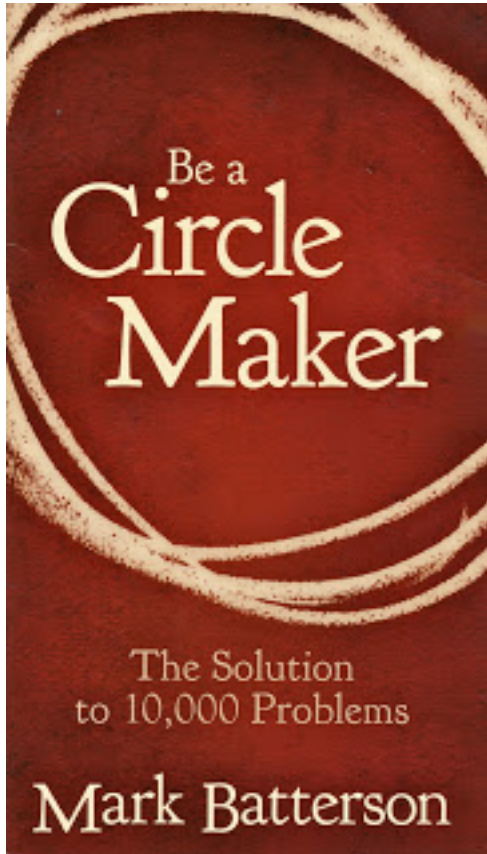


Be a Circle Maker?

By Glenn E. Chatfield



Since I buy books from Zondervan for our book table ministry, they will send catalogues and other stuff. Last month included with the catalogue was a little booklet by Mark Batterson titled, *Be A Circle Maker*.

I had never heard of this author before but the title bothered me a bit. I put the booklet in my "to read" pile and left it there until this past Saturday when I took it with me for something to read while my wife was having her drum lesson. (It took less time to read than I thought, and I ended up with time to look at the heresy in the library of the PCUSA church in which we meet!)

There was much that bothered me about this book, not the least of which were the many assertions by Batterson about what God thinks. The very first paragraph of chapter 2 had this statement: “God isn’t offended by your biggest dreams or boldest prayers. He is offended by anything less. If your prayers aren’t impossible to you, they are insulting to God.”

Oh really? He gave no biblical support for this claim, which sounds much like some Word of Faith nonsense. How about an example: Let’s say I have a performance where I want to do a really good job; is it impossible for me to do? No. So, if I pray that the Lord will help me to relax and concentrate so as to do a good job, is that insulting God? I don’t see anything in Scripture which makes that claim.

Next we have this on p.20: “There is nothing God loves more than keeping promises, answering prayer, performing miracles, and fulfilling dreams. That is *who* He is. That is *what* He does.” This is a mighty presumptuous statement about knowing the mind of God. Of course keeping promises is part of the attribute of God in which He cannot lie. And He may answer prayer with “no.”

Now, what about “performing miracles” or “fulfilling dreams”? If God really loved nothing more than these, then why does God not perform miracles for everyone all over the world? If God really loves nothing more than fulfilling dreams, then why are not all the dreams of His followers fulfilled? Again, this sounds very much like the claims of the Word of Faith heresy.

Batterson follows this presumption at the bottom of p. 20, continuing to the top of p.21 with: “you are only one prayer away from a dream fulfilled, a promise kept, or a miracle performed.” Questions: what

about those Christians in Somalia dreaming of living in freedom and being out of poverty - do all they have to do is pray about it and then God will fulfill it? What promise has God made to believers which require a prayer to fulfill? What if no matter how much you pray for a miracle God responds with “No”? This teaching so reeks of Word of Faith!

As I progressed on page 21, I came across this little gem: “Prayers are prophecies.” Wait a minute - Run that pig by me again! Yep, Batterson says, “Prayers are prophecies.” Then he follows this with, “Ultimately, the transcript of your prayers becomes the script of your life.” I wonder where Batterson finds this nonsense in Scripture!?!

Now what is amusing is that on the very next page Batterson says, “God is not a genie in a bottle, and your wish is not His command.” But didn’t he just say they were prophecies? Hasn’t he said you are only one prayer from having a dream fulfilled? Those statements certainly sound to me like he is saying God **is** a “genie in a bottle.”

Beginning on p.24 Batterson tells us of a “prayer walk” during which he claimed the promise God gave to Joshua about the land the people of Israel were about to inhabit. He said he felt that, just as God had transferred to Joshua the promise which He had made to Moses, that God would transfer the promise to Batterson if Batterson “had enough faith to circle it.” Therefore, Batterson took a long prayer walk around an area in Washington, DC, which was “the biggest prayer circle I’ve ever drawn” as he completed the 4.7 mile walk. And now he has several campuses as part of his church. (As an aside, he said his feet were sore after that walk - what, the guy isn’t used to walking!?! Only 4.7 miles and his feet are sore?!???)

In Batterson's end notes on this particular teaching, he states, "Notice that the promise was originally given to Moses. The promise was transferred to Joshua. In much the same way, all of God's promises have been transferred to us via Jesus Christ."

There is a really big problem with this statement. First, the promise to Moses was for Israel, and Joshua just inherited the promise for Israel as their new leader. Secondly, it is extremely poor teaching to say that "all of God's promises have been transferred to us." There are many, many promises in the O.T. which were for specific people, for Israel as a Nation, etc. Only if a promise was given which would include Christians can we claim the promise for ourselves. Too often Christians abuse Scripture by claiming a promise for themselves which was never intended that way. A few perfect examples are the horrible abuses of **Jeremiah 29:11**, **2 Chronicles 7:14**, and **1 Chronicles 4:9-10**, all of which I've written on.

I think the main idea of this booklet, and the whole "prayer circle" teaching is summed up at the bottom of p.45 to the top of the next page: "If you've never had a God-sized dream that scared you half to death, then you haven't really come to life. If you've never been overwhelmed by the impossibility of your plans, then your God is too small. If your vision isn't perplexingly impossible, then you need to expand the radiuses of your prayer circles." I don't know about you, but I find this claim to be highly presumptuous.

While reading the booklet, I understood the idea of drawing a circle around things for which to pray as being figurative, but then I found **this video** while searching the 'net to find information about Batterson. In this video, he says "If you draw the circle, God will multiply the miracles in your life." So Batterson has decided that by drawing a circle around whatever it is you are praying for, then God will "multiply miracles in your life" - the "genie in the bottle" which Batterson decries! Batterson **does** draw literal circles on the ground. Then he contradicts himself by saying one must pray even

when we don't get the answer we want!!! Wait a minute - I thought praying in a circle guaranteed your prayer would be answered! After all, aren't prayers "prophecies" - and don't prophecies have to come true?

So I have one BIG question: Where do we find this teaching in the Bible; where do we find people drawing mystical circles and God "multiplying miracles" for people doing so?

I had never heard of Mark Batterson previous to receiving this booklet, so I "googled" him and discovered that he is just another "seeker-sensitive/purpose-driven" pastor of a mega church with several campuses. An excellent **example of a report** from Apprising Ministries examines how Batterson responds to his critics. The post also demonstrates that Batterson's poor hermeneutical approach to Scripture is not new.

Only in this westernized, wealthy, hedonistic culture will you find people teaching all these gimmicks about prayer (remember the "Prayer of Jabez"?). While Christians in the Islamic world are being martyred on a daily basis, pastors like Mark Batterson sell gimmicks to gullible Christians who think God just has to be manipulated in the right way.