

# HIDDEN POTENTIAL *by Wendy Pope*

Hidden Potential

Possibility Profile: Sherri

WP=Wendy Pope

S=Sherri

(Music)

WP: So, what do we need to do with our fear? How do we move from this place of being fearful, to being hopeful? Well, my guest this week is a dear friend of mine. And I promised, I promised myself I wasn't going to get emotional, but she lived through my greatest fear. And she's here to talk to us about her story. And we both talked before we went live, that we don't want the focus tonight to be on her story, but to be on the hope she had in the midst of the story that she was chosen to live. So, would you please welcome, my friend Sherri. And Sherri was one of the, as I told you last week... Um Sherri, I don't know if you've had a chance to listen, but I told you that I put everyone's name on little sticky notes. Sherri was one of the first people who came to... Oh, we forgot your mic. That's alright. Sandra, will you hand me that little bag too. The beauty of live, right?

Sherri was one of the first names that the LORD gave me and I didn't want to call you, because I didn't want to bring Sherri's failure, I mean Sharon's failure up, and I didn't want to rehash the fear.

S: Mm-hmm

WP: But your fear, that you lived through and are on the other side of, probably think about on a daily basis, was my greatest fear. And that is, being a young widow.

S: Mm-hmm

WP: I feared, my husband Scott, traveled a lot in his job, and every time he got on an airplane I was scared. And one night, one trip he went on, he put a card on my bed, and it was the sweetest thing, under my pillow. But it said something to the effect of, "if something happens, and I don't make it back, I love you, I love the kids....". When he got home, I said don't ever leave me one of those notes again. So, share a little bit about your story, and what happened on that day, August, when you, 18<sup>th</sup>, August 18<sup>th</sup>, right?

S: Mm-hmm August 18<sup>th</sup>

WP: It's marked in my Bible to pray for you on that day.

S: 2013, so I'm about 6 and a half years in. And I went to bed on August 17<sup>th</sup>, without that fear. I mean it wasn't something that I was fearful of, losing my husband. Especially at a young age, it's just not something I thought about. I had fears, but that wasn't really one of them. And when I woke up on August 18<sup>th</sup>, I was very afraid. Very afraid. It was the scariest day of my life. And also, the future, you know, facing the future without him, was very, very scary. So, I didn't have any warning, like you were talking about earlier. You know, your tire light comes on, you get a warning. But sometimes fear hits you with no warning.

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WP: Right.

S: There were no signs, no warning that, that anything was going on with him. He actually took his own life, and so, you know, I was very afraid. It was a very scary time. And still, I still battle with fear sometimes. Am I going to get my girls raised? You know, are we going to have the financial resources that we need? You know, just different things. You know, I have had cancer since he died. Will the cancer come back, you know?

WP: Right

S: So, I still do battle, battle fear, you know. I think we all do. Like this week, this period in our history, I think we're all battling fear right now.

WP: So you took that fear, and then you were talking about having to, how do you provide for your family. Because you were a stay at home mom. You did all the mom things. Sherri was always where moms were. Bakin' things, makin' things, room mother. She and Harry both were serving in church, you were always involved in the community. So, at that point, it was like, what do I do now?

S: Mm-hmm

WP: And as God would have it, you went back to school.

S: I did.

WP: And that was something that you probably never even thought about doing.

S: Never

WP: How did you transition into I'm going to go back to school.

S: Well, I knew that I needed to provide for my family because Harry was the sole provider and I had been a stay at home mom for twenty-plus years. And so I just began to pray and seek the Lord. And, I had not worked in so long, I did not look good on paper. You know, I knew I could do something, and I knew I could do it well. But I didn't look good on paper. So I didn't know where to start. So I just started praying and I just, God had been so real to me and so faithful to me in this loss. Like, I became a Christian at ten years old. I have believed the things I believe all my life, but I know them differently now.

WP: Wow

S: And He had been so faithful and so real to me, I thought, how can I share that with other people who are struggling. So I decided to go back to school and get my counseling degree. And I did it online, I couldn't really go to class as a single mom, so I did it online. And it took 3 years, and I got my counseling degree, and now I've been a counselor for a little over 2 years.

WP: And as God would have it, you're sitting here with us tonight, on this day, sharing your story. And we just want to kind of talk a little bit about, what do we do in this place. I outlined some things in the book and we both have our copy, and hopefully you have your copy. You're on page, 94. Did I say the right page?

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S: Mm-hmm

WP: Yeah, 94, if you have a copy of Hidden Potential, and if you don't, write these notes down. We kind of went over a little bit of this, and these are some of the things you outline with and go over with in your counseling with people. Because I have a feeling, you probably talk to people who are fearful.

S: Mm-hmm, a lot.

WP: Yes

S: Anxiety, probably the biggest need in counseling is anxiety.

WP: Right.

S: Which is, is fear.

WP: Right, absolutely. So, let's go through these, let's just go through these. So my first, and I'm not a counselor, so I'm going to lean into her. I listen to the Holy Spirit, and she listens to the Holy Spirit but she also has a degree behind that. So behind PAUSE, what do we need to think about when we are in fear? I put PAUSE, and just recognize that moment of fear, how important is that?

S: Mm-hmm

WP: To acknowledge it?

S: It's important, and you know, deep breathing is very underrated. It is a very important thing to do.

WP: Wow, okay.

S: Um, and that's part of the PAUSE. Take some deep breaths, breathe in and count. Because what you wanna do is try to get your brain to focus on something other than the fear.

WP: Okay

S: And so if you take some deep breaths and count, and focus on the counting, it will give your mind just a break for a minute from the fear that's kind of crippling you.

WP: So, not PAUSE, and try to figure out a solution, but PAUSE... and just concentrate on that breathing to basically distract you from that moment.

S: Mm-hmm, that's one tool. And I always say too, my favorite verse is Isaiah 26:3 and it says, "You keep him", I like to say 'her', "You keep her in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You because she trusts in You". So I think part of the PAUSE is returning your mind to the Lord. Change what you're thinking about. Focus on Him.

WP: Okay.

S: You know, and just today I was reading in Psalms 77, and it's a Psalm of Asaph. And he's talking about a distressful time, he's filled with distress, and where is the Lord? Have you left me forever? And then, you know what he says he does? He remembers... He remembers God's faithfulness. He thinks about God's mighty works, and I think that's so helpful for us. And especially me, in these last six and a half

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years, I can think about all the ways God has provided for me and for my family. And taken care of us and met needs that I never knew I would have. And it causes me to trust Him, in times like this.

WP: Right.

S: He's always been faithful, and He will continue to be faithful.

WP: I like to call that my memory bank of faithfulness. You just keep making those deposits over those years when you aren't fearful or when things kind of are on more of a steady plane. And when things plummet, kind of like they are right now, you can go back and say, "hey wait a minute, He was faithful then." We start making those withdrawals at that point.

S: Right.

WP: And they can help us in that PAUSE. And that deep breath, get our focus back on Him and can remember some of those things. And then naturally, the next thing, and I've used "P"s, because I'm a writer, and I try to make things all in, you know, work together.

S: Alliteration

WP: Alliteration, that's the word I was looking for. We've got PAUSE, and then PRAY. And I put pray out loud. How important is it to talk out loud?

S: Very important. Yes.

WP: And I mention that today in our lesson. How important is that to our mind and our transition.

S: You and I talked about Satan cannot hear our thoughts, so for us to praise the Name of Jesus, or pray out loud, it causes Satan to flee. Which is what we want to do, because he will capitalize on our fears. And so talking out loud is huge. And I say things like, "I trust you Jesus.", "You love me Jesus.", "You're here with me Jesus.". I say those kinds of things. And it serves a lot of purpose. It helps me remember that I can trust Him. It helps me change my focus back from the fear, from my circumstances, to the Lord. So, praying out loud is very important.

WP: One of the things I like to, when I'm teaching, I like to remind the people that I'm teaching to, is for a long time, I tell the story for a long time I felt like, because I didn't know every Bible verse that I was trying to recite by memory, or I couldn't remember the address, that somehow it wasn't heard. Or I didn't get credit for it, so to speak. In these moments, that kind of thing doesn't matter. So, if you don't have it memorized like her Isaiah verse, or the Psalms 77. You don't have that memorized, don't go, "well I don't have a verse memorized.". Say what you know. God is love. God you love me. God you died on the cross for me. Tell the things that you know. Give a popcorn part of the verses. Popcorn praise. Popcorn part of the verses, let them pop out in that praise, because the Word of God is light. And light can't be in darkness.

S: Right.

WP: And because Satan is not omniscient, he doesn't know our thinking. We have to tell him what we're thinking. And we have to pull those right thoughts back up. Alright, the third thing I put was put off major decisions. For sure. Because we're not in our right...

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S: Right, you're not thinking clearly. If you are crippled by a fear, you're not going to be thinking clearly. So, it's a good idea to put off big decisions. And I can't give you an exact timeline you know, after 6 months, or after a year.

WP: Right.

S: It will be individual to you, to your fear, to your circumstance. But yeah, it's better to wait till you're a little more clear minded...

WP: Right.

S: to make big decisions.

WP: How important is putting it down on paper? How important is recording that moment, how you're feeling physiologically? How important is that?

S: It's also very important. One of the biggest tools that I share with clients, whether they're battling anger or anxiety, or depression, is journaling. Journaling is a very good tool for all of us. You can journal any way you want to. You can write it as a prayer. You can write it as a diary, what happened, how you're feeling. The physical repercussions of it, the mental, the emotional, the spiritual. It helps us process. It helps us recognize what we are feeling. It helps us process, for me, if I have a lot going on in my brain, I don't function well. And for me, writing things down, helps me clear my head. And then I'm able to focus on something else.

WP: Absolutely.

S: So, writing it down is huge.

WP: And, fear and anxiety, and all of the things that we're talking about tonight, can have a physiological effect on us. So, it really would not even be a bad idea. If you're experiencing, if in the moment, fear has become a way of life, fear. You certainly would want to, and I know you would probably advise, to seek counseling. I mean, that's what you do.

S: Mm-hmm

WP: But also, have a physical check up. Go to your doctor. Say, I'm experiencing these things. I'm not, I'm a proponent of medical intervention if needed. I do believe God can heal us and He can deliver us from things, but also I believe medicine is part of God's miracles for us here. And if that's necessary, that's not a sin either. I know that you have probably counseled in that way.

S: I think as Christian women, we feel like we shouldn't have it.

WP: Absolutely.

S: Because we know, God is the healer, and He is the Great Physician. I think we feel like, oh our testimony will be more relevant and more helpful if God just takes the anxiety away from us or the depression or whatever it is. But part of our testimony might be that medicine helped us. And we can then help encourage another friend or sister who needs the medicine.

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WP: Absolutely. It gives us that longer wick, it gives us a bigger view of, overlooking those moments of fear and how to deal with them. And maybe can direct us back to that PAUSE that we need to do, because sometimes, those in the moment fears, become that way of life fear, and we can't get to a place of PAUSE. I know, I've shared openly and even in the book about my daughter's anxiety. And there are times when I can't talk her off the ledge. You know, and it's hard to get to that, okay breathe, that sounds really good, but how do I get there? And it's hard for her to get there.

S: And it's very hard when you're in the moment...

WP: Absolutely

S: to do the tools that are helpful. It's hard to do those, when you're having an anxiety attack, or you're crippled by fear, it's very difficult.

WP: Absolutely.

S: In the journaling, also I will say, one of the best things we can do is keep a gratitude journal.

WP: Oh, good.

S: Not only journal about your fear and the effects of it, but also just write down a couple of good things a day. A couple of things you're thankful for a day. On the day my husband died, the worst day of my life by far. I could have thought of hundreds of things I was thankful for without even trying. So even on our worst days, we can think of things we're thankful for. And I tell my clients all the time, it doesn't have to be mature spiritual things. Sometimes it is. Sometimes it's a Krispy Kreme doughnut. You know? It can be anything that was good for you that day. Anything that was a blessing. Some days I write down 10, some days I write down 1. Some days I don't write down any, but when I can, I write down things. Because you know what it does? It takes our focus back to the Giver of the gift, and it helps us keep our focus on the Lord. Which is where it needs to be...

WP: Right.

S: instead of on our fear.

WP: That reverent fear. Turn it back to God. You are who You say You are. You do what You say You can do. And, I trust You. Back to redirecting all of that. How important is God's Word? We use that as PROBE here, that's our last P.

S: THE most important. The most important.

WP: Okay.

S: Whatever the battle is we face, there is no better help than God's Word. It has everything we need. It has encouragement. It has instructions, wisdom. You know, it just has examples of His faithfulness that we can go back and study. And it helps us know, He'll be faithful in our situation. It is the single most important thing in our life.

WP: Right.

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S: I think. Digging into God's Word. It's the main way He speaks to us.

WP: Mm-hmm.

S: It's the most important thing. Daily, every day.

WP: Right.

S: It is, I say critical. I tell my clients, I can tell you coping strategies all day long, but the one most important thing is to spend time in God's Word.

WP: One of the easiest ways to, at this point, when you're having fear, and you need some verses really quick, Google. I mean, just type in, verses about fear, and you would be surprised at probably 6, 7 pages...

S: List after list

WP: of lists of all of those. And there was a time in our family when we had some things going on and I remember putting verses on index cards and putting them over the door posts in my house. My Griffin was little at the time, and he didn't understand, so he was, what are you doing? I said, well I'm covering our house in God's Word. And we left them up there for a long time. Long time, till we were through that season. So maybe you even wanna do that. Put them on your dash of the car, your mirror in your home. Write them down in a journal, a little spiral journal. Take it with you. But, in the moment it's hard to find those verses right here in the Bible. So Google those, look them up and record those. And get those, keep those close by, so you don't have to, "well I can't remember it.". I can't find it in my Bible, "oh, never mind.". Have them right there with you.

S: Absolutely. I'm a big fan of the index card and sticking them all over the place.

WP: Right.

S: By the kitchen sink, I know that's where I spend a lot of my time. So if you stick a verse or two by the kitchen sink, you know, you'll see it.

WP: Right.

S: Many times a day.

WP: And not just fear. Anything that we're dealing with.

S: Right.

WP: Because fear can actually bring up lots of different emotions and struggles that we have in our life. So, God's Word, as my little Griffin used to say, little, 19 now; I would say something and I would quote back a verse, or part of a verse, and he would say, "the Bible has an answer for everything!". And it does, just like you said.

S: It really does.

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WP: It's where our answer is. So, interestingly as we wrap up, there is, the father of lies is Satan. And Jesus refers to him, in John 8:44. But He also refers to truth, as we've just been talking about, as setting us free. He says in John 8:31, "If you hold to my teachings", and that's what we've been talking about here in our time together with Sherri. "You are my disciples, then you will know the truth and the truth", will what?

S: "set you free."

WP: "set you free." And that answers our question I believe that we can be faithful.