WALKING IN TOTAL GOD-CONFIDENCE

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21-DAY JOURNEY OVERVIEW

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CONFIDENCE KEY #1: CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE

DAY 1:SELF-CONFIDENCE VERSUS GOD-CONFIDENCE

O Lord, we love to do your will! Our hearts' desire is to glorify your name. Isaiah 26:8

I'm always amused when people say I come across as a very self-confident person. Having been my own constant companion lo these many years, I can assure you that nothing could be further from the truth.

I know myself too well to have any confidence in my own ability or my own goodness. In fact, as the years go by, I'm increasingly confident of only one thing: left to my own devices and given the opportunity to blow it, I'll blow it every time.

Have you ever met someone possessed of an uncanny ability to make the worst of a good situation? The kind of person who invents new ways of sabotaging herself? That's me. You know the slogan "If it ain't broke, don't fix it"? Well, my motto is "If it ain't broke, break it and watch what happens. Someday I'm going to be a "Giant of the Christian Faith" and I'll stop doing incredibly dumb stuff all the time. Meanwhile, I'm stuck with the real me. As a result, I have zero self-confidence.

When I was just getting started as a professional speaker, I attended a secular training conference where the leader advised, "Fake it till you make it. Dress to the nines and act like you know what you're doing. The audience will never know the difference." Well, that sounded like great advice to me. I knew I hadn't "made it" but I figured I could "fake it." So, when I finally got my first speaking engagement, I was nervous ... but at least I had a

strategy.

Even though we were flat broke, I just had to have a new outfit. So, out came the credit card and off I went to the local mall. (I say this to my shame.) Well, I found this fabulous purple outfit with gold buttons--very confident-looking. *Perfect,* I thought, *they won't notice that I'm trembling down to my ankles. All they'll notice is this great suit.*

Everything seemed to go fine at the event and my confidence level started climbing out of the basement. *Hey, maybe God really has called me to do this!* About a week later, I got a letter in the mail postmarked from the city I had just spoken in. *Fan mail,* I thought. *This is too cool.* I opened it expectantly. Guess what? The woman commented on what a nice suit I wore. That was the good part. Then she added, "I couldn't really concentrate on what you were saying because your hair was such a mess. Maybe you should cut it shorter."

How would you react to a letter like that?

I'll tell you what I did: I put that letter down and immediately walked over to my neighbor's house (she's a former hairstylist) and told her to "cut it all off." Boy, did she cut it all off! Then I went to the grocery store and bought a bag of Oreos and a gallon of milk. After I polished that off, I hid under the covers for a month, vowing never to speak in public again.

For the record, I look awful in short hair.

When I finally crawled out from under the covers and snapped out of my Oreo-induced depression, God began to show me that there was a better way. That I didn't have to go through life faking it and trying desperately to make it.

He began to teach me that there's another kind of confidence ... a much better confidence! It's God-Confidence, and it's something completely different. God-Confidence is absolute assurance that God can do whatever he wants through whomever he chooses. It's confidence that God can--and often does--choose to work through the last person on earth that human beings would choose.

God-Confidence trusts completely that God has a purpose for your life and that he is more than capable of seeing it fulfilled. It's confidence that he can even use a woman who's having a bad hair day. (I never have bad hair days; I have a bad hair LIFE.)

You see, your level of self-confidence is based on your level of trust in your own ability. To determine your level, you (consciously or subconsciously) take a little inventory of your resources, looking at factors like:

- who your parents were
- what kind of family life you had
- what schools you went to
- which side of the tracks you grew up on
- how long you've been a Christian
- how mature you consider yourself as a Christian
- how well you perform certain Christian rituals such as praying, reading your Bible, attending Sunday school, etc.
- the condition of your marriage and family life

- your status in the church and community
- how others treat you
- how you judge your own personal appearance
- your past successes and failures
- thousands of other personal and cultural criteria.

Then, based on that analysis, you come to some conclusions about what you can and cannot do, about what can and cannot be accomplished through your life.

Self-confidence looks inward; God-Confidence looks upward. Which one is your life based upon?

I'll be honest. On the days when I operate according to self-confidence, I can barely get out of bed. The awareness of my weaknesses and failures overwhelms me. But on the days when I walk in Total God-Confidence, look out, world!

My goal in offering this class and preparing this class and ebook is to challenge myself, even as I challenge you, to walk *every day* in Total God-Confidence. Confidence is defined by *Webster's Dictionary* as "faith, trust, and assurance." That's what we need. Faith. Trust. And assurance. It also defines it as "a reliance on another's discretion." Wow. That's the heart of the matter, isn't it? If we can come to the place where we *rely on God's discretion* rather than our own--when we can say from our hearts, "Lord, you know best. You decide"--we'll truly be walking in Total God-Confidence.

That's the purpose of this 21 day journey, and I'm excited that

we're taking it together.

I consider it an incredible privilege to be a writer and a great honor that you're reading my class and ebook. I know how hectic and downright frustrating life can be. I know what it's like to be searching for solutions. I know what it is to pick up a class and ebook and cry out with a desperate prayer to heaven, "Lord, use this to change me! I need a breakthrough in my life!"

I know what it's like to get a few pages into a book and think, "What planet is this woman living on? Not only is she perfect, her house is perfect, her church is perfect, her marriage is perfect, her kids and grandkids are perfect, her dog is perfect, even her neighbors are perfect. Is she for real?" And you hope like crazy that the answer is NO, otherwise, you're worse off than you thought you were when you picked up the class and ebook in the first place.

I think you'll find that I'm living on the same crazy, mixed-up planet you're living on, that I encounter the same mix of fruits and nuts you do. I don't live in a perfect world. I live in a world where people (including me) do incredibly stupid things. My life isn't perfect. My kids aren't perfect. And my spices aren't in alphabetical order.

But I have found the perfect solution to all this madness: placing my confidence in the only One who IS perfect.

My guess is that you enrolled in this class because you wanted something different, something more, from your Christian life. I can't give you any guarantees, but I'll tell you this much: the principles I'm about to share with you have truly changed my life. I'm finding, deep within, a quiet confidence in God that I never thought I could experience. And that confidence isn't based on a magic formula. It's not "fake it till you make it." It's based on

who God is. I'm convinced that the more we know of God, the more confidence we will have. That's why, on this 21 day journey, we won't be seeking confidence; we'll be seeking God.

It's my prayer that this class and ebook will enable you to grow in your knowledge *of God,* which must inevitably lead to increased confidence *in God.*

DIG DEEPER

1.Rate your self-confidence level (1 to 10)

2.Rate your God-Confidence level (1 to 10)

3.Do you walk according to self-confidence or God-Confidence? How can you tell?

4. What do you hope to gain from this study? List some specific goals.

5. Write out a prayer to God, expressing your desire to grow in your knowledge of him and in your ability to walk in Total God-Confidence.

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS

- ✓God-Confidence is absolute assurance that God can do whatever he wants through whomever he chooses.

- ✓Increased knowledge *of God* inevitably leads to increased confidence *in God.* On this journey, we won't be seeking confidence; we'll be seeking God.

DAY 2: PUT ON THE BOOTS

I want to tell you about a very special pair of boots that have found a permanent place in my heart: size 9, eight-inch-high construction boots. They belonged to a young homeless girl we took in and raised for six years. Not long after she came to live with us, we discovered that Sarah had lived in some fifty different places, including in cars. She had been knocked around from place to place, being rejected over and over. Some families kept her for a few days, some for a few weeks. Believe it or not, one family kept her for *half an hour.*

As you can imagine, Sarah had zero self-confidence.

But God began to do a miraculous work in her life. He began convincing her that he had great plans for her future. About a year after we took her in, she felt God was calling her to be a missionary to Africa. She heard about an organization called Teen Missions, which offers short-term mission assignments to teenagers. She put in her application, got accepted, and everything was in motion. Talk about walking in Total God-Confidence. She was so excited, I thought she would burst. She just *knew* this was part of God's purpose.

Sarah was told that the very first thing she needed to do to prepare for this great mission assignment was to buy a pair of 8-inch-high construction boots, put them on right away, and wear them every day to break them in.

Well, she sent away for the boots. Then she sent out her missionary support letter to raise the $5,000 it was going to cost to get her there. And, uh, not much happened.

Boy, did that shoot her confidence. Suddenly she wanted ALL the

answers up front. "Okay, God. Where's the money gonna come from? When is it gonna arrive? What color check is it gonna be printed on? How's it all gonna work out?"

She literally refused to put on those boots! In essence, her attitude was, "God, I'm not taking one more step--I'm not even going to put on my boots until you give me all the answers up front." I'm telling you, sisters, those boots sat around our house for three months with the tags still on them.

Now you're probably sitting there thinking, "O she of little faith." But let me ask you something: Have you put your boots on? Is there something God has called you to do, but since he hasn't given you ALL the answers up front, you're not willing to take a step of faith? Not even willing to put on the boots?

A. W. Tozer, in his class and ebook *The Knowledge of the Holy,* says this:

> **Most of us go through life praying a little, planning a little, jockeying for position, hoping but never being quite certain of anything, and always secretly afraid that we will miss the way. This is a tragic waste of truth and never gives rest to the heart. There is a better way. It is to repudiate our own wisdom and take instead the infinite wisdom of God.**

Now listen carefully to this part:

> **Our insistence upon seeing ahead is natural enough, but it is a real hindrance to our spiritual progress [emphasis added]. God has charged himself with full responsibility for our eternal happiness. And he stands ready to take over the management of our lives the moment we turn in faith to him.**

He stands ready, sisters. But first we have to come to the place where we consider--and this is a big thought--that maybe, just maybe, God can do a better job of managing our lives than we

have done. Just a thought.

When we insist on seeing ahead, knowing the answers up front, we can't walk in Total God-Confidence. In fact, we stop dead in our tracks. *We refuse to even put on the boots.* Some of us won't even take off the tags.

If you're ready to make real spiritual progress, don't insist on knowing the answers up front. Just put on your boots and walk forward in Total God-Confidence, knowing that you have been called according to his purpose.

DIG DEEPER

1. Is there something God has called you to do, but since he hasn't given you all the answers up front, you're not willing to take a step of faith?

2. Can you think of a specific step you can take that will be for you, in essence, "putting on the boots"?

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS:

- ✓Our insistence upon seeing ahead is natural enough, but it's a real hindrance to our spiritual progress.
- ✓Don't wait until you have all the answers up front.
- ✓Be willing to "put on the boots" and take a step of faith.

✓

DAY 3: WHAT HAS SHAKEN YOUR CONFIDENCE?

Has your confidence been shaken? Was there a time when you believed God had great things for you, but then something happened and you lost hope?

Today I want to tell you about the event that first shook my confidence in the world. It was when my oldest brother returned from Vietnam a heroin addict. For reasons I've struggled my whole life to understand, somehow there was fertile soil in our family. Eventually four of my seven siblings developed an addiction to the drug. Suddenly we were the "bad news" family. The drug addict family. And I was the kid in the neighborhood that no one was supposed to play with.

The kids in my class used to torment me relentlessly. They would draw pictures of my family with needles in our arms and write "Drug Addict Family" across the top. I'll never forget one day in particular when the teacher stepped out of the room. All the kids in my class formed a circle around me and sang, "DRUG ADDICT FAMILY, DRUG ADDICT FAMILY, DRUG ADDICT FAMILY" until I couldn't stand it anymore and ran home crying.

Now for the real irony. After seeing the human carnage, the wreckage drugs caused, after seeing them tear my family apart and rob me of my childhood, guess what I became? I'll tell you, when the Hound of Heaven tracked me down and dragged me kicking and screaming into the kingdom of God, I was not only a drug addict, I was a drug dealer. I was the kind of scum who would give your kid free drugs just to get him hooked and land a long-term customer.

But I praise God that he did not leave me in that place. In July

1980 I received a phone call from an old high school friend named Bruce. He said there was a really neat camp in northern Pennsylvania. The setting was breathtaking and the people were fabulous. He said it started the following day, and he concluded the conversation by saying, "I'm paying your way, so you can't say no. I'm picking you up tomorrow at 5:00 a.m."

I hung up the phone and figured, "Hey, what have I got to lose? It's a free vacation." I quickly packed my bags, including my string bikini and a couple of joints (that's marijuana cigarettes, for the uninitiated). Boy, was I in for a big surprise! Of course, I wasn't nearly as surprised as the Christian camp directors were when I showed up!

For the first couple of days I argued with them and generally made their lives miserable. Then one day I was sitting on the bank of the Delaware River when it suddenly became real to me: even if I were the only person on the planet, Jesus Christ would have gone to the Cross to pay the price for my sins. I was filled with an inexpressible joy. From that moment on, I've never had a single craving for drugs. That from a person who could not make it until 10:00 in the morning without getting high. What a miracle-working God we have!

The next night, there was a beautiful moon in the sky. As I walked along the river, gazing at the wonder of God's creation, I heard him speak to me in a way that was so clear, it was like he was walking next to me. He said, "I'm going to take you to retreat centers just like this one, all over the country. And I'm going to use you in a mighty way to make a difference in this world."

Let me tell you, I was excited! I was sending away for the boots. After all, I knew John 3:16. I figured it would take me a couple of

months to get a handle on the Bible; a few more months to get my name out; and I'd be speaking at retreat centers before you could say hermeneutics! To tell you the truth, by the end of the week, I was ready to say to the guy teaching the camp, "You can sit down. I'll take it from here."

I can assure you, it didn't quite work out that way. I'll tell you the rest of my story tomorrow. For now, I want you to recall where you were when God tracked you down, and spend a few moments thanking him for his mercy toward you. We all have a story to tell.

DIG DEEPER

1.Can you recall an event in your life that shook your confidence?

2. Write out your personal testimony of coming to faith in Christ. Be sure to share it on the Facebook Group.

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS:

✓Don’t let life shake your confidence.

✓We all have a story to tell of God's mercy and faithfulness.

CONFIDENCE KEY #2: OPEN TO HIS PLAN

DAY 4: RUN YOUR OWN RACE

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. Hebrews 12:1-2

I have to make a confession here. I don't know about the rest of you, but too often I am a woman on the run. Not really sure where I'm going or why I'm in such a hurry to get there, but I'm a-runnin' nevertheless. In fact, I've lived most of my life guided by the motto of the French Foreign Legion: "When in doubt ... GALLOP!"

Sound familiar?

When I first became a Christian, I wanted so much to do great things for God. And I was absolutely sincere. I poured myself into every ministry opportunity that came along.1 My Sunday school teaching experience ranged from kindergarten all the way up to junior and senior high school. I taught Vacation Bible School to two- and three-year-olds. I didn't know why the lady who recruited me was so pleased when I agreed to do it. I found out.

When the Billy Graham Crusade came to the city of Philadelphia, I was one of the very first people who signed up to help out. I was on the fellowship committee. I was on the casserole committee--it didn't matter that I couldn't cook. If there was a committee, I was on it. I was going to do great things for God.

One of my favorite projects was my family. I've got a mom, dad, and seven older brothers and sisters who brought with them husbands, wives, nieces, nephews. Just a sea of humanity. And I was determined to win them all for Christ. I was constantly inviting them to church, to the Crusade, to Christian concerts, anywhere I thought God might be at work. I was lending them books , giving them tapes, all the time plotting and planning for their salvation. And finally, I'm happy to report, God poured forth his mercy upon my family. *He moved me out of state.*

As you can see, I certainly wasn't lacking in zeal. One thing I do have is an abundance of energy and a willing spirit. But no matter how hard I tried, it rarely seemed that God was really using me in people's lives. Oh, sure, occasionally it looked like something I'd said or done had made a difference, but in proportion to the amount of energy I was pouring forth, the returns were dismal.

I felt frustrated and exhausted. I had scattered my energies in a thousand different directions but saw little fruit. To tell you the truth, the only tangible result was the bitterness that enveloped me and the host of confused, frustrated, and often angry people I left behind.

So I stopped. I stopped the committees and the Bible studies, the Sunday school and the missions society. I stopped baking casseroles and sending note cards. I stopped the whirlwind. Funny thing, though, no one seemed to mind. For nearly two years I stopped going to church altogether. I had run myself ragged and ended up dropping out of the race. As my friend Patsy Clairmont says, "I began saying, `I will be all things to all people.' And ended up saying, `I'm never doing anything for a fellow human being as long as I live.' "

Have you ever found yourself at that place? Ever wonder how on

earth you ended up there? No doubt, you started out with the very best intentions. But rather than bringing you joy and fulfillment, your ministry efforts brought you discouragement and maybe even disillusionment.

I have experienced that time after time in my Christian life. And the conclusion that I've finally come to is this: God has uniquely equipped each of us to run our own race and he promises to help us every step of the way. But he hasn't promised to help us run races he doesn't want us to run. Think about that for a minute. God has uniquely equipped you to run your own race. And he promises to help you every step of the way. But he hasn't promised to help you run races he doesn't want you to run.

You see, all of the great things I wanted to do for God were *my ideas.* In my zeal, I completely neglected to prepare for the race he intended for me. I was running races he didn't want me to run. Are you ready to give up *your* ideas of how you can be of service to God? If so, you're ready to run the race God has set before you.

DIG DEEPER

1. Have you been running races God doesn't want you to run? In what way?

2. Ask God to give you a vision of the race he wants you to run. Write out a prayer and note any insights that come to your mind/heart.

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS

✓God has uniquely created you to run your own race and he promises to help you every step of the way.

✓God hasn't promised to help you run races he doesn't want you to run.

CONFIDENCE KEY #3: NOURISHED BY HIS LOVE

DAY 5: PRINCESS WITH AN ATTITUDE

How great is the love the father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! 1 John 1:3

Let's think about the implications of this verse for a minute: If God is the King and you are his daughter, what does that make you? A PRINCESS. But no ordinary princess. A Princess With an Attitude. We're talking PWA! This PWA stuff wasn't an afterthought. Not a side-benefit. Oh no. Ephesians 1:4-6 tells us that bestowing the princess title upon us was God's plan from the very beginning: "In love he predestined us to be adopted as his [daughters] through Jesus Christ." And why did he come up with such a neat plan? "... in accordance with his pleasure and will--to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves."

I'll never forget speaking at a retreat where the average attendee was about seventy and the oldest was in her nineties. It was a bit awkward the first night, because it was pretty obvious that I was just a fraction of their age. I challenged them to consider that maybe, just maybe, God was big enough to work through a *young, slightly wacky vessel.* They were a bit skeptical, but once we got to the PWA part, we bonded! Hey, a princess is a princess, regardless of her age.

That night a group of ladies broke into the camp kitchen and raided the aluminum foil. I thought I would die when they showed up the next morning in the front row with their aluminum foil

tiaras. What fun! That's the kind of princess I want to be as I approach my centennial.

But don't go crazy on me, now! (When I send women home from a ladies' retreat, I almost feel sorry for their families! In comes Mom with a giant aluminum foil tiara and an attitude the size of a football player!) I don't mean a cocky attitude. I mean a God-Confident attitude. An attitude that says, "I know who I am and I walk accordingly."

Wasn't that PWA stuff fun? But some of you are thinking, "There's still one problem. Now I know I'm a princess, *but my family still thinks I'm a HAG."*

Well, that is a bit of a problem, but it isn't insurmountable. Just keep believing the truth about yourself and eventually they'll catch on. I love the story of *The Little Princess* by Frances Hodgson Burnett. You may recall the tale of an aristocratic little girl who leaves her luxurious home in India to attend a ritzy boarding school in England. When her father dies, she experiences a reversal of fortune. Rather than living in splendor, dressed in the finest clothes, she's reduced to poverty and rags. However, regardless of how deplorably she is treated, she always conducts herself like a little princess. Despite her bedraggled appearance, eventually everyone must acknowledge the truth: she is still a princess at heart.

Remember that a princess always conducts herself like a princess, regardless of her circumstances.

Practically speaking, how do we conduct ourselves like princesses in the face of trials? How do we become our real selves: those radiant princesses God intended us to be?

Here's how Andrew Murray puts it:

> **In time of trouble say,**
>
> **First, he brought me here.**
> **It is by his will I am in this place, in that will I rest.**
> **Next, he will keep me in his love and give me grace in this trial to behave as his child. Then, he will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons he means me to learn, and working in me the grace he intends for me.**
> **Last, in his good time, he can bring me out again, how and when only he knows.**
> **Say, I am here:**
> **By God's appointment,**
> **In God's keeping,**
> **Under his training,**
> **For his time.**
> **--from Humility**

Now that's PWA! Isn't it? Nothing can shake a princess who lives like that. A princess who says, "This is where I am, so this must be where God wants me. He is taking care of me, even if other people don't think he's doing a very good job of it. He's teaching me, preparing me for a special assignment that right now I can't even fathom. But I'll be faithful each day, so when the opportunity comes to reign like the true princess I am, I'll be ready."

No matter what your circumstances, walk like a princess.
Know who you are! You're a PWA!
The following poem was given to me at a retreat, typed up on a bookmark. I wish I knew who wrote it! If you're out there and you read this, please don't mind my changing the last word from King to PRINCESS!

Let's make this the PWA creed:

THE CROWN THAT I WEAR

The crown that I wear does not tarnish;

It's not made
of worldly ores.
I don't need to polish and store it

In a vault
or behind metal doors.

The crown is a gift
from my Father

Whose Son died so that I could be free.
What an honor it is just to wear it,

For His last thoughts on earth were of me.

The crown has a special meaning;

It's not about worldly success.
It stands for the
the love of my Lord
and Savior,

Which I wear everyday
like a Princess.

DIG DEEPER

1. Do you believe, in your heart, that you are a princess? How does your life reflect what you believe?

2. What circumstances have caused you to doubt that you really are a princess?

3. What are some practical ways you can walk as a PWA, despite your circumstances?

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS

✓Since God is our father and he is the King, that makes each and every one of us a princess!

✓A princess always conducts herself like a princess, regardless of her circumstances.

DAY 6: CULTIVATING YOUR LOVE RELATIONSHIP

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment." Matthew 22:37-38

Do you know Christians who have a rule for everything? Rules about music, about dancing, about movies? Rules about relationships and religious days? I do. I feel sorry for them. They've lost sight of what the Gospel, the Good News, is all about. Apparently the apostle Paul had some friends who were falling into the same trap. In his letter to the Galatian believers he wrote:

"You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?

"But now that you know God--or rather are known by God--how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you" (Galatians 3:1-3; 4:9-10).

The Good News is that, through Christ, we are daughters of the King. Princesses have direct access to their Father, the King. We no longer need to approach him through the Law. Rather than living by a set of rules, we live by faith. The heart of the Christian life is not rules, but a love relationship with the living God.

I don't know about the rest of you, but I have a limited supply of time and energy. I figure, any moment I spend concentrating on lists is time that would be better spent cultivating my love relationship with God.

Here's how Henry Blackaby, author of *Experiencing God,* puts it:

> **Everything in your Christian life, everything about knowing Him and experiencing Him, everything about knowing His will, depends on the quality of your love relationship to God. If that is not right, nothing in your life will be right.**

I think the following beautifully summarizes what it means to have a loving relationship with your Heavenly Father:

> **Childlike confidence makes us pray as none else can. It causes a man to pray for great things that he would never have asked for if he had not learned this confidence. It also causes him to pray for little things that many people are afraid to ask for, because they have not yet felt toward God the confidence of children.**
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> **I have often felt that it requires more confidence in God to pray to Him about a little thing than about great things. We imagine that our great things are somehow worthy of God's attention, though in truth they are little enough to Him. And then we think that our little things must be so insignificant that it is an insult to bring them before Him.**
>
> **We need to realize that what is very important to a child may be very small to his parent, and yet the parent measures the thing not from his own point of view but from the child's. You heard your little boy the other day crying bitterly. The cause of the pain was a splinter in his finger. While you did not call in three surgeons to extract it, the splinter was a great thing to that little sufferer. Standing there with eyes all wet through tears of anguish, it never**

> **occurred to that boy that his pain was too small a thing for you to care about. What were mothers and fathers made for but to look after the small concerns of little children? And God our Father is a good father who pities us as fathers pity their children. He counts the stars and calls them all by name, yet he heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds.**

What's the status of your love relationship with the King? He invites you to enter his private throne room and spend time getting acquainted with him. He wants you to bring him all of your concerns, both small and large.

Make it your earnest prayer that the heart of your Christian experience would be a vital, living relationship with God, rather than good doctrine and a list of rules.

DIG DEEPER

1. Is the heart of your Christian experience a list of rules or a relationship with the living God?

2. The King invites you, as his princess, to enter into his throne room and spend time with him. How often do you accept the invitation?

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS

- ✓The Christian life is not a list of rules; it's a relationship with the living God.
- ✓The King invites you, as his princess, to enter into his throne room and spend time with him.
- ✓If you want to live like a princess, spend time with royalty.

CONFIDENCE KEY #4: FREE FROM THE CHAINS THAT BIND

DAY 7:THE ELEPHANTS ARE COMING

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1

I don't collect anything. That's because I know that if I collect it, it will collect dust. Then I'll have to clean it and that sounds too much like work!

That's why I was caught off guard about a year ago when ... the elephants started coming. Stuffed elephants, elephant earrings, an elephant belt, even an elephant planter. Mind you, I didn't go looking for this stuff; it came looking for me. Every time I turned around, another elephant was marching into my life.

Well, I've been a Christian long enough to know that maybe, just maybe, God was trying to get a message through to me. After all, if God could speak through Balaam's donkey (Numbers 22), he could speak through elephants. So I began thinking about it. "Okay, Lord, what are you trying to tell me? Go easy on the Oreos maybe?"

But I knew that a God of love would never send a message like that! Then I heard the story of captive elephants. Have you ever been to a circus and observed a giant elephant with a small rope around its ankle? Did you ever stop to think, "Hey, wait a minute. Technically speaking, there is no way that dinky little rope can hold back that giant elephant!" Did you ever wonder how it came to pass that a giant elephant is held in place by something that

has no power to contain him?

Here's how it works. When trainers begin taming a baby elephant, they place a giant chain around its ankle and stake it into the ground. Day after day, hour after hour, the baby elephant struggles to escape. But his efforts are in vain. He simply cannot break free from the grip of that powerful chain. Eventually, he surrenders. He resolves in his mind that there is no possible way he can escape that chain. So, he relinquishes forever the struggle to be free.

And so it happens that ten, twenty, thirty years later, the giant elephant remains held in bondage by something that really has NO POWER to control him. When I first heard that story, a voice cried out within me, *Donna, that's you! You're allowing your life to be controlled by things that no longer have the power to control you.*

Is it true of you, too?

When Christ went to the Cross, he broke the chains that bind us. He set us free from the power of sin and death. If you have trusted Christ for your salvation, you're no longer in bondage: "For if you tell others with your own mouth that Jesus Christ is your Lord, and believe in your own heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

If you have *not* taken that step of faith, the chains are *real.* You're like that baby elephant who literally cannot escape. You cannot escape the penalty for your sins nor can you escape the guilt, fear, and shame that haunt those who haven't made things right with their Creator. At the back of this ebook, you'll find "Steps to Freedom." If you have any doubts about where you stand- -free or in bondage--I would urge you to turn there now. Think and pray about the passages and truths presented.

Okay, let's assume that's resolved. You have been set free in Christ and therefore the *chains* have been broken. You've been set free to live free. If you're not *living free,* it's probably because you (or someone else) has tied some dinky little rope around your ankle. Since you haven't taken a close enough look, you're giving that rope far more power than it deserves.

Usually the rope is some type of fear: fear of failure, fear of success, fear of rejection, etc. Examine your rope. Name the fear, and remember that perfect love, which is the love we have in Christ, casts out fear. "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18).

I want you to ponder: "Am I still living like I'm in chains? Lord, show me how. Give me the courage to shake my foot loose and walk away in Total God- Confidence, knowing I've been set free and called according to your purpose."

I pray that many who are reading these words will enter into a new sense, a deeper reality, of the freedom we have in Christ.

DIG DEEPER

1. Are you, in some way, like that giant elephant held in bondage by a rope? Describe.

2. Can you think of something you would do, right now, if you were truly free?

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS:

✓We have been set free to *live* free.

✓Don't let fear hold you back from being/doing all God has in mind for you.

✓Remember, perfect love casts out fear.

DAY 8:SET FREE FROM THE APPROVAL TRAP

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Hebrews 12:1-3

When I consider the chains that have bound me, nothing has been more powerful than my yearning for human approval. More precisely, it has been my fear that I would *not* receive approval and would be rejected. All my life, I've struggled to break free from feeling like "the kid no one was allowed to play with."

Even though I clearly heard God's call to ministry, I figured it was better not to try at all than to try and have people laugh at me, scorn me, or reject me. My fears controlled me as long as I focused on *people's response* rather than *God's request.*

Are you in bondage to people's opinions of you? Have you fallen into what I call the Approval Trap? You'll know you've fallen into the Approval Trap when you find yourself performing to earn applause rather than serving to glorify God.

Jesus specifically warned his disciples against this trap: "How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?" (John 5:44) . Too often, we seek glory from one another and that's why

we become frustrated in our Christian walk.

I think that when we enter into ministry--whether it's to our own family, reaching out to a neighbor, teaching Sunday school, leading a women's Bible study, or serving in the church nursery--we have to constantly examine our motives. I know I do. Are you performing to earn applause or serving for God's glory? Since we're human, none of our motives will ever be completely pure.

But I can tell you one thing I've learned the hard way: if approval is the motivating force behind our efforts, it is a trap. Why? Because what happens when we don't get the approval we were hoping for? It opens up the floodgates of sin. We're talking floodgates. The kind of sins that entangle us so easily: bitterness, anger, resentment, jealousy, self-pity; the list goes on. The kind of sins the Bible specifically tells us we need to *throw off.*

Do you want to know when you will be free, truly free to walk in Total God-Confidence? The day you learn to pronounce the letters, N-O. For some reason, we can do a sensational job of that as toddlers, but the minute a woman reaches maturity, she just can't seem to say the word. And do you know why? Very simple reason. WE WANT APPROVAL. That immediate human feedback means more, is more real to us, than the eternal reward God has promised to those who will run the race *he* has set before them. A good rule of thumb is this: Say YES to the burden God has placed on your heart and NO to everything else.

Here's a little test you can give yourself the next time you're considering any ministry opportunity. Ask yourself: CAN I DO THIS WITHOUT EXPECTING ANYTHING IN RETURN? Whether it's a thank-you note, applause, to become special friends with the person who asked you, or a wing in the church named after you. If you expect anything at all, other than to hear from your

Master's lips, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matthew 25:21 , don't do it. Because if God is truly calling you, HIS approval will be enough.

When we enter into ministry with wrong motives, when we're striving for human approval, we develop a project mentality. We forget that we're messing with human lives.

I've got a new Golden Rule: If I can't serve for God's glory, I stay home. Why not adopt it as your own?

5 PRINCIPLES FOR ESCAPING THE APPROVAL TRAP:

Principle #1. Just because you're serving God with the best of intentions doesn't mean everyone will approve. In fact, there's almost always a critic.

Principle #2. Don't respond to your critics. Pray, and let God handle the rest.

Principle #3. Sometimes when we pray, the situation actually gets worse. Don't let that shake your confidence!

Principle #4. Take action, but put your confidence in God for the results.

Principle #5*.* Don't try to save yourself. Let God do the rescuing and he'll receive the glory.

DIG DEEPER

1. Do you tend to think that since you're serving God with good intentions, everyone will approve and things will flow smoothly?

2. Is that ever really the case?

3. Is there a critic (or group of critics) who seem intent on thwarting what God is calling you to accomplish in and through your life?

4. Have you ever prayed ... and the situation actually got worse? Describe what happened and how you responded.

5. Resolve *not* to respond directly to your critics! Instead, write out a prayer to *God* and let him handle the rest.

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS:

- ✓Before performing any act of service, ask yourself: Can I do this without expecting anything in return?
- ✓Ask your heart: Am I serving for God's glory or performing to earn human applause and approval?
- ✓If God is truly calling you, his approval will be enough.

DAY 9: SET FREE FROM THE COMPARISON TRAP

Let everyone be sure that he is doing his very best, for then he will have the personal satisfaction of work well done and won't need to compare himself with someone else. Each of us must bear some faults and burdens of his own. For none of us is perfect! Galatians 6:4-5

"I don't know why they pay you to speak," one of my daughters said to me day. "All you do is tell stories about ME!" I must admit, I do like telling stories about my kids. And today I've got a real winner for you, even though it's not about winning.

When my daughter was in seventh grade, she qualified to compete in the 100-meter race at her junior high school's annual track competition. She spent weeks preparing herself physically and emotionally for the event. When the big day finally arrived, I sat down with her at the breakfast table.

"I don't remember a whole lot about my track days," I confessed, "but I can tell you this much: if you want to win the race, don't look at the other runners. They'll only distract you. Focus on your own race and keep your eyes on the finish line. You got it?"

"Yeah, I got it," she assured me. "I'm not gonna look at the other runners. I'm gonna keep my eyes on that finish line and run my own race."

Amazing! With my superior parenting skills, I had actually communicated effectively with a teenager! Feeling very pleased that my pep talk had gotten through, I said, "Okay then! I'll see you at the track!"

Well, I arrived at the track meet with flowers in hand, ready to

cheer her on to victory. Unfortunately, when the gun went off, her head went *left.* I'm telling you, that girl ran the entire race with her head to the side. And you know what? She finished dead last. But you want to know the real irony? I wrote down the winning times in all three heats of the race. In every case, the winning time was 14 seconds or more. In a previous race, she had been clocked at 13.9 seconds. She was capable of running faster than every girl who won out on the track that day. So why did she finish in last place? She looked at the other runners! That is, she fell into the Comparison Trap.

If we're not careful, the Comparison Trap will trip us up, too. Have you noticed that women are constantly comparing themselves with one another? It's like a national obsession! We compare our hair, our clothes, our bodies. (I'm still looking for someone whose thighs are more disproportionate to the rest of their body than mine. Feel free to send photographs for my consideration.) We compare our husbands and our kids. We compare our status as working or stay-at-home moms. We're constantly comparing! And what good ever comes of it? None!

I want to take apart today's verse, bit by bit, substituting her for him:

"Let everyone be sure ..." Yes, we need to be sure. We need to examine ourselves to ensure that we are indeed "running with perseverance the race marked out for us."

" ... that she is doing her very best." HER very best. Not the very best that's ever been done in the history of human civilization. Not the best conceivable. Not even the best she *could do* if it weren't for her preschool children or her battle with arthritis and hot flashes. No, her very best given the circumstances she finds herself in.

" ... for then she will have the personal satisfaction of work well done ..." Notice that it doesn't say everyone's satisfaction. As we've already discussed, there will always be critics. There will always be someone who knows how you should have done it differently or how you could have done it better. That's their problem, not yours. Do you know in your heart that you did the best you could do? Okay, be satisfied then.

" ... and won't need to compare herself with someone else." Here's the key: you won't *need* to compare yourself. When you live your life before God alone, when you let him be your judge, then it really doesn't matter what anyone else does or says. You know where you stand with God.

"Each of us must bear some faults and burdens of her own. For none of us is perfect!"

That's why it's never fair to compare your insides to someone else's outsides. You have no idea what's happening in their lives, and they don't know what's happening in yours, either. They may be living magnificently well, given their background, abilities, and current obstacles, even though you think their life is in shambles. And the woman who appears to have it all together may simply be fooling everyone but God.

Sometimes I get so focused on what someone else has or has not done, on how well her race seems to be going compared to mine, that I lose sight of what God wants me to do. I forget to run my own race.

Do yourself a favor: don't compare yourself. Don't let yourself get distracted by Susie or Barbara and how well her race seems to be going compared to yours. Instead, "fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith."

I'll try to do the same!

DIG DEEPER

1. Examine your heart. Can you honestly say that you are doing your very best? If not, what changes do you need to make?

2. What are some of the limitations in your life that you need to take into consideration when you evaluate what your "very best" can be?

3. Is personal satisfaction enough for you? Or are you only satisfied when *everyone else* (or some specific someone) is satisfied? Again, what changes might you need to make in terms of your expectations?

4. Who do you tend to compare yourself to? How and why? Resolve to break free from comparing yourself to others!

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS

✓Don't look at the other runners! They'll only distract you.

✓Run your own race, fixing your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith.

CONFIDENCE KEY #5: INCREASINGLY CONFORMED TO HIS CHARACTER

DAY 10:THE POWER OF COMPANIONSHIP

I'd like you to think for a moment about the power of companionship. It is most obvious among children. Bobby gets a yo-yo, and all of his friends have to have one. Susie's best friend becomes obsessed with the latest music group, and before long Susie has a poster of the group on her bedroom wall. What's true among children is also true among adults, with perhaps more subtlety.

No matter how independent or unique we consider ourselves, the truth is, we become like the people we spend time with. I once heard it said that who you will be in five years depends largely on two factors: (1) the class and ebooks you read and (2) the people you spend time with.

You may find that encouraging or frightening, depending on the books you're reading (you *don't* read those trashy romance novels, do you?) and the character of your friends (you *do* talk about something other than other people, right?).

If who you are is not who you hope to become, the surest remedy is improving the quality of the books you read and the people you spend time with. What better book to read than God's Word? Who better to spend time with than God himself?

Theoretically, if you will simply read God's Word and spend time with him, you will find that in five years you will be increasingly conformed to his character.

If it were that simple, though, we'd all act like saints.

Let me ask you a question. Promise to answer truthfully, now! Do you ever fall asleep during prayer? Does your mind drift? I mean, did you ever think, *Okay, this is it. I'm going to spend an hour in prayer,* and about five minutes into the prayer time you ran out of things to say? And when you tried to listen for God, all you heard was your stomach rumbling? Or when you tried to picture the majesty of God's throne room, some handsome movie star floated into view?

Or is it just me... ?

Prayer is hard for many reasons. Obviously, the last thing the enemy of your soul wants is to hear you communing with God. Therefore, he'll do anything to distract you. But there's something more, something deeper. There's an inner bankruptcy. In our modern world, we've forgotten how to cultivate the inner life. As the world around us becomes increasingly complex, as the volume of existence cranks up, we find it harder and harder to simply sit and listen to the silence.

I used to flatter myself that I didn't pray because I didn't have time. I wish it were that simple. Then all I would have to do would be to clear my schedule (piece of cake, right?) and I'd be praying to the high heavens. The truth is, we don't know how to deal with solitude. When we look within our souls, we realize we're gazing into a deep, deep well. Unfortunately, for many of us, the well is empty. When we seek to draw refreshment, we find the well has run dry.

I would like nothing more, at this point, than to offer up some quick (or at least surefire) solution to this inner bankruptcy. That wouldn't be honest. If there's a simple solution, I haven't found it. I think each of us, in the privacy of our soul, has to wrestle

with this. I think it's part of living in a fallen world, especially a pyrotechnic world. Nevertheless, we need to find ways to feed our souls, to cultivate the inner life. It will take us all of our lives.

In closing, let me make one suggestion, by way of personal example. In February 1997 I desperately needed to draw upon internal resources. Unfortunately, the well came up empty. So I picked up the phone and called the Franciscan Renewal Center (in Scottsdale, Arizona) on the off-chance that they might help me run away from home. As it turns out, they were delighted to accommodate me for a private retreat. I spent three days living among the monks in complete silence: no conversation, no phone, no radio, not even a clock. Silence.

I brought along my Bible, some great Christian books, paper and pen. I had no schedule. I slept when I was tired, even if it was in the middle of the day. If I awoke, even if it was in the middle of the night, I assumed God had awakened me so we could talk. I wandered through the desert. I sat quietly in the prayer chapel. At mealtimes, one of the monks would ring the mission bell. I would walk to the dining room and quietly have my meal. Then back to my nonexistent schedule. It was incredibly life-changing.

Incidentally, it was there, on February 22, 1997, that God gave me the vision (including the title) for this book.

I've since learned that there are monasteries, convents, and retreat centers all over the country that will gladly open their doors for private retreats. I would encourage you to investigate what is available in your area. As for me, I think I'm just about due to run away from home again!

DIG DEEPER

1. What's the status of your internal spiritual resources? Are you bankrupt?

2. Do you need to run away from home?

3. Jot down some ideas for how, when, and where you might have a silent retreat of your own. Do some investigating into local possibilities.

4. Write out a prayer asking God to show you the status of your internal spiritual resources.

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS

- ✓ Who you will be in five years is largely determined by the books you read and the people you spend time with.

- ✓ In our modern world, we have forgotten how to cultivate the inner life.

CONFIDENCE KEY #6: DAILY IN HIS WORD

DAY 11: SET BEFORE YOUR EYES

I will walk in my house with blameless heart. I will set before my eyes no vile thing. Psalm 101:2-3

I travel all the time. Fortunately, most flights begin and end uneventfully--thank heaven! But there's one I'll never forget. I was in an aisle seat on the left side, toward the back of the plane. I glanced across the aisle and there, in the middle seat, was a young woman who, immediately after settling in and buckling up, set a Bible on her tray. This was no ordinary Bible. It was a great-looking study Bible.

I smiled approvingly to myself.

A few moments later, she reached into her carry-on bag and pulled out *People* magazine. She carefully placed it on top of her Bible and proceeded to read it throughout the entire flight.

What a disgrace, I thought to myself. *A study Bible and no desire to study it. Tsk. Tsk.* It was a very smug moment. Then suddenly I heard a voice from heaven inquire, *"Uh, Donna. So where exactly is your Bible?"*

He had me.

You see, we may not be that blatant about it. We may not take out *People* magazine and deliberately put it on top of our Bibles. Nevertheless, that's exactly what we do every day. Every time you read a magazine, a novel, an interoffice memorandum, an e-mail, or a cereal box. Every time you gaze into the TV screen

rather than gazing into God's Word, you're saying the same thing. You're saying, "What *People* has to say means more to me than what God has to say."

Think about it.
Then do something about it.
Sitting there on that plane, I made a resolution that led to a revolution. I resolved, first

and foremost, never to read anything on an airplane other than my Bible. (I mean, gee, what if you see ME reading *People* magazine after you've read this diatribe. Not good!) That resolution alone got me through most of the New Testament.

I also resolved not to set anything before my eyes before I had looked into God's Word each day. I haven't been entirely faithful, but I've made great progress. Here's a helpful technique I have devised: Link whatever you read first to Bible reading. Perhaps the first thing you read is the morning paper. Or the first thing you watch is *Good Morning, America.* Make the link. Make the resolution: "Before I can do X, I will read my Bible." Before you pick up the newspaper, pick up your Bible. Before you turn on the TV, pick up your Bible. The key to this algebraic equation is for X to be a constant, won't-miss item in your life.

One of the simplest and most effective ways to do this is with a smartphone APP like YouVersion. I have also used the One Year Bible and The Narrated Bible – both very powerful tools. Some people still like to hold a Bible in their hands although, looking around church on Sunday mornings, it’s clear their ranks are thinning! The right Bible for you is the Bible you will read every day!

DIG DEEPER

1. When was the last time you read through the Bible in a year?

2. Will you resolve to read through the Bible in the next twelve months?

3. What specific plans can you devise to help you achieve that goal?

4. What is the first thing you set before your eyes each day? Link that to your Bible reading and you'll be much more likely to stick with the program.

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS

- ✓If you want to read the Bible faithfully, link the first thing you usually look at each morning with the Bible.
- ✓Reading through the Bible in a year is embarrassingly easy!

DAY 12:KNOWING GOD'S WORD BY HEART

How can a young [woman] keep way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart;
do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.
I meditate on your precepts
and consider your ways.
I delight in your decrees;
I will not neglect your word.
Psalm 119:9-11, 15-16

If we want to walk in Total God-Confidence, we absolutely must know what God's Word says. That means not only a broad familiarity with the entire Bible, but an intimate knowledge of an increasing number of select passages.

I first began Scripture memory in earnest when I worked for the Billy Graham Crusade. The only way I could keep up with the large number of verses we had to memorize in counselor preparation was to carry them with me at all times. I wrote out each verse on a bunch of index cards and Post-it Notes. Everywhere I looked, there were Bible verses. They were in my coat, my purse, my pants pockets. I tucked them in my Bible, stuck them on shelves and on the kitchen counter. They were in the car, on my desk, and even under my pillow. My life looked like it had been invaded by an army of index cards.

It sounds crazy and it looks messy, but it works. You don't have to limit yourself to verses on evangelism, although that's a great place to start. Choose verses that address areas of need in your life or the life of your family.

When you know Scripture, you can have Total God-Confidence in the face of demonic attacks. When Satan tempted Jesus in the

wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), Jesus responded with confidence. He knew what God had said. Don't be duped like Eve, who fell for Satan's oldest line: "Did God really say... ?" (Genesis 3:1 . Remember, Satan is the Father of Lies, and the only way to cut through his lies is with the truth. Jesus said, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32 . He also said, "I am the ... truth" (John 14:6).

Know the truth and you can walk in Total God-Confidence.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY: MEMORIZE, PERSONALIZE, ANALYZE

1. Set aside fifteen minutes per day for Scripture memory.

2. Choose verses that address your weaknesses. That way, you'll have a vested interest in remembering them.

3. Read the passage aloud, over and over.

4. Break the verse down into logical parts. Learn one phrase, then two, until you've memorized the entire passage.

5. Repeat the reference often. (How many times have you searched for a verse in your Bible, murmuring that spaghetti sauce motto "It's in there"? If you can't find it, it's not much good. Learn the reference.)

6. It's better to learn a few verses really well, than many poorly.

7. Underline difficult terms or key words. Look them up in the dictionary, a concordance, or a Bible reference book.

8. Write out the verse from memory. This is a critical step. Something about putting pen to paper makes the words more permanent.

Here's a strategy I have used that sounds crazy--but I promise it works! It's so effective, I even got a letter from a missionary in Brazil who is using it. (She read the idea in ***Becoming a Vessel God Can Use****.)* I write out the first initial of every word in the verse, while looking at the passage. I set it down for a while. When I return, I try to complete the words from memory. Repeat this process several times and you'll be amazed to discover you remember that verse years later.

Another effective--and very painless--way to memorize Scripture is with Scripture songs. Many modern praise songs are Scripture set to music. As you sing along, God's Word is making its way into your heart. This year, during my read-through-the-Bible program, I couldn't help singing aloud when I got to familiar passages, especially throughout the Psalms.

Whatever method of Scripture memory you choose, the important thing is to spend time daily in his Word. Only then will you be able to walk in Total God-Confidence.

DIG DEEPER

1. How can you keep your way pure?

2. What's the best way to face down temptation?

3. Can you think of a recent occasion when calling to mind a passage of Scripture might have helped?

4. Can you recall a recent occasion when you have seen the positive effect of memorizing God's Word? If you can't think of an example, what does that tell you?

5. Choose several verses you want to memorize. Transfer them onto index cards and/or Post-it Notes and get to work!

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS

✓ Choose verses that address areas of need in your life or the life of your family.

✓ Scripture memory is our best defense against the attacks of the enemy.

CONFIDENCE KEY #7: ENERGIZED BY FAITH

DAY 13:THE BASIS OF OUR CONFIDENCE

For the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, says: Only in returning to me and waiting for me will you be saved; in quietness and confidence is your strength. Isaiah 30:15

I wonder what you're going through as you read these words. Is life good for you right now? Is it everything you hoped it would be? Do you have every cause for confidence? Or are you in the middle of tough times? Financial difficulties, marriage conflicts, children in trouble? If you're like most of the women I encounter, you have your share of hardships and heartaches. As a result, on some level, your confidence has been shaken.

No matter how complex your difficulties, I believe the solution is simple: knowing God. He alone is the basis of our confidence. When we don't know him, when we have an inaccurate picture of who he is and what he can do, we allow the storms of life to overtake us.

Here's how Andrew Murray puts it:

> **The great lack of our Christianity today is, we do not know God. The answer to every complaint of weakness and failure, the message to every congregation or convention seeking instruction on holiness, should simply be: Where is your God? If you really believe in God, he will put it all right. God is willing and able by his Holy Spirit. Stop expecting the solution from yourself, or the answer from anything there is in man, and simply yield yourself completely to God to work in you....**

> **Pray to God that we might get some right conception of what influence could be made by a life spent, not in thought, or imagination, or effort, but in the power of the Holy Spirit, wholly waiting upon God.**

I'm not saying that if you want a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, you should sit in your room and pray God will make you one. I *am* suggesting that making those PB&J sandwiches day after day would be less tedious if, while you did the work, you set your heart on God.

I am suggesting that, as we live our lives before him, confident that he knows exactly where we are, what we're doing, and *why* he has us doing it, we can walk in joy and confidence. Our answer to "Where is your God?" must continually be "He's right here with me." He's in the midst of the mess, in the midst of the storm. He's also on the beach and the roller coaster ride. I even found him there when I kissed my children good-night yesterday. And he's not standing idly by as I walk through my day, wringing his hands, hoping against hope that life will turn out okay for me. He's active and involved. I have complete confidence that everything that comes my way has either been sent or allowed by a God who is both all-loving and all-powerful.

Leonard Ravenhill noted that "No Christian is greater than his prayer life." Your confidence cannot climb higher than the depths of your prayer life. We're not talking about "God, bless this mess" prayers. I mean prayer that aligns our heart with the purposes of God; prayer that enables us to know him better and, therefore, trust him more. As we grow in that knowledge and trust, we become more like him. Fundamentally, prayer doesn't change God; it changes us.

The basis of our confidence is the character of God. We serve a God who knows how to give good gifts to his children. I once

heard a beautiful word picture of prayer: Prayer is like the gathering of gifts. We enter into the throne room of God and he is waiting there with good gifts he longs to give--to us, to those we love, and to the world at large. We approach the throne, and God fills our arms with gifts, which we take back and give to those around us.

God knows what you need. He knows what your husband, your children, and your church need. Not only does he know our needs, we can have complete confidence that he is *both able and eager* to fill those needs, according to his riches in glory.

Whatever you need today, go to the throne room and gather the gifts he has waiting there for you.

DIG DEEPER

1.Where is your God?

2. Describe your prayer life.

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS

- ✓The solution to every problem is knowing God.
- ✓Prayer is like the gathering of gifts, which we can then pass on to others.

DAY 14: ENERGY FOR THE MUNDANE

Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:43-45

God wants to do something in our lives that only he can do!!! Normally when I talk like that, what I'm thinking of is big stuff. Giant leaps of faith, life- changing events, that sort of thing. But I've realized that it often takes more faith to plod day by day than it does to face large obstacles or undertake grand causes. That's because the energy to do "great things for God" can come from many sources besides faith. For example, we might be energized by the thrill of boosting our own ego. We might be energized by the hope of applause, excitement, or what have you.

When people hear me speaking, they often tell me they are amazed at my energy level. But let me be brutally honest. Some of that energy is from the Holy Spirit, some of it is Donna Partow energized by faith ... but some of the energy is from other, less admirable sources.

The truth is, I absolutely love speaking to large audiences. And as far as I'm concerned, the larger the better. It's so exciting. Believe me, when I'm standing on a stage in front of four thousand women, I don't need faith to energize me. The electricity in the air and my skyrocketing adrenaline is enough.

Then one day after the crowds had gone home and I sat quietly in an airport, I felt my energy fading away. It was then I realized: *It is always like this when I am heading home.* Invariably, the minute I would walk through my front door my energy level would hit rock bottom. Funny how I could be so energetic among strangers, yet so lethargic with my own family.

At that moment, God laid a challenge on my heart. He asked me to devote myself to doing "smaller things with greater faithfulness." What I really needed was to be energized by faith in my daily routine. On New Year's Eve 1998 my family arrived late to the special evening service. The only seats left were in the front row. As I sat in the third seat in from the center aisle, the pastor asked each of us to pray for a major miracle in our lives. He challenged us to ask boldly. We all bowed our heads to pray for our great miracle. *Lord, what should I ask for?* I wondered. *To be part of another giant women's conference? To write another bestselling book?*

He replied, *"Ask me to give you strength.... to do smaller things with greater faithfulness."* Right then and there, I made my New Year's resolution: to humbly serve my husband and children with all the energy God supplies. Believe me, it's going to take a major miracle for that to happen!

It takes great faith to get out of bed every day and go about the mundane tasks of life in a spirit that honors our Father. It takes great faith to pursue holiness in our private lives, in our hearts and minds, where no one else can see. It takes great faith to persevere when we have every justification to quit. It's in those moments, in the midst of the small stuff, that we most need to be *energized by faith.*

DIG DEEPER

1. When do you have the greater need to be energized by faith: to do "big stuff" or in the small things?

2. Is there an area of your life where you have become lethargic? Write out a prayer asking God to energize you.

3. Is there some area of your life in which God is calling you to do "smaller things with greater faithfulness"?

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS

✓Sometimes it takes more faith to plod.

✓God may be calling you to do "smaller things with greater faithfulness."

CONFIDENCE KEY #8: NOT SHAKEN BY THE JERKS

DAY 15: GOD IS BIGGER THAN THE JERKS

But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and has made the Lord his hope and confidence. Jeremiah 17:7

I want to share with you a spiritual insight that you will not find revealed elsewhere in the annals of Christendom. It took me seventeen years to figure out this insight, which is so profound I'm thinking about printing T-shirts with this slogan emblazoned on them:

God is bigger than the jerks.

Well, what do you think?
What's that? You want to place an order?

Trust me: I've had to put up with my share of them! But a whole planet full of jerks cannot thwart God's plan for our lives. Do you know that? God is in control. See, I always thought that God had a plan, but the jerks came along and blew the whole thing to pieces. Now don't get me wrong. I'm not saying God deliberately sends the jerks. No, not at all. God does not send the jerks, but he sure puts them to good use molding our character.

Maybe your husband, or your kids, or your parents, or your boss, or people in your church are acting like real jerks. And you think: *How can I be what God wants me to be when they're standing in the way?*

Philippians 1:6 says we can be confident of this: "that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion." There's not a jerk in the world who can prevent God from carrying that good work to completion. And what exactly *is* that good work?

It's the work of transforming our character. God's purpose for our lives is that we would truly become women of virtue. His ultimate plan for our lives has very little to do with our circumstances. Those are just the tools he uses to transform us into a vessel he can use. Whether

it's physical illness or financial difficulties, whether you're single and wish you were married, or married and wish you were single--the circumstances aren't the point.

And by the way, God's ultimate plan has nothing to do with our convenience, although you wouldn't think so by looking at most of our prayer lists. It has to do with our character. And there's nothing quite like a jerk to drive us to our knees as we allow God to transform us from the inside out. As you can see, jerks actually play a vital role in our spiritual growth.

Let's hear it for the jerks.

All kidding aside. I want to talk with you very personally for a moment. Chances are, if you've been on the planet for more than a week, you've encountered a jerk. Someone who has hurt you very deeply. Someone who has hurt you over and over. And you're harboring that right to be hurt like a prized possession.

It's time to let it go.
It's time to forgive.

Now you're objecting: "If you knew what a jerk he was, you

wouldn't ask me to forgive."

You're absolutely right. I don't know. But God does and he is the one asking you to forgive. Forgive because God first forgave you. Forgive because forgiving doesn't make them right, forgiving sets you free. Forgive because it cleanses the bitterness, and God cannot use a vessel filled with bitterness.

I've also observed that the motivating force behind most jerks is their desire to control. They want power over you. Now think about this for a moment: As long as you don't forgive, they are in control. As long as you don't forgive, you're giving them exactly what they wanted in the first place.

Forgive, and give God control of your life again.

DIG DEEPER

1. Do you have a jerk in your life? Describe what effect you've allowed him or her to have upon your life.

2. What are the implications in your life of the "profound spiritual insight" that God is bigger than the jerks?

3.Who do you need to forgive?
Journal a prayer asking for God’s help to forgive and let go.

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS

- ✓God is bigger than the jerks.
- ✓Forgiving doesn't make the jerk right; forgiving sets you free.
- ✓Forgive, and give God control of your life.

DAY 16: THE PURPOSE OF JERKS

If I were to choose the defining characteristic of a jerk, I'd probably have to say they're annoying. (I hasten to add that not all annoying people are full-fledged jerks; that is, they are not malicious.) Nevertheless, I've found that annoying people play a vital role in our lives: they reveal our sin. Let me give you an example. I homeschool. (You either applauded or thought, *That is seriously weird.)* I often say, "If it weren't for my kids, I would love homeschooling. And if it weren't for homeschooling, I would love my kids."

Mind you, my kids aren't genuine jerks, but the mere fact that we're together twenty-four hours a day causes me to find them ... dare I say it? Annoying. It's tempting to think, *If I could just ship these kids off to boarding school, I would be a saint.* (Wait a minute: boarding school?!?! Not a bad idea.) It's tempting to point the finger at the little urchins and yell, "You kids are making me sin."

You want to know the truth, though? The awful truth? The glorious truth? They're not making me sin. They're just revealing the sin that's already there.

Think about that for a minute.

Maybe you've been telling yourself, *If I had a different husband, I would be the perfect wife. If I had different kids, I'd be the mother of the year. If I had a different boss, I'd be a great employee.* However, we're just deceiving ourselves. The truth is, we're sinners in need of repentance. A different husband might make our lives less tumultuous, but it wouldn't do a thing to change the condition of our heart.

The purpose of jerks--and just plain, ordinary, annoying people--

is to cleanse us from sin. Here's how it works:

1. *Reveal.* The first step to cleansing is revelation. You can't be cleansed of a sin if you don't know it exists. So, the jerks and annoying people do you a great favor when they reveal the sin within.

2. *Confess.* The next step is vitally important once the sin is revealed, we must confess it. As far as I have been able to determine, nowhere in the Bible does God promise to forgive unconfessed sin. Remember 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." Which do you think is the most important word in that verse? In my opinion, it's that tiny two-letter word "if."

3. *Cleanse.* Once the jerks have done their part in revealing our sin; once we've done our part in confessing our sin; then, and only then, can God do his part in cleansing the sin.

Now I want you to sit down and write a thank-you note to the most annoying person you know. You don't have to lie. Just write, "I want to thank you for the vital role you're playing in my spiritual growth."

Yesterday I declared that "God doesn't send the jerks, but he sure puts them to good use molding our character." After searching the Bible more thoroughly, I think I need to amend that statement.

You have three assignments as you read through the following passage:

First, see if you can identify the jerk.

Second, see if you can determine where the jerk came from.

Third, see if you can discover the purpose of the jerk!

You might be surprised by the answers!

But I will cause Pharaoh to stubbornly refuse, and I will multiply my miracles in the land of Egypt. (Exodus 7:3)

This time I am going to send a plague that will really speak to you and to your servants and to all the Egyptian people, and prove to you there is no other God in all the earth. I could have killed you all by now, but I didn't, for I wanted to demonstrate my power to you and to all the earth. (Exodus 9:14-16)

The Lord had told Moses, "Pharaoh won't listen, and this will give me the opportunity of doing mighty miracles to demonstrate my power" (Exodus 11:9).

And once again I will harden Pharaoh's heart and he will chase after you. I have planned this to gain great honor and glory over Pharaoh and all his armies, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord" (Exodus 14:4).

I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians and they will go in after you and you will see the honor I will get in defeating Pharaoh and all his armies, chariots, and horsemen. And all Egypt shall know that I am Jehovah" (Exodus 14:17-18).

What answers did you come up with?

Here are mine:

1. The jerk is Pharaoh.

2. God deliberately sent the jerk.

3. God did so to glorify himself and to demonstrate his power.

I know this is radical stuff, but study the Scriptures for yourself.

For the Scripture says to Pharaoh: "I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth." Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath--prepared for destruction? What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory? (Romans 9:17-18, 22-23)

There you have it, folks. God not only sends the jerks, he carefully fashions them so that he can do ... what? Display his power in you. When you refuse to let the jerks get the best of you, you display God's power. When, through your life, you declare that God's glory means more than your convenience, his mighty name is proclaimed in all the earth.

DIG DEEPER

1.Who's the jerk in your life?

2.Who may have sent him/her?

3.How does that make you feel?

4.How can you glorify God through your relationship with that jerk?

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS

✓Sometimes God *does* send the jerks!

✓But God always wins in the end!

CONFIDENCE KEY #9: CONVINCED THAT HE IS ABLE AND FAITHFUL

DAY 17: FACING THE FURNACE

If we are thrown into the flaming furnace, our God is able to deliver us; and he will deliver us out of your hand, Your Majesty. But if he doesn't, please understand, sir, that even then we will never under any circumstance serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have erected. Daniel 3:17-18

Anyone who's spent more than a few weeks in Sunday school surely knows the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the three coolest teenagers in the Bible. On the off-chance that you don't remember, I'll sum it up. The King of Babylon set up a tall gold statue and ordered everyone to bow down and worship it. These three teenagers, who had been taken from their homes in Jerusalem, refused to obey the king's command. They wouldn't bow.

When they were told to either bow or burn, they responded with the ultimate God- confident slogan: "Our God is able ... but even if he doesn't ..." That's it! We've spent eight weeks trying to get to the heart of the matter, and these teenagers do it in two sentences.

We have to believe that he is able. Many Christians believe that. Unfortunately, too many follow that affirmation with a demand: "Therefore, he *has to."* In other words, since God is *able* to heal me, *able* to give me a promotion, *able* to bless me with children, *able* to send me lots of money; since God is *able* to do all these things, then he better get cracking! And if he doesn't ... they question his love and his faithfulness.

Then there's another category of Christians. They are the Christians who subscribe to the "even if he doesn't" portion of the God-confident slogan. They know God loves them; they're confident of that. They just don't think he's able to accomplish much in their daily lives. They're never bitterly disappointed in God, because they keep their expectations so low, any "god" could live up to them. They question his ability and his power.

Total God-Confidence requires both: confidence that he is able--that our God is an awesome God, active in the lives of his people. And confidence that he loves us, and that even when he says "No" he's still faithful.

Total God-Confidence declares, "God is able ... but even if he doesn't, I'll still follow him."

DIG DEEPER

1. Do you believe that God is able but doubt his love and faithfulness when he doesn't do what you ask?

2. Or are you more inclined to love God "even if he doesn't," mostly because you doubt he could even if he wanted to?

3. What situation are you facing right now that you need to face with an attitude that says, "God is able ... but even if he doesn't ..."?

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS

- ✓God is able to deliver us from any situation, but that doesn't mean he has to.
- ✓We must love God "even if he doesn't," without ever doubting his ability to act with power.

DAY 18:WHILE YOU'RE WAITING FOR GOD TO DO WHAT HE IS ABLE TO DO

"When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. Then I said:

"Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.

"Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations, but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'

"They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man."
Nehemiah 1:4-11

So what do we do while we are waiting for God to do what only he can do? Many answers are found in the life of Nehemiah:

5 Characteristics of God-Confident Prayer:

1. The Prayer of a God-confident person is rooted in God's Word, consistent with God's character, and based on his promises. Its only objective is the glory of God. Nehemiah's prayer begins with God's character--"O great and awesome God who keeps his promises and is so loving and kind to those who love and obey him!"--and ends by claiming a specific promise: "Oh, please remember what you told Moses ... `if you return to me and obey my laws, even though you are exiled to the farthest corners of the universe, I will bring you back to Jerusalem.' "

2. The God-confident person prays, then watches and waits for an opportunity to arise, based on his/her request. It was four months later when Nehemiah finally got his opportunity to speak to the king. You can be certain he was watching for it all along. When we pray, we should expect God to respond, and live in the light of that expectation, knowing that God's timing may not be the same as ours, but it's always the *right* time.

3. The God-confident person prays before speaking. It tells us in Nehemiah 2:4-5 "With a quick prayer to the God of heaven, I replied." Can you imagine how different our lives would be if, before speaking, we prayed for wisdom, for grace, for God to touch the heart of the hearer?

4. The God-confident person acknowledges every turn of events--and every turn of the human heart--as having been orchestrated by the hand of God. Nehemiah says, "And the king granted these requests, for God was being gracious to me." (Nehemiah 2:8) Were his requests granted because the king was being gracious? Because he caught the king on a good day, in a cheerful mood?

No, they were granted because God was being gracious.

In the Book of Ezra, we find another example in which God turned the heart of a king: "because the Lord had filled them with joy by changing the attitude of the king of Assyria, so that he assisted them in the work on the house of God, the God of Israel" (Ezra 6:22).

If God can turn the heart of a pagan king or a modern-day boss, don't you think he can turn the heart of your husband? Or your mother-in-law? Or your child? Or your pastor? Or anyone else for that matter?

God is God. Changing hearts is what he does for a living. If you're frustrated with someone in your life--especially if it's someone who is in authority over you--call out to the changer-of-hearts. Pray with God-Confidence. Then watch and wait for God to give you the opportunity to make your request known.

God-Confidence is quiet confidence. It isn't boastful, because it isn't pursuing its own agenda, but instead seeks God's will. Nehemiah admits, "I hadn't told a soul about the plans for Jerusalem that God had put into my heart" (Nehemiah 2:11).

God-Confidence isn't cocky. It doesn't go around announcing the great things it's going to do for God. Instead, it treasures in its heart the plans God has placed there.

DIG DEEPER

1. Are your prayers rooted in God's Word, consistent with his character, and derived from his promises? If not, what are your prayers based on?

2. When you pray, do you wait and watch expectantly, confident that God will answer? Or do you promptly forget your prayers? Or perhaps you pray, then rush out, taking matters into your own hands?

3. Do you pray before speaking? How would the words you speak be different if you did?

4. Do you acknowledge every turn of events--and every turn of the human heart--as coming from God?

5. If you want to see a change in your life, write out a prayer asking God to turn the heart of the key person involved in bringing about that change.

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS

✓The God-confident prayer is rooted in God's Word and consistent with God's character.

✓God-Confidence acknowledges every turn of events--and every turn of the human heart--as being orchestrated by God.

DAY 19: FAITHFUL TO ALL GENERATIONS

Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him.
Psalm 127:3

Today, I want to give a special word of encouragement to moms. At the risk of getting myself into deep trouble, I'd like to especially address stay-at-home moms. Now, you all know I haven't said a word about this subject, so I would be grateful if you single ladies, empty-nesters, working women (and women in other miscellaneous categories I may have overlooked) would indulge me for just one day.

Back to the moms: maybe you've been reading all this stuff about walking in Total God- Confidence, receiving assignments from God, etc., and thinking, *Gee, God's not calling me to be a missionary to Africa. I'm just a mom. I haven't been invited to speak at any women's retreats lately. I don't even have the strength to teach Sunday school. It takes everything I've got just to make it to women's Bible study.*

If you are searching for significance, search no further. If you are looking for a tough assignment from God, you have one: raising godly kids in this wicked and depraved generation. Put your boots on and get moving!

Yet the question remains: how do we stay motivated to do the small stuff of which motherhood consists? By keeping the big picture in view. By getting a vision for what we can accomplish, not only here and now, but for generations to come and for eternity.

Psalm 127:3 says, "Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him." If our children don't *feel* like a reward; if they feel more like a punishment, something's wrong. Our heart is not

right. Because God says they are a reward, and his Word is true.

A heritage is something you pass on; something that lives on after you. Children are our opportunity to impact the future. When we are dead and gone. When all our possessions are broken, obsolete, sold at yard sales, or thrown away. When the memories of our accomplishments have long been forgotten and our trophies are collecting dust in the attic, what will remain? When the money and houses and property we leave as an inheritance to our children are spent, worn out, or worthless, what remains?

If we live our lives the way God is calling us to, our godly heritage will remain. I'm not talking about religious tradition. I'm not talking about a denomination. I'm talking about a heritage of a vibrant, living faith passed from generation to generation.

Psalm 78 says,

Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old: which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children. That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children. That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments. (vv. 1-7 KJV)

These verses talk about five generations remaining faithful to God. Our goal as we parent each day should be to pass our faith

not only to our children but to our grandchildren.

In the late 1700s, an English woman named Susanna Wesley raised eleven children. She spent thirty minutes of one-on-one time with each of them, every week. She taught them to read the Bible, beginning in Genesis. When she needed time alone with God, she simply pulled her apron over her head. Two of her sons, Charles and John Wesley, were key leaders in the great spiritual awakening of the eighteenth century. We still sing hymns today that they wrote: "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing," "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing," and many more.

Many historians believe that the Great Awakening was the primary reason England was spared a bloody revolution like the one that occurred in France. Susanna Wesley's children literally changed the course of a nation and impacted the eternal destiny of countless thousands.

Among the men John Wesley led to the Lord was John Taylor. John Taylor heard John Wesley preach on the morning he was to be married and was so moved by what he heard that he ended up late for his own wedding. He was in his barn praying that God would bless his home. John Taylor became a lay Methodist preacher. He was zealous for the Lord and raised up several sons who also became lay Methodist preachers. Those sons had several sons who became ... you guessed it: lay Methodist preachers.

One of those men had a little boy, who used to listen to his daddy pray every day: "O Lord, please send missionaries to China." When that little boy was six years old, he said, "God, I will go to China." His name was Hudson Taylor. Sound familiar? J. Hudson Taylor grew up to become the founder of the China Inland Mission and the father of the modern faith mission movement.

Ruth Tucker, in her history of Christian missions, writes,

> **No other missionary in the nineteen centuries since the apostle Paul has had a wider vision and has carried out a more systematic plan of evangelism across a broader geographic area than Hudson Taylor. In his lifetime, the missionary force under him totaled more than eight hundred and continued to grow in the decades after he died.**

As of this writing, there are nine generations of preachers in the Taylor family--and one of those men is right now a missionary to Thailand. That's a godly dynasty. And it all started where? Susanna Wesley: one woman who had a vision that mothering could make a difference for eternity. One woman with an apron over her head!

Another man impacted by Susanna Wesley's children was Jonathan Edwards, a minister and evangelist who lived in the United States one hundred and fifty years ago. He and his wife had ten children. They passed on to those children a godly heritage. The state of New York did a study on five generations of the Edwards family and found that of their 729 descendants, 300 were preachers, 65 became college professors, 13 were university presidents, 60 were authors, 3 were congressman, and 1 became vice-president of the United States. All from one family who determined to raise godly children; one family who built a godly dynasty.

I want my great-great-great-great-great-great-grandchildren to say, "Thank God, Grandma Donna finally got her priorities straight and slowed down. Thank God, she decided to invest time attending to the `small stuff' that adds up over time. Thank God, she poured her energy, creativity, and ambition into the lives of her children and, as a result, changed the course of her family history."

I didn't inherit a godly dynasty. But I'm building one for my kids. No matter where you came from, it can start with you.

I know one thing many women struggle with in the midst of all the "small stuff." It is feeling insignificant. Let me ask you this: Would you feel significant if you knew you had the potential to bring 2,187 people to Christ through the impact of your lifetime? Do you know that any woman reading this has the potential to do it? Here's how it works: First, you have three kids and raise them to love the Lord. Then each of those children has three children, and so on. In just seven generations, you'll have led 2,187 people to the Lord. Cool, huh?

I've even got mathematical proof:

1x3=3

3x3=9

9x3=27

27x3=81

81x3=243

243x3=729

729x3=2,187

What could be more exciting than this? If we would only set our hearts upon building a godly dynasty, then we would truly have undertaken the most important job in the world. Not just in rhetoric but in reality.

When my children were still young, I attended a homeschooling conference featuring the late Sono Harris who shared the following excerpt from a class and ebook called *The Royal Pathway:*

They will not trouble you long,
children grow up fast.
Nothing on earth grows so fast as children.
It was but yesterday that lad was playing with toys.
He's a man now and gone.
There's no childhood left for him
or for us.

Life has claimed him.

The house has not a child in it.
There's no more noise in the hall,
boys rushing in pell-mell.
There are no more skates or sleds,
bats, balls, or strings left scattered about.

Things are neat enough now.
There is no longer another task
before you lie down
of looking after anybody
or tucking up the bed clothes.

There are no more disputes to settle,
nobody to get off to practice.
No more fingers to bandage,
no more faces to be washed.
No more rips to mend
or shirts to be tucked in.

There never was such peace in the house.
It would sound like music
to have some feet
to clatter down the front stairs.
Oh for some children's noise.
What used to ail us that we were
always hushing
their loud laughs
and checking their noisy frolic?
Reproving their slamming and banging of doors.

We only wish our neighbors would loan us
an urchin
or two to make a little noise
on the premises.
A home without children--
it's like a garden with no flowers,
a lantern with no candle,
a vine with no grapes.

We want to be tired,
to be vexed,
to be run over,
to hear children at work
and at play
with all its varieties.

Children are a gift from the Lord,
and they will give us joy if we will let them.

Someday, very soon, life will claim our children.
We are only together for a season.
Our children will grow up
and then the house will become quiet.
Since our time with them is brief,
let's make the most of the summer of child-rearing.
Then we can dance into a winter of rich reward
rather than shuffling into a season of regret.

Several years later, I had the opportunity to get to know Sono's oldest son, Joshua. He shared with me his vision for a book entitled, ***I Kissed Dating Goodbye***. Even though he was only 18 years old, I felt the message was too important and too urgent to delay publication until he was "old enough" to be considered an expert. So I urged him to go for it and am honored to be listed among his mentors on the pages of a book that has sold nearly 10 million copies worldwide -- a book that helped to launch the modern purity movement.

In today's culture, it requires Total God-Confidence to keep your children a priority. May God give you the vision and courage to do it. Who knows how large the impact your children may have?

DIG DEEPER

1. What efforts are you making to build a godly dynasty?

2. What more do you need to do?

3. If you continue living as you are now, do you think you'll dance into a winter of rich reward or shuffle into a season of regret?

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS

✓Nothing we undertake will have more eternal significance than building a godly dynasty.

✓We are only with our children for a season. Then we'll either dance into a winter of rich reward or shuffle into a season of regret.

KEY #10: EAGER TO TAKE THE LEAP OF FAITH

DAY 20: LEAPING OUT OF THE NEST

He spreads his wings over them, even as an eagle overspreads her young. She carries them upon her wings--as does the Lord his people! Deuteronomy 32:11

Christians just love the word picture of soaring eagles. Sounds good, doesn't it? Our kids are running amok underfoot, but we're just soaring up above it all. Untouched, undisturbed by the madness of this world. Nice picture. Too bad it has nothing to do with reality. Here's what it takes to come to the place where you can mount up on wings as an eagle:

When the mother eagle is expecting her young, she prepares a large nest, high on the edge of a cliff. She fashions it out of giant branches and sharp thorns. Then she fills it with layer upon layer of soft feathers.

Then, when the baby eagles arrive and start getting all comfy-cozy in the nest (thinking, *I'm gonna stay here until I'm forty years old),* do you know what the mother eagle does? She begins to make the nest increasingly uncomfortable. Each day she removes a few more feathers. Until, finally, the nest becomes unbearable. She does this deliberately, knowing full well that unless she forces her little ones out of their comfort zone, they'll never take that leap of faith. And if they never take the leap of faith, they'll never know what it means to *soar.* That would be tragic indeed, because soaring, after all, is what eagles were created to do.

Well, finally the little eagles can take it no longer. They climb to

the edge of the nest and look down into the giant chasm below. Their hearts are gripped with fear, but what they've got is so bad, the unknown could hardly be worse. They mount their courage and take the leap of faith, realizing that their wings are completely untested. They have no skill, no experience, no backup plan. They have absolutely no cause for confidence.

The baby eagle continues plummeting toward the earth, and just when it seems all hope is lost, the mother eagle swoops underneath him and allows him to mount up on her wings. For the first time in his life, he *knows* what it means to soar. From that moment on, there's no holding him back. He's free from fear. Confident.

Isaiah 40:31 says, "Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings likes eagles."

You know, the only way you'll ever come to that place of "mounting up on wings like eagles" is to take a giant leap of faith. Maybe God has been making you increasingly uncomfortable lately. Maybe he is removing everything that you place your confidence in; deliberately pushing you out of your comfort zone. Maybe he is taking you to a place where all you have left to depend upon is him.

And I've noticed that sometimes he really lets us sweat it. He doesn't swoop under us until the last minute. That's when God-Confidence comes in. That's when we look deep within ourselves and ask, *Is God really able to do what he says? Is he God enough? And is he really FAITHFUL to do what he has promised?*

It boils down to a crisis of confidence. If we really believe God is who he says he is and that he will do what he says he will do, the rest is easy. Okay, so it's not exactly *easy,* but it's definitely easier than the alternative.

When you place your confidence in anyone or anything other than God, do you know what happens? God is compelled to take that source of confidence from you. He won't play second fiddle in your life. Do you want to know what God keeps taking from me? Friends. First, my two best friends moved to Maryland and Massachusetts. Then it got even worse. Would you believe, I've actually had friends move to Malaysia, Mongolia, Morocco, and Mexico?

If by chance, you've been reading this book thinking, *Poor Donna, she doesn't have to stay the kid no one will play with forever. I'll be her friend.* Forget it. The minute you form a friendship with me, the wheels of heaven will be in motion to relocate you to a foreign country beginning with the letter M. And just for the record, MAUI is not a foreign country!

What does God keep taking from you? Is it possible that's the very thing he wants to prevent you from placing your confidence in? God loves you too much to let you put your trust in anyone or anything other than him. That's because he alone is worthy of your confidence.

I can tell you all day long that God is worthy of your confidence. I can tell you that when I was in free-fall, when I had lost *everything* that mattered to me, when I had absolutely nothing left to base my confidence in ... that was the very moment God swept underneath me and allowed me to soar in a way I never knew possible.

I can tell you this, but until you've let go of everything else; until you've taken that giant leap of faith and found yourself rushing headlong toward apparent destruction; until you're bungee-jumping without a cord; you'll never know--never *really know--what* it's like to have God swoop under you and rescue you; to

discover what it means to soar.

I'll tell you that when you've come to that place, faced it and lived to tell about it, all your fear will be gone. You *know* that you *know* that God is there. That he is real. That he is able and faithful. That kind of Total God-Confidence can only come when you, personally, have taken the leap and met God in free-fall. No one can take that leap for you.

And you can't take that leap for anyone else. Not for your husband. Not even for your kids.

It's one thing to take the leap. It's another to watch someone you love taking it. It's almost more than we can bear. That's why we want to meddle and run rescue missions. That's why we want to put some pillows in the nest or offer them the room upstairs. That's why we want to lend them a parachute or rent a helicopter.

It won't work. Until they've taken the leap for themselves and found God faithful, they'll continue thinking they need a rescuer. What they really need is a Savior.

Take the leap. And when it comes time for someone you love to take it, just close your eyes!

DIG DEEPER

1. Have you ever taken a giant leap of faith? What happened?

2. Is God calling you to take a leap of faith right now? How so?

3. What does God keep taking from you? Could it be the very thing he wants to prevent you from placing your confidence in?

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS

- ✓If we want to soar upon wings as an eagle, we've got to take a giant leap of faith.
- ✓No one can take the leap of faith for us, and we can't take it for anyone else.
- ✓Until you've taken the leap of faith, you'll never truly know that God is there.

DAY 21: ASK BOLDLY

You do not have, because you do not ask. James 4:2 (NRSV)

I think the walk of faith requires leaps of faith--and leaps of faith never appear rational to onlookers. We've come to place far too high a premium on human opinion. If we want to soar by faith, then once in a while we've got to take faith-sized risks.

I'm not talking about presumption; you know me better than that by now. I'm talking about faith--the kind of faith that goes out on a limb and risks looking ridiculous. When's the last time you made an absolute fool of yourself *because of your faith?* When's the last time you were surrounded by people scratching their heads, wondering, *What on earth is she thinking?*

Most Christians would be proud to say, "I never look foolish because of my faith. I want everyone to know how rational Christians are, that our faith is rooted in logic. After all, we don't want people thinking Christianity is for extremists and eccentrics."

While there's nothing inherently noble about being an extremist, I worry about Christians who blend into the culture like chameleons. As Josh Harris said, "This country will not survive another generation of Christians that fit in."1 I worry about Christians who never take any action until they have *all the answers up front,* until they have their safety net in place. I worry about Christians who never do anything that might raise eyebrows.

Granted, you don't want to become irrational in everything you do. So, how do you decide when to conform, when to cling to terra firma, and when to take the leap? I'd like to suggest a very simplistic answer: ask God. And when you ask, ask boldly and

specifically, *expecting a specific answer.*

Questions like "God, do you want me to be a better Christian?" don't count. That's a chicken question, since there's no risk of making yourself look ridiculous by acting on the answer! Think of a specific question--one concerning an issue that's puzzling you--then, *ask God* to tell you the answer.

You might be thinking, *Gee, if God has an answer, why on earth didn't he tell me long ago?* But the Bible says, "You do not have, because you do not ask" (James 4:2 nrsv). The immediate context of the verse is referring to material possessions, i.e., you don't have certain *things* because you don't ask (and when you do ask, you ask with wrong motives). But the larger context most certainly refers to wisdom, to answers for life's questions: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should *ask God* who gives generously to all without finding fault" (James 1:5 niv [emphasis added]). As Andrew Murray observed, "God's giving is inseparably connected with our asking."

My friend Kim Crabill is the founder of a wonderful ministry called Roses and Rainbows. One year, she *asked God* what theme she should choose for their annual women's conference. She asked expecting an answer. As she prayed, she sensed God saying, "Diamonds in the Dust." She asked him to confirm his answer.

A week later she was vacuuming the house, when suddenly she heard the infamous *clank, clank, clank* sound. Her vacuum had swallowed *something* it shouldn't have ... but what? She opened up the vacuum cleaner bag and there, in the midst of the dust, she found *a diamond* (the stone had fallen out of her wedding ring, without her even noticing). So, do you think God was trying to tell her something, or what?

Hey, wait a minute! Did you just raise your eyebrows? Are you

wondering about Kim? Every time Kim tells this story, I'll bet there's at least one listener who thinks she's ridiculous. I LOVE IT!

Why not go do something--or tell a story--that at least *someone* will find absolutely ridiculous. Just be sure you *ask God* first! But when God speaks to you and then confirms, take the leap. Leap into your calling – and do it with Total God-Confidence.

DIG DEEPER

1. When's the last time you raised your eyebrows at something someone did or said?

2. What do you want to ask God right now? Write out a prayer posing the question below then watch for the answer.

CONFIDENCE BOOSTERS

- ✓Leaps of faith never appear rational to onlookers.
- ✓Ask God--boldly, expecting a specific answer.

STEPS TO FREEDOM

1. Know that God loves you: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16)*.

2. Acknowledge your sin. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

3. Turn from sin. "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God" (Romans 6:12-13).

4. Accept that Jesus is the only way. "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me" (John 14:6). "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

5. Realize that Jesus paid the penalty for your sins. "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:5-6).

6. Receive Jesus as Savior. "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in and eat with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20). "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

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Donna has authored 28 books with sales in excess of 1.1 million. She's delivered thousands of keynote messages on 6 continents; equally effective empowering pastors gath ered in a mud hut in Africa or employees at the CIA Headquarters in Langley, Virginia.

Donna has a unique ability to empower her listeners to make significant life decisions and implement life change. As a coach, she is insightful, encouraging...and challenging.

Learn more at www.donnapartow.com

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT UNIVERSITY

If you loved this class, here are some other courses you will enjoy:

Empowering U to Breakthrough

The first and foundational course in **Women's Empowerment University** is "Empowering U to Breakthrough." Virtually everyone has at least one area in our lives where we feel stuck. It's a habit, a way of thinking or a set of relationship dynamics that prevent us from becoming ALL we've dreamed we could be -- all that God intends.

Some of the issues addressed in this class include:

- *How to hear from God*
- The secret to answered prayer
- Why and how to fast for breakthru
- Discover how God sees you
- Uncover what's blocking you from moving forward
- *Discover wrong beliefs you may be clinging to*
- *Gain insight into how to nurture your key relationships*
- *Gain God's perspective on your current calling/career*
- *Dare to Dream again*

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Breakthru Offers You a Spiritual Feast

F - How **FASTING** feeds your spirit, strengthens your soul and energizes your body

E - The power of **ENUMERATING** specific sins and shortcomings, rather than living under a general cloud of discontent.

A - The importance of maintaining the right **ATTITUDE**: why gratitude and humility bring joy... and how pride can hide in things like worry and insecurity.

S - Discover what it feels like to **SHARE** the journey with like-minded women and how life-changing it is when we open ourselves up to the Holy Spirit's ability to speak to us through others

T - Gain a new appreciation for the power of **TIME** in God's presence; experience, maybe for the first time, how much effort and energy you can save by learning to listen to the One who knows all things.

It's not about learning; it's about changing

But this course isn't about head knowledge. It's about EMPOWERMENT. And as you are about to discover, God moves in a powerful way through this course -- His anointing and presence is tangible upon the teaching, the daily devotionals and the prayers offered over the participants.

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Breakthru includes:

- Ebook containing all course material
- Links to pre-recorded training audios
- Exclusive access to your Coaches on a private Facebook Group
- Supportive community of women who are also becoming Empowered for Breakthru

Each Day Features:

- Powerful teaching from Donna Partow
- A Focus Word and Devotional from Deanna Allen
- Scripture to ponder
- Healing and Deliverance Prayers from both of your coaches

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What Former Students are saying:

How truly incredible. Thank you for sharing the beautiful words God has placed in your heart. I am so grateful. How truly, truly God has blessed you with these words He has given to you! I played it for my husband tonight so he could hear what I've been listening to this week. He was very impressed as well and now knows what I've been raving about this week! -- Shirley Moody

An incredible session today. Love that I was able to pause then

play as I took notes and listened to the Lord speak to me personally. I have only had a chance to listen to two messages but am now purposely scheduling my time this week to catch up. I encourage anyone to grab on to the challenge. -- Debbie Underwood

I got my breakthru in a few areas but most importantly in the area of listening during quiet time with God and really seeing the urgency to do this before my day starts. I'm a runner, always on the go and I heard God loud and clear during these 21 days emphasizing the necessity to rest by the still waters and get in His presence more. -- Nikki Marrow

Very refreshing. I hate for the class to end. I really have enjoyed every session. The classes have really caused breakthrough for me. I have truly been blessed by the awesome words of God delivered by two anointed women of God. -- Lue Lott

Special Introductory Price

This is the place to begin your transformation. And because it's your first introduction to Women's Empowerment University, we are making it available for the ridiculous price of just $1 per day.

Register http://snurl.com/26rtuip

Our most popular class !!!

Soul at Rest, Body in Motion

Come journey with us for 21 days. With our revolutionary **7-Step System for Personal Transformation.** Working closing with you in a coaching context, the staff of Women's Empowerment University will empower you to:

Step 1: Paint a fresh **VISION** for what God can do in and thru your life

Step 2: Create a personal--and powerful--**PLAN** to get you where you want to be. You know, that place you've always dreamed of but were beginning to sense you'd never achieve! We'll empower you to dream again...and dream bigger than you've ever dared!!!

Step 3: Equip you with a detailed **MEASURING SYSTEM** to track your progress - this is a tool you can use for the rest of your life.

Step 4: Establish an **ACCOUNTABILITY** relationship that empowers and propels you onward. Our commitment is to walk with you, step-by-step, until you reach the pinnacle of personal achievement.

Step 5: MONITOR your progress to help you discover the power of Learned Optimism

Step 6: CELEBRATE your achievements and ensure they are rewarded. Bottomline: The Greatest Management Principle in the

World is this: "Behavior that gets rewarded, gets repeated." It's a great self-management principle, as well. We'll teach you how to make that principle work FOR you...not against you. (Be honest: have you been using all the wrong rewards and rewarding all the wrong behaviors? We'll help you change that. For good!)

Step 7: Empower you to Empower others. There's no higher level of personal fulfillment on earth that reaching a position in life where you know you have something of great value to contribute to the world--and you are pro-actively making that contribution. You have gifts you can **IMPART** to **IMPACT** the world. Maybe some you've never even recognized as gifts. Our prayer is that those gifts will be revealed and released over the course of this 21-day journey.

Our staff is here to empower you to become a ***Soul at Rest...and a Body in Motion***. A body that is empowered, energized and enthusiastically moving forward in life.

Enroll right away.

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Here's What You'll Receive:

- Ebook containing 21 days of teaching on Soul at Rest, Body in Motion

- Lifetime access to 15 hour-long teaching sessions featuring Donna Partow and Deborah Lovett--accessible online or as an mp3. You can return to this material again and again!

- 24/7 Access to Donna, Deborah and the other class participants on a Private Facebook Group.

- 24/7 Accountability in key areas through the use of technology and required reporting

http://snurl.com/26rtu5p

Listen to the Introductory Teleseminar

What Others Are Saying

I know someone said something similar last night, but after tonight's call I say: "This class is the BEST thing I've ever bought for myself, my husband, our marriage, and our future! The BEST investment I've ever made in myself! Thank you so much dearest Donna, Deborah, and everyone in the class! Love you guys! XO - Maria

The Lord is letting you guys in my head! I feel like I've stepped into a rushing river of God at work, for too long I've just been sitting be a babbling brook just dipping my toe in! Thank You Donna & Deborah I feel so blessed to be under your anointed teaching! - Ann Marie

I have never had anyone ever pray for me like that and it was the

most powerful experience I have ever had and I am going to be 50! Thank you Jesus for Donna and this class and all the wonderful ladies in this group! - Norma

This class, ***Soul at Rest, Body in Motion***, has given me much needed mobility and clarity. I had been stuck in a foggy place with a seeming inability to move. With these sessions, I can wholeheartedly say I have gained great clarity and been empowered with the ability to move to do what needs to be done. Donna and Deborah's words probed and prodded in the dark spots to help me see things I had been unwilling to look at and they helped me clear away the barriers set up by pride and inertia. Their clear connection with God has placed solidarity under every pillar that they built in this program. Donna and Deborah's unselfish sharing and devotion have been evident from the start. It's definitely a God thing! I look forward to more from Woman's Empowerment University. -- Dani

It has gotten me motivated which I needed for years, even though I've had a hard time with my marriage breaking up, and last week my 13 yr old dog had to be put down. I have really benefited from the wisdom and challenge, and excited to see what the Lord has in my future. Donna and Deborah are 2 very spiritual and wonderful coaches, speakers & authors. Their love for Jesus just shines through, even through the phone, computer, books, wow! -- Nancy

This class has been my accountability partner, to be strengthened, motivated, and encouraged to do what I know to do. My focus word from the Lord for this year has been DISCIPLINE. The desire of my heart has been for the restoration of my mind and mental clarity to redefine my priorities God's Way. Donna and Deborah, you have been my cheer leaders, my mentors, and my

coaches. Thank you for being examples of lives lived for Christ in a practical and powerful way. I feel EMPOWERED! -- Teresa

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Walking in Total God-confidence / by Donna Partow
Revised edition
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p. cm.
ISBN 0-7642-2185-X (pbk.)

1. Trust in God--Christianity. 2. Trust in God--Christianity Meditations. 3. Partow, Donna. 4. Self-confidence--Religious aspects--Christianity.