

Russell Kelfer

Five Excuses God Does Not Need

950-B

Series: God's Living Legends II



DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.
INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230 • (210) 226-0000 / 1-800-375-7778 • www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org

Five Excuses God Does Not Need

Our Father and our God, even in eternity past before the foundation of the world, You knew every need we would have, and You knew even then, that Your heart would break, but You would have a plan to turn each of those crises into a beautiful blessing for Your glory.

We don't understand, Father, how Satan has infected this world with sin, how the disease runs rampant, and the problems so many face, seem to so crush the spirit and the life out of them. But You are our God, and You infuse us with confidence, hope and peace in the midst of those trials, and You give us meaning to life. You give us the promises of a life to come where the body will be whole and healed once again. So we ask You, Father, to lay upon our hearts this week, the burden to pray for others whose hearts are grieved or broken, or whose bodies are struggling in pain.

Now we ask that You would take this very difficult subject and make it real to us. In spite of the teacher, You take over. We trust You to do that.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

This is a familiar scene. We are going back to where it all began, to the garden of Eden. God has just had His heart broken. Those two special results of His creative power custom-designed in eternity past to reflect His character have been reported missing. God has gone looking for them. God gave them the freedom to eat of anything in the garden they wanted, but one tree. But man has always resisted diets of every kind, hasn't he? And this was the first one. "You can have anything you want but that." "I'll take that." You know the story. They were inquisitive. They were rebellious. They were disobedient. They were inquisitive because they listened to the voice of the enemy. They were rebellious because they questioned the authority of the Word of God. They were disobedient because they went and did the very thing God asked them not to do.

The reason I tell this story again, is because a character flaw

Five Excuses God Does Not Need

began to emerge in the heart of man that was later going to repeat itself over and over and over, and might even crop up in the life of someone who is sitting in the chair where you're sitting now. The problem began with Adam and Eve. But the focus of today's story is on a man named Saul, Israel's first king. He was a man who, believe it or not, was infected with the same disease that Adam had.

Turn with me to Genesis, chapter 3, look at your notes, read on the overhead, or just stay awake—whatever it takes. You are familiar with the story.

Now they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife [did a ridiculous thing] hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. [They said, "He'll never find us here." Give me a break.]

Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"

He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."

And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?"

[Here is your first key phrase.] The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me some of the fruit of the tree, and I ate."

Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."
(Genesis 3:8-13 NASB)

The man said, "The woman..." The woman said, "The serpent..." Remember that because we are going to get to that again in a moment. Now I know this is a familiar passage to you, but our lesson isn't on Adam and Eve. It's on Saul. What we are going to see is a character weakness emerges in man that is going to repeat itself. But it's a character weakness that disqualifies a man or a woman from a position of spiritual leadership. We'll see why in a moment.

We cannot really leave this passage in Genesis without first looking at some principles.

Principle 1 - Sin makes a person uncomfortable in the presence of God. Have you ever noticed that? When there are besetting

Five Excuses God Does Not Need

sins in your life, you just don't quite get around to spending time with God. Excuses get in the way. Sin separates us from God. Adam, just moments before, had been in fellowship with the Lord and was so encouraged by His presence. Now, he didn't want to be near Him.

Principle 2- You can't hide from God. Psalm 139 asks the question, "Where can we go to get away from God?" The answer is, forget it. You can't.

Principle 3- Sin is the original author of fear. Think about it, this is the first time in history that man has ever been afraid. He was afraid because he was naked, but he'd been naked all along. Fear entered the picture when sin entered the picture. Sin produces fear.

Principle 4- We have the neatest God. He seeks us out, even when we're running. Have you noticed that? God could have just let Adam run. Now I don't know what you would have done, but what I would have done if I had been God is say, "Get out. Scat. Go on Adam. Get out of the garden. I'm going to make a new guy and I'm going to give him a try. Maybe this next one will be obedient." Isn't it neat that God doesn't think that way? God's nature is to pursue those He loves in order that they be reconciled to Himself.

Principle 5- When God finally does confront us, He usually asks us questions, even though He knows the answers. "Where are you?" God asked Adam. "Who told you were naked?" God asked Adam. He knew the best way to deal with Adam and the best way to deal with us, is to ask us questions and see what kind of answers we give.

Principle 6- This is the key. The one thing that breaks God's heart the most is not just our sin, but when we are confronted with our sin, we give Him a dishonest response and excuses instead of owning up to the rebellion in our hearts. God went to Adam and asked him a question. All He wanted was a yes, or no. "Have you eaten from the tree of which I told you not to eat? Yes, or no." It wasn't multiple choice. It wasn't filling in the blank. Yes, or no?

Adam's answer was, "Lord, you'll never believe what happened to me." You've never heard that, I'm sure. So God didn't respond to Adam. He turned to Eve and said, "Eve, what is it that you have done?" Now, hers wasn't a yes or no question, but it wasn't an essay question either. "What have you done, Eve?" What He

Five Excuses God Does Not Need

wanted her to say was, “Lord, I have sinned. Please forgive me.” That’s all He wanted. Instead, Eve said, “You’ll never believe what happened to me. That serpent, boy is he clever.” Now remember those two phrases. The man said, “The woman...” The woman said, “The serpent...”

Now do you see where modern theology gets its roots? Sin isn’t anyone’s fault, right? It’s society. It’s my parents. It’s my mate. It’s that trauma. It’s something other than me. I don’t have any responsibility. Adam said, “It’s really not my fault. If it wasn’t for that woman...” Eve said, “You’d just never believe it. I would never have done it if it hadn’t been for that snake.” Neither one of them would look God straight in the eye and say, “Yes, I knew Your Word and I sinned.” It’s nobody’s fault, right? Wrong!

That’s the problem we are going to see emerge in Saul’s life that will ultimately mean his demise and which will keep him from becoming the man God wanted him to be. Listen to me, in every one of our lives, we face the same test. To the degree to which we are responsive and correctable is the degree to which we can ultimately be used of God.

Now let’s pack our spiritual suitcases, and get on board Flight 777 to the land of I Samuel. We’re going to land on runways 11, 12, and 13. As the plane touches down we find ourselves at Jabesh-Gilead, and we see the strangest sight. The atmosphere is one of stark fear. Everyone is hiding; they’re scared to death. Believe it or not the Ammonites are coming, ta-dum, ta-dum. They’re led by General Nahash, and they have surrounded the city and threatened all the Jewish inhabitants. They’re going to come in and take them captive or kill them. So the Jews wave a red flag, and say, “We’ll surrender if you’ll let us be your slaves and you won’t kill us.” They came up with what I call, the Uno Eye Offer. I’m a little sensitive to this subject, but the Uno Eye Offer was like this. They said, “Okay, you’re right. We won’t invade you. You’ll become our slaves, but we want an emblem of your slavery. Every one of you—we’re going to gouge out your right eye, and that will be a symbol of your disgrace. Then you can be a slave.”

Strangely enough—and I don’t understand this except in the providence of God—the Jabeshites said, “We need time to think your offer over.” And they said, “Okay. We’ll give you a week.” That was neat. So the word went out by satellite to all the other territories around, “WE ARE IN TROUBLE. Either you help us, or

Five Excuses God Does Not Need

the sale of eye patches is going to go off the charts.”

Meanwhile, Saul was at home doing what any good farmer would be doing. He was plowing his field. He hears of this one-sided, one-eyed proposal the Ammonites have given the Jews and he gets angry. There’s an interesting phrase here. It says, “Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul...and he became very angry” (1 Samuel 11:6). So, there is a time when the Spirit of the Lord comes upon you and you get angry. But the anger is not over your reputation being at stake. The anger is at God’s reputation being at stake, and that was the case right here.

So Saul calls the people together; he puts the word out and 330,000 people respond. They get back to the valley and wave the white flags pretending to be surrendering. The Ammonites rush in, and that’s it. They get clobbered. They get defeated. The people went wild, but they forgot to praise God. They began to praise Saul. So the nation gathers together and they re-anoint or have another coronation of Saul as king.

Samuel stands up to give his last sermon. We call it, “Samuel’s Swan Song.” I don’t know what his first sermon was like. I can’t remember. But this one was really something. He points to their hero of the hour and meanwhile, the whole nation was saying, “Long live the king. Saul is our hero.” So, he looks at him and points to him and says,

“Behold, I have listened to your voice for all that you said to me, and I have appointed a king over you.”

(1 Samuel 12:1 NASB)

Samuel says, “I want you to be responsible. He’s what you asked for.” And before he goes any further, he says, “I want to be sure my credentials are good. Have I ever taken anything away from you or not told you the truth?” And they said, “No way, Sam. You’re our boy.” He said, “Okay. I’m going to go on and tell you the truth.” And he begins to tell them, point by point, what God has done for the nation of Israel.

I believe one thing most of us lack in our lives personally, is a book of remembrance. A book of remembrance is a spiral notebook that you keep in your car or some sheets of paper in the front of your Bible, or a notebook with separator sheets, where you make notes of the blessings and answers to prayer that you have seen God do in your lifetime. Some of them may be directly to you or your family. Some may be people you have prayed for

Five Excuses God Does Not Need

or you know well. But, when Satan begins to assail you and say, “God’s not going to intervene,” or “God can’t handle this,” the Jews always went back and read what God had done in the past. Every one of the prophets did the same thing.

I think we forget the miracles God has performed for us and Satan has a field day with our minds. So think about making some kind of book of remembrance. You can include, if you will, incidents in Scripture where God has done similar things to the people of Israel, or for the Christian in the early church as He has done for you. And put a parallel passage in there to encourage yourself.

In verse 6 Samuel says this,

Then Samuel said to the people, “It is the LORD who appointed Moses and Aaron and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt. (I Samuel 12:6 NASB)

But they forgot the LORD their God, so He sold them into the hand of Sisera...

And they cried out to the LORD and said, ‘We have sinned...’

Then the LORD sent...and delivered you...”

(I Samuel 12:9-11 NASB)

The same old history lesson. He brings it up to date.

[But] “When you saw that Nahash the king of the sons of Ammon came against you, you said to me, ‘No, but a king shall reign over us,’ although the LORD your God was your king.” (I Samuel 12:12 NASB)

Now don’t you get tired of hearing the same thing over and over? I do. The problem is, the children of Israel didn’t seem to get it the first time like we do. I mean, we pick up on it and never have to hear it again, right? But the children of Israel had to hear the same thing over and over and over. You don’t need a king. You shouldn’t have a king. Here’s your king. You don’t need a king. You beg for a king. You’ll get a king. You’ll get what you asked for. Over and over and over they are told, and it’s almost like their hearing aids were turned down. They didn’t hear a thing.

“Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen, whom you have asked for, and behold, the LORD has set a king over you.

If you will fear the LORD and serve Him, and listen to His voice and not rebel against the command of the LORD, then both you and also the king who reigns over you will follow

Five Excuses God Does Not Need

the LORD your God.

If you will not listen to the voice of the LORD...[big trouble].

(I Samuel 12:13-15 NASB)

I don't know if you can get the picture here, but try to. The children of Israel went against the will of the Lord and asked for a king. He said, "Don't do that." They did it anyway. He said, "Don't do that." And they did it anyway. He said, "Don't do that." And they did it anyway, so He gave them a king. But beloved, He did not forsake them. They missed some blessings and they got themselves in a big mess and had to pay the fruit of the decision they made, but God didn't forsake them.

Now, I have a belief that there are some people in this room, and maybe some listening another way, who are still struggling like the Israelites because you made one big mistake in your life, and you think God can never use you again. You would give anything to relive that moment and do it over, but you can't. I'm here to tell you today that Satan is a liar. He's trying to tell you, "You blew it and God can't use you anymore." But the truth of the Word of God is, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just [not only] to forgive us our sins, [but] to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

Think about it. Who did God use in Scripture? Over and over and over, He took men and women who failed. And at the depth of their failure, He picked them up, filled them with the Spirit, and used them. It's time some of you, beloved, got on with your life. It's time some of you stop wallowing in the past as though God could never use you. God forgives. He cleanses. He restores. He transforms. He sets you upon a rock and gives you a new heart. Get on with it!

In verse 16, Samuel got Israel's attention. He said, "I don't know what I'm going to do, but I'm going to have to do something so you'll realize God is God, and you've made a mistake." I don't know about you, but the only thing Samuel knew to do was give them some new spiritual thrill. That's the only thing they ever wanted.

Some of you here may have the same problem. You may be a thrill seeker, spiritually. And you want God to prove Himself over and over and over, by doing some neat thing for you—opening this door, providing this miracle, doing something that He has already promised in His Word to do. Maybe you're one of those

Five Excuses God Does Not Need

who runs from place to place looking for a new emotional thrill, spiritually. Wherever the newest thing is, you go.

You need to remember, as you mature in Christ, you should not need those signs the way you once did as a spiritual baby. When you were a physical baby, your mother and father had to constantly lean over your crib and say, “Mommy loves you. Daddy loves you.” And they would burp you and change you. Hopefully, at least, we’ve grown up a little. Even if your mother and father are still living, hopefully, they don’t have to still burp you and change you. The point is, that we’re supposed to grow up. And they’re supposed to let us reach a point where we make some mistakes and suffer some.

Some of us Christians don’t want to grow up. We want God to keep cuddling us and burping us. We want first grade reminders that God is present, when we should be out on the battlefield fighting the battle. The children of Israel were still children. Samuel had to do something about it so he said, “Stand still and see what the Lord is about to do.” What the Lord was about to do, was make it rain. I don’t know if this was set in West Texas or Israel, but that shouldn’t be such a miracle. The problem is, it never rained at harvest time. And it was harvest time.

So Samuel said,

Is it not the wheat harvest today? I will call to the LORD, that He may send thunder and rain. Then you will know and see that your wickedness is great which you have done in the sight of the LORD by asking for yourselves a king.

[He doesn’t give up, does he? This guy, Sam, he just keeps on going. He’s meaner than I am.]

So Samuel called to the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel.

Then all the people said to Samuel, “Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, [don’t you love that] so that we may not die, [there’s their motive] for we have added to all our sins this evil by asking for ourselves a king.”

(I Samuel 12:17-19 NASB)

A revival meeting broke out at the First Evangelical Church of Gilgal. Tears flowed. They all went running down the aisle, grabbed Pastor Sam and rededicated their lives.

The trouble was, emotional group repentance usually only

Five Excuses God Does Not Need

lasts as long as the emotions do. God had just showed them He could make it rain again. Big deal. They knew about all the instances in Israel's past where God had made it rain. The problem was, they wanted something new, and God reminded them. But they had His Word, and so do you. But so often, the Word just isn't enough for us. We want God to prove Himself over and over and over.

Finally, they began to repent, but what were they repenting for? They weren't sorry they had broken God's heart. They were sorry that He might zap them. They said, "Pray for us that we may not die. That was their motive.

So in verse 20, Samuel gives Israel the neatest promise. If you want a memory verse out of this lesson, here is the best one.

And Samuel said to the people, "Do not fear. You have committed all this evil, yet do not turn aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart.

And you must not turn aside, for then you would go after futile things which can not profit or deliver, because they are futile.

For the LORD will not abandon His people on account of His great name, because the LORD has been pleased to make you a people for Himself.

[God isn't going to abandon you because of who He is. What a memory verse.]

Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you; but I will instruct you in the good and right way."

(I Samuel 12:20-23 NASB)

What a passage! There are some truths in this passage we have to look at very quickly before we come to a conclusion, and before we get to the real issue of disobedience.

1- The children of Israel had committed all this evil, but God would not forsake them. Why? Because He said, "You're my people."

2- He will not abandon us. He will not abandon Israel. He will not abandon you.

3- Samuel says, "As God's man, I will never stop praying for you." Isn't that neat? There are some prayer requests and prayer needs in our lives that are lifetime projects. We like the "short-

Five Excuses God Does Not Need

termers.” Pray for Mary to get a job; for Jenny’s baby to get well. We don’t like praying for someone who has been in a constant state of rebellion, or whose heart has been broken, or broken yours over and over and over again. But some of our prayer requests are full life vocations and require lifetime commitments. Samuel said, “I know you are a bunch of rebels, but I’ll never stop praying for you.” Are you that faithful?

4- Samuel says, “Serve the Lord with all your heart, and don’t forget all the neat things He has done in the past.

5- If you choose to rebel, He won’t forsake you, but boy will you suffer. Now I don’t remember Samuel’s first sermon, but I’ll tell you what, I like his last one. It was filled with awe at the character of God—His mercy, His faithfulness, and His power.

The Scriptures tell us that Saul was 40 years old when he took office as king; he was 72 when his reign ended. That means for 32 years God put him under the microscope of spiritual leadership to see how he would fare. He did not fare well. We need to look at his life because God included it in Scripture so we would avoid his mistakes.

Here’s what happened to start it all off. It was the second year of his reign. He had been in office for two years. And he decided to declare war against the Philistines. He had 3,000 men. He kept 2,000 for himself, and gave 1,000 to his son, Jonathan. He said, “Let’s go get them!” Strangely enough—I don’t know why he didn’t figure this out in advance—the Philistines didn’t like the idea (see 1 Samuel 13:5). The Philistines assembled to fight with Israel. The only difference was, they had 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen, and people like the sand on the seashore. Uh-oh.

Now I don’t know if you can figure this out; I don’t know how good you are at math, but it doesn’t sound too swift. It sounds about like a ten to one deal at best. Can’t you see the Israeli high command sitting at Gilgal looking at their trusty IBM computers—IBM back then stood for Israel’s Best Machine—and they’re looking at them and the punch in these numbers. The screen comes up and says, “You fools! Don’t take them on.”

At any rate, in verses 6 and 7, a yellow streak began to emerge down the center of the Hebrew army and they decided to go south even though the battle was north.

I love the Living Bible. It says in verses 6 and 7,

Five Excuses God Does Not Need

When the men of Israel saw the vast mass of enemy troops, they lost their nerve entirely and tried to hide in caves, thickets, coverts, among the rocks, and even in tombs and cisterns.

Some of them crossed the Jordan River and escaped to the land of Gad and Gilead. [They were running like water.] Meanwhile, Saul stayed at Gilgal, and those who were with him trembled with fear at what awaited them.

(I Samuel 13:6,7 TLB)

Panicsville! God had turned up the temperature just a little bit to test them, and they took off. Now it seems that Samuel had given Saul some instructions. It's important that you know this. He said, "Saul, I want you to stay here no matter what happens, for seven days. At the end of seven days, I'm going to come and give an offering to the Lord. I'm the only one who can do that as a prophet." But it seems like Saul, when surrounded with his fleeing troops, looked at his Timex, and seven days and a few seconds later, he said, "I'd better take matters into my own hands."

Now he waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come [right on time—loose translation] to Gilgal; and the people were scattering [taking off like flies—looser translation] from him.

So Saul said, "Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings." ["I'll do it." Uh-oh.] And he offered the burnt offering.

(I Samuel 13:8,9 NASB)

You say, "What a fool." Yes. Any of you ever watch God take a little too long to answer your prayer? And instead of waiting for His timing, you say, "No matter, Lord. I'll take care of it." And you go charging off into the sunset and do it yourself. You see, God is often intentionally late, beloved, not to annoy us but to test us.

As soon as he finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him and to greet him. [Isn't that strange? Over the hill comes Sam.]

(I Samuel 13:10 NASB)

One characteristic of Saul's life that is consistent at least, is that he could disobey God and act as if nothing had ever happened. Verse 11 begins with the same question God asked Adam in Genesis, chapter 3. Samuel turned to Saul and said, "Whatcha been doin'?" And Saul proceeds to answer much the same way as Adam. He gave him five excuses God does not need.

Five Excuses God Does Not Need

And Saul said, “Because I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the appointed days, and the Philistines were assembling at Michmash,

therefore, I said, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the LORD.’ So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering.”

(I Samuel 13:11,12 NASB)

Bless his heart. Poor guy. Caught in the very act of disobedience. You’ve never done this, I know, but he comes up with this Charley Cool routine hoping that if he pretends nothing has happened, Samuel would think nothing had happened. Instead of saying, “Oh, Lord, forgive me, I’ve sinned,” he came up with five excuses God does not need. You may know someone who uses these excuses. You may even live with someone who gives these excuses, even if you live alone.

Excuse 1- Saul said, “It wasn’t MY fault—everybody else let me down.” Have you ever used that? The old lateral-the-ball routine. “You see, I saw the people were scattering. They’re a bunch of cowards, Sam. And so, I did the only logical thing.” It’s interesting that in verses 3 and 4, the army was winning the battle, and they were his army. Now they are running like flies and they’re not his army any more. Isn’t that strange? They’re our kids when they’re doing well, aren’t they? They were running like flies, and suddenly, Saul doesn’t want to claim them anymore. Can’t you kind of hear Grandpa Adam in the background? “The woman you gave me...”

Excuse 2- God’s man let me down. “You didn’t show up on time.” You just can’t depend on preachers, can you?” It never dawned on Saul that Samuel was his spiritual authority, and if Samuel was late, God had a reason. How many Christians today blame their slothfulness or their bitterness on something that happened in a church or some pastor that said this, or some Christian who let them down? “The church doesn’t meet my needs.” The church isn’t here to meet your needs, beloved. The church is here to give you a place to give your life away. You are the church. What he should have said is, “God, *You* let me down,” because that’s what he was really saying.

Excuse 3- The enemy was everywhere; I had no choice. Have you ever used that one? “The spiritual warfare was overwhelming. I couldn’t wait on God. What if He missed the bus? What if the battery in His watch stopped? What if...?” God knew the

Five Excuses God Does Not Need

Philistines were there. And God knew the perfect time and the perfect way to defeat them.

Excuse 4- I was counseling a guy one time and he actually used this Scripture. “Well, I’m just obeying the Scripture. God helps those who help themselves.” That was Saul’s next excuse. “Somebody had to do something, and if I hadn’t started the ball rolling, God probably never would have come around.”

Excuse 5- Here’s the best one. I had to force myself. “It was so hard, God. I wanted to wait on You, but...” Big deal. So King Saul did exactly what Adam and Eve did when they got their hands caught in the cookie jar or the fruit jar, whatever it might have been. They blamed someone else. What did God want him to do? What does God want you to do when all of sudden you realize you blew it? He wants you to drop that silly façade, stop playing games and say, “Dear God, I have sinned. Please forgive me.” And guess what? He will!

I don’t know if you realize it, but if you look at the Scriptures, you’ll find many like David, Moses and others who sinned and owned up to it, and they became God’s greats. Beloved, the ones whose ministries were forgotten and finished, were those who sinned and when confronted, began to give excuses. Samuel didn’t buy it.

Samuel said to Saul, “You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. [God had a ministry for you, Saul! But that ministry is not going to happen.]

But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, [he will take your place] and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you. (I Samuel 13:13,14 NASB)

In other words, “Saul, the long-range potential of your ministry in life just came to an end. You’ll be around for a while, but you’ve stopped growing and your ministry will stop being fruitful. It’s not because God doesn’t want to use you and not because you’re not talented, it’s because you are not correctable. And when God looks you in the eye and says, ‘Wait a minute, you blew it,’ instead of saying, ‘Lord, I have sinned,’ you say, ‘Lord, you’ll never believe whose fault this was.’”

Five Excuses God Does Not Need

Saul is a living legend. He really is. Not because he's a great guy. He never made it to God's Hall of Fame. Saul is a living legend because his life gives us some lessons, and the greatest lesson is this: learn to face God honestly and learn to be correctable. He had a suitcase full of excuses, and whenever he got caught red-handed, he read the script that Adam and Eve wrote.

Now I'm going to ask you a question as we close. It's a serious question. The future of your ministry as a believer, and your ability to be a Christian leader hangs in the balance. When God, through His Word, or God, through his people, confronts you with any area of your life that needs attention, what do you do? Is your first response self-righteous indignation? Self-righteous justification? Or is it humble self-evaluation? I hate this lesson, if that helps.

Ask yourself. I've had to do that this week and I don't like the answer. Am I correctable? Beloved, our answer to that question will determine the ultimate scope of our ministry and the consistency of the depth of our walk with God.

God knows you are not perfect. He expects you to make mistakes. The question is, when the heat is on and you realize you've done wrong, will you justify your mistake by transferring the blame, or will you look God straight in the eye and say, "I was wrong." When people confront you or correct you, whether it's the elders of the church, someone who is discipling you, or just a friend who loves you, are you going to ask them to help you? Or are you going to mimic Adam and Eve, and Saul?

I'm going to give you an assignment. I know you love that. For one week, count the times, no matter what the circumstance, that you transfer blame to someone else for something. Count the times you make excuses. I'll give you one more assignment, for those who are stout of heart. Ask your mate, your co-workers, or someone else who knows you well, to answer this one question honestly. In your eyes, am I correctable, or do I always have an excuse? Do you know what will happen? If you get straight on that one issue, suddenly you'll begin to grow again. Life will begin to be vibrant again. Your spiritual sensitivity will begin to be fresh again.

Can you imagine what it would be like if everyone in the body of Christ responded like this?

Five Excuses God Does Not Need

EXCUSES

Oh, dear God, You've caught me
What a terrible spot I'm in.
Either I've got to find an excuse
Or I've got to own up to my sin.

The choice is mine, I know that.
I can find someone else to blame,
And argue that it wasn't my fault
And bring to myself great shame.

Or I can look You straight in the eye
And pray, Lord, I'm guilty as charged.
Please cleanse me, and help me, remake me
Until my world's been enlarged.

Please use my mistakes to change me—
To teach me Your ways to heed,
And teach me dear Lord that excuses
Are something that God doesn't need!

Let's pray.

Father, what a tough lesson to learn. We don't even mind being instructed, but most of us just don't like being corrected. So we come up with all kinds of excuses, shift the blame and pretend that we are not responsible. All You are waiting for is for us to quietly look into Your precious eyes and say, "Dear Lord, I have sinned. Forgive me."

Some of us here, Father, are praying that prayer right now. We know areas of our lives where we have simply not been responsible. Rather than owning up to it, we have avoided it. By Your grace, even today, may we throw the excuses away and begin to live correctable lives.

In Jesus' precious name. Amen.

dtm DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230

210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778

www.dtm.org • dtm@dtm.org • © Russell Kelfer

(09.14.22.dvd)