



CONFIDENCE

LESSON 5

COMPARISON, PEOPLE PLEASING
AND FINDING REAL CONFIDENCE

HeartLine
CROSSLINE COMMUNITY CHURCH





Get Healthy: Confidence

Lesson Five: Comparison, People-Pleasing, and Finding Real Confidence

Look Back: 10 Minutes

1. **Say 2 Corinthians 3:4b from memory: “My adequacy comes from God”**

Note: an easy way to remember the address of this scripture is 2, 3, 4: 2 Corinthians, chapter 3, verse 4. You will, however, have to remember it's in Corinthians on your own. But Corinthians starts with “C”, like confidence – so that's a start!

2. **Last week's lesson focused on developing the confidence to do what we know we should do, and say what we know we should say. Discuss how you said, or did, something with confidence this week. Did you have to overcome any Goliaths, Eliabs, or Sauls in the process?**
3. **Share one way you have applied what you have learned about confidence since beginning this Bible study.**

Look Forward: 50 Minutes

A few years ago I wrote a blog titled, “I Didn't Know My Life Was Such a Drag, Till I Saw Your Life on Facebook”. I loved that post, mainly because it was so raw and real.

Maybe you can relate. Just when you start to feel confident about something—your life, your job, your family, your relationship with God, your ministry, your romantic life (or lack of one), your friendships, your appearance—BAM! Here comes someone else whose life seems practically perfect. She's smarter. Thinner. Better. Clearly, she's happier. She's got the pictures to prove it.

Nothing can deflate our confidence quite like comparison. We *know* this. But we compare ourselves anyway. It's a crazy-maker, and it's a confidence crusher.

Is there any hope for women who live surrounded by images of virtual perfection to cast off the chains of comparison, and live with true confidence, instead?

Yes! We're about to find out how.

1. Read 2 Corinthians 10:12-13, written below, and circle each occurrence of the word “compare” and “measure”.

¹² We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise. ¹³ We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the sphere of service God himself has assigned to us, a sphere that also includes you.

- a. **What did some people do that was not wise?**

- b. **In what ways do you see how measuring yourself by others, or comparing yourself to others, is not wise?**

- c. **Can you recall a recent occurrence where you compared yourself, or some aspect of your life, to someone else? If so...**
 - **What did you think?**
 - **What did you feel?**
 - **What did you do?**

In lesson one we discussed the following phrase: ***“How I Think, Affects How I Feel, Which Affects What I Do”.***

We see. We think. We feel. We do. In that order.

This explains why comparison affects our confidence so profoundly. If we compare and *think* we come up short, we feel inadequate. If we *feel* inadequate, we *do* what we do, out of insecurity. On the other hand, if we compare and *think* we come out ahead, we feel superior. If we *feel* superior, we *do* what we do out of pride. And make no mistake: Pride is merely insecurity wearing a mask.

Comparison can serve a healthy purpose if it helps us identify areas we fall short, and motivates us toward positive change. More typically, though, comparison sends us down a rat hole of negative thinking, feeling, and acting.

Unhealthy comparison leaves us feeling pitiful or prideful. These insecure feelings drive us to respond in one of three ways:

- 1) **We Compete**
- 2) **We Criticize**
- 3) **We Concede**

In short, we power up, we put down, or we pull back. All this comparing with one another, and measuring our worth against one another, explains the rise in anxiety, stress, negativity, depression, and suicide, which have risen to epidemic proportions.

See? Rat hole.

2. When comparison causes you to feel insecure, are you typically more prone to compete, criticize, or concede? Discuss.

a. Does your typical response:

- **Bring you peace?**
- **Leave you feeling closer to God?**
- **Prompt you to love others more fully?**

b. If comparison isn't wise (or healthy!), why do you think we do it anyway?

Social scientists tell us we compare to answer the question, *How am I doing?* **The real issue behind comparison is the desire to know *I am significant and I have worth.*** But when we measure our worth by our perception of other's worth, we mimic what Paul warned in 2 Corinthians: "They measure themselves by themselves". **Comparison places *my confidence into your hands,*** which is profoundly unhealthy. Other people were never meant to hold the measure of our worth in their hands. That role belongs to the God who formed us uniquely, and who loves us completely.

So we know comparison isn't wise. We know it isn't healthy. But how do we stop comparing?

3. Look closely at 2 Corinthians 10:12a and 13 (from the passage we read, above). I've written it below.

"¹²We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves...¹³We...will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the sphere of service God himself has assigned to us, a sphere that also includes you."

- a. What three words does Paul use to begin verses 12 and 13?**

- b. What does this teach us about the role of choice as it relates to comparison?**

- c. Do you know anyone who doesn't struggle with comparison? If so, can you see how their choice impacts their confidence in a positive way?**

Paul made a conscious decision *not* to compare. He didn't "boast beyond the proper limits". But what does that mean, exactly? And how did his choice elevate his confidence?

The word translated as "boast" is the Greek word, *kauxáomai*, which means "living with 'head up high,' boasting from a particular vantage point by having the *right base of operation* to deal *successfully* with a matter. It refers to living with *God-given confidence*."

Pause and let these words sink in: "*Head up high*"; "*Right base of operation*"; "*Successfully deal*"; "*God-given confidence*".

Now we're talking confidence!

4. Paul confined his God-given confidence (boasting) to what area? Fill in the blanks:

"We will confine our boasting to the _____ of _____ God himself has assigned to us."

a. Let's make this practical and personal. What spheres of service/influence has God assigned to *you*? Mark all that apply:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | <input type="checkbox"/> School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Ministry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Home | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Husband/Boyfriend | <input type="checkbox"/> Acquaintances I See Regularly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children/Grandchildren | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

b. How can focusing on what God has assigned to you, rather than what God has assigned to others, free you from comparison?

c. Are you more likely to try to be “the best” (i.e. I want to be *the* best mom; I want to be *the* best at work/school; I want *the* best house; I want *the* best kids), or more likely to try to do *your* best? (Be honest!)

d. How could aiming to do *your* best vs. being *the* best, liberate you from the burden of comparison?

When we know what God has assigned to us, and we seek to do our best in those areas, we can live confidently, unshackled by the need to compare ourselves with others. We're free to run in our own lane, so to speak. Even better, we can cheer others on to live confidently in their lane. Talk about a win-win! Talk about freedom! Talk about emotional, relational and spiritual health!

When we seek to do our best in the areas He's assigned to us, we're freed from comparison, and we're also freed from another unhealthy confidence crusher—people pleasing.

5. Read John 12:42-43, written below, and answer the following questions.

⁴²Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³for they loved human praise more than praise from God.

a. What did the leaders (the *leaders!!!*) lack confidence to do?

b. Why?

6. **The desire to please people crushed their confidence. Contrast their lack of confidence with Paul's confidence, recorded in 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, below. Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.**

*⁶Therefore we are **always confident** and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸**We are confident**, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

- a. **What was Paul confident of?**

- b. **According to verse 8a and 9, what was Paul's goal? Fill in the blanks:**

We are confident....so we make it our _____ to _____.

When asked about their goal in life, most people respond, "To be happy." God isn't opposed to our happiness; in fact He's for it. However, when our *goal* is happiness, it can easily rob us of our confidence. Why? If we seek happiness above all else, we end up becoming self-pleasers or people-pleasers. One makes us narcissistic; the other drives us nuts!

While the core issue behind comparison is the need to validate our worth and significance, **the driving force behind people pleasing is the need for acceptance, approval, love, and security.**

But here's the deal: No one finds the security they long for by living to please people. Like comparison, people pleasing puts my confidence into your hands. And if *you* can determine whether or not *I* feel loved, accepted, and secure, I've given you too much power over my life. ***Functionally, you've become my god.***

7. **Let's get practical. Choose one or more of the following scenarios to consider. How might a woman respond if her goal is to please people? How might she respond if her goal is to please God? Discuss how her response is related to her confidence.**

- a. **Her toddler (or teenager!) has a meltdown in public.**

- **A people pleaser would:**
- **A God-pleaser would:**
- **How would confidence make a difference?**

- b. Her co-worker mocks her belief in God.**
- A people pleaser would:
 - A God-pleaser would:
 - How would confidence make a difference?
- c. Friends pressure her to join in an activity she's not comfortable with. If she doesn't join, she'll be the only one left out.**
- A people pleaser would:
 - A God-pleaser would:
 - How would confidence make a difference?
- d. A guy she's been seeing wants her to sleep with him.**
- A people pleaser would:
 - A God-pleaser would:
 - How would confidence make a difference?
- e. She knows in her heart God is prompting her to do something. Her family already thinks she takes God a little too seriously for their taste.**
- A people pleaser would:
 - A God-pleaser would:
 - How would confidence make a difference?
- f. Her Christian friend is about to make an unwise choice with big consequences.**
- A people pleaser would:
 - A God-pleaser would:
 - How would confidence make a difference?

When we live to please people, we sacrifice our confidence on the altar of keeping others satisfied--or at least, not mad at us. Ultimately, we stay insecure and miserable. But when we make it our goal to please Christ, we live confident and free!

- 8. Is there any area(s) you need to stop trying to please people, and start seeking to please God? If so, what?**

9. Consider everything you've learned about confidence during this Bible study, what is your biggest take-away?

Here's what I hope you've discovered in our weeks together: God *wants* you to live with confidence. It's your birthright as a believer. Every person we've studied—from Gideon, to David, to Moses—put their confidence in God and, as a result, fulfilled their God-given purpose and was abundantly blessed.

What they did, you can do, too!

How you see your circumstances, how you see yourself, how you see God; these things determine how confident you will be, and how confidently you will live.

Will you see God for who He is? Will you see yourself for who God says you are? Will you seek to please Jesus above others? If you will, you will be a confident woman.

And you will be not only be a healthy follower of Christ, you will be *abundantly, actually blessed*.

***“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
whose confidence is in him.
⁸They will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.
It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green
It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit.”***

~Jeremiah 17:7-8