



With Open Hands

Henri J.M. Nouwen , Sue Monk Kidd (Foreword)

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Now updated, 'With Open Hands' offers gentle encouragement to readers seeking God & insight to the components of prayer: silence, acceptance, hope, compassion, & prophetic criticism.

With Open Hands Details

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Author : Henri J.M. Nouwen , Sue Monk Kidd (Foreword)

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From Reader Review With Open Hands for online ebook

Sylvester says

Lovely book on prayer, written very simply and vividly. Had not thought of prayer in the sense that it was presented by Nouwen. Will definitely be coming back to this again and again.

writer... says

Translated from an original Dutch manuscript, I am one more grateful reader.

Many powerful reflections as I read Henri Nouwen's inspiring call to Bring Prayer into Your Life "With Open Hands". Easy to read with most entries contained entirely on individual pages.

To whet your reading appetite, here's a brief quote shared early in the text - "Each time you dare to let go and surrender one of those many fears, your hand opens a little and your palms spread out in a gesture of receiving..."

Great addition to anyone's pursuit of prayer.

Pleased to note Henri Nouwen was part of the Canadian Larche group in Ontario. His contributions and his learning would have been influencial.

Covers 'W' title for my Alphabet Soup 2014 participation in Lori's [A-Z Reading Challenge]

Nermine Hosni says

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Samira says

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Ian says

This book is a group effort of 25 theology students who helped Nouwen formulate his initial ideas. Lived

experiences forms the background of the book and the insights emerge from such experiences and flow back into them. The book has 5 chapters consisting of experiences constituting a movement from 'clenched fists' to 'open hands'.

Prayer is not easy as anyone who prays will testify. It is a relationship wherein we allow the other to enter the deepest recesses of our being and this is very sensitive and sometimes even painful. The clenched fist imagery represents a resistance to the kind of relationship that prayer demands. Surrendering ourselves to God in prayer is vital to unclench our fists but this cannot be fully achieved as behind every fist lies another one. Nonetheless, surrender brings with it a kind of freedom. Prayer takes on a whole new and significant meaning.

Prayer is connected to silence. It's not only that we need silence to pray but that the silence itself sometimes becomes prayer. Silence is not always connected to peace. Sometimes silence can be frightening especially when we are anxious of what may be revealed in silence.

Prayer teaches us the importance of acceptance. We need to accept God who wants to give himself to us and to feel accepted by Him. The world displays to us the folly of acceptance. It preaches individualism and prudence. Prayer implies a certain amount of folly. We must be willing to stake it all on the Lord, knowing well that He will never let us down. This is one of the challenges of prayer.

Every prayer is an expression of hope. If you expect nothing from the future, you cannot pray. Without hope there can be no life. A prayer of little faith is carefully reckoned, stingy and upset by every risk. It is not permeated by hope. Praying with hope means not getting entangled with selfish wishes and gifts but with the giver.

A prayer of hope is a prayer that disarms you and extends you far beyond the limits of your own longings. Therefore, prayer leads us to others. It is never a closed compartment wherein the individual builds a wall around himself and his God. Prayer cannot be disconnected from life and our life is social. Hence, the best manifestation of prayer is compassion. Compassion must not be confused with pity. It is in the first place, a revelation of our neighbour as a human being like ourselves. Secondly, compassion means acknowledging our mutual destiny in God.

Very interestingly, in the final chapter, Nouwen makes a connection between prayer and revolution. Revolution is not understood in the violent sense, but as conversion or change. As we delve into the depths of prayer, we constantly undergo change and conversion. This happens at the personal level but must also translate into the relational level. Prayer must open our eyes to the problems and sufferings of people in society. Christian witness is a revolutionary witness.

The book is small but very insightful. The chapters are not written in the usual style but as short reflections ranging from a few lines to a page. This fosters reading and reflection. Christians struggling to pray and those in prayer alike will find this book helpful to steer them as they progress to pray with open hands.

Jeremy says

I am a big time Nouwen fan but I think this book is a really good example of the element of his writing that is a bit too cloudy and vague. I love the art with which he writes, and in much of his works, his lack of an

academic tone is very refreshing. However, this work on prayer was so ethereal that until you read the very last page it could have been written by a yoga master, a Buddhist monk, or Oprah. While I think all of the previously mentioned groups have found fruitful and valid applications for meditation, when coming from a Biblical worldview, the person of Christ has to be central to a handling of our conception of prayer. That being said, there were some quotes that were excellent and that I plan to use in the future. Just not a book I would recommend for someone looking to begin their journey into true prayer.

Gregg Koskela says

This is a classic for a reason.

The metaphor for the book/for prayer is helpful. The writing is beautiful and opens the mind and spirit. I love how it consistently comes back to prayer as a vehicle for deepening our encounter with the living God, and not a means to an end.

Laura Payne says

Small book on prayer that really made me think about how opening myself to God works to help me grow and love.

Kathy Dwyer says

I received the original version of this in the 70's and it transformed by understanding of prayer.

Kim says

The quote that went into my bones and will never leave me:

Praying means giving up a false security, no longer looking for arguments which will protect you if you get pushed into a corner, no longer setting your hope on a couple of lighter moments which your life might still offer. Praying means to stop expecting from God that same small-mindedness which you discover in yourself. To pray is to walk in the full light of God, and to say simply, without holding back, "I am human and you are God." At that moment, conversion occurs, the restoration of the true relationship. Man is not the one who once in a while makes a mistake and God is not the one who now and then forgives. No, man is a sinner and God is love. Conversion makes this obvious with a stunning simplicity and a disarming clarity.

This conversion brings with it the relaxation which lets you breathe again and puts you at rest in the embrace of a forgiving God. The experience results in a calm and simple joy. For then you can say: "I don't know the answer and I can't do this thing, but I don't have to know it, and I don't have to be able to do it." This new knowledge is the liberation which gives you access to everything in creation and leaves you free to play in the garden which lies before you.

The person who prays not only discovers himself and God, but in the same meeting discovers who his neighbor is. For in prayer, you not only profess that people are people and God is God, but also, that your neighbor is your sister or brother living alongside you. For if your conversion has brought you down to the bottom of your human nature, you notice that you are not alone: Being human means being together. (58-59)

Deborah Humphreys says

This is a book which never needs to be put down. Each page carries a gem of wisdom. It is small enough to include in a backpack or purse for that spare moment when a small reminder of truth could make the difference in a decision or give depth to a conversation over a cup of coffee.

Do you get my point? It is a godly, insightful, practical jewel of wisdom.

Lucy Pollard-Gott says

Helpful, paragraph-length insights into the effects of the different attitudes we may bring to our times of prayer. Besides the title concept of praying "with open hands," Nouwen contrasts the "prayer of little faith" with the "prayer of hope," in which "there are no guarantees asked, no conditions posed, and no proofs demanded. You expect everything from the other without binding the other in any way. Hope is based on the premise that the other gives only what is good. Hope includes an openness by which you wait for the promise to come through, even though you never know when, where, or how this might happen." (p.73).

Marina Hatem says

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Ian says

Nouwen met with 25 of his students to discuss the topic of prayer and this is the output of those discussions.

It's beautiful how he uses the image of the title - "With Open Hands" - to convey the essence of prayer. Prayer is as much about our attitudinal position as what it is we pray about. To many of us we struggle to spend time in prayer because we're tight fisted on matters we're struggling with and/or prayer is not really a sufficient enough priority in our life to spend the time with the Lord. We send off prayer requests haphazardly rather than sitting down with the Lord and allowing His presence to soothe and comfort us.

In reflecting on certain aspects associated with coming to pray "With Open Hands", Nouwen encourages the

reader to do just that: let go and Let God! Hand over your troubles, your cares, your passions and distractions and let the one who loves you like crazy minister to you as wait upon Him.

A good quick read especially for anyone who is struggling to grasp prayer's power and criticality to living well.

M. H. says

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