

“As I read *With Fresh Eyes*, I felt like I was the one seeing for the first time. Karen Wingate’s vivid descriptions, poignant insights, and overwhelming awe of God’s goodness opened my eyes to the evidence of God’s presence all around me. She dusts the world for God’s fingerprints and finds them everywhere. Then she invites us to marvel with her as we see our world anew.”

LORI HATCHER, author of *Refresh Your Faith*

“*With Fresh Eyes* is a true spiritual treasure. Writing with a deep faith and a transparency forged in the fire of trials, Karen Wingate opens our eyes to the many wonders of the life of faith: patience, hope, trust, contentment, and gratitude, to name a few. Her personal stories and practical application will challenge you to see God and his work from a new perspective.”

SHAWN McMULLEN, vice president of partner relations for the Christian Church Leadership Foundation, and author of *Coming Home to Holiness*

“In this thoughtful and beautifully written book, Karen Wingate provides a refreshing perspective on life’s challenges, renewed vision, and God’s faithfulness.”

CANDY ARRINGTON, author of *Life on Pause*

“Rather than focusing on her miraculous recovery of sight, Wingate invites her readers to see God’s miracles all around them. It is, indeed, an eye-opening book!”

JAMES N. WATKINS, award-winning author, speaker, and editor of *Intimacy with Christ*

“Karen Wingate’s warm, personal messages are deeply relatable yet challenged me to look at things in a different way. I’m grateful for that. Gazing at life through fresh eyes, I was amazed at her perspective and revelations.”

CECIL MURPHEY, author or coauthor of 140 books, including *Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story*

WITH FRESH EYES

60 Insights into the Miraculously Ordinary
from a Woman Born Blind

Karen Wingate



With Fresh Eyes: 60 Insights into the Miraculously Ordinary from a Woman Born Blind

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Bathroom Scales

*Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel
before the LORD our Maker.*

—PSALM 95:6

One month had passed since my retina specialist uttered those hope-filled, Better Than Ever words. Curious what recovery inactivity had done to my weight, I wandered into the bathroom and stepped on the scale.

With my eye still healing and my visual acuity changing daily, I doubted I could see the scale's numbers from any distance. Determined not to have my husband read the numbers to me, I started to do what I've done all my life. I bent over as far as my flabby body allowed and prepared to guess on the low side of the readout.

Blurred digits stared at me, causing me to jerk upright. The blur turned into a crisp, well-defined readout. I could read the number from a standing position. I had never read the numbers, ever, from a standing position. But this morning, I could.

The battery's lifetime guarantee was in dire jeopardy as I stepped off and back on five times. I don't even remember what I weighed. The joy

of seeing trumped the reality of what I saw. It was happening. The day of first discovery had come.

Tears filled my eyes. I could have never anticipated this side effect of better vision. Reading the scale was a long-held private frustration. What woman wants to ask someone else to read the numbers for her? And yet, like any red-blooded female, I wanted to know. Never again would I have to bend or kneel on the scale so I could see the numbers.

It was real. The doctor was right. I would see Better Than Ever. I must have gained two pounds from the joy flowing into my soul. *Oh, thank you, Jesus. I can see!*

Clutching my robe, I ran through the house, shouting the good news to Jack. Then I headed to my computer to share my excitement on Facebook with those beautiful people who had prayed for this moment.

Reactions from my friends set me back.

“Praise God—I guess,” one friend commented. “Couldn’t you find something else to be the first?” another wrote. “God sure has a sense of humor,” a third said. Their point was clearer than the tip of an analog needle. Bathroom scale readouts were nice and practical—but couldn’t my first sight discovery have been something beautiful and impressive, something worthy of the telling?

God grabs our attention in the
unexpected moments, leaving no
doubt about the origin of the gift.

God grabs our attention in the unexpected moments, leaving no doubt about the origin of the gift. Imagine if the first new thing I saw had been leaves on trees, flower petals, or rain-laden clouds. That’s what everyone expected. And they would have scrolled on to the next Facebook entry.

The glory of what God had done would have been lost. But the bath-

room scale piqued my friends' curiosity. It made us all pause. Wonder. Think. Praise.

Angels announced the birth of Christ to shepherds first rather than to kings and emissaries. A visit from heavenly beings to lowlifes like them caught everyone's attention. The unusual choice made generations to come notice and remember. And then the unconventional baby bed—a feeding trough—validated the angel's message. Yes. This is the one. The unexpected marked the miraculous.

Mary Magdalene was the first to see Jesus after he came back to life. Jesus could have chosen one of the apostles, Nicodemus, Pilate, his mother, or a Jerusalem crowd out for a Sunday stroll. No, God chose a formerly demon-possessed woman to be his public relations spokesperson. Mary's testimony propelled Peter and John toward the tomb to see if these things were so. The unexpected became a call to action.

Like Mary's reunion with the resurrected Jesus in the garden, my first encounter of new sight was private and personal. The God who knows me inside and out, who created every fiber of my being, and who is not ashamed of my nakedness desired that this moment of firstfruits discovery be reserved for him and him alone.

If I'd been with other people and seen some outside wonder we'd expected to be my first, my exclamation of surprised delight would have drawn attention to me and what I was looking at. Instead, God chose a private setting to unwrap the gift of my new vision so I could share the joy first with the Giver of the gift. Just God and me, by ourselves, delighting over the gift together. I think I could even sense his delighted chuckle. I stood in wonder and worship of a God who loved me so much that he thought about my frustration over reading numbers on a bathroom scale.

What unexpected thing has God done for you? Thank him first. Alone. Then proclaim the good news to anyone ready to listen: *I have seen the Lord.*

Lord, help me see your unexpected touches in the private rooms of my routine. As I see you at work, I

*want to share those moments of celebration with
you first.*

SEEING WITH FRESH EYES

Name something specific God has done for you in the last few days.
Pause and tell him thank you for what he has done.



Dirt

*For you created my inmost being; you knit me
together in my mother's womb.*

—PSALM 139:13

Not much of a gardener, I'm usually able to stash some petunias, begonias, or geraniums in the planter in front of my house by Mother's Day. This year was different. Nearby yards flourished with colorful blooms, but my garden lay barren.

After the doctor's orders released me to resume life at my choice of speed, I ventured outside with oversize sunglasses, still blinking against the glare. Eager to do something, anything, that wouldn't challenge my surgery-sensitive eyes, I surveyed my desolate yard.

That's when I saw dirt.

Before my surgery, dirt had been nothing more than a homogenous smudge under my moving feet. Now I could see what everyone else saw—the texture and topography of dirt.

My farmer friends wanted to correct me when I told them the story. It's soil, not dirt, they said. Whatever they wanted to call it, I saw it, and it was beautiful and exciting. For the first time in my life, I saw a myriad of particles that support plant life. With the fascination of a

four-year-old, I let a fistful of dark brown dirt sift from one hand to the other like a slow-moving Slinky.

God refuses to be a functional God. He could have whipped up one recipe of potting soil, spread it over all the earth's land surfaces, and called it good. Instead, he splashed dirt with multimillion variety, inventing beauty by its breadth of creativity. There's the dark, rich soil of the Midwest, the red clay of Georgia, and the sandy beach of Florida's oceanfront. The Creator wasn't bothered about the needed tonnage to cover landmasses; in his divine mind, more variations showcased his infinite ingenuity.

Dirt deserves the same awe and wonder we reserve for majestic waterfalls and monarch butterflies. In a farmer's mind, there is nothing more beautiful than a well-turned field, ready for planting. Dirt is rich with nutrients and composted matter, yet interrelated to the rest of nature in its dependence on moisture and temperature to sustain life. It becomes a habitat for all kinds of critters—life-forms that give back to the earth through their decaying bodies. Dirt holds the earth together. It is as basic to our existence as the bread on our tables. Without it, we would have no food supply, no oxygen to breathe, no firm place to stand.

In God's economy, scarcity does
not make a thing more valuable.

The law of supply and demand might apply to a capitalistic society, but it doesn't work in God's marketplace. In God's economy, scarcity does not make a thing more valuable. God must have liked dirt so much that he made a lot of it. Then, like an overeager scientist, he played with the formula, concocting and constructing it to fit the unique needs of each ecosystem.

So much dirt, but every acre so different from the rest. And the deeper you look, the more detail you see. Pausing to ponder strips away the ubiquity and reveals the diversity.

Just like people.

Some sociologists estimate that a hundred billion people have populated the earth, each of them connected to the dust of the ground from which God made the first man (Gen. 2:7). Think of it. Such a large number would hint that human life is cheap, too common to be of much worth. Yet God values each person. Every individual is beautiful and precious in God's sight. He lavishes his love on each of us, customizing us with the same intricacy and variation he used when he made dirt. Just as dirt is plentiful, unique, complex, and an essential, foundational part of earthly creation, so the life of the human race is as well.

Human life as common as dirt? Yes—common and complicated, valuable and valued.

Go ahead. Step outside. Grab a handful of dirt. Let it filter through your fingers and collect beneath your nails. Sort through the wealth of detail. Count the shades of brown. Feel the difference between hard pebbles and slimy mud. Breathe deep and let the dust make you sneeze, then inhale the scent again after a summer's rain.

After each sensation, thank God for the artistry and time he put into the creation of the earth. Then go hug the human being next to you, grateful that God chose to make that person as precious, beautiful, customized, unique, and purpose-filled as dirt.

Wash your hands first. Or not.

*Thank you, God, for making me wonderfully one of
a kind. Thank you for making the person next
to me equally complex, yet different. Your
creativity is amazing.*

SEEING WITH FRESH EYES

Choose the person in your circle of acquaintances who is most different from you. List five things you share in common with that person. Number one on your list could be, "God made both of us."



Color

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

—COLOSSIANS 1:13-14

Easing back into the normal paces of home life, I tackled piles of laundry for the first time since my surgery. Pulling clothes from the dryer, my hand stilled. One blouse had lost its familiar look. The color was off: it seemed brighter, maybe more intense. Not the pink softened by years of wear that I remembered. The truth brought my hand to life as I crumpled the warm, fresh-scented, fiercely fuchsia cloth in my fingers and held it against my face.

The blouse had not changed. My vision had.

For weeks, I'd wondered what my retina specialist meant by "better vision." Would objects appear bigger, more detailed, or less blurry? No on bigger. Dirt told me yes on the boundless level of detail. The bathroom scales shouted new clarity.

I hadn't counted on color brilliance.

Color is a by-product of light, a children's science book told me.

Color allows us to discriminate between objects, the dictionary said. Color is bent light. The more light, the brighter the color.

Dim light strips color and blurs clarity. Imagine a world without color. Defined only by its shape and mass, everything would otherwise look the same.

Before Better Than Ever, my ability to see shape and detail was limited, so color used to be my go-to method of distinguishing what I saw. “Don’t ever change your color,” I told a red-haired friend. “That’s how I know who you are.”

I thought I saw color like everyone else because it was the one strong visual attribute I had. Now, as I stared at the blouse in my hands, I realized how wrong I was. I shouldn’t have been surprised. The widening of my surgically stuck pupil allowed more light to strike the optic nerve, and with light came color brilliance.

The closer we move toward the light
of Jesus, the more distinctive and
alluring our character will become.

Jesus has brought us out of darkness into the light of his love, purity, and goodness. When we stand in his presence, we reflect that light. Remember? Light draws out and heightens color. Observers of our lives will see the brilliant brightness our lives reflect, which stands in stark contrast to the drab gray of their dim environment. How much of a contrast will depend on how close we stand to Jesus. The closer we move toward the light of Jesus, the more distinctive and alluring our character will become. We’ll be as eye-catching as a dazzling leading lady under a spotlight on an otherwise darkened stage.

Perhaps that’s why Paul encouraged the Colossian Christians to clothe themselves with a rainbow spectrum of attributes that would make them look like Jesus: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, forgiveness, and love (Col. 3:12–14). Those

are the colors of our character that will help others recognize that we've been with Jesus. He wants our character to shine brightly enough that others notice and give glory to God (Matt. 5:16). This is what will happen, for Jesus's light makes a life committed to him as radiant as the brightest of rainbows.

If you want your relationship with Christ to color your character, start by moving closer to Jesus. That means spending time with him, doing life his way instead of following your own desires, and obeying his directives even when it is not convenient to do so.

As you grow in your relationship with him, you'll become more beautiful and radiant. You'll glow with that inner light that comes only from Jesus. Your more vivid and visible faith will attract family, friends, and strangers to the delightful life Jesus has to offer. They'll ask questions and long to have what you have and be clothed with the beautiful characteristics you wear.

It's okay. Step into his light. Let Jesus color your world.

*Shine on me, Lord, so I will reflect all the beauty of
your character in a way that others will notice and
want what you have to offer.*

SEEING WITH FRESH EYES

Choose one of the character traits from Colossians 3:12–14 that is difficult for you to portray. Do a Bible word search and read what the Bible says about that trait, asking God to help you shine more brightly in that area.



Clocks

Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

—LAMENTATIONS 3:22–23

In the days before smartphones, nightstand clocks were my nemesis. We have gone through several alarm clocks in our years of marriage, trying to find one I could see. For middle of the night awakenings, a talking clock was not an option.

One day, an online catalog advertised a clock that projected the time and temperature on the ceiling. It was the kind of whiz-bang gift my husband would like, I might see the large projected numbers, and we would both enjoy knowing the morning temperature first thing. It would be a perfect gift for my typically hard-to-please man. His birthday was long past, but I bought it anyway, telling him it was my birthday gift to myself because, well, I hoped I had found a clock I could read.

He loved it and set it up immediately. We lay on the bed together, staring at the ceiling.

“Can you see it?”

“Well . . .” I couldn’t. “It’s the middle of the day. Let’s try again after dark.”

Night came. All I saw was a brown tinge. I got pouty. “Happy early birthday,” I grumbled. “It’s all yours.”

Reading clock numbers didn’t rank on the bucket list of things I wanted to see after Better Than Ever. I didn’t even think about the projection clock. But several months after Better Than Ever, I woke to a quiet house. Baxter, our Welsh corgi, made sleepy sounds in his cage, and my beloved husband snored beside me. A bright red blur glowed above my head.

I wonder . . .

I plucked my glasses from the nightstand. 6:45 a.m. 65 degrees. I could even read the *F* for Fahrenheit. My dear one stirred, and I grabbed his hand, forgetting that people turn in bed while still asleep. “Hey, you, I can read the clock.”

Fully awake, catching the significance of what I said, he rolled over, telling me to read what I saw. We lay there for five minutes with me reading the numbers every time they changed. He chuckled and I cried.

Every morning now, the first thing I see when I open my eyes are those red numbers, and I remember what God did for me. Every morning, I exhale and whisper, *Oh, thank you, God, for eyes to see clock numbers*. It’s become a ritual to snuggle in the warmth of early morning blankets and revel in the miracle.

My red glow has become a kind of memorial, like what Joshua, Moses’s successor, gave to the Israelites. After God’s people crossed the Jordan River on dry ground—at flood stage, no less—Joshua ordered the priests to set up memorial stones. When their children and later generations would ask them the meaning of the stones, the people were to tell the story of God’s rescue and redemption (Josh. 4:1–9).

My gratitude for every-morning eyesight was spontaneous and heartfelt. But I possessed other lifetime gifts that deserved equally delighted praise. I got a red glow of another idea. What have I always had for which I could thank God each morning?

A lone dove call sounded over the air conditioner's hum. *Thank you, God, that I can hear.*

Blanket fuzzies surrounded my early morning with warmth. *Thank you that I own a blanket.*

Baxter turned in his crate and sighed. *Thank you for a dog's companionship and energetic goofiness that makes me smile first thing and get moving right away.*

My mind turned toward the day's plans. *Thank you for today's anticipated activities.* What would I fix for breakfast? *Thank you for food in our fridge and strength in my hands to prepare meals.*

Jack let out an extra loud snort. *Thank you for this dear one who speaks your truth in the pulpit and within our home with eloquence.*

Each morning turned into praise points for what I had instead of a litany of wishes for what I didn't have.

What might prompt you to praise God first thing in the morning?

What might prompt you to praise God first thing in the morning? What can act as your morning trumpet call to worship? Have you almost lost the one beside you? Let those soft, sleepy sounds remind you of God's awesome work of mercy. Did you receive the possessions strewn about you in ways that speak of God's special provision? Use the sight of them to thank the Giver.

You'll find something worth mentioning to God, for the whole earth is filled with God's wonders. Psalm 65:8 says, "Where morning dawns, where evening fades, you call forth songs of joy." The item that calls forth your song of joy can become the first of many gratitude prompts that describe God's lavish love, never-ending faithfulness, and incredible goodness.

What a way to start the day.

Lord, I want to keep my eyes open to all you've given me and done for me. May your Holy Spirit reveal the signs of your faithfulness each morning so I can praise you once again.

SEEING WITH FRESH EYES

Determine to thank God tomorrow for the first thing you see when you open your eyes. Then write it down for you to remember God's mercy. Consider making this a daily practice.