



- WEEK 2 - OPEN SPACE -

CHECK-IN

How are you? Where have you seen Christ working in your life in the last week? And... in today's Scripture, Peter has a vision about God removing the Hebrew food restrictions, (it's really a metaphor for people being clean or unclean, but that's a different topic for a different day.) So, what's the best meal you've ever eaten? Something grandma used to cook? Or maybe you stumbled on a hole-in-the-wall taco joint in San Diego?

OPENING PRAYER

God, do something cool in our lives,
in the lives of those around us, and in our faith community.

INTRODUCTION

Last week we introduced our initiative for 2024: to pray the prayer,
"God...

"DO SOMETHING COOL"

...as often as possible. (We even passed out keytags to help you remember. Get one from Pastor Mike if you missed it. They're... in a word... cool.) We were also challenged to live in the anticipation of God showing up. It's not enough just to pray the prayer and then go on about our day. We have to live with the *expectation* that God will hear us and then do the cool thing. And so, we pray this prayer with...

OPEN EYES

This was our first tip to get the most out of this prayer. When we pray this prayer, we often only need to open our eyes to the cool things God is already doing in our lives. But, we also open our eyes to look for the cool thing God will do. Sometimes, God works subtly, and if we aren't looking for the cool thing, we'll miss it. So, we pray this prayer with eyes open for God working in our lives. We'll look at another tip today that will help us get the most out of this prayer. But first...

Question 1: Last week, we began praying this prayer and looking for the cool things God would do. Now, we've only been at this one week, but let's check in... what cool thing has God done in your life in the last week? If you can't think of anything, assess that... were you praying the prayer? Did you go through your day looking for God working in your life?

STORY & SCRIPTURE

Each week, we'll look at a story from Pastor Mike's sabbatical, a corresponding story from the Book of Acts in the Bible, and then allow

those to give us some direction on how to get the most out of the prayer we are praying. Last week, we left Pastor Mike in Savannah, Georgia, (feel free to read that with a genteel southern accent,) just having had a really powerful, obvious, comical experience where God showed up in a very cool way. (If you missed, go back and give that a listen... it's proof God has a sense of humor.) But it's where this prayer initiative had its beginnings. Pastor Mike began praying this prayer every day, "God, do something cool," expecting God to show up around every corner. And God most definitely did.

From Savannah, Pastor Mike traveled to Charleston, South Carolina, where his next meeting with a church planting team would be. If you missed that story on Sunday, (and aren't in a small group with him,) go check it out. It involves an Airstream trailer, beach sunrise, 300-year-old prayer, church in a bar attached to a soccer stadium, and a little bout with fear. (The fact that Pastor Mike was awake for a sunrise is proof that this was an act of God.) But as he was having this God-doing-something-cool moment, he was also reading a story from the Book of Acts about God doing something cool in another guy's life a few millennia earlier.

Read Acts, chapter 10, verses 1 through 8.

Right about the same time, Peter has a vision about preaching to the Gentiles. ("Gentile" is just a word for anyone who was not Jewish.) Cornelius was Roman, and therefore a gentile, a non-Jew. And so, God is setting up both guys... Cornelius to be seeking out Simon Peter, and

Simon Peter to be open to talking to him. When Cornelius's men find Peter, and now knowing that the good news about Jesus Christ was for everyone, Gentiles too, Peter is open to seeing him. Peter preaches the good news to everyone in Cornelius's house, and God shows up in a big way. The Holy Spirit lights upon these Gentiles, just as it had the Jews, and Peter baptizes everyone in the house. God does something cool.

Question 2: Discuss this story. What stands out to you about Cornelius and his relationship to God? How would you have felt were you in his household hearing the "Good News" for the first time? Feel free to browse the rest of the chapter. What catches your attention about this Scripture?

REFLECTION

Last week, we talked about our first tip on how to get the most out of this prayer. That is... when we pray for God to do something cool, we then need to open our eyes and actively look for how God is working. But Pastor Mike's experience in Charleston and this story from Acts give us our second tip. Remember, our God is in the business of doing cool things. In fact, God *wants* to do the cool thing in your life. But we're often our own worst enemy, and stifle God's ability to work in our lives. That's why this prayer is so important. When we pray, (and the more we pray,) we create the...

OPEN SPACE

...for God to move. The more we pray the more *receptive* we are to God working in our lives, the more *open* we are to the cool things God can do. So, it's not about God working or not working, because God always *wants* to do cool things in our lives. Rather, it's about us opening the space for it. When we pray and spend time in prayer, we open the space within us, within our lives, within our own hearts, for God to do the cool thing.

Cornelius spent time in prayer, and because of that, the space was open for him to receive the vision from the angel. Peter spent time in prayer, which opened *him* to the vision he has... letting him know it's okay to go to Cornelius. Their time in prayer opened the space for this cool thing to happen, and it changed the lives, not only of Cornelius, but his entire household. If God hadn't woken Pastor Mike up that morning, and had he not gone to that beach and spent time in prayer... he never would have been open to the message God had for him that morning. The time these three spent in prayer opened the *space* for the cool thing to happen. When we pray, we open the space for God to work.

Question 3: Assessment time... how much "open space" do you feel you have for God to move in your life? What limits that space for you? What would open it more? What would that open space look like in an ideal world?

CLOSING

Your challenge and our initiative hasn't changed... pray this prayer as often as possible... "God,

"DO SOMETHING COOL"

Leave it open ended and let God fill in the *how*. Pray it for your own life, for your own family, for our faith community... then let God show up. Remember, God wants to do the cool thing in our lives, but it's often our limited space that stifles it, that causes us to miss it. When we pray this prayer and then open our eyes to what God might do living with the anticipation, the expectation, the excitement of God showing up, the space opens for God to work. The more time we spend in prayer, the more receptive, the more aware, the easier it is for us to see what God is doing. When we pray, we open the space within us for God to do something cool.

**Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations.
Close in prayer.**