



# HIDDEN POTENTIAL

*Bible Study Companion*



ONLINE  
BIBLE  
STUDIES

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

# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*



Hey Bible Study Sisters,

Welcome to the Hidden Potential Bible Study Companion! Our team created, designed and wrote this with YOU in mind. You'll spend the next four weeks with three of my favorite Bible teachers: Stacy, Nichole and Trish, who have invested hours researching and studying the biblical truths our author, Wendy Pope, sets forth in her book.

Their heart is to guide you deeper into the Scripture and give you practical tools to apply what you've learned. Because, as we say at Proverbs 31, when we know the Truth and live the Truth, it changes everything.

Their passion for teaching comes through in every lesson, and I couldn't be more excited for you to learn from them.

Before we begin, here are a few tips to help make this Bible Study Companion work for you.

1. Pull out your calendar — Determine your best time to dig into the BSC lesson and then commit to that time each week.
2. Find a designated space — Knowing where you'll study helps set you up for success. Is it your kitchen table? Curled up in your bed? Or maybe at your desk (work or home ... or maybe it's one and the same right now)?
3. Come prepared — Have all your supplies ready. Pens and Highlighters? Check. Notebook? Check. Bible? Check. Cup of coffee or bottle of water? Check.
4. Open each study time with prayer — Please know we prayed over the lessons coming your way ... for God to meet you in the pages of each one. So, as you pray, God the Father will tender and prepare your heart to receive everything God the Holy Spirit has for you as you meet God the Son in His Word.

We're excited to see the revelations God has in store for you specifically and can't wait to join you on this journey. So, without further ado, let's dive into Lesson 1 together.

Take it away, Stacy!

With love and prayers,

Wendy

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## Lesson 1

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



Hi, friend! Thank you for joining me here on the Bible Study Companion today!

Say it with me now: *God has a plan for my life.* Do you believe that? I hope so, because it's true! He's not the only one with a plan, though.

Beginning at the bottom of page 62 of *Hidden Potential*, author Wendy Pope says this:

*"... the enemy has a plan for your life too (Eph. 6:11), and you can be certain it doesn't include revealing your potential or helping you live out your calling. No, the prince of darkness wants us to stay depressed, oppressed, and stuck in the past, completely ignoring that we are a worthwhile possibility and useful to the kingdom of God."*

In other words, y'all? We have an enemy skilled in the art of spiritual warfare. Even worse? We're his target.

But God doesn't leave us to fend for ourselves. In our time together today, we'll dig in deep to learn not only about spiritual warfare, but also about the tools God has given us to fight back and win!

Are you ready? Let's go!

### **Spiritual Warfare - What it ISN'T**

Before we dive into talking about what spiritual warfare is, I think it's important to first take note of a few things it *isn't*.

- Spiritual warfare is NOT an excuse to sin.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. For every temptation, what does God provide?

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That whole, "The devil made me do it"? Nope. We get to choose our own actions.

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- Spiritual warfare is NOT responsible for every single thing that goes wrong.

If nothing is going your way today, could it be the result of spiritual warfare? Possibly. Could it just be a bad day? Likely. We live in a fallen world where things *won't* always go perfectly. (John 16:33) Let's not give our enemy any more power by blaming him for *everything* that goes wrong in our lives.

- Spiritual warfare is NOT us against other people, no matter how it may feel.

Read Ephesians 6:12. Who does Paul say our struggle is against?

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Who is it NOT against?

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While Satan may use people as agents of warfare, *the ultimate battle is not against our fellow man*. It never has been and never will be. Our battle is against Satan and his powers of darkness.

## Spiritual Warfare - What it IS

- Spiritual warfare IS real and to be expected.

To what does Peter compare the devil in 1 Peter 5:8?

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What three things does John 10:10 tell us are the enemy's purposes?

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- Spiritual warfare IS something we need to be aware of.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:5-6. How does this passage (along with 1 Peter 5:8) describe what our state of mind should be?

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We're not meant to operate in a state of perpetual fear, but we ARE meant to be alert and pay attention to what's going on around us.

- Spiritual warfare IS something we can overcome.

Romans 8:31-39 is one of my favorite passages of Scripture. Give it a read, and I think you'll see why!

Copy verse 37 below.

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The original Greek used here includes the word “*hypernikaó*,” which is really two words put together: “*hyper*” (more than) and “*nikao*” (conqueror, also where the brand name Nike comes from). This particular combination of words appears just this one time in Scripture and carries with it an awesome promise: We're not just conquerors; we are *more* than conquerors!

It's important to note, though, that we don't achieve this on our own. The last part of that verse is critically important:

*“We are more than conquerors **through him who loved us**” (NIV, emphasis added).*

Who is the “him” referred to here? Jesus Christ Himself!

What it boils down to is this:

God has a plan, and Satan has a plan. Spiritual warfare is a battle waged in the unseen world by Satan and his powers of darkness against the plans of God, and against us as God's children. But since we are MORE than conquerors through Jesus Christ, we have weapons at our disposal to fight back!

## Equipping for Battle

We're going to park in Ephesians 6:10-20 for the remainder of today's lesson. Go ahead and give it a read in its entirety, then we'll break it down a little at a time together.

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Let's first start with the why. What reason does Paul give in Ephesians 6:11 as to *why* we need the armor of God?

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This is important, y'all! *The devil is scheming against us.* All that potential we have? He (the enemy) will do whatever he can to keep it locked inside of us, lest we become movers and shakers for the Kingdom of God. This means we need to gird ourselves up for battle! Here in Scripture, Paul teaches us about seven pieces of armor to help us do just that.

Our armor consists of:

1. the belt of truth
2. the breastplate of righteousness
3. the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace
4. the shield of faith
5. the helmet of salvation
6. the sword of the Spirit
7. prayer

We'll go through each piece, one-by-one. At the end of each section, use the space provided to process what you're learning, journal your thoughts, and put the meaning of that piece of armor in your own words.

## **The Belt of Truth**

*"Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist ..." Ephesians 6:14 (NIV)*

While we may think of a belt as a fashion accessory, in biblical times, the belt was a crucial part of a Roman soldier's uniform. The belt is where the soldier attached the sheath (called the scabbard) of his sword. He also attached strips of armor to protect his lower body. Should the belt be missing, or put on incorrectly, it leaves the soldier exposed and his life at risk.

Paul says *truth* is to be our belt. But, we live in a world where "truth" is subjective and differs depending on who you ask. So, how do we determine what is true?

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Read Psalm 33:4, John 14:6, and 1 John 5:20. How do these verses define *truth*?

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Let's look at one more passage, John 8:31-32. From where does this tell us truth comes?

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It doesn't matter what the world around us tries to claim as truth. Truth comes from God and God alone, and we learn that truth by studying His Word, the Bible. Like a Roman soldier's belt, the Truth of God is meant to both encircle us and protect us.

*What the belt of truth means to me:*

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## **The Breastplate of Righteousness**

*"... with the breastplate of righteousness in place." Ephesians 6:14 (NIV)*

The breastplate was a metal covering a Roman soldier strapped around his chest. It consisted of two parts, covering both the front and back of his chest, protecting the soldier's vital organs from unexpected blows by the enemy.

Our breastplate is made of righteousness. Righteousness is defined by Google as "the quality of being morally right or justifiable."

Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. How does Paul say we can know what is morally right?

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Biblically, righteousness is the perfect holiness of Christ and comes from God alone. It means to be in right standing with God. It's important to note here, though, that it's the breastplate of *righteousness*, not *self-righteousness* we're after. God's Word teaches and instructs us in what is holy and right, but we can't do this on our own. Read Romans 3:9-20 for proof of that.

So, if we're meant to be covered in righteousness by living out the perfect Word of God, but we can't do it on our own, how can we ever become righteous? Romans 3:21-26 provides the answer.

How does Paul say we can obtain righteousness?

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Let's summarize what we've learned about righteousness. No matter how much we try to live up to God's holy standard, we will never do it on our own. God knew that long before we were ever born, so He made a way for us through Jesus Christ. We're not perfect, but if we've placed our faith in Him, we don't have to be, because Jesus has placed *His* righteousness upon *us*. *That* righteousness is meant to be a part of our armor, protecting us from any unexpected blows from the enemy. Praise God!

*What the breastplate of righteousness means to me:*

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## **The Readiness that Comes from the Gospel of Peace**

*"... and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace."  
Ephesians 6:15 (NIV)*

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Have you ever stepped on a rock or a piece of glass barefooted? It hurts! Our feet need protection as they carry us from place to place. This was even more important for a Roman soldier whose main mode of travel was by foot. He needed a solid and firm foundation to support him wherever his feet carried him.

Our solid and firm foundation? The gospel of peace. The good news of Jesus Christ and the coming Kingdom of God. We can walk into any battle unafraid because we carry within us the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection. We have His peace indwelling us. Centering us. No matter what the enemy brings, God has it all under His control. His peace is over us, in us and with us.

In Mark 16:15, Jesus, following His resurrection, gave final instructions to His disciples before ascending up to heaven. Copy His instructions below.

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What two things did He tell them to do? GO and PREACH.

We aren't meant to keep the hope of Jesus to ourselves! As our feet carry us from place to place, we should be invading the darkness around us, sharing with others the good news of Jesus. (1 Peter 3:13-17)

*What the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace means to me:*

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## **The Shield of Faith**

*"In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one." Ephesians 6:16 (NIV)*

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The most vital piece of equipment for a Roman soldier was his shield. It consisted of sheets of wood glued together, then covered in material such as canvas and leather. The soldier held his shield over his body to deflect the oncoming arrows of the enemy. Some scholars believe these shields were as large as a door. The enemy's arrows, though shot from all over, weren't intended to kill, but rather to distract and panic their target.

Have you ever been distracted or panicked by what was going on around or within you? Heard whispers in your mind telling you you're no good, you're not worth it, you'll forever be a failure? Have you experienced fear in moving forward? This is exactly why we need our shield of faith.

Hebrews 11:1 gives us a definition of faith:

*"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see" (NIV).*

Romans 10:17 adds this:

*"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ" (NIV).*

What do those verses mean to you? How would you now define faith?

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Remember, a shield by our side is useless. As Paul says, we are to *take it up*. We are to carry it confidently, knowing a strong faith protects us from head to toe. Not a single part of our bodies is left exposed. With the firm knowledge of who and what we are in Jesus Christ acting as our shield, the enemy's flaming arrows don't stand a chance against us!

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*What the shield of faith means to me:*

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## **The Helmet of Salvation**

*“Take the helmet of salvation ...” Ephesians 6:17 (NIV)*

Can you imagine a Roman soldier going into battle without a helmet? He would be foolhardy to do so. The helmet, for him, was a necessity to protect his head and mind. So it is for us as well. Without our helmet of salvation firmly affixed on our heads, we leave our minds exposed out on the battlefield.

Have you ever faced discouragement in your walk with Christ? How did it affect you physically, spiritually and mentally?

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Proverbs 17:22 (NLT) says this:

*“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person’s strength.”*

Has a broken spirit ever sapped your strength? Not much Kingdom work happens in our broken places. Why? Because Satan prowls, watches and waits for us to walk into them. Once there, he pounces on and paralyzes us, wanting to keep us broken and discouraged. That’s why taking our helmet of salvation is a must! We do that by continually refreshing our mind by spending time in God’s Word. We pray about everything. We remind ourselves of who and whose we are and who has the ultimate victory —Jesus!

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Let's summarize before we move on. Our helmet of salvation is the knowledge that because of our faith in Jesus Christ, we are God's children, saved not just for now, but for all eternity. No matter what today may look like, no matter how much discouragement Satan tries to throw our way, our identity never changes. We are *accepted* ([Romans 15:7](#)), *free* ([Romans 6:6](#)), *forgiven* and *redeemed* ([Colossians 1:13-14](#)). We *belong to God* ([1 Corinthians 3:23](#)). We are *His daughters* ([1 John 3:1](#)), *bought at a very high price* ([1 Corinthians 6:19-20](#)). As [Psalm 30:5](#) reminds us, joy is *always* on the horizon!

*What the helmet of salvation means to me:*

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## **The Sword of the Spirit**

*"... and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Ephesians 6:17 (NIV)*

Much of the Roman soldier's armor was about defense and protecting himself. His sword, however, allowed him to go on the offense and lead a charge against the enemy.

Our sword? It tells us right there in Scripture: It's the very Word of God.

Read Hebrews 4:12. What does the author teach about the power of the Word of God?

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The Word of God is LIVING, not a relic from days gone by. It is ACTIVE, productive and effective in our lives even today. It is SHARPER and cuts straight to the heart. It is PENETRATING and goes to even those places we try to hide.

I imagine this is what Paul is describing in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5:

*“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (NIV).*

Can you picture the scene? Strongholds, lies, arguments, and wrong thinking, one after another, slashed down and destroyed by the sword of the Spirit. *This* is the sword Paul instructs us to clutch tightly in our fists.

*What the sword of the Spirit means to me:*

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## One Last Piece - Prayer

Phew! That’s quite the arsenal, y’all! But there’s one important piece of the puzzle still missing. Let’s go back up a bit, to Ephesians 6:10:

*“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power” (NIV).*

This part can’t be overlooked. In fact, it’s crucial to the effectiveness of the piece of armor described next in Scripture.

What does it mean to “*be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power*”?

It means no matter how well-equipped we are, we can’t go into battle depending on ourselves for the victory. We can’t go in full of head knowledge alone. It’s not enough. It takes *heart* knowledge and reliance on our strong and mighty Savior. It takes a real relational experience with Him if we ever want to stand a chance.

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Matthew 4:1-11 paints a very real picture of why head knowledge doesn't account for much.

What do you see happening in this passage? (Hint: Pay attention to who is involved and the conversation that takes place.)

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You see, even Satan can quote Scripture. Not only that, but 2 Corinthians 11:14 (NIV) tells us *"Satan disguises himself as an angel of light."*

This isn't fun and games here, friend. As you can see, there's a lot on the line with a very real enemy facing us down. When Satan quoted God's Word to Jesus in the wilderness, Jesus fought *back* with God's Word, something we can also do! As we go into battle against Satan, we need to be studied up, **prayed up** and reliant on our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Prayer. Praying God's Word back to Him. This is our last piece of armor ... the glue that holds it all together.

## Putting Prayer into Practice

Ephesians 6:18a (NIV) says:

*"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests."*

Wendy Blight has written a [prayer](#) putting on each piece of armor, one at a time. I invite you to read it, pray through it, and make it your own.

Remember, while spiritual warfare is very real and something we should take seriously, we don't fight alone. When Satan comes after us, in whatever capacity we're working, serving, leading or praying, we have God on our side. He created us *on purpose with a purpose*. We each have a job to do for His Kingdom, and it's an important one. One that Satan cannot thwart and God will defend!

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As Paul reminds us in Ephesians 2:10 (NLT):

*“... we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”*

Purpose and potential. That’s something worth fighting for, wouldn’t you agree?

Let’s put on our armor and ready ourselves for battle!

Stacy

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## Lesson 2

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



Hi there! So thankful you're back for another week!

As we spend time talking about our potential and the ways God calls it out of us, there's an important piece we can't overlook — the battle in our minds.

This internal battle may not seem as important as the external battles we face, but let's consider Matthew 22:36-40:

*"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"*

*"Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (NIV).*

Jesus said we are to love God with every part of who we are, *including* our minds.

Now read Romans 8:6. What two things govern or control our minds, and what are the results of each?

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Circle which of the two results you want for yourself.

I suspect we all circled the same thing. Knowing that, let's spend some time today pondering our thoughts and learning what it means to have a Spirit-controlled mind. As we engage in this process, I invite you to find a quiet place to study. Put down the phone, silence Facebook and any other distractions, and *really* lean in to our discussion.

When you're ready, let's begin!

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## Focusing In

Let's start with a quick experiment. Hold your hand in front of you, index finger pointed up, and study your fingertip. While focusing on your finger, notice your surroundings. Now switch your focus from your finger to what lies beyond it. Take note of how your finger now looks.

Did you see a difference as you changed your focal point? What does this experiment teach you about focus?

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Here's what it shows me: What we focus on also determines what we *don't* focus on.

As it applies to our minds and the things we think about:

If we focus on *fear*, we can't focus on *peace*.  
If we focus on *anger*, we can't focus on *love*.  
If we focus on *despair*, we can't focus on *joy*.

See where I'm going with this?

Luckily, the book of Hebrews tells us *exactly* where our focus needs to be:

*"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, **fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (Hebrews 12:1-3, NIV, emphasis added).*

We are to *fix our eyes on Jesus*. And why do we do this? So we don't "grow weary and lose heart."

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Friend, if there's one thing these past few months of struggle have taught me, it's how easy it is to "grow weary and lose heart," how quickly our thoughts can turn and get sucked into the negativity and despair that's around us. We're not alone in this either.

Read Matthew 14:22-31.

What happened when Peter first stepped out of the boat?

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Pretty cool, right? Then comes verse 30, which in most translations begins with the word "but." That word indicates change is coming.

When Peter was in the boat, the winds were high and the seas were rough. When he began walking on water, the winds were high and the seas were rough. When he started to sink beneath the waves, the winds were high and the seas were rough. Nowhere in this brief passage of time does it indicate Peter's *surroundings* changed.

So, if his situation didn't change, what did? What was the catalyst in verse 30 that caused Peter to go from walking on the water to sinking beneath it?

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He began focusing on the wrong thing. When his eyes were fixed on Jesus, he was fine. It was only when he switched his focus to the situation surrounding him that he began to flounder.

While you and I have never walked on water, can you relate to Peter's experience? How?

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## Fixing Our Eyes

Peter had Jesus in the flesh to focus on, but we don't, so what does it mean for *us* to fix our eyes on Him? It means to focus not just on the person and deity of Jesus, but also to those things He stands for. Those things He lived and died and rose again for.

In Philippians 4:8, Paul tells us:

*"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things" (NIV).*

*Fix your eyes and your mind* on such things.

I'll admit, I'm not always the best at this. I tend to overthink and worry. If jumping to the worst possible conclusion were an Olympic event, I'd win the gold medal for sure! But those kinds of thoughts don't bring me peace, nor do they honor God. Those thoughts are what I like to call "peace thieves."

What are some of your peace thieves? (Example: worry, fear, anxiety, anger, etc.)

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Hold on to that list, because we're going to come back to it in a bit!

In the meantime, does what we're learning mean we're to take a Pollyanna, "everything is perfect," view of life? Not at all! Life is full of real situations of which we need to take stock and be aware.

This is highlighted in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. In these verses, King Solomon tells us that there is a time for *everything*, including weeping and mourning, tearing down and uprooting (NIV). It's important to note, though: How long does Ecclesiastes 3:1 tell us these things are to last?

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A *season*, y'all, NOT a lifetime.

Even during those difficult seasons, there's a difference between fretting over something, and acknowledging what's real while keeping our focus on the One still in charge of it all.

Paul understood this. In fact, after telling us what we should think on in Philippians 4:8, just a few verses later, he lets us in on his secret for contentment.

What secret does Paul share in Philippians 4:12-13?

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The "him" referred to in this passage is Jesus Christ. Again, Scripture directs us to *fix our eyes on Jesus*.

Below you'll find a few more verses that relate to our teaching today. Look up each verse and fill in the space next to it with what that passage teaches.

PASSAGE	WHAT IT TEACHES
Ephesians 4:22-24	
Colossians 3:2-3	
James 1:13-15	
1 Peter 1:13	



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Scripture is clear — the way we think matters!

## Winning the Battle of our Minds

Head knowledge is great, but I don't want our lesson to end there. I want us to get into some real nitty gritty practical application. Sound good?

In 2 Corinthians 10:5, Paul says this:

*"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (NIV).*

The way I see it, there are three main steps to taking captive our thoughts and winning this battle of who or what controls our minds. We have to **identify**, **examine**, then **remove and replace** our wrong patterns of thinking.

### Step 1: Identify

To change the way we think, we first have to recognize our wrong thoughts, our stinkin' thinkin' if you will. This means instead of allowing our thoughts to run amok, we must actively monitor those thoughts, taking action when needed.

I've heard this process compared to a TSA agent at the airport. These agents don't let just anyone through security. At the first sign of trouble or suspicion, they stop and pull the person out of line. We need to be just as proactive in identifying and pulling aside those "peace thieves" that invade our thoughts.

### Step 2: Examine

While we can't always control the thoughts that come to mind, we CAN control what we do with them when they arrive..

Once we've identified something that doesn't belong, rather than just ignore it, we need to examine it. Why? Because until the roots are gone, the weeds will continue to sprout back up.

Here's what I mean...

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Suppose my friend tells me she received a promotion at work. Outwardly, I'm smiling, but inwardly, I'm upset, and negative thoughts race through my mind.

I could stop that line of thinking then and there, which wouldn't be bad at all ... except what happens the *next* time a friend receives good news? Did I rid my thoughts of that envy? Or will I be right back where I started?

Instead of simply identifying wrong thinking, we need to pray and ask for God's help to trace those thoughts back to their source. It could be a passing thought that can quickly be dismissed. Or, it could be the real problem in this scenario isn't envy at all, but rather insecurity about *my own* job.

## **Step 3: Remove and Replace**

Now that we've identified wrong thinking and determined its source, it's time to revoke its entrance. This may go against the grain of the "everything you think and feel is okay" culture around us, but we have to be ruthless in its elimination.

Refusing to dwell on a wrong thought isn't enough on its own, though, because our minds are constantly flooded with new thoughts and ideas. Getting rid of one thought simply makes way for another. Instead of leaving that next thought up to chance, we'd be better served by countering that wrong thought with *truth* from the Word of God.

## **Walking It Out**

Using my scenario of struggling with a friend's good news, here's what it looks like to walk through these steps:

Identify:

My friend tells me she received a promotion at work. I congratulate her, but internally I hear, "*Must be nice to be her. She gets everything she wants.*" These thoughts aren't leading to peace, something I take note of.

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Examine:

She's my friend, who I care about deeply. I should feel happy for her and celebrate her success, so why am I feeling this way? What would cause me to think so poorly towards her?

After praying about it, I realize I feel this way because someone noticed her good work. I feel like no one notices mine, even though I work hard. I want to be noticed, too!

Remove and Replace:

I refuse to think poorly about my friend. Her success does not take away from mine in the slightest. Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV) says, *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."*

*That's* what I need to remember. I'm working for the Lord and He sees *everything* I do, whether anyone else notices or not. Thank You, Lord, that I get to work for *You*. Thank You for always noticing me.

See how it works? I invite you to practice walking through these steps, either here in the space below or in your journal.

There's also a cheat sheet on the next page listing some common peace thieves and a space to insert truths from Scripture to counter them. I've filled out the first space to get you started. Feel free to further personalize that entry and then complete the rest of the chart. I've left the last row completely blank for you to add any other peace thief you may struggle with.

*HINT: One great way to find these truths is to do a Google search using the following search terms, "Bible verses for when I feel (insert feeling here)." You can find all kinds of applicable scriptures this way!*

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## IDENTIFY:

What wrong thought/thought pattern are you noticing?

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## EXAMINE:

Why are these thoughts coming to mind? Is there a root cause? If so, what could it be? Ask for God to help you see this clearly.

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## REMOVE AND REPLACE:

What truth(s) of God can you replace this wrong thought with?

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# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

WHEN MY THOUGHTS ARE FILLED WITH...	I'LL REMEMBER...	AND I'LL REPLACE THOSE THOUGHTS WITH...
Anger	Psalm 37:8, Proverbs 14:17, Proverbs 14:29, Ephesians 4:26-27, James 1:19-20	<i>Human anger doesn't produce righteousness, so I choose to let it go and trust, leaving this situation in Your hands, Lord.</i>
Worry/Anxiety		
Fear		
Envy		
Unworthiness		

# HIDDEN POTENTIAL by Wendy Pope

## One and Done?

It would be great if going through this process one time would banish our peace thieves once and for all, but that's not how it works. Until we get to heaven, this will be a continual battle we face.

In Romans 12:2, Paul says this:

*“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (NIV).*

That word “renewing” is active. It’s something that’s done again and again. The good news is the more we do this, the more natural it’ll come. Even better, we can take preventative measures!

Because our minds constantly soak in what’s around them, for good or for bad, our choices will influence how we think. While separating ourselves from all forms of negativity is both impractical and impossible, there are some things we *can* do.

For instance, is there someone on your social media feed whose posts continually anger and frustrate you? Unfollow to no longer see those posts. Do you have friends who bring you down with their constant grumbling and complaining? Choose not to take part. (As a side note, I’ve learned a great trick for this: No matter how hard it is, don’t feed the negative energy by joining in. Instead, find ways to turn the conversation back to something good. It’s no fun being a constant complainer to someone who refuses to jump in the muck with you!)

Is there something or someone you’re surrounding yourself with that needs to change? What or who is it, and what step will you take today to change it?

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# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

The flip side of this is also true. We can choose to surround ourselves with good things, GOD things. Things like Scripture, prayer, worship music, counting our blessings, and spending time with like-minded people who constantly point us back to Christ. The more we surround ourselves with such things, the more His light and love will begin to permeate every part of who we are.

What are some *good* things you need to continue or begin surrounding yourself with?

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## Back to the Beginning

We started today's lesson with Matthew 22:36-40:

*"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"*

*"Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (NIV).*

Loving God with every fiber of our being is of the utmost importance. But, so is loving others. The more we learn to love God, the greater the outflow of His love to those around us. So, as we love God, we love others! Pretty good deal, right?

Before we close today's lesson, check out one final verse: Isaiah 26:3 (NIV). What does God promise for those whose minds are turned to Him?

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Not just peace, y'all. PERFECT peace.

# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

*Father, we love You, and we thank You for wanting more for us than what comes when we let our minds roam freely. Your Word says a flesh-controlled mind leads to death, while a Spirit-controlled mind leads to life and peace. We want that peace, Lord. Help us to pursue it daily by following Your directives for the things we are to think about. Give us courage and wisdom to do the hard work of digging deep and making any changes necessary, and give us Your promised life and peace in return. Thank You for Your incredible love for us!*

*In Jesus' Name,  
Amen*

Thanks for being here with me today!

Stacy



# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

## Lesson 3

**Bible Study Companion Leader:** Nichole Stern

**Study Leader's Note:** *Some passages in Scripture cover subjects that may be especially painful for some readers. When we see these stories in God's Word, we should be reminded that God sees these unimaginably painful situations and He has committed to making all things right through the finished work of Jesus Christ. (Revelation 21:3-4)*

*You have been lifted in prayer as this study was written, and our P31 OBS team will continue to pray for you as you study Hidden Potential with us.*



Hey y'all! Welcome to Lesson 3 of our Bible Study Companion for *Hidden Potential*! I'm so glad you're here!

For those I've yet to meet, I'm Nichole Stern. I came to know Christ later in life (I was 31) and ever since then, God has placed within me a desire to dig deep into His Word and teach others how to do the same. I know firsthand that knowing how to study God's word is LIFE CHANGING, which is why I'm so grateful for the privilege to lead us through our BSC this week. I hope you're as excited as I am to get

started!

In Chapter 4 of *Hidden Potential*, Wendy Pope defines frailty:

"... something we didn't and don't have control over, but can still be used for our good and God's glory" (p. 115).

Our personal frailties may take the form of defects, flaws, shortcomings and/or weaknesses. Some may be obvious, and others a bit less conspicuous, but regardless of what our imperfections may be, when we surrender them to God, He will use them to bring about His best for us.

Can you think of a time your frailties (perceived or otherwise) have prevented you from reaching your potential?

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# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

The sad truth is that ancient Greek, Roman and Jewish cultures viewed women as possessions. They considered being a woman a frailty. Even in this day and age, some cultures still hold this erroneous view.

Jesus flipped this belief that women are somehow less than, or flawed because of their gender, on its head. Even the lineage of Jesus reveals the significance God places on women.

We don't have time to study every extraordinary woman in the Bible, but we will spend this week studying the women included in the genealogy of Jesus.

Some of you just checked out when you read the word "genealogies." I know, I know. I too have stifled yawns as I studied the "begats" in the Bible, but *please* bear with me, I PROMISE studying these women who "begat" Jesus is worth it!

\*\*\*begat is just an old-timey word that means "to procreate or generate offspring."

Read Matthew 1:1-17. [We have linked it here.](#)

Now, reread the passage, find the women's names (we've bolded them for you) and write them below. Also, include any details you've already learned about them below:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Typically, Jewish genealogies excluded women. This may seem like a small detail to our modern minds, but what Matthew was communicating to his Jewish readers is that the Kingdom of God is a different kind of Kingdom.

Let's meet our extraordinary women.

## Tamar

The first woman mentioned in Matthew's genealogy is Tamar. That word in Hebrew means "date" (the fruit) or "palm tree." As a point of interest, palm trees were significant in Jewish culture for their usefulness. Their leaves signified victory and peace. (Psalm 92:12; John 12:12-13; Revelation 7:9)

# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

As we study Tamar's story, we'll see that from rejection and desperation, God brought about victory and peace.

The good news is God can do the same for us when we surrender to His will.

Are there areas of your life where you're feeling rejected? Desperate? Hopeless? If so, journal your thoughts below.

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Will you commit to work toward surrendering these areas to God today? If so, write a prayer of surrender below, asking God to help you find victory and peace in these situations.

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Read Tamar's story in Genesis 38:6-27.

Place a check mark beside each of the following details from Tamar's life:

- |                                       |                          |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Judah's daughter-in-law               | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Married two brothers and their father | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Widowed twice                         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Disguised herself as a prostitute     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bore twin boys                        | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mother of Perez, ancestor of Jesus    | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Oh, the drama! Whoever said reading the Bible is boring apparently hasn't read Tamar's story! Hers is one thread woven into the beautiful tapestry of humanity showing God's redemptive and compassionate heart towards His broken people.

# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

We live in a fallen world, and although Tamar's story happened thousands of years ago, we have our own hurts and heartbreaks ... some self-inflicted, some inflicted by others.

Just as Tamar didn't know the significance of her story, we too rarely understand the significance of ours, but we can trust our sovereign God's promises that there is a good plan and purpose for it all. For Tamar, her devastating encounters with rejection led to her inclusion in the lineage of the Savior of the world!

God's plans might be unclear, but we can trust His purpose is always for our good and His glory. (Romans 8:28)

## **Rahab**

Our next ordinary-turned-extraordinary woman is Rahab.

Read Rahab's story in Joshua 2.

Who was Rahab and what was her profession?

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Why did Joshua send spies into Jericho?

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What did Rahab do for the spies?

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Why did she do this, and what did she ask in return?

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# HIDDEN POTENTIAL by Wendy Pope

In Joshua 2:11, Rahab tells the spies:

*“... for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath” (ESV).*

Rahab’s words describing Israel’s God is one of my favorite confessions of faith.

She proclaimed what the spies already knew about the God of Israel, who is the same God we worship today, for He is the same yesterday, today and forever. Her declaration of faith in God led to the saving of Rahab and her family.

The same is true for us. When we believe and confess our faith in God, through Jesus, we are saved.

Read Romans 10:9-10 (NIV).

One of my favorite tools to memorize Scripture is personalizing verses, and what better Scripture to personalize than our statement of faith?

To personalize Romans 10:9-10, replace the pronouns “you” and “your” with your name and update the verb tenses accordingly.

Example:

*If Nichole declares with her mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believes in her heart that God raised him from the dead, Nichole will be saved. For it is with Nichole’s heart that she believes and is justified, and it is with Nichole’s mouth that Nichole professes her faith and is saved.*

While a one-time confession of faith in Jesus is all it takes to seal our souls for heaven, we can find great joy and encouragement in repeating our confession of faith to ourselves, to others and to God.

Let’s see how God honors Rahab’s confession of faith in Him.

Read Joshua 6:17-25.

What happened to Rahab and her family after the walls of Jericho fell?

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# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

Read Hebrews 11:31.

Hebrews 11 is often called the “Hall of Faith” because the author of Hebrews lists many giants of the Christian faith here. The fact that he includes Rahab is a pretty big deal. First, because she’s a woman (the only other woman in this account is Sarah), and second, because she was a harlot.

She may have been a harlot, but because she believed God and trusted Him with her family and her future, the Lord God calls her a heroine of the faith.

What a redemption story.

Friends, *nothing* in heaven above or on earth below can thwart God’s perfect plans.

Furthermore, there is nothing *you* have done or can do to disqualify you from the forgiveness God offers through Jesus Christ. It’s there for each and every one of us, and sister, trust me when I say that the freedom God gives is greater than anything this world has to offer.

May I encourage you to rest in this truth today?

Think of Rahabs in your life who need to hear these words. Write a prayer for them below. Ask God to give you a heart of compassion toward them and to provide you opportunities to show them the love of Christ.

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## Ruth

In contrast to Tamar and Rahab, we find our next extraordinary woman one of the most joyful figures in all of Scripture.

# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

Ruth, a Moabite woman, married into a Jewish family. Not long after she married, she lost everything due to the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband. When her mother-in-law Naomi decided to return to the land of Judah, Ruth determined in her heart to accompany her.

Read Ruth 1-4.

What's your favorite part of Ruth's redemption story? Why?

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I'm struck by the remarkable kindness Ruth consistently showed throughout this story as she joyfully served her widowed mother-in-law in an unfamiliar land with no promised opportunity or security.

Scholars often summarize Ruth's kindness with the Hebrew word "hesed" (or "cheched"), which translates as "kindness," "loving-kindness," or "steadfast love." We often see this word used in the Old Testament when a person saves another's life or makes a long-term promise (Abraham, Joseph and Rahab, for example).

Hesed is a core element of God's nature. (Exodus 34:6-7) God's covenant with the Israelites revealed His "*steadfast love for them*." He shows this same loving-kindness in the New Covenant with His promise to save us through Jesus Christ, our Savior, who came from the line of King David, who came from the line of Ruth and her husband, Boaz.

What a beautiful picture of God's great love for us.

How did God redeem Ruth? What about Ruth makes her a surprising recipient of God's grace?

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# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

Like Rahab (Boaz's mother), Ruth was not a Jew. She belonged to a race excluded from the people of God under the Old Testament. Yet, by faith in God, she became a woman of God whose character modeled God's kindness and love. Her place in the Lord's lineage beautifully models God's kindness in the redemption of "outsiders," and the joy we find as His redeemed.

God also uses Ruth to show His presence, love and kindness in her mother-in-law, Naomi's, life. Pray about how God can use you to show His love and kindness. How you will put this in action.

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Ruth's story (God's story) continues to inspire us today, even though written thousands of years ago. God's truth is timeless, and He never changes. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. Holding onto these truths keeps us anchored to Christ when the storms of this life threaten to toss us about.

In the midst of hard circumstances, it's easy to lose perspective and doubt God. Have you ever been in a situation where God felt distant or His love felt doubtful? Please explain.

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# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

Ruth's is a marvelous story of God's faithfulness. How have you experienced God's faithfulness in the past? In what areas might you need to trust His faithfulness today?

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## **Bathsheba**

Our next extraordinary woman in Jesus' lineage is Bathsheba. While Ruth's was a story of heartwarming romance, Bathsheba's is one of heartbreak and loss as a result of lust and betrayal.

Read 2 Samuel 11 and answer the questions below:

Who is Bathsheba, and what happened between King David and Bathsheba?

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When David spotted Bathsheba bathing from the roof of his palace, instead of looking away, he gave in to his lust and sent his men to bring her to his palace. He then slept with her, got her pregnant and deceitfully arranged for the murder of her husband to cover up the affair.

Nothing in Scripture tells us Bathsheba was at fault. Men often treated women like possessions in ancient times. So, most likely, Bathsheba was in no position to deny the king's request. Unfortunately, David's sin ensnared them both, and the consequences of his sin were long-lasting and far-reaching.

# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

Sin's ripple effect is similar to the ripple a stone creates when tossed into a pond. The sweeping effects disturb the calm and disrupt the stillness of everything within its reach. We learn from David's response to his sin with Bathsheba that we cannot hide sin. The more we try to cover it up, the more destruction we cause. We cannot compartmentalize sin; it leaches into every part of our lives and affects even those not involved in our trespasses.

Thankfully, because of Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection, the battle with sin is won, and the victory found through confession and repentance helps us begin to live in the sweet freedom of forgiveness.

Read Psalm 139:23-24.

*"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" Psalm 139:23-24 (ESV).*

Write a prayer, using these verses as a guide, to invite God to search your heart and your thoughts as you confess and repent of any sinfulness in your life. Then thank God for His love and forgiveness.

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Read 2 Samuel 12:1-24.

How does Nathan confront David's sin, and what was David's response?

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# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

What is the consequence of David's sin?

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Why did David fast and pray for his sick child? And why did he stop fasting and praying once the child died?

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What happened between David and Bathsheba after the death of their child?

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I cannot imagine the grief Bathsheba experienced losing her child. While nothing could take away that pain, God in His wisdom and mercy used Bathsheba to beget Solomon, from whom would eventually come Jesus Christ.

Friend, I don't know your story, and I don't know the wounds you carry, but God sees you and He has a redemption plan for you too. May I encourage you to lay your burdens at His feet today?

Let's do this by reading Psalm 51, but instead of just reading through the verses silently, read them aloud as a prayer from your heart to God's heart.

This Psalm chronicles David's repentance for his sin and God's provision for David's healing, forgiveness, strength and restoration. This is the Gospel and it's available to each and every one of us.

# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

## Mary

Our last, but certainly not least, extraordinary woman is Mary, the mother of Jesus. You've most likely read Mary's story before, but I'd like to challenge you to read and study her account with fresh eyes, asking God to use His Truth to deepen your roots of faith.

Read Luke 1:26-38.

I grew up near Savannah, Georgia, and one of the most frequently asked questions down south is, "Who are your people?" Which loosely translates to "Who is your family?" and "Where are you from?"

What did you learn about Mary and her people (who was her family and where was she from)?

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At first glance, we read nothing notable about Mary. She wasn't from a prominent or wealthy family, nor was she touted for any particular abilities or physical beauty, but as we read in the verses above, one thing set Mary apart.

What made Mary extraordinary? (Hint: re-read Luke 1:28 and 1:30.)

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Mary was extraordinary because God was with her. This very truth is what makes *us* extraordinary too!

I find Mary's response in Luke 1:38 remarkable:

*"And Mary said, 'Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word'" (ESV).*

# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

Y'all. We can learn SO MUCH from Mary and this beautiful act of surrender. Mary willingly allowed God to use her for His purpose, regardless of the cost. And, there's no doubt the cost was high. The culture during Mary's time meant she would endure many hardships due to her divine pregnancy, including:

- Loss of her reputation
- Disbelieving friends and family
- Ridicule and possible stoning (permitted under Mosaic law)
- Nine months of discomfort and sleeplessness
- Labor to bring forth the Savior of the world
- The forfeiture or delay of her own plans

She endured it all to join her heart with God's in fulfilling His beautiful plan to save humanity.

Think of a time when your world was turned upside down and inside out. How did you respond?

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I wish I could say I respond with praise no matter my circumstances. But, the truth is, I often find myself annoyed, distracted and anxious when things don't go as planned.

As I'm writing this study, we're in quarantine due to COVID-19. Like everyone else in the world, this pandemic has disrupted my life. Everything feels heavy and hard right now. I know that if I'm not careful to keep my focus on Christ, I risk becoming overwhelmed by the weight of it all.

One way I shift my focus is to listen to praise music. Fortunately, my husband is a worship leader, so songs often fill the four walls of our home, and I frequently invite God to take the weight of my worries by lifting my voice to Him in worship.

How about you? What can you shift to praise God even if things feel topsy-turvy?

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# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

Our girl, Mary, literally belted out a song of praise in the midst of what must have been terrifying at worst and tense at best!!

I encourage you to not just read Mary's hymn of praise in Luke 1:46-55, but write it below and read it aloud.

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Friends, this truly is one of the greatest praise hymns ever written. It's important to note that though this is Mary's prayer, her prayer includes many Old Testament scriptures.

Mary knew God's Word and had hidden it in her heart.

Why is this significant? Because in Mary's time, women were not formally educated. It's quite possible Mary was illiterate. But, as she heard the Word taught, it settled in her heart, and over time, poured forth in her life and prayers. Today, most of us have the Bible at our fingertips, easily accessible any time of day. As we wrap up our BSC, I encourage you to spend time in God's Word.

How can you take advantage of easy access to the Bible to fill your heart with His truth?

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For me, I've started listening to Scripture. I'm finding a wonderful peace settles my soul as I quiet myself and listen to the Word of God. ((SIGH))

# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

How about you, friend? What new ways can you find to fill up on Truth? Podcasts, sermons, Bible reading plans, worship music?

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It's an incredible honor to study God's Word with you. I hope God has used this time to deepen your faith and expand your understanding of who He is. We've learned much about what it means to be an extraordinary woman of faith, but one thing is for sure: It all starts and ends with Jesus.

Keep seeking Him with all of your heart, dear friend, and be prepared to find all you've ever needed in His presence.

Because of Jesus,

Nichole

# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

## Lesson 4

**Bible Study Companion Leader:** Trish Cordell



Hey friends! Can we get excited that you made your way to Week 4? I'm so proud of the progress you've made. I hope you are too! I'm always encouraged when I remember I'm on a daily journey with my heavenly Father. This isn't a sprint, sisters. This is a slow, methodical, savory walk as we drink in God's glory and Truth.

Before we begin, I invite you to get comfortable and take a deep breath, or 12. Let's face it, sometimes one deep breath just isn't enough, am I right? Taking those deep breaths allows my body to relax and my shoulders to return to their natural posture down below my neck. Whew! Some days, I don't even realize I'm carrying the weight of the world on my shoulders. I need my Jesus time to slow down and get refreshed!

Okay, I'm ready, how about you?

### **The devil made me do it.**

I don't remember the first time I heard the phrase "the devil made me do it," but I remember thinking as a teenager, "That's the perfect out!" For me, that phrase gave me license to do whatever I pleased even though I knew it was wrong. Moreover, if it felt good, I would keep on doing the wrong thing.

Back then, I could've given a million reasons justifying my bad actions, but to settle it in my soul, I'd simply say "the devil made me do it" and move on. As a defiant teenager, this reasoning worked. As an adult, not so much. Owning up to my actions is still one of the hardest things I do. It's much easier to justify my actions than admit I was at fault.

Author Wendy Pope hit the nail on the head on page 146 when she says:

*"Those who acknowledge their faults often do so only followed by a justification:*

- *I was born this way; just ask my momma.*
- *This is what happens when you have a past as colorful as mine.*
- *This is who I am; like it or lump it.*
- *It's too late to change now.*
- *They bring out the worst in me."*



# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

Can you see me nodding my head in agreement? If I were to venture a guess, I bet you have a few justifications of your own. Let's take a few moments to write those down. Don't spend too much time here. Just write down the ones that pop in your mind. Remember, this is about awareness, not condemnation. Romans 8:1 reminds us:

*"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (ESV).*

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Alright, now that we've got those pesky justifications listed, the real fun begins.

## Whose fault is it?

The blame game is one of the oldest tricks in the book. If you've ever blamed someone else for your wrongdoing, then you know how this game is played. The first instance we see this game being played out is with Adam and the woman. Grab your Bible and open to Genesis 3.

If you've read this story and think you know all there is to know, may I gently remind you of this truth from Hebrews 4:12?

*"For the word of God is **alive and active**" (NIV, emphasis added).*

That means we always have something new to learn, no matter the number of times we read it. [Insert happy smile here, because I love learning new things!]

Let's read Genesis 3:1-6 (ESV).

Who did the serpent approach?

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# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

What did the woman do after she ate the fruit?

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Now read Genesis 3:12 (ESV).

Who did Adam say gave him the fruit?

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In Genesis 3:13 (ESV), who did the woman blame for eating the fruit?

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We learn from these verses that Adam blamed the woman, and the woman blamed the serpent. To this day, the blame game still exists.

Before I continue with the lesson, may I ask you a question? In any of the answers above, did you write the name “Eve”? If so, may I ask who told you her name from the scriptures we read? This isn’t a trick question, I promise! Remember when I said God’s Word is alive and active? Allow me to show you what I learned as I was forming this part of the lesson.

The author of Genesis doesn’t give Eve’s name until Genesis 3:20. In fact, her actual name is not mentioned until *after* the blame game has been played out. This type of hidden treasure gets me excited. It’s so personal when God reveals nuggets/fresh insights like this.

List the reasons Eve ate the fruit:

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In Genesis 3:13 (ESV) God asks the woman this question:

*“... Then the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this that you have done? ...’”*

I can picture myself with my hands on my hips, nodding my head in agreement saying, “Yeah, Eve, what’s up with that?”

# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

If I were to venture the reason Eve ate the fruit, it was because she believed she lacked something from God. Instead of talking it out with Him, she took matters into her own hands to get what she thought she wanted.

It's easy to point out Eve's faults with the limited knowledge we have. But we weren't there. We don't know the whole story. We do know, however, in the end, no one escaped God's righteous judgment. (Genesis 3:14-19) But, did God cast Adam and Eve away forever? No.

Wendy reminds us,

*"Our disobedience won't disqualify us from God's plan" (p. 160).*

The fall of Adam and Eve provides a beautiful example of God's great mercy, grace and love. He is sovereign and His plans will prevail. Even though Adam and Eve found themselves banished from the Garden of Eden, God still used them to fulfill His plan of redemption for all mankind. He used them faults and all.

It's my heartfelt prayer you know through this story, God can still use you, faults and all, for His purpose. This fact doesn't give us license to let our faults control us. We need to be keenly aware of our faults so they don't run us over and possibly hurt others. Adam and Eve's example makes clear, there will be consequences for our actions.

As you read through this teaching, did God bring to mind a time when you hurt someone because you allowed your fault(s) to control you? Take some time now to reflect and ask God if He wants you to take an action step with regard to this situation. Don't be afraid. Allow God to walk you through it and thank Him for His goodness. If you feel led, write your prayer here.

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## **Nobody's perfect.**

We all have faults. The word "fault," by definition per the Merriam Webster dictionary, is: "weakness; failing." Have you ever failed at something? Do you have a weakness?

# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

Do you know God's not surprised by your weakness or your failings?

God knows exactly what will draw you closer to Him. After all, He knew you before He made you. How awesome is that? He knew you BEFORE He made you, and He made you anyways. Mind blowing, I know!

Read Jeremiah 1:5.

To help you remember this truth, why not write it down and place it somewhere you can see it daily?

Yes, God spoke these words to Jeremiah about the nation of Israel, but we find similar words in Psalm 139:13-16 and Ephesians 2:10. God knew you before you were born. You are His masterpiece. He has good works for you that He prepared in advance for you to do!

We're going to travel over to the book of Romans now, Chapter 7.

I have a confession to make. The Apostle Paul is my favorite. This apostle gets me. I relate to his story on many levels. His conversion from sinner to saint is the stuff that makes for great dramatic storytelling. Friends, Paul would be my apostle-mate if there were such a thing. If you don't know Paul's story, please take the time to read Acts 9:1-19. It's truly fascinating.

In Romans 7:15 (NLT), we find Paul struggling with himself.

*"I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate."*

In a nutshell, Paul's saying he wants to do the right thing; he knows what the right thing is, but he chooses the opposite. Can you relate to what he's saying?

Wendy explained it like this:

*"Basically, we are a flesh tent, indwelt with the Spirit of God. Talk about opposites. Like a stretched rubber band, our flesh pulls us one way and the Spirit pulls us the other" (p. 161).*

It's a push-pull battle that either leads us to peace or to conflict. Anyone who ever struggled to choose good can attest to this. Allow me to be the first to raise my hand!

# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

My most intense push-pull battle was with alcohol. Years ago, God asked me to lay alcohol down because it had become an idol in my life. I vividly remember times I drove to the liquor store, praise music blaring, with tears streaming down my face. I knew in those moments that I no longer had any control over this weakness.

Full disclosure. I wanted my wine more than I wanted to obey Jesus. Yikes, right?

Just like the Apostle Paul, I knew the right thing to do, but I chose the opposite. I allowed my flesh to trample all over the Holy Spirit.

Name a time when you allowed your flesh to control you.

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How did it make you feel knowing you were choosing the wrong thing? Check all that apply:

- Guilty
- Shameful
- Alone
- Remorseful
- Like a failure
- Disgusted
- Embarrassed
- Angry
- Confused
- Anxious
- Hopeless
- Tormented
- Ruined
- Selfish
- Powerless

I felt such condemnation each time I chose alcohol. I berated myself and wondered what was wrong with me. How could I have Jesus in my heart and allow this sin to control me?

# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

Paul also agonized over his choices. We can feel his agony in these telling words:

*“Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death” (Romans 7:24, NLT).*

But, then he answers his own question in the very next verse:

*“Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God’s law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin” (Romans 7:25, NLT).*

It’s not that Paul didn’t want to follow God’s law. He did, but he still had a sinful nature which led him to say:

*“I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God’s law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me” (Romans 7:21-23, NLT).*

Is it any wonder we too feel conflicted when we sin?

Can you see now why it’s important we know Scripture? Scripture helps us to discern *when* we’ve crossed that sin line. Notice I said *when*. Because we will. But, as a child of God, when we sin, the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin and helps us choose to do what’s right. Wendy says it so well;

*“Knowing Scripture won’t make us faultless, but it will make us Spirit sensitive” (p. 150).*

Thank you, Jesus, for the gift of Your advocate, the Holy Spirit!

## **Recognize, confess, surrender.**

I recognized I had a problem with alcohol. I confessed I loved wine and knew I had become a slave to it. I confessed I needed and wanted help to overcome it. But it wasn’t until I **fully** surrendered my weakness that God’s healing could begin.

# HIDDEN POTENTIAL by Wendy Pope

That's not to say I overcame my battle with alcohol overnight. I laid it down more than once, just to pick it back up and lay it down again. The path of recovery was hard and to date keeps me running to Jesus.

You read that correctly. It keeps me running to Jesus. If you've ever given something up, you know it seems to be everywhere you look. But, Jesus promises that with temptation, He will provide a way of escape.

*"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13, ESV)*

My problem with alcohol caused much heartache and pain to me and those around me. I can't go back and change what happened, but I can look back and count the cost of the mistakes. That cost serves as a reminder how a temporary lust can cause years of heartache and hardship.

But God had a redemptive plan for me. He has one for you too!

Remember what Wendy said?

*"Faults don't disqualify us from working with God" (p. 151).*

If that weren't true, I wouldn't be here with you! Aren't you so thankful God uses us, faults and all?

Can you think of others in the Bible God used despite their faults? Here are a few of my favorites.

Scripture	Who	Fault
Joshua 2		
John 4		
Judges 16		

Each main character in these stories had faults, but they also had a heart to please God.

# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

Sweet friend, God has not discounted you because of your faults and weaknesses. On the contrary, He invites you to draw closer.

Let me remind you through words penned by the Apostle Paul after he asked the question, “*Can anything separate us from Christ’s love*” (Romans 8:35, NLT)?

*“And I am convinced that **nothing** can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, **nothing** in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39, NLT, emphasis added).*

I don’t know where you are in your relationship with your heavenly Father, but I know He still searches for that one lost sheep. If that’s you, I invite you to set aside time to allow Your Father’s love to wash over you. Take a few moments now to thank God for the way He loves His people. There’s no wrong or right way to do this. It’s simply having a conversation with the One who loves you most. I’ll share a few scriptures to get you started (1 John 3:1; Zephaniah 3:17; John 3:16; Psalm 136:26; Isaiah 54:10). Write your thoughts here:

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## **We’re not alone.**

Do you know that through the power of the Holy Spirit, you already have what you need to overcome your faults? That’s right, let me say it again. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, YOU have what you need to be victorious over your faults.

Notice I didn’t say you wouldn’t have any more faults.

Every day, multiple situations arise where we need to make wise choices. Some days we can be spot on, other days we need to regroup, confess, repent and begin again. We’re a work in progress. And that’s OK!



# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

Let's take a peek into the book of Galatians for a few minutes — Chapter 5 specifically. We learned earlier that when we allow our flesh to rule over our Spirit, consequences will follow.

Now, let's seek to get ahead of this problem and define areas where we tend to get into trouble. Paul's words in Galatians give us a great place to start. He exposes the very places where temptation lurks.

Read Galatians 5:19-21 (ESV).

This list is pretty hefty! Let's list them here:

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Whew! I warned you it was a hefty list. Please don't despair! Just as we have a "works of the flesh" list, God has given us a battle plan, and it's found in the fruit of the Spirit.

You'll find the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. Read the passage and list the fruit below:

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You see, God has graciously given us everything we need to overcome our faults. He didn't leave us alone to battle the evils of this world.

Give pause to each fruit of the Spirit and write how they currently look in your life.

- Love -
- Joy -
- Peace -
- Patience -
- Kindness -

# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

- Goodness -
- Faithfulness -
- Gentleness -
- Self-Control -

Let's go a bit deeper, shall we? Think through these two questions.

Which fruit flows most freely and easily in your life?

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With which fruit do you most struggle putting into practice? Why do you think you struggle with this fruit?

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Take heart, the fruit with which you struggle is already in you! It's true! At salvation, God sealed you with His Spirit. In that moment, you received the fullness of God's Spirit, and with that comes all the fruit of His Spirit listed above. Not one is lacking. But, then life ... sin ... the world ... gets in the way. Sometimes that fruit wanes and/or evades us because we don't stay connected to Jesus as much as we should. He is the One who refills and refuels the fruit of His Spirit.

The key to change is increasing the flow of God's fruit in our lives. You may wonder, "How can I do this?" I'm so glad you asked! Here are a few ways that work for me:

- ☐ Be in God's Word (daily is best)
- ☐ Pray
- ☐ Find a verse(s) referencing that fruit and then take steps to put it in action
  - ☐ Write the verse(s) out
  - ☐ Memorize them
  - ☐ Personalize them

# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

Each time you face a challenge involving this fruit, immediately declare your verse over your situation, heart and mind. God will be faithful to respond. It might take time, but He will be faithful. I've given an example below:

If you struggle with self-control, my favorite verse is Romans 12:2. *"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will"* (NIV).

I then take that verse and personalize it, praying the verse back to God. "Father, thank You that I don't have to be conformed to the patterns of this world; that I can instead be transformed by the renewing of my mind. Thank you that when I do this, I'm able to test and approve what Your will is—Your good, pleasing and perfect will."

Praying in partnership with God is so powerful. Remember, perfection isn't needed here. God sees your heart, your struggles, and everything else in between. The fact that you're here means your heart is yearning to know God more. There's nothing more beautiful than a searching heart!

It's my hope that as you went through this list and this exercise, you know just how much God loves you and wants only the best for you. He has equipped you with what you need to live the good and abundant life He has for you.

Some days it may feel like we're at war with ourselves. Much like the Apostle Paul, we may even feel like a "miserable person." But, feelings are misleading. They change from one minute to the next. Yes, we have our faults, but our faults didn't make us, God did.

Remember, God knew you before He formed you! He knows exactly what you need, and He loves you with an everlasting love.

Friends, it's been an honor to be here with you. I pray as you've worked through this Bible Study Companion, you've come to know God, and yourself, more intimately.

Joyful Blessings,  
Trish