

Practically applying the character quality of

availability

vs. Self-centeredness

"Making my own schedule and priorities secondary to the wishes of those I serve."

By: Stephen Leckenby

A phone rings at a pleasant suburban residence around 6:30 in the evening. Mrs. Suzy Businesswoman/Home-maker answers the phone. She has already been home for an hour preparing dinner for her family, all of which are also home except for her husband.

Suzy: "Hello?"

Husband: "Hi, honey.

A big request just came through. I have to stay at the office for a few more hours. I'll have to miss dinner tonight.

Suzy: "But, honey, this is our ONE dinner night together as a family. Can't you finish the project in the morning...?"

Husband: This is a really important project, and it just can't wait until the morning. Tell the kids I love them...."

Now, the husband in our scenario just demonstrated availability, right? He is making his schedule secondary to the wishes of those he serves, right? WRONG! He is, in reality, making his LIFE secondary to the wishes of those he serves...

Let's discuss this further. All of us have days where there is less day than there is work to do. Working late is going to happen no matter how hard we try to accomplish everything within the 9 - 5. But at some point,

we have to recognize that our availability to our work cannot take precedence over our availability to our family. And no matter what we think, the work usually CAN wait until the morning.

Commitment to Availability

- I will be ready when I am called
- I will find a way to help, not a way to hide
- I will be glad for the chance to serve
- I will check with the right person before I make commitments.

Blaming Availability

Over the last month or so, the Character Council of Indiana has been in the midst of an

office move. As a non-profit, our goal has been to make it happen with the least amount of expense. That of course means more work on our end. I have been very overwhelmed in my attempt to make all this happen WHILE trying to make sure that nothing in our day-to-day falls through the cracks. My wife has been very patient with me as we recognized that, in some instances, there were next-day deadlines that forced me to stay late. However, in the midst of all this, and in my desire to fulfill the wishes of those I serve, I became a little too consumed with it all. I quickly realized that, although I was doing a good thing and taking a great load off of others, I was, in a sense, just shifting the burden and stress on to relationships that should have been

higher priority in the first place.

In the midst of demonstrating a somewhat tunnel-visioned form of availability in the situation I just described, I sort of blew right passed balancing qualities such as Sensitivity and Discretion. The "blame" then was shifted to my responsibility to be "available." I think it is safe to say that, any time you blame one character quality for your lack of demonstrating another, you are probably failing with both. Yes, you need to be ready when called and be glad for the chance to serve, but not just at work. Prioritizing your life will help you to demonstrate character in balance and be available to address all the needs for which you are called to meet.

More to think about

We didn't even touch on how to handle priority changes mandated from the top or how to be effective in an atmosphere that does not allow you to set your own schedule. This month's Character Bulletin will address many of these issues. If you don't already receive a copy of this 16-page, full-color bulletin, give us a call and find out how you can subscribe today.

How AVAILABLE are you?

- Do you purpose to be a giver rather than a taker?
- Do you work to make others successful?
- Do you keep your personal responsibilities to a minimum?
- Do you deny yourself distracting pleasures?