

Unexcused Excuses

By RLD Editorial Team

 for use as
STEP 1

Lesson 2**Focus:**

God wants us to obey,
not make excuses.

Lesson 2**Bible Basis:**

1 Samuel 15:1–3,
7–15, 20–22, 24–26,
28–29

Lesson 2**Memory Verse:**

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive
ourselves and the truth is not in us.
If we confess our sins, he is faithful and
just and will forgive us our sins.
—1 John 1:8–9

Your students will discuss valid and invalid excuses as they look at what it takes to obey God completely.

Materials:

☐ Whiteboard and marker (or screenshared document)

Start your class by inviting students to participate in a discussion.

Most of us have probably made an excuse for not doing something. These excuses could have been valid, such as being sick and not able to attend school. Or, they could have been made up, such as pretending to have a prior commitment.

➤ **Have you ever used an excuse? Was it valid or made up? Explain.** (Accept all reasonable responses.)

➤ **What are some examples of reasonable excuses for not attending school, extracurricular activities, or social events?** (Accept all reasonable responses which may include illness, family emergency, broken down car, etc. Record these responses in one column on the whiteboard or screenshared document.)

➤ **What are some examples of unreasonable or made-up excuses people may use to get out of school, responsibility, or obeying an authority figure?** (Accept all reasonable responses which may include pretending to be sick or hurt, wanting to finish playing a game, saying the dog ate homework, etc. Record these responses in a second column on the whiteboard or screenshared document.)

These lists show many great examples of good and bad excuses. While there are many times when excuses are valid, there are also times when we use them to get out of responsibility or avoid doing what an authority figure has asked us to do.

Let's take a look at someone who didn't seem to have a good excuse for not doing a job correctly.

Share the following video [1:58]:

USPS carrier caught on camera tossing homeowner's packages

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nIAu9PMZZeM>

➤ **Why do you think this driver threw the packages onto the porch? Do think it was a good excuse? Why or why not?** (Answers will vary; allow students to speculate.)

We don't know the reason why the delivery driver acted this way or whether they had a good excuse for not finishing the job well. We do know that in throwing the packages on the porch, this driver was disobeying the rules of the job.

The Bible shows us many examples of people who used poor excuses and refused to obey God's commands. The Israelites were people who didn't always take action when God spoke, and the consequences were deadly. Let's see if we can discover how to get better at quick obedience . . . and put aside excuses.

(Continue on to Steps 2 and 3 in your teacher's guide; your Step 4 appears below.)

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Materials:

- ☐ Pens/pencils
- ☐ index cards

If your class is meeting online, invite students to bring supplies with them to class.

Being obedient is hard work! It usually doesn't happen by itself, and we all need help. Do you know what a personal trainer does? In sports, it's an individual who evaluates another person's goals and helps them work to achieve them. We're going to figure out where we struggle with obedience and employ a "personal trainer" to help us stay on track.

Before placing students in pairs, distribute supplies (or invite students to have them ready at home). Tell them to think about three rules or guidelines they have trouble following. (These can be household rules like showing respect to a sibling, or they can be instructions from a coach or teacher regarding schoolwork or practice.)

Depending on the chemistry of your group, prompt them to choose a partner—or pair them up by design. (If your class is meeting online, you can use a break-out room feature to place students in pairs.) In round one, the older of the two will play the role of personal trainer, and the younger person will be evaluated. They will switch roles in round two. If you have an uneven number of students, you can step in to pair up with a student.

Tell your personal trainer one of the areas you are struggling with and write it on your index card. Next, talk together about some strategies for improving your behavior and attitude. If you are the personal trainer, give your trainee a specific plan of action by writing your idea on the back of their card. It's not particularly helpful to say, "Obey your mom," but instead say something specific like, "Put your cell phone in another room after 10:00 P.M."

After both students have traded roles, discuss these questions as a class.

➤ **Sometimes we make obedience harder than it needs to be. Why do we resist doing what's right?** (Our tendency toward selfishness and comfort can make it hard to obey. Also, poor role models in the media can influence our thinking. Some friendships can create pressure to disobey.)

➤ **Would anyone like to share a great idea that you and your personal trainer discovered together?** (Students' answers will vary. Prompt adult leaders to share if students are hesitant.)

➤ **A lot of times, we'll follow a plan of action really well for a few days and then just fade out. How can we keep a good plan going?** (We all need reminders. Text or call your partner to see how they're doing. Post your index card somewhere visible. Let someone in your family know you are working on getting better in a particular area. Pray regularly for God to help you.)

If you have time, allow your students to pray with their partner about what they shared today. When class concludes, encourage each student to take home their plan of action.

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