

## Excuses! Excuses!

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One of my most intense experiences with God happened during my days of teaching in school. It was during a school event when I had to be on my feet for most parts of the day. Imagine my joy when I found an empty seat in the rows of occupied seats. Yes! Finally, an opportunity to rest my legs. I sat on the seat with a sigh of relief.

Then a pregnant lady came into view.

*Darn!*

*Why should I care? My legs are REALLY TIRED!*

In those few seconds that I was struggling with indecision, a fellow colleague sitting in front of me stood up and gave her the seat. My moment of indecision ended just as fast but it was at that moment I had a sudden realisation; that in another context, God does not need me to fulfil the task. He could have easily chosen another to serve Him but He gave me the opportunity to do so.

Have you ever found yourself attempting some explanation on why you failed to obey God, refusing to serve? You are not the only one. Sometimes, I find myself offering excuses for failing to follow God's commandments. Instead of being quick to obey the voice of my master, I hesitate.

### **Excuse making is actually very, very old...**

It is so old that we can find it in

- [Genesis 3: 9 - 13](#), Adam blamed the woman and she blamed it on the snake
- [Exodus 4:1- 10](#) Moses claimed he was not a good speaker



- [1 Samuel 15](#) Saul's excuse was, *It's the people's fault...I was afraid of the men and so I gave in to them...*

In my opinion, [Jonah](#) takes the cake. He did not even make excuses. When God called Jonah to *"Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it..."*, he ran - in the OPPOSITE DIRECTION.

Then when Jonah *finally* did what God asked, he was mad at Him, giving God a seething "I-told-you-so" speech, *"Isn't this what I said, Lord, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish..."* Next thing you know, he went on strike. After building a small shelter east of the city, he refused to budge from its shade until God had destroyed Nineveh. So, another object lesson from God. He provided a leafy plant that shaded Jonah. The next day He sent in a worm which destroyed it, leaving Jonah open to the elements. When Jonah added that to his list of complaints, God used it as a teaching moment.



Jonah mourned the loss of the leafy plant which came up in a day and was lost in a day—a small and trivial thing though he did not tend it or make it grow. Yet the city of Nineveh had a hundred and twenty thousand people ([Jonah 4:11](#)) who did not know any better and Jonah thought their preservation was a bad thing? God showed Jonah that his priorities were more than a little messed up. Are you laughing at him? Don't laugh too hard. The book of Jonah is more than just a delightful story for children.

There are timeless lessons to be learnt here. One of them is how Jonah's desire for comfort and lack of concern for the lost may well be present in us today.

The record of Jonah ends there so we do not know what happened to Jonah after that. However, we can hope to learn what God wanted him to learn. To be careful, not to let our own wants and desires, our comfort zones, blind us to what is truly important.

*Alicia Wong*



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