

## Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop

August 2, 2016

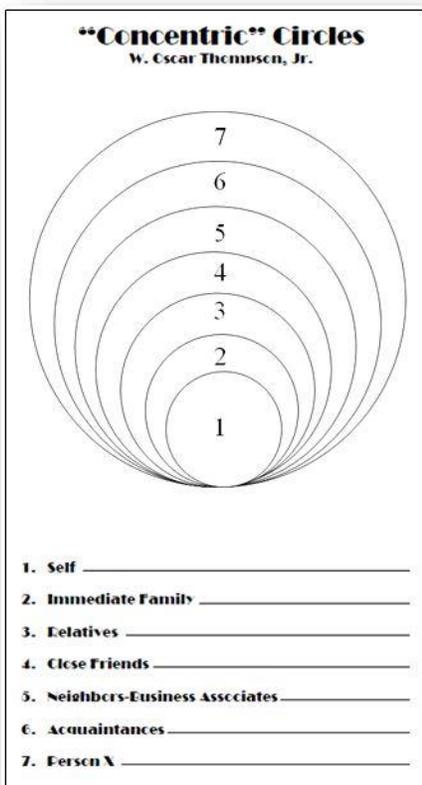
The news is full of wildfires both real and metaphorical. The West is battling huge, literal fires, the usual task of summer, but made harder by years of drought.

Our political process is “on fire” in ways too numerous to count. Shooting wars and terrorist horrors pursue us and assault us via every media source.<sup>1</sup>

The psalmist cried out long ago, “*When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?*” (Psalm 11:3). Two weeks ago we considered what it means to “stand in the gap,” and I’d like to continue that thought today, using the same basic idea I suggested then—**prayer**.

I’ve told you before about the “concentric circles” prayer strategy I learned from Dr. Oscar Thompson long ago. Beginning with the sin and unredeemed areas of our own hearts, these outward-moving circles cause us to pray for particular persons in our

immediate family, our extended family, our close friends, our neighbors and business associates, and beyond. The beauty of this idea is that the circles of our lives overlap, and if each of us is busily on mission in “our own circles,” we will make a great deal of progress in reaching the world . . . and “putting out all these fires.”



Another “outward-bound” prayer strategy is that given by our Lord in Acts 1:8: “*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in **Jerusalem**, throughout **Judea**, in **Samaria**, and to the ends of the earth.*” I used that model to suggest some strategies for prayer to our Deacons recently, and I’ve enclosed those suggestions with this *Laptop*.

My friend, Steven Loots, a pastor and missionary in South Africa, has suggested some additional prayer strategies, which he calls “Strategic Missional Praying.”

<sup>1</sup> As awful as all the killing is, there is good news of a sort in this excellent video: <https://vimeo.com/128373915>.

Those suggestions are attached, also, and provide some very specific ways to pray for our missional connections from right here in Oakland Mills to our partnerships in Jamaica, Ghana, Guatemala, and beyond.

And, in those moments when hope is elusive, I commend again the faith expressed in Habakkuk 3:17-18, plus these words of James Russell Lowell in the hymn, "Once to Every Man and Nation":

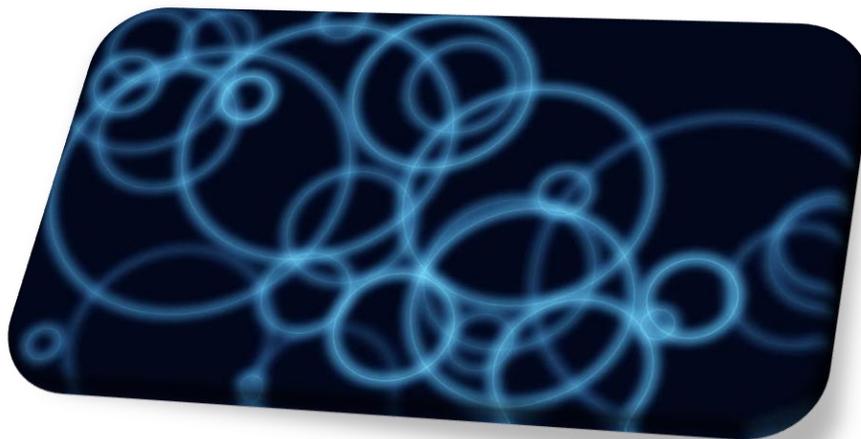
*Though the cause of evil prosper, yet the Truth alone is strong.  
Though her portion be the scaffold, and upon the throne be wrong.  
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown,  
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own.*

And finally, these words from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

*And in despair I bowed my head. "There is no peace on earth," I said,  
"for hate is strong and mocks the song of peace on earth, good will to men."  
Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: "God is not dead, nor doth he sleep.  
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail, with peace on earth, good will to men.*

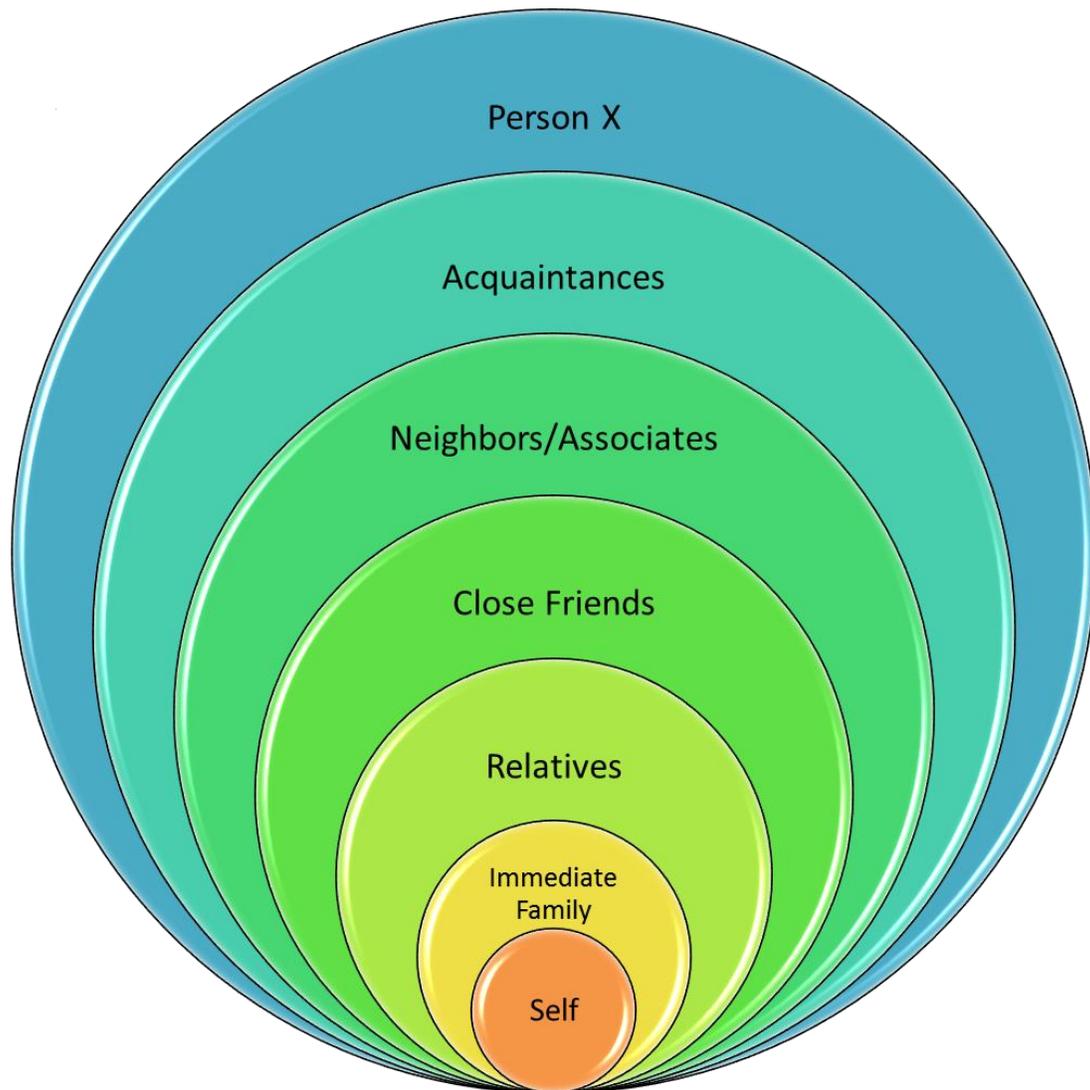
*"Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you.  
Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor  
in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:58).*

Dave



# “Concentric” Circles

W. Oscar Thompson, Jr.



1. **Self** \_\_\_\_\_
2. **Immediate Family** \_\_\_\_\_
3. **Relatives** \_\_\_\_\_
4. **Close Friends** \_\_\_\_\_
5. **Neighbors-Business Associates** \_\_\_\_\_
6. **Acquaintances** \_\_\_\_\_
7. **Person X** \_\_\_\_\_

**TRUST**  
**IN THE LORD**  
WITH **ALL YOUR HEART**  
AND LEAN NOT ON YOUR OWN  
UNDERSTANDING;  
IN **ALL YOUR WAYS**  
**ACKNOWLEDGE**  
**HIM**, AND HE SHALL  
DIRECT YOUR PATHS.

PROVERBS 3:5-6



*You will receive **power** when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.  
And you will be my **witnesses**, telling people about me everywhere—in **Jerusalem**,  
throughout **Judea**, in **Samaria**, and **to the ends of the earth** (Acts 1:8).*

***After David had done the will of God in his own generation,**  
he died and was buried with his ancestors (Acts 13:36).*

#### **JERUSALEM**

Pray that you will continue to grow in Christ.  
Pray for the concentric circles of your life.  
Pray for someone to mentor in Christ.  
Pray that you will do the will of God in this generation.  
Pray for CBF, that we will continue to grow together in Christ.  
Pray for the changes coming to OMI and to Oakland Mills.  
Pray that we will transform Oakland Mills into the image of Christ.  
Pray that we will do the will of God for us in this generation.

#### **JUDEA**

Pray for Columbia, that on this 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our founding,  
we will not forsake the principles out of which we were birthed.  
Pray that CBF will be a force for good throughout our city.

#### **SAMARIA**

Pray for the Fire & Light Church in Reisterstown and for the Tribe Church in Fells Point.  
Pray that we will be able to meaningfully support and encourage these who labor  
to transform Baltimore into the image of Christ.

#### **TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH**

Pray for our wells in Ghana.  
Pray for our mission connections with Jamaica.  
Pray for our mission connections with Huehuetenango, Guatemala.  
Pray for new partnerships with the home countries of our members.  
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem and of the whole planet.

# Strategic Missional Praying <sup>1</sup>

“Something happens when you pray that would not have happened if you had not prayed.”

## MONDAY: Praying *down* God’s Power—Godly Intervention

“Your partner needs to *live* in the power and presence of God, so first of all we need to pray *down* the power of God into and onto your partner. Missionary activity is serious spiritual work . . . so, responding to both the prompting of the Holy Spirit and whatever knowledge or information you may have through your contact and communication with your partner, pray God’s power down on his life, her family, and their ministry” (pp. 112-113).

“Your missionary partner also needs to *function* in the power of God. His or her work needs to carry the seal of godly authority. Strongholds need tearing down, darkness needs to be pushed back, and unbelief must be challenged. . . . Ask God to powerfully confirm His Word, supernaturally bless your partner’s evangelistic efforts, and divinely save the lost. . . . Pray that the power of God may be the hallmark of your partner’s ministry and that it would become evident to all around him” (pp. 113-114).

## TUESDAY: Praying *away* Spiritual Darkness (Ephesians 6:12-13)

“The devil hates all missionary endeavors. He hates any action that will draw people out of darkness and into the light. He will use whatever means he can to frustrate missionary efforts. He will fight dirty; he will lie and deceive and kill. . . . He will break down trust, confuse communications, cause equipment malfunction or failure, bring illness, attempt to kill, sow enmity, emphasize tradition, criticize unfairly, and waste resources. He will do anything to slow down the progress of the gospel and speed up the destruction of God’s servants. . . . Pray back forces of evil. Pray through attacks, pray in deliverance, and pray down strongholds” (pp. 114-115).

## WEDNESDAY: Praying *open* Closed Doors (Colossians 4:2)

“Your missionary partner needs to make the most of every opportunity. Pray that God will show him open doors and that God would open closed doors. Pray that her sphere of influence will expand, that he would meet the right people, and that God would provide her with divine appointments. Pray for invitations, access to the right institutions, and entry into formerly closed areas. . . . Pray that every hindrance will turn into an opportunity” (pp. 116-117).

“Be aware of what is happening in the country where your partner works. Use the Internet, read books, stay up-to-date with the news. In many places civil wars still rage, blocking off huge areas from the gospel. Pray for peace, free entry and safe passage. In some places organized religion is the main opposition. Whether it is a state church, Islam, voodoo or animism, all enslave the people and make it difficult to share salvation. Pray for cultural keys—those well-known stories, histories, practices or myths that could be used to explain the gospel in a way that locals will understand” (p. 117).

“On a personal level, your partners also need you to pray for opportunities to educate their children, for visas, for support, for permits and other documentation, for housing and amenities, for the opportunity to shop, travel, and spend time together as a family” (p. 117).

---

<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from Steven Loots, *Personal Missionary Partnerships* (Greenwood, VA: World Christian Press, 2008), pp. 109-126.

### **THURSDAY: Praying *in* Resources**

“Pray for your partner’s continued fundraising efforts. Many missionary partners gifted for work on the field are not necessarily gifted for soliciting funds. . . . Pray for more partners (and help find them). Pray for open doors to trusts, foundations, and grants. Pray for introductions to those who can give. Pray for churches to get involved. Ask the Lord what you can do to help bring in the resources. Allow the Holy Spirit to prompt *you*” (p. 119).

“Not only do we need to pray resources in, but we need to pray for God to protect, preserve, and help us use well what we have. Pray for the protection of current ministry assets, equipment, finances and resources. . . . Ministry involves an intricate web of people, actions and relationships. Many things can and do go wrong. Family troubles and responsibilities, illness, lack of infrastructure, staff resources, projects, poverty, nature and the environment, a dynamic global economy, and a multitude of other things all present daily challenges to your partner.

“Each of these things needs our prayers. Whether it’s a lack of clean water or a pregnant wife, a dreaded disease or a toothache, a new staff member or a hurricane, aging parents back home or adventuresome teens on the field—all of these require God’s help, guidance, provision or intervention. Losing a cell phone in New York is easily remedied; losing one in Angola is a major setback. Breaking a tooth in London may be painful and even expensive, but doing so in Honduras or Zimbabwe could be a nightmare” (pp. 120-121).

### **FRIDAY: Praying a Spiritual Covering *over* your Partner (Colossian 4:2)**

“One area of prayer that is often neglected is that of watchful praying—being alert to possible dangers and standing in the gap as a watchman for others. Being watchful requires an awareness of what’s happening in the world and sensitivity to spiritual forces—especially to the whispering of the Holy Spirit.

“You may become aware of a worsening political situation in the area where your partner works, or, watching a weather forecast, you realize that a hurricane is headed directly toward them, or you read of new legislation that will directly impact your partner. All of these could be merely interesting, but for someone sensitive to the Holy Spirit, they can be powerful warning signs that urgent prayer is needed.

“Praying watchfully requires a sentry’s vigilance—always on the lookout for possible threat or opportunity. Become a watchman for your partner. Read, listen, and look. Get your spiritual antennae out and get on your knees” (p. 122).

### **SATURDAY: Offering *up* Glorious Praise**

“Breathe in the Holy Spirit. Reflect on the glory of God. Tell Jesus that you love Him. Adore your Heavenly Father, who answers prayer. Rejoice alongside your mission partner for every success, every breakthrough, every victory, and every advance of the kingdom.

“Whether you read of three people coming to Jesus in Albania or 10,000 in Zambia, our response should be equally enthusiastic: Praise God! Every soul saved is a miracle, a work of God, a victory over death and Satan. Every soul won is a step closer to winning the world for our Lord. And thank Him each time He provides for you so that you can bless the ministry more” (p. 124).

### **SUNDAY: Praying *out* Workers into the Harvest (Matthew 9:37-38).**

“In all likelihood your partner needs help. There is a chronic shortage of workers to help bring in the harvest. Pray that God would supply human resources, that people with a calling would become aware of the work your partner is doing, and that they would pray about joining him or her. Perhaps you should be spreading the news, telling others and seeking help—with your partner’s concurrence, of course” (p. 125).