

Confidence

As a member of the human race, we are extraordinarily gifted for the mere reason that we were created in the image of an awesome God. The first step in developing self-confidence is acknowledging the presence of our God-given potential. We are gifted because God says so.

O Lord ... You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit them together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! It is amazing to think about. Your workmanship is marvelous and how well I know it. (Psalm 139)

To develop confidence we often have to demonstrate our gifts and talents to ourselves. How do we do that? We take a risk and do something we haven't done before. We leave the safety and security of our comfort zone in order to learn something new. This might mean having a talk with a counselor or pastor, signing up for a class, volunteering our time, doing service work in a support group, participating in a small group Bible fellowship, applying for a job or a training course, People who never leave their comfort zones don't grow in their confidence. We develop confidence by gritting our teeth and saying, "If I am fearfully made, and I have all of this divine potential within me, I'm going to try something new and see what happens."

God was not lying when He said that He gave gifts to everyone. God wants me to make a difference for good today. God has equipped and empowered me to do that. Will I step forward, confident in who He says that I am and live fully as the amazing person He's created me to be?

It is God himself who has made us what we are and given us new lives from Christ Jesus; and long ages ago he planned that we should spend our lives in helping others. (Ephesians 2)

As it is with a physical body, so it is with us and individuals in community. If you isolate any one part of a body and examine it, apart from its proper place among the other members, it may seem odd and useless. Only when we are connected to a community of people and doing our appointed job are we able to realize our usefulness and grow in our confidence about who we are and where we belong.

Just as there are many parts to our bodies, so it is with Christ's body. We are all parts of it, and it takes every

one of us to make it complete, for we each have different work to do. So we belong to each other, and each needs all the others. (Romans 12)

Once we begin to build our confidence in the good talents God has given us, we need to become "confidence builders" in one another. People in relationships need to tell each other "I believe in you. You have potential you haven't begun to tap into. I am excited to see what God is going to do through your life as you take risks and grow in confidence." We need to stretch each other and challenge each other to take a confident step and be willing to take risks for the sake of growth. We need to let each other know that we'll stay alongside as the challenge is accepted. We need to identify through compliments and gratitude how those around us are making good use of their skills and gifts. We need to faithfully and generously also stick with them as they learn through their stumbles and their failures. No one ever gets everything right the first time. Confidence crushing comes when we walk out on someone when they fail rather than placing their stumble within the context of their journey of growth.

Does it mean anything to you that we are brothers and sisters in the Lord, sharing the same Spirit? Are your hearts tender and sympathetic at all? Then make me truly happy by loving each other and agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, working together with one heart and mind and purpose. (Philippians 2)

Jesus left heaven and risked powerlessness and deep loneliness in order to rebuild relationship between us and our Heavenly Father. He took the risk of the cross, trusting that His Father could do something with the wishy-washy disciples who deserted and betrayed Him and then hid in fear. With full knowledge that Peter would betray Him, Jesus built confidence into Peter by praying for him and preparing him to "build up His brothers" after Peter had repented. Peter grew into an amazing leader. Jesus is our model for building confidence in others.

Am I letting God build confidence in me? Am I allowing God to use me to build confidence in others around me?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. How am I growing in confidence?
2. How am I supporting the growth of confidence in others around me