

6. Be Available

Matthew 1:20-23; Matthew 28:20

Friday, 5:30pm

I let out a sigh as I slumped onto the couch. After a long week of work and ministry, I wanted nothing more than to curl up and unwind.

I glanced at my watch. "45 minutes more". I had arranged to meet a friend who seemed to be going through a tough time. It felt like a good idea when I reached out, but in the tiredness of this moment, I was starting to regret doing so. "Maybe I should just tell him that I'm not feeling too well and ask to reschedule". I glanced down at my watch again, counting the minutes 'til I had to leave the comfort of my couch. "It's no good being there if I'm tired... right? I should stay home if I can't support him properly, that'll be best for the both of us." That train of thought seemed somewhat reasonable as I reached for my phone. But as I typed out my excuse, I couldn't help but feel like I wasn't making a God honouring decision.

I slowly deleted the text I was about to send. I realised that by thinking the way I did, I subconsciously saw myself as the most important person in the conversation, not God. If I truly believed that God was the One who brought comfort and encouragement, what I needed to do was just to avail myself and be present, trusting that God would use me to support my friend.

I put down my phone and sighed again. This time because I knew that I had almost disobeyed God because of my selfishness. I thanked God for His grace and prayed for forgiveness, asking that God would remind me that my time is not my own but God's to use. I prayed that I would simply be available and for God to use me in my weakness.

I got off the couch, no less tired but encouraged in spirit: I knew that God could use me to strengthen my friend that night.

"Fixing our eyes on Jesus, as we thought about in the previous chapter, does not mean we close our eyes to the needs of people around us. Shaking off unhelpful distractions to our faith does not mean we refuse to be distracted by the cries for help that seem to slow us down in our fast-paced lives. Being unshakeable and being available go together because being present for others reflects the fact that Jesus was present for others... We can be the means by which our neighbours, colleagues, friends and family can come to experience the presence of God. We will never be omnipresent like Jesus, however much we try, but we can learn from Jesus, Immanuel, to BE AVAILABLE." (p. 49)

BE: Think of all the people you will encounter/have encountered today. What are their needs? How available are you to them?

SAY: Why is it hard for Celia to be available to her colleagues and employees? Why is it hard for us sometimes to be available? Who around us in our communities would benefit most from a listening ear, a shoulder to lean on, or a friend? How could your church make itself more available to the vulnerable in your community?

DO: Look through your diary. Do you need to find more space or fill more space in order to become more available to others?