

# Student Leadership Class - Leaders Don't make Excuses

- *What's the best excuse you've ever heard for not doing homework?*
- *What's your go-to excuse when you forget something, mess up, or fail?*
- *Why are excuses usually a bad thing?*
- *Is there such a thing as a good excuse?*

## Excuses Reflect our Priorities

We are all can be really good at making excuses. It's a terrible—but common—habit. Leaders need to be different. Godly leaders know there is a high cost for making excuses. They also know that God's power and promises eliminate our need to make excuses for our fears and doubts.

We all make excuses. These excuses range from the trivial—“the dog ate my homework”—to eternally significant—“I was too scared to share my faith.” **The truth is, excuses reflect our priorities.**

Think about it this way: if you really cared about getting your homework done, you would have called a friend for the assignment details. If you were convicted about sharing your faith, you wouldn't let feeling awkward stop you.

Often, we use excuses to justify not doing something we probably weren't going to do anyways. Excuses make us feel better for backing out of commitments or not having our priorities straight. This is not how leaders in the Kingdom of God operate.

Leaders know their mission and stay committed to it despite the obstacles they face. Leaders know that making excuses is a slippery slope; making one excuse leads to making more. Excuses may help you avoid uneasy situations, but they also lead to a life without purpose. Kingdom leaders see excuses as wastes of time, detracting from their eternal mission and calling. Leaders put their faith in an all-powerful God who exceeds any of our expectations or excuses.

Now, that doesn't mean you won't have the opportunity to make valid, understandable excuses. Take Timothy, for example. He was a youngster, talking to full-grown men and women with families about the Gospel. He was just a kid, asking people to change their lives and trust Jesus. But in this letter, Paul shows his young co-worker that leaders in the Kingdom of God don't need to make excuses. They need to show up and make room for God to move through them.

- *In your own words, how do excuses reflect our priorities?*
- *How does refusing to make excuses make you a better leader?*
- *What are some understandable or valid excuses you can think of or have used before?*
- *How are theses things still just an excuse to get out of something you should do?*

## Read 1 Timothy 4:6–16

See how Paul encourages Timothy to stop making excuses and start leading the way he was designed to lead.

### 1 Timothy 4:6-16

*6 If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. 7 Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; 8 for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. 9 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. 10 For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.*

*11 Command and teach these things. 12 Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. 13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. 14 Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you. 15 Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. 16 Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

### **Discuss**

- *What is the main excuse that Paul is telling Timothy to avoid?*
- *Why do you think being young would have been a tempting excuse for Timothy?*
- *How does Paul call Timothy to set an example rather than live in an excuse?*

## **How Leaders Respond to Challenges**

Leadership is often tested through difficult circumstances and challenging opportunities. Leadership is ultimately about influence, for good or for bad. That's why it is so important to not just pursue leadership, but godly leadership.

### **Count it as joy when trials come.**

#### James 1:2-4

*2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

Trials will come in all of our lives – they are an inevitable part of being human. We can choose to get discouraged, entitled and angry at God, or seek out His purpose in them. James makes it clear that God allows trials to test our faith, produce endurance, and make us perfect and complete. The trials we face are God's way of getting us ready for game day, like a spiritual workout. Leaders demonstrate maturity when they embrace trials with determination and a desire to grow, not when they make excuses.

## **Ask God for wisdom.**

### James 1:5-7

*5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*

Throughout the Bible, from Solomon to Jesus, we see leaders seeking godly wisdom for their lives. Wisdom is the ability to see life from God's perspective, **AND THEN ACT ACCORDINGLY.**

Wisdom sees things as God sees things and takes the appropriate action. A godly leader sees more, further, and before others see. They wisely see what battles are worth losing and what hills are worth fighting on. They factor truth & timing into godly decision-making. James commands us to ask in faith for wisdom, without doubt that God will provide.

## **God may test our faith but never tempts us to sin.**

### James 1:12-15

*12 Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. 13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. 14 But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. 15 Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.*

Godly leaders know there is a difference between trials and temptations. What God sends as a trial, Satan will try to use as a temptation. These leaders understand the difference and recognize each situation as it arises. Where they maturely embrace trials, they resist their own evil desires to avoid being enticed by temptation.

## **Actions speak louder than words.**

### James 1:22-25

*22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. 24 For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. 25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.*

People do not follow worthy causes; they follow leaders who pursue worthy causes. James commands us to be doers and not just hearers. Great godly leaders “look into the law of liberty” and follow it. These leaders understand that liberty is not the lack of obligations but the freedom to do the things they ought to do. Leadership is established by a lifetime of leadership, as people see leadership in action.

### **Discuss**

- *How does the passages in James help you respond to challenges in the right way and not make excuses?*
- *How does refusing to make excuses help you set a good example for those you are leading?*
- *How might making excuses hurt your leadership ability?*
- *Can anyone think of a time you made an excuse in your life and later saw the consequences of that excuse?*
- *In what area of your faith life do you want to commit to making fewer excuses? How are you going to do that?*