Have you noticed that there is a right way and a wrong way to talk to people? It is essential to know who they are and what your relationship to them is. Children should speak to their parents with respect. I remember having to tell my kids on occasion: **Is that any way to talk to your Mother?** There is a right way and a wrong way to talk to your Mother. There is a right way and a wrong way to talk to a judge when you are in the courtroom. There is a right way and a wrong way to talk to your spouse.

What about when we talk to God? We usually call prayer. Is there a right way and a wrong way to talk to God in prayer? Absolutely! And of all the relationships in your life, your ability to talk to God correctly has by far the biggest impact. It is the difference between God Almighty, maker of heaven and earth listening carefully to what you say and God Almighty refusing to listen to you because you are not talking to him the right way.

So today let’s discuss: **HOW TO TALK TO GOD.** So that we may learn how to talk to G, let’s look at Abraham, a man of great faith who lived over 4,000 years ago. In reading we hear Abraham talk to God. And from him, we will learn how to talk to God.

First, a little bit of background so we understand what’s happening here. Abraham lived in Ur - a town located in what is now Iraq. His father moved the family to Haran, which is in southern Turkey. After Abraham’s father died, God spoke to Abraham. God made great promises: that Abraham would be the father of a great nation. He was - the Jews. That his name would be great. That he would be a blessing to all people on earth. He was, since the promised Savior of all people was a direct descendant or Abraham. We have the benefit of hindsight. Abraham only had promises. But he believed God and he set out for the land God showed him - Canaan.

With Abraham was his nephew, Lot. God blessed both Abraham and Lot so richly that there was not enough pasture land for their flocks. Abraham decided it was time for them to part ways. He let Lot decide where he would settle. Lot decided to settle near a couple of towns on a fertile plain near the southeast side of the Dead Sea.

Well, that turned out to be a very poor choice on Lot’s part. First of all, he got caught up in a war in that area. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah were defeated and the cities were plundered. Lot and his family were captured and taken into captivity. Abraham, trusting in God, went on a daring rescue mission and God gave him an amazing victory. Lot was rescued and the two cities were returned to the original inhabitants.

Unfortunately, their troubles were not over. The cities were wicked. Among other things, the inhabitants of those cities were sexual deviants in many ways. God saw their great wickedness and decided the cities must be destroyed. God revealed his plan to Abraham. Abraham’s heart went out to the people of that city, especially since Lot and his family lived there. So Abraham prayed to God on behalf of the people of this city. Abraham talked with God. As we observe the way he talked with God, we come to understand how we must talk with God - how we must pray.

These cities were wicked. The people lived rebellious lives and they did not care what God had to say about it. God decided their time of grace was up. Now, God did not really need to make a special visit to the cities to see if things were as bad as he heard. God was simply communicating to Abraham that he knew what was happening in these cities. He was acting with intent and with knowledge. God was not frivolous or haphazard in his judgments. His righteous judgment would come down on them hard, and it would be totally deserved.

What is interesting is that God let Abraham in on his plans. God told Abraham what he was going to do. He did not owe that to Abraham. What an honor! We ought to consider it no less an honor every time we open our Bibles and read. God is revealing things to us that he is not obliged to reveal. That he does so is an honor and privilege we do not ever want to take for
granted! So, knowing what God intended to do, Abraham dared to talk to God and bring his requests to him. As we looked over the way Abraham talked with God, there are seven things we can learn from Abraham when we talk to God.

First, pray knowing your God. Before you talk to God, know God. When a newperson interviews a guest on TV, they do a lot of research before the interview. If the guest wrote a book and is coming on the show to talk about it, usually the host has read the book ahead of time, or at least has become familiar with it. Unless you know the person you are talking to, you cannot speak intelligently.

Abraham knew God. This influenced the way he talked to him and the words he chose. What did Abraham know about God? In his prayer, Abraham knows that God is righteous and he appeals to that characteristic when he prays. He is confident that the Judge of all the earth will do what is right. He also knows God's love and mercy, or he would never bother asking in the first place. He knows the God to whom he prays.

You also, dear Christian, know well the God to whom you pray. Appeal to his characteristics when you do pray. His love, mercy, forgiveness, justice - that he knows all things, has all power, is present everywhere. Bring these things up when you pray! They are the reason you are confident to ask what you are asking. So when you talk to God, know God. And consider this, if you know God poorly, your prayers will be inappropriate. We must know God, and that knowledge comes through study and meditation on God’s Word.

Second, pray with faith. This one is closely related to the previous. But there is a difference between knowing and trusting. Rely fully upon God when you pray. James writes: But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does. Prayers addressed to the man upstairs are not prayers asked in faith. Or, God if you are out there – God if you are listening, is a sure way to get God to close his ears to what you are asking. Look at Abraham’s prayer. He knew God could spare or destroy. He trusted his power. He trusted his mercy. He trusted God would hear and answer. Christian, pray the same way!

Third, pray humbly. Abraham knew that he had no right to demand anything from God. He was a sinful human being and God is holy. He also knew that he had nothing in his possession that he could use to bargain with God. So he says: I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes and May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak.

We see none of: God if you do this for me, I will do that for you. That is arrogance for us to think that we can barter with God. Can we really give God something that he needs? God lacks nothing. But we do. Isaiah writes: But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. If he hears us and answers us, it is certainly not because of anything in us. It is because of his love, his forgiveness of all our sin, and mercy. Pray humbly.

Fourth, pray with surrender. By this I mean, when you talk to God, do so always yielding to his will. Understand when you pray that God is sovereign. That means that while God promises to hear and answer our prayers, finally God will do what God will do. Abraham understood this, didn't he? He kept asking, but he also left the matter in the Lord’s hands each time.

We are to do the same. Our comfort is found in Romans 8: And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. What peace we have in prayer! If we are asking with wrong motives, or we ask for something that God in his wisdom knows would ultimately be bad for us or others - he does what is good and right - not what we ask! Pray with surrender, knowing God’s will will be
Fifth, pray for others. When you talk to God, it is not all about you. Abraham could have asked any number of things for himself. But he unselfishly interceded for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. Before you start your prayers, take a moment and think - who do I know who is in need? Talk to God about others regularly in your prayers.

Sixth, pray repeatedly. Abraham was certainly persistent, wasn’t he? It is almost like a reverse auction as he keeps lowering the number and asking God again and again. Does God get tired of us pestering him? Not at all. Jesus told the parable of the persistent widow to teach his disciples to keep on asking. Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? In Ephesians we read: And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

And finally (seventh), pray boldly. Abraham was very bold. In our text we heard, Abraham remained standing before the Lord. A sinful man who remains standing before the Lord! A sinful man who talks to God! A sinful man who speak boldly and repeatedly! How can this be? Make no mistake. A sinner has no place in the throne room of God. A sinner has no right to talk to God. So how can we pray boldly? How can we pray at all?

Listen to what Paul writes in Ephesians 3: In Christ Jesus, our Lord and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. In Christ, and in Christ alone, we do have freedom and confidence to enter the throne room of almighty God. In Christ and through faith in him, you possess Christ’s holiness. In Christ and through faith in him, your sin and guilt are atoned for and removed forever. Look no further than Christ hanging on the cross and you see everything that separates you from God - everything that makes God turn a deaf ear to you. There you see all of it cast upon Jesus, God’s own Son. The Father did not listen to his Son’s cries on the cross. That is what led him to say: My God, my God! Why have you forsaken me! The sin that separates us from God was carried by Jesus. He took it all. He died for you and for me. And on the third day he rose again! Our sins are forgiven. God is now pleased with us. When we approach him in and with his perfect Son, Jesus, he listens eagerly and intently to everything we have to say.

In Christ we have the freedom and the confidence to approach our God and talk to him without fear. Now, some may say: Hey, is that any way to be talking to God Almighty? Yes, this is the way to talk to God almighty. Model the way Abraham prayed and you will know how to talk to God. Follow all seven things he taught us: 1) Pray knowing your God. 2) Pray with faith. 3) Pray humbly. 4) Pray with surrender. 5) Pray for others. 6) Pray repeatedly. 7) Pray boldly.

Your God, the all-powerful and compassionate God, is listening and he will answer. Pray, Christian, pray! Amen.

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