

I'M TIRED I DON'T FEEL WELL MY KIDS
 I DON'T HAVE ANY HELP
 YOU KNOW HOW I AM I AM UNDER TOO
 MUCH PRESSURE THE STRESS IS GETTING TO
 ME I DON'T WANT TO I CAN'T FIND ANY
Becky Combee Ministries, Inc.

Life Without Excuses

I was thinking the other day about the excuses we make for our bad behavior with such wonderful, trite phrases as, "I was tired," "I had too much on my plate," "I was under such pressure," "I didn't have any help," "My kids were driving me crazy," "I just didn't feel well," or "I was in a financial bind." Do these sound familiar? They are only a few of the many reasons and often realities that we feel justify poor conduct. But my very favorite is, "Well, you know how I am." It seems that personality quirks are the end all of excuses. I think, "If I can't blame my response to the difficulties of life on my health, my schedule, my finances, or my children, then it would be good to remind you that I am an unusual person. Certainly, you can understand that and overlook my words and actions."

The question we must now answer, however, is not, "How do I justify my behavior?" It is, "What does God expect?" The Word of God leaves us without any

doubt of God's will. It declares "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."¹ According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance the word "crucify" means that we extinguish or subdue passions and selfishness.² We can give great light to this definition by spending a few minutes in Webster's Dictionary. A study of the words "crucify" and "passion" teaches us to extinguish, or put an end to, impressions from external agents that cause agitations of mind and body.

The writings of the Apostle Paul to the churches at Colossae and Ephesus agree with this confederacy of knowledge. The Word of God counsels the Colossian Christians to "put off the old man with his deeds."³ To the church at Ephesus it proclaims, "Put off concerning your former conduct . . . and be renewed in the spirit of your mind."⁴ As a teacher, I love Bible translations so let's listen to several and enlarge our vision. The Twentieth Century New Testament records, "Get rid of your old self and its habits." The Moffatt translation says, "You



Parent to Parent

¹⁸ Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul... ¹⁹ And ye shall teach them your children... (Deuteronomy 11:18-20)

With every passing day I become more and more determined to teach my daughter what she needs to know to become a responsible adult, a Christian, a woman, and eventually a wife and a mother. It is our job as her parents to say to her as it says in the book of Isaiah, "This is the way, walk ye in it." (Isaiah 30:21) I want her to learn, both from our experiences and from the guidelines in the Word of God, how to act and react to every situation in her life.

There is a passage of scripture in Romans, chapter 1, that describes the person I do not want her to be.

²⁹ Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication,

wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, ³⁰ Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, **disobedient to parents,** ³¹ Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:

Notice, that in this list alongside some perfectly horrible attributes is the phrase "disobedient to parents"! We see this again in 2 Timothy 3:2-5 where disobedience is placed alongside even more disturbing behaviors.

² For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, **disobedient to parents,** unthankful, unholy, ³ Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, ⁴ Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of

have stripped off the old nature with its practices.” The book of Ephesians talks about these habits and practices of the unregenerate nature referring to them as “deluded passions,” “false dreams,” and “the way to destruction.”⁵ We cannot let them guide our lives. There are actions, responses, and excuses that must be eliminated.

Everything connected with getting our own way and mindlessly responding to what everyone else calls necessities is called off for good – crucified. (*Galatians 5:24, Message*)

According to God’s Word we are spirit beings living in a physical body. The spirit is referred to by the Apostle Paul as the “inward man.”⁶ It is a spiritual body similar to the outward man or physical body but different in substance. It is not flesh and blood. When we are born again, the inward man, or spirit, becomes new, but the flesh and soul (mind, will and emotions) are unchanged. The continued leadership of the flesh and soul in the life of a Christian will promote destructive and compromising behavior. It will barrage our lives with excuses. We must allow

our new spirit to lead us in the ways of God.

I suppose everyone likes new things. If we have a new car, a new house, a new dress, or even new shoes, we want to show them off. We are so delighted that we want people to notice. When we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, we have been changed and everyone should notice – Our actions should now represent the love of God. Our words reflect His kindness and gentleness. But, these changes are not automatic. We don’t push a button and experience instant Christianity. We have to “grow up”.

Our spirit begins to grow as we meditate, ponder, and confess God’s Word. It matures and enlarges as The Holy Spirit, who is our teacher, reveals the truth of the scriptures to us. Then as a maturing Christian, we recognize and extinguish the works of the flesh. “And if [we] through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, [we] shall live.”⁷ And it will be a good life – a life without excuses – a life of spirit and truth.

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¹ Galatians 5:24

⁴ Ephesians 4:22-23

⁶ Romans 7:22; 2

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³ Colossians 3:9

⁵ TCNT; Knox; WMS

⁷ Romans 8:13

God;⁵ *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

This is why we are told that obedience is "pleasing unto the Lord." (Colossians 3:20) If a child is continually disobedient, it will open the door to all these other things! God has given parents an instruction to teach His principles to their children because disobedience will ultimately affect their behavior, their actions and reactions, in every other area of their lives.

Let's take these same scriptures and in reverse list what behaviors are important to God.

Righteousness, Sexual purity, Obedience, Forgiveness, Loving, Giving, Kind, Truthful, Promise keeping, Merciful, Understanding (Romans 1:29-31)

Humble, Clean speech, Thankful, Holy, Honorable, Faithful, and Loves God (2 Timothy 3:2-5)

I would add modesty (Philippians 4:5; 1 Cor. 6:20), restraint (1 Peter 3:10) and gratitude (Colossians 3:15) as well.

In 2 Corinthians 12:14 the Apostle Paul put it this way, "For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." I especially like the Message Bible version. **“Children shouldn’t**

have to look out for their parents; parents look out for the children.”

I "look out for" my daughter by setting an example for her to follow. In John 13:15 Jesus said, "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." In other words, what I expect of her, she should see in myself.

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. (1 Timothy 4:12)

So here it is! I set an example and then she in turn sets an example! What a marvelous thought. But let me take it one step further. The guidelines, or rules, for our behavior do not change because we have become older and are now adults. We cannot ask of our children that which we are not willing to do ourselves.

No! But it is because I am an adult, because I have lived longer and had more opportunities to make choices, that I now have the wisdom and understanding, the knowledge on how to behave both in difficult situations and in common every day ones, to share with her. It is by my response that she will know how she ought to be.

Suzanne Williams