

NO MORE EXCUSES

NOVEMBER 13/14

GOD

IS TRYING
TO TELL YOU
SOMETHING

PART 2

EXODUS 3 and 4

A SERMON BY REV. DR. HOWARD-JOHN WESLEY



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Sunday, November 13, 2021

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley

Sermon: Can You Hear Me Now? God Is Trying to Tell You Something
No More Excuses



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CURRICULUM GUIDE



Sermon Summary

In this sermon series, "God is Trying to Tell You Something", we draw close to the men and women who know the experience of God calling their names several times. This morning, in the shadow of Mt. Horeb, we meet Moses, tending the flocks of his father-in-law, Jethro. God has shared his plan to bring the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage with Moses, and Moses is key to the plan. As God makes his will plain to Moses, Moses begins to make excuses, pointing out why he is NOT the one to carry out this plan. There are three excuses on the mind of Moses:

1. *Who am I?:* Hidden underneath this excuse is a deep sense of insecurity. God speaks to Moses' insecurity with a promise of presence.
2. *What if the people won't listen to me?:* Hidden underneath this excuse is a fear of rejection. He follows up the excuse about the people not listening by assuring Moses the right people will listen.
3. *I am a stutterer!:* Hidden underneath this excuse is a worry about his insufficiencies. God responds to Moses' impediments by saying, I am the God who made you that way and I can use you just the way you are.

Today, as we dive into the sermon, each of us must ask ourselves, "do we really want to discern and obey God's will? Or, will our excuses block us?" The sermon ends with Pastor Wesley asking us a question: "excuses aside, do we want to walk in the will of God?"

Key Points

1. Obeying God's will requires both discerning and surrendering to it.
2. When we discern God's will, our answer should mirror Isaiah's response (Isaiah 6:8), "Here am I Lord, send me" and Jesus' response "...not my will but thy will be done" (Luke 22:42).
3. While he was able to discern God's will, Moses' self-doubt prevented him from initially choosing God's plan for his life. This self-doubt leads to feelings of unworthiness, insecurity, fear of rejection, desire for human affirmation, and focus on what was deficient in his life.
4. Though Moses presents several excuses, God responds to each, reminding Moses there are no legitimate excuses because:
 - a. You do not have to be perfect. God's plan for our lives is not based on who we are, but on who God is, and what God can do with, in, and through us.
 - b. You may not be liked by everyone. God has prepared those who will walk with you, and they are sufficient support for the tasks God has given you.
 - c. You may have an impediment. God created and shaped us for every aspect of His glory.

Getting To Know You Questions:

1. What is the funniest excuse you have ever offered for anything? What was the situation? Did the excuse work?
2. In describing his eldest son's driving, Pastor used the colloquial phrase, "Pray for my strength (skrength) in the Lord." Were tried and true phrases like this used at your prior churches? Do you hear these kinds of phrases at Alfred Street? What are some of the phrases that remind you that you are *in the church*?
3. Just before the closing prayer, Pastor ends the sermon with a question "Some say questions are more powerful than answers." What do you think about this statement?

Into The Bible Questions:

1. When Moses begins to lift up excuses, God is patient with him. Then at Exodus 4:14, God's attitude shifts. What does Moses do to elicit God's anger? What do we learn from this?
2. There are occasions in the Bible when God's patience seems to run out or grow thin. But the Bible tells us that God's love for us is everlasting (Jeremiah 31:3). How would you explain to a non-believer that God's patience can run out, but God's love never ends?
3. Pastor reminds us that God's word says, "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (Phil 3:13-14). In this passage, the word forget means, to lose, let go. If we let go of the past, how might that enable us to press toward our future?





Life Application Questions:

1. The conjunction “but” is a part of speech that connects two clauses by negating what comes before and elevating what comes after. Moses responds to God with “but”, negating God’s plan and elevating his insecurity.
 - a. Similar to Moses, have you ever said “but” to God?
 - b. If you have, what did your “but” negate and what did it elevate?
 - c. After reflecting on the prior “but” you offered God, how might you respond after hearing this sermon?
2. Moses asks God, “Who Am I?” God responds not with an answer but with a promise, “I will be with you”.
 - a. What are the promises God makes to us throughout the scriptures?
 - b. While all of the promises are important, which promises of God have resonated most deeply in your life?
3. Is there a difference in asking, do you want to surrender, will you surrender, and what will you surrender? If so, what are the differences?
4. According to the sermon, “... personal insecurities always reveal themselves in seasons of opportunity”.
 - a. Has there been a season in your life when an opportunity existed but the enemy whispered in your ear, “Not You! You are not the one for this assignment.” ?
 - b. What did you do at that moment? How did you respond?
 - c. How did it affect your prayer life?



"Can I Push It?"

1. Pastor's story about his son's driving almost leading to his death reminds us of how fatal blind spots can be. It also reminds us that we all have individual blind spots, and institutional blind spots, too.
 - a. What are some of the blindspots of the modern church and/or its leaders that can cause a wreckage or divergence from the purpose and will of God?
 - b. What are some of the topics, habits, beliefs that can come up to cause a wreckage in the church?
 - c. What can we do to be sure we are individually and collectively aware of, and working to overcome, blind spots?

Activity:

Moses was raised as an Egyptian in an Egyptian house, with Egyptian parents and even an Egyptian name. But after he became an adult, Exodus 2:11-12 says clearly, Moses struck down an Egyptian and buried the body in the sand because Moses saw him beating a Hebrew, one of Moses' people. How did Moses know he was a Hebrew? Why did he see the Israelites as being his people? Read Exodus 2:7-10 to learn how Moses stayed connected to his true self.

After reading Exodus 2:7-10 ask yourself, how has God kept you connected to your true self? Was it a person, an experience, or something your family taught you? Take a note card of any kind (or create a digital note in your mobile device) and write a word of thanks to a person who helped you know your true self. If that person is alive and would receive the note well, please share it with them. If the person is no longer living, tuck the note in your Bible (or store it on your mobile device) and when you come across it, thank God for the one who helped you stay connected to your true self.



Spirit Work:

There is a phrase that goes like this: “God does not call the equipped. God equips the called.” Each of us has been called; sometimes to things grandiose, but more often to things human scale size and particular to our lives.

On a small piece of paper, finish the prayer below and repeat it during your daily prayer time. If you do not have a regular prayer time, post it in your closet, bathroom, or a private place you go each day, and pray it over yourself. Remember that the Bible promises that God is ready to equip you for the work God has given your hands and heart to do (Ephesians 2:10).

God you have called me to _____. Please equip me to go forward to do your will.

Additional Questions for Married Couples:

1. Each of us must ask ourselves, do we really want to discern and obey God's will or will our excuses block us?
2. Moses was a married man (Exodus 2:16-22). In the ancient Near East, a man who received a divine assignment would never be expected to "clear" the assignment with his spouse. But today, as partners seek to follow God's will for their lives, there can be times when the two wills are misaligned. Have you and your partner ever experienced a moment when your individual understanding of God's will for your lives did not align? What did you do? What did you learn?
3. God focuses not on our past mistakes but on our future opportunities. The scripture from Philippians (3:13-14) Pastor quotes about forgetting/letting go of our past might be symbolized by standing on a high bridge, dropping stones into a river and watching them carried away by the current. If you and your spouse could let go of something from your past and watch it carried away forever, never to be thought of again, what would you release? How do you think it would impact your relationship?

Additional Questions for Young Adults:

1. The practice of self-affirmation can lead us to believe we are always enough. The sermon reminds us that we are never enough without God. What happens when you add God into your equation? Does it change your status as enough or not enough for a given situation? How does God's presence in your life shift your understanding of your ability to discern and accept God's will?
2. God focuses not on our past mistakes but on our future opportunities. The scripture from Philippians (3:13-14) Pastor quotes about forgetting/letting go of our past might be symbolized by standing on a high bridge, dropping stones into a river and watching them carried away by the current. If you could let go of something from your past and watch it carried away forever, never to be thought of again, what would you release?

Additional Questions for Parents:

1. At any age, and particularly in adolescence, the need to be liked and accepted as part of the crowd is a primary motivator. Pastor says we all want approval, which can be addictive. What do you think of this? If you agree, how might you help your child understand that gaining approval from peers may not be beneficial.
2. In an age of social media, children have easy access to compare themselves to classmates and acquaintances. Often these comparisons leave children feeling less than.
 - a. How might you help your child see they are God's beloved creation?
 - b. What messages are important to share with your child about how to balance the content received on social media?

Additional Questions for Women:

1. What excuse(s) are you still offering God? What has this sermon touched in you and how might what you heard impact your excuse(s)? How might you pray and act differently regarding your excuses as you move forward?
2. No one can do anything to you that God cannot undo. Do you believe God can undo all things, repair all experiences? Why or why not? What would you like God to undo or repair in your life? Will you share this desire with God? Why or why not?

Additional Questions for Men:

1. Pastor says, the enemy's greatest weapon to lead us outside of the will of God is the applause of other people. Has the desire for affirmation or applause ever led you away from God? If so, what happened? Was there wisdom you gained that helped?
2. The Bible is full of stories of men who hesitate before accepting God's call. Jeremiah thought he was too young (Jeremiah 1). Isaiah thought he was too unclean (Isaiah 6). Gideon was down in a hole, hiding (Judges 6). Even when we hear God's voice, it may still be hard to say yes. Have you ever struggled to say yes to God? What were the obstacles? Did you overcome them? If so, how?
3. Did you have a man/men in your life who modeled the willingness to follow God's will? What did you learn from him/them?

This Week's Sermon Biblical References

1. Please remember to read all of Exodus Chapters 3 and 4.
2. Forgetting what is behind and pressing toward our future.
Phil 3:12-14
3. Ten Plagues of Egypt
The Ten Plagues