

Genesis 18 : 16 - 33

Abraham was God's friend (James 2: 23)

Christians are friends of Jesus (John 15: 15)

1. FRIENDS TALK

(Verses 16 - 21)

An open & honest relationship	(v 17)
Opening His heart	(v 18 - 19)
Sharing His plans	(v 20 - 21)

2. FRIENDS CARE

(Verses 22 - 25)

Abraham cares about:	
Sodom's fate	(v 22)
God's character	(v 25)
Do we care enough to pray?	

3. FRIENDS PLEAD

(Verses 26 - 33)

An unequal friendship	(v 27)
haggling or tug-of-war?	

Under-valued gifts - 7. The gift of prayer

"All I could do was pray." How often have we heard that as an expression of helplessness. All I could do? All?

During my life I have met several old people who had a profound ministry of prayer. They all seemed to be women, but I haven't yet worked out the significance of that. These people had reached a stage in life where they no longer physically able to do much to serve the church. So they did what they could - they prayed. Some of them were apologetic, as if their contribution to the work of the Lord was rather pathetic.

Far from it. The Lord had used their frailty to teach them a lesson that we all need to learn - that without him we can achieve nothing. Only the branch that remains in the vine will bear fruit.

Our human nature has a strong bias towards self-reliance. Even good things like studying the bible, evangelism, serving the poor can quickly become about us - what we are doing to bring about Christ's kingdom. However, the gospel of grace is supposed to cut through all of that.

While it is true that even prayer can become yet another thing that we do to show off to God, it is probably the hardest arena in which to trust in ourselves. Just as men hate asking for directions (because it means admitting that: 1. They are lost. 2. They need help) so the very act of prayer is admitting that we cannot solve our own problems but only God can.

Christians who really understand the gospel are people who pray. They pray all the time. About everything. No event and no decision is faced without asking for God's help. Their utter dependence on him has a direct correlation with their prayer life. It has been said that if you want to know how popular the preacher is count how many people turn up on a Sunday; but if you want to know how popular Jesus is then count how many are at the prayer meeting.

Prayer is, I think, the most undervalued ministry in churches today.

- read the bible - learn from the heroes of our faith and how they prayed.
- pray - on your own, in pairs, in threes, as a church. Anywhere.

"Pray continually." (1 Thessalonians 5: 17)