



Upskilling: How to Increase Your Confidence

Confidence is an important subject for 4word women – the word is in our mission statement: “...helping women in the workplace reach their God-given potential with CONFIDENCE.” But in a culture driven by power and appearance the popular definition of confidence may fall short of what we are aiming to accomplish at 4word.

To be truly confident is to know oneself and be aware of, and comfortable with, one’s strengths and weaknesses. It’s not a false view of one’s abilities when the evidence shows otherwise; that’s arrogance. Confidence is the ability to rest in your God-given identity.

Confidence comes from the inside.

One of the best examples of true confidence in the Bible is the story of Paul. Paul had an impressive pedigree, a first-rate education, and plenty of accolades - from a human perspective he had every reason to feel confident in himself. But once he encountered Jesus, Paul realized that his external honors and achievements did not make him who he was. Paul learned that true confidence comes from knowing Jesus and allowing the Holy Spirit to strip away the layers of the false self. In Paul’s words, “I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord (Philippians 3:7-8).”

As Paul grew closer to Jesus, his inner confidence flourished because Jesus showed him who he was meant to be. Paul went on to make a major difference in the world that is still having ripple effects after 2000 years.

Shift your focus.

Our Creator is the only one who knows who we really are, so to be confident in our worth and identity, we must do the work of self-reflection through God’s eyes. But there’s a distinct difference between healthy self-evaluation and self-absorption.

Jesus said “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it (Matthew 16:24-26).” Denying yourself might seem like an illogical place to start when building confidence, but just as Paul learned, true identity is revealed – not achieved.

As we learn who we are from God’s perspective, we can let go of the striving and self-criticism that drives so many people to unhealthy lifestyles and eventual burnout, and we can live a life of discovery and meaning marked by humility.

Humility is the backbone of confidence, because true humility is the ability to see ourselves as God sees us. God created us and loves us unconditionally, and through the sacrifice of Jesus, God “...has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault (Colossians 1:22).”

When we know who we really are, we can let go of our narcissistic tendencies and negative self-talk – both of which lead to emptiness, and we can develop genuine interest in others. The great



theologian and author, C. S. Lewis wrote, “True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself less.”

Get curious.

In Paul's letter to the church at Philippi, he wrote: “Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves (Philippians 2:3).” Paul didn't mean that we should put ourselves down. Rather, the Greek word that sums up the phrase “thinking of others as better...” is the word *hēgēomai* which means to put others “in front” as “the leading thought.” Paul is saying that we need to learn to shift our focus from ourselves and get interested in others. Those are his next words: “Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. (Philippians 2:4).”

One of the best ways to develop your personal confidence is to get curious about the stories of other people. When you learn to ask good questions and listen actively with genuine interest, you will not only expand your view of the world, you will also grow in confidence. As you make others feel seen and heard you will reap the blessing of making meaningful connections because your focus is turned outward.

But one caution: watch out for social media. Social media platforms are great ways to keep up with friends and people you admire, but they do not tell a person's whole story. To show interest in others you need to hold actual two-way conversations. If you find yourself reacting to social media posts with envy or criticism, go back and do some Holy Spirit led self-reflection so you can follow the emotion to see what's underneath it.

Take a risk and learn something. Resting in your God-given identity doesn't mean standing still. God expects us to stretch beyond our comfort level and take faith-based risks so we can grow in our influence and make a difference in the world. One great way to grow in confidence is to push beyond the boundaries of what you already know and learn new concepts and skills.

Now more than ever, learning is accessible and affordable, and the very act of learning builds confidence. Don't be afraid to pursue knowledge or skills that are outside what you need for your job. Take a risk and pursue something you are passionate about or just interested in. As you add to your knowledge toolbox, you'll increase your ability to grow in other areas as well, because learning keeps your brain cells operating at an optimum level. Who knows, as you explore new ideas, God may just lead you into a whole new vision for your life.

Set achievable goals.

It's great to have a God-sized vision, but it's also important to set smaller goals that are in line with the realities of your stage of life. Set short-term goals every week and then concentrate on the actions steps that will get you where you want to go.

In addition to your career and work goals, set goals for your spiritual life, your family, your friendships, and any other area of your life that's important to you. Then work the steps and set regular times to evaluate your progress. You'll be amazed how far you've come and how much you've grown in confidence when you are purposeful about this one life that God has given you.

Give yourself a break.



Often it seems like everywhere we go we're being evaluated by our external attributes – our appearance, our age, our taste in clothes, our parenting. In a world where women especially are judged on their outsides, a strong sense of who we are on the inside is essential for living confidently. But even when we've done the work of God-guided self-reflection and developed our listening and learning abilities, we can still fall into the perfection trap.

God knows that on any given day we will fall short of some of our goals and aspirations, but God loves us anyway. When our own efforts fail, we can still rest in the love and acceptance of God – this is the real basis for discovering our identity and increasing our confidence.

Our purposeful efforts to grow in confidence should always stem from the knowledge that because of Jesus, God sees us exactly the way God intended us to be - perfect and without fault. When we stop and acknowledge God's view of us, we can confidently say with Paul, "We put no confidence in human effort (Philippians 3:3)." Rather we draw our confidence from the One who created us and called us into being.

In Christ you can move forward confidently and humbly knowing that "God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him (Philippians 2:13)."

Discussion Questions

1. How do you react to the idea that confidence is the ability to rest in your God-given identity?
2. In what ways have you seen the Holy Spirit strip away layers of your false self?
3. What emotions or thoughts arise when you think about taking time for self-reflection?
4. Have you had any training in active listening? What benefits have you discovered from listening to others with genuine interest?
5. Apart from your work, are there any areas of your life where you need to set some achievable goals?
6. What might God be prompting you to do to increase your confidence? How do you intend to follow through?

For more ideas on increasing your confidence, be sure to listen to the March Work, Love, Pray podcast episodes with Nona Jones and Christy Wright.



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Marion served in pastoral ministry for 17 years at three local churches including, most recently, Willow Creek Community Church. During her church ministry, she incorporated her organizational development skills with her practical knowledge of effective discipleship to create growth strategies that focused on the equipping and mobilization of congregations on the mission of Jesus. She holds degrees from Trinity International University and Wheaton College in Organizational Leadership and Missional Church Movement.



***4word** is a global community of Christian women in the workplace. Our mission is to help women in the workplace reach their God-given potential with confidence.*

Why 4word?

At 4word, we know you want to reach your God-given potential so you can have a Kingdom impact on your workplace and the world. To do that, you need resources for professional and spiritual growth - and a community of like-minded women to cheer you on!

The problem is your time is limited and meaningful connections are hard to find. This can leave you feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, and isolated on your life's journey.

We believe you shouldn't have to navigate work, life and faith on your own because God designed you for community. You are worthy to be surrounded by loving and supportive women who "get you."

We understand you face unique challenges as a Christian woman in the workplace, which is why we create easy-access opportunities for leadership development, spiritual growth, and connections to influential women around the globe.

Our Simple Empowerment Plan:

- Connect to a community – We offer virtual and in-person Community Groups specifically designed for working women – and we also have special groups for executive women.
- Access relevant content – 4word's podcast, blog, and our Community Group Discussion Guides are specifically geared to women in the workplace to help thrive on your journey.
- Get matched with a mentor – From our pool of over 220 amazing mentors we connect you with the right fit for a transformational mentoring experience through 4word's Mentor Program.

Join the Journey to empower 10 million Christian women in the workplace to change the world by 2030. Click the picture below to learn more.





Upcoming

April Discussion- Recognizing Healthy Organizational Culture

HundredX Campaign- April 8 -May 7