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Now Is the Time: My Top 5 Dad Excuses

Exodus 3-4

Introduction

Well, I don't if all of you young dads have had a similar experience to me during Covid-19 lockdown, but I can tell you it has been a hard season to be a parent. I think my lowest moment was one Sunday morning. After worshipping online, my wife Rachel and I have been hosting a Virtual LifeGroup. As usual our kids were arguing and fighting upstairs—alongside our 6 year-old Evelyn, we have a 5 year-old, Ezra. Normally we just try and ignore it. Thank the Lord for the mute button on Zoom! But this particular Sunday it was getting worse and worse. So eventually, I had to go upstairs and check on them.

I walked into their bedroom and found Evelyn bawling. I asked her what was wrong, and she told me that Ezra had thrown a Lego brick at her Chrome Book. (You see, all the kids had been given Chrome Books from the schools to help do their work.) I said, "Is that it? That doesn't sound so bad." And she said, "Yes it is." And then she proceeded to open the screen of the laptop and I saw this.

Yup. Epic dad fail. Of course, I confessed what had happened to the school. They were very gracious. But I tell you, at that moment I just wanted to give up. And I tell you I have felt like that So. Many. Times. This season has been so incredibly hard to be a dad. And I think I'm not the only one who feels like this. So, to all the dads out there, I want to offer you a message of encouragement today.

To do so, we're going to look at the story of a man named Moses, who was called by God to confront the most powerful man in the world, the King of Egypt, and to plead with him to end his slavery of the Israelites, and let them go. Today we're going to hear as Moses meets with God and offers 5 excuses to try and get out of this call.

The reality is that all of us have a call on our lives, and for those who are fathers, one of our most important calls is to parent our children. Today as we look at Moses' top 5 excuses, I want you to see where you find yourself in them. Maybe you connect with one in particular? Maybe more than one? I know I find all of them relatable in my call as a dad. So I'm calling today's message, "My Top 5 Dad Excuses." And my hope is that we will find encouragement from a God who looks beyond our excuses to offer us his power and presence in our call as parents.

Excuse #1: I don't believe I can

The first excuse Moses gives is, "I don't believe I can." Here's how he puts it, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" (Exodus 3:11) In other words, "I don't believe I can do it."

As I already mentioned, there have been so many moments in this Covid-19 season when I have got to the point where I have said, "I can't do it. I'm done." Usually it is when my kids are screaming, my son is physically punching the wall, my wife is on a Zoom call for work, and I have a Zoom call starting in five minutes. Moments where I just don't believe I have it in me to respond patiently to my kids, to deescalate the situation, to prepare myself to speak to those on my zoom call, and not to just punch a hole in the wall, alongside my son.

Sometimes in life, the call God places upon us can seem daunting. And the way God responds in this moment to Moses can offer us some comfort. God says, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain." (Exodus 3:12) God tells Moses that he can do this, because he is not alone, and this too shall pass. One day, God says, Moses will stand in this very spot, looking back at what has been, and he will know that God was with him. If you feel like you can't do it, remember, God is with you, and this too shall pass. One day you will look back on this and laugh. Keep going!

Excuse #2: I don't know I can trust God

Of course, the answer that God will be with you, isn't particularly helpful if you're not sure if you can trust God. And that's Moses' second excuse: "I don't know I can trust You." This is how he puts it: "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?" (Exodus 3:13)

Now, to understand this, we have to understand the significance of knowing someone's name. In the ancient near east, your name connoted your very essence. Knowing someone's name was to know who they really are. So in effect, Moses is saying, "Who are you?" He is saying, yes, I have heard about the God of my fathers, but I don't really know you. How can I trust that you will be with me and come through for me as you are saying?

I know for many of us, trusting God is hard because we have hurts and pains from our past. Moses did. And I know you do too. Every Father's Day is hard for me because my own father died suddenly of a cardiac arrest 4 years ago. Every Father's Day I have a moment where I ask God, "Why did you let my dad die? Why can't I see him today?" And maybe you have similar hurts and pains in your life. Things that are causing you to doubt that God is trustworthy. And I understand. Moses understands too. But listen to God's response to Moses: "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: "I AM has sent me to you."'" (Exodus 3:14)

As we heard from Rachel last week, God here reveals his name, and his very essence to Moses. His name literally means that he is going to be, who he is going to be. He will be true to himself, and will continue to be true to himself. In other words, he will be faithful. Sometimes we sing a song that has a line, "All my life you have been faithful." And Nate Maxwell, our Worship Intern, remarked to me the other day, "There is something so powerful about hearing an 80-year-old man sing that line." There is. Because an 80 year knows that to be true 4 times more than 20-year-old Nate. God will prove himself to be faithful, and when you doubt it, hold on and trust him. He will come through.

Excuse #3: I'll look stupid

Once Moses gets over believing God is faithful, he begins to worry about how he's going to look in front of others. This is what he says, "What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, 'The Lord did not appear to you?'" (Exodus 4:1) Moses is worried he is going to look stupid in front of others.

I was at the neighborhood park the other day, and there was a mom there whose daughter was asking her to play swamp monsters. She kept trying to persuade her daughter that now wasn't the time, but the daughter kept persisting. The mom said to me, "I always think that when I do this all the other parents think I'm crazy. Oh well." And then she proceeded to chase after her daughter making monster noises. Of course, her daughter loved it.

There are so many times when I'm worried I will look stupid if I prioritize my kids. Stupid if I play games at their level like that mom. Stupid if I tell my employer I have to look after my kids at that time and can't make that meeting. Stupid if I confess that I'm not doing a great job at being a dad.

The reality is, other people might think you look stupid. But God doesn't. Whenever we are faithful to his call on our lives, it doesn't matter what we look like, God is proud of us. When he looks at us, he looks at us through the finished work of Jesus. He doesn't see our failures. Instead, he sees Jesus' successes. And he looks at us just like I looked at my daughter the first time I held her in my arms. This is my daughter, whom I love, with you I am well pleased. So don't be afraid to look stupid in front of others when you follow God's call, because you have a heavenly Father who loves you and is pleased with you.

Excuse #4 I'm not good at this

I remember one of the biggest arguments Rachel and I have had in this Covid season was regarding my belief that I didn't have the gifts or skills to teach our kids. You see, Rachel trained to be a teacher. She's a natural. Me. Not so much. I really struggle to do it.

Moses felt similarly. He said to God, "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." (Exodus 4:10) Moses was worried that he wasn't very good at speaking, just like I felt I wasn't very good at teaching. And I just love the way God responds to Moses.

Here's what God says, "Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the Lord?" Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say." (Exodus 4:11) I can kind of sense God's frustration at this point! But God is using a simple argument: if I made you, I can help you. And the same is true for you. When you doubt you don't have the gifts or skills necessary to respond to the call, trust that God will equip you.

Now, I am still not very good at teaching, but I have seen God use me to teach my kids. And it has been a joy to be involved in helping my son to learn to read! And a joy in helping my daughter to learn about science! I've loved it. But I had to trust that God would equip me for my call. And he has.

Excuse #5 Can't mom do it?

Obviously Moses didn't say, "Can't mom do it?" But he did say this: "Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else." (Exodus 4:13) And if you couldn't sense God's frustration before, you can now. The passage says, "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well... I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do." (Exodus 4:14-15)

The amazing thing is that God doesn't ask us to walk out our calling alone. He does give us a community to surround us. Men, he has given you brothers to walk on this journey with you. I know that my LifeGroup who have been meeting on Zoom for this period have continued to encourage me in my parenting. My neighbors have continued to encourage me in my parenting. My colleagues have continued to encourage me in my parenting. I am not alone, and neither are you. And, for many of us, he has given us the mother of our kids to walk this journey with us. My wife is my biggest encourager and I am so thankful for her. We don't have to do this alone. But nevertheless, it can't be done without us.

And this is where I want to land. Dads, you have a unique call on your life to raise your sons and daughters. And although you might be filled with excuses, particularly in a season like this, I know that each one of us will look back on this season and realize how formational it was in our lives. We will never forget the time spent with our kids. The ways it brought us closer. And the ways we saw God at work through us. Dads, you have a unique call from God. And he will be with you. He will be faithful to you. He loves you. He will equip you. And he will provide support for you. Don't give up.