



Hidden Potential

Revealing What God Can
Do through You



Wendy Pope



Hidden Potential

Revealing What God Can
Do through You

Wendy Pope

DAVID  COOK™

transforming lives together

© 2020 Wendy Pope. Published by David C Cook. All rights reserved.

Contents

Acknowledgments	15
Introduction	17
1. What God Can Do	27
2. What God Can Do through My Failures	53
<i>Possibility Profile: Sharon</i>	81
3. What God Can Do through My Fears	85
<i>Possibility Profile: Sherri</i>	111
4. What God Can Do through My Frailties	115
<i>Possibility Profile: Meg</i>	142
5. What God Can Do through My Faults	145
<i>Possibility Profile: Linda</i>	172
6. What God Can Do through My Future	177
Epilogue	193
Notes	197
About the Author	199
About Proverbs 31 Ministries	201
Bible Credits	203



Introduction

If you could change anything about you, what would it be?

I'm sure my list would be completely different from yours, or maybe you look at me and assume I don't have a list. Oh, I have two: one from child me and one from current me. The child me wanted blond hair, and yes, because it seemed like they had more fun and were more popular. Child me wanted blue eyes to go with the blond hair. I wanted my jeans to be Gloria Vanderbilt or Jordache, and my shirts to have an alligator—not a ladybug pretending to be an alligator. Oh, and to be smart, you know, on the A/B honor roll. These things seem silly now that I'm grown, but grown women have lists too.

Current me wants to be twenty pounds lighter and have wrinkles only in clothes. I'd love to know what *she* knows about the Bible (whoever *she* is). And it would be fabulous if my house could stay clean like *hers*. This ideal *she* is further



along in ministry than I (and I started before her!). Current me still has so much work to do.

That's what we do, isn't it? We habitually compare our insides, how we feel about ourselves, to another's outside, how they look, to determine our value and sum up our potential—appearance, accomplishments, and assets. We look at other girls and think: *She has the beauty and talent of singer Whitney Houston, the success of J. K. Rowling, and the influence of Marlee Matlin. I'm sure she doesn't hear the echo of negative and condemning thoughts in the empty places of her heart. There's no way she wrestles with the weight of fears, faults, failures, and frailties—she doesn't have any!*

Out in the world we have to prove our abilities, demonstrate our intellect, and establish our authority in order to show we are useful and worthwhile. But what about in a safe, supposedly judgment-free zone, like inside the walls of the church? Do we think we have to prove ourselves there too? Do we make assumptions about someone's worth based on what they do or how they look? Without pause, yes, yes, we do. We look at *her* outside—appearance, accomplishments, and other assets—and assume *her* faith is just as strong.

She has every question completed in her Bible study. Her responses in small group are always deep and profound. Her house is immaculate, and those children, well, they never misbehave. What doesn't she do? Everything turns out right for her. There is no way she struggles with her faith. She's on the short list for sainthood. I'm sure her past is as clean as the Colorado snow on a winter day.

May I ask you to honestly answer a few questions? Not necessarily out loud, or even on paper where someone might see your answers, but just for yourself.

- Do I allow the echo of fears and faults to silence God's voice?
- Do I dwell on failures and let them determine my direction?
- Do I worry that my frailties disqualify me from doing any good work for God?

If you answered *yes* to just one of these questions, then your faith, my friend, is wounded. Fractured. Splintered. Ruptured. No longer in its original design or even what it once was before life happened to you. The original design of our faith is to be Christ-centered, Spirit-led, and Word-fed. Somehow, you, like so many of us, have gotten off track.

When we first come to learn about Jesus and His love for us, we have every intention to stay in that love. Once you know what it feels like to be loved just for who you are and just as you are, why would anyone want to move away from that? We want to learn more about the God who saved us. We may even see ourselves serving Him all our lives.

But then, often without warning, an accusing memory targets our belief that God can really wash away our sin and make us new. An old or new fear consumes our spirit and devours our courage. Our frailty shouts louder than truth, and the portfolio of our faults overwhelms our sense of purpose. Before long, the point of the splinter has pricked our heart, the assurance of our faith ruptures, and ugly thoughts fill our mind.

Fractures can be repaired—just consult any orthopedic surgeon. Bones and tissue can be reset and repaired, almost as good as new.

But what about our faith? Can it be repaired, reset, or made better than before? Or are we condemned to a powerless life full of regret?

I want to say something that may sound a little harsh, momentarily make you mad, and quite possibly give you an overwhelming desire to throw this book out a window. So, I ask you to trust me enough to read the entire statement below, pause to think through the words, and perhaps even pray.

What if God's plan isn't to "fix" the things that have fractured your faith but instead to show His power through them, making your faith stronger than ever?

[Insert pause.]

Whew. There, I said it. Are you still with me? Oh, I hope so!

God has such a good word for us, friends! Yes, us. I'm writing this book for me, as much as I am for you. I've spent much of my life trying to conquer my fears, correct my faults, get over my failures, and accept my frailties, only to discover I still have fears, faults, failures, and frailties. Can anyone relate?

My duties are completed. My Bible is highlighted. My radio is tuned to positive music. My friend group is solid and supportive. My laundry is ... almost folded. I'm doing all the "right" things I think I should be doing to hang on to hope and stay on track with God's plan. I'm reading the Word, living the Word, and have learned to love the Word—and yet I experience the same old struggle.

And I find myself wondering, *What if we are just spinning our wheels?* Reading self-help books and devotionals, watching TED talks, praying heartfelt prayers to be made perfect ...

What if we are working hard to get rid of (or hide) the very thing God wants to use for His glory?

Whitney had a tumultuous life. J. K. persevered through rejection and the fear of not publishing *Harry Potter*, and Marlee defied the odds to become a well-known actress, even though she was deaf. We don't recognize these individuals because of their great Christian faith (however, if I get the chance, I'll be sure to ask them if they know Jesus). But my point is, we consider these women to be worthwhile. If these women, whom we see as beautiful, successful, and accomplished, can live a worthwhile life even with their fears, faults, failures, and frailties, then how much more can we expect as women following Christ?

The motivational speeches that tell us we must overcome our fears, correct our faults, rise above our failures, and strengthen our frailties before we can be of any value sound inspiring at first. They sound right. Just look at the speakers—they have it all together, so surely we can do it too! But then we sit at home under piles of dishes and diapers or at our desks, staring at deadlines and dead ends and wonder: *How am I ever going to do all that? How am I supposed to make a success out of my mess?* And we might even wonder, *Even if I do all the work to get strong and fix my mistakes and overcome my weaknesses, will I be valued?*

Thankfully, God does not leave us alone with our thoughts. He's given us His Word, which is filled with examples of men and women He has used for His kingdom—people just like us. People like Moses. His life paints a different picture. It's a picture that shows it's possible to be:

- Faithful, even when we're afraid
- Included in God's plans, even with our faults
- Useful, even when we've failed
- Valuable, even when we feel damaged

God doesn't want to change what makes you, you. And about all those splinters that have fractured your faith? He accepts them—all of them. He accepts you, just as you are. Moreover, He wants to take that which has wrongly defined and misdirected you and use it to demonstrate how He can transform weakness to power, regret to purpose, and anxiety to peace.

**He can transform weakness to power, regret
to purpose, and anxiety to peace.**

I'm thrilled you've chosen to journey with me to this place of healing and hope. And believe me, I know this will be well-traveled ground for some of you. I've been on this path myself many times before and revisit the frequented sod more often than I care to confess. After all, the idea that God can use us in our weakness is an old one—as old as the Bible itself!

But we can never have enough reminders of how God sees us, not as problems, but as His people. Broken and yet beautiful.

And this is not a book of empty encouragement that will leave you lost as to what to do next. It's not another motivating speech printed out on pages. I'm not going to tell you to pull up your boots or slap your own face or make lemonade from lemons. Instead, we'll dig into the story of Moses and see how, though God never fixed this man's faults or stopped him from his failures, He used him

completely and fully for His glory. Every day after Moses heard God speaking through that burning bush was a day He spent following God—sometimes stumbling, tripping, or dragging, but following still. With a terrible past and an uncertain future, Moses was still able to put his trust in the God he knew. And that's what we can do today.

We'll also look at real-life examples from women I know who are staying faithful in the middle of struggles. These "Possibility Profiles" are not stories with happy-ever-after endings where everything has worked out exactly according to their plans, but stories in which these women are still living with, waiting on, and trusting in God to use them according to His plans.

We're going to move from possible outcomes to practical steps that help us see how God can use us. We are going to learn so much together. I can't wait! Now, let's go see what God can do, and meet Moses too.

Revealing My Potential

Use the next couple of pages to jot down your thoughts. (Remember, your thoughts matter!) Record your important ideas, precious pieces of revelation, and other significant snippets. Don't erase, edit, or omit. Just put pen or pencil to paper and listen to what God is trying to teach you through His Word.

How is your faith fractured?

Copyrighted Material

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal lines.

Chapter 1

What God Can Do

Can God do anything with me?



We could fill the pages of this book, and the pages of many books, telling of the things God can do. Perhaps the chapter titles would include: “Heal,” “Provide,” “Calm the Storm,” “Protect,” “Comfort,” and “Deliver.” It could be a collection of stories describing all the wonderful acts of God. What an encouraging book that would be! Maybe the cover would have a beautiful sunrise bursting through a thick cloud of fog, attempting to capture the glory of the Lord. Oh, I can see it now, resting on coffee tables everywhere!

Before we send this book to be published, let me ask a question. Would you be able to contribute a story to such a book? Or would the book be filled with stories of what God can do in the lives of other people? Do you believe God can do things in your life? That God can heal, can provide, can calm the storm? Or do you believe God can for *others* but not for you?

Do you believe God can for others but not for you?

Ouch, I just stepped on my own toes—are yours aching too?

In this chapter we are going to address this thorny question: Why do we believe God can do things for others but can't do anything for us? I've asked God for the bandwidth to help us understand why we have trouble believing He *can*, to teach us who He *is*, and to develop our confidence to believe He *will*.

No I Believe!

There's really no gentle way to say this, so I'm going to rip the bandage right off the wound and get this conversation started: we can't

believe a God we don't know. It's impossible to believe God *can* if we don't know who God *is*.

It's impossible to believe God can if we don't know who God is.

Please take note of what I *didn't* say. I did not say that we can't believe in a God we don't know yet. When people first believe in Jesus, they often come to Him with little knowledge and yet trust Him as their Savior. God seeks us: "For the Son of man has come to save that which was lost" (Matt. 18:11 NASB). He chooses us: "Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him" (Eph. 1:4 ESV). It is through a daily commitment to our relationship with Him that we get to know Him. We read His Word, pray, and obey.

Jesus talks about this kind of believing. One day Jesus had a conversation with a Jewish leader who was amazed at all the miracles he had seen Jesus do. Nicodemus said to Jesus, "We know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him" (John 3:2). This Jewish leader had some knowledge of God but did not yet believe in Jesus as God. Jesus explained to Nicodemus that anyone could receive Him, even if they didn't *know* Him; they only had to believe.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.
(John 3:16–17)

The apostle Paul also plainly explained salvation in his letter to the Romans:

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. (Rom. 10:9–10)

For the sake of your eternity, and the opportunity to *know* the God who *can do*, I pray that, if you have not yet taken that step to accept Jesus as your Savior, you will believe in Him and not perish, declare with your mouth that He is Lord, believe in your heart, and profess your faith. He longs for you to know Him and experience Him in your life. Salvation is the first step in believing that God *can do*.

Salvation is the first step in believing that God can do.

Even when we believe in God for our salvation and trust Him with our eternal future, it is not uncommon to have moments of unbelief. Yes, I said *not* uncommon. We may struggle with questions like these: Can salvation be that simple? Am I really saved? Can I really go to heaven after all the terrible things I’ve done? Does God find me useful for joining Him in His work?

Friend, if you have asked Jesus to come into your life and save you, then you are saved! Write the time and place down when you made this decision, if you haven’t already done so. Celebrate it!

Our enemy, the devil (I hate even typing his name), wants to steal the joy and assurance of our faith and replace it with unbelief

about everything God wants to do in and through our life. But there is no way he can steal our salvation: “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand” (John 10:28). Since he can’t snatch us away, Satan desires to render us completely ineffective and unusable in God’s kingdom, for His plan, and for His glory. We have to keep believing that God *can* even when He isn’t at the moment.

We have to keep believing that God can even when He isn’t at the moment.

In the Bible, the apostle Mark told of a time when a man brought his demon-possessed son to Jesus. The man said to Jesus, “If you can?” in regard to his son’s healing. To which Jesus replied, “Everything is possible for one who believes.” The boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” (Mark 9:23–24). Did the man believe or not believe? We can be certain the man believed because he brought his son to Jesus to be healed (Mark 9:17). That being true, why did he cry out to Jesus to help his unbelief?

Apistia (ap-is-tee’-ah) is the Greek word for *unbelief* and means “weakness of faith” or “betraying a trust.”¹ The father had faith, but in that moment, he realized the faith that had brought him to Jesus wasn’t as strong as it should have been. One has to have faith in order to recognize a weakness of faith. Theologian Charles Spurgeon defined this concept as feeble faith, rather than faithless: “While men have no faith, they are unconscious of their unbelief, but as soon as they get a little faith, then they begin to be conscious of the greatness of their unbelief!”²

Another way of saying this is that the man believed what Jesus could do for others but wasn't sure that Jesus could do the same thing for him and his son. Sound familiar?

We will have times in our faith adventure when we momentarily struggle to believe God's promises and have to fight to make His Word an anchor for our soul. This man was one of many in the Bible who were confronted with unbelief. The disciples wrestled with unbelief when people needed to be fed and they only had some fish and bread (John 6:1–15). When her brother died, Martha found it hard to believe that Jesus could do anything about Lazarus's death (11:38–44). We can't forget Thomas, who, after spending years with Jesus, seeing Him perform miracles, and hearing of the plans for His crucifixion and resurrection, had to touch the holes in Jesus's body before he would completely believe (20:24–29).

Wrestling with believing that God *can do* will strengthen our faith. However, when we allow unbelief to convince us He *can't do* or *won't do*, that's when our faith begins to fracture. Each individual mentioned above got real with Jesus about their doubt.

- The father: “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24).
- The disciples: “But what good is that with this huge crowd?” (John 6:9 NLT).
- The sister: “If you had been here, my brother would not have died” (John 11:21).
- The disciple: “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were,

and put my hand into his side, I will not believe”
(John 20:25).

Jesus can handle our temporary uncertainty. God can handle our tough questions. His Spirit will gracefully help us reconcile our unbelief and realign our faith with the truth of His Word. He will lead us to know who He is.

Jesus can handle our temporary uncertainty.

It is true: you can't really start knowing God until you believe and receive Him as Savior. Once you believe *in* Him, you can truly *know* Him. The joy of life is knowing Him and getting to know Him better and better. Let's talk about that—knowing God. Who is this God who *can do*? Oh, the possibilities are endless!

Scripture verifies, “For nothing will be impossible with God” (Luke 1:37 ESV). All we have to do is believe and watch: “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Heb. 11:6). The reward is in the seeking and the knowing.

Who Is the God of Can?

The question has been asked and answered by thousands of experts and theologians: Who is the God of *can*? So to attempt to breathe fresh wind into such a hefty topic is a bit overwhelming. To be completely honest, I feel less than qualified to address it. Who am I

that I can know God? After all, I'm only a wife and mother with an elementary education degree.

Maybe you've felt the same way. Perhaps you've believed the same lie—the "I'm only" lie.

Many years ago, I set out to know God—to know Him beyond my fill-in-the-blank Bible studies and devotionals. With Satan the liar's (John 8:44) fiery words of doubt breathing down my neck, I began reading the Bible, book by book, chapter by chapter, and word by word. With fresh eyes I read stories I had first learned while sitting in the teddy bear chairs of my kindergarten Sunday school class, sipping Hi-C orange drink and nibbling on saltine crackers. My teacher used the felt board to make the stories come to life. Hearing again of the creation, the ark, the tower of Babel, and of Joseph and his colorful coat drew me in like a moth to light. I paused over a word that changed me forever as I read about the exodus of God's people from Egypt.

Through His reluctant leader Moses, God said to the Israelites, "I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians" (Ex. 6:7). God wanted His people to *know* Him. Wow! In reading, I began to notice throughout the Old Testament that phrase, "know that I am the LORD God."

I was never one to pay attention to little, seemingly insignificant words. In fact, I had always struggled with reading as a child, and I often didn't pay attention to words—period. Reading through the Bible was a whole new experience for me. However, on this particular day, this particular word got my attention. Looking

back, I'm certain this was God's whisper to my heart, inviting me to go deeper in my faith.

At the time, I wasn't sure how to dig deeper into the meaning of the word *know*. I was fairly certain it didn't mean the same in English as it did when it was recorded in Hebrew. After fumbling around in some free Bible study websites, I clicked on a link that took me to another link with the meaning of this word as written in Exodus 6:7. Through the word *yada* (yaw-dah'), God tells His people, "I want you to experience Me." *Yada* is an experiential knowledge of God. It means "doing life together with Him, allowing Him to lead the way while we obey and watch the miraculous happen." God wanted to be in relationship with His people then, and He still does today.

God wanted to be in relationship with His people then, and He still does today.

While the Old Testament is written primarily in Hebrew, the New Testament is written primarily in Greek. Therefore, the word for *know* is not the same in both testaments, but the definition paints the same picture. *Ginōskō* (ghin-ocē'-ko) means "to become acquainted with."³ Life experiences, joyous or sorrowful and difficult or delightful, are all ways to become acquainted with someone.

My friendship with my very best friend started in preschool when we were only five years old. Other than God, no one, not even my husband, is more acquainted with the nuances that make me, me. How is this possible? She has known me longer, and we have shared more gut-wrenching, heartbreaking, and belly-laughing moments than I have shared with anyone else I know. We have trusted each

other with information we've never told another living soul. We have *experienced* life together, and those experiences have created a bond that doesn't compare to any other.

Just like my BFF wants to share life with me, the God who *can* wants us to share experiences with Him. Are you having trouble believing me? Okay, then believe Jesus. As Jesus prepared to die, He intimately prayed to His Father. He said, "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3 NKJV). Underline or highlight the word *know*.

Even though I had connected these dots, I still struggled with the idea that God wanted me to know Him beyond knowing what He did for me on the cross. Determined to dig deeper and understand how to know God, I discovered something else: God had more than one name. I could know Him by His many names.

Wait a minute. Press pause. How had I missed this information in all my Bible-study-blank-filling-in and sermon-note-taking? The God of *can do* has other names. Maybe you know this information, or maybe this is your "wait a minute" moment too.

Experiencing life together is not the only way to know someone. It's very important to know the name, or in this case the names, of the person with whom you are sharing life. Another way to experientially know our great God is to call Him by name.

The names of God generally have two parts and begin with either *Yahweh* or *El*. Yahweh, also translated as Jehovah or LORD (notice the all caps), describes God's self-existence and enables us to peek into His character. *El*, which is the plural for Elohim, means "strong one" and is used when discussing God's sovereignty, creativity, and power.

We can know Him as:

- *Yahweh Tsidkenu*: The Lord my Righteousness. God is the source of my righteousness (Jer. 23:6).
- *Yahweh Jireh*: The Lord will provide. God makes provision for His people (Gen. 22:14).
- *Yahweh Maccaddeshcem*: The Lord is my Sanctifier. God forgives my sins and through His Spirit makes me holy, and sets me apart for His purposes (Ex. 31:13 ESV).
- *Yahweh Nissi*: The Lord is my Banner. God fights for His people; He is our victory (Ex. 17:15).
- *Yahweh Shammah*: The Lord is always there. God will never leave or forsake us (Ezek. 48:35).
- *Yahweh Rapha*: The Lord is my Healer. God is the one who heals (Ex. 15:26).
- *Yahweh-Rohi*: The Lord is my Shepherd. The Lord shepherds and cares (Ps. 23:1).
- *Yahweh Shalom*: The Lord is Peace. Our peace comes from God (Judg. 6:24).
- *Yahweh Sabaoth*: The Lord of Hosts. God is the commander of heaven's armies (1 Sam. 1:3 NKJV).

We can call Him:

- *El Shaddai*: God Almighty, who loves and comforts but also corrects and chastens. (Gen. 49:24).

- *El Elyon*: God Most High, who is strong, sovereign, and supreme (Job 42:2).
- *El Roi*: God Who Sees, the one who sees (Gen. 16:13).
- *El-Shaddai Robi*: God Almighty; the mighty One is not like any other “god” (Gen. 17:1).
- *El Deah*: God of Knowledge; all wisdom comes from God (1 Sam. 2:3 NKJV).
- *El Olam*: The Everlasting God, who is unchangeable and inexhaustible (Gen. 21:33 NKJV).

Doesn't just seeing these names cover you with peace like a warm blanket on a cool night? Oh, it does me! I love every one of His names. One of my favorites is Yahweh Jireh (or Jehovah-Jireh), the Lord provides. I've witnessed His provision as I've prayed to Him, calling this name, and watched this name transform my husband's faith.

Not too long ago, and for the second time in a period of a few years, my husband, Scott, found himself without a job. Unemployment is hard on anyone, but especially hard on a man who has a family to support. I encouraged him with words, prayers, and Bible verses on his bathroom mirror. *God will take care of us. God has a plan for you. God sees what's going on. God has something better in store. God is faithful.*

Nothing I said or did seemed to make a difference. As hard as I tried, cried, and prayed, Scott remained jobless and his faith seem to wane. Sometimes God has to get us out of the way so He can work. After a weekend of ministry, I returned home to a husband who

had been ministered to by the Holy Spirit. The conversation went something like this:

Scott: "Did you know that God's name is Jehovah-Jireh?"

Me: "Yes, I did."

Scott: "Do you know that it means 'God will provide'?"

Me: "Yes, I did. How did you find this out?"

Scott: "It was the lesson in Sunday school. God just assured me that He will provide for us."

Sweeter is the blessing to know and to experience Him by name.

Friends, Jehovah-Jireh hasn't failed us. Even when Scott found a job but the company closed and we faced another year of unemployment. During the seasons of having no work, Jehovah-Jireh provided ways for Scott to make money to take care of our family. The God Who Provides wrote a book in my heart and gave me the opportunity to put it on paper and have it published. Now our family tagline is "Jehovah-Jireh."

Each time we were afforded an occasion to work or receive payment for a service we rendered, we called His name. Over the door on the inside of Scott's office are tall vinyl letters spelling Jehovah-Jireh. He intentionally hung God's name there so he would see it from his office chair and constantly be reminded of God's faithfulness, even when His provision looks different from what we expect or is not on our timetable. Would God have provided for our needs even if I hadn't prayed His name of provision? Absolutely. Oh, but sweeter is the blessing to know and experience Him by name. Knowing Him through experience and by name opens our eyes to what He can do.

What God Can Do

Our knowledge of God's names and experiences with Him develop our confidence to believe He *can do*. Let's circle back around to the question that started our chapter: What can God do? Our initial responses might be: *Anything He wants. Everything, because He is all-powerful and all-knowing, and His presence is everywhere.* Maybe there would be more specific answers based on His names: *He can heal. He can save. He can sanctify. He can provide. He can protect.* These would all be correct answers. However, there's a tightrope we walk believing that He can and trying to understand why He doesn't. To help us maintain our balance, we need to revisit the name of God that speaks to the essence of this quandary.

El Elyon describes God as Most High; one who is strong, supreme, and sovereign. The sovereignty of God declares that He is in complete control over all things. And yet, people make real choices with real consequences, both favorable and unfavorable. Since both of these statements are true, we can deduce that God doesn't *cause* all things to happen, but He divinely *consents* to things taking place.

At first glance this might not seem fair. Why would a loving Father allow His children to make huge mistakes or be victims of a heinous act? You are probably nodding your head or even saying out loud, "What she said!" This can of worms has been opened and debated for many years by the best and brightest biblical scholars. God's sovereignty is supposed to be a comfort to us, not an issue to be concerned about or debated over. The truth is that God does not violate our wills by choosing us and redeeming us. Rather, He changes our hearts so that our wills choose Him. The Bible shows us

that “we love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19 NKJV) and “you did not choose me, but I chose you” (John 15:16 ESV).⁴

In regard to mistakes and wrong decisions, God has given us everything we need to wisely discern solutions to the problems we face. “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness” (2 Pet. 1:3). His Word is a book of instructions, full of wisdom and guidance. “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16–17 NASB). We fail to make good decisions when we don’t consult the Word and submit to the Holy Spirit’s work in our life.

El Elyon is stronger than our greatest weakness and higher than anything that seeks to bring us down.

As to the victimizing of individuals because of another’s free will, there is not an easy answer. I could craft some comforting words, but the truth is, the cries of the innocent bewilder me. Scripture is full of individuals who suffered at the hands of the free will of others, starting when Cain killed Abel (Gen. 4:8). Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers (Gen. 37:28), and Dinah (Gen. 34:2) and later Tamar were victims of sexual assault (2 Sam. 13:14). In the New Testament, John the Baptist was beheaded (Matt. 14:8–10), Paul was imprisoned (Acts 16:22–23), and Jesus was crucified (Matt. 27:32–37).

The truth is, on this side of heaven, no one will be able to give a satisfactory explanation to why innocent people suffer. We live in a fallen world, full of sinful people (including us), but we were

saved for an eternal existence by a redeeming and just Father. He will satisfy all suffering and redeem all our pain. God's promise is clear, "And we know [with great confidence] that God [who is deeply concerned about us] causes all things to work together [as a plan] for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to His plan and purpose" (Rom. 8:28 AMP). Please notice the word *know*. It screamed *ginóskō* (ghin-ocē'-ko) to me. In fact, I assumed it was the *ginóskō know*. Oh, but God—He breathed another word into this scripture, one of greater hope for the hurting and those who have been wrongly victimized at the hands of another.

This Greek word for *know* is *eidō*, short *e* (i'-do). *Helps Word Studies* breaks down the meaning like this—get ready, it is *so* good!—"('seeing that becomes knowing') then is a gateway to grasp spiritual truth (reality) from a physical plane ... a physical seeing (sight) which should be the constant bridge to mental and spiritual seeing (comprehension)."⁵

God will make things all right, or help us be all right with things.

In the most simple explanation: God will make things all right, or help us be all right with things, and we will recognize His Spirit's work in doing so.

While making certain all the vile and wrong that happens works out for our good, He wants us to see a spiritual truth and constantly be working to comprehend all things surrounding the situation. In return, He calls us to love Him and live for His purpose. With a promise like this, and such powerful names, who wouldn't love and live for a God like that?

The sovereignty of God is indeed complex. Living under the sovereignty of God means believing He *can*, trusting He *will*, and accepting if He *doesn't*. His sovereignty is supreme and perfect, and we can rest in it. El Elyon is stronger than our biggest weakness and higher than anything that seeks to bring us down. Our fears, faults, failures, and frailties have no power over God's sovereign plan and purpose for our life, so we shouldn't permit them to have power over us. God won't allow anything to thwart His plan, and we shouldn't believe anything or anyone who tells us otherwise. "I know that You can do all things, and that no thought or purpose of Yours can be restrained or thwarted" (Job 42:2 AMPC).

**Living under the sovereignty of God means believing
He can, trusting He will, and accepting if He doesn't.**

What Can God See in Me?

Earlier I shared that Jehovah-Jireh was one of my favorite names of God. Scott and I experienced God through this name. Another of my cherished names of God is El Roi, the God who sees. It overwhelms me to even consider that El Elyon, the supreme and sovereign One, sees me and that He also cares for me. No matter who you are or what you've done, God, the creator of the heavens and earth, cares about you. And what's more awesome is, the very first person to ever call Him El Roi was an Egyptian slave, a castoff from the crowd, and a woman who, by that day's standard, would be considered a nobody.

But she wasn't a nobody to God.

We meet this woman named Hagar in Genesis 16 when she is brought into the twisted saga of Abraham's wife, Sarah, who is desperate to have a child. God promised Abraham that he would father a child late in life and through that child all nations would be blessed. The *Reader's Digest* version of the story goes like this: Sarah became impatient for God's plan. (I can relate to you, Sarah-girl.) She made the hasty decision to let her husband sleep with her maidservant. (I can't relate to *that*! It's messed up on so many levels!) Hagar conceived and gave birth to Ishmael. Sarah got jealous (imagine that), mistreated Hagar, and Hagar ran away. Let's join up with Hagar near a spring in the desert on the road to Shur (Gen. 16:7), where she converses with the angel of the Lord.

God believes everyone is worthy of seeing.

The angel listens and speaks prophecy over her unborn child. Scripture references the conversation this way, "The LORD talked to Hagar." Hagar's response is priceless. "She began to use a new name for God. She said to him, 'You are "God Who Sees Me."' She said this because she thought, 'I see that even in this place God sees me and cares for me!'" (Gen. 16:13 ERV).

God believes everyone is worthy of seeing. He sees in us what no one else can: a *worthwhile possibility*.

God is El Roi, the God who sees. He sees our fears. He sees our faults. He sees our failures and frailties. We see them too, but unlike God, we allow these deficiencies to hold us back from walking out the call God has for our life. Hagar failed. She was part of a scheme that interrupted her life, but she didn't wreck God's plan. (Remember: His plans won't be thwarted, no matter how royally we

mess up.) God wants to use our weaknesses to strengthen us, rather than weigh us down.

God sees in us what no one else can: a worthwhile possibility.

The word *potential* can be defined as “present but not yet visible, apparent, or actualized, excellence or ability that may or may not be developed; possible, as opposed to actual.” A person with potential is someone who is a worthwhile possibility. Despite our fears, faults, failures, and frailties, God sees all His children through the same lens, the lens of potential. Our potential is present, but may not be visible; possible, but may not be actual. In Christ we are a worthwhile possibility.

God *can* see our potential even when we can't. Moses is another excellent example of an individual who had possibility but allowed the weight of his past to keep him from seeing the impact his future could have in the kingdom of God. God had big plans for Moses's life. He was destined to be the leader of God's people; to lead them out of a life of slavery in Egypt and into a life of abundance in the Promised Land of Canaan. He would be the communicator of God's law to God's people and the author of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible). Big plans, I tell you.

God wants to use our weaknesses to strengthen us, rather than weigh us down.

Moses entered the world with a death sentence on his life. The Israelites, even though subjected to cruel slavery, were faithfully prolific. As their numbers increased, so did Pharaoh's insecurity. His attempt to work them harder didn't stop the pitter-patter of Israelite baby feet, but he came up with a plan that would. Pharaoh gave this

order: “Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live” (Ex. 1:22). *But man’s plan can’t thwart God’s plan.* God has given man free will, but ultimately, our choices will be worked out to be in alignment with God’s plan.

Moses was born, and in an attempt to save her child, Moses’s mother placed him in a basket and set the basket in the Nile River. The Nile just happened to be where Pharaoh’s daughter would go to bathe. She found Moses and adopted him as her own. Moses grew up in Egypt, the very place he would eventually fulfill God’s plan for his life, but not before an epic fail. However, we have a lot of his life to examine before then.

As first, Moses didn’t see himself as a worthwhile possibility. In the following chapters, we will closely examine his arguments with God about the calling on his life. Eventually, Moses surrendered his fears, faults, failures, and frailties and lived the life God planned for him.

Do you struggle to believe that God sees you as a person with potential?

He is the God who *can do* and the God who sees. He saw the first drink you ever took. He knows when you went to the clinic and cried the entire time. He sees the links you click and the person you spend time with (who is not your spouse). He sees you crying in the pillow as you process your overspending. He knows that you have to sleep with the light on. He sees you standing in the unemployment line after losing another job. Maybe today you are like Hagar, feeling like a castoff, camped out in the desert region of Shur, wondering, *Does God even see me?*

Oh, my sweet friend, may I hold your beautiful face in my hands and lean in real close to speak truth? He sees your potential and

believes you are a worthwhile possibility. You were destined for a great plan, “for we are His workmanship [His own master work, a work of art], created in Christ Jesus [reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, ready to be used] for good works, which God prepared [for us] beforehand [taking paths which He set], so that we would walk in them [living the good life which He prearranged and made ready for us]” (Eph. 2:10 AMP).

God sees your potential and believes you are a worthwhile possibility.

God determines your destiny. Don't allow your fears, faults, failures, and frailties to derail you from His plan. He has saved you and called you to a holy life—not because of anything you have done, but because of His own purpose and grace, grace given to you in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time (2 Tim. 1:9).

Reflecting on What God Can Do

1. I remember reading Genesis 1:1 when I was little, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Little-girl me was blown away by a God so big, who could create everything. What Bible stories have you read, or even just heard about, that have shaped your idea of who God is in a significant way?

2. In this chapter, I shared a couple of my favorite names of God. Now it's your turn. Choose two names of God that stand out to you. What do those names mean to you? Select a name that's new to you, and pray this week to God using that new name.

3. I have a skin condition call rosacea, and the thought of someone seeing me without makeup unnerves me. But God doesn't care about my complexion. God sees me. God sees you. You are never alone, and God is a come-as-you-are God. What do you feel when you think about the fact that God sees who you are?

4. Sometimes I wonder what in the world God was thinking when He chose me to serve Him through speaking and writing. Moses also did not consider himself worthy to be God's messenger. Yet he led the Israelites out of their suffering in Egypt and saw God face to face. What does that tell you about what God can do?

5. Our looks or abilities are of no concern to God. Turn in your Bible to Proverbs 31:30. What kind of women will be praised? Turn to 1 Samuel 16:7. What does God look at when He looks at you? Write a short prayer to God in response to these two scriptures.

Revealing My Potential

Use the space provided to respond to this prompt: “You are a worthwhile possibility.” What do those words mean to you?

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal lines.

Lined area for writing, featuring horizontal lines and a diagonal watermark reading "Copyrighted Material".

Copyrighted Material

