

WHAT IS YOUR EXCUSE?

Luke 14:18-20

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DEFINITION - EXCUSE:

A reason or explanation given to justify a fault or offence – Oxford Dictionary

To give a false reason why you cannot do something – Cambridge Dictionary

Is a defense of some offensive behavior or some failure to keep a promise. – English Dictionary

One hindering habit that people struggle against is excuse making. Call it what you will (justification, rationalization), no matter what we call it a lot of times it's just an excuse. There are legitimate reasons, but I wonder how many times our reasons for not doing something or for doing something are just masked excuses.

And it's amazing the lengths that some people will go to make their excuse. Some people work harder on an excuse than anything else.

Unfortunately, a lot of folks make excuses when it comes to matters of faith. "I'm too

busy to pray." "I don't read the Bible because I don't understand it." "I would get right with God but I've just got too much going on in my life right now....later will be better." I think people can especially deceive themselves with some of the excuses they come up with for not attending worship assemblies.

Since God does not take kindly to our excuses, we need to be so very cautious about making excuses.

Let's examine some excuses so that we might be better equipped to resist making excuses for our behavior.

Reasons People Make Excuses

BLAME GAME - It's Not My Fault

If I could just blame something or somebody. Maybe I'll blame my parents. Maybe I'll blame the weather. Maybe I'll blame you. If I can take the blame off myself, and put it on someone else, then maybe I'll get out of trouble. People do it all the time. Making excuses for mistakes is not new. In fact, we can trace this undesirable habit all the way back to the Garden of Eden. Adam blames God who gave him the woman who gave him the fruit, the woman blames the serpent, and the only one not making excuses is the serpent (**Genesis 3:12**).

My excuse for doing something wrong is an attempt to not receive blame, to get out of trouble. A person who makes excuses is trying to shift the blame from himself or herself to something or someone else. A Christian, on the other hand, accepts responsibility for his or her wrongs, confesses them, and asks God for forgiveness.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all righteousness.” (1 John 1:9).

God did not accept these excuses. He cursed the land Adam would have to work his whole life (Gen 3:17-19). Aren't we tempted to pass the buck today, too? “My friends tempted me, and I sinned.” “My husband just doesn't want to come on Weekdays, so I don't either.”

Are you blaming others for your sin?

NICE TO DO - I'm Helping God

When Saul brought back spoil from the Amalekites he was not permitted to take, he told Samuel, “The people took the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal” (1 Sam 15:21).

God strongly condemned Saul for his actions. Samuel told Saul, “Behold to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed that the fat of rams” (1 Sam 15:22). Samuel concluded his rebuke of Saul with, “Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he also has rejected you from being king” (1 Sam 15:23).

Many times today we say that we're helping God. “I know instrumental music isn't appropriate, but it makes me feel closer to God.” “I know that denominationalism is sinful, but they're really trying to honor God, so I'll worship with them every now and then.”

Are you saying that you're helping God when you are really sinning against him?

AVOIDANCE - To get out of responsibility

Two biblical characters claimed that they could not do what God was asking them to do.

Moses claimed that he could not deliver the Israelites from Egypt. “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” (Ex 3:11). “Suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, ‘The LORD has not appeared to you’” (Ex 4:1). “O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue” (Ex 4:10). At this point we’re told in the text,

“Then the anger of the Lord burned against Moses....” (Exodus 4:14).

Benjamin Franklin once said, “He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else.”

When the Lord told Jeremiah that he had ordained him a prophet to the nations, Jeremiah said, “I cannot speak, for I am a youth” (Jer 1:6).

God accepted no excuses from Moses or Jeremiah. God answered every objection Moses offered and he sent him to deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt. God told Jeremiah, “Do not say, ‘I am a youth,’ For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak” (Jer 1:7).

We often say, “I can’t do it.” We say, “I can’t teach class,” when we’ve never tried. We say, “I don’t have the talent to evangelize,” when we’ve never spoken a word to a friend about Jesus. We say, “I’m too old to do that,” when those who are younger need the guidance of those who are older.

A Chinese proverb says, “The man who says it cannot be done should not interrupt the man who is doing it.”

We all have different talents. “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them” (Rom 12:6). “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers” (Eph 4:11).

We cannot expect someone to do something for which he does not have the ability. However, so many say that they can’t do something when they’ve never tried. How do we know if we can do something if we’ve never tried it?

Are we saying that we cannot do what God has expected us to do?

DENY - To deny a personal problem

Aaron made a couple of excuses in the Bible in order to deny his own part in the gold calf that was built for worship in the wilderness. You remember the story well, how Moses had gone up the mountain to talk with God and while he was gone the people grew impatient and doubtful and they told Aaron to make a god for them. Aaron caves in to the peer pressure and instructs the people what to do so that he can build an idol. When Moses comes down from the mountain, he is irate. He broke the stone tablets, burned the idol, grinded it up in powder and made the sons of Israel drink it. Then he said to Aaron, “What did this people do to you, that you have brought such great sin upon them?” (**Ex. 32:21**). In other words, “*What’s your excuse for this wickedness?*”

Now notice that Aaron never accepted personal responsibility for what he had built.

- **Excuse #1:** “Do not let the anger of my lord burn; you know the people yourself, that they are prone to evil.” (**Ex. 32:22**). In other words, “*It’s not my fault; it’s the people’s fault.*”
- **Excuse #2:** “I threw it [the gold] into the fire, and out came this calf.” (**Ex. 32:24**).
- **The account of Aaron’s building the golden calf makes Aaron look foolish—especially his statement that the calf came out of the fire when he put the people’s gold in the fire.**

The real problem? “Aaron had let them get out of control” (**Ex. 32:25**). He was supposed to be their leader, the High Priest of God. And he failed the people as their leader. And rather than accept responsibility for his failure, he denied his sin.

Proverbs 30:12 – There is a kind who is pure in his own eyes, yet is not washed from his filthiness.

It is easy to blame others and make excuses for evil thoughts and wrong actions. Excuses include: (1) *it’s the other person’s fault*; (2) *I couldn’t help it*; (3) *everybody’s doing it*; (4) *it was just a mistake*; (5) *nobody’s perfect*; (6) *you made me do it*; (7) *I was pressured into it*; (8) *I didn’t know it was wrong*; (9) *God is tempting me*.

All of these excuses are a denial of a personal problem. It’s like the adulterous woman of Proverbs 30:20, “She eats and wipes her mouth, and says, “I have done no wrong.”.

But 1 John 1:8 says, “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.”

I’m Afraid

In the Parable of the Talents, the one who hid his talent said, “I was afraid, and went and hid his talent in the ground” (Matt 25:25). This servant was so afraid that he would lose his master’s money that he hid it in the ground. Because he was afraid and did nothing, he was cast into the outer darkness (Matt 25:30).

Those who are afraid often cannot do much. Ten spies came back from scouting Canaan, and they said that the people there were too large for the Israelites to take Canaan—they were afraid (Num 13:33). When the children of Israel saw Goliath, they “fled from him and were dreadfully afraid” (1 Sam 17:24). When Jesus was arrested, “all the disciples forsook Him and fled” (Matt 26:56). If we are fearful, we will be lost—the cowardly will have their part in the lake of fire (Rev 21:8).

We are often afraid. “If I respond to the invitation, everyone will look at me funny.” “If I don’t do what my friends want me to do, they’ll think I’m weird and I’ll lose their friendship.” “If I talk to my friends about Jesus, they’ll get mad and we won’t be friends anymore.” “If I stand up to my employer and tell him I’m not doing that, he’ll fire me.”

What about you? Are you not doing God’s will because you are afraid?

I Don’t Know How

Matthew 25:44-45. Jesus condemned these people for not caring for him when he was down and out. They said, “Lord, when did we see you that way?” Jesus said when they didn’t do it to one of his disciples, they did not do it to him. They basically say, “Lord, we just didn’t know that we were supposed to do that.” Jesus did not accept this excuse—he sent this crowd to hell.

Ignorance of the will of God is a very dangerous thing. The Pharisees came and asked Jesus if a man could divorce his wife for any cause. Jesus answered them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female?’” (Matt 19:4). When the Sadducees came and asked Jesus about the resurrection, he responded, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matt 22:29).

We can use ignorance as an excuse for not doing God’s will today. “Lord, I just didn’t know that getting a divorce for just any reason and remarrying would send me to hell.” “Lord, I just didn’t know that when you said we weren’t to forsake the assembly of the saints, I didn’t know you meant it.”

Are you claiming ignorance before God? God no longer overlooks ignorance (Acts 17:30).

BUSY BEES - I'm Too Busy, Luke 14:18ff

Jesus told a parable that illustrates our attempt to excuse ourselves from doing God will. The parable is about a man who was giving a big dinner and invited everyone to come "But they all alike began to make excuses." (Luke 14:18). In the Parable of the Great Supper, those who were invited made excuses as to why they could not come. One said:

- "I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused." **(14:18)**.
- "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused." **(14:19)**.
- "I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come." **(14:20)**.

"What they were basically saying is: "I do not have the time to come right now." These excuses were not accepted, for the master said, "None of those men who were invited shall taste my supper" (Lk 14:24).

Scripture exhorts us to be good managers of our time. "So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Ps 90:12). Ephesians 5:15-16. "Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time" (Col 4:5).

So many of us use time as an excuse of not honoring God. "I just don't have the time to come on Wednesday evenings." "I just don't have the time to pray and study my Bible like I ought." "I just don't have the time to visit the hospitals and the shut-ins."

Are you too busy for God? If you are, why should you expect God to make time for you?

Reasons to stop making excuses.

1. Making excuses hinders people from seeing solutions.

You become focused on **why** you can't instead of **how** you can. In fact, the habit of making excuses keeps one focused on obstacles.

It's like the 10 of the 12 spies sent into Canaan's Land. They began making excuses and all they could think of is why they couldn't conquer the land God promised to them.

- "The people are strong, the cities are fortified and very large...and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight" (Num. 13:28,33).

It is unfortunate that excuses destroy the lives of so many people. Gerard Egan, author of *The Skilled Helper* and Professor Emeritus at Loyola University of Chicago, wrote "[A]voidance behavior and excuse making contribute a great deal to the 'psychopathology of the average."

2. Making excuses turns people into victims instead of victors.

Proverbs 22:13 – The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside; I will be killed in the streets!"

Excuses are the nails used to build a house of failure. A poor workman always finds fault with his tools.

3. Making excuses reveals a lack of faith.

In Judges 6, Gideon was called a valiant warrior of God and was given the challenge to lead God's people out of oppressions and defeat against the Midianites. But when he was given his mission, he began making excuses:

- Judges 6:15 – O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house.

You know, if the Lord says you're a valiant warrior, then you really shouldn't argue with Him. The Scriptures tells us that we are "more than conquerors" (Romans 8:37). You should have faith and be the warrior he made you to be.

4. God doesn't accept excuses.

One talent man offered excuses (Matt. 25:24-25). The Master rejected his excuses: "But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave....'" (Matt. 25:26). This man was just wicked and lazy!

Romans 1:20 – For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

When Jesus talked to His disciples about how the world had rejected Him and would reject Him because of their spiritual blindness and stubborn hearts, He said: [John 15:22](#) – “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.”

So I know why I make excuses and I know why I should stop making excuses. But I've done it for so long it has become a habit. How can I break this destructive habit and overcome my excuses?

5. Don't expect perfect situations before you take action.

Waiting for the perfect or ideal situation is a common hindrance of getting things done. Of course, sometimes there is a better time than others to do certain things, but you can't always sit around waiting for that perfect day. At some point you just got to do things even when it's inconvenient. I know some folks say, “Good things come to those who wait.” And in some cases that is truth, but more times than not those “good things” are the leftovers from those who hustle and get things done.

The person who really wants to do something finds a way; the other person finds an excuse.

6. Realize the potential that God has given you.

We are responsible not for what we have, but for what we could have; not for what we are, but for what we could become.

[2 Timothy 1:7](#) – For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

Do you believe that verse? If you do, then live like it!

While the false prophets in Israel were making excuses, the prophet Micah, whose name means, “*Like Jehovah*,” said, “I am filled with power—with the Spirit of the Lord—and with justice and courage.” (**Micah 3:8**). So the next time you feel tempted to make excuses, remember the Spirit within you!

7. Ask God to help you stop making excuses.

[Jeremiah 1:4-7](#) – Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.” Then I said, “Alas, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, because I am a youth.” [EXCUSE] But the Lord said to

me, do not say, “I am a youth,” because everywhere I send you, you shall go, and all that I command you, you shall speak.” [EXCUSE DENIED].

8. Look for solutions instead of problems.

Don’t find an excuse, find a way. This will change your mindset from a pessimist to an optimist. Consider John 5:5-9:

John 5:5-9 – When Jesus saw him lying *there*, and knew that he had already been a long time *in that condition*, He said* to him, “Do you wish to get well?” ⁷The sick man answered Him, “Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.” ⁸Jesus said* to him, “Get up, pick up your pallet and walk.” ⁹Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and *began* to walk.

Conclusion

As we come to the conclusion of our lesson this morning, I’m sure that the Adversary within is giving us excuses not to get right with God.

You need an excuse? You don’t have to go to the internet to find one; the Adversary has plenty of them.

There’s no doubt; making excuses is a deadly habit for Christians. In fact, it has a lot of negative effects. Making excuses can reduce our motivation and retard our spiritual growth, it will cost you...a life of mediocrity, defeat, a life of potential that is never actualized, and it may cost you eternity.

When Paul preached in Athens at Mars Hill, some who were present for that great opportunity said, “We shall hear you again concerning this matter.” (**Acts 17:32**). I don’t know what their excuse was, but I wonder what was so pressing that they gave up salvation. Don’t make their mistake, don’t use their excuses. If you need to get right with the Lord, then do it now.

I have a feeling that this is going to be the best day of your life. The best day of your life is the one on which you decide your life is your own. No apologies, no excuses, no one to blame. This is the day your life really begins. When you stop making excuses in life that is the day you start making progress.