

Icebreaker: What is the most elaborate excuse you have ever given to get out of doing something you didn't want to do?

Key Verse: *Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.* Ephesians 5:15-16

We've all been there . . . *You see the person approaching you, you know they are going to ask you to do something you don't want to do – how do you get out of it? Do you have any legitimate plans? No. Okay, what plans can you make up?* We all make excuses every day. Excuses help us cope when we don't want to disappoint people or when we don't live up to something we wish we had. Many of our excuses are well intentioned, but the bigger question is do our excuses glorify God?

The short answer is no. Lying, even to protect someone else's feelings, is still lying. You could be honest and say you don't want to participate, or you could be generous and agree to help out. Paul wrote that the days are evil because we live in a sinful age. When we make excuses and are selfish with our time, we fail to make the most of the days God has given us.

Each of us only has one life to glorify God and make disciples. Excuses limit our influence and keep us from focusing on what is really important. Ultimately, excuses are designed to serve us. You cannot control what comes at you in the day to day, but you can control how you respond to the day-to-day stresses and strain. Be careful how you respond and give your best as an offering to God.

## THINK IT OVER >>>

Thinking back on Dwight's message, what stood out to you?

Where is there wisdom to be found in a life lived free of excuses?

How do excuses keep you from making the most of the time the Lord has given you? How is wasting time sinful?

Dwight said we should ask ourselves the following questions:

- What are the areas of your life where you feel stuck?
- Are you making progress? Or are you just making excuses?
- Is there someone you've lost credibility with because of excuses?
- What are you settling for?
- Do you find yourself blaming others or circumstances rather than taking responsibility?

## LOOK IT OVER >>>

How does making excuses in your private life lead to making excuses in your personal life?

How do we use excuses to mask our own insecurity? What merit is there in recognizing and admitting your own limitations?

What is the difference between a genuine limitation and an excuse? How often do you confuse the two?

How do you demonstrate Christlikeness by embracing areas where you are weak instead of giving an excuse?

What is an area of your life you need to focus on? What action steps need to be taken to focus on this area?

## NEXT STEPS

This week, consider taking some next steps together, as a group:

1. Praise God that Jesus did not make excuses for the difficult and painful mission that lay ahead of Him. Pray that you would have the same attitude as Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul, and others in Scripture. Admit your limitations before God and embrace them as reasons to depend on God and His Spirit.
2. Talk through your thought process in making excuses as a group. Are there any common themes that come up? How can we take these reasons, acknowledge our limitations, and press on knowing that God is with us? How can we hold one another accountable this week for not making excuses?

## EVALUATION/ACTION

### Choosing the responses that honor Christ

Rate yourself from 1 to 10 1 (never), 10 (always)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Why did you give yourself this rating?										
What benefits will you obtain by raising your rating?										
Do you know someone who demonstrates this bottom line well? What do you admire about that person?										
What specific action can you put into practice to raise your rating?										
At the end of this week, reflect - where did you see the bottom line show up in your actions throughout the week?										

## PRAYER

List group members and their prayer requests for this week:

## FURTHER STUDY

Want to dig deeper? Check out these verses:

- Matthew 25:21-29
- Exodus 4:10-12
- 2 Corinthians 12:1-10
- Ephesians 2:10
- Luke 9:57-62

***Don't let the conversation stop here. Keep talking it over with others throughout the week.***  
*(Don't forget to bring this paper to the next small group meeting)*