

## Excuses vs. Reasons

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by Wayne Goff

If we are being *intellectually honest*, then I think we all know the difference between an “excuse” and a “reason.” An **excuse** is when we “seek to clear ourselves, wholly or in part, from blame without denying or justifying the action concerned” [*Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*]. A **reason** is a “cause of a fact, situation, event, or thing, especially one adduced as an explanation, cause, ground” [*ibid*]. In these definitions you can see a clear distinction between the two. An “excuse” requires some mental effort, and sometimes mental gymnastics, to justify oneself or others! A “reason” requires no explanation. It alone is a *fact, a cause, or a ground* sufficient to explain the action.

When we excuse ourselves from attending worship, it may be that **we really don’t want to go** to Bible class, or worship, etc. But we do not want to admit that to others or to ourselves, so we make up an excuse!

On the other hand, if we truly wanted to attend worship, Bible class, etc., but for some **reason** were unable to go, then that **reason** stated is sufficient to explain our absence.

For example, “Bob did not come to church last Sunday because he died on Saturday.” That is a **reason**. “Bob did not come to church last Sunday because he had a dark brown taste in his mouth.” That is an **excuse**. You and I can clearly see the difference and so can God.

However, since we are only human, and fallible judges at best, we could possibly be mistaken in our judgment. That “dark brown taste” might actually turn out to be a serious disease that Bob needs to take care of — even though we thought it was nothing more than an excuse! Shame on us for so thinking! (Of course, past history of an individual helps us in the realm of judgment.) But God, the righteous, infallible and just Judge will **never** make a wrong assessment of our absence. He will never be fooled by an **excuse**, and He will never miss a valid **reason**. The church, the elders, or the preacher may *think* an **excuse** is a **reason**. God never will.

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