

Excuses, Excuses: God's Calling and the Kingdom of God

Rich Nathan
February 1-2, 2014
Vineyard Core Series
Exodus 3 and 4

I want to speak today about excuses; you know, the reasons we give to explain why we're not going to do what somebody else wants us to do, or the reasons we give to explain a mistake or bad behavior. Police officers hear the funniest excuses for why people were speeding. Here are some actual excuses people gave when they were pulled over for speeding:

Oh, I thought the sign I-95 met the speed limit...glad you didn't catch me over on SR 210 earlier.

One police officer said:

I stopped a guy for doing 71 in a 50mph zone because he wanted to get to McDonald's before the breakfast menu ended.

How about this one?

I stopped a guy for going 54 in a 45 mph zone. He told me that his dyslexia was acting up again.

Here's one that I love:

I stopped a lady who was crying when I walked up. I asked what the problem was. She said she had gone shopping for the first time after having a baby and nothing fit right. I gave her her license back and slowly backed away. I knew that nothing good was going to come from this!

Here are some great excuses from parents (with their original spellings) regarding why their child missed school. Listen to some of these.

My son is under a doctor's care and should not take gym today. Please execute him.

How about this one?

Please excuse Lisa for being absent. She was sick and I had her shot.

Or this:

Dear School: Please excuse John being absent on January 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd and also 33rd.

I love this one:

Please excuse Ray Friday from school. He has very loose vowels.

Or this:

Please excuse Johnny from being absent yesterday. He had (diahre) (dyrea) (direathe) the runs [words in parentheses were crossed out].

Diarrhea is a hard word to spell. Here is my favorite excuse of all:

Please excuse Jennifer from missing school yesterday. We forgot to get the Sunday paper off the porch, and when we found it Monday, we thought it was Sunday.

I asked our staff to share with me actual excuses they've heard from people regarding why individuals were unable to serve in the church, or connect with one of our small groups. In one day, I had sent to me 167 different excuses that our staff has heard. Here are some of the excuses:

- *It's too cold outside.*
- *I don't feel like it.*
- *I don't come from a lineage of Christians at Vineyard Columbus.*
- *I don't have time now because I'm married.*
- *I don't have time now because I'm expecting a baby.*
- *I don't have time now because my child is a senior in High School.*
- *I don't have time because I have small kids.*
- *I don't have time because I just got married and I need to think about my wife now.*
- *I don't have time because our kids have so many sports.*
- *I don't have time because the Buckeyes are playing.*
- *I don't have time because I have a dog.*
- *I can't because I don't speak in tongues.*
- *I can't because it might snow.*
- *I thought we were going to cancel because it was raining.*

Here is a really honest excuse:

I'm lazy. Once I work or do what I want to do during the day, I just don't want to go back out.

And then, of course, there are these excuses:

- *I'm too young.*
- *I'm too old.*
- *I'm divorced.*
- *I'm single.*

Today we're going to look at the life of one of the most famous people in the Bible, a man named Moses, and the encounter Moses had at the Burning Bush. What some of you may be surprised at is that Moses was not just a great biblical hero, but he was a world champion excuse maker. When God called Moses to go to Pharaoh and to tell Pharaoh to, "Let my people go," Moses came up with excuse after excuse regarding why he could not do what God called him to do.

During this month I've been doing a series that I've titled Vineyard Core. I've been talking about the key ingredients that are necessary to produce a thriving Christian life.

Picture of the Pentagon with worship at the bottom, the kingdom of God in the middle, community on one side, discipleship on the other, stewardship and spiritual gifts on the top. And then add this week "our calling and mission."

Today I will be talking about our calling and mission. I've called today's talk, "Excuses, Excuses: God's Calling and the Kingdom of God."

Exodus 3:1–6 (NIV)

3 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. 3 So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."

4 When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"
And Moses said, "Here I am."

5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." 6 Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

Here is what we read in v.4:

Exodus 3:4 (NIV)

4 When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"
And Moses said, "Here I am."

The first call is a call to God

You know, when Christians use the term "call" almost always we use it to speak about a call to some kind of paid ministry. Folks will say, "I remember as a teenager feeling God call me to be a pastor, to become a priest, to be a missionary." In popular Christian language, calling is almost always associated with what people call full-time Christian service. There has been in Christianity this unfortunate dualism. Some people are called to a spiritual life; others to secular work. This dualism of higher vs. lower, sacred vs. secular has a long history in the Christian church to a man named Eusebius, who was the Bishop of Caesarea, and who was the principle historian of the early church. A lot of what we know about the first few centuries of the church comes from Eusebius.

But Eusebius wrote that Christ gave us two ways of life – one is the perfect life; the other is the permitted life. The perfect life is the life of spiritual calling. It is reserved for priests, monks, and nuns. The permitted life is the secular life. It is dedicated to various tasks like being in government, or farming, or business, and raising families. So answering the call became a common way to talk about becoming a priest or a nun.

The Protestant Reformation began to break down this dualism. Martin Luther wrote:

The works of monks and priests, however holy and arduous they be, do not differ one whit in the sight of God from the works of the laborer in the field, or the woman going about her household tasks, but all works are measured before God by faith alone...Indeed, the housework of a manservant, or a maidservant is often more acceptable to God than all the fastings and other works of a monk or priest, because the monk or priest lacks faith.

Luther began to breakdown this high/lower, sacred/secular, perfect life/permitted life view of call.

The fact is that every human being has multiple callings. In my own life, I am called by God to be a pastor, to be a husband, to be a father, to be a grandfather, to be a friend, a neighbor, citizen, a writer, and so on. And all of you have multiple callings from God. And your callings whether they involve your activity in the church, or your activity in the world are not measured by higher and lower, or sacred and secular. The only issue is whether we are going to be faithful to God and the tasks he's called us to.

Nevertheless, whether we're talking about our job, or our ministry, or our family, our

politics, our relationships – none of these things are big enough to provide us with ultimate meaning in life. These are all secondary callings. Your first calling, as a human being, your primary calling is a call to relationship with God. Before all the tasks and all the roles you have, you and I are like Moses called into relationship with God. So often secondary callings swallow up this primary calling. We're called first of all not to do something, or to go somewhere. We're called, first of all, to someone.

The problems with the restlessness that is in so many of our lives today is that people are looking to their relationships in marriage, or dating, they're looking to their careers, their families, their friends, their secondary callings for what can only be found in their primary calling – a calling to relationship with God.

Back in the 1960's there was a woman named Peggy Lee, who sang a song called "Is That All There Is?" In the 1980's the band U2 sang "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For." 1600 years ago the great St. Augustine wrote:

Our hearts are restless until they rest in you, God.

You and I were made for God. And it really doesn't matter how happy our marriages are, how happy our families are, how great a job we have, how much money we're making, how great our homes are, we all experience a restlessness, if we don't respond to our primary calling to God.

God calls Moses first to an encounter with himself at the Burning Bush. And this pattern of first being called to God and then secondarily to a task is repeated throughout the Bible. The prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 6 is in the Temple. He first has an encounter with God. He first sees God and then, only after that, we read these words:

Isaiah 6:8 (NIV)

8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"

And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

The same thing is true in the New Testament. Here is what we read about Jesus' calling of the twelve apostles.

Mark 3:14 (NIV)

14 He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach

First called to Christ, a relationship with him, and then to the task Christ has for us. You see this same order when the Apostle Paul was converted on the road to Damascus in Acts 22:

Acts 22:6–10 (NIV)

6 “About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. 7 I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?’

8 “ ‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked.

“ ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied. 9 My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.

10 “ ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ I asked.

“ ‘Get up,’ the Lord said, ‘and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.’

You know, we almost always reverse these questions. We almost always put the cart before the horse. The preoccupying question of most Christians, especially of Christians who are young adults, is the question: What shall I do, Lord? At the top of the list of the preoccupying questions for many Christians is: What is God’s will for my life? Does God want me to marry, or not? Does he want me to date so and so, or break up? Where does God want me to go to college? Should I take this job? Should I move out of this city? Is God calling me to consider pastoring? Does God want me to lead a group? Does God want me to serve in Children’s Ministry, or in our food pantries, or to host a small group, or to work with immigrants?

It is not that these questions are unimportant, it is just that these questions are secondary questions. Your first call is to know God intimately. And until you do that, you are going to feel restless and dissatisfied in all of your secondary callings.

Let me tell you a story. Arthur Burns was the Chairman of the Federal Reserve and our Ambassador to West Germany. He was a counselor to many presidents. Arthur Burns was a man, who when he spoke, people listened and presidents listened. Arthur Burns was Jewish. When he began attending an informal White House group for prayer and fellowship in the 1970’s, the other people in the room treated him with great respect, but they didn’t exactly know how to engage him. And so when folks took different turns in praying at the end of their meetings, they used to skip Arthur Burns, out of respect for him. They thought he might be uncomfortable in praying out loud with a bunch of Christians.

Well, one week the group was led by a newcomer, who didn’t know Arthur Burns. At the end of the meeting, the newcomer turned to Arthur Burns and asked him to close the time with a prayer. Some of the old timers looked at one another. They didn’t know what Arthur Burns would do.

Without missing a beat, Burns did what that group of folks did. He reached his hands out and grabbed the hands of the persons on his left and right and he prayed this way. He said:

Lord, I pray that you would bring Jews to know Jesus Christ. I pray that you would bring Muslims to know Jesus Christ. Finally, Lord, I pray that you would bring Christians to know Jesus Christ. Amen.

That prayer became legendary in Washington. Arthur Burns knew that even people who called themselves Christians had not fulfilled their primary calling of knowing God through Jesus Christ in any personal, or intimate way.

Let me ask you a question: Have you fulfilled your primary calling to know God? Are you fulfilling your primary calling? Do you know Christ? Do you know him personally? Are you really trying on a daily basis to respond to Jesus Christ in your life? Before you are doing everything else, are you responding to him? Do you know him? Your first call is to God.

I want you to note when Moses encounters God.

When do we encounter God?

Exodus 3:1–2 (NIV)

3 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.

God broke a 40 year silence on the day we read about here in Exodus 3. He didn't give Moses any warning. He didn't say, "Hey, Moses, get ready. I'm going to speak to you on such and such a day. I'm going to encounter you." It was a day like any other day. Moses was just doing what Moses did, tending his sheep, and then he had an encounter with God.

Has this ever happened to you? You are just doing what you normally do, and you have this wave come over you of feeling that there is something more going on here than just your normal activity? Maybe you hold an infant; maybe it is your baby; your grandchild. You pick up the baby and look into her eyes and you have this overwhelming feeling of gratitude to someone. You say, "Where did that come from?"

You are walking along the beach and you are so flooded with peace and contentment, so out of proportion that you feel like it is not just being at a pleasant place, but that you are actually encountering someone who is giving you peace.

You wake up in the morning having had a dream that is so profound, so different than what normally happens. You say, “I feel like Christ was trying to talk to me through my dreams.”

When do we encounter God? Moses encountered God on an ordinary day through an ordinary bush.

Maybe the encounter is through a really hard, unexpected blow – a tragedy, an accident, a betrayal, a loss, or a divorce that happened to you or someone you love.

Now, listen. We miss this in the English, but you can pick it up in the original Hebrew. The writer is engaged in a little word play in the original Hebrew. The Hebrew word for “bush” is:

Bush = Sneh

Now, the bush was right near a mountain called Mt. Sinai.

Mountain = Sinai

In Hebrew the bush has exactly the same consonant as the mountain.

Sneh = Sinai

I think the writer is trying to tell us something here. That any ordinary bush, any ordinary thing can be a place of encounter with God. An ordinary bush can be Mt. Sinai, the place where we can meet God. You can meet God in your bedroom, your study, your car on the way to work can a place of encounter where you meet God; so can a church service, a walk in the woods, your workplace, your school.

You might say, “Well, that’s nice to hear that I can encounter God anywhere on an ordinary day through any ordinary bush, but how do we encounter God?”

How do we encounter God?

Let’s look at Exodus 3.2-4:

Exodus 3:2–4 (NIV)

2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. 3 So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.”

4 When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"
And Moses said, "Here I am."

I like the way the King James Version of the Bible puts this best. The old King James Version says this in v.3:

And Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight why the bush is not burnt."

God is regularly speaking. He is regularly available to you and me in the ordinary places and situations of life. But we've got to, like Moses, turn aside; we've got to get off the road that we're going on and pay attention.

The current Pope is a Jesuit. And the Jesuits frequently say that to find God, to encounter God is a matter of noticing where God is already active in your life. The problem is that God is showing up over and over and we just go by bushes that are burning. God is working in your everyday life. The key is noticing.

When I read over the 167 excuses that our pastors said they've heard from individuals regarding why folks say they can't serve, or can't participate in a small group, so many of the excuses had to do with "I'm too busy." Friends, I say this with all affection, but I really believe in the 21st century that the greatest barrier to us meeting God is not that God has stopped talking, or that God has gone AWOL. It is simply that we are too preoccupied, too busy, too overloaded. Shut off the radio in the car. Turn off your FB page. Turn off the television and pay attention. Take five minutes as you drive to work and thank God for the blessings in your life, the people who make your life work, the good things that are going on. Take five minutes to count your blessings. Take a few minutes to review your day. What might God be saying to you through your conversation, through an experience.

Our first call is a call to God. That's your primary call. The second call is a call to a task.

The second call: A call to a task

Exodus 3:7–9 (NIV)

7 The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them.

I love what we learn about God here.

Exodus 3:7-8 (NIV)

7 The LORD said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.

8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.

Those of you who are suffering right now; those of you who have a family member, who is suffering – maybe you or a family member have a severe medical condition, maybe you’re out of work, maybe you are struggling with a child, or in your marriage, or in a relationship, or your loved one is facing a trial. Is this the way you think about God? Do you say to yourself when you face difficulty, the God who revealed himself in the Bible, the God who visited this planet in Jesus Christ, the God that I believe in, the God that I have bet my life on and given my life to, the God that I pray to during my trials, my God sees, my God hears, my God is concerned, my God comes down. The cries of people reach up to God.

Friends, if you are going through something, listen to me. God is touched by your pain. One philosopher said:

The tears of God is the meaning of history.

God sees, hears and is concerned and he comes down.

Here is the call in v. 10:

Exodus 3:10 (NIV)

10 So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

God is calling Moses to a task – to go to Pharaoh and to bring the Israelites out of Egypt.

Now, listen, when God calls us to a particular task, he is not calling us to take a multiple choice exam. He is not saying, “Among the options that I give you, here is A-B-C-D.” God’s call is not a multiple choice test. God’s call is not an invitation to discussion. “Well, that’s an interesting idea that you have, God, concerning me serving in a particular area, concerning something you want me to do, concerning a certain relationship, or my money. That’s a great idea. Let’s talk about it and see if we can brainstorm other options.

God calls – first to himself, and then to a task. And Moses, like the rest of us, makes excuses regarding why he can't do what God called him to do. In Exodus 3 and 4, Moses gives God five excuses. I'm just going to quickly tick off four of them because of the time.

God calls Moses to go to Pharaoh and to deliver the Israelites out of Egypt. Here is Moses' first excuse:

I am not qualified

Exodus 3:11 (NIV)

11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

Who am I? Why did he say this? God, I'm not able to do what you want me to do. Who am I? Maybe Moses thought back to his past failure when he was in Egypt 40 years before. Maybe he thought about his age; he was 80 years old when God called him. Maybe he thought that the task was too great; how could I possibly persuade the most powerful ruler in the world to release all of his slaves.

You know, when I asked the pastors to send me the excuses that people make regarding why they are not able to serve in some way in this church, even though they are part of the church, or why folks say that they can't go to a small group, next to "I'm too busy," the excuse the came up the most had to do with some version of "I am damaged goods." I'm divorced. If you knew my history. I'm not perfect. I've got issues. I'm not qualified.

Friends, one of the blessings of reading through the whole Bible, and I try to do this most years – to read through the entire Bible at least once over the course of a year – one of the blessing is to see the people who God calls. They're all damaged goods. They are all people who you and I probably wouldn't select. Father Abraham? He was a big liar over and over again. He lied to save his own skin. Yet, Abraham became known as a friend of God.

Jacob? He was a chiseler, a cheat. And yet God changed Jacob's name to Israel. He became an overcomer.

Rahab? She was a prostitute. And yet, her faith is celebrated in the New Testament.

Some people dropped out of ministry. They were quitters. They ran away, folks like Jonah in the Old Testament, and John Mark in the New Testament, yet God used them all. And God will use you. And God will use me even though I am damaged goods.

What is the answer to your sense of not being qualified, of being inadequate. Look at God's response.

And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

I want you to underline that phrase in your Bible: "I will be with you." Clearly, God says, it is not who you are. What matters in my calling is who I am. "I will be with you." This is God's answer for every task he calls you to. "I will be with you." This is God's answer to your excuses, "I will be with you." This is God's answer to the reluctant leader. "I will be with you." This is God's word for the Jews in Haggai's day, who didn't feel they could ever rebuild the destroyed Temple. God sent the prophet Haggai with one simple message: "I am with you," declares the Lord.

After Jesus announces to us his Great Commission, he's going to send each of us out throughout the world to make disciples of every nation, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything he has commanded us, our natural reaction is, "how?" How in the world could missions happen? How could we possibly bring the Muslim world into followership to Jesus Christ? How can my Muslim neighbor, or my Jewish neighbor, or my gay colleague who has had such a horrible experience of church, how could people around me who don't know God ever come to embrace Jesus as their Lord? When Jesus presents to us this monumental task of bringing the world into submission to him, of course we immediately confront our own inadequacies. How? With me being what I am, Lord, and with the world being what it is, and with Satan being what he is, how can we spread your kingdom?

And Jesus says, "Here is my answer. Matthew 28:20:"

Matthew 28:20

...And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (NIV)

You see, serving in some task that God may be calling you to is not a matter of who you are, it is a matter of growing in your faith regarding who God is. And this wonderful God is with you.

Let's look at excuse #2:

I don't have all the answers

Exodus 3:13 (NIV)

13 Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

Moses is saying here, "I can't be your spokesman; I don't have all the answers. When people start firing questions at me, I won't know what to say." Before we look at God's response, doesn't this have a familiar ring to it? Lord, I can't possibly open my mouth and share my faith with someone at work, or with my roommate at school because they will start firing questions at me and I just don't know the answers. Well, what about all the suffering in the world? If you say God is good, what about all the suffering? What about all the failures of the church? What about all the hypocrites? What about what science says in this or that area? And I'm just going to get all tongue-tied and I won't know what to say.

You know, I have tremendous respect for people who are able to say, "I don't know." It is a really hard thing to do. Pride gets in our way and we don't want to admit that we don't have all the answers. I have tremendous respect for folks who say, "I don't know." God calls us to share our Christian faith with others. Someone asks you a question that you don't have an answer to, you can say, "I don't know. But that's such a good question that I am willing to do a little research, to talk with someone who might have an answer, and get back to you." There is nothing that will educate you more than having people ask tough questions of you that stretch you and force you to learn.

What is God's response? V. 14:

Exodus 3:14 (NIV)

14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.' "

There are literally hundreds of scholarly articles written on the meaning of this phrase from Exodus 3:14, "I am who I am." What does God mean when he calls himself "I am?"

The most natural explanation is one that is readily seen in the original Hebrew. God's name is related to the Hebrew verb which means, "to be." In fact, God's name is the first person play on words of the Hebrew word "hayah." The Hebrew pronunciation of God's name is probably "Yahweh." God says, in essence, "I am being that I am being." Or "I am the Is-ing One."

In other words, I am not just some philosophical principle. The Lord says I am not some abstract force. "The force be with you." I am not merely someone who existed in the past and did great things 2000 years ago. I am not merely a doctrine in a theology book, or online at the end of a Creed, or a scientific conclusion of a brilliant scientific argument. I am not just the one who got the world started and then stepped aside to let people run the show.

And the Lord says, "I am not someone who will merely do something great in the future, when my Son returns to establish his kingdom. I am not static. I am active being. I am actively working in the present, right now at this moment. If you want to know who I am, I am the one who is always personally present with you. I am the one who is always personally active in your life. I am the one who is always personally involved."

"In the hospital room, I am there. When you feel isolated as a Christian, separated from fellowship, I am there. In your family, I am there. In moving you to growth, I am there. I am at work in your life. I am on the move. I am drawing the lost. I am protecting the weak. I am constantly speaking. I am constantly loving. I am constantly empathizing. I am concerned. I am listening to your prayers. I am constantly healing, rescuing, and redeeming."

Here is a third excuse:

I am not gifted

Exodus 4:10 (NIV)

10 Moses said to the LORD, "Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue."

We often think: If I just had the abilities that so and so does, then I would be able to obey God and obey his call. Sure, if I could do what that guy does; if I could do what she did; if I can speak like her; if I just had an overwhelming encounter with God like Moses did where a bush was set on fire, well, that would fix everything.

Here is God's response.

Exodus 4:11–12 (NIV)

11 The LORD said to him, "Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the LORD? 12 Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say."

God doesn't say to Moses: Moses, you really are up to the task; stop getting down on yourself. Moses, need a boost to your self-esteem. Moses, you really are up for the job. God says, Moses, I knew when I called you that you weren't up to the task. That's what God says to me all the time. He says, "Rich, you are not up to the task that I've called you to. You are not able to do it; you are not adequate." And he says the same thing to you. You are not able to do what God asks you to do. That's why we need to look to him and to depend on him.

And did you notice that God doesn't instantly transform Moses and make him a great speaker and fill him with all these incredible gifts. Moses has to lean on God and so do we – which leads to the fourth excuse:

I don't want to

Exodus 4:13 (NIV)

13 But Moses said, "Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else."

Moses essentially says, "I can't; therefore I won't do what God is calling me to." The response God wants from you and me is, "I can't, but he can, therefore I will." Every excuse begins with "I." I'm not qualified. I don't have all the answers. I am not gifted. I don't want to. I am too busy. I'm damaged goods. I...I...I...I The response that God gives is always: stop looking at yourself. Look at me. You can't, but I can. The response to God's call to any particular task ought to be, "God, I can't do this on my own. But you can accomplish this. You can change this situation. You can heal. You can save. Therefore I will." Let's pray.

Gospel Call – Talk about the parable of the Great Banquet and the excuses people made for not coming to Christ.

Excuses, Excuses: God's Calling and God's Kingdom

Rich Nathan
February 1-2, 2014
Vineyard Core Series
Exodus 3-4

I. The first call: A call to God

- A. When do we encounter God?
- B. How do we encounter God?

II. The second call: A call to a task

Excuses:

- A. I am not qualified (Ex. 3.11)

God's Response:

- B. I don't have all the answers (Ex. 3.13)

God's Response:

- C. I am not gifted (Ex. 4.10)

God's Response:

- D. I don't want to (Ex. 4.13)

God's Response: