

Drawing the Circle

Week 6 After Praying...

April 8-9, 2017

Drawing the Circle has been quite a journey. One cannot help but to be moved when they walk into this room and see all of the prayers that have been circled. We are trusting that God will be answering prayer after prayer in the coming months and so on. We have reports of some prayers being answered already.

1. One 7th grade boy in our Elevate Student ministry decided that he would Circle-Trust God. Not long after this, he was at lunch sitting with his friend group and he noticed a new boy sitting alone at lunch. This Elevate student felt God was prompting him to go sit next to the new boy, but he was nervous. But he had been DTC around trusting God, so he decided to trust that God would honor this step of faith to leave behind his friends to be a friend to someone who didn't have any. In spite of his nerves, he walked over and sat down next to the new boy and made friends with him. Soon after, his friends from his table got up, followed him over and now the new boy has a few new friends and the young man from Elevate has grown in his trust in the Lord.
2. One young lady who is a leader at our church recently came into a time of significant trials at her workplace. She got a new boss and things got pretty rough for a while. She decided to go to battle not in the workplace but in her prayer closet. She said that there was a shift throughout DTC- Let me read you her exact words. "Each day I could relate the reading from the book directly to my circle, but ironically throughout the last 27 days, my prayers changed. I originally started by asking God for the promotion to get me out of the terrible situation I was in. But then I read about praying through, so I heard God telling me that I needed to be a better person to get through my current situation until I was out of it. So I prayed to be kinder and more patient and understanding with my new boss." She allowed God to change her instead of just relying on the situation to change. Oh and by the way, just last week, a new position in her company was created that she describes as her dream job. She's a front runner, so how about 1000 of us over the weekend pray for this young leader in our church to get this job.
3. Some people have received healing as well. Just a few weeks ago a Crossroader came forward about her friend who has ovarian cancer. I thought it was interesting that the Crossroader didn't want to pray for the person to just be healed or to have it healed through treatments, she said she wanted to pray that when they operated to remove the tumor that encased the whole ovary, part of the bowel and another area within the abdomen that the tumor would have

completely disappeared. When she went in for surgery last week there was no visible cancer. The surgeon said, "Wow!" The friend couldn't believe it and started crying. She'd had to skip 3 chemo treatments because she became chemo toxic and doctors expected that since she had to skip the treatments the tumors were going to be much larger. Instead they were gone! The Crossroader prayed boldly that all cancer would be gone and that it would be unbelievable to all. Her husband who is a non-believer was absolutely shocked. The lady with cancer said she has flown under the radar so long, she didn't know if God even knew her. Now she knows that God knows her.

4. Last week Steve shared this testimony from a woman. "My husband and I have been trying to get pregnant for over 2 years now. We have 2 beautiful daughters from my previous relationship, and really wanted to grow our family. For my 'Draw the Circle.' I asked God to either give me the peace, knowledge, and acceptance to know that it wasn't in His plan, or for us to finally get pregnant. Last night (and again this morning), I took a pregnancy test - and it was positive! We are so overjoyed and in a state of shock." She said she couldn't wait to check off her circle on the wall.

As I walked around and prayed for your circles, I couldn't help but notice that some circles have check marks as well. So we have to ask the question as we close this series: where do we go from here? I think there is a principle that would serve us well as we continue this journey of DTC from this day forward. We mentioned this principle a few times throughout this series. The principle I encourage us to continue following is...Pray like it depends on God and work like it depends on us. In other words, we continue to seek and trust that the Lord will hear and answer our prayers while at the same time we commit to be a people of action who are willing to be a part of the solution.

When we look at scripture there is one individual besides Jesus of course, who seems to rise above the rest when it comes to prayer. King David was known as a man after God's own heart. We have in our recorded scriptures prayer after prayer that he wrote in the form of Psalms. We also have some of his recorded prayers in other parts of scripture. King David passionately pursued God and trusted that God could do the seemingly impossible. Yet, King David was not only a prayer warrior, but he was a man of action as well. He prayed like it depended on God, but he worked like it depended on Him.

There's one section of scripture in particular that illustrates the prayer and action relationship. As the King of Israel, David's task was to clear out evil influences of other societies that worshipped idols and did great evil in the eyes of the Lord. These nations were famous for their cruel behavior, sexual deviancy and overall lack of morality. David was united with God in a vision for a people and a land that were dedicated to the purposes of God. In the second book of Samuel David is pleading with all of his heart

for God to reign supreme throughout the Kingdom of Israel and the lands that surrounded it.

We see 3 movements in this passage of scripture that correlate with our learning from DTC. First we see that David is prompted by a promise by God. **2 Samuel 7:10-11.** *¹⁰And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning ¹¹ and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders^[a] over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you.*

In this passage we see that God is making a promise to David that God will not only clear out the wicked oppressors from the land, but that God would establish the house of David. In other words David's lineage would continue on for generations, which might not seem like something that we are too concerned about today. But we have to remember that when someone became a King, it was standard practice to kill off all of the descendants of the previous King to completely wipe out their lineage so that the new king would not have to worry about an uprising from someone who claimed that they were the rightful heir of the throne. So, this was a very important promise given to David.

We see a second movement when David claims this promise and draws a circle around it through prayer. **2 Samuel 7 25-26.** *²⁵ "And now, LORD God, keep forever the promise you have made concerning your servant and his house. Do as you promised ²⁶ so that your name will be great forever. Then people will say, 'The LORD Almighty is God over Israel!' And the house of your servant David will be established in your sight.* David drew the circle around the promise of God and claimed it in prayer.

We see a 3rd movement by David. He shifts from praying like it depends on God, to working like it depends on him. David goes into battle after battle, trusting that God would defeat the nation's oppressors and the enemies who were bringing evil influences into his nation.

2 Samuel 8

¹In the course of time, David defeated the Philistines and subdued them,

² David also defeated the Moabites. ³ Moreover, David defeated Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah, ⁵ When the Arameans of Damascus came to help Hadadezer king of Zobah, David struck down twenty-two thousand of them.

¹³ And David became famous after he returned from striking down eighteen thousand Edomites^[g] in the Valley of Salt. ¹⁴ The LORD gave David victory wherever he went.

David trusted in God that His promises would come to fruition. David circled the promise in prayer and then David went to work like it depended on him. This story illustrates the relationship between the promises of God and praying like it depends on God while working like it depends on us.

As we come to the end of this campaign let's look at three movements I encourage us to carry as we continue to grow in our prayer journeys with God.

3 inward movements

Movement 1. Move from Crisis to Lifestyle

When we read King David's prayers we can easily pick up that there was a familiarity between David and God. We see in scripture that David brought everything before the Lord, not just the emergencies. For Christians throughout the U.S., instead of prayer being something we do every day, like breathing, eating and walking and talking, it seems to have become like that little glass covered box on the wall that says, "Break in case of emergency." Isn't it true that we often associate prayer with the crises in our life? I heard a story the other day of a man who encountered a bit of trouble while flying his small airplane. He called the control tower and said, "Pilot to tower, I'm 300 miles from the airport, six hundred feet above the ground and I'm out of fuel. I am descending rapidly. Please advise, over." "Tower to pilot," the dispatcher began, "Repeat after me: "Our Father, Who art in heaven..."

God calls us to a relationship that is representative of a lifestyle of prayer instead of only seeking Him when we need something and we need it now. DTC has taught many of us about the riches that come from a daily time alone with our Lord. Let's make a commitment to be a people that pray as a lifestyle instead of an emergency.

Movement 2. Move from motions to emotions

When we look at the prayers of David, he see he was a passionate seeker of the Lord. He laid his heart bare before the Lord over and over again. David modeled for us how to pray. In other words, let's be a people who pray passionately. So often we view prayer as a checklist instead of a battle. Let's remember what we discussed a couple weeks ago. The viability of our prayers is not contingent on our vocabulary but on our intensity. Let us be a people who pray with passion because we know that our God is at work on our behalf.

Movement 3. Move from interest in self to intercession for others

David was not just praying for himself, but on behalf of the nation that he served. David understood that intercessory prayer changes things. Howard Hendricks, who for years taught at the Dallas Theological Seminary and pastored in the area shared this story. He said: "Years ago in a church in Dallas we were having trouble finding a teacher for a junior high boys' class. The list of prospects had only one name -- and when they told me who it was I said, 'You've got to be kidding.' But I couldn't have been more wrong about that young man. He took the class and revolutionized it. I was so impressed I invited him to my home for lunch and asked him the secret of his success. He pulled out a little black book. On each page he had a small picture of each of the boys, and under the boy's name were comments like 'having trouble in arithmetic' or

‘comes to church against parents' wishes’ or ‘would like to be a missionary someday, but doesn't think he has what it takes.’ ‘I pray over those pages every day,’ he said, ‘and I can hardly wait to come to church each Sunday to see what God has been doing in their lives.’”

You see, when you pray for others, when you pray for God's work to be done, for His will to be accomplished, He will begin to use you and grow you in ways that will astonish those around you. It is when we pray for others that we will become more like Jesus, and as we become more like Jesus God will grow us more, show us more, and use us more.

We're going to try something new after Easter. We will schedule volunteers to walk around the church and pray each day of the week. In the cold of winter, we will open up this sanctuary for people to do so. We will be praying for spiritual awakening in our church and in our area. If this is something you are interested in doing once a week or once a month, let us know by responding on your communicator card and giving us your email.

Now that we have talked about some inward movements that we want to maintain as we leave this campaign, let's talk about some outward movements that will bring impact to those who are in our circles of life. Impacting other people's lives for Jesus is hard work and we can become discouraged very quickly when we don't see immediate results. I would love to see us become a people that can be described by the word GRIT. When someone has Grit, they are a person of perseverance and passion who does not give up on long term goals.

What are some actions steps that we can take over this next season to bring impact to those that we are DTC around in hopes that they will come into a relationship with Jesus?

G- Give someone your book.

R- Remain faithful to DTC.

I-Invite the person that you have been DrawingThe Circle around to lunch or breakfast.

T- Teach others to draw the circle. I've heard of some Crossroaders who already gave the book to their friends and are walking alongside their friends as they discover Christ.

GRIT means that we pray like it depends on God while working like it depends on us. Remember, Prayer is not about making God available to us, but making ourselves available to Him for His purposes.

Lastly- Expect the unexpected. Let's remember who we serve. Mark Batterson shared this story in DTC: “A few years ago, I heard author Ken Gaub share one of the most amazing prayer testimonies I've ever heard. He and his family were driving on I-75 near Dayton, Ohio, when they decided to stop at a restaurant. Ken's wife and

children went right into the restaurant while he stretched his legs. As he walked past a nearby gas station, he heard a pay phone ringing. The phone kept ringing, and Ken thought it might be some sort of emergency, so he answered it. He heard the voice of an operator who said, 'Long distance for Ken Gaub.'

Ken almost passed out. He said, 'You've got to be kidding me. I was just walking in the middle of nowhere and heard this phone ringing.' Confused the operator said, 'Is Ken Gaub there?' After making sure there weren't any candid cameras, he said, 'This is Ken Gaub.'

A voice on the other side of the line said, 'Mr. Gaub, my name is Millie. I'm from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. You don't know me, but I need your help.' She went on to explain that she had just written a suicide note but had decided to give prayer one more shot. She said, 'God, I don't really want to do this.' And as she prayed, she remembered seeing Ken Gaub on television. She thought to herself, 'If I could just talk with him, he could help me.' But this was pre-Google, making it extremely difficult to track him down. As she prayed, some numbers popped into her head, and she wrote them on a piece of paper. She couldn't help but think, 'Wouldn't it be wonderful if God were giving me Ken's number?' Then Millie said, 'I decided to try calling the number, and I couldn't believe it when the operator said it was you.'

Millie asked Ken, 'Are you in your office?' When he said no, Miller sounded surprised. She said, 'Then where are you?' Ken said, 'You made the call, don't you know?' She said 'I don't even know what area I'm calling. I just dialed the number on a piece of paper.' Ken said, 'You won't believe this. I'm in a phone booth in Dayton, Ohio.' Millie replied, 'What are you doing there?' Ken said, 'Answering a pay phone!'

Ken went on to draw this conclusion: I walked away from that phone booth with an electrifying sense of our heavenly Father's concerns for each of His children. What were the astronomical odds of this happening? With all the millions of phones and innumerable combinations of numbers, only an all-knowing God could have caused that woman to dial that number in that phone booth at that moment in time.

When Ken hung up the phone, he walked over the restaurant and sat down with his family. Still stunned, he said to his wife, Barb, "You won't believe this. God knows where I am."

As we leave this series and continue to DTC, I want you to remember this always...God has been drawing a circle around you since before you were born. You are loved deeply by Him.