

Daniel Day-Lewis and the art of the holy "no"

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I said no to something recently, something pretty cool. Not because I wasn't interested, or because it wouldn't be beneficial in some ways. I just knew that saying "yes" meant I could not do that, and probably many other things, as well as I should. So I said no.

It felt weird. But also good. I'm not good with "no." I like it in theory. I know that boundaries are important. I know, as the saying goes, "every time you say 'yes' to something you are saying 'no' to something else." But it's so hard to practice that.

Christians are often bad with "no" We are so infected with the culture of nice, and often so motivated by the twin demons of people-pleasing and guilt, that we can't utter it. But there is such thing as a righteous, healthy, and holy "no."

I found some inspiration from Daniel Day-Lewis via [Ain't It Cool News](#). It seems that initially the acclaimed actor was going to turn down Steven Spielberg's offer to star in the now-successful *Lincoln*. This is the email he sent to the director before he, in the end, accepted:

Dear Steven,

It was a real pleasure just to sit and talk with you. I listened very carefully to what you had to say about this compelling history, and I've since read the script and found it in all the detail in which it describes these monumental events and in the compassionate portraits of all the principal characters, both powerful and moving. I can't account for how at any given moment I feel the need to explore life as opposed to another, but I do know that I can only do this work if I feel almost as if there is no choice; that a subject coincides inexplicably with a very personal need and a very specific moment in time. In this case, as fascinated as I was by Abe, it was the fascination of a grateful spectator who longed to see a story told, rather than that of a participant. That's how I feel now in spite of myself,

and though I can't be sure that this won't change, I couldn't dream of encouraging you to keep it open on a mere possibility. I do hope this makes sense Steven, I'm glad you're making the film, I wish you the strength for it, and I send both my very best wishes and my sincere gratitude to you for having considered me.

That's how you say "no" Of course, since he relented in the end, maybe it isn't the best example. But the language is there.

A great question for everyone, especially those in the caregiving business, is this:
When was the last time you said no?

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