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

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**SMALL GROUP CURRICULUM**

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**BY SHERRY HARNEY**

# Praying with Eyes Wide Open, Week 1

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## Praying with **Eyes** Wide Open

### *Group Discussion Questions and Prayer Direction*

*Praying with eyes wide open can become a lifestyle. This means shifting our thinking about prayer and literally keeping our eyes open when we pray (at least some of the time). By making this small shift, we discover that we can pray at all times and in all places. When we do this, we will find ourselves praying more.*

*Praying with our eyes open also allows us to see what is happening around us and engage in prayer in new ways. Rather than closing our eyes to block out the world, we open our eyes, like Jesus did. We see the need and pain as well as the beauty and joy all around us. What we see shapes our prayers.*

*When we pray this way, our time with God is limitless and the power of God is unleashed in surprising new ways.*

1. The Bible never commands that we close our eyes when we pray. As a matter of fact, it does not even suggest it or give examples of people closing their eyes in prayer. Why do you think the posture of eyes closed and hands folded is the norm in most of our prayer lives?
2. Who taught you how to pray? What were some of the habits, patterns, or specific prayers you were taught?

### **Watch Week 1 Video**

3. If we *only* pray when we can close our eyes, what are some of the situations and settings in the flow of life that could remain void of prayer?
4. If you were in a group of people who were praying together, how might opening your eyes actually engage you more in prayer? How do you think you might feel if someone saw you with your eyes open during prayer?

**Read:** Luke 9:12-17; John 11:38-44 and John 17:1

5. What do you learn about Jesus' eyes and hands during these powerful moments of prayer? What are ways we can model the example of Jesus in these passages as we pray?
6. What are some reasons we might want to pray with our eyes closed? (Just for the record, there is nothing wrong with closing your eyes some of the time when you pray.)
7. What are some settings and situations in which you can imagine yourself praying with your eyes wide open? How do you think you might find yourself engaging more intimately, actively, and frequently in prayer if you began praying with your eyes open on a daily basis?
8. How can praying with our eyes wide open connect us more fully to the *presence* of God in our lives and the world around us? How might our prayer lives increase if we really understood that our time with God is limitless?
9. How can praying with our eyes wide open connect us more fully to God's *power* that is at work in the world around us?
10. How might praying with your eyes open when you are with other Christians bring new life and vitality to your prayers?
11. What are two or three situations in which you are going to try praying with your eyes open in the coming week?

**Your Prayer Journey:** Take time as a group and also through your week to pray using one or more of the "Your Prayer Journey" suggestions from chapters one through four in the book, *Praying with Eyes Wide Open*. (Pages: 25, 35, 48, and 56)

# Praying with Eyes Wide Open, Week 2

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## Praying with Ears Wide Open

### *Group Discussion Questions and Prayer Direction*

*God is speaking...more than we realize. His voice cries out through creation, he declares truth every time we read the Bible, and his Spirit whispers into the depths of our soul. In the flow of a normal day God can speak to us through other people and he opens and closes doors using life-situations to give us direction and speak his will. All through the Bible God shocked and surprised people with dreams, visions, and even angelic encounters. Why would we think that God has stopped speaking today?*

*The one true God who we worship is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Listen close. Open your ears. He is still speaking!*

1. Describe a time God spoke to you clearly and personally through his written Word. (This could be a time you were reading the Bible or a time you heard someone preach, teach, or talk about a Bible passage.)

### **Watch Week 2 Video**

2. If “prayer is about entering God’s plan for me more than about getting what I want,” how does prayer help us draw near to God and align our life with his plan?
3. Respond to this statement: Just because we tag the words, “in the name of Jesus” on the end of a prayer does not mean we are actually praying in Jesus’ name.

Give an example of a prayer that might be lifted up “in the name of Jesus” but is actually not a prayer that honors Jesus and does not reflect his will and desire.

**Read:** John 14:12-14 and 1 John 5:14-15

4. How can we make sure the prayers we lift up are according to God's will and worthy of being lifted up "in the name of Jesus"? How do we know we are praying "in the name of Jesus"?

**Read:** John 10:2-5

5. What does Jesus mean when he says that his sheep recognize his voice? If Jesus is your Good Shepherd, how do you know when he is speaking to you?
6. Tell a story about a time God spoke to you in some way. How did you recognize his voice and how did you respond?

**Read:** 2 Timothy 3:16

7. How does God speak through the Scriptures? What are some of the things that can keep us from hearing and following what God declares clearly in the Bible?

What practical things can we do to hear God's voice speaking through the Bible with growing frequency and clarity?

**Read:** 1 Kings 19:9-13

8. God spoke to Elijah through a gentle whisper. What are ways God speaks to us through the still small voice of his Holy Spirit? How can we tune in, listen more closely, and learn to hear the gentle whispers of the Spirit?
9. Why is it critical and essential that we measure anything we think is coming from the Spirit against the teachings of the Bible? How should we respond if what we think we are hearing does *not* line up with what God teaches in his Word?
10. Tell about a time God opened a door or closed a door and led you through very specific circumstances. How did God speak to you and direct you through this situation?
11. Tell about a person God has placed in your life who loves Jesus, walks closely with God, and has been used by God to speak to you. What is one example of how God spoke into your life through this person and how did this experience deepen or grow your faith?
12. What tends to get in the way of you listening to God and hearing his voice? What can you do to pay more attention and overcome these distractions?

**Your Prayer Journey:** Take time as a group, and also through your week, to pray using one or more of the “Your Prayer Journey” suggestions from chapters five through eight in the book, *Praying with Eyes Wide Open*. (Pages: 71-72, 87, 97, and 108)

# Praying with Eyes Wide Open, Week 3

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## Praying with **Hearts** Wide Open

### *Group Discussion Questions and Prayer Direction*

*A heart open to God will help you see who he is and pray with greater passion and transparent honesty. A heart tuned in to God will alert you to the spiritual battles Christians face in our world today and lead you to victory over the enemy. When we open our hearts to God in prayer, his peace fills us and anxiety runs for the back door and scurries away!*

*"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms." Ephesians 1:18-20*

1. What are some of the things that can fill our hearts with worry, anxiety, or even fear? How can these get in the way of our prayers?
2. Describe a time when you started praying to God about a concern you had and then realized that your prayer had actually turned into worry and anxiety. What is the difference between confident and trusting prayer and worry-filled prayer?

### **Watch Week 3 Video**

**Read:** Philippians 4:4-7

3. Tell about a time you were really stressed and prayer brought a deep sense of peace and confidence. How did God give you peace through prayer?

**Read:** Psalm 23

4. The Lord is our Shepherd. What are some of the specific ways we experience God as our Shepherd when we prayerfully entrust our heart and life to him?

**Read:** Psalm 22:1-5

5. What do you notice about David's honesty as he prays in Psalm 22? Why do you think that many Christians have a hard time being totally honest with God in prayer (particularly when they're frustrated, hurt, or angry)?
6. How do Psalms 23 and 22 give a picture of the wide range of prayers that honor and please God? Why is it important for us to know that God welcomes both of these kinds of prayers?
7. There are more Psalms of Lament than any other kind of psalm. Just think about it, the most common kind of prayer in the Book of Psalms includes an honest and heart-rending cry to God out of the depths of pain, loss, and struggle. Why do you think there are so many examples of lament psalms in the Bible? How do you think God feels when he hears us pray like this?
8. There is a basic structure to a lament psalm. It looks like this:
  - a) **Address to God:** Call to God by name ("My God," "My Lord," "My righteous God," "Lord my God")
  - b) **Honest and Heartfelt Complaint:** Expression to God of the pain you are feeling (Declaration of fear, loneliness, pain, struggle, emotional turmoil, pain of being attacked...)
  - c) **Petition or Prayer:** A passionate cry asking God to help ("Deliver me," "Save me," "Defeat my enemy," "Heal me")
  - d) **Confession of Trust:** Bold declaration that God is on the throne and he will deliver ("You are my shield," "You hear my voice," "Yet I will trust you," "The Lord is my King for ever and ever!")

(For further study on this, read *Out of the Depths* by Bernard Anderson.)

Why is it so important to address God specifically and by name when we are in a hard time and our heart is feeling bruised or broken? What are some of the names of God that might be good to use as you address him in hard times?

9. Why do you think God wants us to be totally honest and open with him about our hurts, pain, and the struggles we face? What are some possible negative consequences if we don't tell God about the pain we are carrying?
10. Once we have addressed God and expressed, with deep honesty, our pain and struggle, we should ask for his help and invite him to unleash heavenly power into our tough circumstances. Tell about a time you cried to God from the depths of loss and heartache and he showed up and answered your prayer, healing your broken heart.
11. At the end of a lament psalm there is a bold pronouncement of utter trust in the power, goodness, and faithfulness of God. Why is it absolutely critical that we end these kinds of heartfelt prayers with a statement of confidence in God? What has God done in the past to make you confident that he will deliver you in the future?
12. What is one thing you are facing in life right now that would lead you to a time of pray a lament? How can your group members join you in praying as you face this situation?

**Your Prayer Journey:** Take time as a group, and also through your week, to pray using one or more of the "Your Prayer Journey" suggestions from chapters nine through twelve in the book, *Praying with Eyes Wide Open*. (Pages: 122, 136, 151, and 163)

# Praying with Eyes Wide Open, Week 4

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## Praying with **Lives** Wide Open

### *Group Discussion Questions and Prayer Direction*

*When we pray with our life wide open, opportunities to communicate with God come flooding in with surprising regularity. We no longer “try to pray” or “work at praying more.” Speaking to God and hearing from our Lord become the norm.*

*As our life becomes a dialogue with God, we also find ourselves praying for others with consistency and growing regularity. The little and inconsequential things become an occasion to talk with God and the big things move us to conversation with the only One who can manage the universe and our lives.*

*Praying with our life open to God will lead us to the undeniable conclusion that God hears our prayers, God delights to answer, and something happens every time we pray.*

1. Tell about a time you were going through the normal flow of life and you found yourself praying for someone because God placed that person on your heart and in your mind.
2. How might our lives become richer and fuller if we would begin praying for people all through the day as we encounter them, think of them, or have the Holy Spirit place them on our heart?

### **Watch Week 4 Video**

**Read:** Ephesians 6:18-20

3. What does each of the “all” exhortations in verse 18 teach us about prayer? How can you increase your prayer life by following each of these three challenges?
4. Where is a place you can prayer walk in the coming week and what will you pray as you are walking in this specific location?
5. If you have received a text, email, or written prayer from someone, tell about how this kind of prayer made you feel and how it impacted you. Without using a name, tell about a person in your life who would be encouraged by receiving a text-prayer. (**Note-** You might want to stop right now as a group and have each person send a short text-prayer to a someone who needs to know God is watching over them.)
6. Who is a person you love that is not yet a follower of Jesus? When would be a good time for you to pray for this person for one minute each day? Take a moment right now and add them to your phone as a reminder every day at the same time. When your alarm goes off at this time, pray for them with your heart and life wide open!
7. What are some situations you face on a consistent basis when you should begin lifting up short, silent, and powerful “Help Me” prayers to God with your eyes wide open?
8. What are one or two places you drive past on a regular basis that you should begin lifting up with “drive-by” prayers? What are some of the ways you can pray in these moments? (Be extra sure to keep your eyes open!)
9. What is a situation you are fairly confident you will face in the coming week when you could ask someone if you can pray with them? What topic will you pray about in this moment?

10. What is one Scripture you want to use in the coming week to guide you in prayer? How will this passage from the Bible help guide you to a deep place of prayer?
  
11. Imagine a day where you would be lifting up many different kinds of prayers in a variety of situations with eyes open and closed. How could these prayers impact your day, other people, and the heart of God?

**Your Prayer Journey:** Take time as a group, and also through your week, to pray using one or more of the “Your Prayer Journey” suggestions from chapters thirteen through sixteen in the book, *Praying with Eyes Wide Open*. (Pages: 179, 191, 206, and 217)