



#### **A in PACE - AVAILABLE**

Greetings, Susan Caulder here. Former Lay Pastor and friend of Mel Steinbron.

I want to speak briefly about something simple but deeply powerful in our calling as Christian lay ministers: availability. In a world of constant motion, noise, and distraction, one of the most Christlike things we can offer is our presence—our full, undistracted, caring presence.

Scripture tells us that God is always available to His people. In Psalm 46:1 we read:  
"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

That phrase—"a very present help"—reminds us that presence is more than proximity. It's attention, compassion, and readiness to respond. As lay pastors, we're not called to fix every problem or have every answer—but we are called to be present.

Jesus modeled this ministry beautifully. In John 11, when Lazarus died, Jesus didn't rush to perform a miracle right away. First, He showed up. He wept with Mary and Martha (John 11:35). He didn't start with a solution; He started with presence. His availability allowed them to feel seen, heard, and loved in their pain.

Paul reminds us in Romans 12:15:  
"Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep."

This is the ministry of presence—being there when someone's world falls apart, when they get the diagnosis, when the marriage is struggling, or when the loneliness hits hard. Often, what people need most is not advice or theology, but someone who will simply be with them.

We can't all be Billy Grahams, but He asks us to be available. One of my flock families had a daughter who suffered with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis. I was their lay pastor for 10 years. This young lady died at age 30. Even though I had not been their lay pastor for close to 15 years (I had moved), I attended the funeral. Did I have to do that? No – did it make a difference to that family? – Yes. They treated me like a long lost friend, I was asked to sit with the family and I was introduced as their "special friend." I don't remember doing anything special while I was their lay pastor. I simply sent cards on holidays and birthdays, stopped by every now and then and on occasion made a phone call or delivered a plate of homemade cookies. I was intentional about reaching out to them and they remembered.

In Acts 3, Peter and John encounter a lame beggar. Peter says:  
"Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you..." (Acts 3:6)

What did Peter have? His time, his attention, his willingness to stop. And that's where God's power moved.

As lay pastors, we don't always carry resources, titles, or answers—but we carry the Spirit of Christ within us. We carry the capacity to show up. And that matters more than we often realize. So I encourage you: Make availability an essential part of your ministry. Answer the text. Sit beside the hospital bed. Pause to pray with someone in need. Let your time become someone's lifeline to God's love.

Because the ministry of presence says, "You are not alone." And in that sacred space, Jesus is there too!

Amen.