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**PRAYING WITH EYES**  
**WIDE OPEN**

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**PREACHING OUTLINE**

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**BY SHERRY HARNEY**



## **Dear Friend,**

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*I am so excited and honored that you are preaching through Praying with Eyes Wide Open with your congregation. My husband Kevin and I have gathered some materials to help as you put each sermon/message together.*

*Of course, no pastor or teacher plans to take someone else's sermon and simply repeat it. That is why we are not offering a manuscript to read, but resources for you to use as you shape the unique message God wants you to bring to your congregation. What you will find in this document is a compilation of resources for each of the four weeks of the Praying with Eyes Wide Open Series. You can use what works for you, drop out what does not fit, and add your own content as you develop a Spirit-directed message that will connect for the unique needs of the congregation you serve.*

*As you prepare each message, here is a simple process that will help integrate the resources provided:*

- **Pray** for God's leading and the infusing power of the Spirit as you write a message that helps people in your church go deeper in prayer.
- **Read the primary biblical passage(s)** provided for each message and ask God to speak to you through the truth of his Word. God wants to speak to us first, so keep your heart open as you prepare.
- **Read the corresponding section of Praying with Eyes Wide Open** and contextualize the lessons from that section of the book for your ministry setting. Each section contains four chapters.
- **Watch the small group video for that week.** This will give additional ideas, stories, and biblical input.
- **Review the sermon/teaching materials** provided in this document. Kevin and I have been intentional about giving you lots of ideas to get your heart and mind engaging in the message preparation process.



- **Add your own study** and ideas. God will be speaking to you as you prepare. We trust that you will have a unique word from the Lord and ideas to communicate to the congregation you serve.
- **Write your message and deliver it** with passion and joy. As we prepared these resources we prayed for God to give you a life-impacting message.

May the God of all grace lead you in your preparation and delivery of your message.

With you in his service,

**Sherry Harney**



# Message #1 -

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## Praying with **Eyes Wide Open**

### Preparation Suggestions:

- Pray for God's leading as you develop your message.
- Read the biblical passages contained in Week 1 of the daily reading guide.
- Read the book introduction and Section 1 of *Praying with Eyes Wide Open* (pages 11-56).
- Watch the Week 1 video for *Praying with Eyes Wide Open* (on the sherryharney.co website).
- Review the resources below.
- Write your sermon/message.
- Pray again for God to fill you to overflowing as you present the message he has placed on your heart.

### Preaching Resources for Week #1

**Introduction Idea: *Light and Funny*...** Give a list of ten situations where you definitely want to keep your eyes open when you pray (e.g. When you are driving, when you are in a tense spot during a meeting at work, when you are walking around your campus or neighborhood...). Be clear that we all understand that if we are going to pray in the flow of life, we will need to keep our eyes open at certain times.

**Introduction Idea: *Personal Testimony*...** Tell about how you learned to pray, who taught you and what was helpful. Also talk about some misunderstandings you have had about prayer.

**Introduction Idea: *Video*...** Show the portion of the Session One video where Sherry tells the story of walking with her dad on a snowy Michigan day and praying as they were walking.



**Scripture Reading:**

- Read Scriptures as you feel they fit your message. Give exposition of texts you choose. You will find many passages in section 1 of the book, in the daily reading guide, and in the outline below.

**Prayer:** Pray for God to bless this sermon series and grow each person in his or her prayer life. Invite the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to the presence of God through each day and to help you talk with God in fresh and life-changing ways.

**Key Idea:** *The Bible does not command or even suggest that we close our eyes or fold our hands when we pray.* Expound on the passages and teaching on this topic found on pages 18-21 of the book.

- Genesis 24- Abraham's servant
- 1 Chronicles 5: 18-22- The people of Israel
- John 17- Jesus

**Key Idea:** *There are many postures for prayer.* Look at the biblical passages that teach us a variety of postures for prayer found on pages 21-22.

- 2 Samuel 7:18
- 1 Kings 8:22
- 1 Kings 8:54
- Daniel 6:10; Acts 20:36; Luke 22:41-42

**Key Idea:** *We don't have to pray continually, we get to!* Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:17 and teach on the heartbeat of this key passage. Emphasize that the God of all creation invites you to talk with him and hear from him any time, any place, and all the time!

**Illustration:** Tell a story from your life about a time you prayed with eyes wide open. Share how this grew your prayer life and connection with God (see story on page 24).



**Key Idea: *Prayer lessons from Jesus.*** Teach on the example of Jesus in his prayer life. Use the passages and teaching ideas found on pages 30-32.

**Key Idea: *God's Glory and Our Good.*** Teach about how prayer glorifies God and also brings blessing to us. Use the passages and teaching on pages 28-29 as you develop this teaching.

**Key Idea: *Jesus Our Perfect Example.*** Teach about how Jesus prayed and how his example should inspire and guide us:

- John 11:38-44
- Luke 6:12-16
- Matthew 14:16-20
- Mark 7:33-35
- Luke 9:28-29

**Key Idea: *The God to Whom We Pray.*** Teach about God as Creator, Father, and Shepherd. Expound on how knowing these three images of God help us in our prayer and engagement with God (pages 40-48).

**Creator:** Psalm 139 and Isaiah 46:3-4

**Father:** Matthew 6:9; Romans 8:15-17 and Matthew 7:9-11

**Shepherd:** Isaiah 40:11; Psalm 95:6-7 and Psalm 23

**Prayer Challenge:** Invite people to try praying in private with the following posture...eyes open turned toward heaven, standing, hands lifted, praying out loud.



**Illustration:** Tell about the T-Shirt Ken Davis made with the little lamb and Jesus as his shepherd (pages 49-50). You might even find a picture of this online or you could show the T-Shirt that can be found on Ken Davis' website: [store.kendavis.com](http://store.kendavis.com)



**Life Application...Pray with Open Eyes:** Challenge each person to try praying with their eyes open in a situation when they would normally close their eyes.

**Closing Prayer:** Invite the congregation to do three things as you pray at the end of your sermon. 1) Ask them to keep their eyes open. 2) Encourage them to turn their hands upward on their laps or even raise their hands as you pray (if they are comfortable doing so). 3) Ask them to join you in prayer and fully engage their hearts as you all pray with eyes wide open. Then, you pray with your eyes open, looking at the congregation, making eye contact, and praying with passion!



# Message #2 -

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## Praying with Ears Wide Open

### Preparation Suggestions:

- Pray for God's leading as you develop your message.
- Read the biblical passages contained in week 2 of the daily reading guide.
- Read Section 2 of *Praying with Eyes Wide Open* (Pages 57-108).
- Watch the week 2 video for *Praying with Ears Wide Open*.
- Review the resources below.
- Write your sermon/message.
- Pray again for God to fill you to overflowing as you present the message he has placed on your heart.

### Preaching Resources for Week #2

**Introduction Idea: Scripture Reading...** Have someone read Psalm 143:1-8 live or on video. Have it read with passion, from the heart, emphasizing words like "listen," "hear," and "answer me!"

**Introduction Idea: Story...** Tell the story about Nate from pages 63-66. A good friend who is a Teaching Pastor at one of the largest churches in the United States actually told this story as part of one of his sermons and he said it was well received and powerful (even though it did not happen to him).

**Introduction Idea: Personal Testimony...** Tell about a time God spoke to you in a simple or surprising way. Affirm that God is actively engaged in our lives and world more than we often notice and that he will speak if we are ready to hear him and respond.

### Scripture Reading:

- Read Scriptures as you feel they fit your message. Give exposition of texts you choose. You will find many passages in section 2 of the book, in the daily reading guide, and in the outline below.



**Prayer:** Pray for each person to grow more open to hearing God's voice speaking to him or her in any way he wants to communicate. You might even want to give a moment of silence and invite the Holy Spirit to whisper words of truth to each person's heart.

**Key Idea:** *God is speaking....He has from the beginning and he will forever!*

Take time to look at Genesis and Revelation and reflect on how God is clearly speaking to his people in a way that should be seen as normative.

- Genesis 1:26-31
- Revelation 21:6

**Key Idea:** *Exposition* of Genesis 2:15-18. Read and reflect on this foundational passage from the very beginning of the Bible. Take note of how this passage teaches us that God:

- **Provides-** God provides in multiple ways: the garden, plentiful food, and community with God and others.
- **Protects-** Reflect on God's warning designed to protect his people from sin, their own bad choices, and the enticements of the enemy.
- Gives **Purpose-** Teach about the goodness of work and how God gives meaning to life through labor.
- Offers **Pleasure-** Expound the idea that God delights in pleasure from good food, beauty, closeness with him, and intimacy in marriage.

Take note that God was speaking. His words were clear. Ask those gathered if they believe God is the same yesterday, today, and forever? If they do, they should expect him to speak to them about these same four realities.

**Illustration:** Tell about a time there was a clear and consistent sound that you stopped noticing, even though it was still there. Look at the story on pages 74-76. In this situation it was a bell tower. It could be the hum of a refrigerator that you have blocked out, a rattle in your car, or some other sound. The point is that God is speaking but we can get used to not hearing. We need to pay attention and tune in so we can hear, recognize, and follow his leading.



**Key Idea: *Asking Good Questions.*** Sometimes we need to ask God specific questions and listen closely for his response, knowing that God speaks in many ways (see pages 66-71). You might want to take time to unfold 1 Samuel 3 and focus on verse 10 where Samuel says, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” You might also want to look at some of the questions on pages 79 and 80. These are questions God delights to answer.

**Congregational Engagement: *Silent Reflection.*** Take time to ask some of the questions provided in the book, or questions you feel God wants his children to ask, and allow time for quiet reflection. You might want to have some quiet music playing if you give time for people to reflect, pray, and listen. Remind them that they can pray with eyes open or closed, but they definitely need to keep their ears open.

**Key Idea: *Hindrances to hearing God.*** Teach on some of the things that keep us from hearing God and responding to him. Teach about:

- ***Unbelief-*** Look at how unbelief can get in the way of recognizing God speaking and challenge those gathered to believe that God still speaks through the Scriptures, through people, through circumstances, and in many other ways.
- ***Mental Clutter-*** Encourage people to set the clutter of life aside as they pray and make space for quiet.
- ***Busyness-*** Give ideas for how people can simplify their life and make room for intimacy with God and time to listen.
- ***Negative View of Self-*** Some people have been taught or believe that God might speak to special, holy, godlier people, but not to them. Remind those gathered of what Peter says about all those who are followers of Jesus (1 Peter 2:9-10). If they grew up in a church tradition that teaches that they don't have access to God, remind them that they are a “royal priesthood.”
- ***Untrained Ears-*** Encourage people that they can train their ears to hear and recognize the voice of the Holy Spirit.
- ***A Sinful Lifestyle-*** Call people to confession of sin and repentance from rebellion. It is hard to hear God when we are running from him and have our ears plugged.



**Point of Clarity:** *Scripture is always our first and final authority!* It is important to remind people that God speaks in many ways, but Scripture is our unchanging authority. If we think God is speaking, but what we are hearing does not line up with the Bible, the Scriptures are right and what we are hearing is wrong. The Holy Spirit will never call us to do something that is contrary to the teaching of God's Word.

**Life Application...Learning to Listen:** Walk people through the Prayer Journey idea on page 87. Challenge them to begin a process of listening and learning to recognize the voice of their Good Shepherd.

**Closing Prayer:** Invite people to keep their eyes and ears open as you close in prayer. Invite God to remind each person that they are loved and that while they were still lost in sin, Christ died for them (Romans 5:8). Give a moment of silence for listening. Ask God to speak to each person about one area of their life that they need to yield and fully surrender to God. Give time for reflection. Then, pray for power to walk in obedience to the Spirit's conviction. Close by thanking God that he is not removed and unconcerned, but that he is near, active, and still speaking as a Good Shepherd to his sheep (John 10:1-18).



# Message #3 -

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## Praying with **Hearts** Wide Open

### Preparation Suggestions:

- Pray for God's leading as you develop your message.
- Read the biblical passages contained in week 3 of the daily reading guide.
- Read Section 3 of *Praying with Hearts Wide Open* (pages 109-164).
- Watch the week 3 video for *Praying with Hearts Wide Open*.
- Review the resources below.
- Write your sermon/message.
- Pray again for God to fill you to overflowing as you present the message he has placed on your heart.

### Preaching Resources for Week #3

**Introduction Idea: *Personal Story*...** Tell a story about a child and parent facing an issue of trust. It could be a parent standing in a pool with arms extended saying, "Jump honey, you can trust me." It might be a parent at the bottom of a slide saying, "Let go and slide to me, you can trust me." Talk about how the child needs to truly trust the parent to jump in or let go. When they do, the fun begins!

Connect this story to the issue of trust in prayer. We will pray with hearts wide open when we trust the one we are talking to. If we trust our heavenly Father we can fall into his arms and tell him anything.

**Introduction Idea: *Scripture*...** Read Matthew 7:9-11 or Luke 11:11-13. Unfold this powerful picture of an earthly parent who gives good gifts and who would never taunt their child. Remind those gathered that God is far more loving and kind than we are. We can trust him with our lives and with all of our heart.

**Introduction Idea: *Classic Illustration*...** Tell the story of Edward Farrell and his Uncle Seamus. Focus on the heart-moving words, "Me Abba is very fond of me" (pages 113-114). Possibly tell about a time when the strong and abiding love of God became real to you and moved deep into your heart and soul. Emphasize how prayer deepens when we realize that God loves us. Our Abba is fond of us!



### Scripture Reading:

- Read Scriptures as you feel they fit your message. Give exposition of texts you choose. You will find many passages in section 3 of the book, in the daily reading guide, and in the outline below.

**Prayer:** Pray that each person gathered will grow in their understanding of the relentless, amazing, staggering love of God. Ask the Holy Spirit to open each heart to receive the fullness of the Father's love.

**Key Idea: *God Loves You and Likes You*** (Pages 114-117). Look at four realities of God's love for his children:

- ***God is radically approachable.*** Teach on Matthew 27:51 and Hebrews 4:16. Look at the theology of the Temple and how the curtain kept the priests out of the Most Holy Place. But, when the work of the cross was finished, the curtain was torn in two and access to God was made available. Also, talk about how we can draw near to God with confidence, due to the finished work of Jesus. Invite people to come near to God in prayer, knowing that the way has been opened through the love and sacrifice of Jesus.
- ***Pray with growing hunger for intimacy with God.*** Talk about how we draw near to God like children when we know we are loved and accepted. Encourage people to come near like loved children. Teach on Galatians 3:7 and 26-29.
- ***Be who you are in prayer.*** Children don't try to impress parents or act like someone else. Good parents know who they are and love them as they are... always wanting more for them. Encourage those gathered to come to God just as they are.
- ***Pray without fear.*** Read 1 John 4:16-18. Teach the simple but profound truth that knowing God's love for us drives our fear and releases us to run into our Father's arms at all times...this is prayer!

**Quote:** A.W. Tozer (page 117)



**Key Idea:** *God's love moved him to action on our behalf.* Read John 3:16-18. Talk about the vastness of God's love and the greatness of our need. When we embrace God's seeking love, we are ready to open our heart and talk with this God who so loves us that he gave everything to bring us home.

**Key Idea:** *When we engage our hearts fully in prayer we enter a place of spiritual battle* (Chapter 11).

- Tell a story about a time you prayed and felt the protecting power of God come over you or over someone you loved and prayed for (pages 137-140).
- Read John 17:11-12 and 15-16. Teach on how Jesus prayed for the protection of his people from the work of the evil one. Emphasize that the spiritual battle is real (Ephesians 6:10-18). The enemy is at work (1 Peter 5:8). Focus on how God is more powerful than the enemy (1 John 4:4).
- Share a personal story of a time you saw the power and name of Jesus win a clear victory over the lies and work of the enemy.
- Pray like Jesus... He prayed for the power of the Holy Spirit to be unleashed in us. Teach on John 14:15-21.
- Prepare for the battle. Read Ephesians 6:10-18. Teach on the spiritual armor and also the weapons for the battle. Challenge people to begin their day praying through this passage and each piece of armor as they begin their day.
- Pray protection over people and places. Encourage people to pray with their eyes open and their hearts open as they drive and walk through their day. Pray for churches and pastors in your community. Ask God to protect them, fill them, and empower them. Pray for local schools, businesses, community gathering places, and for the people who gather in these locations. Pray for the Holy Spirit of God to move in your home, on your block, in your apartment, at your workplace, and everywhere you go.



**Key Idea: HALT**

Teach the simple acronym HALT that is often used in recovery groups to help people identify times they might be tempted to give in to the enticements of the enemy (pages 148-150). Each letter represents a word or idea that reminds us about times the enemy may be more prone to attack. These are times when we can become more susceptible to fall into sin:

- **Hunger-** Beware when you are driven by physical hunger, this is when the enemy tempted Jesus (Matthew 4:1-4).
- **Anger-** When we are fired up, hurt, and angry, the enemy is often close. But, we can be angry and still not sin (Ephesians 4:26-27).
- **Loneliness-** When we feel forgotten, left out, and alone, the enemy can use this emotional pain to entice us to find quick, easy, and dangerous pleasure.
- **Tired-** Fatigue is fertile ground for the enemy of our souls to plant the seeds of sin.

Challenge those gathered to learn how to identify when the situation is conducive for the enemy to creep in and seek to tempt them toward sin.

**Life Application...Praying the “All’s”:** Take time to memorize Ephesians 6:18:

Learn to pray these three All’s...

- Pray on ALL occasions- Make your prayer frequent and normal in all situations.
- Pray ALL kinds of prayers- Pray lots of different kinds of prayer. Don’t get in a rut.
- Pray for ALL God’s people- Every believer you meet is an occasion to pray. Pray for or with Christians you encounter.

**Closing Prayer:** Ask God to grow your heart in two specific ways. First, pray for your heart to be soft and tender toward the God who loves you. Second, pray for your heart to be tough and strong for the spiritual battles you will face.



# Message #4 -

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## Praying with **Lives** Wide Open

### Preparation Suggestions:

- Pray for God's leading as you develop your message.
- Read the biblical passages contained in week 4 of the daily reading guide.
- Read Section 4 of *Praying with Eyes Wide Open* (pages 165-217).
- Watch the week 4 video for *Praying with Lives Wide Open*.
- Review the resources below.
- Write your sermon/message.
- Pray again for God to fill you to overflowing as you present the message he has placed on your heart.

### Preaching Resources for Week #4

**Introduction Idea: *Personal Testimony*...** Share about a time when the Holy Spirit put someone on your mind and prompted you to pray for that person. It does not need to be some big dramatic thing, but maybe just a reality that someone was on your heart numerous times over a few days and you knew God wanted you to lift them up in prayer. Affirm people that God loves to stir us to pray for others.

**Introduction Idea: *Video Testimony*...** If you have the capacity to make a brief video, gather a short collection of people sharing how someone had prayed for them and how those prayers impacted their life and really made a difference. You could even ask church members to record a thirty second testimony about the power of prayer on their phone and send it in to the church. Show some of these at the start of the message, or at various times during the message.

**Introduction Idea: *Church Prayer List and Answered Prayers*...** If you have a church prayer list that is updated and shared with people in your congregation who love to pray, share this with the congregation and invite them to join those who pray regularly for these needs. Then, give a list of five to ten specific prayers that have been answered from that list over the past months. This will encourage and inspire people to engage in prayer for others with greater frequency.



### **Scripture Reading:**

- Read Scriptures as you feel fit your message. Give exposition of texts you choose. You will find many passages in section 4 of the book, in the daily reading guide, and in the outline below.

**Prayer:** Pray for every person gathered to grow a life of prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to move in each life and give them clear direction on how prayer can become a key part of their lifestyle...little prayers and big bold prayers.

**Key Idea:** *As followers of Jesus, we are called to pray for others.* Look at some of the Scriptures that call and charge us to make prayer a part of the normal journey of our life.

- Colossians 4:2-4- Paul's instructions
- James 5:16- James' challenge
- Matthew 6:11-13 Jesus' teaching

**Key Idea:** *Praying for others makes us more like Jesus.* Teach through the seventeenth chapter of John. In this powerful prayer of Jesus, the longest prayer of our Savior recorded in the Gospels, we see his heart for his followers, for the world, and for the future Church. Explore what he prayed and how he is an example for each of us. See ideas on pages 170-172.

Teach about praying for spiritual **protection** of those we love. Jesus understood the spiritual battle that his followers would face. He prayed for them to be protected from the evil one. Give ideas for how Christians can pray for protection from and power over the enemy.

Challenge those gathered to pray for the spiritual **growth** of those we care about. This would be a great time to give practical ways that parents and grandparents can pray for the next generation to grow strong in faith. In our generation many parents know how to inspire and challenge their kids in academics, sports, the arts and other important aspects of their lives. But with these we should also instruct them in how to grow mature in faith and we should pray passionately for this part of their lives because it is most important.



Jesus even prayed for generations to come. He lifted up you and me. He realized that the disciples would leave a spiritual legacy that would pass through the generations. That prayer included the believers in your congregation. You might want to teach your congregation to pray for generations still unborn to love and follow Jesus. At the publication of these preaching resources we have three married sons but no grandchildren yet. This has not stopped us from praying for any grandchildren God might give us to love and follow Jesus.

**Key Idea: *When we pray together we are being the Church.*** Walk through three or four examples of how God's people in the book of Acts prayed together. This was normative; it was part of their spiritual DNA.

- Acts 1:13-14- They gathered to pray constantly.
- Acts 2:42- Devoted to prayer
- Acts 4:23-31- Prayers of praise and cries for help
- Acts 16:25- Prayers in crisis
- Acts 21:5- Prayers for the journey
- Note...this is a small sample, there are many more.

**Key Idea: *When we pray together, God unleashes power.*** There are unique and amazing things that happen when God's people join their hearts in a concert of unified prayer.

**Illustration:** Tell a story from the history of your church when God's people prayed with united hearts and recount how God showed up, worked in power, and brought glory to himself. This story might even shed light on the future of your church and how similar prayer is needed for a fresh and powerful work of God. As you look to the future, always remember and bless the past.

**Key Idea: *Prayer and the spread of the gospel go together.*** Once again, the book of Acts has great teaching about how prayer and the mission of the church go together. Share two or three ways God is leading your church to reach out, love your community, and bring the Good News of Jesus to those right around you. Cast vision for these next steps of reaching out with the gospel. Spend time right then, during the sermon, and pray for the evangelistic passion and action of your church.



**Takeaway:** Consider making a nice bookmark you can give every person in your church with these two or three specific outreach opportunities. Let this bookmark be a simple reminder to pray for these evangelistic opportunities God has placed before you. For those who do most of their reading on a tablet or smart phone, you might even develop a simple screen saver with your church mission and these prayer needs. Put this on your website with a link so they can download it.

**Life Application...Prayer Reminders:** On pages 177 to 179 in *Praying with Eyes Wide Open* you will find five simple prayer reminders. Teach on these and challenge those gathered to make these part of their regular prayer life:

1. Praying for those in places of **authority**... Encourage your congregation to pray for those who serve in the government, in law enforcement, in education, and in any place of strong influence over people, culture, and societal trends.
2. Praying for those **far from Jesus**... We all have people we love who need to meet Jesus and receive his amazing grace. Make a list of these people in your life and pray for them often.
3. Praying for the **Church**, God's people... You might want to offer a list of 5-7 current needs for your congregation, including one or two needs their pastor might have.
4. Praying for your "**enemies**"... Jesus was clear about this. As we walk in his grace, we begin to love, care about, and pray for those who see us as enemies. Ask your church to commit to pray for personal, family, and even national "enemies."
5. Praying for the **will of God**... In all things, be sure you pray in the will of God. We have discernment and leading from God, but he always knows what is best. Pray according to his will in all things.

**Closing Prayer:** Invite the congregation to stand, if this is not a normal way that you pray. Invite them to open their eyes and look at you as you pray. If they are comfortable doing so, ask them to turn their hands upward in front of them, or even to lift their hands before the Lord. Then, pray for your congregation with your eyes wide open. Look at them and ask for God to make you a church of prayer, their homes places of prayer, and their lives a constant conversation with the living God as they walk through life with their eyes wide open!