



IN A DARK CORNER

bible study companion



KNOW THE TRUTH. LIVE THE TRUTH.
IT CHANGES EVERYTHING.

hidden joy in a dark corner

BY WENDY BLIGHT

Week One - Part 1

Bible Study Companion Leader: Katrina V. Wylie



Hi Bible study friend! I'm glad you've chosen to join me here in the Bible Study Companion. Like Wendy Blight indicated in Chapter 1 of *Hidden Joy in a Dark Corner*, it was God's love and Word that set her heart free. So what better step for us to take than to dig into His Word, and learn more about His love and Truth, to begin to set our hearts free too! To help us do that, let's start by *opening* our hearts.

Opening Our Hearts:

When we have a loss, hurt or trial burdening us, it's not uncommon to close our hearts to some degree. But, if we want to find freedom again, we need to set about reopening our hearts, even just a little bit, especially to God. In the "Guide for Reflection and Study," in the back of *Hidden Joy in a Dark Corner*, Wendy Blight wrote and shared a beautiful prayer to help us do this. Let's pray that now.

"Heavenly Father, we acknowledge You as our Creator and the One who loves us just as we are. Together, my new friend and I come before You and give the next weeks to You as we begin this journey together. Lord, I ask that You open her heart to receive all the wonderful Truths You have in store for her. You led her to choose this book because You have a powerful work You want to perform in her life. I pray that as she turns each page, she would experience the power of Your healing touch. Thank You for Your promise that when we seek You with all of our heart, we will find You. I claim that for her right now. I pray she will experience You in a powerful way. We thank You in advance for all You will do. It is in Your Son Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

Your Dark Corner:

In the introduction of the book, Wendy asks these tough questions:

Have you ever...

- *Been the victim of someone's violent behavior?*
- *Felt like someone ripped away all you had in this world?*
- *Felt like your life was spiraling out of control and you didn't know how you could survive another day?*
- *Experienced a physical or emotional pain so deep that nothing could soothe the hurt?*

*Do you relate? Circle the bullets or parts that personally speak to your feelings and circumstance, and then answer the next questions. Though this step can be hard, taking time with God to do this can also be a helpful beginning to finding healing and freedom.

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*How does your loss, hurt or trial currently burden your heart and affect your everyday life?

In Chapter one, Wendy shares her “dark corner” story with us about being raped. She begins with these hard-hitting words: *“It was supposed to be the happiest time of my life...”* While I haven’t endured being the victim of someone’s violent behavior, I can very much relate to her words in regards to my own “dark corner” experience.

My dark corner began with a long, difficult labor during the birth of my daughter, which led to health complications I’m still dealing with today, ten years later. Complications that meant we wouldn’t have more children of our own through pregnancy.

The birth of a child is another time in our lives that’s “supposed to be the happiest.” Part of what made my experience so hard for me was that my expectations of what that time in my life was supposed to be like, didn’t align with my reality. What I felt “should’ve” been a beautiful high point in my life, suddenly and unexpectedly involved one of my toughest lows.

*Have your expectations and the timing of your loss, hurt or trial played a part in your reaction to it? If so, how?

Wendy’s story struck another chord with me when she ended Chapter 1 with these words: *“I felt so alone. No one, not a single soul, understood the depths of my pain and my despair. No one knew the terror I lived with each day. No one knew ... my loneliness, my helplessness, my hopelessness.”*

*Have you, too, felt alone in the burden you carry, like no one truly knows or understands? Explain.

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Merging Our Story with Jesus' Story:

*Look up and read the passages listed in the chart below, making note of what Jesus endured. As you do, reflect upon all you've endured through *your* dark corner experience, circling and/or jotting down the ways in which you relate, big or small.

Bible Study Tip!

Flipping back and forth between books is a great way to increase familiarity with the Bible. I highly encourage the practice! However, when in a time crunch, you can also utilize technology such as Bible Gateway to look up a list of verses quickly. Here's how:

1. Go to <https://www.biblegateway.com/>.
2. Click in the search box at the top.
3. Type out each of the listed verses, adding a comma between each one.
4. To the right, choose the desired Bible translation and hit the SEARCH button. All the verses will now show up, one after another, for you to scroll and read through.

Verses:	Jesus endured:	How I relate:
Luke 22:4-6 Matthew 26:20-25 Matthew 26:47-50	Betrayal	
Matthew 26:69-75 Mark 15:6-14		
Matthew 26:59 Mark 14:56 Mark 15:1-3 Luke 23:10		
John 19:1 Matthew 27:27-31 Matthew 27:37-44		
Mark 15:33-34		
Mark 15:37		

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I went into labor on Good Friday. Friday came and went. Saturday came and went. Easter Sunday came and went, and *still* no baby. With what felt like no end in sight to the pain, I vividly remember crying out in my mind the very same question Jesus cried out on the cross: “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” But finally, on Monday morning, my beautiful girl came — Ava — a gift from God with my mom’s red hair!

After a week of Ava having to be in the NICU (due to health complications from the long, difficult birth), our hospital stay finally came to an end. But my questioning of God? That cry of my heart echoed into each passing week, month and year as my own personal health complications continued without answers.

*Has your loss, pain or trial affected your faith, causing you to question God’s love, His goodness and/or the Truth of His Word? If so, what have you questioned, and how has that impacted your walk with God (Bible reading, prayer, church attendance, etc.)?

In addition to relating to Jesus enduring physical pain and feeling forsaken, I also related to Him experiencing death. Not death in the physical sense, but the death of my dream to have more children. Death of my overall good health and the everyday tasks I used to take for granted but now can’t do. And death to the years I spent living in fear, anger and resentment. The years I pushed God and my loved ones away, turning to food for comfort instead. A choice that only caused further health struggles that still plague me today.

*What emotions are you experiencing in response to your loss, pain or trial (anger, jealousy, fear, resentment, doubt, etc.)? How strongly are those emotions controlling your everyday life (thoughts, actions, beliefs)? List and rank them from strongest to weakest.

*In what ways and how often do these emotions affect you and those around you?

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*Have you tried to deal with everything through means other than God? If yes, what have you tried, and did it successfully resolve anything?

Jesus endured betrayal, rejection, false accusations, excruciating pain and humiliation, feeling forsaken and eventual death. What an unfathomable experience to have to endure! But, we know God had a bigger plan. One that everyone but Jesus couldn't yet see or understand. One that, in order for it to take effect, first meant Jesus experiencing all those unthinkable things.

*Look up and read John 3:16. Why and for whom did Jesus endure all of those things?

Friend, while I don't know what you've had to endure, I do know this: God so loved YOU that He gave His one and only Son to die on that cross. God being God, could've chosen a less painful way to accomplish His salvation plan for us. But, God being God, knew what WE would have to endure in this sin-soaked world. He knew it would take Jesus' outstretched arms on the cross to reach us, in our times of pain, with His message:

You are not alone.

I am with you.

I understand.

*How does knowing and remembering everything Jesus endured and why, AND that God had a bigger plan, help your view of your loss, hurt or trial?

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Week 1 - Part 2

Let's continue on in Jesus' story, because we know it doesn't end here in all the pain and sorrow. Resurrection and new life are coming!

*Look up and read Luke 24:1-3, John 20:1-2 and Mark 16:1-4. Did the women have to roll the stone away from the tomb?

*Look up and read Matthew 28:1-3. Through this account, who do we learn was responsible for the stone being rolled away?

In our memory verse this week, God says, *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."* Ezekiel 36:26 (NIV)

While this verse isn't speaking of the stone at Jesus' tomb, when I read it, I picture the angel of the Lord rolling away the stone, opening the way for Jesus to enter into His new and glorious resurrected body and life. I picture God doing the same for us — rolling away the stone that's entombed us in the dark corners of *our* hearts, so we can walk out into new life!

Don't miss the significance of *who* rolled away the stone. God didn't expect the women to roll away the stone to make the way for Jesus to walk into new life. He did it for them. It's the same with us. We don't carry the burden of removing what holds us captive and burdens our hearts. That's God's role. He carries the load for us, making a way for us to walk into new life.

*How are you striving, in your own strength, to overcome and start anew after your loss, hurt, or trial? How has this worked for you? What's one step you'll commit to take to stop striving and start surrendering the burden over to God to carry?

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Turn back to Luke 24 in your Bibles (or Bible app). We're going to journey through the rest of this account of Jesus' story together!

*Read verses 2-8. What emotion did the women feel in response to not finding what they expected in the tomb?

*What do the two men remind the women of that helps them to move past their fear into understanding and belief? Write out verse 8.

*Read verses 9-12.

In response to *remembering Jesus' words*, the women leave the tomb and go tell the apostles the good news. But the apostles don't believe them. Verse 11 (NIV) tells us why: "*because THEIR words seemed to them like nonsense*" (emphasis added). In other words, they were focusing on the women's words rather than the words of Jesus!

Oh, how I'm guilty of this — focusing on the words of others over God's. But this is why it's so important for us to remember what *God's Word* says when we find ourselves in unexpected trials. While the words of others often leads to lies, fear and doubt, God's Word fills us with truth. Truth that leads to trust and belief and gives us the courage we need to step out of the tomb, step outside our pain and share the good news with others!

In my Bible, the next section of Luke 24 is titled "On the Road to Emmaus." While the apostles stayed back in Jerusalem, other followers of Jesus left Jerusalem confused and filled with sadness. We meet two of these followers in verses 13-35. Let's read their story.

*Read verses 13-24, taking note of the first few words of verse 21.

Jesus' followers doubted and failed to recognize Him. In the NIV version, verse 21 starts out, "*...but we had hoped...*" These words hint at what Cleopas and his friend are focused on — their own expectations! So much so, they're not seeing what God has done and is doing.

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*Do you recognize when Jesus shows up in your loss, hurt or trial? Or do your expectations keep you from recognizing God at work in your circumstance? List any “but I had hoped” expectations you’re still holding on to.

*Read verses 25-27.

Jesus reminds Cleopas and his friend why He had to suffer, explaining what the Scriptures say about Him, trying to help them see that it truly is Him risen from the dead and standing before them alive. But, they still failed to recognize Him and the Truths He’s telling them. He’s about to finally get through to them, though.

*Read verses 28-35. Why do you think Cleopas and his friend had yet to recognize Jesus? What did it take for them to recognize Him?

The two go back to Jerusalem and share their story with the apostles. Though Scripture isn’t clear why the two initially failed to recognize Jesus, it could be because they didn’t truly know Jesus. Maybe they didn’t listen carefully enough to have truly heard and absorbed His teachings. But, when Jesus opens the Scriptures, *opens the Word* to them that prophesied of His coming, their eyes are opened to see who He truly is.

*Are you opening the Word of God enough to truly know Jesus, follow Him closely and recognize Him at work in your loss, hurt or trial? Which of these do you struggle with (knowing, following, recognizing)? What’s one step you’ll commit to take to be in the Word more?

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*Read verses 36-44.

In this passage, both the followers and apostles respond with doubt when Jesus appears. While initially this seems crazy to me, when I stop and think about it, I, too, flip-flop between recognition and doubt. So, it encourages me that even His followers and apostles, who physically saw Him, struggled with this. Jesus' response also encourages me — by offering His peace and continuing to invite them to "see," know and remember that everything written about Him *must* be fulfilled. He keeps inviting and reminding us too, friend.

*Read verses 45-49. What did Jesus do then and why (v. 45)?

*We began this Bible Study Companion praying for God to open our hearts, but have you ever asked God to open your mind to the Scriptures? If not, why not pray for that now?

Bible Study Tip!

Beginning each time you spend in God's Word with a small prayer for him to open your heart and mind to scripture can make a big difference! Especially when praying God's Word, such as Psalm 119:18, which says: "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law." (NIV)

*Read verses 50-53.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, He blessed the apostles and THEN the apostles finally responded in worship, joy and praise.

*Reflect back over your life for a moment. Has it taken a blessing coming from God before you were able to respond in worship, joy and praise?

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This is yet another reason it's important to be in God's Word. So that no matter what's happened/happening, we can respond with worship, joy and praise. It's my hope and prayer that you'll be able to respond with these, even if it's only in small ways and things, and that you'll continue to do so through the remainder of our study.

I sure have enjoyed taking this journey with you of merging our stories with Jesus' story. But, don't go anywhere yet! I have one more page below, to help you recognize and record all God is doing in you, and for you, through this study.

Blessings,
Kat

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Seed Seeking:

Remember the 4 reasons Wendy gives for God leading you to choose her book (from the introduction of *Hidden Joy*)?

Because God has...

1. A **personal message** for you
2. **Powerful truths** to teach you
3. **Amazing love** to reveal to you
4. **Everlasting hope** to offer you

Let's close our study time reflecting and recording the seeds God has planted in your heart this week. I invite you to track the seeds God plants each week by printing six copies of this page and filling one out at the end of each week.

*What **personal message** did God give you this week?

*What **powerful truths** did God teach you this week?

*What did God reveal to you about His **amazing love** this week?

*What did God offer you that's brought **everlasting hope** this week?
