
EVENTS NEWSLETTER

PEARLS OF WISDOM (P.O.W)

Welcome to WoW², Women of Worship, Women of Witness. This newsletter captures special events we participate in outside of our normal meetings. Some events happen with other small groups, and/or other people, but some do not. This event was our annual WoW² retreat, where we gather for special teachings related to the title. This newsletter will not capture everything, and the topics may not be in the exact order discussed; however, it is intended to capture key points from our time together, with like topics being grouped together for convenience.

Moreover, since the lesson was very free flowing, some topics from my message notes may not have been shared but have been included in this newsletter. We hope you are blessed as you join us on our journey.

EVENT TYPE: Retreat

EVENT DATE: September 24, 2022

HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR RETREAT:

- The **name** of this retreat was P.O.W. (Pearls of Wisdom). This acronym also had a double meaning: Pearls of Wisdom to set the Prisoners of War free.
- The **theme** for this retreat was **Denim & Pearls**, so everyone who had denim and pearls was encouraged to wear them, and our wonderful events coordinator also had the entire atmosphere decked out with denim and pearls!
- **The message.** I had several bags of freshwater oysters containing a cultured pearl. And since I felt like the Holy Spirit was telling me to keep it simple, being the visual learner that I am, I used one of those bags as a visual aid for the message.
- **Application.** To bring the message home, application questions were asked to help make the information personal to each of us. The hope is that we will allow the Holy Spirit to continue speaking to our hearts regarding these questions in a way that produces pearls of wisdom we can share with others.

- **The interaction.** The original plan was to do two messages, “The Value of Pearls,” and “The Value of Wisdom.” However, we had a lot of meaningful interaction during the first session, which included many of the key points from the message on wisdom, so the message for the day ended up being: “**The Story of the Oyster and the Pearl.**”

THE STORY OF THE OYSTER AND THE PEARL:

- **The bag.** Each bag contained four individual freshwater oysters, with each oyster containing a pearl. Additionally, there was a bowl on the table containing several more bags. Each bag represented a community, which spoke to how we were gathered in my home. The other bags of oysters spoke to other communities that gather.
- **The individual oysters in the bag.** The individual oysters represented each of us gathered in my home. However, once the oyster left the bag, it was no longer in that same community. Likewise, once we left retreat, we would no longer be in the same community.
- **The wrapper.** Each oyster was vacuum sealed in a bag that provided a level of protection. Just as the wrapper protects the oyster, God protects us.
- **The discussion.** Just like the oysters have a purpose, so do we, and one of those purposes is to produce a gift. Using the analogy of we are the oyster, I went on to share what I know about how pearls are made along with some spiritual insights I received while preparing the message
 - **Wisdom defined.** Since wisdom is the overall topic of the day, I’m going to start off by defining wisdom. Based on Dictionary.com, wisdom requires “knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action.” Therefore, for us to make a wise decision, all those components must be involved in the process of determining our actions. For instance, we cannot make an informed decision without the proper knowledge, and as daughters of God, Scripture should be our main source of what is true, which will help us to know what is right and just.
 - **The multifaceted wisdom of God.** While sharing a testimony related to Psalm 139:13-16, I shared how the words “many colors” in verse 15 (Amplified version) reminded me of the multifaceted wisdom of God, which is something we

frequently discuss in small group! It also led into our discussion on the different types of pearls.

- **Types of pearls.** There are three kinds of pearls: natural, cultured, and imitation, which can be summed up as “**real**” (natural and cultured that come from living organisms) or **fake** (manmade). And even though fake is fake, we could look around and see even fake pearls can be a source of beauty. We also took note that, while imitation pearls might be pretty, the time it takes to make real pearls contributes to their value.
- **The source.** Natural and cultured pearls can come from diverse types of mollusks, such as mussels, clams, conchs, and gastropod; some mollusks can produce multiple pearls. This diversity was also represented in our group with women of different ages, ethnicities, and even our maturity in Christ, each of us with a pearl inside! And just like with the oyster, our pearls are not for us to enjoy, for producing pearls brings no pleasure to the oyster! However, they can bring joy and pleasure to others!
- **The process.** Natural and cultured pearls are formed when an **irritant** of some kind gets into the oyster’s shell. It can take three years for the oyster to be ready to receive the irritant, at which point its defense mechanism kicks in and produces “layer upon layer” of a coating called “nacre,” which is also referred to as “**Mother of Pearl**.” Once the process begins, it can take another three years to create the pearl.
- **Likening ourselves to the oyster.** Since we said earlier each individual oyster represented us, our irritants are seeds planted today that can produce a future harvest. So, I shared one of my main irritants for the past 20 years has been coming to terms with being a “homemaker.” It’s something I’ve battled with off and on ever since I got out of the military, because it was hard for me to see the value in it.
 - **Question.** What irritant is inside your shell – your heart – that God is allowing in your life to cultivate a pearl of wisdom within you?
- **The irritant.** Unlike with natural pearls where the irritant gets in without assistance from man, oyster farmers surgically implant the irritant to create

cultured pearls. This led to a few questions and some shared testimony on my part:

- **Question.** Who in your life is Abba empowering to be a “mother of pearl” implanting irritants in your life to cultivate a pearl of wisdom.
- **Question.** Have you counted the value of having that person in your life?
- **Question.** Who or what are you discounting as not “valuable enough” to be a source of wisdom in your life?
- **Testimony.** My spiritual mother was in attendance, and I shared and repented for how in the early days of our relationship, she would sometimes get on my last nerve with the advice she was giving me. It was not until one day, God told me to shut up and listen. However, because I wasn’t ready or willing to fully do that, I eventually disappeared (for which I publicly repented). The thing is, there are times when it’s the ones that irritate you the most that are preparing you to produce a pearl! And now that I value having her in my life, I also value the advice she gives me.
- I’ve even learned, now, to not discount people because of their age, because I’ve been listening to and learning a lot from a young homemaker on YouTube. So, even though I’m probably old enough to be her mother, by listening to her and implementing what works in my household, I have gained a peace and an appreciation for the space that God has created in my life that allows me to wholeheartedly serve my family rather than having to also pursue a career I have no interest in. However, something I don’t think I clearly explained is it’s okay to have interests outside your home. The point of being a homemaker is to ensure inside your home reflects a Proverbs 14:1 atmosphere that builds those within rather than tear them down.
- Additionally, I’ve even been blessed to now receive some of my best pearls from one of the women in attendance that I use to mentor. One of those pearls is “life happens here,” which really helped me move from a

perfection mindset when it comes to my home to being able to enjoy the fact that life does happen here, so my home doesn't have to look like a magazine cover! So, never discount someone because of age or even because you've poured into them, because what you poured in could one day produce a harvest that nourishes you!

- **The environment.** Oysters can produce pearls in both freshwater and saltwater environments, and ironically, saltwater pearls tend to be more valuable. In **Matthew 5:13**, we are told that we are the salt of the earth, so even in our saltwater environments – those that don't feel as good or as fresh as sitting in the company of like-minded believers – we are to produce pearls of wisdom as gifts to others.
- **The oyster farms.** The word “farm” reminded me of the second episode of the Raising Godly Women podcast (The Women of the Soils),¹ where the guest speaker shared how God is our Master Gardener; therefore, it stands to reason He sees every irritant that comes our way, and just like He created the oyster to turn that irritant into something beautiful, He created us to do the same.
 - **Question.** Do we allow our irritants to create something beautiful OR do our irritants become weeds in our garden that choke the life out of us?

The pearl. Last, but not least, we looked at the pearl itself. The color of the pearl is genetically determined by the host mollusk, and it is also one of the many ways to determine if the pearl is real or not. Other factors like water conditions, disease, or nutrient supply can impact the color, meaning when things are less than ideal for the oyster the color is affected. And since pearls can be used to create a pair of earrings, a bracelet, or even strung together to create a necklace, would that jewelry be as beautiful to us if the color wasn't pleasing to the eye, especially since color is one of the ways to determine if a pearl is valuable. Likewise, the words we speak determine the color of wisdom that others see!

¹ *The Women of the Soils*. Raising Godly Women Podcast. 21 September 2021. Website: <https://raisinggodlywomen.buzzsprout.com/1792483/9188039-the-women-of-the-soils>.

- **Question.** When things are less than ideal for us, what about us changes that our “different color” of wisdom is evident to those around us?
- **Real or fake.** Discussing fake pearls and their value sparked a discussion that started with “beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” Something that’s pretty might just be all glitter. And while it might be difficult to tell real from fake, once you get close **and** have the knowledge, you are able to discern the difference. This also applies to wisdom. As with all things, the enemy of our souls seeks to counterfeit the things of God, thus we also need knowledge to be able to discern the difference in the world’s wisdom and God’s wisdom. I don’t remember if we covered this in depth, since it was intended to be a part of the second message, but the distinction is found in James 3:13-18.
- **One last analogy.** Before heading to lunch I shared how the pearl is in a dark hidden place while it is being formed, and so are we. When God is transforming us, the place we are in can feel very dark, and we can feel hidden from all the good things in life. HOWEVER, that dark hidden place is protecting us from the elements around us the same way the oyster is protecting the irritant to coat it and transform it into a pearl; thus, our greatest treasures of wisdom come from our darkest seasons. Now, that’s something to ponder and to be excited about. And as I’ve heard it said in more than one sermon, “we’re not buried, we’re planted.”
- **Opening our oysters.** After lunch, everyone chose an oyster from the bags in the bowl. As each person was opening their oysters and sharing the color, one of the young women present looked up the meaning of the different colors.² It was a very fun exercise, and everyone had their own pearl to take home.
- **The exercise.** After everyone had their pearl and the symbolic meaning, we concluded this portion of our day with an exercise. In the same bowl that contained the oysters, we had a bag that contained folded slips of denim decorated paper with one of the parables of Jesus. Each person selected a piece of paper and was given a chance to

² *The Symbolic Meaning of Each Pearl Colour.* Coleman Douglas Pearls. 24 May 2021. Retrieved from: <https://www.pearls.co.uk/blogs/news/the-symbolic-meaning-of-each-pearl-colour>

read the parable she chose; she was then asked to share one word that came to mind as she reflected on her parable. To the person, the parable she chose was very fitting and for some, it spoke directly to an irritant she previously shared.

- **Bracelet making.** Once everyone had their word or words from the exercise, we turned that word or words into a pearl bracelet we can wear to remind ourselves of what the Holy Spirit spoke to us on this day.
- **Take home gift.** There were pink and blue gift boxes on the table. All the pink boxes held the same style gift, as did all the blue boxes. So, before leaving, each person picked a gift box. Inside both boxes was a set of handmade pearl earrings to wear!
- **Pearls of Wisdom.** While I'm sure many pearls were shared that are not captured in this newsletter, here are a few I jotted down or that were shared with me.
 - **Sometimes we are victims of victims.** This was related to the relationship we do or don't have with our parent(s), not realizing that our parent(s) was/were also a victim of their childhood and then passed some of that victimhood onto us.
 - **Perspective.** One sister shared our perspective about a situation determines whether we produce a pearl of wisdom or become a prisoner of war!
 - **N.O.W.** This acronym was for "No Other Win No Other Way." I'm not sure of the full discussion surrounding this, but it came up when we were looking at Proverbs 2:1-6, which is where Solomon shares the benefits of wisdom.
 - **How we respond.** We can either respond to a situation with, "Woe is me!" or "Wow is He!" This landed in the depths of my soul!
 - **Destiny not desire.** God is more committed to your destiny than He is to your desires.
 - **Self-care.** The greatest aspect of self-care is self-awareness!
 - **Layer upon layer.** Just as the pearl is being formed layer upon layer, we are being formed from pearl to pearl.
 - **Application.** Even if the application isn't perfect, we're still using wisdom.

Closing: We ended our day with communion and prayer.

If you have questions, comments, or concerns about information contained in this document, or would like to be added to or removed from the email distribution for the meeting notes, please email us at wow2@wow2women.com or complete a Contact Form on our site www.wow2women.com.

References

For simplicity while compiling the Notes, I didn't do footnotes, but here is a list of references; some I used and some I may not have.

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P.O.W. ATTACHMENT: QUESTIONS TO REFLECT UPON

- **Question.** What irritant is inside your “shell” – your heart – that God is allowing in your life to cultivate your next pearl of wisdom?
- **Question.** Who in your life is Abba empowering to be a “mother of pearl” implanting irritants in your life to cultivate a pearl of wisdom?
- **Question.** Who or what are you discounting as not “valuable enough” to be a source of wisdom in your life?
- **Question.** Do we allow our irritants to create something beautiful OR do our irritants become weeds in our garden that choke the life out of us?
- **Question.** When things are less than ideal for you, what about you changes, so that your “different color” of wisdom is evident to those around you?