

## Things you cannot afford to lose – Confidence 1

There are many things we possess that the Bible says we should hold on to. Things we should not lose cast away or get rid of. Things when retained and maintained have a great reward. One such thing is

**“confidence.”** Hebrews 10:35 says, **“Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.”** Another translation reads, **“So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.”**

One of the rewards of confidence is strength; the strength to tough it out and stay on course and the strength to still be standing when the victory trumpet is heard. Isaiah 30:15 states, **“...Confidence shall be your strength.”** There are probably people here today who feel that they do not have the strength to carry on. Maybe your problem is not lack of strength but insufficient confidence.

Self-confidence is an attitude which allows you to have positive yet realistic views of yourself and your situations. Self-confident Christians should always have a complete trust in God, but also have trust in their own abilities. They should have a general sense of control in their lives, and believe that, within reason, they will be able to do what they plan, and expect. Having self-confidence does not mean that you will be able to do everything. It merely makes your expectations more realistic. Even when your expectations are not met, you continue to be positive and accept yourself as you are.

People who are not self-confident depend excessively on the approval of others in order to feel good. They tend to avoid taking risks because they fear failure. They generally do not expect to be successful. They often put themselves down and would rather discount or ignore compliments paid to them. By contrast, self-confident people are willing to risk the disapproval of others because they generally trust God and the unique abilities He's given them. They accept themselves at every level, and they don't feel they have to conform in order to be respected.

Self-confidence is extremely important in almost every aspect of life, yet so many people struggle to find it. Sadly, this can be a vicious circle. People who lack self-confidence can find it difficult to become high achievers, mainly because they don't get a positive response from others. After all, would you instinctively want to back someone who doesn't believe in themselves or their own abilities? On the other hand, you might be persuaded to back someone who spoke clearly, who held their head high, who answered questions assuredly, and who readily admitted when they did not know something.

Self-confident people inspire confidence in others – their peers, their bosses, their customers, their families and friends. Gaining the confidence of others is one of the primary ways in which a self-confident person finds the strength to succeed. The good news is, self-confidence can be learned and built on. And, whether you're working on your own self-confidence or building the confidence of people around you, it's worth the effort!

All other things being equal, self-confidence is often the single ingredient that distinguishes a successful person from someone less successful.

### How is Self-Confidence Initially Developed?

Many factors affect the development of self-confidence. Parents' attitudes are crucial to children's feelings about themselves, particularly in children's early years. When parents provide acceptance, children receive a

solid foundation for good feelings about themselves. If one or both parents are excessively critical or demanding, or if they are overprotective and discourage moves toward independence, children may come to believe they are incapable, inadequate, or inferior. However, if parents encourage their children, and accept and love their children when they make mistakes, children will learn to accept themselves and will be on their way to developing self-confidence.

Surprisingly, lack of self-confidence is not necessarily related to lack of ability. And this is especially true of Christians. Instead it is often the result of focusing too much on the unrealistic expectations or standards of others, especially of those people you hang out with. Friends' influences can be as powerful, or more powerful, than those of parents in shaping feelings about themselves. This is why God's word instructs us to be careful who we befriend (Proverbs 12:26). Always go where you're celebrated, not where you're tolerated!

### **So how do you create a sense of balanced self-confidence?**

Self-confidence is being certain (and trusting) – first in God – then about yourself with regards to addressing certain tasks or other people. Self-confidence is critical to effective performance in the workplace and in the home, and it is the source of assertiveness. That is, fully representing yourself and your opinions to others. But self-confidence is also about balance. At one extreme, we have people with low self-confidence. At the other end, we have people who may be over-confident. Good self-confidence is a matter of having the right amount of confidence; confidence founded and grounded on God's infallible word, and also on your true abilities. With the right amount of self-confidence, you will operate in **faith**, take informed risks, stretch yourself (but not go beyond your strengths and abilities) and consistently try harder.

By contrast, if you are under-confident, you'll avoid taking risks and stretching yourself; and you might not try at all. This means that you'll fail to reach your full potential in God. And if you're overconfident, you'll probably be presumptuous about God, take too much risk, stretch yourself beyond your capabilities, and fail badly. You may also find that you're too optimistic, or that you don't try hard enough to gain success. So, self-confidence needs to be founded on reality – realistic expectations. That is, your level of faith, personal skills and experience, and the effort and preparation that you are willing to put in to reach your goal.

So then... How do you build this sense of balanced self-confidence – founded on God's word and on a firm appreciation of reality? The bad news is that there's no quick fix. The good news is that building self-confidence is readily achievable, just as long as you have the focus and determination to carry things through. And what's even better is that the things you do will make you successful. After all, your confidence has GREAT reward. And notice no-one can take this away from you! Only you (yourself) can throw it away!

### **Strategies for Developing Confidence**

- **Emphasise Your Strengths.** Give yourself credit for everything you attempt. By focusing on what you can do well, you applaud yourself for efforts rather than emphasising end results. Start from a base of where your strengths are located, this helps you live within the bounds of your inevitable limitations.
- **Take Informed Risks.** Approach new experiences as fresh opportunities to learn rather than occasions to win or lose. Doing so opens you up to new possibilities and can increase your sense of self-acceptance. Not doing so turns every possibility into an opportunity for failure, and this inhibits personal growth.

- **Use Self-Talk.** Use positive confession (in line with God's word). Positive self-talk is an opportunity to counter harmful assumptions. For example, when you catch yourself expecting perfection, remind yourself that you can't do everything perfectly, that it's only possible to try to do things your way and to try to do them well (to God's glory).
- **Self-Evaluate.** Learn to evaluate yourself independently and honestly. Doing so allows you to avoid the constant sense of turmoil that comes from relying exclusively on the opinions of others. Focusing internally and examining how you feel (your emotions), will give you a stronger sense of "self" and it will prevent you from giving your personal power away to others.
- **See Yourself as God Sees You.** See yourself as God sees you. You are the *apple of His eye* and He chose you to be His representative here on earth. By looking at yourself through His eyes, you will see the "self confident" person you want to be, and before you know it, you will become that person. If you have a setback, make a quick comeback, and don't let anything get you down. Just remember the times when you exhibited self confidence (and how good it felt) and then try again. Each time you try it will help you to build confidence. Do this until 'confidence building' becomes a way of life. If God be for you – who can be against you!

Lastly, the best advice anyone can give you is clearly stated in our opening scripture.... ***"...Never throw away your confidence; for it will be richly rewarded."*** (Hebrews 10:35)