



- WEEK 1 - OPEN EYES -

CHECK-IN

How are you? Where have you seen Christ working in your life in the last week? And... winter is in full force! So, how is your cold tolerance? Are you part sled dog, perfectly happy in the chill? Or are you cold-intolerant... it's not a choice, it's a medical condition.

OPENING PRAYER

Ever-present God, show up in such awesome ways
that we cannot deny your presence in our lives.

INTRODUCTION

There's just something about beginning a new year that causes us to assess our lives, see changes we would like to make, and then begin new habits, make new plans, and set goals for our year. Sometimes they stick. Sometimes they don't. Along with working out, eating right, and writing the next great American novel, it's also a good time to set new habits in your relationship with God. And so, this series

will be all about an initiative we are setting for ourselves, our lives, and our faith community. Buckle up, this could get fun.

Warm-up Question: What's the *coolest* thing that's ever happened to you? (Define that word however you'd like.) Did you get picked to play the Price Is Right? Were you in the right place at the right time to watch the space shuttle launch? Maybe you ran into Willie Nelson in the bathroom at the airport? (Awkward, but cool.) Share!

SERIES SETUP

If you missed worship on Sunday and aren't in a Connect Group where Pastor Mike can retell the story, take a break and go watch the reflection from Sunday. He shares a powerful scene from his Sabbatical where God shows up in a really powerful, obvious, and comical way. (Cuz yeah, God has a sense of humor.)

In a tiny chapel on a small coastal Georgia island, he prayed a prayer asking for God to show up in a way that he couldn't deny it was anything other than the hand of God. But he finished the prayer with this line, "God...

"DO SOMETHING COOL"

And, boy, did God take that to heart. See, our initiative for 2024 is going to be simple, easy, and by the end of the series, we're going to make it as easy as possible for you to keep it up throughout the year. (Easier

than keeping up that “pilates 5 days a week” resolution, anyway.) Our initiative will be to pray this prayer as often as possible. “God, do something cool.” That’s it. That’s all. Easy, right? And yet, as simple as it is, this one little change could completely change your life.

Question 1: How does this initiative strike you? What are your first impressions of this simple, little prayer? Have you done an initiative like this before? Do you think this could impact your life?

SCRIPTURE

Our God is in the business of doing cool things. We might go so far as to say, our God ENJOYS doing cool things. It seems like God looks down on our lives and goes, “Hey yoy, what mind-blowing, life-changing, supernatural thing can I do for you?” And then sits up in heaven chuckling when it comes to fruition. Here’s how we know... as Pastor Mike was traveling through the eastern half of the country, on this 28-day road-trip. He read a chapter of Acts each day, (28-day road trip, 28 chapters in Acts, he would be starting a church, Acts is about the start of THE Church... just made sense.) The book of Acts is all about God doing cool things. Every chapter is just one story of God’s powerful work after another. So, each week, we’ll look at another story from this book and how it can guide our initiative to pray this prayer.

Read Acts, chapter 12, verses 1 through 11.

God has been doing cool things for millennia... and here's something insanely cool that God does for the early church and for Simon Peter. And just as God did for Pastor Mike, God was up in heaven watching this happen, going... "this is going to be hilarious, look at his face when he realizes it's not a dream! Oh! There it is! You're welcome."

Question 2: What catches your attention about this Scripture? If you were one of the church-folk praying, what would you have thought when Peter knocks on your door that night? If you were Peter, would you have been confident about your situation? Would you have been able to sleep? Would you have thought it was a dream?

REFLECTION

We're just going to assume that, in verse 5, when it says the church prayer "very earnestly" for him, that they were praying the prayer, "God, do something cool." (just... in Hebrew.) And God shows up in an awesome way. But we learn two things from this encounter and from Pastor Mike's story on his Sabbatical. The first is this... we have to start expecting God to show up. Often, as Christians, we often treat our relationship with God like buying a lottery ticket... it's great if it happens, but we're not counting on it. God loves to show up, and we should start expecting it to happen. The church in our scripture may not have been expecting it... we know, because when Peter shows up that night, they don't believe it and are amazed when it's really him. Peter must have expected something cool, because the guy is sleeping soundly when the angel appears. If you're scared for your life, you're probably not snoring in the jail cell. We should live

like Peter... expecting God to show up when we pray this prayer. On Pastor Mike's sabbatical, the more he prayed this prayer, the more God showed up, and the more he began to live in the anticipation of it. "I couldn't wait to get to the next place. I couldn't wait to meet the next person or pastor or chef. I began living with this expectation that God was going to show up and it was going to be cool. And I can't tell you how awesome a state that is to live in. It's exciting and powerful and meaningful and life-changing... Expect God to show up."

Question 3: Do you expect God to show up in your life? Do you anticipate God working things out and providing for you... maybe not how *you'd* like, but knowing God's got it? Or do you walk through life somewhat unaware of God's presence around you?

The second thing we learn from our stories today is the first tip to help you live out this prayer. When we pray, "God, do something cool," often God is already doing something cool in your life, you're just not looking for it. So, step 1, pray this prayer with...

OPEN EYES

That is, when you ask God to do something cool in your life, keep your eyes open for it. Start looking for God's movement. It's there already. Peter was in prison yes, but God had placed a powerful faith community around him, one that sat up, through the night, praying for him. For Pastor Mike, God didn't need to give him a street sign with his name on it, God was already doing cool things in his life if I'd

have just looked at them that way... the purpose he was given, the people who were praying for him, meeting Alberto and his family. God was already doing cool thing... we just have to open our eyes and start looking for how God is already working. But also, when you pray that prayer and seek to live in anticipation of God showing up, keep your eyes open for the awesome, supernatural things, too. Like we said, God LOVES to do the cool thing... so keep your eyes open for it. Peter thought his cool thing was just a dream, and it wasn't 'til he opened his eyes and saw that he was free outside on a street that he understood what had really happened. For Pastor Mike, he could have kept walking, nose buried in a brochure, or just kept driving... but then he would have missed the cool thing God was doing, if he hadn't opened his eyes and looked for it. So, when you pray this prayer, start looking in anticipation for what God will do with open eyes... and expect God to show up.

Question 4: What prevents you from seeing the awesome ways in which God is working in your life? What prevents you from viewing them that way? Do you believe God can, and will, do amazing things in your life?

CLOSING

We, as individuals and as a faith community, are going to make this our theme, our motto, our resolution, our initiative for 2024. Our challenge is to pray this prayer as often as possible... "God,

“DO SOMETHING COOL”

Don't make it specific... it's not “God, do something cool by letting me win the lottery.” or, “God, do something cool by giving my boss the flu so I don't have to go into work.” No, the power of this prayer is in leaving it open ended. “God, do something cool...” and leave it at that. Pray it for your own life, for your own family, for our faith community... then let God show up. That's it. Can you do that? Can this be our initiative for our own lives and for our faith community? Pastor Mike concluded Sunday's reflection by saying, “I don't put guarantees on many things. But this one, I stand by. Because I know what it has done for my life. I have experienced how many awesome and amazing and cool ways God has shown up when I start praying this prayer. And so, I challenge you, I DARE you, to pray this prayer... And then open your eyes in anticipation and expectation.” Let's make this our prayer for 2024, and just watch how God will do something cool.

Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations.

Close in prayer.