

## Excuses, Excuses

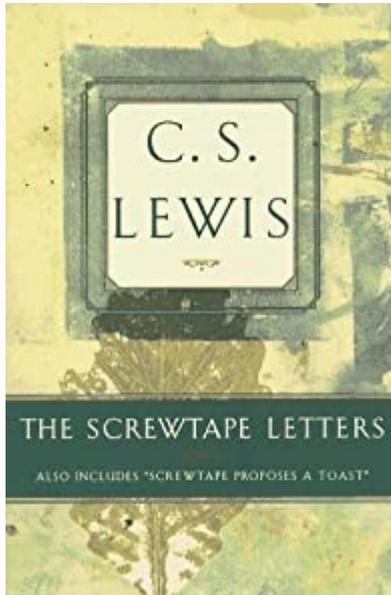
Most Christians are so focused on the stuff in the world, so immersed in their business, their family, and their possessions; that they never “hear” the call of God. God has issued a general call to all Christians to study the Scriptures, be ready to defend them, and to serve God and glorify Him. In addition to that, all Christians have been given spiritual gifts and are expected to use them, yet the vast majority don’t even know what they are. All of us should represent Christ within two different types of relationships—believers and unbelievers. We are called to edify believers and evangelize non-believers. A few years back, a very talented and able guy in one of my Bible studies said to me, “I would like to be more involved in God’s work, but I’m right on the verge of several big deals that are taking up all of my time. As soon as my ship comes in I’m going to do it.” Apparently there was a storm at sea because I haven’t seen him since.

## This Fallen World

James warned about the peril of this immersion in the things of the world in James 4:4, “you adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” The Apostle John echoes this, “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him”(1 Jn.2:15). What do they mean by the “world”? John explains it in 1 Jn.2:16, “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.” Both James and John are giving a contrast and drawing a distinction between the material and the spiritual, the temporal and the eternal, and the lusts of the flesh versus the leading of the Spirit.

## What Would Jesus Say ?

I believe Jesus nailed the materialistic Christians with the third soil analogy in His parable of the soils in Matt.13:22. The seed is the Word of God, the soil represents the heart of man, and the thorns that choked out the Word are “the worries of the world and the deceitfulness of riches” so that he becomes unfruitful. This third soil in the parable represents people who hear the Word of God and believe it, they agree with it, it moves them, they know that it’s true; but they get distracted, and they lose their focus. This is a much more effective scheme of the devil than the obvious aggressive temptations. In C.S. Lewis’s *The Screwtape Letters*,



*Cover of The Screwtape Letters*

the devil says to his apprentice, “the only thing that matters is the extent to which you separate the man from the Enemy (God)...edge the man away from the Light and out into the Nothing.”

#### Identity Crisis

In 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, Paul tells us who we are, what our identity is. You may have thought you were a father, a businessman, an executive, an American, a golfer, a graduate of an esteemed college, etc.; but Paul lists none of these. Biblically, you are a steward who no longer lives for himself, but for Christ. The love of God controls us, He is our motivation for living. We have been reconciled to God through Christ, therefore Christ has given us a ministry of reconciliation. We are ambassadors for Christ, and God is making an appeal to the world through us. This is who we are. In Galatians 2:20, Paul said, “I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, and the life I now live in this body I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

#### The King of Excuses

The life of Moses is a good study in this being diverted from your true purpose and identity. He resisted his calling in an exaggerated way which serves to make more obvious principles and applications. Remember in Exodus 2:11-15 that Moses started out with good intentions, but was distracted by his anger, then he tried to “run the show” in his own way and in his own timing, but was rejected by his own people. Acts 7:29 gives us additional details that

“Moses fled and became an alien”. He was as distracted and unfocused as he could get, yet God was patient with him. Years later, God called him in such a way that he could not miss it (the burning bush) yet Moses resisted. Moses still did not see himself as a steward. He had a home, a family, and an occupation, and wasn’t about to answer the call.

When God confronted Moses in Exodus 3, Moses had at least five excuses:

Excuse # 1—Who am I? Check the record Lord, you’ve got the wrong guy. Israel didn’t want me forty years ago in my prime so they darn sure won’t follow me now. Plus I’m the last guy Pharaoh will listen to. Get somebody else.

ANSWER—God is not looking for perfection or strength, as He told Paul, “My power is magnified in your weakness”. God told Moses that the only thing Moses needed was God’s presence—“I will be with you”. God calls every believer to service (2 Cor.3:5-6).

Excuse # 2—Who are you anyway? How do I know who is calling me? Even after God assured Moses of His presence in helping him, Moses had insufficient faith. Like us, Moses always wanted more information, more proof. How do we know God will keep His promises? Just think, Moses got run out of Egypt and lived as a fugitive in the wilderness for forty years—where was God then? How powerful can the God of Israel be if His people were all slaves?

ANSWER—Exodus 3:14, “I AM THAT I AM”, God is the one and only self-existent unique creator of the universe. He is all-powerful and omniscient. If we will trust Him, He will give us ample evidence of His presence.

Excuse # 3—What if they reject me? What if I fail? Like all of us, Moses feared failure and rejection. The main reason believers will not share their faith is fear of rejection.

ANSWER—Our fears are no match for God’s empowerment. In Moses’ case God gave him three dramatic miracles to give him confidence and evidence of God’s presence. After awhile, Moses got comfortable that God was with him. In our case, some unexpected person may believe in Jesus in spite of our pitiful testimony and we will know that God did it. As Paul said in 1 Cor.2:3-4, he had delivered the Gospel in fear and trembling, not in persuasive words of wisdom, so that it was clear their faith rested on the power of God.

Excuse # 4—I have no talent or ability. I have never been able to speak. I am not the right man for this job. Get someone else who is better.

ANSWER—Don’t place your trust or confidence in your own talents and abilities. This is all about God, not you. The Lord reminded Moses, “Who has made man’s mouth? Is it not I, the Lord?”(Ex.4:11). God is not looking for talented people but faithful servants.

Excuse #5—Find someone else. I’m busy, I have another life, and I don’t want to get involved

(Ex.4:13).

ANSWER—Now we have gotten down to the bottom line. We have our own projects, our own life, and we don't want to get out of our comfort zone. We don't want to rock the boat. God does not like to get stiff armed. You can see the anger and frustration God has with Moses in Ex.4:14. God may graciously and patiently continue to pursue you as He did Moses, or He may discipline you as He promised in Hebrews 12, "God disciplines those whom He loves". God will also give us human and supernatural help as He did Moses in Ex.4:14-16.

Wake Up Sleeper

What can we learn from our excuses and God's answers? God is not moved or changed by our excuses. God will not remove the call or the responsibility. The greatest problem in our faithfully acting as servants is our reluctance, our selfish resistance. God will not force us, but if we are fortunate, He will be persistent because answering His call is the fulfilling purpose of our lives. What if God had said to Moses, "Fine, go back to your vocation and your family and I'll get someone else"? I'm sure Moses would have been a wonderful goat herder. Should we be left alone to sell our real estate, make our deals, service our clients, and hoard our money? Does that have eternal significance? Is that what God created us to do and be? Is it possible to be too busy to answer the call of God? God is not impressed with our excuses. We can fool each other, but not God. Our excuses only prevent us from experiencing the greater joy of serving Christ. When Moses died, the author wrote, "Moses, the servant of the Lord—Since then no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses" (Deut.34:5,10)

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