

When You Need It

Offer Yourself to Serve Others

When planning a big trip, you might need to book a flight, a rental car, or maybe a hotel room. But imagine showing up at the airport to discover there aren't any seats left on your flight, no cars in the rental car lot, or no vacant rooms at your hotel. What good is booking something in advance if no one's going to hold it for you? Don't you expect your reservation to be available when you need it?

We're modeling our dedication after Jesus' dedication, as we continue our [Cross Training](#) journey. Dedication includes counting the cost, wholeheartedness, establishing priorities, and making ourselves available to others. So how can we reserve ourselves to guarantee we're available to others?

What You Need to Know

Jesus' disciples often tried to shield him from interruptions, like when a blind man tried to talk to him or when small children approached (Luke 18:35-43; Mark 10:13-16). Yet Jesus constantly made himself available to the disgraced and rejected. Remember his response when questioned about eating with sinners? *"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."* (Matt. 9:12-13).

Sometimes I make myself an island, but Christ crossed the gulf to come near to us. He left the security of heaven and became like us, to help us at incredible cost (Phil. 2:5-8; John 1:10-14). He comes with open arms, ready to receive. *"Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God"* (Rom. 15:7). What would happen if you cleared your schedule to focus on your family, friends, and neighbors who need you? How much more impact could you have for others if you prioritized their needs above yours (Phil. 2:3-4)? You might be busy — even with important spiritual work — but making yourself available to someone in a time of need is worth the time (Luke 10:29-37; 8:43-48).

What You Need to Do

Being available to others requires you to show up, offer your support, and get deeply involved in people's lives. How do you do that? It begins by simply saying, "Yes!" Commit yourself to the work, no matter what's required. We pour ourselves out for others, spending and being spent, just like Paul did for the early church (Phil. 2:17-18; 2 Cor. 12:15).

First, we can deeply listen to someone and offer specific and targeted prayers to God about their struggles. James tells us to *"confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working"* (James 5:16). Grow your skills as a listener, slow to judge, and trustworthy to keep a friend's words in confidence. Try to invest in relationships before the crisis comes.

Second, let's take action and get involved. While our prayers are a mighty way to fight for each other, don't just offer "thoughts and prayers" as a way to keep people at arm's length. Saying "*Be warmed and filled*" only has power when you take the next step by getting involved, putting our love to work (James 2:15-16; 1 John 3:18)!

Third, let's move beyond patronizing "advice" to the more difficult work of burden-bearing and sharing the load (Gal. 6:1-2). Commit to listening, asking questions, and sharing in someone's challenges as you think, feel, and live through them together. "*Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. ... Rejoice **with** those who rejoice, weep **with** those who weep*" (Rom. 12:13-15). With "*humility, count others more significant than yourselves.*" Don't just look out for your interests, "*but also to the interests of others*" (Phil. 2:3-5).

Through the Week

- **Read** — Mark 10:13-16; Luke 10:29-37; Acts 4:32-37; Phil. 2:17-30; Gal. 6:1-10
- **Reflect** — Ask yourself, "*What opportunities to connect and serve lie just beyond my comfort zone?*"
- **Request** — Pray, "*Lord, here I am! Send me*" (cf. Isa. 6:8).
- **Respond** — Check in with three people, listening for ways to bless them through quality time, prayer, and service.
- **Reach Out** — Ask someone, "*How have your relationships evolved when you've gotten more involved?*"