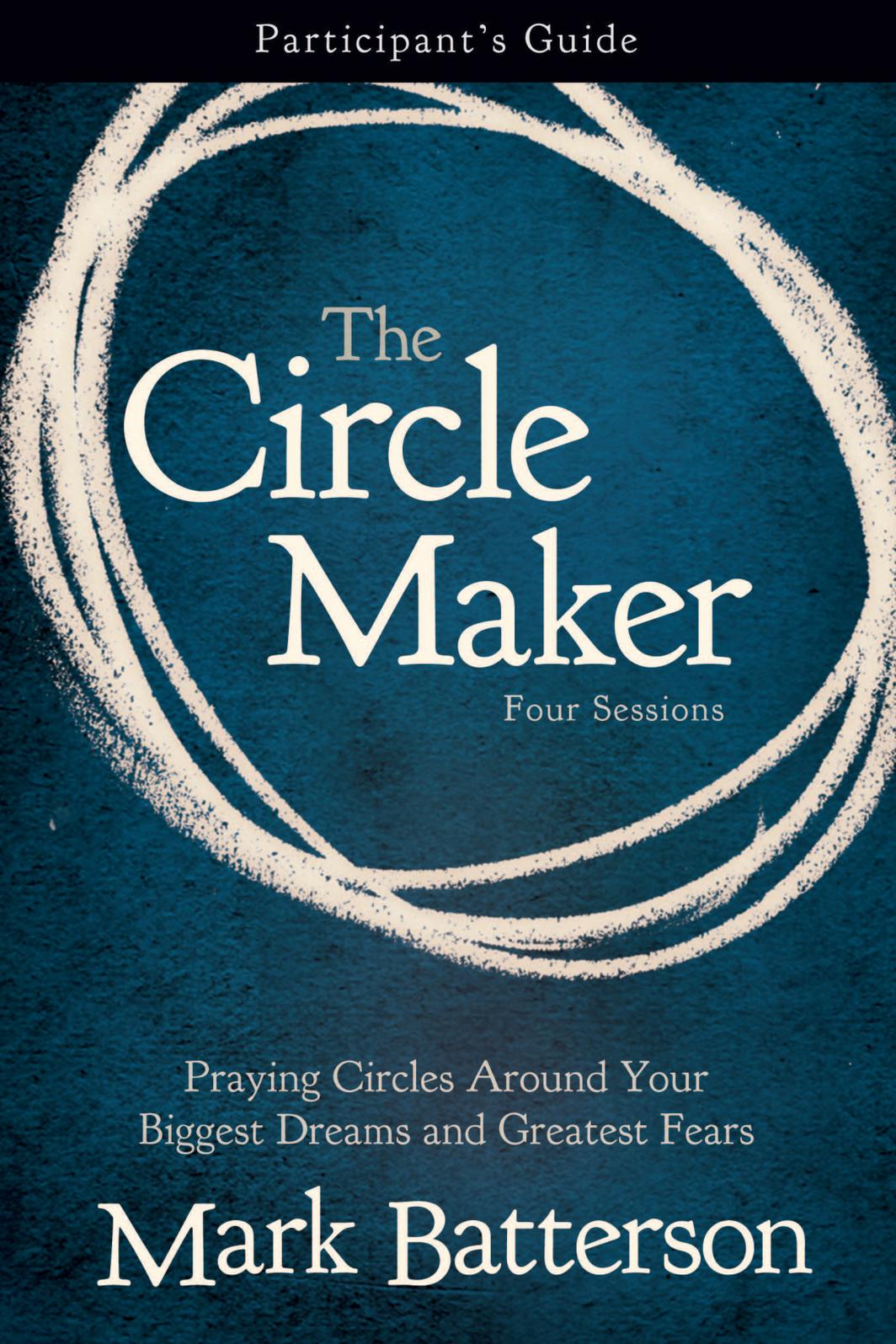


Participant's Guide



The
Circle
Maker

Four Sessions

Praying Circles Around Your
Biggest Dreams and Greatest Fears

Mark Batterson



Becoming a Circle Maker

God loves to make promises. He invites us to draw a circle around those promises and pray until we see them become a reality. God is inviting you and me into the adventure of seeing His dreams come true in this world. This happens as we make the decision to become circle makers.

Introduction

People today love extreme sports!

We live in a world where the boundaries of human ability and capacity continue to be pressed and stretched. People compete in Ironman Triathlons where they swim 2.4 miles, bike 112 miles, and *then* run a full marathon of 26.2 miles.

Freestyle motorcycle riders used to dream of doing a backflip and landing it. Few dared even try it. That move is now commonplace ... riders are *expected* to do it. So, in 2006, a rider named Travis Pastrana attempted and landed a double backflip on a motorcycle in the X Games. No doubt, someone out there today is trying to figure out how they will land a triple backflip on a motorcycle.

Extreme sports like ice climbing, wingsuit base jumping, kayak skydiving, snocross, and a myriad of other surprising options are cropping up as people look for a new rush of adrenaline and a greater challenge.

Something in the human spirit pushes us to climb higher, drive faster, and push the boundaries. Into this world of risk-taking adventurers God whispers an invitation, “Try drawing a prayer circle!” Into the lives of Christians who have become bored with the same old religious practices and routine spiritual lives, the Spirit of God says, “Take a risk, draw a circle, and engage your faith at a whole new level.” For believers who love God with a passion, but have slipped into a spiritual rut, it is time to enter a whole new level of extreme faith ... it is time to become a circle maker!

At the end of the day, and the end of your life, you will look back and discover that one of the most extreme things you could ever do is draw a circle.



The greatest moments in life are the miraculous moments when human impotence and divine omnipotence intersect — and they intersect when we draw a circle around the impossible situations in our lives and invite God to intervene.

Talk About It

Tell about a time you did something risky or extreme. What moved you to do something adventurous like this?



Who you become is determined by how you pray. Ultimately, the transcript of your prayers becomes the script of your life.

Video Teaching Notes

As you watch the video teaching segment for session one, use the following outline to record thoughts and reflections that stand out to you.

Drawing a prayer circle around Capitol Hill

The Legend of Honi the Circle Maker

The Jericho miracle

Identifying your Jericho

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Wayne and Diane's circle makers' story

Know what to circle

Learning from Daniel: finding a time and place

The 21-day challenge



Drawing prayer circles starts with discerning what God wants, what God wills. And until His sovereign will becomes your sanctified wish, your prayer life will be unplugged from its power supply.

Video Discussion

1. Mark shares his story of feeling under qualified and overwhelmed when he started National Community Church. Tell about a time you faced a real-life situation and you felt under qualified and overwhelmed.



When we feel under qualified and overwhelmed, we might be exactly where God wants us. These moments force us to pray like everything depends on God. They also drive us to our knees. In times like this we move to a place of raw dependence on God and raw dependence is the raw material out of which God performs His greatest miracles.

2. **Read:** Numbers 13:26–33. Describe the territory God called Joshua and the people of Israel to enter and take as their own. What was the nature of this task and why would prayer be such an essential part of accomplishing it?

3. Mark tells the story about prayer-walking a specific area of Washington D.C. He marked an area; he made a map; then he circled it in prayer.

Take a moment and draw a map or picture of an area, relationship, goal, or something else that you believe God wants you to circle in prayer. It could be as simple as the name of a person, or a drawing of your neighborhood or workplace.

Next, write down three or four prayers you can begin to pray around this territory.

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You may want to share with your group the place, situation, or person you feel God drawing you to and invite them to join you in drawing this circle.

4. Describe a time you prayed about something and God did far more than you expected.

5. Write down a specific time in your life when you experienced great blessing, a spiritual breakthrough, a miracle, or the fulfillment of a dream. Then, reflect back on the persons who were praying for you. Write down their names ... create a prayer genealogy.

A blessing I experienced, breakthrough, miracle, or dream:

Names of persons who prayed:

Briefly share this story with your group, and then pause as a group to lift up a few focused prayers of thanks for these people who are in your spiritual genealogy and who circled you in prayer.



I believe that every blessing, every breakthrough, every miracle, and every dream has a genealogy. If you trace it all the way back to its origin, you will find a prayer circle.

6. Why is it important that we have people in our lives who draw circles of prayer around us? Who is praying for you right now and how can you help them stay informed so that they can continue to pray in specific and powerful ways? This might be a great time to thank them in some tangible way.

7. Who are *you* praying for regularly and how are your prayers impacting the lives of these people? How can you increase the intensity of the prayer circles you are drawing for these people?



Miracles are the by-product of prayers that were prayed by you or for you. And that should be all the motivation you need to pray.

8. **Read:** James 4:1 – 3. Mark says in the video: “God has determined that certain expressions of His power will only be exercised in response to prayer. Simply put: We have not because we ask not. Put another way, we have not because we circle not.”

How do you respond to this idea that some things don’t happen because we choose not to pray and circle these things?

What might be an example of something we would miss because we make a choice not to pray?

What is something you have *not* been circling in prayer that you now feel you need to engage with a whole new level of seriousness? What steps will you take to circle this matter in prayer and how can your group members come alongside of you?

9. When Honi prayed, and then the rain began to fall ... he did not stop praying! He began to pray with greater specificity. First, he prayed for more rain ... rain that would fill cisterns, pits, and caverns. He asked God for an outpouring that people would remember for decades. Then, he prayed for a rain of God's favor, blessing, and grace. Wow! What boldness! Sometimes we pray small and unfocused prayers when God wants us to draw circles that are big and specific.

Think about the map you drew earlier in this session and the list of prayers you wrote down. Look at the map and read the

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prayers. Now, rewrite those prayers with two things in mind: (1) How can I be bolder and dare to ask even more? (2) How can I be more specific and detailed in how I circle this territory in prayer?

Next, rewrite some examples of how you can circle this person, need, thing, or situation in prayer. Be bold and precise!

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Share your new prayer direction with your group members and invite them to pray with similar boldness and precision.

10. **Read:** Joshua 6:1 – 15. How do you think the people of Israel felt as they approached Jericho and saw the mammoth walls and extraordinary fortification of this fortress-city?

What is the Jericho in your life right now? You know God is powerful and you trust Him, but if the truth were known, there are moments when you wonder if this wall will ever fall, if you will ever see the victory of God in this specific area. Share your journey of facing this Jericho and how you feel about it today.



Jericho is spelled lots of different ways. If you have cancer, it's spelled healing. If your child is far from God, it's spelled salvation. If your marriage is falling apart, it's spelled reconciliation. If you have a vision that is beyond your resources, it's spelled provision.

11. **Read:** Matthew 20:29 – 34. If Jesus were to meet you face-to-face and ask, “What do You want me to do for you?” what would you answer? What would you dare to ask of Jesus . . . and have the confidence that it is something He wants to accomplish in and through you?



Well-developed faith results in well-defined prayers, and well-defined prayers result in a well-lived life.

Closing Prayer

Take time as a group to pray in some of the following directions . . .

- Thank God for the people He has used in your life to circle you in prayer.
- Confess that there have been times when you missed out on opportunities to draw precise and bold prayer circles and pray that these moments would be less frequent.
- Lift up a need of one of your group members in prayer and circle them with confidence.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to prompt, convict, and move you to deeper places of prayer.



Bold prayers honor God, and God honors bold prayers. 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. Why? Because they don't require divine intervention.

Between Sessions

Personal Reflection

Take time in personal reflection and think about the following questions . . .

- What is a specific situation I am facing that needs to be circled in prayer and what has kept me from praying with bold confidence?
- How has God been faithful to answer prayers in my past and how can my awareness of God's work in the past give me confidence for the future?
- What is my next step in growing as a circle maker?
- Who do I know who needs to learn to draw bold circles of prayer and how can I tell that person about what I have been learning about prayer?

Personal Actions

21-Day Prayer Challenge

Try a prayer challenge starting today, and for the next twenty-one days. Using the space provided on page 28, identify a time you will pray every day. Then, pick a place you will go consistently to meet with God in prayer. Be sure this is a place you feel connected to God. Finally, identify a specific person, promise, or problem you will circle in prayer every day for the coming three weeks. Be sure to keep this appointment with God every day and see what He accomplishes in and through you.

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My Prayer *Time*:

My Prayer *Place*:

The *Person, Promise, or Problem* I will circle:

Results from my prayer circling challenge:

Prayer Walk

If you have never prayer-walked before, use the simple directions below to help get you started:

1. Identify a specific location you know God wants you to pray for. You might even want to draw a picture of this place. It could be a home, workplace, school, community building, a block, or even a neighborhood.
2. Make a short list of three or four things you believe God wants you to pray while you walk around this area. It could be needs

for specific people, salvation for those who are far from God, an in-breaking of God's Holy Spirit, conviction of sin, safety, the breaking of spiritual strongholds, or anything else God places on your heart.

3. Plan to do your walk (on your own or with others you might invite along). Then go out and do it. You can pray silently or out loud. If you are with another person or a group and you pray out loud, others will think you are having a conversation with each other. If you are alone, if you pray in a normal and conversational tone, people will think you are talking on a Bluetooth or phone!
4. Keep praying for these same needs and concerns after you have completed your prayer circle walk.



Not every prayer will be answered the way we script it, but I'm convinced of this: The miracles that have happened would not have happened if I hadn't drawn a circle around them in the first place.

Recommended Reading

As you reflect on what you have learned in this session, you may want to read the opening section of the book, *The Circle Maker*, by Mark Batterson, chapters 1–4. In preparation for session two you might want to read the section, *The First Circle*, chapters 5–7.



Don't just read the Bible. Start circling the promises. Don't just make a wish. Write down a list of God-glorifying life goals. Don't just pray. Keep a journal.

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A large, vertically oriented rounded rectangle with a light gray border and a subtle drop shadow. Inside the rectangle, there are 25 horizontal lines spaced evenly down the page, providing a space for handwritten notes or reflections.