

## No Excuses

Centenary United Methodist Church

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May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

We are pretty good at making excuses, aren't we?

We forget to do something, or something we're working on doesn't work out as well as we had hoped, and we make excuses for the lack of execution.

We've all heard some of the classics:

- Teacher, the dog ate my homework.
- Boss, there was a wreck on the interstate, and that made me late for work.

But what are some others?

I found a great list from Reader's Digest. They labeled the article "The Funniest Excuses Ever Uttered."

Here are some of my favorites:

- A person called to say they couldn't come into work because of a death in the family — the boss was her cousin.
- One person said he didn't have their rent because they only had half the money and went to the casino to try to double his money.
- A man interviewing for a federal agent job didn't disclose that he had been arrested for excessive speeding. When asked why he thought such an arrest wouldn't count, he replied "because I didn't have a driver's license."
- One student tried to explain why he didn't have his homework by saying he had been "fighting a kid who said you weren't the best teacher ever. I had to defend your honor."
- One roommate's excuse for not washing the dishes was she was allergic to hot water.

Sometimes the excuses pay off.

- An officer pulled over a young man in a very old station wagon.
- The officer asked if he knew he was doing 55 in a 45-mph zone.

- The young man said “Honestly officer, I didn’t think this piece of junk could go that fast.” The officer said that was the best excuse he had heard in a long time and let him go without a ticket.

An excuse worked in that one instance, but usually people see right through such things, don’t they? We know it’s just an excuse.

And if we were to admit it, we know people are going to see through ours as well, even when we use them ourselves.

We’re going to continue our look through the great stories and characters of the Bible today with a look at Moses.

We’ll have Moses featured for a few weeks. He is, after all, one of the central figures in the first five books of the Bible. But today we’re going to talk about his excuses — and how God challenged him on each one of them.

Yes, just as God now challenges all of us with our excuses, particularly as it relates to us serving God and sharing our faith.

### **The story**

Moses ran off from Egypt and settled with a family in Midian. He has taken a wife and has at least one son at this point and is out shepherding sheep one day when he notices something.

A bush is burning but it isn’t being consumed — how could that be?

- God calls out to Moses.
- God tells Moses to remove his sandals because he’s on hallowed ground.
- And God tells Moses that the horrific treatment of the Hebrews must end. God intends to rescue the people of Jacob known as Israel. And Moses has been picked to lead this task.

Most of us know the story from there:

- Moses confronts the Pharaoh to let the people go.
- Ten plagues ravage Egypt before Pharaoh finally lets them go.
- God gives The Ten Commandments to Moses.
- The Israelite people enter the Promised Land after wandering for a generation in the wilderness.
- You get the picture.

But if Moses had had his way, we would be remembering someone else in scriptures. You see, Moses had five excellent excuses. And as we go through them, listen to see if you've caught yourself making the same excuses.

God sets up the scenario for Moses, and then he gives him the plan.

**From Exodus 3:9-11 ...**

Now the Israelites' cries of injustice have reached me. I've seen just how much the Egyptians have oppressed them. <sup>10</sup> So get going. I'm sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt."

<sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, "Who am I to go to Pharaoh and to bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

God issues a call to Moses. And his response is "Who? Me?"

### **1. Who? Me?**

That's Moses' first excuse. "God, Surely someone else is better for this job than me."

How often have we asked those questions ourselves when God has called us?

- To serve in the church.
- To get involved in our community in some way.
- To give of our time or money.
- To preach, to teach, to mentor.
- To get back to life and discipleship after a tragedy has hit us or someone we love.
- You name it!
- God has undoubtedly called you to something at some point in some way.

Moses was saying, "Surely there is someone better for this job than me."

And we sometimes answer that way, too.

We respond with "Who? Me?"

God had a succinct answer for Moses. God said quite simply: "I will be with you."

As we read scripture — and as many of you will remember — God did many, many things with and for Moses and the Israelites.

And the assurance was those five words: "I will be with you."

Now, that should be the end of the discussion, but like we all tend to do, Moses isn't giving up. He has more excuses.

## **2. I don't have all the answers**

### **Look at Exodus 3:13 ...**

But Moses said to God, "If I now come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' they are going to ask me, 'What's this God's name?' What am I supposed to say to them?"

### **In other words, "I don't have all the answers."**

And that's our response often isn't it. "I don't have all the answers. Or I don't know how to do that."

And we may not know at the beginning. But we've all learned before. Let me give you some examples:

- Using a spoon.
- Potty training.
- Reading.
- Math.
- Driving.
- Using new appliances.
- Operating a computer.
- The TV remote.

Some of those things were learned early in life and others much more recently. God gave us a brain. We always are absorbing new information.

And that last one — the TV remote — is something all of us, regardless of age, likely have had to learn how to use in the past five years or so. There's always something new to learn. So, yes, you can teach an old dog new tricks.

- God equipped Moses with the name for God — Yahweh, or "I am."
- God equips us with scripture, speaking through prayer, and interactions with other believers.

But like us, Moses had more excuses.

## **3. People won't believe me**

## Chapter 4:1 ...

Then Moses replied, "But what if they don't believe me or pay attention to me? They might say to me, 'The LORD didn't appear to you!'"

## SKEPTICS

In other words, he's afraid people will mock him and ignore him. He's afraid they won't believe him.

- "You didn't hear from God!"
- "What do you know?"
- Who does this guy think he is?!"

Yes, people might make fun of you or simply ignore you.

But doesn't that happen already?

- I bet many of us have shared a political belief once or twice.
- Or we've talked about a movie or TV show or book that we enjoyed.
  - Those things can lead to disagreements.
  - Or people can ignore what you have to say.
  - To be blunt, we have to address people who ignore us or berate us for our faith like we do when people disagree with us on something else in life.

God gives Moses some miraculous signs to share — a staff that turns into a snake, a hand that turns leprous and then is healed, turning the Nile River into blood.

We don't have that. But we can have a thick skin.

- When someone says, "Who does this guy think he is?"
- Reply, "I'm a saved follower of Jesus Christ, and I want you to be one too."

Surely that was the end of the discussion, right? Wrong. Moses is persistent.

## **4. I don't know what to say**

### In Exodus 4:10 ...

But Moses said to the LORD, "My Lord, I've never been able to speak well, not yesterday, not the day before, and certainly not now since you've been talking to your servant. I have a slow mouth and a thick tongue."

## What to say

Moses didn't know what to say.

This could mean one of two things: Moses either has a speech impediment, or he doesn't think he thinks quickly enough on his feet to refute arguments from the Pharaoh.

In our case, we tend to say "I don't know what to say. I'm not good enough to influence anyone."

Wrong! We influence people every day:

- Our kids.
- Our neighbors.
- Our classmates.
- The mailman.
- The person at the checkout counter.
- Anyone we encounter during the day, we influence.

My advice: Don't get caught up on chapter and verse — do you honestly think pastors know exactly where everything is in the 1,189 chapters in the Bible?

This one doesn't!

- We use Google!

**Three words: Tell your story.**

- You don't have to know book, chapter and verse.
- You don't have to be deeply steeped in theology.
- You can't mess up your own story, so just tell it.
  - What does your faith mean to you?
  - Why is your church important to you?
  - How has your faith changed your life?
  - What keeps you coming back to God and the church day after day, week after week?

Moses had one more request/excuse.

**Not qualified**

**Exodus 4:13 ...**

But Moses said, "Please, my Lord, just send someone else."

**NOT QUALIFIED**

He clearly doesn't think he's qualified. And we use that as an excuse, too, when something seems like extra effort or when things seem too difficult.

My question would be "qualified for what?"

- God isn't asking us to go to the cross like Jesus did.
- God isn't asking us to go to the Pharaoh and ask for him to blow up his economic system.

**We definitely are qualified for whatever God calls us to do. God equips us.**

God is merely asking us to be involved with people.

- We do this every day — or do you not talk to a soul when you go to the store, the doctor, library, or anywhere else outside your home?
- So what can we do?
  - Do the little things.
    - Get to know people.
    - Help them when you can.
    - Serve God by serving the church and the community.
    - Seek ways we can show the love of God to others in a world that is more and more void of
      - humility,
      - kindness,
      - and respect.

I doubt seriously that God is going to visit you through a burning bush.

But I have no doubt whatsoever that God is visiting you daily with opportunities to serve others in some way.

That's our ongoing life's work.

And the dog isn't eating our homework.

We have no excuses.

Amen.