



## Are you Guilty of being Too Nice?

Do you ever find yourself saying “yes” when you want to (or should) say “no”? For example, several years back, a graduate student asked me if I thought she would make a good counselor. I knew her gifts weren’t strongest in that area, but I didn’t want to hurt her feelings. She left our conversation believing I thought she was capable.

We all do it. We say “yes” when our honest response should be “no”. But let’s take a look at the cost of being too nice.

### **We Hurt People**

It amazes me how unaware we are of how we injure people by being too nice. Isn’t that why we’re nice to begin with? We *don’t* want to hurt people? When I wasn’t completely honest with my intern, I unintentionally hurt her. She spent time, energy, and money pursuing a career that didn’t reflect her true calling.

In another example, Lydia worked hard to be a Proverbs 31 wife and mother. But the more she gave, the more her husband and children took, with little concern or even awareness of Lydia’s needs.

Lydia became exhausted caring for everyone with no one giving back to her. Over time, Lydia’s niceness enabled her family to become more and more self-centered, self-absorbed, and selfish. Lydia didn’t mean to, but she weakened her husband and children by not inviting them into a more reciprocal relationship.

Here’s another way we wound people by being too nice. Debbie was a new believer who attended Nancy’s Bible study at church. Debbie began phoning Nancy at home, asking a question or wanting to talk something through.

Nancy always took Debbie calls, but soon grew weary. She didn’t want to discourage her new friend, but found her neediness overwhelming. Instead of being more honest with Debbie and setting a better schedule for phone calls, Nancy started using her caller ID to screen her calls. Eventually Debbie caught on and felt hurt and abandoned. Nancy’s niceness gave Debbie the impression that she was always available any time night or day.



When we are too nice and fail to set appropriate boundaries, we may not mean to, but we hurt people. The only person who can be always available without getting crabby or tired is God. Don't try to do his job. You will fail every time and the other person will get hurt.

### **We Hurt Ourselves**

There is nothing unbiblical about being wise with who you give yourself to. While in college, Sharon took a walk with a young man she wasn't attracted to, nor was she very comfortable with. She said yes because she didn't want to hurt his feelings by saying "no thanks". During their walk, he sexually assaulted her. Every day she deeply regrets that she was too nice.

It doesn't have to be a dangerous or suspicious situation for us to learn to simply say "no thank you, I can't," or "I don't want to." We all have limited resources of time, energy, and money. When we allow others to take from our resources without limits, it's like giving them unrestricted access to our checking account and then feeling angry when we're constantly overdrawn.

If giving to someone hurts you, count the cost. Sometimes it's appropriate to sacrifice yourself for another, and other times it's foolish. Jesus tells a story about five women who refused to share their lamp oil with five others who did not bring enough for themselves. Instead of rebuking these women for being stingy, Jesus called them wise (Mathew 25:1-13).

### **We Miss God's Best**

Each day there are endless things and people that clamor for our attention. Oswald Chambers reminds us that "the great enemy of the life of faith is the good that is not good enough." Don't allow other people to set your values, your schedule, or your priorities.

Many people asked Jesus to do things for them, but Jesus always looked for what God wanted first—even if it meant disappointing people. (See Mark 1:29-38 or John 11:1-6.) When we are too nice and passively accommodate others, we could very well miss God's best.

Finally, here are some steps to help you stop being too nice:

Understand that nice isn't one of the fruits of the Spirit. Being kind doesn't mean you always say "yes." It means that you learn to say "no" kindly.



Before you say “yes,” stop and say, “Let me think about that. I’ll get back to you.” This will give you time to think through whether you’re being too nice or if you really feel led to do it.

Let go of guilt. You can’t be all things to all people nor do everything people want. Jesus was perfect, and he still disappointed people.