

# hidden joy in a dark corner

BY WENDY BLIGHT

## Week Six

**Bible Study Companion Leader:** Stacy J. Lowe



Hi, friend!

Throughout these past weeks, we've talked about healing from dark times, both past and present. We've done the nitty-gritty hard work of digging in and pushing through. This week, I want us to focus on the *why* behind it.

No better place to begin than our memory verse for this week, Ephesians 2:10 NIV:

*"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*

Write your name in the blank below, then read the sentence out loud:

For I, \_\_\_\_\_, am God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for *me* to do!

Did you read it out loud? I hope so, because believe it or not, it's true!

Because this is the point at which a lot of people get stuck, before moving forward, read Proverbs 3:5. List two things Solomon instructs us to do.

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Read the following Scriptures:

Proverbs 28:26

Jeremiah 17:9

What do these passages teach about our own wisdom?

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THIS is why we can't lean on our own understanding!

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Now, see what *these* Scriptures have to say about wisdom:

Proverbs 2:6

1 Corinthians 1:25

James 3:17

What do these passages teach us about GOD'S wisdom?

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Isaiah 40:28 ESV says this:

*Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LoRD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.*

God created the heavens and the earth, and He created you and me. Not only did He *create* us, Paul's words in Ephesians 2:10 tell us we were created *on purpose* with a plan to do *good* in this world! While we may not see how He could possibly use us, God says it's so, and His ways and understanding are far beyond our own!

## Using Our Gifts for Him

In Chapter 10 of *Hidden Joy*, Wendy says:

*"Our calling is simply God's invitation to use our gifts and talents to His glory."*

This is an idea I struggle with. When I look at others, I see the good; when I look at myself, I see the flaws. I decide I don't measure up, my weaknesses too big to overcome.

One of my favorite things about the Bible, though, is that God didn't fill it with stories of people who had it all together and did everything right. Instead, it's filled with people just like you and me! Let's take a look at a few.

# hidden joy in a dark corner

BY WENDY BLIGHT

Look up the passages below. Determine and share what could have disqualified each person from being used by God. I'll get you started.

NAME	SCRIPTURE	SHORTCOMING
Abraham	Genesis 17:17	Too old
Moses	Exodus 2:11-12 Exodus 4:10 Exodus 6:12	Murdered an Egyptian, struggled to speak clearly
Rahab	Joshua 2:1	
David	2 Samuel 11:2-27	
Jonah	Jonah 1:1-3	
Peter	Matthew 26:69-75	
Paul (Saul)	Acts 7:54-8:3 Acts 9:1-2	
Timothy	1 Timothy 4:11-12	

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Can you relate to any? Looking at your own life, what do you think hinders *you* from being used by God?

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I envy people who light up the room and make friends everywhere they go. Meanwhile, as an introvert, I cringe at the thought of making small talk and am perfectly content to stay home and read a book. I compare myself to others and think, *What good can there be here? How can God possibly use ME?*

How do those things you view as hindrances make *you* feel?

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Let's go back to the chart we filled in above. Each person had flaws. Each had weaknesses. But that didn't stop God.

Using the Scriptures provided, share below how God used each of them, **DESPITE** their flaws and imperfections.

**Abraham** was too old, BUT GOD (Genesis 15:5, 21:1-5)

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BY WENDY BLIGHT

**Moses** was a murderer who struggled with his words, BUT GOD (Exodus 14:15-31, 24:12-18)

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**Rahab** was a prostitute, BUT GOD (Joshua 2:1-24)

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**David** was a liar, an adulterer, and a murderer, BUT GOD (2 Samuel 12:13-25; 1 Kings 3:3-14; Matthew 1:1)

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**Jonah** ran away from God's calling, BUT GOD (Jonah 3:3-10)

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BY WENDY BLIGHT

**Peter** denied knowing Jesus, BUT GOD (Acts 2:14-41)

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**Paul** (Saul) persecuted and killed Christians, BUT GOD (Acts 9:3-22)

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(God also used him to write much of the New Testament, including this week's memory verse!)

**Timothy** was young, BUT GOD (1 Timothy 6:11-14)

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I may look for a quiet corner in a crowd, BUT GOD has used those quiet corners to bring about conversations that never could have happened had I been flitting from person to person. Conversations that bring Him glory and serve to uplift others.

God has used you, too! Fill in below with your own example.

I may be/have \_\_\_\_\_, BUT GOD

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## When We're Afraid to Move Forward

I've been a writer all my life, but I rarely felt comfortable sharing my words and ideas with others. Five years ago, God led me to apply as a blog writer for Proverbs 31 Online Bible Studies. I was nervous, but I moved forward in obedience, completed the application project, and was shocked to be selected.

Submitting that first blog post intimidated me, but I survived the editing phase, and God has grown me through this process. I still get nervous, but I write with confidence now because I write the words God has given me.

Writing is one thing; speaking is another. I've always shied away from praying in front of others, from using my words to verbally teach and lead. Just the thought of it turned my stomach.

A few years ago at the P31 She Speaks Conference, as I was running out the door, my roommate (who I had just met) suddenly asked, "What is God calling you to do?"

I stopped dead in my tracks. I'm not sure which of us was more surprised when the tears began to flow. "Well," I said, "I've always enjoyed writing, but I can't help but feel God is asking me to use my words to speak."

I had never shared that with anyone. I had never even allowed myself to acknowledge it until that moment. Knowing I needed to figure this out, I went down to the Prayer Room, grabbed a notecard, and wrote a prayer to God.

I confessed I didn't like to speak, and I didn't WANT to speak. (In fact, I told Him that several times, in case He didn't already know and had somehow missed the first time I said it.) "But God," I wrote, "I can't get away from the feeling that this is what You're asking me to do. And if You are, my answer is ..."

I stopped right there. I didn't want to write it if I didn't really mean it. I thought about it, took a few deep breaths, then finished it off with a shaky *yes*.

Of all the words I've written in my life, those four are among the scariest: *My answer is yes*.

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What is that *thing* God is asking you to do that scares you?

Are you ready to tell Him those same four words? Use the space provided and write out your own prayer of surrender to the calling God has for you, even if you don't understand the how or why.



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In the days following my *yes* to God, He filled me with a *desire* to speak (which is *still* crazy to me). However, the nerves were still there. Soon after, God placed 2 Corinthians across my path. It's where Paul, even after giving his life to Christ, still struggled with what he called "a thorn in (his) flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7 NIV). While we don't know with certainty what that thorn was, we *do* know he asked God to take it away.

Read 2 Corinthians 12:8-10. What was God's answer to Paul's request?

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What was Paul's response to God's words?

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Suddenly those words of Scripture came alive like never before. I realized I didn't need God to *change* me in order to *use* me. Sure, He could take away the nerves and the fear that come along with speaking, but if He does, would I then rely on my own strength? By God NOT taking away my fear, my "thorn in my flesh," I can *only* operate in His grace.

Those who know me well know I don't have a natural bent to speak, so when I do, it can ONLY be because of God. HE gets all the glory, not ME, and that's exactly as it *should* be!

## The Battle Isn't Ours

Before we end today, let's go back to David before he became king of Israel. In 1 Samuel, we learn about the Philistine, Goliath. Twice a day for 40 days, he taunted the Israelites to choose a man to face him in battle. His giant nine-foot frame terrified the Israelites. David, at the time a young shepherd boy, finally had enough of Goliath's taunts.

Read 1 Samuel 17:32-50 to discover what happened next.

Fill in the next phrase from verse 47 (NIV): "All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; \_\_\_\_\_."

Just as that battle was the Lord's, so, too, is *this* for you, whatever *this* might be for you.

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## Saying Yes to Grace

During a recent visit to a wave pool at a local water park, I noticed two young girls playing. One was eagerly anticipating the coming waves; the other was trembling with fear. The first girl looked at her friend and said, "Release your fears, and just ride the waves!" Moments later, I saw the two of them dive straight in, allowing themselves to be swept forward in the oncoming swells.

THIS is what I envision God asking us to do: Release our fears and just *ride the waves of His grace* into the calling He has for us!

Let's do one last fill-in here. I'll go first:

I may be uncomfortable in a crowd, but I am *not* disqualified from His grace! I will still be used by God!

Your turn!

I may be \_\_\_\_\_, but I am *not* disqualified from His grace!  
I will still be used by God!

*Father God, thank You for the examples You've given in the Bible of real people with real flaws and shortcomings that You have chosen to use. Thank You that we can be listed among those as well. We say YES to Your grace! Everything about us that we think are hindrances, we give to You now. Turn them into something beautiful that could ONLY come from You. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Cheering you on,  
Stacy