

WEEK 2 — NO MORE EXCUSES

Don't allow your excuses to keep you from responding to God's calling.

Scripture Reading: John 5:6–9

Introduction

Last week, we talked about how we can become so accustomed to our comfort that we stop moving forward. Today, we're going to continue with the story of the man at Bethesda.

When Jesus asked him if he wanted to be made well, the man responded, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me." His response shows us that he had faced real obstacles. He had no one to help him, and others got there before him. But what's interesting is that Jesus didn't begin arguing with him about his circumstances. Jesus told him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk."

Instead of depending on the pool, the man experienced the power of Jesus directly. And although this story was not written specifically about serving in the church, it reminds us that we must be attentive when Jesus calls us to respond in a way different from what we expected.

Many times, we also have reasons why we don't get more involved in the things of God. We say we don't have time, that we don't know enough, that we're not good at certain things, or that we're not ready yet.

And some of those reasons may be legitimate limitations. But we must also recognize that sometimes, behind our excuses, there is fear, insecurity, unwillingness, or simply the desire to remain comfortable.

1. Excuses can become permanent obstacles.

We all have responsibilities, difficulties, and challenging seasons. The problem isn't recognizing our limitations. The problem is allowing them to become a permanent reason to never take a step forward.

For example, someone might say, "I can't serve because I don't know how."

But no one starts out knowing how to do everything. We all need to learn, receive instruction, make mistakes, and grow. Or someone might say, "I don't have any talents."

However, 1 Peter 4:10 reminds us that each of us has received gifts that we can use to serve others. Maybe not everyone can sing, preach, or teach, but we can listen, organize, help, walk alongside others, prepare, or simply be available when someone needs support.

2. God can use what you already have.

Sometimes we think we need extraordinary abilities to be useful in God's Kingdom. But serving doesn't necessarily begin with great ability. Many times, it begins with a sincere willingness.

In Romans 12:4–8, Paul explains that we have different gifts and functions within the body of Christ. This means we don't need to compare ourselves to others. God isn't asking us to do exactly the same thing as someone else. He's calling us to be faithful with what He has placed in our hands.

Maybe you're an organized, patient, creative, or responsible person, or someone who knows how to listen. Those qualities can also become tools to bless others.

3. Obedience begins when we decide to respond.

The man at Bethesda heard Jesus' instruction and responded. The Bible says that he was immediately healed, picked up his bed, and began to walk.

His response reminds us of the importance of taking action when God calls us. Many times, we wait until we feel completely prepared before beginning. But there are things we will only learn once we take the first step.

Maybe you don't need to immediately commit to a major responsibility. Your first step might be talking to a leader, learning about a ministry, receiving training, or beginning to help with something simple.

What's important is not allowing fear to make the decision for us.

Conclusion

It's possible that for a long time we've been saying that one day we'll begin serving. When we have more time. When we're more prepared. When life becomes less complicated.

But if we always wait for the perfect moment, that moment may never come.

God can guide us to begin with small but meaningful steps. The question isn't whether we have all the necessary skills. The question is whether we're willing to learn and allow God to use us.

Excuses keep us waiting, but willingness prepares us to respond.

Interactive Questions

1. What do you think is the most common excuse that keeps people from serving in church? Why do you think that excuse has so much power?
2. What gifts, abilities, or experiences has God given you that could be a blessing to others? Is there something others see in you that you haven't recognized in yourself?
3. If you stopped waiting for the perfect moment, what would be the first step you could take toward serving? What would you need to change to make it happen?

Weekly Challenge: TAKE THE FIRST STEP

Last week, we identified the areas where we've become comfortable. Now it's time to do something about it.

Your challenge: This week, approach a leader or someone who is already serving in a ministry that interests you. Ask them what they do, how you can get involved, and what you need to get started.

You don't have to commit immediately, but you do need to take an intentional step toward discovering how you can serve.

Remember: You don't have to have everything figured out to begin, but you do need to be willing to take the first step.