

What would it look like if we stopped benching the Holy Spirit and actually let him call the shots in our lives? That question sits at the heart of a powerful exploration of Acts chapter 9, where an ordinary man named Ananias receives an extraordinary assignment. Before God even explains the details, before a name is mentioned or an address is given, Ananias simply responds with two words: yes, Lord. That unconditional yes is the spark that sets one of the most dramatic transformation stories in all of Scripture into motion. We are challenged to examine whether our own schedules and habits reflect the life of someone who genuinely wants to hear from God, or whether we have filled every moment so completely that the whispers of the Holy Spirit simply cannot find a way in. The supernatural, we are reminded, begins the moment we say yes to those whispers. This is an invitation to create margin, to listen, and to trust that what waits on the other side of our obedience is far greater than anything we could plan or predict.

Title: On the Other Side of Yes: Saying Yes to the Holy Spirit's Whispers

Sermon Summary: Drawing from Acts 9 and the story of Ananias and Saul, Pastor John Brown challenges believers to give the Holy Spirit full control of their lives rather than keeping him on the bench. Using the conversion of Saul as a backdrop, the sermon emphasizes that ordinary followers of Jesus can have extraordinary impact simply by saying yes to God's promptings, even before knowing all the details. The message calls believers to stop writing people off based on their past, to create margin in their lives to hear God's voice, and to trust that their obedient yes carries a reach far beyond what they can see or imagine. The sermon concludes with a call to the altar, inviting the congregation to surrender control to the Holy Spirit and respond with an unconditional yes.

Key Points:

- Give God your yes before you know the rest -- Ananias said yes to God before he even knew what was being asked of him, modeling unconditional obedience
- Do not let their yesterday determine your yes today -- just as Ananias was tempted to refuse because of Saul's violent history, believers must resist writing people off based on their past
- Your yes has a reach you may never see -- the ripple effects of one act of obedience can extend across generations and far beyond what the obedient person could ever witness or measure
- Hearing God requires margin -- believers must create intentional space in their schedules to hear the whispers of the Holy Spirit, rather than filling every moment with activity
- Obedience is your responsibility, but the outcome belongs to God -- the role of the believer is to keep showing up, praying, and loving, while trusting God to do the transforming work

Scripture Reference:

- Acts 9:1-31, which recounts Saul's dramatic encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, the vision given to Ananias, Ananias obeying God's call to go to Saul, Saul's restoration and baptism, and the early growth of the church

Stories:

- Jason Williams (known as White Chocolate) coaching a high school all-star game and unknowingly benching Anthony Edwards, used as an illustration of how believers often sideline the Holy Spirit rather than letting him lead
- The story of Kevin Cheik, a troubled student who came to youth camp causing problems, later became a major drug dealer and served jail time, but surrendered his life to Jesus on an Easter Sunday nine years after his first encounter with the youth ministry, and has since expressed a desire to reach others like himself through Youth for Christ
- Pastor Brown's own parents, who were a young struggling couple far from God, whose neighbors persistently invited them to church revival services, leading to their conversion and ultimately shaping the faith of Pastor Brown and his daughters -- illustrating how one act of obedient invitation can echo across generations

Here is a list of all scripture references mentioned or alluded to in the sermon:

- Acts 9:1-31 — The primary passage of the sermon, covering Saul's conversion, Ananias's obedience, and the early growth of the church
- Acts 7 (alluded to) — The stoning of Stephen, which Saul witnessed and approved of
- 1 Samuel 16:7 — The speaker references God looking at the heart rather than outward appearance, which is the central teaching of this verse
- Isaiah 6:8 — The phrase "send me" echoed in the speaker's closing call to obedience mirrors Isaiah's response to God's call
- Matthew 28:19-20 — The Great Commission is broadly alluded to in the call to reach neighbors, classmates, and those who seem far from God
- Romans through Philemon (alluded to broadly) — The speaker notes that 13 New Testament letters were written by Paul, referring to the Pauline epistles
- Proverbs 3:5-6 — The theme of trusting God before knowing all the details aligns with this passage about leaning not on one's own understanding
- Luke 15:11-32 — The speaker's reference to praying for prodigals in the closing prayer alludes to the parable of the prodigal son
- Matthew 7:7-8 — The theme of persistent prayer for others who seem far from God aligns with this passage on asking, seeking, and knocking

Pastor Brown describes Ananias giving God an unconditional yes before knowing any of the details -- in what areas of your life do you find it most difficult to say yes to God before fully understanding what he is asking of you?

The sermon draws a parallel between having the Holy Spirit on the bench and not utilizing him in our daily lives -- in what practical ways might you be sidelining the Holy Spirit in your decisions, relationships, or daily routines?

Ananias had legitimate, well-reasoned fears about approaching Saul, yet he obeyed anyway -- how do you typically respond when God calls you toward something that seems dangerous, uncomfortable, or counterintuitive?

Pastor Brown challenges the congregation not to let someone's yesterday determine their yes today -- who in your life have you written off as too far gone, and what would it look like to begin praying for them again?

The story of Kevin illustrates that visible change can take years, even decades -- how do you sustain faithful prayer and love for someone when there is no evidence that anything is changing?

The sermon suggests that our schedules often do not reflect the priorities of someone who genuinely wants to hear from God -- what specific changes could you make to create more margin in your life for listening to the Holy Spirit?

Pastor Brown states that obedience is our responsibility but the outcome belongs to God -- how does separating your role from God's role change the way you approach sharing your faith or reaching out to difficult people?

The anonymous neighbors who persistently invited Pastor Brown's parents to church never knew the lasting impact of their obedience -- how does the idea that your yes has a reach you may never see affect your willingness to act on small promptings from the Holy Spirit?

Ananias is presented as an ordinary person, not a pastor or apostle, who was simply available and attentive to God's voice -- what does this suggest about who God chooses to use, and how does that challenge or encourage you personally?

The sermon closes with the statement that the church gets more Pauls when we begin to live like Ananias -- what would it look like for your community of faith to collectively cultivate a culture of listening, obedience, and unconditional yes to God's promptings?