

“How Confident Are You?”

Hebrews 10:19-25

7/18/10

Confidence.

How confident a person are you?

Some people I know just seem to exude confidence. Nothing ever seems to faze them. They walk into a room and are in command. Everyone likes them. Everything together in their life.

Or so it all seems, right?

How confident a person are you?

Marian V. Liautaud, writing in Christianity Today, says:

One morning as I got ready for work, my husband watched me put on blush and eyeliner. I always get nervous when he hovers like this. Dan's a purist; he thinks I'm prettier without make-up. Later that night, he asked me why I wear it.

"I like wearing make-up because I feel more finished—more put together—when I have on blush and mascara," I explained.

"What do you think would happen if you didn't look put together?" he probed.

"People at work might view me as unprofessional."

Still not satisfied, he asked, "What do you think would happen if they viewed you as unprofessional? Do you think you could lose your job?"

"No, probably not lose my job, but I might miss out on opportunities because I'd go unnoticed."

"Oh, so make-up helps you get noticed."

"I don't wear make-up to get noticed," I rebutted a little more defensively than I'd intended. "It helps me look better, and when I feel like I look the best I can, I have more confidence, which in turn leads to more opportunities." I was getting tired of his questions—and uncomfortable. Still, he persisted.

"Oh, so making yourself look different from what you are gives you confidence." As Dan tried to understand the psychology behind wearing make-up, his questions became needles that poked holes through my logic. Exasperated, I ended our conversation by saying, "I'm annoyed by your questions, but they're making me realize that I don't have this issue sorted out in my mind. I'm going to take our conversation to heart and try to figure this out."

The next day I embarked on a 30-day experiment. Without telling a soul, I committed to wearing no make-up to see what kind of reaction I'd receive from the people in my life. I was sure coworkers would look at me and either judge my unfinished appearance with disapproval—maybe even disgust—or they'd ask me if I was feeling sick.

The first week was the hardest. I avoided making eye contact with people. Every time I saw myself in a mirror, I instinctively reacted with disgust. "You're ugly," I said disgustedly to myself on more than one occasion. I felt so unattractive.

To make up for my insecurity, I decided to go on the offensive. I started to concentrate on smiling as much as I could and initiating conversations with people so I could learn more about them as a way of taking the focus off of me. I desperately wanted to get comfortable in my own skin. But how could I when I felt so ugly?

Somewhere during week two, I began to realize that how I look has nothing to do with me. I had nothing to say in the matter. At conception, God knit me together, weaving the DNA from my mom and dad into a little girl with brown hair and blue eyes. My chin comes from my grandma, unchiseled and prone to doubling, and my nose might be a bit too big for my face. At what point had I started to judge these facts as good or bad? Who convinced me that my looks make me less than enough? And why had I allowed this faulty thinking to continue for most of my life?

At that moment, I decided to stop judging my looks as good or bad and instead begin to accept myself as I am. I'd view my physical appearance neutrally and without judgment. Beauty would become a moot point for me because it had been determined by God. He didn't request my input on how to design me, so I needed to trust that what I look like is as it should be. There's nothing to improve upon. However I look, it is enough.

After my 30-day boycott on make-up, I began sharing my experience with a few close friends. The thought of leaving off lipstick had never occurred to them. Every one of them said they wear make-up because it's fun, it makes them feel feminine, and they feel prettier with make-up than without. I understand all these responses fully and agree wholeheartedly. At the same time, I've experienced such freedom in not wearing make-up, mainly because I feel released from the struggle to be pretty.

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Marian V. Liautaud, "The Skin I'm In," Today's Christian Woman Editor's Blog (7-9-09)

I said a few weeks ago, clearly God and the world have conflicting purposes. God made you, knit you together, beautiful, wonderfully made.

And then in steps the world and says otherwise: You must have this kind of nose, this kind of skin, this kind of brain, this kind of personality to be called beautiful. It's no wonder, when we are constantly exposed to all that, along with our own knowledge of where our weaknesses are, it's no wonder we can quickly lose confidence.

W.C. Fields "It ain't what they call you, it's what you answer to."

Today we're hearing more about worship—and I think in a way we don't hear enough. Last week we heard that worship is not about all the things we do, as if we make something happen. Worship is coming before God, fully open in gratitude and love for God, allowing the space to pour out our hearts before Him.

And now hear these words:

No matter who you are or what anyone else may think about you—no matter what you think about yourself—Because of what God did for us in His Son Jesus Christ, you can walk into this place with absolute confidence.

Take off the makeup. Let go of your fears. Because we have a Great Priest over the house of God who has opened up a new and living way.

Confidence. The Greek, "parrasi'a", literally means boldness. And in this context here in Hebrews it is "courage", "confidence", "boldness", "fearlessness", especially in the presence of a person of high rank—in this case, God.

We are confident because the way is clear: there is a new and living Way opened up.

I am not very confident when I don't know where I'm going—when I am lost.

I mean, if you've ever been lost as a kid you know what I mean. My dad likes to tell a story about me when I was ten years old. It was my first trip over to Hungary to

visit my family over there. Of course, we did a lot of site seeing in Budapest—a very busy city.

Well, one day as I walked with my parents, I got enthralled with something that I saw and stopped to look. The only trouble is that no one else stopped. So in a flash, there I stood alone, in a huge crowd, in a huge city, in another country that does not speak English.

My parents of course panicked. My dad said when they spotted me I was just standing still in the crowd, eyes as wide as could be, scanning the crowd for signs of hope.

Not a confident moment.

There are a lot of people, a lot of us, standing still, wide-eyed, gazing into the crowd for signs of hope. But that is when we must know, all must know, that God has opened up a new and living way through Christ. It is His Way. He has come and sought us out in our lostness. He sees us standing alone, scared, and says, Take my hand. Come with Me. It's okay.

A new way. This is unlike anything the world has ever seen or known. In Jesus' day, it was the Gentiles who felt that separation. It was the Jews who could enter the temple. And it was only once a year that the high priest could enter the holy of holies where God was present. The huge heavy curtain separated everyone from God's holy presence.

But:

Jesus tore that curtain in two, so that all have access to God, no matter who you are in this world.

And that happened by His death and resurrection, removing all barriers between us and God that all might know His love and grace.

That is worship. That is why we are here—and not just here, but with confidence. Boldly. Plainly. Fearless before God.

Come to this place with confidence. No matter what you think or others think about you, know and believe what God thinks—that you are His beautiful creation, loved, so much that He gave His Son that you could be adopted into this family.

Because there's not much worse than thinking others around you are better than you somehow. Truly God forbid that ever be the case here in church. I am not confident when I feel like others around me are "better" somehow.

Running track in high school was always a test of confidence, especially when we got to bigger meets when we were up against guys from bigger cities. Looking back now it's kind of a funny scene really. The infield of the track is filled with a bunch of guys trying to look calmly tough. "Yeah, I'm bad. I'm going to act like I don't want you to look at me, but look at my bad self. Oh yeah."

None of us, not one person who ever has nor ever will enter this sanctuary, comes here because of how good we are. We gather here because of how good God is. It's a new and living way He has opened up.

We are confident because we are clean.

"Our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

We witnessed that last week as our four young persons were baptized. We are made clean in Christ.

For the Jews, this again was a big one. It was the priest who had to determine you fit and clean for entering the worshiping community. Gentiles were totally unclean. But now, as Hebrews says, we have the Great Priest over the house of God. Now He has made us clean, everyone of us who honestly, in spirit and truth, comes before Him with open hearts.

We are clean.

I am not too confident when I smell. When I was 25 years old I did a lot of mountain biking. One day I wrecked really bad and tore my shoulder out. Fortunately I was up in the hills just behind the hospital in Hershey. My mom also worked there.

So I walked down to the hospital, sweaty, filthy dirty from crashing into the ground. I hobbled into my mom's office where I immediately got a look, and the words, that said, "What are you doing here like that?"

You see, she was the administrative assistant for the director of the hospital. I was a filthy, stinky guy standing in the perfectly clean and fresh smelling office.

Of course, once she realized I was heading to the emergency room she was relieved! ☺

Our Great Physician is waiting for us to get to the emergency room, where we are healed, cleaned up, made whole. In Him we are clean. New confidence. Not ashamed or dirty any longer.

We are confident because we can count on God: He who has promised is faithful.

There are a lot of people in this world—any human for that matter—who will let us down some time. None of us are perfect.

But God is. God promises life and hope and strength and peace, and He is faithful to it all. Where we see the impossible, God empowers us to soar.

God is right here. Allow the music, God's Word, and the people around you to bring down the walls and open you to Him. Allow God to touch that part of you deep within that only you know, that is, your spirit. And when He does you may want to weep, or you may want to jump for joy. However you express it, let go and worship God boldly now in spirit and in truth. Amen.