



- WEEK 3 - OPEN DOOR -

CHECK-IN

How are you? Where have you seen Christ working in your life in the last week? And... Pastor Mike's story today takes place in a festival. What's the best festival you've ever been to? Did you stumble upon a Renaissance Fair that blew your mind? Maybe your life was changed the first time you stepped into the Big Top of the circus? Ready, go!

OPENING PRAYER

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

INTRODUCTION

We are in week 3 of our series and prayer initiative, where we have committed to praying a very simple, yet powerful prayer. Let's say it together, "God..."

"Do Something Cool"

(Do you have your keytag yet? Have you given one to a friend? Get more, Pastor Mike has plenty!) And in the previous weeks, we've been learning how to get the most out of this prayer. Week 1, we talked about how it's not enough just to read your keytag and then go on about your day. We have to live with the *expectation* that God will hear us and then do the cool thing. And so, the first tip was this: we pray this prayer with...

OPEN EYES

We have to look for the ways God is working in our lives and keep an eye out for the cool thing God might do. Then, last week, we talked about how God *wants* to work in our lives. God *wants* to do the cool thing. But often, it's our own closed nature that prevents it. When we pray, when we build that relationship with God, it creates the...

OPEN SPACE

...for God to work. So, the second tip was to spend time in prayer. Yes, praying our “cool” prayer, but also to do deeper, and open the space for God to do the cool thing in your life. We’ll look at another tip today that will help us get the most out of this prayer. But first...

Question 1: Check-in time... 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? (Keep in mind, God works on God's time... so, you God might still be letting the cool thing marinade for a while. Be patient.)

STORY & SCRIPTURE

Remember our formula for 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, Pastor Mike had just left Charleston, South Carolina, and continued his way up the east coast. Our prayer initiative had its beginnings in Saint Simon's Island and Savannah, Georgia, continued through a powerful sunrise in Charleston, and now finds its way into Virginia Beach, Virginia. He was continuing to pray this prayer every day, “God, do something cool,” expecting God to show up around every corner. And God was about to drop the coolest moment of the trip yet. The story combines the Roman God, Neptune, sand sculptures, a turkey leg, and the coolest convergence of God's handiwork we've seen yet. (If you weren't at worship on Sunday or aren't in a Connect Group with Pastor Mike, pause here and go give it a listen.)

Now, shortly before “The Great Turkey Leg Encounter,” he had read his favorite story from the Book of Acts. Let's take a look.

Read Acts, chapter 8, verses 26 through 39.

God does an incredibly cool thing in the lives of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch, something that had surprising similarities to the events of that day in Virginia Beach, (sans turkey leg, of course. Though, maybe Philip was munching on a quail leg, we don't know.) In any case, this powerful interaction changes the course of this man's life.

Question 2: Talk about this scripture. What stands out to you? How would you have felt were you Philip, being asked to go walk by the chariot, knowing God was up to something? What if you were the Ethiopian eunuch, would you have asked for help? What catches your attention about this interaction?

REFLECTION

To this point, we've had two tips about how to get the most out of this prayer. First, as we said earlier, when we pray for God to do something cool, we then need to *open our eyes* and actively look for how God is working. And second, when we pray, we create the *open space* for God to move. But this story from Philip and Pastor Mike's evening in Virginia Beach give us one more tip. And that is, we can pray this prayer... we can look for God's movement... we can open the space for God to work... but when God lays the “cool thing” right in front of us, we have to...

OPEN THE DOOR

...and seize it. See, sometimes the cool thing just happens to us, as when Pastor Mike was simply sitting in front of a sign with his name on it, and the angel showing up to free Peter from prison. But sometimes, the “cool thing” requires us to respond. It requires us to act. And Philip did. God put the opportunity in front of him, but *he had to open the door*.

Now, there are two things that Philip does to “open the door.” First, he listens to God’s nudging. In verse 26, an angel of the Lord says “Go south.” And Philip does, he goes south. Then, in verse 29, the Holy Spirit whispers in his ear, “go walk by the chariot,” and he does that, too. Philip listens to what God wants him to do. For the cool thing to happen, Philip has to listen to God’s nudging. He didn’t have to go south. He could have stayed in Jerusalem where all the other disciples were. He didn’t have to go walk by the carriage, he could have kept his head down, thinking, “meh, that’s someone else’s problem.” But instead, Philip listens to what God has asked him to do.

The second thing we gather from this story about opening the door for the cool thing to happen is this: it doesn’t happen in the temple. It happens along the road in the course of Philip’s everyday life. When they start talking in verse 31, the eunuch says, “how can I understand?” Philip could have responded, “uh, well..., but my pastor is better at explaining things than I am, so let’s go to church first.” But no, Philip takes the initiative, and shares his faith right there while they are on the road. Pastor Mike could have said, “nope, I’m going to go back to my hotel and crash... they’re someone else’s problem.” But they both listened to that still, small voice of God whispering, “I have something special for you to do for that person. Go walk beside them.” When God presents you with a situation that might just be that “cool thing,” you have to open the door and seize the opportunity.

Question 3: What prevents you from hearing God’s still, small voice? Then, if you recognize that nudge, what stops you from opening the door? What would make either of these easier? If you have a story of a time when you listened to God’s nudging and the door opened for a cool opportunity, feel free to share.

CLOSING

We have a God who wants to do the cool thing in our lives. God wants to put you in the kind of scenario like Philip experienced and the kind of scenario Pastor Mike experienced. God enjoys doing the cool thing. But they don’t happen if we don’t open our eyes to them, create the space for them to happen, and then *open the door* when they do. This challenge and initiative hasn’t changed... we are still committed to praying this prayer as often as possible... “God,

“DO SOMETHING COOL”

So, listen for God’s nudgings. And when God whispers, in the course of your everyday life, when God puts that cool thing right in front of you... open the door. Something as random as a turkey leg could change someone’s life.

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