

HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

Hidden Potential

Possibility Profile: Sharon

WP=Wendy Pope

S=Sharon

(Music)

WP: So we're just going to have a little bit of a chat. Um, and some of you may have read chapter three, which is Sharon's failure book chapter, um, her profile. Can we scoot up here? We got it. We got it. We're good. Okay. Um, and so if you haven't read it, this will be a little bit of a preview because we have just a little bit of time to, um, to discuss things. But in deep detail, she shares her story at the end of chapter three. So, Sharon take us to the day that I called you. And how did you respond to that call? Tell them, I mean, like I was scared. Was I scared? Could you hear it in my voice?

S: I think you were, you were scared, but I think that you were really caring about my heart and wanting to make sure that I was, um, far along enough in my healing that you weren't ripping open a wound. And, um, I knew that. The wonderful thing about the timing was, and Wendy had shared with me that she, um, had my name on the sticky note in her car and prayed for months, and I don't take that lightly. Um, the neat thing was, uh, I was driving in the car and my phone rang and my daughter was with me in the car. And, um, my husband, Jim and my son Joshua, and my daughter Gabrielle had walked through this failure with me and really been such a support. And they had seen, um, the difficulty I went through, the humiliation, feeling shame, um, and they had completely reflected Christ to me during all of that. They lived out the gospel with me. They said, mom, we, we love you. This is, this is not a big deal to us. So they had walked through all of that with me. And when Wendy's call came and my daughter was with me, um, Wendy was scared, I was delighted. When I heard her request immediately I knew I was completely fine sharing about the failure, um, because I knew that God would use it for his purposes and for his glory. And I was delighted that, um, my daughter was in that car and that she could hear Wendy's voice and that she could hear and know that the redemption was beginning.

WP: So tell us about your failure.

S: So before I share what my failure was, I want you to know that I do keep this in perspective. Um, what my failure was compared to other failures I have committed, this particular failure was not a sin. Um, other failures that I have committed and failures you may have experienced, I keep this in perspective. Um, there are other things more serious, but it still affects our heart the same way, it can threaten our faith.

WP: And don't minimize it either. This was a dream. Have you ever dreamed something? A huge dream? Okay. So that's where we are. Set the stage for yourself because it was big.

S: It was big. Lots of prayer had gone into prayer lots of years. Thank you for, for saying that. And, um, you know, this was something that my family was invested in, my friends were invested in, um, the

HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

support of my friends and my family was unbelievable, but Wendy and I met 14 years ago, um, at, uh, She Speaks, She Speaks conference. And immediately when Wendy and I met, we had actually met over the phone before it, but we, we were just kindred spirits. I had an immediate connection, immediate comfort with Wendy. So she had seen me through many years. And I enjoy writing and I had desired to write, and there were many years that I went and had met with different publishers and they all liked my ideas and liked me, but it wasn't something that I had never gotten a, an offer for a book. And I was really fine with that because I, the verse that I always used for ministry that I truly believe in is in Psalm 127, unless the Lord builds a house we labor in vain. And I don't want to labor in vain. I, you know, the Lord needs to build the house. That's nothing that I want to do on my own. This particular year, I had met with a few publishers and they all were interested in my two book ideas. And I had gotten an offer from a publisher and for both books, um, the first book was called, "Why is my Raincoat Dryclean Only?", and it was about obeying God, um, obeying God's instructions, even when they don't make sense. And then the other book was a devotional called "Table for Two".

WP: Now we celebrated because...

S: Oh, we celebrated, we did. This was, I remember Wendy walked in, saying goodbye to her that day at the conference. And she looked right at me and she said, no, you go write that book. It's something that she had walked through with me, my family and my friends - I have a dear group of friends that threw me a celebration brunch, and it was Christmas time and they did, they decorated a Christmas tree and raincoats, and it was crazy. Um, but it was a rejoicing this time of, of great rejoicing. So I had worked, um, on the book I had had some of it done, but the, the timeline that the publisher gave me was really, really short. And I kept checking in with Wendy and another friend of ours, Lisa, who's also a writer. And I'm like, I feel like I need more time. And they kept just saying, you meet your, your, um, obligations and your commitment, do what you need to do and get the book in, the manuscript in. So I had prayer groups, I had peer editing, I worked hard. I felt like I had done a responsible job. However, I was a first-time author. I had devotions published, I had magazine articles published, but this is a book and I was new at it. And I knew it. And I was looking forward to the editing process with a professional publisher, knowing that I would need that. So when I finally did, um, submit the manuscript under a very, very short and tight deadline, um, I then waited, you know, I was waiting for the email back saying, okay, let's start the editing process. So, um, I think it was a day before my family was leaving for vacation, I did get an email from the publisher but it wasn't to begin the editing process. They told me that they were no longer interested in publishing my book and they wanted to terminate the contract. When you read the book, you'll see a little bit more of what they said to me. Um, so this was quite a shock to me and, uh, very disappointing. Um, when I had gotten the book contract, I had just been through a very long trial in my life of about 10 years that was very difficult so I really felt like this book was just a little gift from the Lord. Um, my husband had encouraged me to write, my kids were very supportive, so this email came and again, I'm keeping it in perspective, but if I'm being honest, um, I lost my breath and I landed on the floor, just sobbing. And, um, my husband came in and I just showed him the email and he was equally as stunned. You know, when, when things like this happen, sometimes they're very private and sometimes they're more public. This was something we had announced. And again, it's just my little small world, but it was somewhat public.

HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

WP: It was more than somewhat. It was, it wasn't, she's very, she's, it was more than somewhat. It was your dream coming true. And you telling all of your friends and then you have to tell your friends, they said, I wasn't good enough. That's what the message was.

S: Yeah. So it's humiliating, and you do feel ashamed even though in this failure, it wasn't sinful but you still feel a sense of shame. I sat in my dining room with Jim and, um, honestly as public as it was, what happened in the four walls of my home was more important than anything else. I wanted my kids to be proud of me and, um, I didn't want them to be disappointed. I didn't want them to be embarrassed. So Jim walked with me into the kitchen where the kids were and they saw I was upset and I shared the news with them. And they, at that moment just reflected the love of Christ, the redemption of Christ and the gospel. And they said, mom, we are so proud of you. We love you. You are not a failure. And from that moment, what happened in the walls of my home really helped me, um, to move forward in healing. Wendy, uh, our friend Lisa, they called me every day. My wonderful friends would come over and bring me things.

WP: So talk to us about your, inside your home. That's how it was, but inside your heart, how did you, what did you want to do? Did you, did you want to deny it? Did you want to just fix it and, and solve that problem and make sure nobody knew about it and try to make things right with the publisher? Did you want to, did you want to find a Midian to go to? What did you, how did you process that? I mean, that's, it's beautiful what Jim and the kids did, but in your heart and outside, facing your friends and then dealing with it and have you shown, have you dealt with it?

S: Yeah. And so, because I was under contract, there were some things that I had to debug. So there were some things that we had to tend to, God was extremely gracious. We have a friend who's a lawyer. He helped me through that, he helped Jim and me through that. We had a Christian book agent contact me and said, listen, I don't like what's going on. I'd like to help you through this. God was so gracious to help us debug the practical things that we did need to debug. So I did have to tend to that, I had to, you know, had to kind of put her to grow up and kind of deal with. That.

WP: You had to push your emotions aside, right? And then deal with the practical.

S: Yes.

WP: And then you were left with, okay the practical parts been settled. How did you move forward? And do you still taste that?

S: Yeah, so I don't, um, I never really had a problem with denial and this one, and there was no denial, denying as I was down on the floor eating the carpet fibers, but, um, darling, you talk about darting in this chapter. And I definitely went to, um, a Midian, but I needed to be there, and I didn't regret it. Um, I wanted to be there. As painful as this was for me and embarrassing from the outset when it happened, I knew - and again, Wendy talks about the sovereignty of God in this chapter - I knew that whatever was happening to me did not pass through, it did pass through the sovereignty of God and his love. And, um, I know that whatever He was doing, He was protecting me. He was redirecting me.

HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

WP: Would you say that failure, um, that failure takes us to a place that when failure is the conduit, maybe to get us to a place where God needs us to be, to do something that he wants us to do, have you seen redemption in this? Are you still writing? Are you, where are you with that?

S: So to be honest, I, um, I do write occasionally, it definitely took the wind out of my sails, and I actually felt like it was the appropriate thing for me, for me in that situation - other authors may feel differently - for me to not write because I just needed to draw near to the Lord. I needed to go to Midian and just tend to the sheep. And, um, you know, if he was gonna bring me a burning bush, he was bringing me a burning bush, but I really felt like for me I needed to step back. And it's interesting because as I said, the name of the book is, um, "Why is my Raincoat Dry-clean Only?" and it's about obeying and honoring God when things don't make sense. And when I did share this news with my family and my friends, um, my brother said to me, you know, Sharon, um, I guess you have to live out the message of your book right now. You need to honor God, even though this doesn't make any sense. And I thought, well, shut my mouth. There it is right there.

WP: That was really southern Sharon. That was good.

S: I really felt like, you know, it was more important for me to really understand and live out the message of the book rather than having the book ever published, because things happen to all of us that don't make sense. Right. And we still have to choose and respond to honor the Lord and to obey Him even when they don't make sense.

WP: So what do you think your biggest lesson from this professional failure is in your life? What do you, what did you learn from that and how did it shape the next years, the next few years of your life?

S: Yup. So I think one of the, one of the big lessons I think throughout life, and you mentioned this Wendy was, um, really just humility. Um, really just keeping our hearts yielded to the Lord, um, being humble before him, only doing what He wants us to do, um, which I thought I, I was, but you know, when we're in the middle of a failure, our response is so important. And I had to pretty quickly decide how I was going to respond because, um, this would affect other people. And, um, I wanted to, even though I was a mess, I wanted to respond well because I knew people were watching. Not that I was, I was honest. I was transparent. I was all of that. I was ugly. Um, but we, we have to choose to respond well, to trust Him, trust His sovereignty and really to say, and again, in this particular failure wasn't a sin, but whether your failure is or isn't, to go back to Psalm 139 and at the end where it says, "Search me, Oh God and know my heart. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting." And that was my prayer.

WP: And even though a sin is not, sin is failure, but failure's not always sin, it can lead us, if we don't deal with it, it can lead us to, to sin. It can lead us away from God. That's why the correct response is so important. All right. So, Sharon, I want you to answer the question we started with the question and is that "I am still, am I still useful after I fail?" Will you answer that question for us?

HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

S: We, we are absolutely useful. Um, you know, Scripture says that He had works prepared for us ahead of time. Um, as we learn through our fears and our faults and our frailties and our failures, we are absolutely useful. What He wants to do during that healing process and that redemption process will be different in every heart in this room, but we are absolutely useful. We need to steep ourselves in God's Word. We need to, um, Romans says that a mind controlled by the Holy Spirit is life and peace. We have to let that control our mind, and we have to walk in cadence with the Lord, you know, again, unless the Lord builds the house we labor in vain,