

Stop: The Series

Stop Making Excuses

These are a list of excuses that were sent in to school with students from various parts of the country:

- My son is under a doctor's care and should not take P.E. today. Please excuse him.
- Dear School: Please excuse Cecil being absent on June 28- 33.
- Please excuse Marvin from Physical Education lessons for a few days. Yesterday he fell out of a tree and misplaced his hip.
- Please excuse Ray from school. He has very loose vowels.
- Please excuse Eddie for being. It was his father's fault.
- I kept Billie home because she had to go Christmas shopping because I don't know what size she wears.
- Mary-Ann was absent October 8-11, because she had a fever, sore throat, headache and upset stomach. Her sister was also sick, fever and sore throat, her brother had a low grade fever and ached all over. I wasn't the best either, sore throat and fever.
- Sally won't be in school a week from Friday. We have to attend her funeral.

Then there's my personal favorite:

- Please excuse Jennifer for missing school yesterday. We forgot to get the Sunday paper off the porch, and when we found it Monday, we thought it was Sunday.

Excuses. They come in all shapes and sizes. I have some good news and some bad news for you this morning.

The good news is, by the time this service is over some of you are going to commit yourselves to making some real spiritual changes in your lives. The bad news is, others are going to have all kinds of excuses why they can't personally make any spiritual changes. So, before we even get into the message I want to ask you, which group are you in this morning?

We're in week one of a series that I pray will be life-changing for all of us. We're calling this series "Stop" and what we're going to do in the coming weeks is look at those areas in life that by God's grace we need to stop.

If that sounds a bit negative to you hang on. We're not only going to see the things that God wants us to stop doing; we're going to focus on the power of God to do what's right and the blessings that come from obedience.

Today our priority is “Stop Making Excuses.”

Now the truth is...

I. We All Tend To Make Excuses

Actually, making excuses is nothing new. **Turn to Genesis 2 page 2**

God created the world and all that is in it in 6 days. On that 6th day God fashioned a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into him the breath of life. Adam was unlike any other living, breathing thing that God had made. Adam was made in the image of God.

Read verses 15-17

God gives His crown of creation one simple command. Eat from every tree but one. Eat from that one and you'll die.

This was before the fall. Everything was fresh and pristine. I couldn't imagine what all the fruit Adam *could* eat must have been like.

Next God creates a human companion for Adam. **Read verses 21-23**

Adam and Eve are co-rulers and caretakers of an amazing kingdom. But Satan has other plans. He tells Eve that God was lying. There's no punishment for disobeying God. In fact, God was just keeping her from an experience that would make her god-like.

So what does she do? **Read 3:6**

God's instructions were simple. Don't eat. Satan deceived Eve but Adam joined in knowingly. And now look at this. **Read 3:9-11**

God obviously knew what happened and He knew exactly where Adam was but He was giving Adam every chance to confess. And of course, since he was caught red handed, Adam came clean with his Maker.

Read verse 12

Isn't that amazing? Adam didn't offer a confession. He offered an excuse.

Genesis is a book of firsts. Here's the first excuse. "It's the woman. I was just minding my own business taking care of the garden and she sticks a piece of forbidden fruit in my mouth. What was I going to do God? Besides, you're the one who created her and brought her to me, so technically, it's Your fault!"

But wait. There's more! **Read verse 13**

Now I read that and I think, "Come on. It's all so obvious. What's with the excuses guys?"

And in my own deluded self-righteousness I somehow imagine that I would have fessed up and taken ownership of everything.

Listen, Adam and Eve were just setting the stage for what was to come and what was to come was all of us and our litany of excuses.

Adam and Eve's excuses were designed to deflect the guilt and responsibility away from themselves. Our excuses are designed to deflect the guilt and responsibility away from us. But just like it didn't work for them, it really doesn't work for us either.

The only one who buys into our excuses is us. God and everyone else can see right through them.

You say, "Not me Ed. I'm not making excuses." So let me ask you the, do you love your neighbor as yourself? You say, "Well some of them are unlovable. But I try to treat the rest right." Sounds like an excuse.

Are you forgiving others as God has forgiven you? You say, "Well most people, but you don't know this one guy I work with. He really annoys me. No one on the job can stand him."

Do you worship God and God alone? "Well, most of the time. I do get my priorities mixed up sometimes, but hey, I'm only human."

I. We All Tend To Make Excuses

II. Ignorance Is No Excuse

Turn to Romans 1 page 1104

Last month Rob Bell, who pastors Mars Hill Bible Church in Grand Rapids Michigan, released a book called, *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived*.

In his book Bell argues that eventually everyone will succumb to God's love and be saved. He believes that even hell is just God's way of showing people the error of their ways so they'll turn to Him.

Along with some very shaky biblical interpretation, Rob Bell basically argues from the fact that he doesn't like the traditional Christian belief in hell. In fact, he points out that there are lots of disaffected Christians who can't square the idea of eternal punishment with the idea of a loving God.

The promo for the book says, "Rob Bell addresses one of the most controversial issues of faith—the afterlife—arguing, would a loving God send people to eternal torment forever...? With searing insight, Bell puts hell on trial, and his message is decidedly hopeful—eternal life doesn't start when we die; it starts right now. And ultimately, Love Wins."

Isn't it instructive that he wants to determine truth by what he thinks God is like? That's a loaded question designed to elicit an emotional response; would a loving God send people to eternal torment forever? When we start down that road, we're not putting hell on trial, or any other biblical doctrine. What we're really doing is putting the God of the Bible on trial. We so want to create God in our own image.

We even want truth to be determined by what we would do. That's why people say, "Well, I couldn't believe in a God who... and you fill in the blank. For Rob Bell it's, "I couldn't believe in a God who would actually send people into eternal torment." The reason is, because Rob Bell wouldn't send people into eternal torment.

Well you know what? I wouldn't have cursed the world just because the first 2 people ate a piece of fruit, but God did. I wouldn't send poisonous snakes into the camp of the people of Israel just because they were complaining about the bread He fed them with every day, but God did.

I wouldn't have sent in the Babylonians and the brutal Assyrians in to wipe out Israel just because they worshipped idols, but God did.

And the real clincher for me is, I wouldn't send my Son to be brutalized, tortured, and sadistically crucified by the people I created so I could provide salvation for them. But God did.

Aren't you glad God said, *My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.* (Isaiah 55:8,9)

That's the God of the Bible. That's the God whose sense of justice is far superior to yours and mine.

Now look what He says here in Romans. **Read Romans 1 verses 18-20**

We have so much to be thankful for. We should be the most thankful people on the planet. We have the message of God's love and truth all around us.

There's approximately 300,000 protestant churches in America. Fifty six million people attend them every week. There are Christian bookstores in every city and town. Twenty five million Bibles are purchased every year. 92% of households in America own at least one copy and of those households that own a Bible, the average number of Bibles is three. We have so many English translations of the Bible I can't keep up with them. We have over 900 self-described religiously affiliated and accredited campuses across the USA.

We have all that, and yet our media mocks God with impunity and statistically Christians aren't doing much better than non-Christians in moral areas.

Now think about this. God says in Romans one that everyone is without excuse for not acknowledging Him.

The fact that there is a God and that He's all-powerful is clearly seen in creation. That means that if a person in a remote area of the world worships a tree or the sun, or whatever, that God holds him accountable.

He can't say, "But I never heard about your existence God. I have an excuse." They are without excuse. In fact, if a person worships and serves the creation, whether he worships a tree or he's a totally materialistic evolutionist who worships himself, God says he's under divine wrath.

God says, he's suppressing the truth.

If you, "I don't like that. I can't believe in a God like that," then what you're doing is putting God's actions in submission to your reasoning. You're in essence saying, "God wouldn't think that way or act that way because I wouldn't think and act that way."

God says, *They are with out excuse.*

Now if God holds people accountable because of the witness of creation, what do you think He says to us who have the creation and so much more. If the guy in the jungle is accountable to the smaller amount of light and revelation that he has, what do you suppose God says to us who live in the most "Christian/Bible/Church" saturated nation in the history of the world?

Ignorance is no excuse.

I. We All Tend To Make Excuses

II. Ignorance Is No Excuse

III. Preoccupation With Life Is No Excuse

Turn to Luke chapter 14 page 1025

Let me ask you this while you're turning there. What's one thing that you believe God wants you to do but that you think just too busy to accomplish? Is it pray more, read the Bible more consistently, serve in church? Is it taking more of a spiritual leadership role with your family? What is it?

I'm sure we could all come up with something; probably any number of things.

Now look at this. **Read verse 15**

Jesus is at a meal. It's actually at home of one of the rulers of the Pharisees. Pharisees were Jesus' harshest critics. They were also a bunch of self-righteous religionists.

They were like the moral police for everybody else but usually gave themselves a pass when it came to showing love and mercy to the poor and sinful masses.

So Jesus tells about helping those who can't pay you back. He says you'll be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

That causes someone there to kind of shout out "Happy (that's what the word translated 'blessed' means). Happy is the person who eats bread in the kingdom of God. Happy are those who eat in God's coming feast. Happy are those who attend God's eternal party."

He was right. So Jesus gives him a parable to consider.

Read 16-17

The "certain man" in this story represents God. What's interesting is that this man, who represents God, is "preparing a great banquet. . ." The word translated "great" is *megas* in Greek. In other words, God is preparing for a mega celebration.

Here in Jesus' parable, God sends for everyone to come.

In First Century world an invitation to an event had two parts: (1) the initial invitation ahead of time, and (2) the actual call to the meal when it was ready.

That's because food preparation took a long time. You couldn't run out to the store if you didn't have quite enough. So to not show up, if you didn't indicate you couldn't be there, would be totally inconsiderate of the host.

So God sends His servant out with the announcement: "Dinner's ready. The party's starting," and look what happens:

Read verses 18-20

They said, "We know you worked on this banquet thing a long time and you really put a lot into it but we're just not going to show up. We're all too busy."

Now in context I believe the people with the excuses were the religious leaders that rejected Jesus. This was directed to the Pharisees. So look what happens...

Read verses 21-24

God has invited the world to come to His banquet. The Bible says, *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* (John 3:16)

The Bible says, *“Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.* (Revelation 22:17)

God’s salvation is by grace through faith. But it’s clear that if we really believe Christ died for our sins, we’re not just going to sin with impunity. If we understand that it was our sins that put Christ on that cross we’re going to have a different attitude toward sin.

That’s where a lot of people don’t want to go. “I’m not interested in what God’s done for me (even providing forgiveness) cause I want to run my own life. I have my priorities and interests and God isn’t going to get in the way!”

Even Christians can use priorities as an excuse.

“Sorry, I can’t volunteer to help in VBS because that would tie me down for a whole week. Sorry, I can’t help in Sunday School or the nursery because that would be too much of a commitment.”

“What, start reading a chapter a day in the Bible? Sorry, I’m slammed with life. I’m fighting the tyranny of the urgent and there’s no end to all that urgent stuff.”

Now in the parable God says, “I don’t accept excuses. Get out there and invite the people on the periphery of society to come in.” He was saying to the Pharisees, “I’m going to bring in all the people you rejected.”

Now I want you to notice what kind of emotion the master of the house showed when he got bombarded with all the excuses. Verse 21, he was angry. God is angry when we make excuses.

In Romans 1 His wrath is directed toward those who try to ignore Him and in Luke 14 He’s angry at those who say, ‘I’m just too busy God.’

Excuses are serious things to the living God. There’s just way too much at stake.

- I. We All Tend To Make Excuses*
- II. Ignorance Is No Excuse*
- III. Preoccupation With Life Is No Excuse*
- IV. Trust God To Do What You Can't Do*

Turn back to the Old Testament book of Exodus. Chapter 3 Page 55

Moses was living on the backside of the desert, tending sheep when God spoke to him in the burning bush. God was calling Moses to do what seemed like an impossible job.

He was supposed to go to the strongest, most powerful nation on earth, the nation of Egypt and bring out all the Jewish people.

There were 2 really big problems. First, Moses happened to be wanted for murder in Egypt. He had killed an Egyptian who was beating up on a Jew. Second, the Jewish people were slaves of Pharaoh. They built monuments, pyramids as well as supply cities for Pharaoh so he wasn't about to part with a good thing.

So what does Moses do when God says, "Here's your assignment whether you choose to accept it or not"?

Read 3:11

Moses offers an excuse. "But God, I couldn't possibly do what you are asking of me. I have no experience in the negotiation business."

Here's God's answer... verse 12

Next excuse **Read verse 13**

They're never going to believe me. Who should I say sent me?

God answers again... verse 14

Next excuse **Read 4:1**

What if they don't believe me, God?

God answers... read verses 2-4

Next excuse (They just keep rolling out) **Read 4:10**

“I stutter. I can’t do this. You’ve got the wrong guy, God.”

God answers... read verses 11-12

Next excuse **Read verse 13**

“I hate to bring this up Lord, but I killed a man and I've been eating dust for forty years. I’m getting too old for this. Can't you find someone else?”

God’s getting fed up with these excuses. **Read verses 14-15**

What I want you to see is how God answered every one of Moses’ excuses. He said, “Don’t worry about that. I’ll take care of it for you.”

Here’s the point. God is never going to ask us to do anything that He’s not going to give us the power to do.

Moses was right. He was nobody. He couldn’t speak. He didn’t exactly have a leadership personality. And he was a wanted man back in Egypt. He was right. But God said, “Just be faithful and I’ll do the rest.”

God told Moses to pick up a stick and use it for a staff. The Bible calls that staff *the rod of God*. It was just an old stick. A piece of dead wood lying in the sand but in the hands of God it became the rod of God.

Moses was just a nobody tending sheep in the desert, but in the hands of God Moses became one of the greatest leaders the world has ever known.

Here’s more good news this morning. God’s not sending you into the halls of power somewhere to make demands of some president or king.

But He is calling you to step out and make spiritual changes that will further His kingdom. You say, “I can’t. I’ve tried. I’ve made promises to God before. I’ve had good intentions.”

How many here have had good intentions of making some change in your spiritual life? You've tried to make resolutions. You've tried to make promises to God. You've tried and failed.

Good intentions center on us. This is what I would like to be different about my life. Good intentions are me centered.

God intentions are totally different, they're God centered. This is what God wants to be different about my life, and instead of being based on my own abilities, my own strength, my own resolve, if I've got a God intention, then I can rely fully on God's power to do what God wants me to do.

It's interesting that God told Moses, "Go and I'll be with you. Go and I'll bring this all about. It's not going to happen until you go."

That's how it is for us. We're not going to experience God's Holy Spirit strength in our life till we step out to do what He's called us to do.

So what is it today that you need to trust God to do that you haven't been able to do?

Our purpose statement says, *The purpose of Faith Community Church is to introduce people to Jesus Christ and equip them to become His devoted followers.*

Our goal is the same as God's goal. To equip you to become a devoted follower of Jesus. Sometimes the first step in really following Jesus Christ is to stop making excuses and to take that first step.