

Chapter 2

Confidence

The Fear-of-GOD builds up confidence,
and makes a world safe for your children.

Proverbs 14:26 MSG



Faith in God

Confidence gives you courage and extends your reach.
It lets you take greater risks and achieve far more
than you ever thought possible.

Jack Welch, chairman and CEO of General Electric

WELCOME BACK TO MY PLACE— CHARACTER MAKEOVER STUDIO!

Hi there. I'm glad you mentioned last week how much you love the outdoors, because it dawned on me that you might just enjoy a beautiful rustic path around the corner from my house. We'll be surrounded by trees with chirping birds and have a view of a canyon with a stream running through it. What do you say? How about a leisurely stroll as we chat? There are even a few benches we can use along the way, as needed. Good! I think the prayer that is on my heart before we head out is this, but feel free to add to it . . . if you'd like:

Heavenly Father,

You are the Ruler of all creation. Thanks that we will have a chance today to breathe in some of the fresh air you've given us and hear the rustling of the trees you made. Thank you for walking with us for this coaching session. We give you absolute authority over the path of life you would like us to follow.
Amen.

Now, off we go to discuss today's topic: confidence.

CONFESSIONS OF A NONCONFIDENT COACH

It's true confession time. I hate to admit this, but people used to call me "helmet head." You see, for years I felt ugly and self-conscious about my

looks, so I compensated for that by spraying on so much hairspray that I cemented every hair in its perfect place. I'm telling you—a hug with a head-bump from me could have knocked you out! I may have felt embarrassed about my general appearance, but I was confident about my hairstyle!

Confidence is an important quality for women of character. Confidence gives us that inner self-assurance that helps us interact effectively with others. It equips us with the belief that we can live out our purpose in life. Without confidence, we shrivel up and hide, and we don't believe in ourselves or in God's power working through us. Certain self-help gurus suggest that confidence is built upon little tricks, such as good posture, dressing for success, a strong handshake, powerful deodorant, or having an image consultant. (And . . . yes, I've tried all of those too, in addition to the hairspray!) Confidence, they say, is a matter of looking right and acting like you believe in yourself. The problem is this: What happens if you don't think you look right? What happens when you let yourself down?

SELF-CONFIDENCE VS. GOD-CONFIDENCE

Self-confidence comes *not* from believing in yourself but from having faith in God. Pervasive self-confidence is not self-confidence at all, but God-confidence. That's another one of those spiritual paradoxes, like losing your life to find it, or the last shall be first. Confidence is only as good as the one in whom you place your confidence. If you try really hard to work up your confidence by doing your hair right or putting on a dazzling smile, your confidence will last only as long as your hairspray or your tooth whitener, and it could be destroyed by a rainy day or bad breath.

So, if confidence is only as good as the one in whom you place your confidence, who better to trust than God himself? A radical shift from self-confidence to God-confidence makes all the difference. Sociologists tell us that our self-esteem is based on what we believe the most important person in our life thinks about us. If you are picking up your self-esteem cues from a parent or a best friend or a mate or your own self-talk, your confidence suffers when you get a negative message. But, if you are looking to God for your self-esteem cues, how much more solid and unshakeable could your confidence possibly be? You will know, despite what anyone else says—and despite what you might tell yourself—that you are worthwhile; you are lovable; you are acceptable; you are desirable; you are forgivable.

DEBORAH: A PICTURE OF CONFIDENCE

The Bible is full of stories about confident people, those who found strength and unexpected leadership abilities as a result of placing their trust in God. One of the most alluring stories of confidence is about the judge-prophetess named Deborah, a woman who was a national leader in a culture that largely ignored women. There are a few, very powerful women in Scripture—such as Queen Esther, the Queen of Sheba, and Queen Jezebel—but Deborah is the only woman who rose to her prominent position of authority by popular demand. Among a slew of judges over a span of a few hundred years who demonstrated increasingly blatant character flaws, Deborah is the only one of her time who consistently exhibited integrity, character, wisdom, and a confidence in God that drew people to follow her bold leadership.

One day, as people were waiting their turn for Deborah to settle their disputes and dispense justice, she received a prophetic message from God for Barak, the military commander: assemble an army and attack the Canaanites. Now let's just stop a minute here to realize how audacious this idea was. The Canaanites boasted an invincible army with iron chariots (Judges 1:19). Earlier generations of Israelites had been so terrified of them that they surrendered before they even prayed. Well, the Canaanites still had their chariots, but Israel now had a secret weapon—Deborah's abiding faith in God. Barak was willing to face those chariots only if Deborah would come along. He said: "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go" (Judges 4:8).

So off went Deborah and Barak, and due to her inspirational leadership, ten thousand tribesmen gathered with them to place their lives on the line for an impossible cause. Deborah's complete faith in God became the strength of the army as she raised the battle cry, "Go! This is the day the LORD has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the LORD gone ahead of you?" (4:14). The charge of the brave Israelite army coincided with a great thunderstorm, and the invincible Canaanite chariots were mired in a sea of mud, resulting in the utter destruction of the Canaanite army.

Deborah displayed absolute confidence in God, unshakable faith, extreme devotion to her nation, passion for her people, and confident leadership despite leading in a male-dominated culture. Yet, we don't see an ounce of pride in her as she gives all the credit and glory to God for their military victory (see Deborah's song in Judges 5).

LESSONS IN CONFIDENCE

Deborah exhibited several important qualities of a confident person:

- **Problem-solver.** Deborah saw a situation that demanded action, and she organized a solution. She did not let her gender or her lack of experience stymie her.
- **Risk-taker.** By faith in God, Deborah rallied an army and inspired the men to go to battle. This was not the behavior of a fearful, unsure woman, but that of a woman with a solid faith in a powerful God.
- **Realistic about strengths.** Deborah attracted followers by virtue of her devotion to God, but the people's attention didn't make her self-conscious. She didn't put herself down by saying, "Oh, I'm just a woman. You shouldn't be listening to me. Go talk to Barak."
- **Competent.** Deborah's sense of competence did not come because she dispensed her own wisdom or controlled people. She felt competent because she listened to God, spoke his words, and pointed people to him. She didn't claim credit for her success—she acknowledged God as the giver of victory.
- **Knowing purpose.** Deborah understood her strengths and exerted her influence. When faced with a great obstacle, she rose to the challenge knowing that this was the moment and purpose for which God had placed her in that position. She was decisive, not a people-pleaser or a conformist.
- **Awareness of *not* being qualified.** We see nothing in this story that explains why Deborah was used by God in this dramatic way. She did not come from a long line of leaders. She had not distinguished herself in battle before this. From what we can tell, God used her simply because she was usable, obedient, and faithful. It seems that he must have said, "Wow! A woman sold out to me? That's all I ask!"

It's time to check in with you to see how confident you are. Try the self-assessment on the next page in order to take your *confidence pulse*:

Confidence Self-Test

For each pair of thirteen statements, check the one that more frequently describes you, then total your score to determine whether you lean more toward confidence or insecurity.

Confidence	Insecurity
I find the positive side of negative events. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> I see a negative event as a reason to quit.
I look for solutions to problems. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> I feel stuck when problems arise.
I see mistakes as learning opportunities. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> I see mistakes as embarrassing; I hide them.
I accept myself, even when I fail. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Failure is proof that I'm unworthy.
I take risks and try new things. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> I fear failure and avoid risk.
When I'm new in a group, I focus on others. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> When I'm new in a group, I'm self-conscious.
I realistically acknowledge my strengths. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> I put myself down.
I am able to receive compliments graciously. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> I discount compliments as undeserved.
I do the right thing, even when criticized. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> I'm driven by what I think will make others happy.
I have a strong sense of who I am. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> I conform in order to be accepted.
I generally feel competent. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> I feel out of control, incapable, inadequate.
I know what my life purpose is. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> My life is meaningless; I'm confused.
My self-esteem is based on what God says. <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> My self-esteem is based on approval of others.
TOTAL CONFIDENCE SCORE ___	TOTAL INSECURITY SCORE ___

Reflecting on the results of this self-test may help you answer the following journal questions more realistically.

Journal

Read Deborah's battle cry again: "Go! This is the day the LORD has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the LORD gone ahead of you?" (Judges 4:14).

1. What "day" is this for you — what battle is taking place in your sphere of influence? In what area are you finding your confidence the most shaken or susceptible right now?

2. What is God saying to you about this area? If God is telling you to "go!" or charge or move ahead, what would that obedience look like?

3. Picture God going ahead of you into your battle. How would placing your faith in him instead of yourself (or your appearance, or your past successes, or what your friends say about you, or whatever you typically rely on for your self-confidence) affect your confidence?

PRAYER

Precious Lord,

Thank you that I don't have to rely on how I feel about myself for my confidence. Lord, help me have faith in you when I lack confidence. You have proven over and over again that you use people even when there is something in their lives that could erode their self-confidence. You raised up Deborah to be a national leader, even though she was a woman. You made Sarah the mother of a nation, even though she was too old. You used Rahab to protect Hebrew spies, even though she was a prostitute. Ruth is in the genealogy of Jesus, even though she was an outsider—a Moabitess. You made Esther a queen who saved her people, even though she was an orphan. You let Martha serve you, even though she was a worrier and a complainer. You inspired the Samaritan woman to evangelize her village, even though she was a five-time divorcée. And you taught a lesson in generosity through the widow who gave two pennies, even though she was destitute. Please go before me and win the battle in the area about which I feel most vulnerable. I want to make the shift from self-confidence to God-confidence.

In the name of Jesus, amen.

Insecurity: Exposing Your Inner Charlie Brown

Another belief of mine: everyone else my age is an adult,
whereas I am merely in disguise.

Margaret Atwood, novelist

A VIRTUAL MESSAGE



NOTE: It's Day 2, so you have the option of listening to today's message by downloading it from my website, www.LifePurposeCoachingCenters.com/CM, or reading the message text below. Enjoy the virtual coaching and don't forget to open in prayer!

THE FLIP SIDE OF CONFIDENCE

"I got a 'C' in everything. I'm a straight 'blah' student!" This is a typical self-assessment from Charlie Brown, that hapless star of the *Peanuts* comic strip, who is constantly battling his anxieties and shortcomings. He is resigned to his loser status: "I'm not a poor loser; I'm a good loser. I'm so good at it I lose all the time!" And he lets Lucy dominate him: "You, Charlie Brown, are a foul ball in the line drive of life. You are a miscue. You are three putts on the eighteenth green. You are a seven-ten split in the tenth frame. You are a dropped rod and reel in the lake of life."

Poor Charlie Brown. I wonder if his parents were as critical and demanding as Lucy! Were they overprotective and controlling? If so, they probably greatly contributed to Charlie Brown's feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. After all, everything *else* gets blamed on parents! If only they had made Charlie Brown feel accepted, even when he made mistakes, he probably wouldn't have been so hard on himself when he missed the football or

got his kite stuck in a tree. Remember that Charlie Brown didn't necessarily lack ability; he just focused too much on other people's expectations and let others shape his self-concept.

CONFIDENCE ROBBERS

We all have areas about which we are insecure. Simple things like gaining ten pounds, getting criticized, or feeling left out can shake our confidence. But there are deeper threats that can cause a more deep-seated insecurity: the confidence robbers of false identity, lack of purpose, and self-sabotage. Fortunately, you can prevent your confidence from being stolen by: (1) knowing who you are; (2) knowing why you are here; and (3) knowing what you are worth!

You need to know who you are.

If you don't have a strong sense of who you are, then your identity may depend on what other people tell you about yourself. If you have friends like Charlie Brown's, this could be rather discouraging! When people around you are habitually critical, or if they label you or insult you, your confidence can erode and you can be left feeling like a *nobody* and a failure. We all know the importance of choosing our friends wisely and limiting our exposure to those who put us down, degrade us, or treat us like we're worthless.

With their mouths the godless destroy their neighbors.

Proverbs 11:9

The words of the reckless pierce like swords.

Proverbs 12:18

Another factor that can sway your confidence is if you compare yourself to others. Comparison can lead to pride if you feel superior to others, or it can lead to insecurity if you think others are better than you. If you are someone who tends to gauge your status by measuring yourself against other people, then you'll be on an identity seesaw, depending upon whom you're comparing yourself to that day.

We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they do not show good sense.

2 Corinthians 10:12 NRSV

You need to know why you're here.

Nothing helps you overcome confidence-barriers more than a sense of purpose. When you know why you're here on earth and what you were made to do, it gives you a tremendous sense of meaning in life. You may notice that when you're operating in your gift area, whether that's singing or teaching or painting or managing or phone calling, you have boundless energy. You feel you could just keep going and going as if you have an endless tank of gas. You also may find that you keep bouncing back after a failure, trying again and again at something you believe in and know you're supposed to do, undeterred by detours or setbacks. But if you are confused about your direction or unsure of your purpose, you are far more susceptible to fatigue and failure.

This is exactly what happened to Peter. Jesus' arrest was Peter's unhinging. All along he thought he knew what his purpose was—to be at Jesus' side when he was crowned king of the Jews. But when that glittering destiny was ripped away at the hands of an angry mob, Peter lost his confidence, which set the stage for him to succumb to fatigue and failure. He stumbled into a courtyard, upset that all his dreams and plans had been dashed, worn out from his all-nighter in Gethsemane. With his reserves depleted, he couldn't withstand the taunts of strangers and ended up retorting three times that he didn't even know Jesus (see Luke 22:54–62).

You need to know what you're worth.

A person with low self-worth can self-sabotage by being perfectionistic, controlling, or depressive. This makes her harder to be around, which only reinforces feelings of low self-esteem and isolation. Look closely at each category, paying special attention to ways you can stop the self-sabotage:

Perfectionism: A particularly insidious method of self-sabotage is perfectionism. It's the syndrome that says, "If I could just be perfect, everybody would like me," which mistakenly assumes that we can control what other people think of us. It can sound like this: "I have to have so-and-so's approval or I'll die." Or, "If it's not perfect, I've failed; and if I fail, I'll die." If that's the case, perfectionists are doomed! Being perfect is the unattainable goal of a woman who is trying to prove her worth. But worth is not something we earn or achieve. Worth is something we learn to perceive. We come to realize that we have worth because God created us, redeemed us, and loves us.

Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love.

Ephesians 1:4 MSG

Control: Some insecure people have a high need for control. A perfectionist tries to make *herself* perfect, while a controller tries to make *her world* perfect. It can feel threatening to be out of control, such as when a coworker has a different opinion than you, your house is a mess, your children are misbehaving, you're jobless, or your husband is late getting home. If your self-image relies on being right, looking right, parenting right, or doing right, then you might become a controller. Usually, forcing the people and things in your world to line up with your perception of "right" only succeeds in alienating those you are trying to control.

Depression: Another common method of self-sabotage for insecure people is depression. In depression, you are attacking yourself. Many things can cause depression. For me, it was a thyroid condition that exacerbated the post-partum blues after my daughter was born. But, once I was in a state of depression, my chronic insecurities converged to prolong it. Even after I trudged back to the land of the living, I moved into hyperactive mode in order to avoid feeling pain and plunging into another pit. Looking back on it now, I believe that if I had been more secure in my identity in Christ, known my purpose in life (which I was almost frantic to discover at the time), and had not been so perfectionistic and controlling, I would have recovered more quickly and the aftermath would have been less turbulent.

I encourage you to use this next self-assessment to get a better idea of how confidence robbers may be intruding on your life.

Confidence Robbers Checklist

Check any of the following confidence robbers you have experienced, as illustrated by the sample statements for each. For everything you check, pray about what you discover and what God might be inviting you to change.

- Perfectionism:** “It has to be perfect, or I have failed.”
- Control:** “I need to make my family look ‘right’ – they’re a reflection on me.”
- Mistaking feelings for fact:** “I *feel* stupid, so I’m sure I *am* stupid.”
- Projecting:** “I know they’re laughing at me,” or, “She probably thinks I’m boring.”
- Deflecting compliments:** “You liked the meal? I’m sorry it wasn’t gourmet.”
- Downplaying:** “My success wasn’t my doing – it was good luck/chance/ because of someone else.”
- Comparison:** “I’m not as pretty/talented/thin/successful/capable/ well-dressed/outgoing/holy as she is.”
- Entrenchment:** “I was raised in a dysfunctional home, so I’ll always be dysfunctional.”
- Futuring:** “Since I got laid off, that means I’m never going to make it in this industry.”

For an additional confidence assessment, go to www.LifePurposeCoachingCenters.com/CM.

Beware Extreme Thinking

We tend to think in extremes. Be careful about doing that because confidence robbers feed off extreme thinking. Look through the following pairs of statements for classic examples of such behavior:

Unrealistic assessment ...

“I’m a terrible mother.”

“If my children aren’t well behaved, they’re completely bad.”

“If my dishes are not done, my house is entirely messy.”

“I’m useless.”

“I’m lazy.”

... as opposed to realistic assessment

“I have to work late sometimes.”

“Everybody has good days and bad days.”

“I haven’t gotten the dishes done yet.”

“I’ve got a lot to learn.”

“I’m feeling tired today.”

CONFIDENCE RESTORERS

Let's return to the scene where Jesus washed his disciples' feet that we talked about in relation to humility. There are lessons here that will also help restore the confidence stolen by the three confidence thieves. To set the stage again, let's look in on the upper room:

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴so he got up from the meal ... ⁵and began to wash his disciples' feet.

John 13:3–5

This passage tells us that Jesus knew three things about himself:

- 1. He knew who he was.** *He had come from God.* Jesus knew that his identity was sourced in God.
- 2. He knew where he fit.** *The Father had put all things under his power.* His position was one of authority, and he knew that his authority was given to him by his Father.
- 3. He knew his destiny.** *He was returning to God.* Jesus knew his purpose was to redeem humankind, and he was so confident that he would accomplish his purpose that he knew he would return to the presence of his Father in heaven.

Notice one very important thing about Jesus' self-image: It was entirely based on God. There is no mention of Jesus thinking: "I wonder what they'll think of me," or "I need to do this to be noticed," or "It makes me feel so good just to serve." Jesus' self-image was not reliant on the approval of others, on achievement, or on being the best. His self-image was based on who God made him to be (he had come from God), what God gave him (all power), and God's destiny for his life (completing his purpose and returning to God).

Journal

True and lasting confidence comes by basing our self-esteem in what God says about us. For each of the following verses, summarize what the Bible says about you and how this affects your self-esteem.

My identity (who I am)

Psalm 139:14–18 _____

Ephesians 1:4–5 _____

My position (where I fit)

Romans 12:4–5 _____

Ephesians 2:6 _____

My purpose (why I'm here)

Matthew 5:16 _____

John 15:16 _____

2 Corinthians 5:20 _____

PRAYER

Precious Lord,

I have felt like a Charlie Brown-type loser at times. I have been guilty of giving more credence to what the Lucys in my life say about me than what you say about me. I have compared myself to others and come up short. I have felt like I don't fit in—like I'm alone and rejected. I have become confused about my purpose, and I find myself more tired, more discouraged. And the more insecure I feel, the more I try to fix myself through perfectionism, or fix my world through control, or retreat to a place of depression where I'm numb. Lord, I don't want to be like that anymore. Help me to believe you when you tell me you made me just the way I am, and that you chose me. Help me to remember that I am part of something larger, to know where I fit in your family. And give me a vision for your purpose for my life. I want to be the best me I can be. I want to be the person you see when you look at me through your eyes of love. Thank you that you love me for being me.

In the name of Jesus, amen.

How to Be Nice to Yourself

A realization of the universal lack of self-confidence
tends to strengthen one's own.

Anonymous

YOU'VE GOT MAIL



WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM RICK WARREN ABOUT CONFIDENCE

A number of years ago my pastor, Rick Warren, said something in a sermon that really struck me. He said that *we consider our problems unique, but not our potential*. About our *problems* we might say, "You don't know how hard it is for me ... you don't know my kids ... you don't know the man I have to live with ... you don't know how lonely I am." But when we talk about our *potential*, we think we're not unique at all. We'll say, "Anybody can speak ... lots of people can organize ... there's nothing special about cooking."

God’s Word tells us just the opposite of this. It says that our *problems* are not unique—they’re universal:

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to us all.

1 Corinthians 10:13

Scripture also points out that our *potential* is not typical—it’s unique:

But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹If they were all one part, where would the body be?

1 Corinthians 12:18–19

And here’s the kicker, according to Pastor Rick: God only made one you, so he’s never going to say, “Why weren’t you more like so-and-so?” But he might have to say, “Why weren’t you more like you?”

KATHRYN’S STORY ABOUT BEING AVERAGE

“Kathryn is average, and she’ll never be anything but average.” With that disparaging comment from her fourth grade teacher, my colleague Kathryn launched on a lifelong quest to prove her teacher wrong. No one up to that point would have characterized young Kathryn as average. She was an only child in a loving Christian family, made to feel special and unique. But the negative attitude of a teacher marked a turning point in her life.

For the next three decades, Kathryn worked at accomplishing more than everyone else. By seventh grade, for example, she was back on the honor roll and stayed there all through high school, college, graduate school, and her doctorate. Her papers were the longest, her notebooks the biggest, and her doctoral dissertation was six times as long as necessary. She became a teacher, and her students benefited from extra programs she started—a newscast, a school store, the chess club, and competitive academic teams such as Knowledge Masters and Stock Market. She eventually became the chair of the elementary education department at North Greenville University.

Her spiritual dedication was just as intentional, starting at age twelve when she publicly surrendered her life to God to do whatever he asked of her, and continuing into adulthood with mission trips to Africa, China, India, Thailand, Brazil, and several eastern European countries. She started an adoption agency and a ministry to women called Go Fish! All the while, no matter what she accomplished, she never believed it was enough. Her perfectionism drove her to work longer and harder than everyone else, and sometimes kept her from trying those things that she feared she wouldn’t

be able to do perfectly. Her self-talk included statements such as: “There’s nothing special about me.” “I have to be better than everyone else.” “I’m not good enough.” “I can’t write because I’m a horrible speller.” “I have to be perfect.” “I’m average.”

This all changed in 2005 when a friend challenged Kathryn, as she was relating the story about her teacher’s comment. These words changed her life: “Isn’t it time you surrendered that comment and let it stop controlling your life?” Her answer? Yes! Kathryn became aware of her negative self-talk and started replacing negative statements with positive ones. Now, instead of telling herself she’s depressed, Kathryn thinks, “I choose to be happy.” She tells herself that she’s worthy, since God made her. She dwells on God’s blessings instead of her problems. And in regard to her writing, instead of believing she would never write, she started saying things like, “Computers have spell checkers now!” and “At least I’m a good editor” and “I have something God wants me to say.” She has now published several articles and is working on a book. She has changed her inner voice recording to say, “I am special and God has an awesome plan for my life that is more exceedingly abundant than I can even imagine.” Her advice to women struggling with confidence? “Spend time daily with God, developing a love relationship with him. Then surrender your negative self-talk. You can’t trash yourself without slamming the one who created you.”

SUREFIRE CONFIDENCE BUILDERS

Kathryn’s story points out an important principle: In order to surrender your negative thoughts and statements, you have to replace them with positive ones. Kathryn actually asked friends to catch her when she said something negative about herself; then she would write down the negative statement and ask God to give her a new, replacement statement that would honor him.

The Bible affirms this commonsense strategy:

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.

Philippians 4:8

Let’s examine this verse phrase by phrase and find some surefire confidence builders that you can memorize and use when you uncover something negative that you’ve been telling yourself. It’s as simple as remembering what

God says about you, believing it, and then saying those things to yourself that a loving Father would tell you.

Whatever is true

Are you making sweeping, unsupportable statements about yourself, such as, “I can’t do anything right”? Do you need to let go of something someone said a long time ago about you that just isn’t true? Are you going to believe what a *person* said about you or what *God* says about you?

“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

John 8:32

Whatever is noble

Do you tell yourself you are dishonorable, crushed, embarrassed, humiliated? No matter how unworthy you may feel, God’s love can’t be shaken.

“Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the LORD, who has compassion on you.

Isaiah 54:10

Whatever is right

Has a great wrong been done to you? Are you telling yourself that your life isn’t fair? God promises to take care of us if we’re wronged.

Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me.

Psalms 27:10

Whatever is pure

Are you saying that what you have done cannot be forgiven? Do you feel impure, dirty, unclean, or unacceptable? There is nothing you have done that is beyond the reach of God’s cleansing power.

Through what Christ would do for us . . . he [God] decided then to make us holy in his eyes, without a single fault—we who stand before him covered with his love.

Ephesians 1:4 LB

Whatever is lovely

Do you feel ugly? Have you been telling yourself that you're unlikable, that you don't measure up, that you're flawed? God wants to replace your injured, broken, and destroyed places with beauty.

[He will] bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes.

Isaiah 61:3

Whatever is admirable

Do you tell yourself that your character is less than commendable, that there is nothing you do that anyone else would admire? Do you feel like you can't lead, that you're afraid to speak from your heart, or that you need to shrink into the background?

I have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers me—I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into me; I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency.

Philippians 4:13 AB

If anything is excellent

Do you feel like you're unworthy or worthless? Do you tell yourself that you're just average? God's care for you proves your level of excellence in his eyes.

“God feeds [the birds] ... and you are far more valuable to him than any birds!”

Luke 12:24 LB

Or praiseworthy

When someone compliments you, do you rebuff them? Do you feel you don't deserve kindness, praise, affirmation, or positive attention? God made us acceptable, which results in praise to him.

To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

Ephesians 1:6 NKJV

Self-Talk Checklist

Mark the three types of positive self-talk you need the most:

- Whatever is true:** I need to let go of a lie someone said about me and believe God.
- Whatever is noble:** I need to affirm that God loves me even when I feel dishonorable, crushed, embarrassed, or humiliated.
- Whatever is right:** I need to remember God will take care of the wrong done to me.
- Whatever is pure:** I need to declare that God says I am forgivable.
- Whatever is lovely:** I need to see the beauty God has given me for my “ashes.”
- Whatever is admirable:** I need to claim God’s sufficiency when I feel inadequate.
- If anything is excellent:** I need to state that I’m valuable when I feel average.
- Or praiseworthy:** I need to thank God that I’m acceptable when I feel undeserving.

Journal

Following Kathryn's recommendations, the first step to replacing negative self-talk is to write down your negative statements. Referring to the items you checked on the Self-Talk Checklist on page 80, write out your three most typical negative statements.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Now, replace those statements with positive, true statements, drawing your ideas from the surefire, confidence-building verses found on pages 78–79.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Proverbs 18:21 (GWT) says that “the tongue has the power of life and death,” so speak these positive, true statements *out loud* at least once a day—during your quiet time with God, or while driving, or whenever you catch yourself putting yourself down.

PRAYER

Precious Lord,

Sometimes I get it mixed up; I think my problems are unique, but my potential is not. Lord, you are my confidence-booster. If I speak negatively about myself, I'm trashing your creation — me! Forgive me for being down on myself. Help me to replace my negative self-talk with statements about myself that are true, that affirm what is noble about me. Remind me to thank you for justice to come, to embrace how you have made me pure, to rejoice in the loveliness you have given me, to claim your strength to be admirable, to affirm my excellence, and to receive praise graciously. My confidence comes from what you think of me, Lord, and I promise to dwell on your surefire confidence builders instead of on the lies of the confidence robbers I have listened to in the past.

In the name of Jesus, amen.

Your Confidence Coach

God expects of us the one thing that glorifies Him – and that is to remain absolutely confident in Him, remembering what He has said beforehand, and sure that His purposes will be fulfilled.

Oswald Chambers, 1874–1917, Scottish Protestant minister

PERSPECTIVE-CHANGING OUTING

Today you and I are meeting at a delightful tearoom you discovered. It's in a restored Victorian house, and the walls are covered with old photos, intricate needlework, and hats with sweeping plumes and elaborate ribbons. We say a prayer of thanksgiving and then select from a vast variety of teas—I pick Chrysanthemum, you pick Lavender Dream—and as we steep our tea leaves, we study the old photos. They make us think of history and destiny, and we wonder who those people were and what they did with their lives.

Let's turn our attention to your life. Our conversation today is about confidence. How are you doing at having confidence in God, and knowing who you are, where you fit, and why you're on earth? Throughout our discussion, we're going to look at the confidence of Jesus and use the lessons of his life as the trigger for our evaluation. Let's get started.

HOW GOD-CONFIDENT ARE YOU?

Jesus showed great confidence in God every time he did a miracle, but raising Lazarus from the dead is perhaps the most revealing.

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. . . .³⁹ "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha . . . "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."⁴⁰ Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"⁴¹ . . . Then Jesus looked up and said,

“Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴²I know that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.” ⁴³... Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” ⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”

John 11:38–44

Consider Jesus’ words. He prays aloud so the people nearby can hear. But notice that he starts off by saying that God has already heard him. He must have been praying before he ever got there, which is how he received his marching orders from the Father. Then, with full confidence in God, he speaks the impossible, and the impossible happens—Lazarus walks out of the grave.

Jesus had a habit of prayer that prepared him for this moment. If you were to find yourself in a daunting situation right now, how well would your current patterns of connecting with God equip you to be confident?

Jesus pointed people to God by reminding Martha about a truth and by praying aloud. In what ways do you point people’s attention away from yourself and toward God (i.e., I give praise reports about the “impossible” things God has done in my life. In times of public prayer, I often unabashedly thank God for his mercy on me.)?

Jesus had confidence in God when it seemed impossible. Think about an impossible situation in your own life. How would you describe your level of belief in God’s power in that impossible situation?

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE?

Jesus had a true, unshakeable knowledge of who he was. He would describe himself, using varying terms that fit the occasion. For instance, he told the woman at the well, “I am the living water”; to the blind man he said, “I am the light of the world”; after feeding the five thousand he declared, “I am the bread of life”; and before raising Lazarus, he assured Martha, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Jesus knew without a doubt who he was, and he knew which aspect of himself was most needed by the person to whom he was speaking.

List four words about yourself that describe who you really are to the people around you. (Try to avoid names that depict roles, such as “I am Tyler’s mother.” Instead, use character qualities, such as: nurturer, encourager, helpmate, confidante, prayer warrior, mentor.)

Jesus knew Scriptures that described who he was. Write out your favorite phrases from Scripture that describe your true identity in Christ. (You may want to refer to verses in the journal exercise from Day 2, page 73, or look up the following passages for additional ideas: John 1:12; John 15:15; Ephesians 2:10.)

Looking back at the phrases you selected, what conclusions can you draw about what God thinks of you? How does that line up with what you think of yourself?

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOU FIT?

If you recall, before Jesus washed his disciples' feet, he already knew that the Father had put all things under his power. Jesus knew the extent of God's power, and he knew where he fit into God's plan in any given circumstance. In the midst of a storm, for example, he knew that his role was a position of authority over the weather.

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."...³⁷A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. ³⁸Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

³⁹He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

⁴⁰He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

⁴¹They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Mark 4:35, 37-41

Knowing where he fit in God's plan on a daily basis gave Jesus utter confidence in a humanly terrifying circumstance. His confidence was so complete that he was even able to rest while a storm raged.

What event or concern is shaking your confidence today? What understanding do you need to develop in order to be more unshakable in your daily roles? Is it learning more about God's power, or about how you're gifted, or about where your problems and solutions fit in God's plan? How can you develop this understanding?

Jesus was so confident in God and in his role that he was able to rest. How have you responded during a crisis? What did you do to find rest and peace when things were in turmoil?

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW WHY YOU'RE HERE?

Jesus knew his purpose on earth, and just before he was arrested, he looked toward heaven and told his Father that he had completed the work he had given him to do.

"Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. ²For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. . . . ⁴I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. ⁵And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."

John 17:1–2, 4–5

What was the work the Father gave Jesus to do? Jesus described it in various ways, but without wavering:

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Luke 19:10

"I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly."

John 10:10 NKJV

"I have come down from heaven not to do my will but the will of him who sent me."

John 6:38

"As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."

John 10:15 NKJV

Describe the purpose of your life. Even if you don't have a succinct purpose statement, try to summarize how you think God might want to use you in the world (i.e., to give women hope that God has a plan for their lives; to listen to the lonely and hurting, offering biblical counsel).

Jesus said that he brought glory to God by completing the work God gave him to do. In what ways do you give God glory by the way you are living your life?

PRAYER

Precious Lord,

My strongest confidence comes from consistent prayer that connects me with you. Help me to rely more on prayer and less on my capabilities, especially when I'm feeling insecure. My strongest identity comes from what you say about me. Help me to embrace your words about me and live like I believe them. My strongest role is that of being a daughter of you, the King. Help me to draw upon that when my foundation is shaken. My strongest purpose is to bring glory to you. Help me to be the best me I can be, since you made me the way I am to fulfill a unique part in your grand plan. That is stunning to realize, Lord. Thank you. Thank you.

In the name of Jesus, amen.

Steps to Confidence

We probably wouldn't worry about what people think
of us if we could know how seldom they do.

Charlie "Tremendous" Jones, motivational speaker

Whether you think you can, or think you can't,
you're probably right.

Henry Ford, founder, Ford Motor Company

SITTING QUIETLY WITH YOUR MAKER

Today is a time of reflection and solitude for you in the privacy of your own quiet-time space. You will be putting together a Confidence Action Plan. Considering everything we talked about this week, you are going to look at developing confidence by liking yourself and forgiving yourself. I'm confident that you will put together a great plan!

Ask yourself how deeply you are able to focus on increasing your confidence during this season of your life. Then select the appropriate action steps on pages 90–92, whatever you feel you can realistically experiment with this week. It's your plan, your life, and your prayerful decision—nobody else's. If you feel God impressing on you to concentrate on your confidence right now, go for these exercises with gusto—without further ado or delay! I know that whatever effort you are able to devote to improving your confidence will be richly rewarded by him on earth and in heaven.

Confidence Action Plan

PRAYER FOCUS: Thank God for the way he made you—your appearance, abilities, talents, and strengths. Release to God the things you wish were different about you. Pray for God’s help to make changes where you should, and accept his sovereignty for the things he chooses not to change. Thank God that Jesus died for you. Pray that God will reveal to you when you are not forgiving yourself. Receive his forgiveness and payment for your sins.

DEVOTIONAL FOCUS: Choose one of the following Scripture passages on the topic of confidence: To focus on *liking yourself more*, read the story of David preparing to face Goliath in 1 Samuel 17:12–50, noticing the ways David stayed true to who he was. Or, to focus on *forgiving yourself more*, read the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11–32 to remind yourself how much God values you.

EXTRA PERSPECTIVE: Read *Grace Awakening* by Chuck Swindoll. Or get creative and plan an outing with a woman who affirms and encourages you!

Action Steps: Liking Myself

Instructions: Prayerfully choose one or two action steps to experiment with this week.

Start Date

- _____ **I will use my own measuring stick.** I will evaluate myself based on what God says, how I feel about my efforts, and how I did compared to last time. If I don’t feel great about myself, I will examine why. It may be that I am feeling fearful about what someone else will think, which is letting myself be manipulated and controlled by others. Or I may be comparing myself to someone else, which is irrelevant because everyone is unique.
- _____ **I will lighten up.** I will laugh at myself when I do something dumb; I will cheer for myself when I do a little thing right (“Yes, indeed—I got the laundry started before 3 p.m.!”). Also, I will find one new thing every day that I like about myself and write it down (“I like my smile—it reminds me of all the things I’ve had to smile about”).

_____ **I will replace my self-consciousness.** When I'm unsure of myself in a social situation, I'll get my mind off myself by looking for what I can do to help. I'll make others feel valued by asking them a question, such as "What do you love to do?"

_____ **I will tune in to my body language.** When I'm nervous, my body screams out to people, "Keep away." I will change my body language so that I don't appear to be unapproachable. I will smile more, or at least relax my facial muscles. I will look around the room instead of keeping my eyes down. I will uncross my arms.

_____ **I will work** on liking myself by *(add your idea here)*

Action Steps: Forgiving Myself

Instructions: Prayerfully choose one or two action steps to experiment with this week.

Start Date

_____ **I will let go of my guilt.** My unresolved guilt is destroying my confidence. I will accept God's forgiveness and stop living like God is mad at me. There is nothing I can do to myself or add to my punishment that will make me any more acceptable to God. *Area of unresolved guilt I will release:*

_____ **I will not view my past as a permanent mold.** I am not stuck in the mold of my childhood. Early influences do not have control over me now. I will separate myself from false messages about who I am and choose to believe the truth.

_____ **I will give myself grace.** God gave me grace, but I need to give myself undeserved favor more often. I will give myself credit for trying, not just for achieving. I will distance myself from people who don't know how to give grace and are more likely to be judgmental, negative, or discouraging.

_____ **I will let go of my perfectionism.** I will watch for sentences that start with “I should ... I must ... I ought to ... I have to ...” When I set an unattainable standard of perfection, I’ll let myself off the hook. I will remind myself that God and others don’t expect perfection and that I won’t be letting anyone down by relaxing into a sane standard. I will pleasantly surprise someone today by letting my flaws show!

_____ **I will work** on forgiving myself by *(add your idea here)*

MASTER ACTION PLAN

Now, select only one major action step from this Day 5 exercise and record it on your Master Action Plan in appendix A on page 322. When you have finished reading this book, continue to refer to that one major action step on your Master Action Plan (as well as this Confidence Action Plan, of course, as your season of life permits!). Remember, in order to become more like Christ in your character, you need to collaborate with God in three ways: preparation, prayer, and practice. You have done the work of preparation by learning God’s truth about confidence. Now, internalize it by praying for the Holy Spirit’s help and practicing your action steps, one by one.

CONFIDENCE PRAYER

Precious Lord,

What a great friend you have been to me! Thank you so much. You are the type of friend who breathes confidence into me, because you are an encourager. I can tell how much you want me to succeed. I can hear your whispers of “You can do it” and “I believe in you.” My biggest prayer now is that I will believe you. Fill my lifetime with the knowledge of who you are and who I am in you. That will be a gloriously full life.

In the name of Jesus, amen.