

The Legend of the Circle Maker

January 6, 2013

What do you imagine God can do in your life in 2013?

I'm confident that God wants to do some great things in and through each of us. Not only that, I believe that if you will open your heart to hear what God has to say to you over the next five weeks; then you will experience a transformation in your life that will also flow over into our church.

What excites me heading into 2013 is the promise that we have from God in Ephesians 3:20 which says: *God 'is able to do exceedingly more than we could ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.'*

Now I want you to know that I can imagine some pretty grand things. And I can ask for a lot; but that also got me thinking, 'What have I asked specifically of God when it comes to my life: as an individual, a husband, a father, the pastor Linglestown Life?' How would you answer that question?

Here is the problem that many of us encounter in prayer. We *know* the promises of God; but rarely do we believe the promises are for us. As a result we often we leave our prayers so vague and general that we'd never know if God answered our prayer!

And that is at the heart of what we are going to be learning about over the next several weeks. We want to learn to *pray specifically* the promises of God; to define what we believe God wants for us to experience, singularly and corporately; so that God is glorified in our lives and in our church and community.

So where I want to begin today is to introduce you to how we can pray Bold Prayers- the kind of bold prayers that God honors!

During the next four weeks we are going to learn to pray in ways that I believe will not only change our church, but will change your life, the life of your family, and maybe the next generation.

As a matter of fact, I want to introduce you to someone whose prayer changed a generation; and whose Bold Prayer made him a legend. The story of Honi, the Circle Maker, has been preserved down through the ages in the Jewish Talmud- the teachings of the Jewish rabbis. Honi's story, has been revived by Mark Batterson, in his book, *The Circle Maker*. So let me allow Mark to introduce you to the story of Honi. **[Video 7:38-10:43]**

Now Honi was a bold prayer! And what I want you to hear today is that God is looking for circle makers; people who will pray Bold Prayers! The kind of Bold Prayers that honor God!

God is looking for people who are willing to circle the promises of God and believe that there is nothing God loves more than keeping promises, answering prayers, performing miracles and fulfilling dreams. That is *who* God is. That is *what* God does.

And God wants to keep his promises to you, answer your prayers, perform miracles in your life and fulfill your dreams! But do you believe that God is *for* you? You see, if you don't believe that God is for you (as Paul writes in Romans 8:31) then you'll pray small, timid prayers; but if you do believe that God is for you then you will pray big, audacious prayers! Prayers like Honi's.

Think back for a moment to that promise from Ephesians 3:20 (*God 'is able to do exceedingly more than we could ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.'*). Do you realize that this verse says that God is not only for you; but it says that God's power is within you! That should excite you! The power of God – the power to do more than we can ask or imagine- is within you. I think that should cause us to ask ourselves this morning: 'Am I living today, praying today, as if I believe that God's power is within me?'

Now I want to be clear about praying circles; we're not talking about a 'name it and claim it' type of theology. What we want to learn to do over the next several weeks is to start to discern what God wants, what God wills for your life and for those for whom you pray.

The goal of prayer is not to get what you want, but to glorify God by drawing circles around the promise, miracles and dreams that God wants for you. And how we discover those things that God wants for us, so that God is glorified, begins with us getting into God's word.

You will never know the promises that you can circle, the miracles and dreams that God want for you; until you open his word and begin to seek the heart of God. [Talk about options of how to read the Bible: YouVersion, Gospels, etc]

But here is the other thing about prayer that we need to learn. Sometimes we are not praying circles around the things God has promised us. We've never circled any of God's promises. We've never written down a list of life goals. We've never defined success for ourselves. And our dreams are as nebulous as cumulus clouds.

Drawing prayer circles begins with being able to answer a question that Jesus asked two blind men outside the city of Jericho. "What do you want me to do for you?" Matthew 20:29-34

Now most people, even the ones standing around Jesus at the time must have said, 'Duh? They're blind, what do you think they want?'

Jesus wasn't being mean or hurtful; Jesus was activating their faith. By getting them to voice what they wanted Jesus to do they were able to define exactly what they wanted from him. It wasn't that Jesus didn't know what they wanted; Jesus wanted to make sure they knew what they wanted.

And that is where drawing prayer circles begins: knowing what to circle.

You've got to define the promises God wants you to stake claim to, the miracles God wants you to believe for and the dreams God wants you to pursue.

So while we may know *God is for us*, most of us have no idea what we want *God to do for us*. And that's why our prayers aren't just boring to us, they are uninspiring to God. I like how Mark

says this: “If faith is being sure of what we hope for, then being unsure of what we hope for is the antithesis of faith, isn’t it? Well-developed faith results in well-defined prayers and well-defined prayers result in a well-lived life.”

Like the two blind men outside Jerusalem, you need an encounter with the Son of God. You need an answer to the question He is still asking: ‘What do you want Me to do for you?’

Obviously, the answer to this question changes over time. We need different miracles during different seasons of life, we pursue different dreams during different stages of life, and we stake claim to different promises in different situations. It’s a moving target, but you have to start somewhere. Why not right here, right now?

Don’t just read the Bible. Start circling the promises.

Don’t just make a wish. Write down a list of life goals.

Don’t just pray. Keep a prayer journal.

Define your dream.

Claim your promise

Spell your miracle.

It may be spelled many different ways. If you have cancer, it’s spelled *healing*. If your marriage is falling apart, it’s spelled *reconciliation*. And sometimes what you want Jesus to do for you has the same spelling as someone’s name.

What I want you to do over the next 4-5 weeks is to begin asking God what kind of BOLD prayers he wants you to pray. As you read your Bible, ask God if there is a promise in those verses that is something God wants you to circle and to believe that God will be glorified in your life through God’s answer to your prayer.

What are the situations and who are the people that God is calling you to circle in prayer?

These can’t be vague prayers; these need to be bold and specific, inspired by God so that God is glorified when God acts.

Jesus said, What do you want me to do for you?

So ask yourself: What do I want Jesus to do for me?

Drawing prayer circles starts with identifying your answer to Jesus question, “What do you want me to do for you?” When you can answer that question in a way that glorifies God; then you will be able to circle the promises, the miracles and the dreams God wants for you. From then on, all bets are off as to what God will do in and through your life and the lives and situations that you circle in prayer.