



● Intro

- Whether you or your church celebrate Lent, building up some self-denial muscle is always a good plan. But maybe this is the year that you build the muscle by saying “yes” rather than, or in addition to, “no.”

Note: While this exercise does not include a personal prep (as does all our small-group studies) we encourage you, as the leader, to work through this exercise before engaging your students.

● Open

- After your group has gathered, discuss these questions:

What’s your worst, happy temptation? (i.e. chocolate, Doritos, binge watching a series...something you’re not completely embarrassed to share).

What’s been your experience in beating temptation with sheer willpower?

● Digging In

- Share:

If you’re like most, your willpower will fade over time, whether months, days, or even minutes. In fact, studies have shown that we have a limited amount of willpower. So there must be a better way. Thankfully, there is.

Ask students to read the passage on their student pages and to look for the following :

1. Underline anything that gives you insight into willpower and temptation
2. Draw the shape of a stop sign over anything we are to say no to.
3. Circle anything we are to say yes to.

Taking It Inward

After a few minutes, process these verses as a group with these questions:

What are things these passages tell us to say no to?

What are some things these passages tell us to say yes to?

What insight do these passages give you in overcoming temptation or giving up something for Lent?



● **Putting Into Practice**

- When Jesus gave us a “no” in Matthew 16, He also gave us two “yes’s”: take up our cross; follow Him.
- Maybe that’s the ratio we should use when trying to say “no” to things. Let’s not just count on sheer willpower, which we know fades, but let’s replace the “no” with two “yes’s” that are tied into the resurrection life Jesus has given us, which will not fade. Here is an example:

Let’s say your “no” is to quit eating so many M&M’s. Along with avoiding M&M’s, come up with two “yes’s” to replace your no such as: 1) say “yes” to eating more nutritiously and keeping your body a healthy temple for God’s Spirit; 2) say “yes” to giving the money you’d spend on M&M’s to a friend in need.

Give students a few minutes in solitude to list one or two “no’s” along with two “Yes’s” for each “No.” Then ask for volunteers to share with the group.



● Digging In

● Matthew 16:24-25 (NIV)

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.

Romans 7: 21-25 (MSG)

It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge. ²⁴ I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question? ²⁵ The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different.

Romans 8:12-17

¹²⁻¹⁴ So don't you see that we don't owe this old do-it-yourself life one red cent. There's nothing in it for us, nothing at all. The best thing to do is give it a decent burial and get on with your new life. God's Spirit beckons. There are things to do and places to go! ¹⁵⁻¹⁷ This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike "What's next, Papa?"

● Putting Into Practice

NO: _____

NO: _____

Yes 1: _____

Yes 1: _____

Yes 2: _____

Yes 2: _____