

What Excuses Have You Heard? – Rev. Peter Paige Aug 13, 2017, Wesley UMC, Bryan, OH

In John 1:43-51 Jesus calls two more brothers to be his disciples. Nathanael made an excuse for not believing his brother Philip that he had met and had been called to follow the Messiah, the Savior, the one their whole nation was awaiting– the one their prophecies were pointing to. When I read this passage, I realized that I love excuses. I do. Doesn't that seem strange for a pastor, for a man of the cloth. Why would a person who hears excuses almost every day - and at the very least every week - especially on Sunday, why would I like excuses? Some excuses I like, but some I don't.

1) I love excuses - as long as they're honest.

Philip had told Nathanael that this man, Jesus, was from Nazareth. "Can anything good come from there?"

"Nazareth? You're telling me that the Messiah was raised in Nazareth!" <laugh & eye roll>

That's how Nathanael really felt. Even Jesus recognized this and in John 1:47, said of him, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." Does this mean Jesus loves honest excuses? ...I love honest excuses.

2) I love honest excuses because they show a person's deepest feelings.

If you ask someone if they'll do something for you and they say, "I'm already helping my sister move that day."

You know that promises and family are important to him or her. If you ask a friend to come to a basketball game with you and their excuse is that they have a date, you know you rank lower than the date.

Think about it, honest excuses reveal our values, our true priorities, our deepest feelings.

3) I also love honest excuses because they show that you care.

If I came to you and asked a favor, you could just blow me off and say "No. That's your problem pastor. I don't care. Go away."

Or if I asked why you were doing something, or even why you weren't doing something, you could ignore me or just tell me you didn't want to talk about it. And that would be that.

On the other hand, if in either case you gave me an excuse, I'd know that you cared that I understood what else you had going on or how you were feeling about the subject or how you felt about me. Giving an honest excuse shows that you care about the other person.

Nathanael, truly feeling deep down that there is no way the Messiah could come from a place like Nazareth, could have been rude to his brother, ignoring him or calling him stupid or tearing him down in any number of ways, perhaps saying, "Whatever Philip, you're so gullible." Instead, Nathanael gave an excuse for his unbelief because he cared for his brother.

4) I want you to leave today loving honest excuses too if for no other reason than to be like Nathanael.

I know your #1 priority is loving God. I see that your deepest feelings are centered around the joy you have in your lives, in your families, in your jobs, and in your faith because of what God has done for you. You care enough about others that, I believe, after today you will give them honest excuses about why you have Jesus in your life.

I want you to care for other people, show them your true priorities, reveal to them your values and your deepest feelings. I want you to give people honest excuses.

Excuses for your faith. For your compassion and forgiveness of others.

Excuses for why you go to church, why you study the Bible, why you pray.

Excuses for your hope in heaven awaits

Excuses for why you build up the lowly instead of laugh at them.

Excuses for your love that has no end.

Excuses for why you help others everyday, not just when there's an emergency.

Conclusion:**Excuses require a response; belief or unbelief.**

Philip did not believe his brother's excuses, and invited him to "Come and see!"

People may not believe your excuses for what you get at church, they might not believe that 'religion' could really make a difference in your life much less their own. People might not believe you the first time or even the second time or the third or the fourth. But as long as you allow God to work in your life, to reveal his grace in your trials and temptations, and to call you into His service for others...then eventually those people who didn't believe your excuses will one day "Come and See" when you invite them. All it takes are honest excuses.