

Excuses

So he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of others; but God knows your hearts..." Luke 16: 15

The elementary school principal was looking out his office window after school when he noticed that little Johnny didn't get on the bus to go home. He just sat there on a bench looking at his report card. The principal walked outside and took a look for himself. "What's your excuse for these bad grades?" Little Johnny said, "If I had an excuse, I would have gone home."

That night Little Johnny's dad didn't come home, didn't phone, didn't let anyone know where he was. He'd gone out with the guys after work, and so the next morning he walks into the kitchen at breakfast time and says to Little Johnny's mom, "Great news, hon! I escaped! I hope you didn't pay the ransom."

Saturday the man next door wanted to borrow the lawnmower. Little Johnny's mom refused. "My husband is going to need it this afternoon to wash my car." The neighbor said, "You don't wash a car with a lawnmower." The mom answered, "Maybe, but if I don't want to lend you my lawnmower, one excuse is as good as another."

Maybe one excuse is as good as another if you don't want to do something, but what excuse do we give God for not doing what we ought? Not doing what we know is right? Not doing what our faith requires of us? Not taking the next step of faith? What excuse do we give to the one who *"knows our hearts."* (above)

Perhaps we've used the word "excuse" so often through the years that we hardly think about the seriousness attached. Excuses can require what seem to be such tiny fibs, and some of us got started in elementary school. "The dog ate my homework." But if we were procrastinators, we needed an excuse every time we were late getting in an assignment. "My grandmother died. I had to go to the funeral." Reliance on tiny fibs can grow like topsy.

As adults we give excuses to the dental hygienist for why we haven't flossed since seeing her the last time and to the I.R.S. agent for why we don't have any receipts for our expenses. The search for a believable reason for our behavior, or lack thereof, can grow tiny fibs into whoppers.

But as adults we seem to give more and more excuses to ourselves. "I didn't exercise today because _____." (Fill in the blank.) Or "I didn't vote today because _____." Or "I didn't check on the elderly lady down the street because _____." Or "I was going to get so much done today, but I didn't because _____."

And what are some of the synonyms for an excuse? Alibi. An excuse is an alibi, and what sort of people most often need an alibi? Guilty people...Exemption. An excuse is saying we are exempt from a duty laid upon others, a duty dodger...Exoneration. An excuse exonerates us of any blame for not doing the expected. Somehow, all charges were dropped...Justification. An excuse justifies our behavior, but as the scripture above says, only with others. Not with God.

Certainly, giving excuses to others is valid at times. Things happen beyond our control. An excuse is called for. God, though, already knows why we didn't show up or why we did what we shouldn't have done. We don't need an excuse with God. We need forgiveness and the resolve to do the right thing next time. - DJ

