

Weaving the Word

What's Your Excuse?

January 22, 2017

Welcome to where we come to identify our excuses and stop making 'em!

Today's question is simple: **What's your excuse?**



I grew up in the youth house; that's me on the right. We moved in when I was two. I remember going through a brief phase where I liked to poo in the backyard. Dad said, if I ever did it again, *I'd get what-for!* Long story short: *I dooed it again.*

Dad took me outside and asked me who did it; and I said, "A dog," and he said, "What kind of dog?" And it hit me that our backyard was *fenced in too high* for a dog!



But, being quick on my feet, I neatly replied, "A *circus dog.*" I can remember thinking: "*Yeah, that makes that make sense!*" Yet, *somehow* dad saw right through it.

No matter *what* the excuse, if it's a *dishonest* excuse ... it's a *circus dog!* So, what's *your* excuse? **It might make sense to you; but, every dishonest excuse to our Dad is just dumb.**

Speaking of which ...

When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. **[The Sea of Galilee]** Then **a teacher of the law** **[Uh-oh, he's one of those guys]** came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "**Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.**" **["Okay ... whatever that means; so ... you want me to follow?"]** **Another disciple** **[Oh, that teacher of the law was a disciple. So, he isn't one of those guys; he's one of His guys. Now, this next disciple]** said to him, "**Lord, first let me go and bury my father.**" But Jesus told him, **["First before what? Did I miss the first half of that?" Actually, that's not what He said; Jesus told him:]** "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead." Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. – Matthew 8:18-23 NIV

Matthew does two significant, but often disregarded, things by recording this story in such a strange way: first and foremost, **he forces us to choose between making it make sense, and not.** Sadly, most believers choose the *latter*.

Why do we settle for confusion rather than asking and seeking and finding? That's how His sheep follow His voice in His Word. Know this: if we don't ask, we guarantee no answer: in His Word; in this world; in our life; our family; our future; our faith.

We make excuses *not to follow* to find our answers. Or worse, we answer our questions with assumptions, and believe we *have*.

Since the first guy says, “I will follow you wherever you go”, we *assume* the second guy is saying, “*Me too, but ...*” “first let me go and bury my father”. But, he’s *not*. Just the *opposite*! If you were there, you’d know that Jesus told him to follow, and he’s making an *excuse not to*. If you were there ... or, if you tie in Luke’s floating account.



The second thing Matthew does is to categorically anchor this between Jesus’ “orders to cross” the lake, and getting “into the boat”, which places it in Capernaum, at sunset, on Jesus’ very big day, on His walk to the dock, after sharing His private parables; which He had shared, privately, when ...

... he left the crowd [on the shore] and went into the house. When he was alone, His disciples the Twelve and the others around him came to him and asked him about the parables. – Matthew 13:36; Mark 4:10 NIV



Who are the “others”? The 72 disciples Luke refers to, in his “*walk-to-the-dock*” story, (Lk 10:1) that Jesus sends out the following day.

[But] *That* day When Jesus had finished *these* parables, when *evening came*, he moved on from there. [It happened this way, as Matthew records in a floating passage that’s easily woven in:] When Jesus saw the crowd around him, he said to his disciples, [all 80+] “Let us go over to the other side.” he gave *orders* to cross to the other side of the lake. [Much to their surprise] – Matthew 13:53, 8:18; Mark 4:35 NIV

One of the reasons for “floating” stories in the Gospels is what’s called, “type-scenes”. In a **type-scene**, the author puts two separate events side-by-side to help us see the contrast. Mathew uses a type-scene, of the Sabbath sunset after Jesus heals Peter’s mother-in-law, to contrast *this sunset* on Jesus’ big day.

When evening came, [at Peter’s] many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and **he drove out the spirits** with a word and **healed all the sick**. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.” [This is where this type-scene account, at Peter’s house, ends] **When** [de: but; yet; also; and; nevertheless] Jesus **saw the crowd around him**, [on the Sabbath, at sunset, in Capernaum] he gave orders to cross to the other side of the lake. – Matthew 8:16-18 NIV



Two Sabbaths. Two sunsets. Two crowds. In the first, He **heals everyone; in the second, no one. Why?** “Make this make sense!” **At Peter’s, Jesus offered healing after the Sabbath, at sunset.** But, at Capernaum, He offered it **during the Sabbath**; but, the synagogue ruler said: “*There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath.*” (Lk 13:14)



And many, if not most, obeyed the religious rulers. So now, at sunset, here comes everyone who disregarded *Jesus' authority*, either unaware or unconcerned how their delay to respond is an indictment against Him. Plus, one of the usurping rulers, Jairus, whose daughter is dying at home, will be coming with that offending sunset crowd.



So, when He saw them, Jesus: **"gave orders [keleuō: to command, esp. militarily] to cross to the other side."**

We don't dictate to Jesus when or where we'll follow. He's in command. We can only either obey or make excuses.

And, when He commands, do you obey or delay and defy?

Then As they were walking along the road, [from the house to the boats; to cross the Sea (that's a lake) when *nobody* sets sail, due to the dangerous evening winds that drop down from snowy Mt Hermon into the hot valley that funnels 'em onto the Sea of Galilee] a man a **teacher of the law** [who was one of His disciples] came to him and said, to him, "Teacher, I will follow you **wherever you go.**" [The two words translated, "wherever" do not mean, "all the places you may go," but, "wherever it is you're going right now," which, he, being familiar with what the religious upper class do and don't do, assumes Jesus is getting away from the needy for some "me" time, to recline, as Kings and religious rulers do] Jesus replied, "**Foxes have holes** ["Fox" is a nickname He uses for King Herod, (Lk 13:32)] and **birds of the air have nests**, ["Birds of the air" is a nickname He used that day for religious rulers in league with the devil, who snatch away the Truth He's sowing, from those who have no understanding (like *this* teacher-disciple) (Mt 13:4, 19; Mk 4:4, 15; Lk 8:5, 12)] but the Son of Man has no place to **lay** [*klinō: sprawl out and recline*] his head." [Which He demonstrates shortly after, by laying His head on a cushion, cramped uncomfortably in the stern of the boat, to grab some rest. (Mk 4:38) "So, *do follow*; but know, and don't assume you know, *who* you're following and *how* I operate"] He said to another man, **Another disciple** [*who was shrinking back*] "Follow me." But the man replied [with the *best excuse* that culture had to offer] "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." But Jesus told him, "Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead." [By the way, *we're dead*. That's why He came to *bring life*, and to lead us *into life*] but you **go and proclaim the kingdom of God.**" ["**Stop settling for burying those you love; and, lead 'em to life!**" The following day, Jesus sends out His 72, to *go and proclaim the kingdom*] Still another [*disciple, who was ready to go, and for the right reason*] said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family." [Now, seeing Jesus' *urgency*, and this man's *willingness* to go, it makes me think his family is close by. Perhaps in the crowd, as Jesus' mother and brothers are. "*This'll just take a second*"] Jesus replied, [*as He continues to march 80+ disciples to the boats*] "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." **Eyes straight, feet forward, or you'll veer off course** **After this** [the following day] **the Lord appointed seventy-two others** [There's the "others" who were with the Twelve at His headquarters, hearing His private parables, and now obeying His orders to walk to the dock] and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go [as He urged that second, hesitant, disciple, to come and do].

So Then **Leaving the crowd behind**, [to realize that **by putting off His call, they missed their opportunity**] **he got into the boat and they took him along, just as he was** [No packing. No preparing. Without warning] **his disciples followed him**. [This appears to include that first disciple, who apparently realized that **following Jesus isn't about our own peace and comfort**. And, that second disciple, who apparently realized that **no excuse is greater than following Jesus**] **they got into a boat and set out**. [Which appears to include that last disciple (that only Luke mentions), who apparently realized that **seemingly good and harmless little things can cause us to miss out on big things**] **There were also other boats with him** [to accommodate the *other disciples with Him*]. – Matthew 8:19-23; Mark 4:36; Luke 9:57-10:1, 8:22 NIV

These three disciples *almost* missed the boat.



The first guy says: “I’ll follow you to wherever we’ll do what I assume we’re doing.” But, **you can’t count the cost unless you comprehend the mission**. He’s following what he *assumes* Jesus is doing without bothering asking if He’s actually doing what he assumes He’s doing.

So, **are you following Jesus, or an assumption about Jesus?** “How do I know?” Ask. Seek. Find.

The second guy says: “**I can’t follow because, obviously, something is more pressing.**” He shrinks back, even when asked point blank, because **he assumes that some things justifiably take priority over following**. But, an excuse is an excuse is an excuse. Now, **it may be so important (a death, your health, work, family, or even fear), that it doesn’t feel like an excuse. But, if it keeps you from obeying Him in any way ... it’s a “circus dog”**.



The last guy says: “I’ll follow you anywhere you lead me ... **in just one second.**” **Are the little things distracting you from the big things?** He assumes he can fit this in; but, only because he has no idea how quickly Jesus needs ‘em to get in those boats. *Or, why!*

Sometimes the smallest things are the biggest obstacles.



There’s a reason Jesus *orders* them into those boats. There’s no time to lose! Jairus is coming; and, Jesus is arranging his life-altering lesson. And, that perfect storm is coming, that’ll allow these disciples to experience His power, which helps prepare ‘em to proclaim His full authority the following day.

All three of these disciples, on this walk to the dock, had one thing in common: **they weren’t really following ... until they set sail with their Commander.**

So, don’t you be making excuses, or, you might be missing the boat.