

VIDEO-BASED
7-SESSION BIBLE STUDY



SEEN. CHOSEN. SENT.

CHRISTINE CAINE



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Christine Caine is an Australian-born, Greek-blooded lover of Jesus, activist, author, and international speaker. Christine also has a passion for justice, and, together with her husband, Nick, founded the anti-human trafficking organization The A21 Campaign. They also founded Propel Women, an organization dedicated to activating women to fulfill their God-given passion, purpose, and potential. Christine is a graduate of Sydney University, with a B.A. in English, and is currently enrolled in Wheaton College pursuing her master's in Evangelism and Leadership. Powered by hot, extra-dry, skinny cappuccinos, Christine is a lover of words who

speaks too fast, talks too much, and still manages to write them down. She and Nick, their two girls, Catherine and Sophia, and their dog, Ezra Blake, make their home in Southern California.

DEDICATION

To the love of my life, Nick Caine.

INTRODUCTION

When I was in college and still living at home, I used to make fun of my mum when she reached for her glasses to read something that was right in front of her. I'd tease her about her age and really rub it in that she was growing older and couldn't see. She took my playful jabs in stride, and being the witty and fun mother she was, she would always dish the ribbing right back at me. She's in heaven now, but I can still see her smiling and laughing and saying what she always said, "Christina, I've been where you are, and one day you will be where I am."

Well, as always, Mum was right! Here I am, decades later, and I'm always reaching for my glasses to read something inches from my face! Just like she warned, I am right where she once was.

I remember how Mum always had reading glasses all over the house—by her chair in the living room, on the kitchen counter, on her bedside table. There was always a pair within reach in the familiar places she sat, cooked, or slept. While Mum's world was primarily her house, I lead a much different life. My world is *the world* and wherever I find myself traveling around the globe—ever involved in leading Propel from our offices in California, or A21 in one of our fifteen global offices, or speaking about Jesus at a church somewhere in between all the stops. And my glasses are always within reach.

Traveling like I do, I have my favorite "go bag," the one I carry on the plane stocked with all the essentials—my Bible, toothbrush and toothpaste, a change of clothes, and my glasses, always. Not long ago, after I disembarked from a long flight home, I accidentally left my glasses behind. When I realized they were missing, I felt like my life came to a screeching halt. I made my way through the terminal, into the car, and back to our offices, but the moment I went to reach for them to read, I realized they weren't there.

I had no other choice but to postpone all I had planned for the afternoon and schedule an appointment right away. I had a lot of work to do—catching up on emails, meeting with our teams, and writing—but I couldn't even focus on my laptop without my glasses. So, within an hour I was off to the eye doctor. I had to see!

Soon, I was sitting in the chair, ready for my exam. When the doctor entered the room, he reviewed my history and asked me a few questions. He began the examination by positioning the phoropter in front of my eyes. (Yes, that's what you call that machine the doctor makes you look through. I looked it up.) Once it was lined up correctly and my face was firmly planted against it, he began asking the customary questions over and over: "Is it better with one or two? Three or four?" You know the drill: the doctor switches lenses over and over to ensure the clearest focus, and then he or she writes you a prescription that gives you the perfect perspective: 20/20 vision.

Guess where the inspiration for the title of this Bible study came from? Do you know there is such a thing as 20/20 spiritual eyesight? Well, there is! It's the way God sees us and it's the way He created us to see, but sometimes, we need to get a checkup to refresh our lenses so we can see clearly—exactly the way God wants us to see—with 20/20 spiritual vision.

Can you imagine getting into your bed at night knowing you saw all God wanted you to see, when He wanted you to see it, and how He wanted you to see it? And that you fulfilled the purpose for which He allowed you to see it?

Can you imagine breaking out of the daily mundane routines that often define our lives and living an abundant life, one saturated with adventure and God-given purpose? Can you imagine doing that day after day for all your time on this earth?

Friend, that life is possible for you, for me—for every single one of us! And this study is all about pursuing that life.

Over the next seven weeks we are going on a journey together—one in which you will discover that God not only sees you but has chosen and sent you to accomplish His purposes on the planet.

I am so thrilled we are on this journey together. Strap yourself in, and let's go!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Case". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.



WEEK 1

LOOK AND SEE

DISCUSS

In Luke 7, the overlooked woman behaved in a way that was culturally unacceptable for that time in history. She walked into a room of religious men and did the unthinkable. Not only did she let her hair down, which was so brazen it was considered grounds for divorce,¹ she also lavished expensive perfume on Jesus' feet, which was a bold act of love and humility.² As the religious men in the room judged her, Jesus turned toward the woman and asked His host, Simon, who was seated beside Him, "Do you see this woman?" (Luke 7:44).

Pause for a moment. Look over your notes. What stood out to you from the video teaching?

Have you ever felt invisible to someone? When has someone looked at you but not really seen you?

When that person looked at you but didn't see you, how did it make you feel? And how did you respond?

Why do you think Jesus asked Simon the question "Do you see this woman?" (Luke 7:44). What was He really asking Simon?

What do you think it means that "we often look but do not see"?

What may have blinded Simon from seeing the woman? What blinds us from really seeing people?

When Simon was face to face with Jesus—with God Himself—he didn't see Him! When he was beside Jesus looking at the woman, he didn't see her either. How is that even possible? There's something critical for us to learn about looking and seeing both people and God—and God in people.

MOVE

Consider the following action steps in response to what you've seen and heard today.

What did you learn through the experience of not being seen?

How has God used that experience to draw you to Himself and create in you a heart of compassion?

PRAY

Heavenly Father, open the eyes of my heart so that I'll see people and not overlook anyone. Help me to make those around me feel seen, known, heard, dignified, and valued. Use this study to show me how I can grow to see others more clearly. I want to see people the way You do. In Jesus' name. Amen.

DAY 1

WHEN WE FEEL HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

A number of years ago, when my daughters were young and we were traveling as a family, I decided to get a coffee right before we boarded. Checking the clock and the boarding time, I knew I had more than enough time for a coffee run. So off I went.

While I was gone, Nick decided to board with the girls and get them settled in with the games, toys, and books they had packed for the flight. Everything was running according to plan.

I made my way back to the gate with coffees in hand and time to spare. But when I started to pass from the terminal onto the jet bridge, the airline employee stationed at the doorway took one look at me and emphatically stated, "You're not getting on, ma'am."

Totally taken aback by her strong demeanor, I asked her what she meant. She said, "Well, if you have time to go and get coffee, then you don't have time to get on the plane."

I was shocked. It didn't make sense. I could see that the door to the plane was still open, and I knew it wasn't past the time to board, so I kindly said, "The door is open, ma'am. Please, take my boarding pass and let me board."

But she wouldn't budge.

"Ma'am, my husband and children are on board," I said. "I checked the time before I ran to get our coffee, and I knew I could make it back. Please let me on."

She was immovable.

She then began to review her day and all the challenging people she'd encountered. I politely agreed that she'd had a really tough day, but it still made no sense for me to be the object of her escalating frustration. I wasn't causing a problem. The door to the plane was still open. I had a reserved seat. Nick was waiting for me and was likely worried and wondering where I was.

As I started to tear up, I pleaded one more time, “Ma’am, my children are on the plane. Please, I can’t let them leave without me. The door is still open. Please let me board.”

I remember feeling so helpless, so surprised, so insignificant. I felt like she saw me as a problem, a nuisance, a bother ... not a human. Her actions made me feel like my request was invalid and my concerns for my family were unimportant. She was *looking* at me, but she wasn’t *seeing* me. No matter how hard I tried, there was nothing I could say to make her see me.

I didn’t want to make her bad day worse, but I had to get on that plane. As I wiped away a few tears with the back of my hand, my mother instincts kicked in to high gear. I found someone who had more authority than she did, and I got on that plane.

How true that people may forget what we say or do, but they rarely forget how we make them feel.

Even though that was years ago, I’ve never forgotten how that woman made me feel. Overlooked. Insignificant. Unseen. How true that people may forget what we say or do, but they rarely forget how we make them feel.

What about you? How many times has someone made you feel unseen or unheard? How many times have you felt categorized, marginalized, devalued, or dismissed because of your ethnicity or gender, because of your age or stage of life, because of your potential or education level? How many times have you felt overlooked for a job, an opportunity, or a promotion? How many times have you felt dismissed because of your role as a stay-at-home mom or a working mom, or because you never became a mom? What about when you wanted the attention of someone—a friend, a mentor, a spouse, or someone you were dating or hoped to date—and you felt invisible? What about the times you hoped to be picked first and were picked last, or not picked at all?

un·seen

1. not seen or noticed.

synonyms: hidden, concealed, obscured, camouflaged, out of sight, invisible, imperceptible, undetectable, unnoticeable, unobserved, mysterious.³

Write about a time you felt overlooked or objectified in a situation.

What message did you hear about yourself when you were overlooked?

We've all known times when we've felt unseen. When someone else was chosen over us. When no one noticed our efforts or hard work. When no one noticed our passion or potential. When no one was empathetic to what we were going through. When someone looked right past us ... or right through us. When it seemed they were looking our way but were incapable of seeing us—as though we were hidden in plain sight.

I'm so grateful God always looks right at us and sees us. None of us is ever unseen to God. He sees us no matter where we are or what we are doing. He sees our value and our worth. He sees our pain and our purpose. He sees our passion and potential. He sees our hearts and knows our deepest hopes, dreams, and desires. He never overlooks us or looks away from us. He looks right at us and sees us with 20/20 vision.

Look up the following verses and write how we know God sees us.

Genesis 28:15

Psalms 32:8

Psalms 33:13-14

Proverbs 15:3

When we are confident in knowing we are fully seen and fully known by God, we can see others and help them feel fully seen and fully known. When we aren't confident in knowing He sees us, we can be tempted to behave in a way that begs attention—whether negative or positive—hoping someone else will notice us. But if we spend most of our time doing things so we can be seen, we're apt to be tripping over the people we're meant to see. How crucial, then, to rest in



knowing we are seen by God. To be seen and known by God fills our deepest longings. It is what we are looking for—whether we know it or not—and it is what helps us see others.

I'm well aware of the times I've acted more like the airline employee than like Jesus—when I've looked but not seen. How easy it is for us to absentmindedly look past our server in a restaurant, our manicurist at the salon, or the store clerk transacting our purchase. How common it is for us to stare at our phones and forget to look up and acknowledge the barista handing us our coffee.

Make a list of people you typically interact with each week—in your neighborhood, at church, at the office, and so forth. If you don't know the person's name, just write a description of him or her.

Looking is not the same as *seeing*. To *look* is to "direct one's gaze in a specified direction."⁴ To *see* is to "perceive with the eyes; discern visually."⁵

What a difference in meaning! The woman at the gate looked at me, but she didn't see me. She directed her gaze at me, but she didn't perceive or seem to fully understand my situation.

Review the previous list. Ask God, "Who am I looking at regularly but not really seeing?" Circle anyone on the list He brings to mind.

As you look at the names you circled, think about why you overlook them. Below, identify the reasons that apply to you or write others that come to mind.

- I'm too busy.
- I'm too tired.
- I'm focused on what I have to do.
- I'm in a rush.
- I have enough to think about with my own problems.
- I've been hurt and don't want to risk being hurt again.
- I don't want to intrude.

- I think if they want my help, they'll ask for it
- I feel awkward.
- I don't feel comfortable with people who are different from me.
- I don't believe it's my place to meddle.
- Other:

Consider the reasons you just identified. Could you attribute any of those to a root issue listed below? To grow, we have to take an honest inventory of our hearts. Ask the Lord to show you if any of the following apply to you:

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Selfishness | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear | <input type="checkbox"/> Pain |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Greed | <input type="checkbox"/> Indifference | <input type="checkbox"/> Envy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insecurity | <input type="checkbox"/> Pride | <input type="checkbox"/> Anger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ignorance | <input type="checkbox"/> Prejudice | <input type="checkbox"/> Jealousy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-righteousness | | |

God wants us to look and see! And He wants us to take it a step further; He wants us to have 20/20 vision spiritually. He wants us to see and understand people with His perspective, especially those who cross our paths every day.

God has a lot to say in Scripture about spiritual sight. Look at the following verses and write what they say about how God sees.

1 Samuel 16:7

Isaiah 11:1-5

John 5:19

Look up the following verses and write down their implications for our spiritual sight.

2 Kings 6:15-17

Jeremiah 5:20-25

Ephesians 1:15-19a

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

Revelation 3:14-22

It's possible to look and not see. Read Proverbs 20:12 and fill in the blanks:

"The _____ and the _____, the LORD made them both."

This verse is true both physically and spiritually. Let's pray we are those who see the way He sees.

ZOOM IN

How many times have we missed important moments in our lives because we were too busy scrolling through someone else's? It's time to look up and see who is right in front of us.

DAY 2

WHEN LENSES LIMIT

Jesus knows how we feel when people overlook us, look past us, or look right through us. He, too, was often overlooked by people who didn't see Him for who He really was. Many religious people—like the Pharisees and Sadducees—failed to see that He was the Son of God. They looked through lenses that limited their vision. In the video teaching, I mentioned that Simon sat and ate with Jesus and didn't even know who He was! He sat beside the Messiah, the Savior of the world, but Simon didn't see Him.

There was another time, after His resurrection, when Jesus wasn't recognized. This time, though, it wasn't His enemies or those who barely knew Him that didn't recognize Him; it was some who were closest to Him.

In Luke 24, two of Jesus' disciples were discouraged, because they didn't understand the redemptive mission of Jesus accomplished through His death, burial, and resurrection. They didn't realize He had to go to the Father in heaven so that the Holy Spirit could come and dwell in us on earth—that He had to fulfill all the prophecies we read today in the Old Testament. So, they left Jerusalem and headed out of town on the road to Emmaus.

[Read Luke 24:13-35.](#)

Did you notice all the times the words *eyes*, *look*, *seeing*, and *sight* were used? Did you notice how the two men were prevented from recognizing Jesus at first? Most scholars agree that they were divinely inhibited from recognizing Christ.⁶ But their disappointment and disillusionment could have been a contributing factor to their spiritual blindness. They were so focused on their own pain. It was only after Jesus shared the scriptural narrative about Himself and broke bread with them that their fogged lenses cleared, and they recognized Him.

Although lenses are intended to correct our sight, they don't always work that way. Have you ever looked through a dirty windshield or a severely smudged pair of glasses? What happens? Everything you see becomes blurry at best and totally distorted at worst. Lenses can actually limit our sight, resulting in our failure to accurately see what's in front of us.

That's what happened with the two disciples and Simon the Pharisee. None of them were able to recognize Jesus.

What about you? Are your lenses blurred? What's preventing you from seeing Jesus? Disappointment or brokenheartedness? Self-righteousness?

Sadly, it wasn't uncommon in Jesus' day for people not to see Him for who He really was.

Read the following Bible passages and answer these questions after each one: Who couldn't see Jesus? What clouded their spiritual lenses?

Mark 6:1-6

Mark 8:27-30

John 18:28-40

John 21:1-14

I have often wondered what Jesus was like in His growing-up years. Was He playful, funny? When He was a toddler, did He spit out His lentils and make His mother laugh? As He grew older, was He responsible and helpful with His younger siblings? Firstborns often are. If Mary and Joseph were keenly aware of who He really was, how did they juggle knowing He was so incredibly special with letting Him just be a boy who caught bugs and played with His brothers and sisters?

I don't know all the answers to my musings, but I find one story in the Bible very insightful. It's a story that unfolds around the time Jesus was entering young adulthood and His identity wasn't recognized.

Read Luke 2:41-52.

Can you believe it? Mary is recorded forever in the Holy Bible as having left a kid behind while returning home from a family vacation! Mary lost Jesus—not for one hour, or two hours, or even a full day, but for three full days! This passage should free of guilt every mother who has ever been late for pick-up, left a kid



at school, or lost a kid at a grocery store. And, it should make this the best Bible study you've ever walked through!

OK, back to the main point. Mary and Joseph assumed Jesus was somewhere in the large traveling party. That's why they didn't start looking for Him until after a full day had passed. But when they realized He was missing, they immediately launched a full-scale search. They finally found Him in Jerusalem, teaching adults in the temple.

How did the people who were listening to Jesus in the temple react to His teachings?

Do you think they were able to see who He really was? Explain.

When Mary and Joseph approached Jesus, Mary wanted to know why He had been so insensitive to them, why He didn't think about how His disappearing act would affect them. She acted just like any parent would, and though He gave a sincere answer, they didn't understand His reasoning.

**What does this story reveal about how Joseph and Mary saw Jesus?
What may have been limiting the lens through which they saw Him?**

How often do we—like Simon, Mary Magdalene, the people in the temple, the people in the synagogue, and Mary and Joseph—miss seeing Jesus for who He really is because our lenses are unclear? We often allow them to become smudged and clouded by our feelings, circumstances, or other distractions.

Take some time to reflect on the reasons that contributed to unclear lenses for everyone we've mentioned. Which of those reasons—or other feelings, circumstances, and distractions—may be distorting your vision of Jesus or causing you to overlook Him for who He really is?

When our lenses are clear—when our hearts and minds are open—we see the presence of Jesus everywhere.

Let's make one more application point today. When I think about how Joseph and Mary thought Jesus was being looked after by someone else in the large traveling party, I can't help but consider that perhaps we don't look and see others because we think someone else is.

In the context of our study, can you think of anyone you've looked past because you thought someone else was seeing them?

Today, make it a point to have clean and clear lenses so your vision isn't limited, so you can see Jesus and everyone around you, especially those you might normally overlook.

DAY 3

WHEN BEAMS BLIND

Can you imagine being in the presence of God and being oblivious to Him? Isn't that what Simon did? And the people in the temple and synagogue? I think it's fascinating that Jesus was often unseen by people. And yet, He always saw the one—the person He was meant to acknowledge, notice, speak to, or heal. He saw the grieving widow from Nain who lost her only son (Luke 7:11-15), Zacchaeus up in the tree (Luke 19:1-10), and the disabled man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-9).

Read John 5:19-23. According to this passage, how did Jesus know the one who needed to be seen in each situation? How does this apply to us?

In the Gospel of Mark, there is a story of a blind man who was brought to Jesus. On the day Jesus entered his life, this blind man was the one. Before we walk through this story, I want to point out the significance of its placement in Mark's Gospel and in the lives of Jesus' disciples.

My friend and fellow LifeWay author, Lisa Harper, noted in her Bible study, *The Gospel of Mark*, that the first half of Mark's Gospel (Mark 1:1–8:30) is all about the compassion of Jesus Christ, while the second half (Mark 8:31–16:8) is all about the passion of Jesus Christ—His unwavering commitment to fulfill His sacrificial calling to the cross.⁷

The story I want us to look at is placed right in the middle of Mark's Gospel—in the center of this transition of focus. It's preceded by Jesus feeding four thousand people because He was moved with compassion (Mark 8:2), after which He got into a boat and headed to the district of Dalmanutha (Mark 8:10). There, the Pharisees showed up and began to argue with Him.

Read Mark 8:11-21 and note what Jesus asked His disciples in verse 18. What did He mean?

Immediately following Jesus' conversation with His disciples is the story of the blind man who was brought to Jesus. This can't be a coincidence! Is Jesus teaching us just like He taught His disciples?

Read Mark 8:22-25.

Let's look at what stands out as unusual about this story, apart from Jesus spitting on a man's eyes. And let me just say, that's always the part of the story that stops me in my tracks. I'm such a germaphobe I can barely read this story without cringing. I guess sometimes you have to receive God's healing however it comes, but it would take some work for me to get past the spit!

Here's my question: Why did Jesus lay hands on him not once, but twice? Surely, His healing power wasn't wearing off! What was really going on?

**After Jesus touched him the first time, what did the blind man see?
What about after the second time?**

In the story of Jesus healing the blind man, the man doesn't receive his sight immediately. Instead, it seems to be a two-step process.

To dig into why that might be, let's review the following verses and note whether they are talking about spiritual or physical blindness.

Jeremiah 5:21

Ezekiel 12:2

Matthew 13:10-16

Which kind of blindness was the man healed from? Spiritual, physical, or both?

Read Mark 8:27-29. How does the man's experience compare to how the disciples saw Jesus—both before this story and after?

Jesus' gift of spiritual and physical sight to the blind man was symbolic of the disciples' spiritual progression. Before this healing story, the disciples were confused about who Jesus was and what His purpose was, and Jesus challenged them on it in Mark 8:14-21. But following the miracle, their vision began to clear. Like the blind man, they needed a second touch. They had experienced some spiritual insight in their time with Jesus but it wasn't yet complete.⁸

Are there areas in your life where you've gone from spiritual blindness to spiritual sight? Did it happen immediately? Or in stages? Describe the process.

Learning to look and really see is a process, a journey that God will take us on through this study. And I believe as we earnestly seek Him, He will do a work in us internally to prepare us to do a work for Him externally. Isn't that the kind of transformation He was working in His disciples' hearts and minds? He was maturing them so they wouldn't just look, but see clearly. Focused. With understanding as they went through life.

He will do a work in us internally to prepare us to do a work for Him externally.

In John 9, Jesus healed another blind man who was born without his sight, and He did so on the Sabbath. The Pharisees investigated the miracle, because they believed it was unlawful for Jesus to heal on their holy day.

You can read the entire account in John 9, but I want you to write below the question the Pharisees asked Jesus (v. 40), and how Jesus answered them (v. 41).

From Jesus' response, it seems the Pharisees thought they knew and saw everything, but they were more blind than the man who was healed. They couldn't see the one Man or the miracle. Like Simon the Pharisee, who couldn't see Jesus for who He really was or the woman sitting at Jesus' feet, they were blinded by their self-righteousness.

blind

1. unable to see.
synonyms: sightless, unsighted, visually impaired, visionless, unseeing
2. lacking perception, awareness, or discernment.
3. cause (someone) to be unable to see, permanently or temporarily.
4. deprive (someone) of understanding, judgment, or perception.⁹

Jesus addressed the condition of being spiritually blind more than once.

Read Matthew 7:1-5.

Oftentimes, we don't see people because we're blinded by the beam of wood in our own eyes, which makes it easy to become judgmental. That's what the Pharisees' self-righteousness was—a beam. I contend that we grow so accustomed to having beams in our eyes that we are often unaware of them. We need to regularly ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the beams to us.

I love praying Psalm 139:23-24:

Search my heart, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my concerns.
See if there is any offensive way in me;
lead me in the everlasting way.

When I pray these verses, God is faithful to show me when I've been frustrated with someone because of a beam in my own eye—sometimes one of judgment or unforgiveness. God wants us to keep our hearts open to hearing what He has to say so our hearts can stay free and our sight can stay clear.

When have you focused on others' splinters and judged them, even though you had to look around a beam in your own eye to see them?

What motivated you to be judgmental? What was the beam in your eye? Label it. Anger? Jealousy? Prejudice? Selfish ambition? Competition? Insecurity? Pride? Self-righteousness?

In Luke 18, Jesus told a parable to make a point about those who looked down on others because they trusted in their own righteousness.

Read Luke 18:9-14. How can you begin the process of going from looking to seeing without a beam in your eye?

Write a prayer asking God to remove the beam you identified earlier.

God wants us to see, but He also wants us to understand that sight is more than what the eye sees; it's what the heart sees and perceives, free of judgment. Think about those you have judged wrongly, and make it a point to see them and love them with a new perspective. See them as the one.

DAY 4

JESUS SAW THROUGH THE LENS OF COMPASSION

When my mum was in the later years of her life, her health began to decline and her memory started to fail. It was sad for my brothers and me to see our roles reverse from being cared for to being caregivers. In the last two years of her life, her need for assistance intensified.

Though my brothers and I offered to get her an in-home full-time caregiver, she didn't want one. She was also unwilling to move to a safer place that offered around-the-clock care. She wanted to maintain her independence at all costs, even though it was becoming increasingly unsafe and unwise. For my brothers and me, it was agonizing—and at times beyond frustrating—because no matter what we said, Mum couldn't see our point of view. She refused to acknowledge what we all saw.

So many times I wanted to throw my hands up in the air in frustration and get back on a plane to America where I could be far away from my mum's suffering—because, let's be honest, sometimes it's easier to be compassionate with people who are far away from us than with the ones who are up close.

If we focus on protecting ourselves, we will miss others.

How essential it is, then, that we come before Jesus daily and ask Him to keep the eyes of our hearts open so we can see those closest to us in the same way He does. When we feel rejected or taken for granted by our husbands, children, friends, or colleagues, we can easily default to a defensive posture and harden our hearts to shield us from being hurt. But if we allow our hearts to harden, then we will lose compassion and, therefore, lack what is required to see others as Jesus does. If we focus on protecting ourselves, we will miss others.

When my conversations with Mum grew difficult and she became upset, she wasn't trying to hurt me. She was simply frightened. She didn't want to leave the home where she'd lived for more than forty years. The home where she raised us kids and spoiled her grandkids. The home where decades of memories resided. She didn't want to move and be dependent upon someone else. She had always been such a strong person. Even as a teen, she boarded a



ship in Egypt with her sister and set sail for Australia. They were escaping political upheaval in Egypt, and her parents had only enough money to buy passage for the two of them. In Australia, she managed to secure a job, save money, and send for her parents and younger brother so they could be together again. I always found that extraordinary. She had spent her entire life in Australia as an immigrant working to build a life and look after her family.

When I considered her life—the obstacles she overcame, the tragedies she endured, and the sacrifices she made for all of us—I understood her reluctance to leave her home. When I saw her perspective, my frustration melted into love.

When I just loved her and stopped feeling discouraged or frustrated with her, our time was filled with laughing and sharing good memories. I definitely had to rely on the wisdom and strength of the Holy Spirit to navigate through that difficult season, but I am so grateful my brothers and I persevered. My final year with her had so many happy moments—all because I chose to love her and see her through the lens of compassion.

We view people through the lens of compassion when we see them for who they really are and are deeply moved to respond.

Jesus always saw the one, and when He did, the Gospels often say He was moved with compassion. Jesus saw people and felt their pain, loneliness, misery, hopelessness, and desperation—even when it was hidden in plain sight from everyone else.

The Greek verb translated “had compassion” or “moved with compassion” in the Gospels is the word *splagchnizomai*. It means to be deeply moved in the inward parts, in one’s bowels. Today, we might say it means to be so moved we feel it in our core, deep within ourselves—in our gut. But to feel compassion is not only to encounter an emotion, it’s to be moved to action.¹⁰

Read the following verses and list who Jesus saw through the lens of compassion and how He expressed that compassion.

Matthew 14:14

Matthew 15:32-39

Matthew 20:29-34

Mark 6:34

Seeing through the lens of compassion changes our view of people. It enables us to see who they really are and respond.

I'll never forget the time when Sophia was little and she got away from me on a busy street. I was holding her hand as we raced from place to place getting errands accomplished. But all of a sudden, I realized her hand was no longer in mine. When I looked down and back through the crowd, desperate for a glimpse of her sweet face, she was crouched down in front of a homeless man handing him the dollar bill I had given her that morning. She had been so indecisive at every stop we'd made, debating on how to spend it. On a trinket? A piece of candy? A toy? And there she was just handing it over to this man. She said, "Jesus gave me this dollar to give to you."

Then I watched as the man gave it back, and with tears streaming down his face, he said, "Honey, you spend it on some candy for yourself."

Sophia gave him something far more valuable than a dollar. She extended to him a heart full of compassion.

I was beyond relieved to find her and overwhelmed at the goodness of God in her. I was grateful she wasn't numb to someone who was asking for help. I have always wanted my girls' eyes to be open to really see people and to be moved to act with compassion. Sophia was moved that day, and I was so grateful.

Look up the following verses and notice where compassion comes from and what we're to do with it.

Colossians 3:12

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

When did you last feel compassion? What did it move you to do?

How did compassion affect your sight and change your perception of someone else?

When our compassion wears thin, we can develop “compassion fatigue.” This term isn’t in the Bible, and I doubt they had such a term in Jesus’ day, but it’s a very real condition. It happens when we give out of our hearts so long that we are no longer moved with tenderness and empathy, and we no longer feel or see like Jesus does.

com·pas·sion fa·tigue

1. indifference to charitable appeals on behalf of those who are suffering, experienced as a result of the frequency or number of such appeals.¹¹

When Jesus felt depleted—because even though He was God, He was also fully man (Phil. 2:5-8; Col. 2:9; 1 John 4:2-3) and felt all the same things we do (Heb. 4:15)—He took steps to maintain the ability to see the one through the lens of compassion.

Read the following verses and write what Jesus did to avoid compassion fatigue. Note how He found rest and solitude to replenish His soul.

Mark 1:35; 6:30-32

Luke 5:15-16; 6:12-13

In the work of A21, the anti-trafficking organization Nick and I founded, our team sees the pain and suffering of victims up close.¹² To ensure everyone stays mentally and emotionally healthy, we watch team members closely so we can respond when signs of compassion fatigue surface. Notice I said “when,” not “if.”

Compassion fatigue is inevitable in so many seasons of our lives:

- When our children are small and we feel overwhelmed trying to juggle the roles of wife, mother, friend, colleague, and employee.
- When our kids are older and we’re out every night of the week attending games or parent meetings and grabbing dinner on the go.

- When we're building our careers, putting in long hours, developing teams, and leading new growth.
- When we decide to go back to school while working and raising a family.
- When we're a long-term caregiver for a child or aging parent.

Signs of compassion fatigue can include physical, mental, and spiritual exhaustion; acute emotional pain; growing less empathetic; withdrawing from others.

It's surprising how what comes into our lives as a gift—raising a family, an outreach opportunity, caregiving, a new friend, starting a business, and even our phones—can evolve into a source of exhaustion, draining away all of the tenderness, sensitivity, and enthusiasm we once had. And because of that, we can go from truly seeing people to overlooking them everywhere we go—all because we're bone tired.

Consider the last few months of your life. Have you experienced any signs of compassion fatigue? Circle any of the following behaviors, thoughts, or habits that have crept into your life.

- Feeling hopeless
- Growing fearful
- Wrestling through sleepless nights
- Being attacked with anxiety
- Experiencing headaches
- Feeling depressed
- Feeling angry
- Growing pessimistic or cynical
- Becoming overly vigilant about safety
- Feeling people have become an inconvenience

If you are suffering from compassion fatigue, please don't withdraw or feel like you can't tell anyone. Reach out to a Christian friend or mentor and share what you are feeling. Ask them to pray with you and walk with you through the process of healing. Take time to reflect, rest, and replenish. Seek professional help if you need it—I firmly believe in the benefits of sound Christian counseling. I strongly encourage you to ask for help.

DAY 5

EYES WIDE OPEN!

My girls are both in their teens now, and that means they sleep. A lot. By the time they get up on a Saturday, I've had coffee, gone for a run, eaten lunch, and run errands! Yes, it's afternoon by the time they begin to stir.

They not only sleep a lot, they sleep like rocks. Even when our dog, Ezra Blake, who sleeps on Sophia's bed, snores so loudly that it sounds like a freight train, both girls sleep right through it. I guess to them it must sound like a lullaby!

But when it's a school day, well, that's a different story. Both girls have to set their alarms and get up on time. Of course, Nick and I serve as the backup system. We stop by their doors, listen for sounds of life, and take the necessary steps to ensure they are getting ready.

Sometimes when we listen at their bedroom doors we don't hear anything. Not a peep. That's when we enter their rooms and shake them awake!

Perhaps that's what God has been doing in us all week. Shaking us awake. Moving us from a place of blurry-eyed sleepiness to fully opening our eyes so we can see the people around us the way He does—without prejudice, without objectifying them, without dismissing them.

Even the Christians in the Ephesian church fell asleep, and the apostle Paul had to shake them awake!

Read Ephesians 5:1 and write the first instruction.

What a powerful command! Paul told the Ephesians that God wanted them to imitate Him—and then he listed multiple ways they were to do so. But near the end of that list, in verse 14, he told them that part of imitating God is being awake, eyes wide open.

Read Ephesians 5:8-15, paying special attention to verse 14. Why is it so important to stay spiritually awake?

When I read Ephesians 5:14, it occurs to me that it's possible to go through life asleep—fully functioning but not fully awake. I'd call that sleepwalking! God doesn't want us sleepwalking through life. If we do, we will miss everyone He wants us to see. Besides, sleepwalking is dangerous.

God doesn't want us sleepwalking through life.

Our eldest, Catherine, has had episodes of sleepwalking, so much so that we had to put a special door upstairs so she wouldn't sleepwalk downstairs, open the front door, and walk out. In the course of researching her experiences, I've learned a lot about sleepwalking. Did you know that sleepwalkers remain in a deep sleep throughout their episodes, making them unlikely to remember anything? And oftentimes sleepwalking involves more than just walking. People who sleepwalk have been known to try to drive a car or perform other activities that can be dangerous to themselves or others. Also, it's a common belief that sleepwalkers should not be awakened; however, research says it can be more dangerous to allow a sleepwalker to stay asleep than to wake them—especially if they are attempting to drive a car!¹³

All of this tells me that sleepwalking, physically or spiritually, is not a good idea!

Describe what sleepwalking spiritually might look like in your life.

In Mark 13:32-37, Jesus taught His disciples about His second coming. He warned them three times to "stay awake" or "be alert." Could it be He didn't want them spiritually sleepwalking?

Read Mark 13:32-37 and note the three times Jesus instructed His disciples to remain awake.

If Jesus told the disciples—and us—something three times in the same breath, then could it be that He wants us to understand more than the obvious? If we keep reading in Mark we learn that a couple days after Jesus told them to stay awake, He ate with His disciples at the last supper, and then, together, they went to the garden of Gethsemane for Jesus to pray.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record aspects of this night. Read the account in Matthew 26:36-46, and note the disciples' actions and Jesus' words to them.

The disciples couldn't stay awake for one hour, even after Jesus asked them a second time. He didn't bother to wake them again, and they slept through His greatest agony. Can you imagine sleeping through a moment God invited you into? And then that moment becoming one of the most pivotal in history?

That's the danger God wants us all to avoid. We don't want to sleep through the moments He invites us into, the ones He's orchestrated into every one of our days. How important it is for us to look and see, to be alert and awake, to see the one God wants us to see.

When has God invited you to look and see someone as He does? Describe that moment and how you responded.

Based on what we've studied this week about looking and seeing, about feeling seen and then helping others feel seen, do you think it's possible for us to be so drained from our own disappointments and circumstances that we "fall asleep" spiritually while still going through the motions of our everyday lives? Explain.

How can falling asleep spiritually affect our vision?

Could it be that we're spiritually sleepwalking? We're functioning, yet we're going through life with our eyes closed, blind to everyone around us. We may even be blind to Jesus.

God's words to the disciples and to the Ephesians to "Wake up!" and "Be alert!" roughly two thousand years ago are still true for us today.

Here are some verses that reiterate this very message. Look them up and write what stands out to you.

Deuteronomy 4:9

Luke 12:35-38

Romans 13:11-12

Ephesians 6:18

1 Thessalonians 5:1-8

1 Peter 5:8

Revelation 3:1-3

Revelation 3:14-22

God is calling us to wake up and to open our eyes wide—our physical eyes so we can see people, and our spiritual eyes so we can *really* see people.

Choose a Scripture passage from the list above and write it as a prayer, asking God to help you be alert, stay awake, and have 20/20 vision.