

Opening The Eyes Of Your Heart

We Need To See Things Differently



We need to see things differently.
We need a better view of the world.
We get negative, defeated, depressed.
We need a different view of the world.

Remember Susan Boyle?

Unknown until age 47.

Susan Boyle was briefly deprived of oxygen at birth,

She has mild brain damage and learning difficulties.

She was bullied as a child (and as an adult).

People called her "Simple Susan" and "Susan Bong".

Susan Boyle never left home, but lived with her parents until they died.

She still lives in the same house she grew up in.

She once had a cleaning job for six months but apart from that she has been unemployed all her life.

At 47 years old when she was discovered, Boyle said she said had, "never been married and never been kissed".

What do you see when you look at Susan Boyle?

Do you need a different view?

In 2009 Susan appeared on a TV show called "Britain's Got Talent".

You all know I don't like TV that much and I struggle to find good in Reality TV especially,

So I am ashamed to say I am a fan and I'm going to show you some in church!

When Boyle appeared on "Britain's Got Talent" they looked down on her and gave her a very hard time.

After they had made her feel bad for her looks and age this is what happened...

[VIDEO – BRITAIN'S GOT TALENT 2009 – SUSAN BOYLE FIRST APPEARANCE – I DREAMED A DREAM]

Within nine days of her appearance on TV in Britain Susan Boyle's video had been watched 100 million times online.

Her first album was the world's best-selling debut album of all time.

Here's something you might not know:

She is also a Christian – a practicing Roman Catholic and she sings in her local church choir!

We need to see things differently.

We need God's Holy Spirit to come and change the way we view things.

We need to see differently so that instead of defeat and hopelessness we can see more,

We need to a change of perspective - like the way the crowd changed with Susan Boyle.

We need a transformation in the way we see things,

So that we can see not just darkness and failure, but also hope and beauty.

We Need The Eyes Of Our Heart Opened!

Today's Bible verse talks about a new way to see things.

Ephesians 1:17-18a

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened...

This is in a letter called “Ephesians” written by a bloke called Paul.
And all through his letter he keeps showing us a bigger view, a greater vision, a new way to see.
He keeps on talking about life and stretching our horizon to see something greater.
When Paul talks about Jesus Christ he stretches our view to a glimpse of the whole universe.
Ephesians is mind-blowing stuff!

Right at the start of this letter Paul tells us that he’s praying.
He’s praying for a Spirit of wisdom and revelation,
He’s praying that ‘the eyes of people’s heart may be opened’!

This is what we need – the ‘eyes of our heart’ opened.
Now I know hearts don’t have eyes, so don’t bother pointing out that the Bible is wrong here.
The Bible uses phrases like ‘the eyes of your heart’ and ‘the skin of your teeth’ to make a point.
When Paul talks about ‘the eyes of your heart’ he is talking about something spiritual.
He’s saying: “We need to see things differently.”

We need to stop seeing things from a limited point of view.
We need to stop thinking as if everything depends on us.
We need to stop thinking as if God can only do what human beings can do.
We need to see things differently.

This is Paul’s prayer.

Notice the word - it’s not actually “open” – it’s ENLIGHTEN!
The word there is “photidzo” from which we get the English word “photon”.
Paul says we need the eyes of our heart ILLUMINATED, LIT UP, SHONE ON, FULL OF LIGHT.
He’s saying that we need to see something deeper – we need to see spiritual reality.

Enlightened Eyes Isn’t Something We Can Do Ourselves.

And the most important thing to see here is that it’s not just about ‘trying harder’.

I’m not saying “always look on the bright side of life”.
I’m not saying to you “look at the positive side more.”
I’m not telling you to stop thinking so negative and try to see things differently.
This is something we can’t simply do on our own.

Paul talks about a “Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation”.
So this is something God does.
To have enlightened eyes is something God does,
It’s a ‘revelation’ which means it’s something God opens up to us.

If you go home and say,
“From now on I’m going to look at people like Susan Boyle and look for the beauty” that might be nice,
But that’s not the point of this Bible passage.

Paul prays that God’s Holy Spirit might light up the eyes of our hearts.
And that’s what I pray for you today.

I pray that you might grow to know Christ all the more,
That you might trust him more and more,
That as you grow in Christ,
You might see the world as he does,

That you might see people with the love he has,
That you might see the hope and joy that he has.

This is not something to do yourself,
It's about relaxing in Christ, letting go in his arms, and asking the Spirit to show you things a new way.

Recently I had to visit a woman to pray with her as she prepared to die.
She had battled with a terrible cancer and was emaciated, thin and grey.
She might have looked like a ghost.
But as I looked at her God showed me a vision – I saw with new eyes.
As I looked at this dying person instead I saw a young vibrant beautiful woman, full of life and hope.
I saw her future, her vitality, her joy, her vivacious life.
My eyes were opened so that I saw her true self.
And as I told her what I saw the Holy Spirit brought hope.
The Holy Spirit does this work of showing us things differently.

Early this year I found myself worrying about finances.
I have no idea why I should start worrying about money and about the future, but I did!
And then as I brought it to God in prayer he changed things,
I saw how God has always provided for me,
And I saw that even if the worst should ever come God will hold me,
I saw my future with Christ, no matter what should happen now.
A whole new boldness was born in my life to give and give and share,
Because I saw how incredibly rich I am!
My eyes were enlightened.

If you are depressed or can't see hope for your life,
My prayer for you is that the eyes of your heart would be enlightened,
That you would see things a new way,
That you would get a glimpse of how Jesus Christ sees you ,
And of his future alive in you now!

For me I think the thing that opens up my view of the world the most is the cross of Jesus.
When I contemplate Christ on the cross,
The darkest most hellish moment of history,
Knowing that God went there lights up everything else.
Knowing that Jesus has gone to hell for me opens up my eyes to a whole new world.

In your walk with Christ there is a maturity and wisdom that can grow – things get deeper.
And so this is the prayer of our church for today,
That we might have our eyes opened to see a deeper view.

We Need Our Eyes Opened By The Holy Spirit To See Three Things:

Ephesians 1:18-19

¹⁸I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his people, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

Notice that Paul's prayer isn't just for our eyes to be opened spiritually,
But that we might have our eyes opened to three specific things...

1. The HOPE we are called to

Instead of seeing the hopelessness of things,
The bad economy, the way the third world starve, the corrupt political system, the environment failing,
The Holy Spirit comes to give us HOPE and show us that God truly is in control,
To show us that our destiny is to shine, and that no matter what happens in the meantime,
We will RISE with Christ!

That's hope!

2. The RICH INHERITANCE we have

Instead of worrying about the mortgage and the bills,
Instead of getting caught up in the cycle of 'keeping up with the Joneses' and comparing.
Instead of focussing on our bank accounts,
The Holy Spirit comes to show us the RICH INHERITANCE we have in Christ,
That we are children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus,
That everything that is Christ's is ours – that we share LIFE with him!

3. The POWER of Christ!

Finally,
When we feel powerless, like nothing can possibly change for the better,
The Holy Spirit comes to open our eyes to the POWER of Christ,
That power that broke the grave and smashed death,
That power that changes everything and sets us free.

Our Church has just approved a brave new plan for 2012.
We are going to be trying some crazy wonderful faithful new things.
This plan is not about our own ideas – it has been formed by praying together.
At our AGM last week every single person voted in favour of our new strategic plan.
Why not read it and pray about where God wants you in this plan?
And as you read it don't just see details, dollars, decisions, and detours.
Ask God to show you the power of Christ,
Because what Christ can do is greater than we can possibly imagine!

Let me finish by asking you which of these three things do you personally need to see the most right now?

Today at communion we are offering prayer for 'new eyes',
To see things in a new, deeper, Christ-like way,
To have our eyes enlightened by the power of the Holy Spirit.

As you come forward for communion,
If you want to be prayed for to see things a new way,
Just indicate by putting up one hand,
And one of our leaders will place a hand on your head and pray Paul's words for you:

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his people, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

Amen.