

The Day

I Said

“NO”

To God

By Midge Houghtaling

I once held to the belief that when God speaks, the only appropriate answer is "yes." But then there was that one time ... just once, when I said "no" to my Lord and Savior. Looking back on that day, I really had no other choice. I did what I had to do for the good of my family, for the preservation of sanity and self.

It has always been my desire to follow hard after God. So I knew that He would understand that day when my answer to Him was "no."

My husband and I were arguing. For the life of me, I don't remember why. It could have been anything; or it might have been everything. Everything from kids to cash flow - his family, my family or the color that I chose for the bathroom rug. My Pastor says that some people are like fire and ice and I guess that's the way it was with Tim and me.

Because of the friction between us, Tim decided to go water the garden. Because I loved him, I decided that we needed to talk. I caught up with him somewhere between the tomato plants and the zucchini. I told him that we *had* to talk. Except for the sound of the spray hitting the vegetables - silence.

There's nothing quite like feeling less important than a summer squash. After my failed attempt to communicate, I turned and started back up to the house. I remember this walk vividly because a "voice" or a thought had entered my head. Every step of the way I heard it, resonating in my brain - "You have to leave. You have to leave. You have to leave!"

I headed straight for the bedroom, pulled the suitcase from the closet and started laying out clothes on the bed. Makeup, blow dryer ... my mind was going through the checklist of everything I would need. Phone numbers so I could call into work on Monday - what else? Think! As I was reaching to pull another blouse from its hangar, I heard - this time - the Holy Ghost speaking to my heart.

Overwhelming and powerful was the gentle voice of His Spirit as He spoke. "Will you deliver yourself?" He asked.

My hand froze in midair. For a second or two I did not move a muscle. Then I lowered my hand, turned and sat on my bed in stunned silence. I was thinking of the question that the Spirit of God had asked and I felt as if He were right there beside me, waiting for my answer.

I thought of Jesus on the cross. He didn't want to go there. In the garden He had asked God if, maybe, there was some other way. But the cross was the only way. He suffered and endured the agony of the cross, going where He did not want to go, staying where He did not want to stay, submitting to the will of the Father - for me.

"No, Lord," I said, tears welling up in my eyes. "No, I will not. I will not deliver myself."

Still sitting on my bed, I thought about the children of Israel in the wilderness; how they followed the cloud by day and fire by night. And when God did not move, neither did they move. If I am His child, I thought, should I not be led by His Spirit?

I decided to address the "voice" that had entered my thoughts as I walked up from the garden. So, I said, "Devil, I do NOT have to leave!"

And you can put that thought into my head a hundred times a day if you've got nothing better to do! But I'm putting you on notice: I move when My God tells me to move. I go where HE tells me to go and I stay when HE tells me to stay! I am led by HIS Spirit! I am His and His Voice is the only voice that moves me!"

The zucchini flourished that summer. The devil fled. Tim finally came up from the garden. As I write, I can look across the room at my wonderful husband who is fixing me lunch. I lack sufficient words to tell you how happy I am that I stayed.

I have since found a place in the Bible where the disciples also said "no" to God. You can read about it in the sixth chapter of the Book of John, in verses 66 to 69:

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

How would you answer if God were to ask you:

"Will you deliver yourself from this situation?"

Or

"Will you also go away?"

If that is the question God is asking, I hope that you will answer "no" right now, today. There is nothing to gain by moving yourself off in some direction where God has not told you to go. There is no benefit in separating yourself from His Presence. He has the words of eternal life. He will chart the best course for your life, if only you will follow.