Being Available

Acts 10:1-20

• If I were to ask you this evening if you believe
  o God has the power to do great things,
    ▪ I believe all of you would raise your hands in agreement.
• If I were to tell you that I believe God wants
  o to do something special in your life,
    ▪ most, if not all of you would still agree with me.
• However, the truth is that God cannot,
  o indeed He will not,
    ▪ do some great work in our lives
      • – through us –
    ▪ unless we make ourselves available to Him.

• Our 2016 theme, Available, is designed to reinforce the fact
  o that God uses those who are available.

• That is probably the most basic statement that you will ever hear.
  o It is not a revelation of any type.
• However, even though we all know
  o that God works through those
    ▪ who have made themselves available,
  o we don’t always genuinely make ourselves available to him.
• This year we want to compel you
  o to consciously make room
    ▪ for God to work in your life.

• We all want God to do great things.
  o We all want to have a great revival.
    ▪ We all want to see souls won
      • for the kingdom of God.
• We even expect God to do all of these things.
  o But, all too often, we are too busy
    ▪ or preoccupied with our lives
      • to give Him the opportunity
        o to do these things for us!

• When we hear that he has done them somewhere else
  o we rejoice and wishfully wonder
    ▪ when our turn will come.
• What we fail to realize
  o is that we are not waiting on God.
• Rather, He is waiting on us.

• He is waiting for us
  o to make ourselves available
    ▪ for a move of God in our lives.

• He is waiting for us
  o to make ourselves available
    ▪ for a miracle to happen.

• He is waiting for us
  o to make ourselves available
    ▪ for a revival to break out.

• Here’s the thing:
  o Just because we say we are available to God,
    ▪ doesn’t necessarily mean that we truly are.

• It doesn’t cost me anything to declare
  o that I am available for God to work in my life.

• However, the truth is that genuine availability
  o may cost me everything.

• Let me illustrate the principle.
  o I want to lose wait.
    ▪ As a matter of fact, I’m available
      • for a tremendous diet to take place.
  o There is easily 75 or 80 pounds
    ▪ that I could spare
      • and still look quite healthy.

• But, until I actually commit myself to a viable diet,
  o my availability for weight loss
    ▪ is little more than wishful thinking.

• I really like good food.
  o As a matter of fact, it makes me feel pretty good
    ▪ to enjoy a well-made meal.
      • I take great pleasure in eating.

• Part of the reason why I’m constantly available
  o for a diet that never happens
    ▪ is because I’m not willing to sacrifice
      • that rewarding feeling
        o that a good meal brings to me.
  o All of those carbohydrates?
    ▪ They love me.
      • And, honey, I love them.
  o And, apparently, I’m more hungry for them
    ▪ than I am for a serious diet.
• This is the fatal flaw in our availability to God.
  o We all want to say amen
    ▪ when the preacher says,
      • if you make yourself available,
        o God will use you.
  o We will even raise our hands or voices
    ▪ and declare to God,
      • I’m available.
    ▪ Whatever you want God,
      • wherever you send me,
        o whatever you ask me to do.
  o But strangely enough,
    ▪ God never makes his wants known,
      • he never sends us anywhere,
        o and he never asks us to do anything.
    ▪ We are available for a miracle
      • that never seems to happen.

• Is that because God doesn’t make his wants known anymore?
  o Is it because He just doesn’t send folks
    ▪ to specific places for revival to break out anymore?
  o Or is it because He doesn’t really ask us
    ▪ to do much anymore?
• Not at all.
  o It is because, although we say we are available,
    ▪ we aren’t really that willing to put ourselves
      • in the kind of places where
        o God can speak to us,
      • where we can hear his voice,
        o where He can give us directions.

• There’s no shortage of lost people around us.
  o There is no shortage of potential revival in this city.
• There’s no shortage of possible miracles
  o that could occur in your life.
    ▪ God is able
      • and he is willing
        o but he needs a vessel to work through.

• Here’s the thing, until we actually commit
  o to putting ourselves in the kinds of places
    ▪ where we can hear the voice of God,
      • we will never hear his voice.

Being Available
o Until we actually put ourselves in the mindset
  ▪ where we are willing to follow
    • the directing of his spirit,
      o we will never receive directions from him.
o Until we are willing to listen to his voice
  ▪ and to seriously contemplate what he asks,
    • we will never see God do for us
      o what he does for others.

• Availability is more than a declaration.
o It is a commitment to “being available” to God.
  ▪ It is a commitment to put yourself in the place
    • where you can hear God speak to you.
  ▪ Its about making up your mind
    • that you will obey whatever God asks
      o then giving him the opportunity to ask.
  ▪ Its about determining that you will go
    • wherever he says go
      o then being sensitive enough to know
        ▪ where he’s saying to go.

• Until we make ourselves genuinely available to God,
o on a regular daily basis,
  ▪ our declaration of availability
    • will profit nothing.

• So, how do you become truly available to God?
o There are a lot of places in scripture that I could turn,
  ▪ however, we will look at one chapter
    • in the book of Acts tonight
      o and consider what it teaches us.

Acts 10:1-22
1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,

• Cornelius was a Roman soldier, a Gentile.
  o In the grand scheme of the story
    ▪ that makes him a bad guy.
      • He’s lost and he needs God.
  • But Cornelius is not your normal bad guy.

2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.
• Cornelius was hungry for God.
  o He was a pretty good guy for a bad guy.
    ▪ The Bible calls him a devout man
      • Who feared God
        o And gave to the poor.
      o On top of all of that,
        ▪ Cornelius prayed to God regularly.

• I want to point something out here,
  o availability is not predicated
    ▪ on how good or bad you are.
• Cornelius is as lost as they come
  o but because he determined to pray daily,
    ▪ because he genuinely sought God,
      • he became available to God.
• There’s the first step to truly becoming available.
  o You must open up the lines of communication
    ▪ between you and God.

• Many of us wouldn’t know
  o if God tried to tell us something
    ▪ or tried to give us some kind of direction
      • or desired to use us
        o because we never create the opportunity
          ▪ for communication with Him.
• You are not available
  o until you have some kind of regular time
    ▪ that you spend with God in prayer
      • and Bible reading.
• You can say you are available
  o But, honey, you’re just giving lip service to God.
• You aren’t available
  o until you’ve got some skin in the game!

3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.
4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.
5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter:
6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou outhest to do.
7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;
8 And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.
• Because Cornelius put himself in a place to hear from God,
  o he heard from God.
    ▪ What a novel idea.
• It really is that simple.
  o He made himself available to God.
    ▪ And God used that availability
      • to set him up for a miracle.
• God spoke to him.
  o And it frightened him.
    ▪ He didn’t expect that!
  o I’m sure he was sincere in his prayer
    ▪ But I’m also sure he never expected
      • an angel of God to speak to him
        o while he was praying.
• Too often prayer is about us,
  o And not about God.
• We don’t expect God to speak.
  o We don’t even make an opportunity for Him to speak.
    ▪ We think that if we aren’t saying something
      • then we aren’t praying.
  o We are consumed with our wish list of prayer requests.
    ▪ If all you ever do is inform God
      • of everything you want him to do,
        o you haven’t even begun
          ▪ to scratch the surface of prayer.
  o Prayer isn’t just one-way communication.
    ▪ God wants to speak to you too.
• Sometimes, in the middle of your routine prayer
  o God breaks through our routine
    ▪ and moves in a special way.
• He begins to speak to us,
  o urging us to do something,
    ▪ to call someone,
      • to step out of our comfort zone
  o and we immediately begin to doubt
    ▪ that it is really him.
• It frightens us, like it frightened Cornelius
  o Because God is trying to push us
    ▪ outside of what we are comfortable with.
  o Cornelius was a religious man.
    ▪ But he needed a divine move of God.
      • So God pushed him to do something out of the ordinary.
Had he said no
  ▪ And elected to stay in his comfort zone
    • He would never have been saved!
• But Cornelius, the bad guy, the lost sinner,
  o had enough faith to do
    ▪ what God told him to do.
    • He obeyed God.
• Part of being available
  o is opening up the lines of communication.
    ▪ However that's not all there is to it.
• We have to be willing
  o to actually follow through
    ▪ on what God impresses us to do.
• Sometimes we have heard the voice of God
  o But have hesitated to actually respond
    ▪ And act on faith in what God has said to do.
• You aren't available until you are obedient.
  o The miracle will never happen.
    ▪ Revival will never break out.
      • Your life will never be transformed.
        o Until you obey God.

• But that's not the end of the story.
  o Even though Cornelius has prayed,
    ▪ heard from God
      • and even obeyed God,
        o the miracle hasn't happened yet.
  o On the other end of the miracle,
    ▪ there had to be someone else
      • who was also available
        o and also willing to obey God.

9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:
10 And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,

• At around noon, Peter was praying.
  o He was making himself available.
    ▪ But then life began to intrude
      • on his prayer time.
        o He got hungry.
• Have you ever had that to happen to you?
  o Almost every time I pray,
    ▪ life tries to break in!
      • I remember bills that need to be paid,
        o Commitments that need to be kept.
      • I’m possessed with the urge to go do something else.
        o To go fix some problem
          ▪ that has cropped up in my mind.

• Watch what Peter does.
  o Apparently he called down to the kitchen
    ▪ and ordered some lunch
      • but he kept on praying
        o and that’s when God stepped in.

• Sometimes you have to persevere in prayer
  o before you get to the place
    ▪ where you are truly available to God.
  o Sometimes you have to press past the distractions.
    ▪ Sometimes you have to hang in there through the intrusions.
      • Being available means that you have to be willing
        o to put everything else on hold.

11 And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending upon him, as it had been a
great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:
12 Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and
creeping things, and fowls of the air.
13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.
14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or
unclean.
15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that
call not thou common.
16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

• Now that Peter has made himself available,
  o Now that he has pushed through the distraction,
    ▪ God speaks to Peter.
  o Have you ever wondered
    ▪ what would have come of Cornelius
      • if Peter had gone ahead and went to lunch?
• Now, here’s the thing about Peter
  o He’s the good guy in the story
    ▪ but he’s also a little hard headed.
• God has to give him the same message 3 times
  o before he really gets it.
    ▪ And, even then, Peter doubted himself
      • wondering if this was really God!
17 Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,
18 And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.
19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.
20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

• Even though Peter wasn’t quite sure
  o what to make of the thing
    ▪ that God was speaking to him,
    ▪ he continued to dwell on it.
    o He thought about it.
  o And, as he contemplated the word of God, 
    ▪ God began to clarify it in his heart.
• When you aren’t sure if it is really God
  o Go back to prayer.
    ▪ Pray again tomorrow and the next day.
    ▪ God will confirm his word if you will
      o make yourself available.
• What I’m trying to tell you tonight
  o is that God is looking for people
    ▪ who will be faithful to him.
  o People who will walk with God,
    ▪ listen to His voice,
    ▪ obey His Word
      o and carry out His plan in the earth.
• If God can find a man or a woman
  o who will make themselves available
    ▪ and be willing to act on His Word
    ▪ regardless of how impossible,
      o unreasonable
      ▪ and difficult it may seem,
    ▪ God’s power and ability
      ▪ will flow through that human vessel
      o and touch the world with God’s greatness.
• Somewhere in your world
  o There is a lost soul that is available for a revival
    ▪ That is desperately waiting for
      ▪ A child of God to make themselves available!
• The truth is, God is not limited in power.
  o God is only limited by people
    ▪ who are more in tune
      • with the carnal things of life
        o than they are with the voice of God.
  o If we continue to put the carnal things of this world
    ▪ ahead of the need to make ourselves available to God
      • we will miss out on what God wants to do.
  o Just like I will miss out on
    ▪ the greatest weight loss record of my life
      • if I continue to put my delight in food
        o ahead of my desire to lose weight.

• God is looking for people who are willing
  o to commit to times of prayer
    ▪ and fellowship with Him.
  o People who are committed
    ▪ to obey the Word of God
      • and not just get excited about it.
  o People who are willing to pull aside
    ▪ from the busyness of modern life
      • and get alone with God
        o so He can guide us,
          ▪ teach us,
            • and speak to us.
  o Make yourself available to Him in worship
    ▪ and He will begin to manifest
      • His character,
      • His nature,
      • His glory
      • and His power in you.

<<PRAYER>>

• Another way you can make yourself available to God
  o is through a commitment
    ▪ to help serve in His kingdom.
• There are many roles in which you can serve in this church.
  o We have a sign up sheet that shows some of the ways
    ▪ that you can make yourself available
      • to help with things around the church.
• A couple of particular needs that we have
  o are for help with the cleaning crew
    ▪ and help getting kids to and from services.
• Please check out our Available sign in sheet.