

“BIBLE DOING”**Amy Taylor-Sheldon**

God's Word: Exodus 3:7-1 and 4:10-13 or 10-17

Text: Mark 1:40-42

To begin, a disclaimer, I am a self-proclaimed Martha. I overcommit. I overstep my boundaries. I boss people around without always saying please, but I try to say thank you. I get frustrated when others don't help, and then want to tell everyone else what to do. However, for today, that makes me a pretty good example to share what has been put on my heart and encourage you all to step out in faith and be Jesus.

For my second disclaimer, just like in basketball, all of my ideas are stolen. I will do my best to cite my resources like my new BFF Bob Goff whom my Sunday School class hears about all of the time. In his book Bob Goff has an awful lot to say about Jesus and about grace, which is probably why I really like him because I need a lot and have a hard time giving it sometimes.

When Pastor Mike shared two weeks ago that the Crawford County Mentoring Program was looking for adults to share their lives with kids in our local schools, I asked if I could share five minutes about the need at our school and the potential impact. Instead I am sharing a message about how if we want to do God's will that we need to be “Bible doing”, not just “Bible study”. Now I have no doubt that many of us here are justified in saying that “I am doing my part” and this message doesn't apply to me. Maybe so. But I know that Jesus is calling us to be with people.

In the book of Exodus, the account is shared of the Lord calling Moses to go to Pharaoh to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. Obviously rescuing thousands of people out of slavery from the most powerful people on Earth- was not the easiest task for a mere human; therefore, Moses didn't quite feel up to the challenge, nor prepared. So let's look at how Moses responded to God's command.

After God tells Moses to go to Pharaoh- that's a pretty simple verb- go- in verse 11 Moses plays the not worthy, humble card in his first excuse. “Who am I?” God doesn't respond with a coddling, pep talk that tells Moses that “You can do it! Look at your resume! I believe in you!” He actually says in verse 12 – my version in my brain - God has raised eye brows and is like “duh I'm going with you. I believe in Me” I would say a pretty good side kick- the master of the universe.

The end of that chapter Moses freaks out a little more, and God does a little explaining about what to say and why- and empowers him with some profound stuff like make rod into a snake and turn the Nile River into blood. After all of the explanation, Moses has the nerve to say in chapter 4 verse 10 “Listen God- I'm just not a great public speaker, not even before You asked me.” So after all of this, God gets a little frustrated with Moses, reminds Moses that He is the one who made his mouth, yet grants him some grace and tells him that his brother Aaron will help him out and be his

human megaphone. Of course you know the rest of the story, God uses Moses to save the nation of Israel.

I use this example to show that even God's greatest of leaders, if you will, made excuses not to be used for His work. That Moses thought he was unworthy, unprepared and underequipped. Yet God still enabled a mere human to carry out His plan for all of mankind to be able to be reunited with Him.

I use this reference to support that the people of 2019 are no different than Moses, but the excuses we use are just as lame, if not worse, and God isn't asking us to save an entire nation. He is simply asking us to be willing, to be intentional and to be full of grace. Because doing all of those three things is exactly what Jesus did. And if you haven't heard from this pulpit before that you are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus- I just don't know what to tell you. So let's look at some of Jesus' behaviors and examine why we aren't doing this.

If I took a survey, I would absolutely bet that the number one EXCUSE people say IS they DON'T HAVE TIME. I just have to say are you kidding me right now? So let's look at that shall we? We don't have time. Let's look at Jesus time.... He had three years for His time with His disciples. Just three-less time than you had in high school, less time than you probably dated your spouse, most likely, you have had a cell phone longer than Jesus had with His friends- to lay the human path that has led us all to this very moment in church today. Americans today have more free time today than in other time in human history. The speed limit is 70 miles an hour on the interstate. Do we really need to be reminded that Jesus walked everywhere? Think of the time just getting from point A to point B – let alone all the time that people were spending beating their clothes on rocks or growing the grain or hanging out with sheep or building their houses. Physical living is easy for us today. Let's not make time our excuse. Let's be honest and say that we really aren't willing to give up our own time- for someone else.

Therefore, let's talk about our will and more importantly- Jesus' will. How did Jesus show He was willing. One how about dying on the cross for our sins? I know too obvious. Instead, let's look at the day to day living and interaction that Jesus had with people. The account of the man with leprosy is in three of the four books of the Gospel, so it must have been a pretty big example of Jesus' behavior in treatment of others.

My favorite is Mark's account. Mark 1: 40-42. Jesus is travelling through Galilee, again most likely on foot, and verse 40 "A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "IF YOU ARE WILLING, you can make me clean. Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man. 'I AM WILLING' He said. 'Be clean!' Immediately, the leprosy left him, and he was cured."

We have to decide if we are willing. Are we willing? Can we carve out a time of our "busy schedules" and do something for Jesus? I am not sure. Our society named the selfie.

As a side note for all of you other "Martha's" out there, and you know who you are. I would encourage you to give some other people a chance to do what you do, to help, to get started, to play a part. Doing it all because nobody else will step up can also be just as sinful because we are robbing

other's from opportunity simply in not asking for help, risking that it won't be as good, doing it for the wrong motives or being fearful that someone will do it better than you do. That's probably an entirely other message- but I just want to encourage you to seek out others and consider sharing the blessing.

I digress... so let's just say we all just decided "Jesus I am willing! What's up for me to do?" From what I understand about Jesus, he was observant and perceptive and didn't try to complicate it for people. Sort of like the Captain Obvious on the TV commercials- the ones where the guy in the doorman/pilot uniform states something crystal clear to all, and someone responds sarcastically "Thanks Captain Obvious". Jesus saw it, made a statement or asked a question and then did something about it. When dealing with people, Jesus didn't seem to seek out people and share His resume of the skills that were in His wheelhouse and then decide what was best for him. In general, He didn't say let's pray about it first and then prioritize my list and come back in a week with an answer. In reading how Jesus interacted with people, He just stated what was obvious to just about everyone and then offered an act of love-on the spot- hey there's a blind guy, hey there's a woman about to be stoned, hey why don't you just put your net on the other side of the boat. Jesus willing to be love, all the time, with everybody, always.

Let's go back to our verses. "A MAN WITH LEPROSY CAME TO HIM AND BEGGED HIM ON HIS KNEES, "If you are willing, you can make me clean. Filled with compassion, Jesus REACHED OUT HIS HAND AND TOUCHED THE MAN. ' I am willing,' He said. 'Be clean!" Immediately, the leprosy left him, and he was cured." So there you go, here's a man with leprosy- that's a pretty obvious need during that time and oh man he is begging me.

So then our SECOND excuse was what Moses was feeling? Are you kidding me God? Who am I? I don't know anything about leprosy. I don't want to catch that disease. I have to touch him? Ugh all of that just makes me UNCOMFORTABLE. That is just the worse isn't it? Jesus I am willing, but don't tell me to do something that makes me UNCOMFORTABLE. Give me something within my "gifting" for me to do. I like to bake. Can I make him some cookies? I am really good with money. I will see if I can balance his checkbook. I love that God gives us very specific talents that we can all use to bless people. But I don't think this includes just LOVING people. He wants ALL of us to do it, ALL of the time. In this interaction with the man with leprosy, Jesus did something that was PHYSICALLY, EMOTIONALLY AND SOCIALLY uncomfortable. Physically he touched a man with leprosy, a contagious and deadly disease, emotionally the man was authentically groveling at his feet and socially lepers by all accounts were absolutely some of the greatest social outcasts that existed in Jesus' day.

I would like to share a personal story of most likely one of the greatest things that made me uncomfortable and the choice I made to obey the Holy Spirit. I will probably cry – just so you know... Some of you read the Bob Goff book Love Does. God used the Holy Spirit through Bob's words in that book, and I became super convicted about saying no because of being uncomfortable. Personally, I feel like God has freed me from saying yes to everyone for everything because I am overcommitted- but laid it heavy on me that I shouldn't say no because my own uneasiness. So I will try to make this

story as simple as possible. A coach that David and I have known for years had a daughter who took her own life as a result of anorexia and mental health issues. She was 27, and by all accounts a devout servant of Christ which for some of you seems like a paradox but again another sermon. When David shared it with me, I did feel sad and certainly felt sorry for the family. However, I had no intention of going to the funeral or calling hours which were over two hours away or even sending a card. That was a Monday night. But frankly I just couldn't shake thinking about it- the tragedy, the understanding, the similarity of someone I know. So I texted Michael Hurles and shared that this coach's daughter had died, if he remembered her, and just a few simple text messages. That was it. So fast forward to Wednesday- for background, Michael's wife Shauna is the Tiffin University volleyball coach. Shauna has a player on her team who has long struggled with some similar issues as the coach's daughter. That late afternoon, Michael and Shauna called me on speakerphone, a first, and told me that earlier that day the player asked if she could miss practice on Thursday to go to the calling hours in this small town of a woman who was in residential treatment with her during the summer of 2018. Light bulb moment. It was the same person about whom I texted Michael. My first response was wow. What a coincidence. Then they asked me to drive down with her to take her to the calling hours because neither of them could go, and they felt like someone needed to. I have to be honest about my first response. I was like what??? You want me to take a college kid, I don't know other than watching her from the balcony of the bleachers at a game, drive her two hours there and two hours back, small talk about something that isn't death and the obvious for both people, take away an uninterrupted evening with David and the girls- and you want me to go by myself. And why aren't you taking her? Actually that's probably not even all I thought and said. Then it was a lightning bolt through my conscience. Why am I saying no? I am saying no because I am uncomfortable. I AM UNCOMFORTABLE. Jesus is dropping this opportunity in my lap, and I am questioning what He has clearly made obvious right in front of me. So immediately after my spiritual shock I said yep I will go. I will take her. Tell me where and when we will meet tomorrow. I didn't have to pray about it. I knew what I was supposed to do. And I completely felt sick about it. You name it. What am I going to talk about for two hours? I don't even know anything about her. How am I supposed to address the elephant in the room. Am I supposed to? Dozens of insecurities and questions. Satan was just dropping bombs on me. I knew I wasn't going to change my mind, but I prayed about how Jesus wanted me to handle being overwhelmed and asked a few others to do the same. God heard me and had grace on me and guess what? He sent me Michael just like he did with Aaron for Moses. Michael let me know that morning that he could go, and for me, Michael going was a gap closer.

So we drove down there and then stood in line for over two hours to see the family. Overall, I can't even begin to share all of the feelings that I had and compound the feelings that Shauna's player had- the questions, the grief, the family and friends by the hundreds. The entire scenario was just emotionally overwhelming as we saw and read the memories shared of this person's life. The family, person by person of hundreds of people, consoled each one as families often ironically do at calling hours. As we got to the front, I shared my condolences and introduced Michael and Shauna's player to the dad and then walked over to the mom. Shauna's player shared with the mother her

connection to her beloved daughter. All I can say is that in my entire life- that I have never experienced what I saw in that moment between those two people. It was the most intense, deep, emotional moment of my life. I am sobbing. Michael is sobbing. Shauna's player is sobbing. And this grieving mother is sobbing after probably keeping a stiff upper lip for four or more hours. I watched- for a mere five minutes- them share a deep love for each other and for Jesus and for God's grace all unfold just feet in front of me. Upon our departure, we three were still crying as we made our way to the car and continued for several minutes on the way back. I am trying to read what Jesus wanted me to do, wanted me to say. And all he had me say was "Do you want to talk about it?" I have to tell you I was terrified even to say it, but I was obedient. She shared and cried for the next 20 minutes or so about her life, her thoughts, her prayers, her faith. Basically I said very little because Jesus took care of it. It wasn't about me in my insecurity and fear. It was about this young woman, and her opportunity to share and grow and fulfill a need that God had placed on her heart. All I can say is that it has had a profound effect on me- spiritually and emotionally. I am sure that God would have made a way for "things to work themselves out" had I said no as He always does for events in His will. But I might have robbed her of that blessing, that opportunity, that family to be blessed, as well as my own growth by the entire experience and increased my understanding of so many issues. Don't let your fear get in the way of a blessing for someone.

Finally, the third excuse I think we subconsciously use is judgment and lack of grace. Most of the time I don't even think I get to this excuse because I might have already bowed out on the time or uncomfortable excuse to realize that I am the judge and jury of someone else's life choices. Jesus being God in human flesh surely had to count the costs of what He was doing all of the time. Ultimately His love and grace for people outweighed the costs of choosing not to do it, even going to the cross. Leprosy, like many other physical diseases, were by many considered consequences of sin and that lepers were cursed by God. These people were easily set up for judgment by not only the public at large but were also shunned socially by friends and family. Surely, this guy had done something pretty major to end up this bad. We can look at the verse one last time for our final emphasis. . "A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean. FILLED WITH COMPASSION, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' He said. 'Be clean!" Immediately, the leprosy left him, and he was cured."

I looked up the word compassion in Strong's concordance and it stated that the Greek word "splanchnizomai" (splan-kh-nid-zom-ah-ee) which means "to be moved in the inward parts". It is so interesting to me that Jesus, upon this brief interaction with this man, didn't just feel sorry for him- that he felt feelings- love, sympathy from his guts, in the deepest part of his self. Of course we know that Jesus is love and we are supposed to be that love, but when do we EVER feel that measure for others and act upon it? What do we feel when we see someone in a truly dire situation? Do we go with love and action- over judgment and dismissal? We can't get stuck on that God is working on something in our lives that is completely different than in somebody else's life. It is our duty as

Christians to start seeing people this way, to catch ourselves in critical thoughts and to get back to WWJD.

Because ultimately what Jesus did was
to be willing,
to be intentional
and to be grace filled.

Today the need in front of you is to be an adult support at one of our local schools through the Crawford County mentoring program. It's an obvious need to be filled. I probably hear people complain about "kids these days" and "the government has taken God out of schools" by more Christian people than I care to remember. So here's an opportunity that checks all the boxes- it's an obvious one you have the contact information right in front of you. It's going to take some time in your schedule. You are probably going to be uncomfortable- your student might have just come back to school after having lice, he might not want to talk to you or be upset and she might have some pretty deep emotional issues she is dealing with. And as soon as you walk in the front door, you might have some pretty quick judgments about how your tax money is being wasted or disbelief about the your kid's behaviors.

So let's eliminate those excuses as best we can

1. It's a half hour weekly, and you can go to any school or age kid you want. Most employers provide comp time for volunteer or community work. Just ask.
2. Know that Jesus is going to be with you- to face your lack of confidence or level of physical, emotional or social discomfort- just like he did with Moses and He might even send you a sidekick to help you. If you are at Wynford, that can be me.
3. You aren't there to solve any problems or talk to them about anything they have experienced or call children's services or try to save them from hell. Kids who need mentors don't usually share that anyway. All you need to do is be willing and have compassion for them to show love that they are important and loved by you and ultimately loved by Jesus. You play cards or bring a game, ask about the best part of his day, color and talk about animals, find out when her birthday is- God will provide the words- you just have to say them.
4. And if you are unable to do this, as there are seasons of life, I would encourage you to intentionally pray and support for someone who is working with these kids- teachers, aides, social workers, counselors, principals, probation officers, youth group leaders, employers, coaches, bus drivers. Ask how you can pray for them, ask questions about their needs, follow up with your prayers in how situations are, ask the person if she has needs where they are and make or buy them dinner. Don't leave blessings up to random acts of kindness that fade away to distant memory- make it intentional acts of love that will last an eternity.

If you want "Jesus back in public school," the Jesus is you.