



DAILY DEVOTIONAL FRIDAY BIBLE STUDY FOR AUGUST 2, 2013

DO YOU TALK TO GOD?

Then Abraham said, "May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?" (Genesis 18:32, NIV)

COMMONLY, YOU'LL HEAR TOUR PROFESSIONALS speak of their on-course conversations. They talk to spectators, officials, the roving commentators, their playing companions, their caddies, and certainly themselves! But for all the post-round God-thanking I've heard through the years, I'm not sure I've ever heard a player say that he or she talked to God during the round. What I have heard are quiet divulgements about having prayed this little thing or that.

We all know that prayer is talking of a sort. But we make no instant connection. When someone tells you, "I prayed about it," you don't picture a conversation—two friends engaged in give-and-take. You don't picture God and Abraham.

In Genesis 18, God initiated his dialogue with Abraham on the basis of the patriarch's esteemed position as "father of the many nations" and his commitment to do and pass on what was right and just. God literally thought, *Now here's something I want to talk to Abraham about.* Then he began by telling Abraham that he was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.

What an intriguing conference this opened up. Abraham asked God if he would really enact such a wholesale judgment if a significant number of righteous people could be found in the city. He began at the number fifty, and by the time the exchange ended Abraham had extracted a promise from God not to destroy the city if only ten righteous people could be found.

It turned out, of course, that not even ten could be found and once Lot's family had been rushed out of Sodom the fire of God rained down. But what we see in the interval of conversation between God and Abraham is quite remarkable. It is not one man praying but two men talking (calling Yahweh here the incarnated Lord, in the same way we do with Jesus). Abraham, delivering all due respect, negotiated with God.

In reviewing our own prayers, we might wonder then if we really are engaged enough, open enough, bold enough with God. Are we only "saying prayers" to him, or are we seeking to turn his mind on a matter of real importance to us?

Opening questions: Talk, talk, talk

What do you like to talk about on the golf course? Do you think conversation hinders or helps your game? If you were to talk openly with God about one key matter today, what would it be?

Negotiating with God

Read Genesis 18:16-33. What do you find to be the tone of this conversation? Do you think God changed his mind or simply heard Abraham out? How was the outcome an answer to Abraham's final question?

Read 2 Samuel 12:13-23 and 2 Kings 20:1-11. Compare the pleading of David with the pleading of Hezekiah and the outcomes of their crying out to God. What was their reasoning in making their pleas? Why would we talk this way with God if we have no assurance that the outcome will be what we desire?

Faith and prayer

Read Matthew 15:21-28. How did the Canaanite woman convince Jesus to help her? Do you think he was moved by her reasoning or her heart? What difference does faith make in the way we talk to God?
