Derailing excuses

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In the book, “The Little Engine That Could,” we’re encouraged to think we can do something despite the obstacles in our path. The little blue engine that agreed to carry the stranded passengers and load of goods was climbing a mountain is an illustration of perseverance.

Little Blue Engine huffed and puffed her way to her goal despite the physical strain. This book reminds us that we can achieve anything if we put our mind to it.

Tucked inside this tale is another story. Little Blue Engine wasn’t the first engine called upon for help. Three other engines were approached and each one had an excuse for not helping.

The first one thought it was beneath him to carry such things as toys, food, and stuffed animals. He didn’t want his reputation to be hurt.

The second engine was strong enough to pull them, but he was so full of pride that he said “No!”

The third engine said that he was too tired.

Then came Little Blue Engine, who was really too small for the job and who had never been over the mountain. She had valid reasons to say no, but this little engine did something that others hadn’t. She thought about the boys and girls who would be the recipients of the cargo she’d be carrying. In spite of the difficulties she faced, Little Blue Engine’s willingness to serve motivated her to say “Yes!”

What kinds of excuses do we often use when God asks us to do things? Are we the engine that was too tired? Maybe we are the shiny engine and don’t want to reach out to those who might “smudge” us and make us seem less appealing. Or perhaps, we are the strong engine who was bursting with so much pride that we think we only have to serve when, where, and how we want to.

If we see ourselves as one of those first three engines, let’s ask God to forgive us for making excuses. Let’s ask God to give us a spirit willing to serve, the courage to believe we can do what He’s called us to do, and the strength to see it through. With God, we don’t have to think we can; we can know we can.

“So not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor, ‘Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it’–when you have it with you. Proverbs, 3:27, 28 (ESV)