

# Draw the Circle

## **Resources by Mark Batterson**

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# Draw the Circle

The 40 Day Prayer Challenge

Mark Batterson

*New York Times* Bestselling Author of *The Circle Maker*



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*Draw the Circle*

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# Contents

<i>Introduction</i> .....	7
Day 1: Get Ready .....	15
Day 2: Established by God.....	21
Day 3: Amazing Things.....	26
Day 4: Don't Pray Away .....	32
Day 5: Write It Down .....	37
Day 6: Shameless Audacity .....	42
Day 7: Put on Waders .....	47
Day 8: One God-Idea .....	52
Day 9: Dream Factory .....	57
Day 10: Crazy Faith.....	62
Day 11: First-Class Noticer .....	67
Day 12: Sow a Seed .....	72
Day 13: One Day.....	78
Day 14: Speak to the Mountain.....	84
Day 15: Contend for Me.....	89
Day 16: Lord, Surprise Me.....	94
Day 17: Do Not Delay .....	99
Day 18: Keep Circling.....	103
Day 19: Memorial Offerings .....	108

Day 20: Go. Set. Ready. ....	112
Day 21: Set Your Foot .....	118
Day 22: Prayer Fleece .....	123
Day 23: Not Now .....	129
Day 24: Find Your Voice.....	134
Day 25: A Prophetic Voice .....	139
Day 26: Game with Minutes.....	144
Day 27: Double Circle .....	150
Day 28: Quit Praying .....	155
Day 29: A New Prayer .....	160
Day 30: Abide in Me .....	165
Day 31: Spell It Out .....	171
Day 32: Get a Testimony.....	176
Day 33: Prayer Covering.....	182
Day 34: Raise Up a Remnant .....	188
Day 35: The Longest Lever .....	194
Day 36: Senior Partner.....	199
Day 37: Prayer Contracts .....	204
Day 38: Climb the Watchtower.....	209
Day 39: Holy Ground .....	215
Day 40: Prayer Alphabet .....	221
Notes.....	227

# Introduction

The forty-day prayer challenge is going to change your life. In fact, the next forty days have the potential to dramatically alter the *rest* of your life. God is going to begin a good work in you, and He is going to carry it to completion. Miracles that happen in your life decades from now will trace their origin back to this season of prayer. Breakthroughs that happen during these forty days will become generational blessings that live on long after you die.

If you press into God's presence like never before, you will experience God like never before. You'll look back on these forty days as the best forty days of your life. They won't be the easiest forty days; in fact, they may be the hardest. Don't be surprised if you experience spiritual opposition along the way. But if you pray through, God will break through in new ways. It's as inevitable as the tide coming in.

There is nothing magical about forty days, but there is something biblical about it. That's the number of days Jesus spent in the wilderness fasting and praying. It marked a critical chapter in His life — the transition from His earthly

## Draw the Circle

father's business to His heavenly Father's business. Jesus was tested like never before, but this experience set the stage for His greatest victories over the enemy. The war against sin and Satan may have been won on Calvary's cross, but a key battle happened in the wilderness three years earlier. When Jesus returned to Galilee, He wasn't the same person. You won't be either. You'll emerge from this forty-day prayer challenge, just like Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

If you want God to do something new in you, you cannot keep doing the same old thing. You have to do something different. And if you do, God will create new capacities within you. There will be new gifts and new revelations. But you've got to pray the price. You'll get out of this what you put into it.

## How to Start a Revival

*Draw the Circle* is a sequel of sorts. Since the release of *The Circle Maker*, I've heard thousands of prayer testimonies that have set my faith on fire. Almost every day I hear a new story that makes me want to applaud God. This book is my way of stewarding those testimonies by sharing them. I've also learned more about prayer since *The Circle Maker* was released than the knowledge I had beforehand. I'll share those new discoveries in the pages that follow.

So let me pick up where *The Circle Maker* left off.

Rodney "Gypsy" Smith was born on the outskirts of London in 1860. He never received a formal education, yet he lectured at Harvard. Despite his humble origins, he was invited by two sitting United States presidents to the White

## Introduction

House. Gypsy crisscrossed the Atlantic Ocean forty-five times, preaching the gospel to millions of people, and he never preached without someone surrendering their life to the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Gypsy was powerfully used of God. Everywhere he went, it seemed like revival was right on his heels. But it wasn't his preaching that brought revival. It never is. Preaching may move the hearts of men, but praying moves the heart of God. And that's where revival comes from.

Gypsy revealed his secret to a delegation of revival seekers who sought an audience with him. They wanted to know how they could make a difference with their lives the way he had with his. His answer was simple yet profound — as timely and timeless now as it was a hundred years ago. He gave them this advice:

*Go home. Lock yourself in your room. Kneel down in the middle of the floor, and with a piece of chalk draw a circle around yourself. There, on your knees, pray fervently and brokenly that God would start a revival within that chalk circle.*

## Start Circling

I have a confession to make. Even though I wrote a book on prayer, and my personal prayer life was thriving, I had failed to lead our church in corporate prayer. When that changed, everything changed with it.

When we did our first forty-day prayer challenge at National Community Church, it completely changed our church culture. It ranks as one of the most significant seasons of spiritual

## Draw the Circle

growth in our church's history. And on a personal level, I was a different person afterward.

As we prepared for the forty-day challenge, I believed that God wanted our church to circle 2 Chronicles 7:14 by hitting our knees every day at 7:14 a.m. I explained to our church that the time in and of itself wasn't significant but offered a daily reminder of the promise we were circling in prayer.

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

On the first day of the prayer challenge, I dropped to my knees right after I got out of bed. This daily habit didn't stop on day 40. Please read this carefully: the goal of the forty-day prayer challenge isn't to get what you want by day 40. In fact, the goal isn't to get what you want at all. The goal is to figure out what God wants, what God wills. Then you start circling it in prayer and don't stop until God answers.

Too often we pray ASAP prayers — *as soon as possible*. We need to start praying ALAT prayers — *as long as it takes*. The goal of the prayer challenge is to establish a prayer habit so you're still praying on day 41, day 57, day 101, day 365.

## Logistics

*Who should I do the prayer challenge with?*

You may want to consider a church-wide challenge or turn your small group into a prayer circle. You can do this chal-

## Introduction

lunge with your family or with your friends. But whatever you do, don't do it alone.

I've met employers who give a copy of *Draw the Circle* to everyone they hire. I've met small groups who have repeated the forty-day challenge as many as fourteen times! There are youth groups that have circled their schools, members of Congress who circle the Capitol, and lots of sports chaplains and coaches circling football fields, baseball fields, and basketball courts! In fact, one NBA team started *Draw the Circle* on the first day of the playoffs and kept circling until they won the most recent NBA championship. I'm not saying that's why they won, but I'm not saying it isn't either!

*What should I circle?*

Don't feel bad if you don't know what to circle on day 1. One of the biggest misconceptions about prayer is that it means outlining our agenda to God as a divine to-do list. The true purpose of prayer is to get into God's presence so He can outline His agenda for us. Here's my advice: pray about what to pray about. God will reveal a promise, a problem, or a person. Then circle whatever God has prompted you to pray for with the same kind of consistency with which the earth circles the sun.

Too often we pray for something once and then completely forget about it. So when God answers, we fail to give Him the glory because we forgot what we asked for. That's one reason why you need to journal during these forty days. Document your prayers and God's answers. If you don't have a journal, pick up a copy of *The Circle Maker Prayer Journal*. It'll help you not just pray, but pray through.

During our forty-day prayer challenge, different people

## Draw the Circle

circled different things. We saw prodigals come back to God after years of running away. Marriages were restored. Job opportunities opened up. Provision for financial needs came out of nowhere. Divine appointments happened on a daily basis. And there were even a few miraculous healings.

*When should I take the challenge?*

You can do this at any time, but the important thing is to establish a start date or end date. A forty-day prayer challenge is a great way to begin a new year or to end a year. At NCC, we approach Lent as a way of beginning the spiritual journey to Easter. This past year, I coined the word *ExperiLent* because we wanted to see what would happen if we circled one promise for forty days, and God delivered. You'll read about it in the devotion for day 34. You can also leverage a birthday or holiday. It was a forty-day fast leading up to my thirty-fifth birthday that proved to be a turning point in my life. I turned my birthday into a self-imposed deadline that yielded my first book.

*Where should I pray?*

It's important to make a daily appointment with God by determining a *time and place* to pray. If it helps, put the appointment in your calendar or set an alarm. I recommend that you give God the first few minutes of the day. When I pray at the beginning of the day, it's like my whole day becomes a prayer. When I dial into God's frequency in the morning, I hear His still, small voice the rest of the day.

I also recommend a corporate gathering for prayer. Kick it off with a night of prayer and praise as a church, as a group, as a team, as a family. Then sustain the momentum with daily gatherings. Our 7:14 a.m. weekday prayer gatherings not only

created tremendous synergy; they were a way of holding us accountable.

## Find Out about Prayer

In 1952, a Princeton doctoral student asked Albert Einstein a question: “What original dissertation research is left?” I’m intrigued and inspired by Einstein’s answer: “Find out about prayer.”

That is the challenge on the table: find out about prayer.

My prayer for you is that each day on this journey will yield a new discovery. Those discoveries will change the way you pray, and when you change the way you pray, everything else changes.

Few people had a more profound impact on the spiritual climate of America in the last half of the twentieth century than Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ (CRU). He championed evangelism and discipleship from college campuses to foreign mission fields and influenced millions of people through the organization he started and the books he wrote.

In 1994, Dr. Bright felt led to do a forty-day fast for revival in America. The man who went into that prayer circle and the man who came out were two different people. His faith soared. He sensed God’s presence like never before. And biblical truths went from his mind to his heart to his soul. In his own words, “This proved to be the most important forty days of my life.”

I believe the same thing can be true for you.

Draw the circle!






## Day 1

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# Get Ready

*He prayed to God regularly.*

ACTS 10:2



**F**ive words tell me everything I need to know about Cornelius: *He prayed to God regularly*. Scripture doesn't record exactly *when* or *where* or *how* he prayed. It doesn't reveal whether he prayed in the morning or the evening. It doesn't tell us what he said or the posture he prayed in. It just says he prayed regularly. And when you pray to God regularly, irregular things happen on a regular basis. You never know when or where or how God will invade the routine of your life, but you can live in holy anticipation, knowing that God is orchestrating supernatural synchronicities.



Like a grandmaster who strategically positions chess pieces on a chessboard, God is always preparing us and positioning us for divine appointments. And prayer is the way we discern the next move. The plans of God are only revealed in the presence of God. We don't get our marching orders until we get on our knees! But if we hit our knees, God will take us places we never imagined going by paths we didn't even know existed.

## Draw the Circle

If history is a chess match between good and evil, then Acts 10 is one of God's epic moves. It reveals how one prayer can change the game. It reveals what can happen when two people pray. It reveals the power of prayer to checkmate the enemy and seal the victory.

Here's the play-by-play.

A man named Cornelius has a vision while praying in Caesarea. Simultaneously, Peter has a vision while praying in Joppa. Those visions collide in a divine appointment that radically alters the course of history. Up to this point, the Way was a sect of Judaism. It isn't until Cornelius, an officer in the Roman army, puts his faith in Jesus Christ that the gospel is opened up to Gentiles. If *he* doesn't get saved, *you* can't get saved. It's not even an option. So if you're a non-Jewish follower of Jesus, your spiritual genealogy traces back to this genesis moment. When Cornelius puts his faith in Christ, the door of salvation swings wide open to the Gentiles. But it started with two people praying. Those two prayers have been answered billions of times over the last two thousand years. In fact, they were answered yet again when you put your faith in Jesus Christ.

Now let me state the obvious: Cornelius and Peter should have never met each other. Never. Ever. They were separated by geography. The thirty-two-mile distance between their two towns may not seem like much to us, but the average person in the first century didn't travel outside a thirty-mile radius of their birthplace. And more significantly, they were separated by ethnicity. Roman soldiers and Jewish disciples didn't hang out. In fact, Peter broke every law in the Jew-

## Day 1: Get Ready

ish books when he entered the home of Cornelius. Stepping through that doorway was like crossing the Rubicon. He went against everything he'd ever known and risked everything he'd ever accomplished. That doorway to the home of Cornelius was like the wardrobe in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* or the rabbit hole in *Alice in Wonderland*. I call it The Door to Whosoever. When Peter entered the house of Cornelius, it literally meant, "Whosoever will may come." And that includes you and me!

## Get Ready

It's not every day that a member of the United States Congress requests a meeting with me. At first I was curious. Then I got a little nervous. I hoped it had nothing to do with the fact that I had illegally taken my kids sledding at the Capitol during snowmageddon a few winters back, but I figured that couldn't possibly warrant a federal investigation. Turns out the congressman just wanted to thank me for writing *Wild Goose Chase*, a book he read during his first run for Congress.

As we sipped lattes in my office above Ebenezer's Coffeehouse, the congressman shared his backstory with me. Not unlike Daniel's improbable rise to political power, James's path was full of unpredictable twists and turns. It all started one day in 2007 when the Holy Spirit said in that still, small voice, "Get ready." His initial reaction was, *Get ready for what?* At the time, James was directing one of the largest Christian camps in the country and preaching on weekends. He was

## Draw the Circle

perfectly content doing what he was doing, but the Holy Spirit kept impressing the same thing on him: “Get ready.”

Several months later, James was reading the newspaper when he came across an article about the congresswoman who represented his district. Rumors were flying that she was going to make a run for governor, which would leave her seat in Congress vacant. That’s when the Holy Spirit said, “This is it.”

James didn’t have a political bone in his body. In fact, he didn’t even know the boundaries of his congressional district. He went online to do a little research when his wife walked in and said, “What are you looking at?” He said, “County statistics.” She said, “We’re running for Congress, aren’t we?” They had never talked about it or thought about it. Running for Congress seemed like a wild goose chase. After all, James had no background, no network, and no resources. There was no way he could win — unless, of course, the front-runner happened to drop out of the race a few months before the election. That is exactly what happened, and James Lankford was elected to represent the 5th Congressional District of Oklahoma. And he has since been elected to the United States Senate.

The Celtic Christians had a fascinating name for the Holy Spirit. They called Him *An-Geadh-Glas*, which means “wild goose.” Can you think of a better description of what it’s like to live a Spirit-led life than “wild goose chase”? When you follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, you never know who you’ll meet, where you’ll go, or what you’ll do. But one thing is certain: it’ll be anything but boring!

At the end of our conversation, Congressman Lankford

## Day 1: Get Ready

mentioned that he had also read *The Circle Maker*. And he's putting it into practice. If you visit the Capitol on any given morning when Congress is in session, you'll find the camp-director-turned-senator circling his constituents, colleagues, and country in prayer!

### Anything but Routine

If you establish a prayer routine, your life will be anything but routine. You will go to places, do things, and meet people you have no business going to, doing, or meeting. You don't need to seek opportunity. All you have to do is seek God. And if you seek God, opportunity will seek you.

I live in a town, Washington, D.C., where it's all about who you know. *Who you know* is more important than *what you know*. This is certainly true for the children of God. Who you know — the heavenly Father — is far more important than what you know.

Don't worry about meeting the right people. If you meet with God, God will make sure you meet the right people at the right time. After all, there is nobody He doesn't know. It's one degree of separation! And if God can change the heart of Pharaoh, He can help you find favor with anybody and everybody. Let God do the promoting and networking. I'm certainly not suggesting that you don't apply for a promotion or trade business cards, but seek first His kingdom. You've got to do God's will God's way.

Remember when Moses got impatient and took matters into his own hands by killing an Egyptian taskmaster? He

## Draw the Circle

thought it would expedite God's plan. In reality, it delayed God's plan by forty years. He thought it would bring relief, but it made the burden on the Israelites almost unbearable. That's what happens when we try to do God's job for Him. It's unbearable. When we try to make things go faster, we usually slow things down. When we try to make things easier, we usually make them harder.

Don't try to manufacture your own miracles.

Don't try to answer your own prayers.

Don't try to do God's job for Him.

Stay humble. Stay patient. Stay focused.

Keep circling.



Draw  
the  
Circle

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*If you pray to God regularly, irregular things will happen on a regular basis.*

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