

CHAPTER 11

HOW'S YOUR AVAILABILITY?



Biblical Lessons for Students, Athletes & More

Individual or Group Experience

FOCAL VERSE

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send?
And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!" Isaiah 6:8 (NIV)

WISE WORDS

"Basketball is one of those rare opportunities where you can make a difference,
not only for yourself, but for other people as well."
— Bill Walton

Introduction: Are You a Trophy or a Tool?

A trophy is an object that sits on a shelf to be looked at and admired. It boasts of pride and beauty. The life of a trophy is an easy life. Conversely, the life of a tool can be agonizing, yet full of purpose. The tool does not choose *where*, *when*, or *how* it will be used. No, tools are simply created with a unique purpose in mind and are at the mercy of the craftsman. As followers of Christ, we are called to be God's tools. If you've ever handled tools, then you know they get dinged up, dirty, and worn. They may sit in a tool box for a period of time and enjoy a season of rest, but eventually the Master carpenter will pick up the tools available to Him, and use them for His good and pleasing purposes.

Are you a trophy or a tool? Are you sitting comfortably on a shelf like a trophy, or are you willing and available to be used by God? Notice, I didn't ask if you're *ready and* available; I asked if you're *willing and* available. As we dive into chapter eleven, be thinking about the "trophy vs. tool" illustration. Be prepared to answer for yourself, "Am I a trophy or a tool?"

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Read the first two paragraphs then discuss:

- Dick DeVenzio said that a player who is constantly available to the ball defuses a lot of potentially troublesome situations.
 - What kind of troublesome situations might he be referring to?
 - Practically speaking, do you think praying, reading, and studying God's Word can also help defuse or prevent a lot of troubling situations? Explain?

But first...

Did you have an opportunity to pray for your coach or guide a negative conversation in a more positive direction since last session?

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"Watching the activity of God from a distance can never compare with the thrill of being fully involved in the Spirit's active work."

Henry and Mel Blackaby

"God is not concerned with your ability, God wants your availability."

Kirbyjon H. Caldwell

"The Christian walk was never meant to be easy. The 'trophy life' is easy. The trophy life is pretty. The trophy life looks really good on the outside, but is empty and full of pride on the inside."



Julie Ann Fitter



Being constantly available to the ball is of great benefit to you. If you're not available to the ball, you can't score. And who doesn't like to score? It's exciting to be part of the action. It's also exciting to be part of the action when you make yourself available to be used by God.

Did you know that God *wants* to use *you*? You may hear it referred to as "*being the hands and feet of Christ*." Being used by God is not confined to pastors, preachers, or teachers. *Anyone* can be an instrument or tool in God's hands. You just need to have a willing spirit, like Isaiah did when he said, "Here I am God, send me." Being the hands and feet of Jesus means to co-labor with Christ to serve, love, and minister to a world that is broken, hurting, and hopeless.

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At the bottom of page 72, I share a story of rolling down my window while at a stoplight, and simply saying, "hello," to a displaced man. It didn't cost me anything. It wasn't hard. But it did require action; it required *doing*. That simple act made the man feel seen, cared for, and valued. In his own words, he felt "recognized." As an athlete, you have a platform in which God can use you too. In the words of Bill Walton, "Basketball is one of those rare opportunities where you can make a difference, not only for yourself, but for other people as well."

- **List some practical ways in which you can be available to God. I'll get you started.**
 - Begin the day with worship. (Reading God's Word, praying, listening to worship music, etc). Personally speaking, when I start my day by seeking God first, I'm more inclined to seek opportunities to be used by Him as a result.
 - Ask a parent or guardian if there's anything around the house they need help with. Be prepared for "sure!" How will you respond?
 - Ask a friend how you can personally and privately pray for them.
 - It's your turn! **How can you be available to God today? Throughout the week?**

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Chalk Talk

- **Read through the parent, coach and player applications. Allow time for discussion.**

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Personal Training Session

- Don't skip over the quote by Neal A. Maxwell. "God does not begin by asking us about our *ability* but only about our *availability*, and if we then prove our *dependability*, He will increase our *capability*."
 - **Meditate on this quote. How does it apply to you as a basketball player?**
 - **How can you apply this quote to your spiritual walk with Jesus?**

Closing Comments:

As a former coach, I had players who were willing to set aside their personal comforts and interests to serve the team in whatever capacity would benefit the program. What did that look like? On most days, it meant physically pushing their bodies and minds beyond their comfort level. It also meant playing a position they might not be comfortable with because I asked them to. On rare occasions, it meant an athlete sacrificing a position on the "A" team to serve a greater need on the "B" team. One of my former athletes made such a sacrifice—a sacrifice that was incredibly humbling, and to be honest, embarrassing. But God, being faithful to His Word, exalted her to a place of honor; a place where He showed up in ways she never imagined. She discovered the goodness of God by being available and after much prayer, uttered the words, “Here I am. Send me!”

God is looking for workers who are willing to set aside their personal comforts and interests to follow Him and share in His ministry. He wants obedient, focused, and committed followers who will not only trust Him, but who will submit to His authority even when it's not comfortable or easy.

Jesus warned his disciples that following Him wasn't for the faint of heart. Matthew 16: 24-25 says, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it."

To truly serve Christ requires sacrifice. What are you willing to sacrifice to be the hands and feet of Christ? Your time? Your comfort? Your pride? Are *you* available to be used by God?

We will end today's lesson with this question:



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- End with Post Game Prayer.

*God has made you as you are
in order to use you as He planned.
J.C. Maculey*