

# hidden joy in a dark corner

BY WENDY BLIGHT

## Week 5

**Bible Study Companion Leader:** Katrina V. Wylie



Hey, sweet friend! It's so good to be back with you. As we settle into this lesson together, it's my prayer God will grow in you a deeper yearning and commitment to spend daily quiet and prayer time with Him, because it's in spending time with Him that our hearts are truly filled.

In the deepest part of my dark corner, like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, I tried to hide from God. My anger against Him continued, as did my questions and doubts. At the same time, shame filled me for the state I found myself in, in every area of my life. I couldn't bear to face Him, so I pulled away from everything that created connection with Him; especially quiet time and prayer. I distanced myself from family and friends, too, because I was tired of wearing the "everything's fine" mask.

Though pulling away seemed easier, it led me into a deep pit of isolation that felt impossible to climb out of. It led me into a false reality where I was convinced everyone could see the state I was in, and judged and ridiculed me for it. It led to the day I was so consumed with anger, and fear of being "found out," I couldn't turn the knob on my front door and walk out to check the mail.

On that difficult and humbling day, I again hit replay on my all-too-familiar reel of disappointments. But, this time, as those images flashed through my mind, a forgotten memory seeped in. A happy one. The time God placed the call to women's ministry in my heart.

With that tender reminder of my calling, a bud of hope sprang to life! I slid to my knees, lifted my hands and tear-drenched face to the heavens and, in full surrender prayed, *"Lord, I can't do this. I'm too broken. But YOU can. Forgive my wanderings. Wherever You lead, I'll go. Whatever You say to do, I'll do in You."*

I share my story with you because it was in re-surrendering to God, *through prayer*, where my journey back to Him and out of the dark began. It's through *prayer*, through *daily time with God*, your restoration can begin and/or continue as well.

*Thank You, Lord, for never leaving or forsaking us; for how You keep seeking us, asking, "Where are you?" just like You did for Adam and Eve that day in the garden. May You grow in Your daughter a deeper yearning and commitment for quiet time and prayer, as she takes this time to meet with You today in these pages, and through our study this week. To You we give the glory for all the growth and restoration that is to come. In Jesus' name, amen.*

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## Examining Your Time with God and Your Prayer Life:

\*Describe your time with God and your prayer life. Would you describe yourself as “devoted”? Why or why not?

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\*How has your time with God and your prayer life been affected by your loss, hurt or trial?

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\*Describe how you desire this time and prayer life to be.

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In Chapter 8 of *Hidden Joy in a Dark Corner*, Wendy Blight reminds us, “*God will pursue us, but He will never force His way into our lives. We have to make time for Him.*” She also speaks the hard but honest truth about why we don’t make time for Him: “*... instead of centering our lives on God and letting all other things take their rightful place underneath Him, we center our lives on our agenda and fit God in where we can.*”

Sound familiar? In other words, spending time with God, or not, comes down to our priorities and where we place Him among ours. *Ouch*. Let’s study the biblical story of Mary and Martha to see what we can learn about our priorities and spending time with God.

\*Look up and read Luke 10:38-42. What does this passage reveal about each of the sisters’ personalities and priorities?

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I'm most naturally Martha. My personality tests all reveal I'm task-driven. I'm all about getting things done and making things perfect. So much so that, if I'm not careful and intentional, it distracts me from sitting at the feet of Jesus. I confess there are times I choose to start my day tackling tasks, rather than spending time with God. There are also days my "to-do's" bombard my quiet time like a cascade of arrows on a battlefield.

\*Who do *you* personally relate to more, Mary or Martha? How does that impact your time with God?

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\*Re-read verse 38. Who opened her home to Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

It's not that Martha wasn't willing and wanting to invite Jesus in. She opened her home to Him. Her problem was her focus. She was distracted and got off track.

\*Which step is more often a stumbling block for you: Making time to spend with Jesus OR your focus during your time with Him? Why do you think that is?

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\*Re-read verse 39.

Mary's actions teach us two things I don't want us to miss:

1. **She sat at the Lord's feet.**

Sitting at someone's feet is more than receiving simple instruction and learning. Yes, that's important. But, this expression also means *"to be in a position of devotion or worship to someone; to pay homage to or be reverential to someone"* (Farlex Dictionary of Idioms). By sitting at Jesus' feet, Mary sought to learn from Him, but she also chose a humble posture. She recognized and revered *Him* as Lord.

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\*When it comes to your quiet and prayer time, what's the posture of your heart? How can having the right posture toward God help?

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## 2. She listened to what He said.

Listening seems so easy. However, it takes intentionality and is a step “task-oriented Martha’s” (such as myself) may easily miss!

\*Do you intentionally listen for God during your quiet and prayer time, or do you do more of the talking? How can listening help?

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\*Re-read verse 40.

When I read this, I personalized the first part, replacing my name with Martha’s and listing what distracts me. Take a moment to do the same.

\*But \_\_\_\_\_ was distracted by \_\_\_\_\_

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Recognizing what keeps us from sitting at the feet of Jesus is helpful. It enables us to take steps to eliminate those distractions. When I read Martha’s words to Jesus in the second part of verse 40, *and listened*, God revealed a new distraction.

During Week One, I shared the story of my difficult labor with my daughter. After two days, it felt like the doctors and nurses had forgotten me and weren’t doing anything to help me. Like Martha, frustration mounted, and I yelled (in my mind), “*Tell them to help me!*” What I failed to recognize in that moment was how I had fixated on man’s help and lost all focus on THE Helper — Jesus. It wasn’t just in this one instance. Upon further reflection, I’ve realized this is a pattern.

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Friend, could your focus on how *people* are or aren't helping you be distracting YOU from seeking help from *Jesus*? Just a thought to ponder...

\*Re-read verse 41. How does being worried and/or upset affect you sitting at Jesus' feet? Is it a distraction that keeps you from Him OR a source that drives you to Him?

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\*Re-read verse 42. Knowing Mary chose to sit at the feet of Jesus, what is the "one thing" Jesus tells Martha (and us) is needed?

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*Jesus*. He is the One and Only thing needed, better than anything else we could choose. The only thing that can't be taken from us. This task-driven gal has slowly come to recognize that all work I could get done pales in comparison to the work our Lord does in our hearts and minds when we humble ourselves at His feet and listen to what He says.

I have a confession, though. The story of Mary and Martha used to bother me. Why would God create task-oriented girls like Martha and me when He seems to prefer "sitting-at-the-feet girls" like Mary? "Task-oriented Martha's," don't miss this! Nowhere does Jesus tell Martha to change *who* she is. Nowhere does it say doing tasks is wrong. Rather, Jesus gently rebukes and encourages Martha to change her priorities. To choose to sit at the feet of Jesus *before and above* doing tasks (and all else).

\*Where do you prioritize spending time with God into your daily activities? What change(s) do you need to make to place time with Him above all else?

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Though Mary and Martha's story is only a small part of Luke's Gospel, if we remember and apply the lessons we've learned, it can make a big impact! To further equip and motivate us to prioritize spending time with God, let's study a few more verses.

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## Blessings/Benefits of Spending Time with God:

- 1 Chronicles 16:11 (NIV) instructs us to, *“Look to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.”*
- Psalm 62:8 (NIV) encourages us to, *“Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.”*
- Our weekly memory verse, Colossians 4:2 (NIV), calls us to, *“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.”*
- And Matthew 6:33 (NIV) even tells us to make time with God our *first* priority: *“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness...”*

Jesus Himself also set the example for us. In all four Gospels (Matthew 14:13, 23; Mark 1:35, 6:45-46, 14:32-34; Luke 4:42, 5:16, 6:12, 9:18 and John 6:15) we see Jesus, over and over again, being intentional to spend quiet time with God and in prayer. But why?

\*Look up and read the verses listed in the charts below. Note next to each the blessings/benefits they reveal can be ours when we spend time with God.

Verses:	Blessings/Benefits of Spending Time in God’s Word:
Joshua 1:8	Learning to do what the Word says; prosperity and success
Psalm 119:9, 11, 105	
Romans 10:17	
Romans 12:2	
2 Timothy 3:16	

Verses:	Blessings/Benefits of Spending Time in Prayer:
Matthew 6:6	Being rewarded by God
Philippians 4:6-7	
Hebrews 4:16	



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Verses:	Blessings/Benefits of Spending Time with God's in General:
Psalms 32:8	Receiving instruction, teaching and counsel from God
Psalms 46:10a	
Psalms 62:1, 91:1	
Psalms 63:6-8	
John 15:5	
James 4:8a	

\*Put a star next to the verses from the charts that personally speak to you most. Circle the benefits/blessings that excite and motivate you.

I find great comfort in knowing that when we draw near to God, He WILL draw near to us. That even through our dark corners, we CAN and WILL bear fruit, if and when we remain in Him. And, that when we remain in thanks and prayer, we CAN have the peace of God to guard our hearts and minds through it all.

*Lord, thank You for drawing near to us and providing Your instructions, teaching and counsel. Thank You that we can rest in and be upheld by You, with Your peace that surpasses all understanding. We praise You for the transformational work You do in us, and for how you renew our minds when we meet with You. We praise You and give You all the glory for the faith and fruit grown, mercy and grace received, and all the rewards, success and prosperity to come. In Jesus' name, amen.*

Before we wrap up our time together, here are three things I don't want you to miss:

- First, Wendy's many helpful tips in Chapter 8 for spending time with God. Highlight or underline your favorites, and then choose a few to implement!
- Second, the "My Quiet Time Declaration" (provided on the next page). Pray this to commit (or recommit) to spending time with God.
- Third, if/when you have additional time, don't miss the bonus lesson below to practice and personalize the different types of prayer Wendy teaches in Chapter 9.

It's been an honor and blessing to be a part of this journey with you!

Kat

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## My Quiet Time Declaration

Lord,

I, \_\_\_\_\_, commit to spend \_\_\_\_\_ mins/hrs with You daily.  
(name)

I commit to spend my time with you at \_\_\_\_\_ a.m./p.m. in my \_\_\_\_\_.  
(place)

During my time with You, I commit to doing the following:

(pray, listen, read/study the Bible, journal, read devotions, memorize Scripture, etc.)

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

When something out of my control causes me to miss that scheduled time with You, I commit to spending at least \_\_\_\_\_ minutes with You sometime before I go to bed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

*“Lord, please draw me to Your Word daily. Your Word says that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Father, as I commit to spend time with You, help me to hear Your voice. I commit my thoughts to You and ask that You would fill me with Your Truth as I seek You each day. Help me to tune out anything that conflicts with the Truth You desire to speak to me. Give me ears to hear and let Your Word dwell in me richly. Give me discernment to understand all You have to say to me. I ask this in the name of Your Son, Jesus. Amen.”*

(prayer by Wendy Blight in *Hidden Joy in a Dark Corner*)



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## Practicing Prayer - Week 5 Bonus Lesson

In Chapter 9 of *Hidden Joy in a Dark Corner*, Wendy Blight shares **four forms of prayer**. Let's recap, reflect on and practice those! But first, let's start with this prayer by Wendy:

*"Heavenly Father, I praise You as the source of all Truth, as the author and Perfecter of my faith. Thank You for creating me to be in relationship with You. Thank You that You desire for me to come before You in prayer. I commit to deepen my times of prayer with You. Please meet me every time I open my heart to receive all You have to offer me. Bring the fullness of Your Spirit into my prayer time with You. Let me sense the power of Your presence. Show me that You are active and listening. I claim Your promise that when I draw near to You, You will draw near to me. May I be different because of the time I spend with You. Change me as a woman, as a wife, as a mother, as a friend, and as Your servant. Make me a blessing to all those for whom I pray. May I draw others to You because of what You are going to do through me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."*

### Prayers of Desperation:

Wendy describes prayers of desperation as ones we pray *"in our darkest moments ... as we walk through a difficult or painful situation."* Here are two examples for your reference:

- *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* (Jesus in Matthew 27:46 NIV)
- *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?"* (David in Psalm 22:1 NIV)

Though I didn't know it at the time I prayed it, my prayer I shared with you in the beginning of this companion is this type of prayer. Before that day, I only allowed my desperation to seep out in ugly bursts of anger. When I finally released my desperation to God, it became a powerful turning point!

\*Have you ever prayed a prayer of desperation? If so, what impact did it have on you and/or your situation? If not, is there a prayer of desperation yearning to be released? What's holding you back? Write your thoughts and/or a prayer of desperation below.

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## Prayers of Confession:

In prayers of confession, Wendy teaches “we ask for God’s mercy, grace and forgiveness.” She also reminds us “real confession”:

- “Springs from a repentant heart”
- “Requires that we confront our sin”
- “Cleanses us from the eternal effects of sin” (1 John 1:9)

David gives us a great example of this type of prayer in Psalm 51:1-2 (NLT): “Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin.”

\*Is there a place where you need God’s forgiveness and cleansing? If so, spend time in reflection and confession, recording your thoughts and/or prayer below.

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## Breath Prayers:

Breath prayers are great because we can speak them in one breath. As Wendy says, it is “a short prayer, usually one sentence that you can repeat throughout your day.” I love breath prayers because they’re simple to memorize and keep repeating! They help us to “pray continually” as 1 Thessalonians 5:17 NIV instructs.

After reading Chapter 9 of *Hidden Joy*, I started praying four breath prayers:

- When I’m tempted to turn to food or something else besides God, I pray: “You will not let me be tempted beyond what I can bear” (1 Corinthians 10:13 NIV) And: “I can do all this through Him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13 NIV).
- When my residual, wrong thought patterns return to plague me and keep me from living in joy, I pray: “This is the day the LORD has made. I will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118:24 NLT).
- When I need reminding to look to God in the everyday interactions in my marriage, I pray: “A cord of three strands is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12 NIV).

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\*Write a breath prayer of your own, following these steps:

1. Identify an area in your life that's a temptation, need, struggle or praise.
2. Find verses on that topic by using the concordance of your Bible or Google.
3. Choose a verse that most speaks to you and use it to write your breath prayer.
4. Place your verse where you'll see it often and be reminded to pray.
5. Pray it for a week or more and see what God does!

\*My temptation, need, struggle or praise: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Verses on the topic: \_\_\_\_\_

\*My breath prayer: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Intercessory Prayer:

Like Wendy writes in *Hidden Joy*, intercessory prayers are when “we invite God to work in and through us to affect the lives of those around us.” She also reminds us of the powerful weapon we have in God’s Word by saying, “The key to any prayer, especially intercessory prayer, is praying the Scriptures.”

Jesus gives us the perfect example of how to pray Scripture when He’s tempted by Satan in the wilderness and replies: “Get out of here, Satan ... For the Scriptures say, ‘You must worship the LORD your God and serve only him’” (Matthew 4:10 NLT).

\*Who comes to mind that you can stand in the gap for through prayer?

\_\_\_\_\_

\*What topic(s) do you feel led to pray for them?

\_\_\_\_\_

\*Based on those topics, use your Bible concordance to find verses you can pray for them.

\_\_\_\_\_

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\*Use the Scriptures you found to write a prayer for that person, then continue to keep them in your prayers for the next week (or longer) and see what God does. If examples would be helpful, check out pages 140-143 of *Hidden Joy*.

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As we wrap up, let's circle back to our weekly memory verse, Colossians 4:2: "*Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.*"

\*What three instructions does Paul give us regarding prayer?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

As you head into the rest of your week and beyond, devoting yourself to the four types of prayer, will you also devote yourself to being watchful and thankful for how God responds? I encourage you to come back and record your praises for how God's worked. May many prayers and praises continue to be raised!

\*How God has worked through these prayers:

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