Teaching Notes

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Intro to The Circle Maker by Mark Batterson

For Zadok Orchestra LifeGroup, January 6, 2013

1. Thanks and opening remarks.
2. We will be studying The Circle Maker. The Circle Maker is about praying big prayers and trusting God to move mightily in your life. It all centers around the story of Honi, a Jewish prophet who lived in the 1st century before Christ. I’ll tell you his story, and what made Honi special, but first, I want to lay the foundation.
3. The Circle Maker is all about praying big prayers, but I believe there are some things we have to understand before we can just jump in and start praying such prayers. In order to pray, you have to have a certain understanding of the way God works. It’s not a mystery, but the Body of Christ at large just hasn’t had it until recently. Here at Abba’s House, we’re just starting to shift into this paradigm over the last year in the prophetic ministry, and we’re starting to see it move into the hearts of the entire Body.
4. So basically, God is shifting the Body of Christ at large into that new paradigm right now in three areas.
5. First paradigm shift: Living FROM His presence instead of trying TO GET His presence.

This is a radical paradigm shift going on in the Body of Christ right now. For so long, we’ve been focusing on getting the Lord to come down: into our church, into our situations, into our lives. We know we need Him, so we beg Him for His presence. We worship knowing that God inhabits the praise of His people, so we praise and worship and hope that He will come down. We sing great songs, like “Come, Holy Spirit, I need you, come, sweet Spirit, I pray…” all in an effort to get Him to come down and inhabit our worship services.

There’s only one problem with that: It’s not Biblical.

God is already here. He is omnipresent. It’s not possible for Him not to be here. We can’t conjure Him up with three fast songs and three slow songs. He’s already here. All we have to do is understand that, and learn how to operate out of a new paradigm.

1. Second paradigm shift: To receiving His love (sonship), instead of always trying to make ourselves love Him more (works).

**We seek to love the Lord first and foremost. How many of you agree that that is our #1 goal? (Show of hands.) And yet the Bible specifically states that that is the goal of the Law.**

*Matthew 22:35-40 says: “Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying,****36****“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?”* ***37****Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’****38****This is the first and great commandment.****39****And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’****40****On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”*

**But we are not under the Law. We are under grace. We are part of the Kingdom. What is the paradigm of the Kingdom? It’s that the Lord loves us, that He is a good God, that He has glorified us.**

*1 John 3:1-3: “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.****2****Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.****3****And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”*

According to Chris Gore’s sermon “The Secret of John,” (Bethel Church, <http://store.ibethel.org/p5622/the-secret-of-john>) when Jesus was fasting in the desert at the beginning of His ministry, He had just come from an amazing experience with His Father, where heaven literally opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in visible form. God the Father openly declared Jesus to be His Beloved Son, in Whom He was well pleased.

Jesus was on a spiritual high. But the enemy showed up and tried to get Jesus to forget Jesus’ identity. (I don’t like to talk about the enemy much, but it’s important that we understand that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and the rulers of darkness.)

**The temptation of the enemy was to get Jesus to forget that God the Father said He was His Beloved Son. The enemy repeatedly said, “If You are the Son of God…” even though God had just called Jesus His Beloved Son. The enemy wants you to forget that you are beloved.**

**Some of you have never felt like you were beloved in the first place, and therein lies the source of many of our problems in life.**

The fact is, that He loves you. His heart beats for you. He has waited thousands of years for you to be born. He wrote down every day of your life in His book before the foundation of the world. His eyes are fixed on you and He can’t take them off of you. There’s no one in the world that He loves more than you.

**Graham Cooke says:**

**“The Lord says there is nothing you can do that would make Him love you more. There is also nothing you can do that will make Him love you less. He loves you, because He loves you,**

**He loves you 100%.**

**It is your job to be loved outrageously.**

**His name is: I Am He Who Loves You Outrageously.**

**When He looks at you, He sees someone He can love outrageously….”**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dEisSxR2cps>

The problem for many of us is that we know intellectually that God loves us. We have been told that all our lives. But we don’t *feel* like He loves us, so we don’t reflect our status as His beloved children in our day-to-day lives.

1. Discuss how to feel God’s love as it relates to the Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman.
   1. Quality time: God is with us always. He is Immanuel.
   2. Acts of service: God is always helping us and doing things for us.
   3. Physical touch. Touch in worship; when you sense His presence, it’s because He’s touching you. He longs to hold you and comfort you. Use hug from Father illustration.
   4. Words of affirmation: Give examples. “I have loved you with an everlasting love; with great mercies I have borne you.” “Fear not; I have called you by your name; you are Mine.” “I will not, I will not, I will not leave you without support.”
   5. Gifts: Salvation; the Holy Spirit; free lunches at work; gifts from friends; family is a gift; etc.

When we *feel* like God loves us, then our entire paradigm shifts and we can think and live like the beloved children we are, rather than like orphans.

1. Third paradigm shift: To believing that He is truly FOR us, not against us, and boldly operating out of that principle. Paradigm shift to resting in Him and letting Him work on our behalf.

See, when we start thinking that God is FOR us—that He’s truly on our side—then everything changes in our lives. We cease worrying. We cease working. We start to understand that God does not have a hard time being God. He’s very good at His job.

See, the Bible, in the creation story, says over and over, the evening and morning were the first day, the 2nd day, and so on. But there’s an interesting thing. It never says that about the 7th day. It says on the 7th day God rested, and He never put a period on that rest.

He has never stopped resting, and that’s why He expects us to rest.

**Hebrews 3:7-19 says:**

*“Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:*

*“Today, if you will hear His voice,****8****Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,  
In the day of trial in the wilderness,****9****Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me,  
And saw My works forty years.****10****Therefore I was angry with that generation,  
And said, ‘They always go astray in their heart,  
And they have not known My ways.’****11****So I swore in My wrath,  
‘They shall not enter My rest.’”*

***12****Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;****13****but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.****14****For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,****15****while it is said:*

*“Today, if you will hear His voice,  
Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”*

***16****For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses?****17****Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?****18****And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?****19****So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”*

The reason God was angry at the Israelites was because they failed to believe that He was sufficient for their needs—that He was fighting for them and would take care of them—and they refused to enter into His rest. That is why He let them wander in the wilderness for 40 years—to prove to them that He is faithful and trustworthy.

God still insists today that we acknowledge Him as God with all power and believe that He will exhibit that power through us and for us.

Psalm 84:11 says, “*For the Lord God is a sun and shield; The Lord will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold From those who walk uprightly.”*

Hebrews 4:1-10 says,

***“Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.2****For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them,not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.****3For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said:***

***“So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest,’”although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works”; [***[***c***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Heb%204&version=NKJV#fen-NKJV-30019c)***]******5****and again in this place: “They shall not enter My rest.”* ***6****Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience,****7****again He designates a certain day, saying in David, “Today,” after such a long time, as it has been said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.”***8***For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.****9**There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. 10For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.”***

Eph. 2:10 says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

God does everything and He does it well. God even does those things that you and I think we do. He actually commands us in Hebrews 3 and 4 to rest in Him and cease working.

We focus on what we can do for Him. Yet God says that we should enter His rest, and that all of His works were finished before the foundation of the world. So we don’t have to focus on what we can do for Him… **all we have to do is be with Him, and He does the works.**

1. Talk about what it means to be anointed (“smeared,”) and how Jesus bought the glory of God back for us. Romans 3:23: “For all have sinned and fallen short of the *glory* of God.” Jesus died not just to redeem us from our sins, but to redeem us back to being carriers of God’s glory.
2. When we believe that God is with us, loves us, and works for us on our behalf, then we have the faith to start praying God-sized prayers.
3. **How these things relate to prayer:**
4. Prayer is intimacy with God. God loves you. You are His favorite child. There’s no one on earth He loves more than He loves you. You are His treasure and delight. He waited for thousands of years for you to be born and He watches you every day because He can’t take His eyes off you. He is just too wild about you. Your picture is on His refrigerator!
5. When I pray, I go into my office and sit there and just soak in the presence of the Lord, and receive His love. I tell the Lord the most intimate secrets of my soul. He talks to me and I talk back. He tells me His secrets too, because Jesus said that we are His friends, and He tells His friends His secrets.
6. Prayer is an open invitation to filling up with the love and presence of God. It’s God’s invitation to sit and let Him heal you from all the hurts and frustrations we pick up along the course of life. It’s God’s invitation to make everything better. It’s God’s invitation to be more intimate with Him than you could ever be with any earthly lover. It’s communion with God, and it’s a two-way street.
7. God is wooing you to prayer. He’s wooing you to bigger prayer.
8. We as a church, if we pray at all, have been praying prayers that are too small. We have been operating out of the principle: “He must increase, but I must decrease.” But who said that? John. What did John still operate under? The Law.

Luke 16:16: *“The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.”*

1. **So what is the Kingdom revelation of prayer?**

*John 14:12-14: “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.****13****And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.****14****If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.”*

1. Conclusion:
2. God made you, and He wants to dream with You. He made you to be a co-laborer with Him. He is filling you with His glory so that His glory can cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. You think being filled with God’s glory is too high to attain to? Well, do you believe in the sacrifice of Jesus? Because my Bible says that all have sinned and fallen short of His GLORY.

*Isaiah 60:1: Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.*

1. God will give you whatever you ask in faith.
2. Faith is born of the Word of God. You get your direction for what to pray for from the Word. (You are not likely to be able to pray in faith for something you know is not God’s will.)

*Matt. 21:21-22: “So Jesus answered and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done.****22****And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”*

*Mark 11:24: “Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.”*

*Matt. 7:7-11: ““Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.****8****For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.****9****Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?****10****Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent?****11****If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!”*

*Heb. 4:14-16: “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.****15****For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in allpoints tempted as we are, yet without sin.****16****Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”*

1. Tell the story of Honi the Circle Maker.