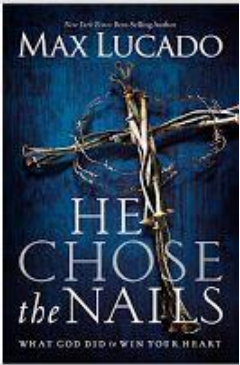


## Will You Say Yes?

**Preface:** During this Lenten season our Sunday School class is studying the Max Lucado book, [He Chose the Nails – What God Did to Win Your Heart](#). Chapter 7 has a powerful lesson and story that really impacted me. I am paraphrasing chapter 7 because I don't want to take away from the emotion of this fantastic story as told by Max Lucado. I take no credit for this powerful storyline. I highly recommend you read this inspirational book first hand. The paraphrased storyline is in italics with my commentary in normal print.

To get the full effect, read this story picturing yourself as the dad. *His wife died in childbirth, leaving him to raise a son and daughter himself. At age 5 the daughter was cuddly and loving towards her dad. And the father loved both his children deeply. The daughter treasured the family tradition of dancing with her dad every Christmas Eve. The love of a parent for a child is a mighty force. Initially, the young child has nothing to offer her dad, but still the love is deep, genuine and mutual. Then, life happens.*



*The rebellious years began as the daughter was old enough to drive. By then the biggest influence was now her peers and she totally ignored her dad. The daughter became close friends with an unkempt, tattooed boy who lived in the neighborhood. The father knew this boy was not a good influence on his daughter, but she insisted on making her own choices. In spite of the efforts of other extended family members she continued to ignore her dad. That Christmas Eve, the daughter flatly turned down the invitation to dance with her dad and stormed out of the house.*

This story is intended to parallel our relationship with God. We were once totally dependent on God, but foolish confidence and worldly influence took precedence over the loving guidance of the Father. And then, we went further. We not only turned away from God, but we started living against God. We did things we know were not pleasing to Him. Author Max Lucado didn't mince words when he said God became our enemy and adversary. We wanted to do things our way and didn't want God getting in our way. "We offended God, not out of ignorance, but by intent." That is a powerful indictment.

Back to the story. *The daughter returned home for a short while but was unresponsive to the dad's attempts to re-establish relationships. She treated him as if he didn't exist. One day she was gone, off to a distant big city across the country, seeking a different way of life. She left with no forwarding address. As it turns out a cousin of the unkempt neighbor boy lived in that far away city. He would let runaways stay at his apartment at night, but that arrangement didn't last. Soon the daughter was out on the streets, eventually finding her way to a homeless shelter. That wasn't a pleasant environment. It was noisy, making it difficult to sleep. It was at this time that she began to realize the gravity of her mistake, but she felt she had gone too far to go back. A girl in the cot next to her told her about a job dancing on tables. It would pay big bucks, putting food on her table and a roof over her head. Max Lucado said that hunger "has a way of softening convictions." So, the very thing she treasured most with her dad – dancing – became her new way of life. And the men who watched her dance were the age of her father.*

*The cousin of the tattooed friend began delivering boxes of letters from the dad. The cousin became the go-between for mail from the dad. Every week there were more letters. None were opened. But, they were not thrown away, either. She instinctively knew each letter included a plea to come home. Pride and shame both worked together to keep her separated from her dad. Pride was running away from home and trying to make it on her own, in spite of the consequences. Shame was the realization that what she was doing was wrong. Max Lucado hit the nail on the head when he wrote: "If pride is what goes before a fall, then shame is what keeps you from getting up after one. Pride drives you away. Shame keeps you away."*

*She never wrote her father back. "If he knew what she was doing he would never write to her again." Then, a few days before Christmas Eve another letter was delivered by the cousin. This letter had no postmark. She knew it was from her father. For the first time, she opened and read the letter. It said, "I know where you are. I know what you do. This doesn't change the way I feel." It concluded by saying, "Will you dance with me?" In tears and realizing the depth of her mistake, she pulled from under her bed the large stack of unopened letters, and read every one. Each one ended with the same sentence, "Will you dance with me?" There was still time. Within the hour she was on a bus for the long trip home.*

*As she burst through the door of her home on that Christmas Eve, she said to her loving dad, "The answer is yes – if the invitation is still good. The answer is yes."*

As we celebrate Easter we realize that Jesus made an ultimate sacrifice for you, and for me, because of His love for us. That was just the beginning of a new life for us with Christ. Because of Jesus' sacrifice and victory over death, we can forgive and be forgiven. The Father doesn't give up on us, in spite of what we have gotten our selves into. God knows all about us -- what we do -- and none of that changes the way He feels about us. The Father does this for us because He loves us. Even though we may waver in our faith, drift away for a while or even rebel against Him, His invitation to come home and be with Him is still good. It is called reconciliation. No matter how lost we are, God is waiting with open arms for us to come home to Him. The invitation is still good. What is your answer? Will you say "yes?"

**The Bible Says:** *All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).*