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Praying for our Lost Friends and Coworkers, Insights from Genesis Chapter 18



Many of us have a heart for spiritually lost family members, coworkers, friends and others and spend time in daily prayer pleading with God to reach their stony hearts with the Gospel. Like those that share this concern I pray each day for a large group of people including many with whom I used to work in one of my previous careers. Of the people on this long list five particular people stand out, let's call them the "five guys." One day as I was pouring out my heart to God about this long list of people and I came to an interesting understanding of how I could be praying for them but especially my five guys.

Genesis chapter 18 chronicles a very interesting exchange between God and Abraham. The context is that God just announced that He was going to destroy the world because of their sin. Abraham pleads with God not to take this extreme action. Reading from verse 23 Abraham says, "Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? (NKJV and all verses thereafter)." He goes on, "Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous that were in it? The dialogue continued.

> Genesis 18:25-33 NKJV 25 (Emphasis Added) "Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to

> slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" 26 So the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom **fifty** righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes." 27 Then Abraham answered and said, "Indeed now, I who am but dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: 28 "Suppose there were **five less than the fifty righteous**; would You destroy all of the city for lack of five?" So He said, "If I find there **forty-five**, I will not destroy it." 29 And he spoke to Him yet again and said, "Suppose there should be **forty** found there?" So He said, "I will not do it for the sake of **forty**." 30 Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose **thirty** should be found there?" So He said, "I will not do it if I find **thirty** there." 31 And he said, "Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose **twenty** should be found there?" So He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of **twenty**." 32 Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose **ten** should be found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of **ten**." 33 So the LORD went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

Abraham started his plea asking God to save the world if just 50 righteous people could be found within the city of Sodom. After he received a positive answer from God Abraham worked his way down from 50 to 45, then 40, 30, 20, and finally stopped at 10. God agreed that if He could find just ten righteous people in all of Sodom He would not destroy the rest of the people because of those ten.

As I was praying my daily prayer list including pleading with God for the salvation of the long list of my friends, family and others I came to a wonderful understanding of how I should pray for my five guys from my very long list of those who need the Lord Jesus. It went like this:

> *God, if there is only one person (me!) praying for these five guys I ask you to save them. This is because when they get to heaven you can show them that you brought them to believe in the finished work of Jesus on the cross through your hearing of just **one** believer's prayer!*

Next I changed my prayer:

> *God, if there are only one or two of us praying for these give guys I ask for you to reach out to them and change their circumstances such that they come to trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.*

My five guys are a diverse group whom I met over many years through various circumstances. One of them is a man who I added to this list in response to a challenge that I gave a small group to whom I was leading a Bible study on evangelism. I challenged my small group to begin praying for the salvation of person whom they knew personally and that would be the most impossible to come to faith in Jesus Christ. The reason that I gave that challenge was because my brother Mike issued a similar challenge to a small group that he was leading. After I came to faith in Jesus Mike told me

about this challenge and that the person that he chose was me!

What about you, are you praying that God will save someone that you know? Perhaps you and and at most one other person are praying for them. Do you consider it to be almost impossible for them to come to faith in Jesus Christ? In closing let's pray.

> *Dear God, You are King of Kings and Lord of Lords. You alone are worthy of all glory and praise. I bring to you the remembrance of your word to Abraham. I fall at your throne and even dare to go beyond what Abraham asked of You. I beg of You that if only two of us believers are praying for the salvation of my five guys that You would intervene and save them. Please show them when they get to you in heaven that you answered my prayer just because it would glorify your name. Today I lift up Tony, Erik, Doug (the impossible one), Mike, and Ken. I pray this in the boldness and name of Jesus Christ, Amen.*

Please let me know your thoughts on what I said here. Jim Hill, May, 2013 Winona Lake, Indiana