



May 15 & 16: Confidence

Overview

There are times in life when we all feel like people have deliberately run over us, when we have been knocked down or deeply wounded. In the book of *2 Corinthians*, Paul emphasizes the special resources available to those who are Christians and who are hurting. This letter was written to a troubled church and a hurting people. Throughout the letter Paul encourages the church to remain faithful. Paul himself had faced many hardships; he was able to encourage them because Jesus Christ had transformed his attitude. As we look through *2 Corinthians*, we will see how God can change our perspective and take us BEYOND the blues.

Goals of the study guide:

- To understand that humility and confidence are both essential parts of Christian character.
- To recognize that how we live our lives is the biggest testimony to the power of Christ that we can give.
- To see that real confidence comes when we learn to trust in and rely on God and His power in our lives.

Key points:

- Self-confidence enhances our spiritual life in many different ways.
- We should never expect to get our confidence from what other people think of us.
- Our confidence is strengthened as we realize that God gives us His provision and His grace for every situation.



Take a second look ... Sermon Summary

The Christian should be a *humble* person. The Christian should be a *confident* person. How do you reconcile those two virtues?

We are not to have an inflated view of our importance. But neither are we to be insecure. We are to be confident without being cocky. We are to be assured without being arrogant. Self-confidence is absolutely essential for the Christian, because...

- Confidence enhances the use of our *spiritual gifts*. *2 Timothy 1:7*
- Confidence enhances our *testimony*.
- Confidence enhances our *personal joy*.

In *2 Corinthians 3*, Paul speaks of his confidence in the Christian life. He uses the word "competent" three times, and that word means "sufficient." The same word is used in *2 Corinthians 12:9*, *My grace is sufficient for you*.

Notice four ways we can gain confidence while maintaining a proper attitude as believers.

1. Resist the temptation to *impress* people.

2 Corinthians 3:1, *Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you?*

Paul was not out to impress people. He certainly could have. He had impressive credentials. He was a world traveler. He was brilliant. But he refused to boast about himself to impress others.

Paul says, "My confidence does not come from the way others feel about me." If your confidence is directly related to other people's opinion, you will be plagued with insecurity.

- People are *fickle*.
- People are often *wrong*.
- People's tastes are so *varied*.

2. Rejoice in the *encouragement* of others.

2 Corinthians 3:2, *You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody*.

Paul's endorsements were the changed lives that he had led to the Lord. Everyone could see the legitimacy of his ministry by the lives won to Christ, where he had been. We are also open letters to the community. There are people who will not read the Bible and who will not listen to religious radio broadcast, but they will read your life.

2 Corinthians 3:3, *You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.*

3. Rely on the assurance of God's provision.

2 Corinthians 3:4-5, *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.*

As Christians we can be confident because our confidence is not in ourselves but in God.

4. Relax in the freedom of the new covenant.

2 Corinthians 3:6, *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.*

When you understand, as a Christian, that even though you stumble and fall, there is a net underneath you called *grace*. God catches you and He reestablishes you in your role. And He forgives you. It shouldn't make you careless, it can make you more confident.



Take it to the source ... Bible Study

Introductory question: What is a situation where you tend to lose all confidence? Why?

Opening thought:

Every one of us has had a time when we lost all confidence. When this happens, we lose our focus, our perspective and our ability to follow through in a situation. A person who is solidly grounded in a relationship with God develops a confidence that goes beyond their own abilities and comfort zone. Use this question to get your group thinking about how confidence, or the lack of it, affects their own lives.

Read 2 Corinthians 3:1 and John 2:23-25.

1. Jesus clearly saw that people are fickle. What are some indicators of fickleness in our society?
2. How easy is it for you to fall into the trap of putting too much emphasis on what other people think about you? What practical steps can you take to keep from becoming a slave to other's opinions of you?
3. What are some ways you could be sure that your confidence is coming from your relationship with God?
4. How can a strong relationship with God positively affect your confidence?

Key points:

- *John 2:24* says that Jesus would not entrust Himself to the crowds who were following Him because He "*knew all men.*" Jesus knew that people are fickle and likely to change. The opinions of others should not be the basis of our confidence or of our decision making.
- A strong relationship with God means that we are continually learning more about who God is. The more we know about God, the more we trust Him, and the more our confidence is in Him rather than relying only on ourselves.

Read 2 Corinthians 3:2-3.

1. Consider the following statement: "Christians' lives are the only religious books the world reads." What does that say to you about your daily responsibility?
2. What does the book of your life say so far?
3. Would you say that your life has been a letter of recommendation concerning what Christ can do in one life? What can you do to enhance that letter?
4. How can you encourage others who are writing a letter with their life?

Historical perspectives:

- The Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD said that a minister coming to a city where they were unknown should not be allowed to speak or pastor without letters of recommendation from their bishop.
- In the 2nd century, Ignatius of Antioch wrote, "Give unbelievers the chance of believing through you. Consider yourself as employed by God. Your life is the language in which He addresses them. Be mild when they are angry, and humble when they are haughty."

Read 2 Corinthians 3:4-6, Psalm 55:22 and Philippians 4:19.

1. Would you say that you fully trust God with every aspect of your life and all that you face? Why or why not?
2. When are you most confident of God's work in your life? When are you least confident? Why?
3. What are some practical ways you can strengthen your confidence in God and His place in your life?

Key points:

- The better we know God, the more we will trust Him. Taking time to know God through His Word and through prayer will have a positive effect on our own self-confidence, because we will learn to look to Him as our source in every situation rather than feeling like we've got to do it all in our own strength.
- Learning to involve God in every circumstance we face will help us to strengthen our confidence in God and His power to work in our lives.



Take it home ... Practical Applications

This week take some time to look at the areas of your life where you may not be confident in God:

- What keeps you from fully trusting Him?
- What can you do to strengthen your confidence in God?
- How can you deal with anything that weakens your trust in God and His provision for you?



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All Bible references are from the New International Version unless otherwise stated.

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