

## INTRODUCTION

Would you like to have more confidence? In this message I'm going to share with you "The Ultimate Secret for Total Confidence."

A lack of confidence can affect your performance in sports. I heard a story about a golfer who didn't have much confidence, and he came to a hole where there was a water hazard. He really didn't believe he could carry the water hazard, so he dug around in his bag and teed up the oldest, most scuffed-up ball he had. After he teed it up, a voice from heaven said, "Use a new ball!" He looked up into the sky and said, "What?" Again the heavenly voice said, "Use a new ball!" With chill bumps on his spine, he replaced the old ball with a brand new Titlelist ProV. With his confidence brimming he stepped up and took a practice swing—and it was an ugly looking golf swing. After the practice swing, the voice from heaven said, "Use the old ball!"

Confidence is great, but skill is nice too! Michael Jordan played basketball with amazing confidence. You might remember in the 1998 NBA playoffs, MJ had been taunted the whole game by the rookie, Dikembe Mutombo. Near the end of the game, Michael was taking a free throw. He got the ball at the free throw line and said, "Watch this, Mutombo." The he closed his eyes and shot the free throw—nothing but net! That's confidence backed up by skill!

By the number of books that are published on building confidence, it's evident people are desperately searching for it. I checked on amazon.com and there were over 300,000 links to books on confidence! Here are a few of the actual titles in print today:

1. *How to Have Confidence and Power in Dealing with People*
2. *Maximum Confidence: Ten Secrets of Extreme Self-Esteem*
3. *Unstoppable Confidence*
4. *How to Develop Self-Confidence and a Positive Self-Image Permanently and Forever*
5. *The Confidence Make-over*
6. *Building Self-Confidence for Dummies*

And this last title may not be the best book, but it gets the prize for the longest title:

7. *What's Holding You Back? 30 Days to Having the Courage and Confidence You Need to Do What You Want, Meet Whom You Want, and Go Where You Want*

I don't know everything there is to know about God, but I know that HE wrote a book, and I believe it contains the ultimate secret for total confidence.

2 Corinthians 3:4-6. "Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life."

If we're going to talk about confidence, we've got to know what it is. I searched several

dictionaries and didn't really like any of the definitions I found there, so I compiled my own definition based on the different dictionary definitions. I believe that “confidence is the courage to approach a challenge with the certainty that you can accomplish it successfully.” Confidence is that voice in your head that says, “You can do it!” Everybody needs confidence, and God wants you to have confidence. First let me tell you what confidence ISN'T, then I want to show you what total confidence is for a Christian.

## **1. DON'T TRUST YOUR SELF FOR CONFIDENCE**

All the secular books talk about the importance of SELF-confidence, but the Bible teaches our confidence comes from a different source than from self. In fact, the key to discipleship is found in Jesus' words recorded in Luke 9:23, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” Jesus said we must deny our “self-life.” The essence of sin is self-ishness. We're all born with the desire to put our “self” at the center of our own little universe, and to view life from this ego-centric perspective. But Jesus said we must deny “self.” There are two different extremes of “self-love” that have to be recognized and resisted.

### **(1) Avoid the danger of self-promotion**

The first extreme to avoid is to promote your “self.” To put it another way, it is the belief that YOU have the inner resources yourself to do whatever you attempt. The world values this kind of confidence. That's why all the secular books on confidence are about “self-confidence.” They don't know of any other kind of confidence.

One of the funniest characters on the old Saturday Night Lives was Stuart Smalley played by comedian Al Franken. Stuart was a talk show host of a mock self-help show named, “Daily Affirmations with Stuart Smalley.” He always wore a yellow button-down collared shirt with a baby blue cardigan. He'd look into a mirror and say, “I'm good enough. I'm smart enough. And doggone it, people like me!” People laughed at him because it was a parody of the whole “self-help” movement.

Is that what confidence is? Just looking at yourself in a mirror and faking it until you make it? Well, the Bible teaches that we should have a healthy “self-image.” We're to love others as we love ourselves. We've got to love ourselves, but we shouldn't be “in love” with our self. A person who is in love with self stands in front of a mirror and sings, “How Great Thou Art.”

The Bible tells us that we shouldn't look to our self, or our flesh for confidence. Paul wrote, “It is we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—though I myself have reasons for such confidence.” (Philippians 3:3-4) Paul was saying if anyone had a right to put confidence in the flesh, it would be him. He goes on to say he was a Pharisee among Pharisees, a Jew among Jews. He had a perfect pedigree. But all those things he once thought would be a source of confidence; he considered garbage, for the sake of knowing Christ. So don't think you'll gain confidence by promoting self.

### **(2) Avoid the deception of self-protection**

Some people say, "Pastor, that's not my problem! In fact, I can't do ANYTHING!" That's the other extreme. These people don't deify self; they denigrate self and confuse it with humility. They say, "I'm nothing. I'm nobody. I'm just a worm. I'm just a dirty dog." They walk around saying, "I'm so humble. I'm so humble." That's not humility, that's just poor posture.

Sadly, some people never attempt anything for God because they're afraid if they fail, that SELF will be wounded. So they do everything they can to protect their precious self. They say, "Oh, I could never talk to anyone about my faith. I'm too shy." What they mean is they are so in love with precious self that they don't want to risk being rejected. The Bible says, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline." (2 Timothy 1:7). In other words, God doesn't want you to be inhibited. He wants you to be inhabited by His powerful Holy Spirit! So what's the ultimate secret for confidence?

## **2. TRUST CHRIST FOR TOTAL CONFIDENCE**

The self help gurus are correct about one thing: You can't have confidence if you have poor self-esteem. Confidence comes from knowing who you really are. As you are coming to see yourself for who you really are, you must realize that:

### **(1) Confidence doesn't come from what others think about you**

Some people live with the constant pressure to try to please other people. You can please some of the people some of the time. And you can please a few people all of the time, but there are some people that you'll NEVER be able to please.

Some people are so paranoid that when they see a football team in the huddle, they think they're talking about them! Actually, if you realized how *little* people actually think about you, you wouldn't worry so much about what they think! They aren't thinking about you—they're thinking about the same thing you are—themselves!

One of the most important decisions you'll ever make in your life is to decide whether you're trying to please God or please other people, because you can't do both. The Bible says, "Am I trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ." (Galatians 1:10)

If you please God it doesn't matter whom you displease. But if you displease God, it doesn't matter whom you please. If you make it your goal to please God, most of God's people will accept you. Here's the ultimate secret for confidence. Ready?

### **(2) Confidence comes from knowing who you are in Christ**

The healthiest self-image you'll ever have comes when you see yourself as God sees you. The key phrase is "in Christ." Paul used that two word phrase 93 times in his letters. Whenever you read that phrase think of Noah and the ark. Noah and his family were "in the ark" and they were safe from the waters of judgement. The ark is a picture of Christ. When you are "in Christ" you have total security and confidence. And by the way, you are eternally secure in Christ. Noah

might have fallen down IN the ark, but he never fell out of it! You may stumble and fall occasionally, but once you are in Christ you are eternally secure.

The Bible says, "In him (Jesus) and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence." (Ephesians 3:12) If most of us had a chance to visit the President in the Oval Office, we'd be a little nervous about it. If we had the chance to have an audience with Queen Elizabeth in Buckingham Palace, we could easily feel intimidated. But in Christ we have the confidence to approach God Almighty, the Creator of the Universe.

I always laugh when I see people like Stuart Smalley making "self-affirmations." So instead of "self-affirmations" I want us to make some "In Christ affirmations."

### **(1) I AM DEEPLY LOVED BY THE CREATOR!**

All people are looking for love and acceptance. The Bible says God has accepted us among the beloved. This may blow you away, but did you know that God loves you as much as He loves Jesus? In John 17 Jesus prayed, "that the world may know that You have sent me, and have loved them as You have loved me." (John 17:23) Sometimes people love us conditionally. They say, "If you'll change this about yourself, I'll love you." God loves you unconditionally. He doesn't change you so He can love you. He loves you so that He can change you. In Ephesians 1:5 the Bible says God loves you so much that He chose you in love before the world began, so that you would be adopted as His child. Hold your head high, Believer! You are the frog who became a prince or princess, because you're a child of the King!

### **(2) I AM RIGHTEOUS IN CHRIST!**

We think of "saints" as super-Christians who've died and been honored by the church. But the New Testament says we are saints *right now*. I'm Saint David. Here is Saint Matthew. There's Saint George. When the saints go marching in, you don't have to hope to be in that number, if you're in Christ, you're *already* in the number.

Again, some people want to display a mock humility and say, "oh, no. I'm just a worthless dog. I'm just a rotten sinner who was saved by grace." Right, that's who you USED to be, but NOW you stand in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Some Christians beat up on themselves and focus on their past. They think a preacher should keep reminding people that they were dirty rotten sinners, or else they might become careless about sin. They don't feel they've really been to church unless the preacher stomps all over their toes with hobnail boots. I disagree. Who is more afraid of dirt, a man in grimy overalls, or a man in a white tuxedo? We should be confessing our sins, but we should also be confessing our righteousness in Christ.

In his book *Mastering Your Emotions*, Adrian Rogers wrote, "The grace of God will exalt a person without inflating him and will humble a person without debasing him... If you would have a healthy, positive self-image you must recognize that your righteousness is a gift from God and does not relate to your works at all." (*Mastering your Emotions*, p.19)

### **(3) I HAVE ACCESS TO ALL OF GOD'S RESOURCES!**

Sometimes people think they lack confidence, because when they face a challenge, they're afraid they don't have what it takes to be successful. You DON'T have what it takes, but God does! The Bible says, "My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19) God has everything you need to be all He wants you to be. He has a storehouse, a reservoir, an ocean of resources that He wants you to access. The sad thing is many of us don't claim these resources.

This can be illustrated in the life of Joshua. Moses had died and Joshua was getting read to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land and God said, "I will give you every place where you set your foot." (Joshua 1:3) God had given the land to them, but Joshua and the Israelites had to walk into the land to claim it. They had to possess their possessions. They had to plant the foot of faith on the promise of God. We have to do the same thing. We will never know God's power until we reach out and claim it.

I've found that God provides power at just the time you need it. The problem with many of us is that we never attempt anything that requires the power of God. Let me ask you, "What have you attempted for God in the last month that you absolutely could not have accomplished without the supernatural power of God?"

I heard about an experiment marine biologists conducted. They put a Northern Pike in an aquarium, and then filled the aquarium with minnows. The pike went on a feeding frenzy and enjoyed those minnows for lunch. Then the scientists placed a glass cylinder in the tank and placed the minnows inside the glass cylinder. The pike could see the minnows, but when it tried to eat them, he bumped up against the glass. They kept the cylinder there for several days, and then removed it. The minnows were swimming freely, but the pike didn't eat them. There was no glass cylinder keeping them from him, it was the faulty thinking in his fish brain that kept him from enjoying lunch. The fish eventually starved to death with the minnows available.

Too many Christians are stuck in a place where they feel inadequate. The resources of God Almighty are available to them, but they're starving because they simply don't claim them.

### **(4) I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST!**

There is not a single challenge in life you'll face that God doesn't provide the resources you need to be successful. That's why you can have confidence. You may look at me and say, "David, you look like you have a lot of confidence. You stand up in front of thousands of people each week and speak." I have confidence, but it's not self-confidence. I don't have any more confidence in David Dykes than I have in the devil himself. Like Paul, I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing. My confidence is in Christ and in Christ alone. I know in whom I have believed and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I've committed unto Him against that day.

There are two verses I constantly come back to. In John 15:5, Jesus said, "Without me, you can

do nothing." I agree with that. But then I balance that with Philippians 4:13 which says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

So let's reaffirm these "In Christ" statements: I am deeply loved by the Creator; I am righteous in Christ; I have access to all of God's resources; I can do all things through Christ!

## CONCLUSION

So our goal should be to exhibit Christ-confidence instead of self-confidence. So what's the secret? It seems for the last 37 years as I have tried to live for Jesus that God keeps bringing me back time and time again to the fact that everyday we must make the declaration Paul made in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ, and I (self) no longer live, but Christ lives in me." That's the essence of Christ-confidence: "Not I but Christ." The thing that often robs us of confidence is our fear of failure. Well, you can be certain a dead person has no fear of failure. People out in the cemetery aren't worrying and fretting about succeeding or failing. And when you are dead to self and alive unto Jesus, He removes the fear of failure and replaces it with His confidence.

I recently read a great book by Louie Giglio entitled, *I Am Not but I Know I Am*. The title is confusing until you understand that the "I am" he's talking about is God. When Moses stood at the burning bush in Exodus 3:13, he had the audacity to ask God, "What's your name?" You see all the Egyptian gods had names, so if he was going to tangle with Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt, Moses needed to know the name of the Living God. Up until that time, God had been identified as "Adonai" which means, "Lord," or by "Yahweh" which basically meant "most high God." It was a title so revered that the generations before Moses seldom wrote it out, instead using an abbreviation of it.

But Moses was asking for God's personal name. And God's answer is found in Exodus 3:14. He said, "I am who I am. Just tell them 'I am' has sent you." I smile when I think that Moses probably didn't get it at first. It was like the Abbott and Costello "Who's on first?" dialogue. Moses said, "THAT'S WHAT I'M ASKING, WHO ARE YOU?" God said, "I am." Moses said, "I am WHAT?" And God said, "I am who I am." Finally, it sank in and Moses understood that God was saying, "I have always been; I am being right now; and I will always be." God is the great "I am." And so, now the title of Giglio's book makes more sense, "I am not but I know I am." For everything we're not, God is; for everything we lack, God supplies; for everything we wish we could be, God already is. He is the great I am. So do you lack confidence? Let "I am" be your source of confidence.

Think about it:

I AM NOT but I know I AM.  
I need help! I am.  
I need hope! I am.  
Who can figure out this mess? I am.  
What really works? I am.

Does anything last? I am.  
I need a fresh start! I am.  
Nothing's real anymore. I am.  
I'm not sure who's on my team. I am.  
Nobody's listening to me. I am.

I can't hold on. I am.  
I'm pouring my life into others; who's pouring into me? I am.  
If I fail, who'll get the job done? I am.  
I'm not even sure why I'm here. I am.  
I've given all I have and it's not enough. I am.

I'm tired. I am.  
I quit! I am.  
I need a drink. I am.  
I need a fix. I am.  
I can't! I am.  
I need a lover. I am.  
Will somebody just hold me? I am.

I'm not able. I am.

And what does the great "I am" have to say about Himself? He says, "I am the way and the truth, and the life. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the bread of life. I am the door. I am the Good Shepherd. I am the Living Water. I am Jesus. I am the first and the last. I am alpha and omega. I am the One who can give you true and total confidence. Trust me. Lean on me. Follow me. And when you do that, you have discovered the ultimate secret for total confidence.

(From *I am not but I know I am*, Louie Giglio, p. 143)

## OUTLINE

### 1. DON'T TRUST YOUR SELF FOR CONFIDENCE

#### (1) Avoid the danger of self-promotion

"It is we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—though I myself have reasons for such confidence." *Philippians 3:3-4*

#### (2) Avoid the deception of self-protection

"For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline." 2 *Timothy 1:7*

### 2. TRUST CHRIST FOR TOTAL CONFIDENCE

#### (1) Confidence doesn't come from what others think about you

"Am I trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ." *Galatians 1:10*

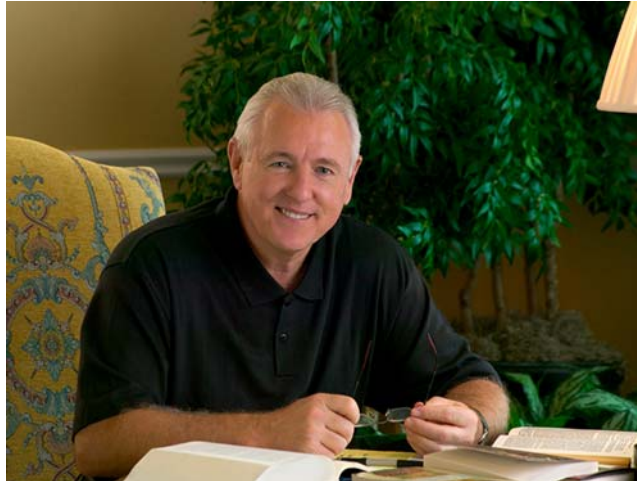
#### (2) Confidence comes from knowing who you are in Christ

"In him (Jesus) and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence." *Ephesians 3:12*

### IN CHRIST AFFIRMATIONS:

1. I am deeply loved by the Creator!
2. I am righteous in Christ!
3. I have access to all of God's resources!
4. I can do all things through Christ!





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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes