

Reasons vs. Excuses

January 1995

On new year's eve, our girls were playing on the trampoline with their friends who were visiting from Germany. Sometime during the jumping and bouncing, Marissa's hand was sat on and, unbeknownst to us, three fingers were fractured.

So caught up was Marissa in all the fun (and afraid that telling Mom and Dad of her injury would end the fun) that she did not cry or complain. Only when all the kids came in did she let on that she had been hurt. Still not wanting to miss out on her friends' visit, she continued to play one-handed through the evening. It was not until the next afternoon that X-rays revealed the fractures. The kid is as tough as nails.

Then I began to wonder: can this possibly be the same child that often finds creative reasons not to do various chores assigned by her parents? What happens to the toughness, resilience and determination when the activity at hand is cleaning up her bedroom instead of jumping on the trampoline?

But don't we all do the same thing? That which is a minor irritation in one context can put us totally out of commission in another. For example, brethren will sometimes excuse themselves from worship over a condition that will not keep them from their job. They would not dare offer the same excuse to the boss that they offer to the Lord for their absence.

The fact is that we have all cheerfully endured discomfort, inconvenience, sickness, expense, etc. for the sake of something we desired but have complained, procrastinated, and protested over the same conditions when the task was unpleasant.

Peter Bentley, a blind brother in London, taught me an unforgettable lesson on the difference between excuses and reasons. When we went door-knocking or letter-boxing, Peter was always there doing his part. I have seen him scratched by rose bushes and fall down stairs he couldn't see, walk into gates, posts, trees and foul his shoes in dog feces.

Not one time in four years of working beside Peter did I hear him utter a single complaint or a word of discouragement. Here was a man who had good reasons for limited service but who never used them as an excuse for sitting at home.

Let us make sure that we are giving God our best and that our efforts are no less than what we invest in other endeavors.