



Humble and Confident?

Description

There is an inherent tension between what appear to be, at first glance, two very diametrically opposed components of a healthy sense of self and human identity: humility and confidence. If humility has the connotation of *less*—think of yourself *less*, talk about yourself *less*—and confidence has the connotation of *more*—stand up for yourself *more*, speak out *more*, and on—then how can you reconcile the two? Is it even possible to have both humility and confidence at the same time without devolving into a fragmented, schizophrenic contradiction of terms? And if it's possible, then practically speaking, what does that *look like*? The beauty of the gospel is that, in Christ, the seemingly impossible becomes possible. We just need to become who we already are in Christ: yes, both humble *and* confident. Here's how.

In Christ

So, first of all, why all this emphasis on being “In Christ”? The Bible references the Christian's position in this way many times:

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. – **Romans 8:1**

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. – **Ephesians 2:10**

For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. – **Galatians 3:26-28**

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. – **Colossians 2:9-10**

We are placed in Christ by God's gracious work in our lives when we put our faith in Christ, and that

position never changes, though the sense of closeness, fellowship, comfort, and even power can vary depending upon our choice to “abide” in Christ, or not (John 15:5). Hence, the koanlike call to *become who we already are in Christ*.

It's only when we are in Christ, and see ourselves as being in Christ, that the impossible becomes possible. We can be both wildly and supremely confident because of that position—Access to God! (**Hebrews 4:16**) Joint-heirs to the kingdom! (**Romans 8:17**) The power to do great things! (**John 14:12-14**)—while at the very same time recognizing that we did nothing in our own power to deserve or merit this standing in the least.



You know the timeless trope of the beggar/pauper who becomes an adopted prince? The story of rags to riches, a young misfit lifted from abject poverty and desolation, to find himself commanding a kingdom, second in authority only to the great king? It's a timeless trope* that's been told and retold a million ways, because it's a story about us. And on some level, we all know this; that's why it works so well, and why the story resonates so deeply within us. (*This trope is nearly irresistible to authors as well as readers. No matter how creative my attempts at outlining might be, once I actually began putting words down in my [Young Adult Dystopian Trilogy Meritropolis](#), this plot line seemed to write itself).

The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope. — **Timothy J. Keller**

In short, we can be both humble and confident at the same time—really, truly humble and really, truly confident at the same time, not just paying lip service to one while being the other—because of Christ. We know who we are with him, giving us confidence, and we know we are without him, giving us humility.

Humility

Okay, so being humble and confident at the very same time sounds pretty good. We'd love to put that on our resume, but how do we know we really have both, and aren't just fooling ourselves? (Sidenote: and, if we say we have humility, much less put it on a resume, then does that immediately disqualify us, kind of like the guy who got a trophy for his humility, but then got it taken away after he accepted it?) Well, first of all, defining terms is important.

Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less. – **C.S. Lewis**

What God says is valuable and important is valuable and important. Period. Yes, even when it's you. This is worth repeating, so remember this: if God says you are valuable and important, then you are. Don't ever forget this, because it's easy to let your feelings at a given moment, or what someone else says about you, or even your own self-talk deceive you into ignoring God's assessment of your worth, which, really, is the only one that matters.



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So, humility is not diminishing who we are in Christ, or trying to redefine the beautiful, wonderful things God has said about us as his children. We are loved, accepted, complete, worthwhile, and more. But humility does most certainly contain an element of being focused outward on others rather than inward on self. Paradoxically, sometimes the best form of self-care is others-care. (The key word is *sometimes*, not always. Self-care is certainly a good and Biblical thing too; that's not the point being made here).

Confidence

So, *humility* sounds very respectable and Christian-like. But *confidence*? Even though most of us are attracted to people with confidence, and we may or may not realize the need for more confidence in our own lives, to actively strive for more confidence has a somewhat *un-Christian* feel to it, not to mention that vaguely *icky* feeling of self-importance.

And then there's the whole question of: if you have to try to have more confidence, then are you actually more confident, or just pretending? Kind of like the corollary to the age-old high school maxim: if you have to try to be cool, you are decidedly uncool (anyone with soon-to-be adolescents will discover that this is as true in parenting as in high school).



So what gives?

The answer, again, is the phrase *In Christ*. If ever there was a clear thread running through Scripture, it's the idea that having confidence in oneself or in man is a recipe for disaster, but confidence in God, specifically as revealed to us in Christ, is our greatest treasure!

If we have all we need in Christ, then can acting in a less-than-confident manner reflect poorly on that standing? In a word, yes. To live and enjoy a life of power in Christ is to be confident. Faith in Christ, not in ourselves, saves, and confidence in Christ, not in ourselves, *energizes*!

Practical Application

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, the practical application is simple. *Become who you already are in Christ*. This is not clever wordplay or Zen mimicry. We have all we need in Christ, so act like it. Just like the person who tries hard to be cool, and shows themselves to be anything but, we don't need to *try* to be humble and confident, we simply need to allow ourselves to be all who we already are in Christ.

He's done the work, he does the work, and he will continue to do the work. The answer is the same as when we first came to him: turn to him, trust in him fully, and he won't let you down.

And that is how you can be both humble and confident at the very same time.

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Category

1. Identity in Christ

Date Created

January 26, 2018

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