



Exodus Study Questions

Week 4

Excuses, excuses. Some are difficult to spot, but they usually come into focus with time. He's afraid of failure so he rationalizes why he shouldn't even try. She simply doesn't want to do something—continue on in a relationship, help out a neighbor, take on a project—so she concocts a sophisticated explanation of why it simply wouldn't work. Not all excuses are equal, but we know they're a common tool to avoid difficult or unwelcome circumstances.

Main Text: Exodus 4:1-31

Connect

1. What are some common excuses you've heard (from other people, of course)?
2. Share a story about a time when you used an excuse. What was your motivation?
3. What did you find most significant from this week's sermon?

Understand

1. Chapter 4 begins in the middle of the "burning bush" dialogue between the LORD (revealed as "I AM") and Moses. Skim back over Exodus 3, especially verses 7-22. How do these verses lead into the first verses of chapter 4?
2. Read the first 17 verses of chapter 4. Note the questions Moses asks and the objections he makes, going back to 3:11 and 3:13, and then here in 4:1, and 4:10. How reasonable do Moses' questions or objections sound to you? How does the LORD respond to each?
3. Regardless of how we might judge Moses' previous questions and concerns, his final objection in verse 13 is as clear as it gets—"Oh, my Lord, please send someone else." Verse 14 says that "the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses," but what else can we observe about the LORD from His response to Moses' plea in verses 14-17?
4. Read verses 18-31. Verses 21-23 state that the LORD "will harden [Pharaoh's] heart, so that he will not let the people go." This is a repeated idea that we'll talk more about next week,¹ but how could it relate to what we've already seen back in chapter 3, verses 19-20?

5. EXTRA CREDIT! Verses 24-26 describe a perplexing scene that raises more questions than it answers.² We should focus on what *is* most clear: that the LORD requires obedience from His people (see Gen 17:1-14 for the background) and not only from Pharaoh. How are the stakes similar for both Pharaoh and Moses as you read verses 22-26?

Apply

1. There can be a fine line between a question for God that's motivated by a genuine concern and one that is a stall tactic or excuse to keep from obeying God's will. Is there presently, or has there been, an area of your life where you have tried to get out of something God was calling you to do?
2. One clear message from this passage is that God equips you for what He calls you to. How has God equipped you for something He called you to do?
3. God told Moses in 3:18 that the elders of Israel would listen to him, yet chapter 4 begins with Moses expressing his doubt. The chapter ends, not surprisingly, with affirmation that things happened exactly as God said they would. Can you relate to the kind of doubt Moses experienced between God's promise and the fulfillment of it?
4. Obedience to God is a life-or-death matter in this chapter. It's a life-or-death matter in all of the Bible, as well! While this can seem extreme, how could it also help stir up a sense of gratitude in our hearts for the costly (and perfectly obedient) life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Endnotes:

1. Chapters 4-14 contain a number of expressions about God hardening Pharaoh's heart, Pharaoh hardening his own heart, and more generic statements about Pharaoh's heart becoming hard, or stubborn. We'll look at these more closely next week.
2. For example, (1) Who is "him"? No proper male names are actually mentioned in these verses in the original Hebrew text even though some English translations have attempted to clarify who they are. (2) How should we understand Zipporah's strange actions? (3) What does "a bridegroom of blood" mean? These are all good questions, but their potential answers require extensive homework and are beyond the scope of this guide! (Excuses, excuses!)