

Availability

vs. Self-Centeredness

Availability is simplifying our daily needs so we are ready and able to serve those whom God brings to us.

Definition

When Jesus called his disciples, He used the verb *akoloutheo*, which means “to accompany, to join one as a disciple.” He taught them to not be hindered by personal cares and distractions and explained the sacrifices they would make to serve Him: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). The Greek word for *deny* is *aparneomai*, meaning “to forget one’s self, lose sight of one’s self and one’s own interests.”

Availability Begins by Choosing One Leader

Availability is impossible to demonstrate if we try to serve more than one leader. “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other” (Matthew 6:24).

Every person must choose to serve the Lord, or self will be served by seeking after such things as money, popularity, or possessions. Joshua stated, “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15).

Availability Is Basic to Discipleship

When Jesus called His disciples, He called them to a life of

availability. The whole concept of discipleship is rooted in being available for training and serving. In the days of Jesus, a person who wanted to acquire knowledge from a master teacher would set aside his personal agenda and literally follow the teacher. Because of this practice, these people were called “followers.”

Today, this very same practice is carried out as students leave their homes and go to places of learning to be taught by experienced teachers.

Be a “Giver” Rather Than a “Taker”

Jesus made it clear to His disciples that they must have the motivation of being givers rather than takers. “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24).

Jesus then explained this paradox: if someone tries to keep his life for his own goals, he will lose it. “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 16:25).

A taker often focuses on getting money. Yet Jesus asked, “What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Matthew 16:26).



The boat was empty and available, so when the Master came, it was used to teach multitudes how to find life. (See Matthew 13:2.)

When we serve God-given authorities as if we are serving the Lord, it is hard to distinguish which voice is calling us. This was the experience of young Samuel. (See I Samuel 3.)

“Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work.” —Titus 3:1

Availability is giving our hearts—not just our hands—to a task.

“I used to ask God to help me. Then I asked if I might help Him. I ended up by asking Him to do His work through me.”

—J. Hudson Taylor

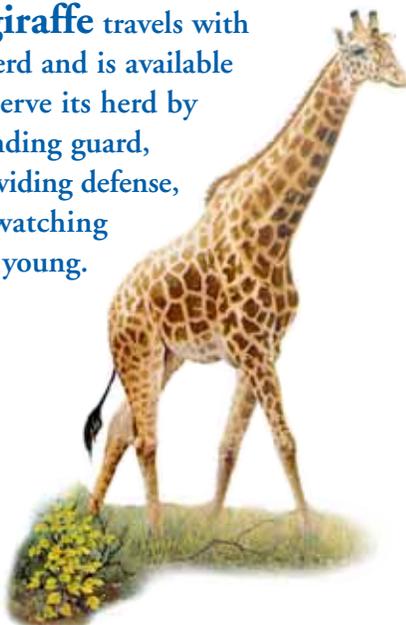


We are motivated to be available if we recognize how our tasks accomplish part of a greater objective.

When three bricklayers were asked what they were doing, the first answered, “I am making a living.” The second said, “I am building a wall.” But the third responded with a smile, “I am building a great cathedral!”

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” —Matthew 5:16

A giraffe travels with a herd and is available to serve its herd by standing guard, providing defense, or watching the young.



Availability Is Based on the Joy of Making Others Successful

True happiness is found not in receiving things, but in giving that which will truly benefit the lives of others. Paul praised Timothy for his availability. “For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel” (Philippians 2:20–22).

Jesus is the ultimate example of availability. He lived among people who had needs and served them from early morning until night. He laid down His life that we might have life, and now He makes intercession for us at the right hand of God. (See Romans 8:34.)

How Can We Develop Availability?

1. By not seeking our own pleasure

The pleasures of the world dissipate time, energy, and assets. Proverbs says, “Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings” (Proverbs 31:3). The futility of seeking our own pleasure is accurately described by the word *amusement*, derived from the root words *a*, meaning “not,” and *muser*, meaning “to think.”

2. By not seeking great achievements for ourselves

“Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not” (Jeremiah 45:5). By seeking our own achievements, we will be distracted from achieving the goals

of those whom we serve, and we will tend to use others to serve us and our goals.

3. By developing efficiency in meeting personal needs

The more organized our personal lives and the less we need to accomplish for ourselves, the more time, energy, and resources we will have to accomplish the tasks of those we serve. Paul stated, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Philippians 3:8).

4. By discovering the priorities of those whom we serve

Availability means knowing when needs occur and which needs have priority. If we try to decide this for ourselves, we risk making unnecessary sacrifices. “To obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Samuel 15:22).

Personal Evaluation

How available are you for service?

- Do you choose to serve God rather than money?
- Do you purpose to be a giver rather than a taker?
- Do you work to make others successful?
- Do you keep your personal responsibilities to a minimum?
- Do you deny yourself distracting pleasures?
- Do you set aside personal ambitions in order to advance the kingdom of God and His righteousness?