Benjamin Franklin once said, “He that is good for making excuses is seldom good for anything else.” Laura Schlessinger once said, “People with integrity do what they say they are going to do. Others make excuses.” You know most of us are good at picking from a wide range of excuses to limit our own capabilities. That’s true in almost every area of our life from going to the gym to studying for an exam. We might make an excuse for not reaching out to those in need or for not putting God first in our life. Listen guys excuses are the primary reason we are unable to accomplish what we want or even what God wants for our life. Excuses will always work against us, they can hold us back and leave us in a cycle of procrastination. They are that inner voice within that tells us we're not good enough, worthy enough, capable enough — and therefore we should make an excuse or deflect so we can get the attention or focus off ourselves and on to someone else or something else. So I what us to that all of this negative self-talk is of no value, in fact it can keep us paralyzed in our own fears. Guys we are in 6-week series called I Quit and as we talk about making New Year’s Resolutions what better area to deal with than our tendency to make excuses. Do you ever make an excuse… silly question I know because I think we all do at times and as I said excuses can create problems in our life and hold us back from what God wants to accomplish in us. The definition of an excuse is “a reason or explanation put forward to defend or justify a fault or offense.” We make excuses for all sorts of things. There are excuses for why a person can't get the job they want, or why debt can't be paid off, or why they need to buy that brand new car, or why they can't improve their lives, and on and on it goes. Listen guys excuses are a waste of time, they won’t fix our problems, they hold us back, and they are not going to help us in the future. So then why do we feel the need to make excuses? Well there are a lot of reasons, but I think most of those reasons are driven by our fears. Fear of failure, fear of embarrassment, even fear of success, fear of change, fear of making a mistake, fear of taking responsibility, or the fear that comes from uncertainty. Somebody once said, Fear cuts deeper than a sword. So guys in order to successfully eliminate excuses we need to first remove all traces of fear. 2 Timothy 1:7NLT. That spirit of fear doesn’t come from God in fact it’s the very opposite of faith and the scripture says without faith it’s impossible to please God. You see faith is trusting and believing God where fear is to not trust God… to not believe Him… it’s to doubt that God even cares. And therefore, we feel the need to step in and justify or make excuses for our life and circumstances in an attempt to boost our own self-esteem. However, all you are doing is creating the illusion of security. So guys in 2019 let’s make the decision that we are going to Quit Making Excuses! But be ready… because as soon as you decide to do away with excuses… Satan will flood your mind with 100 reasons why you need to make an excuse. Friends when that happens you have to replace those lies with truth. Paul said in 2 Cor. 10:5NIV. Guys we need to demolish or get rid of those lies or those thoughts that set themselves up against the truth and knowledge of God. I can’t do that Steve… yes you can… we decide what we’re going to think about. Phil. 4:8NLT. Listen guys I’m not saying that life is not hard… I know it is… but so much has to do with the way we think about it. For instance, when you’re trying to lose weight don’t say, “well my mom and dad were both heavy, so I certainly won’t be able to lose weight.” Instead remind yourself, “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength, with God’s help I can lose that weight”. On other hand if you’re looking for excuses not to lose weight Satan will give you plenty. Or let’s say you have a lot of debt, so you say, “I know I owe a lot of people but you know I’m just not good with money, so I’m sure I’ll always be in debt.” Guys… stand on truth and say, “God is teaching me to be faithful with all that He has entrusted me with. And so, I’m going to stop making excuses and take the necessary steps to be debt free.” Luke 16:10NLT. Or maybe you catch yourself saying, “some people are just positive people… but my parents were negative and critical people so I’ve just learned it from them.” Well that’s fine… but you need to unlearn it. Believe truth, “I have the mind of Christ and God is renewing my mind daily. 1 Corinthians 2:16NIV. So when you start to feel bad about yourself and start sliding into those all-too-familiar thoughts, remember that if you follow Christ, the same spirit that raised Christ from the dead lives inside of us. Romans 8:11NLT. Listen guys whenever you are tempted to make excuses you need to remember that you are created in the image of God. He has a grand design for you and good works that He planned in advance for you to do. Eph. 2:10NLT. You have heard me say it before but guys if you’re not dead you are not done, God still has significant things for you to accomplish. So again, you’ve got to capture these wrong thoughts that are causing you to justify your actions and replace them with truth. Because if you continue to make excuses… you are insulting God’s power by saying I don’t trust you to come through. Jesus tells a story in Luke 14:16-18aNLT. So this guy is preparing a party and he invites a lot of guests. But they all come up with lame excuses, I just bought a field and I need to go see it… another guy says I bought 5 pairs of Oxen and I want to try them out… I am not a farm boy but what does that even mean… how do you try out Oxen? Excuse after excuse after excuse, much like the silly excuses we come up with on why we can’t do what God has asked us to do. You know statistics tell us by the end of January 40% of New Year’s resolutions are already abandoned… and by the middle of February 75% of the people have given up on their resolutions. Of course, most people have good intentions… but what we need are God intentions. Do you see the difference… good intentions center around us… good intentions are me centered. While God intentions are centered around God and His plan for my life. So, if I know this is what God wants for my life, then I know He won’t ask me to do anything He won’t give me the power to follow it through. So instead of asking what do I want to be different about my life, it’s approaching it with the attitude what does God want different about my life? Now hopefully what God wants for your life is the same thing you want but when you know it’s what God wants then you approach it with more courage and confidence. So guys there are 2 questions I put in your notes that I want you to answer. What is it that God want you to do in 2019? Maybe there is a ministry God wants you to serve in, or maybe there’s someone he wants you to invite to church, maybe He wants you to give an amount of money, or maybe He wants you to be Baptized or to work through a Discipleship Growth Plan, whatever it is guys I want you to write on your notes right now. Some of you aren’t writing… seriously you are telling me there is nothing God wants you to do in 2019? Second question, Why does God want me to do this? Listen when you connect the spiritual why with the what there is a lot more motivation to follow through. For instance, if I asked you what God wanted you to do and you said lose weight and start exercising, well why? Because I don’t look good in my skinny jeans! No! The reason why I want to lose weight and exercise is because my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and God wants me to honor him by caring for this temple. Do you see the difference? When I understand my why the motivation suddenly increases to follow through with the what. Or I could say well I want to pray with my wife in 2019… why? Well that’s what the pastor said I should do. No… you pray together with your spouse so that you are putting Christ in the center of your marriage and getting the mind of Christ for what He wants the two of you to do. Does that make sense? If God is the author of your change and you know why He wants you to make this change you will be motivated to follow through because this is what God wants for me. Another example I’m reminded of is Moses, in Exodus 4 we see 2M plus Jews had been in bondage for over 400 years, and God asked Moses to help deliver them from slavery. You say well Steve that was a pretty big ask… Yes it certainly was but that’s the point God won’t ask you to do something without giving you the ability to carry it out. God says Moses you are my guy… Moses says no God I’m not your guy. And the excuses begin to fly! Exodus 4:10NLT. God I’m not good with words… I get tongue-tied. I don’t like public speaking God. He was doing the same thing we are guilty of doing, he was looking at his own inabilities rather than God’s unlimited power! Vs 11. God gets in his face and says, who do you think gives people the ability to speak or to hear or to see? And in case Moses doesn’t get the obvious, God helps him out… it’s Me Moses… I’m the one that does those things. Vs 12 Now Go!! Do what I’m asking of you… I will give you what to say. I think God is saying the same thing to all of us. No Go!! Stop with all the excuses all ready, quit thinking about it, stop praying about it and as Nike says Just Do It! Listen if you do your part God is faithful to do His part. So whatever it is guys, just do what God is calling you to do. But Steve I’m just not very talented. Listen to what Paul said in Phil. 3:12-13NLT. Paul is saying I haven’t arrived yet, I still have more to learn and I still need to grow but one thing I’m going to do… (no excuses) forget the past (no excuses) I’m going to press and be obedient to the Lord (no excuses). Listen guys God is aware of your inabilities and your weaknesses so stop making excuses and just trust Him. Listen people that understand who they are in Christ don’t make excuses, because they know in order to experience God’s best in their life they must do what God has asked them to do. So my friends, if you want a better marriage in 2019, if you want to be in better physical shape in 2019, if you want to get your finances in order in 2019, if you want to be a better parent in 2019, if you want a discipleship plan in 2019, then stop making excuses and start improving your life tonight – don’t wait until tomorrow – start changing your life for the better, NOW. Of course, there are those who would say, but it’s so hard… yes it is… if it were easy then everyone would accomplish their goals, everyone would accomplish great things for God, but success is reserved for those who persevere no matter what obstacles comes their way, they wake up every day with the determination to create a better life for themselves. Listen my friends, one of the best habits you can build into your life is to proactively make a commitment to stop making excuses and start taking responsibility for your life. When you realize that you are the one responsible for your life then you will stop trying to blame everyone else. Successful people take action, they don’t sit around complaining or making excuses, they have the courage to achieve all that God has for us. 1 Timothy 1:7NLT. God has given you the power or the self-discipline to take responsibility for yourself and Quit Making Excuses. Pray