

Do we make excuses to get out of God's calling?

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(Photo: Caetano Lacerda)

The people of Israel were in Egypt in bondage and slavery, and they asked God to deliver them. God did not intervene immediately but he began to look for someone who could be His instrument and in the end, He did so with a baby.

Such a process is not very fast and often takes more time than we want. We sometimes find ourselves asking 'God can it be a little faster?'. No, God likes to look for a tool or instrument that can carry out His work.

In this case, it was a baby who had to become a leader for the people of Israel and act as God wanted him to - according to His principles. The best training for him was in the court of Pharaoh and so God caused His man, Moses, to land right there and get the best education.

After 40 years, Moses understood that he was God's chosen instrument to

liberate the people of Israel. He saw it all before him (see Acts 7:22-25 and Hebrews 11:24-25), he would liberate Israel, he was to be the big man, wise in words.

But at that moment God saw that Moses was not ready and sent him for 40 years into the desert. It was a time to put into practice what he had learned. There he attended an intensive course on 'how to survive in the wilderness'. But God also taught him not to trust in his own abilities.

He must have wondered many times how he could be so stupid to forfeit his ministry. Doubt was his greatest companion. Had Moses made a mistake in thinking he would be used by God? 'I thought I had the training to liberate the people and now I'm right in the sand. Why?' 'God can use me and he doesn't'.

After 40 years of training among the sheep and the desert, Moses no longer feels he has a task from God. His enthusiasm and his horizons have been quenched.

And then God speaks: 'Moses, now you are finally in a way I can use you, I want you to go to Pharaoh.' Moses was afraid (see Ex 3). In fact, he reluctant. When he was 40, he was excited, he wanted to take action and that's why he just took it upon himself to kill someone.

By the time he was 80, all hope and expectation had disappeared. 'God, you're a little late,' he must have been thinking. 'When I was 40, I had some sense of it, but not anymore.'

Moses therefore comes with all kinds of excuses not to obey:

- Ex 3: 11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"
- Ex 3:13 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?"
- Ex 4:1 Moses answered, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The LORD did not appear to you'?"
- Ex 4:10 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."
- 4:13 But Moses said, "Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else."

In other words, send somebody else.

The first excuse is so often used by us too: 'Who am I? I cannot, I'm simply not cut out for it. You should not ask me, you should ask someone else.' Moses was so concerned about himself that God was not in the picture.

With any excuse, God has patience but he gives a clear answer to make our excuse invalid. Of course the excuse, 'They do not believe me,' is still a common one. This command is not suitable for me and my audience will not respond to me.

Moses said he could not speak well and God gave him a companion. As we read in other passages, he was a powerful man in word and deed. Just like with Moses, our excuses are camouflage over what we really want to say: 'Lord, send someone else.'

That was enough for God, he was angry (see Ex 4:14).

The first apology sounded something like: 'I do not have much faith in myself and not really any in You.' But in truth, they were soft expressions for: 'I do not want this.'

And when God had rejected all excuses, Moses went anyway reluctantly to Pharaoh. God spoke so clearly that Moses knew he could not get away from it. It would have been easier for God if Moses had just been obedient in the first instance instead making all these excuses.

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