

What's Your Excuse?

Benjamin Franklin once said, “He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else.” The difference between a reason and an excuse is simply that a reason explains why things are the way they are, while an excuse does the same but puts the blame on something or someone else not presently defensible. Excuses are always late, lame and limitless. In today's Templates of Truth, we hear Jeremiah's excuses in answering the call of God on his life, and they compel us to evaluate our own excuses in doing the same.

God spoke to the prophet Jeremiah and declared – *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* (Jeremiah 1:5). This verse speaks first of all about God's view as to when life begins – not at the point of conception but before conception! The will, plan and purpose for each individual human life is established by God before sperm and egg unite, and while the fetus is growing in the womb, God's plan is already materializing. To abort a fetus at any stage of development is to interrupt and annihilate that sovereign plan. God uses this insight to undergird the significance of His call on Jeremiah's life to serve Him as a prophet to His people.

Immediately, Jeremiah offers excuses to God – *Behold, I do not know how to speak...I am a youth* (Jeremiah 1:6). Numerous studies over the decades reveal that the number one fear among American adults is speaking in public. We fear public speaking more than we fear death! Jeremiah must not have seen himself as one of the smooth orators to which he compared himself, and he threw in the young & inexperienced factor as further indication of his lack of qualifications. What did God say to these objections? – *Do not say...* (1:7). In other words, God told Jeremiah He didn't want to hear his lame excuses. In spite of whatever limitations Jeremiah placed on himself, God determined – *everywhere I send you, you shall go, and all that I command you, you shall speak* (1:7). When God gives us a directive, he simply wants our obedient cooperation. He is not concerned with our ability; only our availability.

So, what excuses might you be throwing up to God in response to His call on your life? Don't say, “God doesn't have a call on my life,” because God calls and equips each believer for ministry service. While Jeremiah squawked that he was too young, some might say they are too old. As long as you are walking or breathing, God still expects you to be actively engaged in ministry service. Some use their lack of talent, skills or education as their excuse for sitting on the side lines. News Flash – God doesn't need degrees and PhDs for a role in Kingdom service. If you think you just don't have the time, God simply responds, “Rearrange your priorities.” You might be one of these who think you have to be perfect in order to serve God, or because there are past failures in your life you have become disqualified and exempt from ministry service. First off, you will never be good enough to serve God perfectly and any past failures for which you have confessed & repented of, they are no longer relevant to the issue. God has forgiven and forgotten them. Sounds like we've pretty much run out of excuses. But there might be a reason. God informed Jeremiah that when he spoke the message of God to

the people, *they will fight against you* (1:19). Nothing like being told on the front end that you will not be voted Most Popular Prophet of the Year. One of the reasons we refuse be involved in the work God called us to do is because it requires more of us than we want to give God. We don't like what He offers. It is not big enough, glamorous enough, doesn't pay enough money or costs too much money. We would rather do something else somewhere else, or we simply would rather not have to do anything at all! Whether you label that a reason or an excuse, God still responds, "I don't want to hear it!" All God wants to hear from us is, "Yes, Lord!"

Jeremiah was just an ordinary man that God wanted to use for an extraordinary purpose. The same applies to you and me. We may be comfortable in life, but we will never be fully satisfied, happy and fulfilled until we are living in the very center of God's will, plan and purpose for our life. If you are not engaged in ministry service for God and His church, you are NOT living in the center of God's will! In fact, you are walking in rebellious disobedience. That may be the very reason you are not enjoying the blessings and favor of God. Divine deployment has been activated. We are to report for duty. If you haven't made it yet, what is your excuse...because you have no reason.

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.

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