

## Check Availability: Making Room When Life Feels Restless!

### Week 4: Marginal Mission

I. We're continuing our series called Check Availability which is aimed at making room in what often feels like restless lives. How do we have breathing room or margin in our lives and why does it matter that we do so? To be super frank, as Christ-followers we're called to model the life that Jesus led. We begin that process by accepting His death and resurrection as the only doorway to new life. We come to Jesus by grace through faith. We can't prove we're worthy disciples. We come to Jesus broken and He gives us a heart transplant along with the Holy Spirit. We follow from a position of security in Christ and as we relinquish more and more of our lives to Christ daily, the Spirit transforms us more into the image of Christ. It's not a linear process. It can be quite messy, but God is faithful to bring the work He started to completion.

II. Are we Bending our lives to the Book and getting to know this Lord we serve and follow? As we do we notice that Jesus modeled for us how we spend and think about time. Jesus was available. He invested His life in the people around Him. Jesus was a King, but He didn't have a court or palace. Jesus was a teacher, but He didn't have a classroom. Jesus was a priest, but He didn't have a church. Why? Because He chose to Do Life Together with people. Messy, broken, frustrating people!

A. Here's the big takeaway for today:

[Slide]: Jesus saw the mission in what we see as marginal!

B. When we do a series of messages on time and availability to God and others, our first thought might be to either brush it aside or cut back our schedule so that we have breathing room. To that end I would say please don't brush this aside and yes there are times when our schedules get so packed that we have zero margin for connecting with God and others. That's a sinful place to be and a dangerous place to be. That's when burnout happens, or anxiety can happen. We get restless and detached from the very anchor that is the foundation of our lives. We can come up with a thousand excuses but if we don't have time for God first and some margin to invest our lives in other people, something is out of balance. We might say yes, but we just started a business. Or yes, but we are parents with busy kids. There are lots of great things in the world, but if anything becomes the center of our world apart from Christ it is a recipe for disaster.

C. It's common to hear people say, "you got to put God first in your life." O.k., I agree with that statement, but what does that practically look like? We're always looking for the loophole. We say put God first, then family, then church, then our career, then hobbies, etc., when a much better way of putting God first is to say, "God, my heart is to put You first in my family. I want to put You first in my service to You. I want to put You first in my career. I want to put You first in how I view my free time." That is a revolutionary view on how we view our lives.

1. Could you imagine if just the 400 hundred or so folks listening to this message made the decision to put God first in our families, in our careers, in our conversations with classmates or neighbors? It could change our city! And here's how the series comes full circle from the first week we talked about Sabbath. For those who are Christ-followers we're not overtaken by the restlessness of our environment because we enter every situation from a position of Sabbath rest. God is already pleased with me, and I have nothing to prove. My identity is secured in my relationship with the living God knowing that He'll never leave me nor forsake me. If I'm living my life in conjunction with the tailwind of the Holy Spirit, I can rest in the reality that God is for me. Even when life throws us a curve ball, God is ahead of me working all things together for good. That allows us to step off the treadmill of life, take a deep breath, and look at our world from an entirely different lens. We start looking at what the world deems marginal in a very Jesus way. What we see as marginal, Jesus sees as missional!

D. Turn with me to Luke 10:25-37. It's likely a familiar story for most so I'm not going to read the entire passage. But if you're not a Christ-follower yet or a new believer, please read the passage in its entirety at some point this week. It's a powerful story! It's the parable of the Good Samaritan and it begins with an expert in the law posing a question to Jesus. He wasn't asking a genuine question, but one in the hopes of tripping Jesus up. Here's what the lawyer asks:

**Luke 10: 25 (CSB) [Slide]: “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”**

1. **That’s a really important question to ask! The lawyer is basically asking Jesus, “how do I get to heaven?”**  
Jesus is always taking our formulas and checklist and throwing them out the window. It’s one of the things I love about Jesus, but if I’m being real, super frustrating too. We want to be in control, and we want to be right, and Jesus doesn’t let us play that game. **Jesus doesn’t give the guy an answer based off Jesus’s authority (which He could have rightfully done!), and instead calls the man’s attention to their common source of authority:**

**[Slide]: God’s Word.**

- a. **What does the law say?** Or in our language, **what does the Bible say?** The lawyer is quick to respond with **a mash up of two verses, one from Leviticus and the other Deuteronomy:**

**Luke 10:27 (CSB) [Slide]: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,” and “your neighbor as yourself.”**

- b. **Jesus says, “Great! You got it! Go do this and you’ll live!”** But like all humans tend to do, the guy couldn’t leave it alone. He wanted to find the loophole and **asked Jesus one more question:**

**Luke 10:29 (CSB) [Slide]: “And who is my neighbor?”**

2. Jesus decides to answer the question in typical fashion. He opts to share a story! Here’s how it begins:

**Luke 10:30 (CSB) [Slide]: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, beat him up, and fled, leaving him half dead.”**

- a. Let’s understand some of the context. A man was traveling down from Jerusalem to Jericho. Jerusalem sits up high from the surrounding areas at about 2,600 ft above sea level. Jericho sits about 800 ft below sea level and the highway between Jerusalem and Jericho is only 17 miles long. It’s a mountainous road with lots of caves and hiding spots. It was a dangerous highway prone to what we would call today, terrorist groups. **Those hearing the story would have likely taken this parable initially in nationalistic thought. Someone traveling down from Jerusalem would have likely been a good Jewish person traveling back from business or the temple and a group of thugs jumped him, took his money and left him for dead! The emotion would have been palpable. The outrage!**

- b. **But things immediately start looking up for the man laying half dead in the ditch!**

**Luke 10:31a (CSB) [Slide]: A priest happened to be going down the road.**

- (1) **The sense of the verse is God’s providential hand coming to fruition.** Right at the time this guy was left for dead this priest “happened” to be going down the road!

**Luke 10:31b (CSB) [Slide]: When he saw him, he passed by on the other side.**

- (a) There’s been a lot of ink spilled over the decision of this priest to ignore the man and pass on the other side. To me, if we look closely, **we can piece together easily what’s taking place. The regulations about ceremonial uncleanness don’t apply here. It was common for priests to travel into Jerusalem for a designated period to do their duty in the temple.** That’s how the temple functioned. **This priest was traveling “down” the road heading back home. He had already done his duty and was clocked out.** This isn’t about a priest who was worried about uncleanness. He was clocked out and ready to get to the house!  
**He walked by on the other side because he didn’t want to notice the unnoticeable.**
- (b) **When we say, “put God first and this thing second and this thing third”, we come up with a theological framework that justifies actions so contrary to the heart of God.** And I’ve done this! My God box is over here, and my time is over there. **I did these things for God so now let me be and have my time. The man who was half-dead in a ditch was in the margin.** Literally, he was off to one side of the road, **so the priest was able to move to the other side and pretend like he didn’t see anything.** The other way the man was in the margin was the fact the priest had already fulfilled his “ministry.” The priest had already gone to Jerusalem and checked his box. He had calendared in his week or two in Jerusalem and now he needed to get back to his family. **Helping a half dead man would have been a major disruption and he hadn’t built that into his schedule.**

He wasn't available to step into a situation of that magnitude. I've been guilty of that one! I see a situation that's so severe that I convince myself of a free pass simply because it's beyond my capabilities or above my pay grade!

- (2) After the priest walks by on the other side another flicker of hope happens when a Levite comes on the scene. A Levite was an associate priest around the temple. They handled the music, guarding the temple, and would help with the logistics of the sacrifices. The idea is that a Levite was more of a newbie around the temple and less jaded. Here's the young buck walking by, the future, and what happens?

[Slide]: The same thing!

- (3) For the guy laying half dead in the ditch things are looking despairingly. If a priest and a Levite both walked by and both took note of the situation and yet deemed it marginal enough to be inconsequential to their mission, who then could possibly give a rip?

Jesus is about to blow their minds!!!

[Slide]: But a Samaritan.....

- (a) That's another huge but! Samaritans and Jews hated each other. They were bitter enemies. Samaritans didn't just hangout in Jerusalem but would journey there for business. It's a parable so I don't want to press too far, but those hearing would have likely considered this Samaritan to be a business opportunist. Like a tax collector, someone to be despised.
- (b) The Samaritan is coming from a different perspective than the priest or Levite. How so? He came up on the man. He wasn't finished with the task at hand like the priest or the Levite. He was on his way to Jerusalem presumably to conduct business. But in a very Jesus way, the man looks and sees the mission in what others see as marginal! If anyone should get a free pass, it's the Samaritan, and yet he's the one person who makes margin for the mission!

- (c) This time when the Samaritan sees the man he responds with:

[Slide]: Compassion

- (d) What is compassion?

[Slide]: Seeing a need and acting on it!

- (e) The Samaritan didn't just pray for him, he moved toward him, bandaged him, comforted him, he gave him a ride, got him out of the elements and into shelter, and took care of him over night. The next day, the Samaritan gave a down payment to the innkeeper for anything the man needed. The Samaritan still went and took care of his business, but along the way he was open to what we call:

[Slide]: A divine disruption!

- (f) This guy made margin to step into the marginal for the sake of God's mission! Out of the three who was a neighbor?

[Slide]: The Samaritan.

### 3. At the end of the parable, the poor lawyer can't even bring himself to say the word "Samaritan."

He responds to Jesus's question with the response:

Luke 10:37 (CSB) [Slide]: "The one who showed mercy to him."

- a. Mercy is the idea of extending help to one who is helpless. Jesus says to go and do the same!
- b. Why would Jesus set such a high bar? We don't work our way into a relationship with God. We model the life of Jesus in response to what he's already done! But the extent to which we model the life of Jesus is the extent by which we understand what God has done for us in Christ!
- c. Maybe not physically, but spiritually we're all the guy in the ditch! Helpless in need of help! God brought us up out of the ditch through the sacrifice of His Son Jesus. He showed compassion and mercy on us. To the extent we extend compassion and mercy is the extent we understand what God has done for us!
- When we see our lives for what they are it changes everything!

Because putting God first on one side and putting how we interact with others on the other side doesn't compute anymore. It's two sides of the same coin.

d. We open up our lives daily with this posture:

[Slide]: How do I honor God in this moment?

E. That's the point! That's a question that can't be compartmentalized into a calendar, yet it ought to radically impact our calendar! Availability to God and others isn't something that we do on Sundays at 5:00, it's a lifestyle of the Christ-follower in response to His extreme mercy on each of us.

1. What am I saying? Cancel everything and become the next Mother Teresa?

No, that's not what I'm saying but two things to make this very practical:

[Slide]: Open up to divine disruption?

a. Most of our schedules are so packed we wouldn't even see a divine disruption if it smacked us. The key to this is spending time in God's Word and in prayer. Being in relationship with God and listening to His voice. The Spirit of God will pull at our hearts when we walk in step with Him and see a need.

2. Secondly,

[Slide]: Do for somebody what you would like to do for everybody!

a. Because we can't be all things for all people, we tend to throw our hands up and not do anything. That's a cop out! That's why we're a part of the body of Christ. None of us have what it takes to do everything for everybody, but we can all do something for somebody! Are we available? We have the power to drastically change our city and make an impact for Christ. I look forward to the difference that will be made this week!