

Introduction

Confidence probably means different things to different people here. We think of the things we put our confidence in or how confident we feel. And we can be confident in some areas and not in others, which is part of the natural strengths and weaknesses everyone has. And confidence in the secular world is a different thing to confidence for a Christian, though there's lots to learn.

Our struggles with confidence can have their roots in different things too....

Perhaps you like me have a fear of what others will think, of not living up to my own standards of perfection. A need for approval.

Or perhaps your struggle with confidence is around loss or change, maybe in your circumstances or health. You're just generally battered by life and it's affected your confidence.

Perhaps your struggle with confidence is a deep seated or nagging doubt about your identity. About being good enough compared to her.

Or maybe your struggle with confidence is rooted in a struggle with being confident in God. Why has he let this happen? What must he be like? Or a feeling of shame in your relationship with God, not believing his love is for you... What would he want with me?

And I bet as we look at those around us, we imagine that they have it all together. What's she doing here.... she seems to be brimming over with confidence!

Some seasons of our lives will inevitably be marked by loss of confidence. This isn't about conforming, but about God's healing work in each of our lives where it's needed. And it's about confidence to flourish where God uniquely puts us.

We wanted to start by looking at God's word. There are loads of Bible characters that struggled with confidence. It's very reassuring! We're going to look at Moses.

Before our reading let's set the scene and meet Moses.

Moses is a Hebrew by birth but an Egyptian by upbringing, brought up in the royal palace. The Egyptians who raised him are oppressing the people of his birth. His own attempts to intervene and make sense of the situation had ended in him murdering an Egyptian and fleeing for his life. He's now an exile far from home. Years have passed and he's tending sheep.

I imagine Moses to be unsure of and shaken in his identity. Aware of his failure. And distant from any rootedness in the God of his forefathers.

Reading Exodus 3-4:17

Before we even get to Moses and his major wobbles and crises of confidence, **God has things to show him about Himself.** There's a bigger scene to set, the central figure isn't Moses. It's God himself. Let's start there.

First, **God comes to meet Moses.** He needs to get Moses' attention. God has the next act in his great story to write and Moses is chosen for the job.

In the middle of an ordinary day looking after ordinary sheep near an ordinary bush God is there. Suddenly it's a holy place. God has come near. Moses' response to hide his face is a natural and right one before a Holy God. God's holiness shows up our own unworthiness. The beginning of Moses' journey into God's plans for him starts with a right fear, with wonder and worship, awe and reverence.

I wonder if God started a healing work in Moses at that moment of encounter.

Meeting with God and worshipping Him is where transformation in us can start. Our confidence struggles make us quite inward looking. So, making space for God to draw alongside and get our attention is really important. Even in the ordinary everyday-ness of life. Do we come to him in worship? Do we let our hearts respond? Worship rubs off on us and can begin to change the way we look out at the world.

Second, **God shows Moses his heart for his people.** He says I have seen their misery. I have heard them crying out. We feel his heart going out, we feel God moved to respond. As God calls Moses to step out with him, he wants Moses to see and share in his compassion to reach out and rescue. His desire is to bring his people out into a good and spacious land. He's a God who wants deliverance, goodness, wholeness and abundance for his people.

Will we let the compassion of God move us? His compassion for me. And compassion for those around me. He wants freedom and wholeness for them too and he might be sending me.

Too often in my own crises of confidence and inadequacy, if I step back, I realise that I have made myself the central figure in the story and lost sight of a Holy God, who is worthy of my worship and obedience. And a compassionate God who has heard the cry of my heart and the hearts of the people around me. I need to get back to the right starting point. **We need to have our attention more transfixed by a God who is both holy and compassionate and wants us in with him.**

So now let's turn to think about **Moses and his wobbles and the way God graciously deals with him.**

In verse 10 we get to the tough bit. **"So now, go. I am sending you"**.

Why me says Moses. "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" Perhaps he's referring back to the fact that he had fled from Pharaoh after taking the life of an Egyptian. Or perhaps it's a right sense of the crazy impossibility of the task for one man....an 80-year-old man at that.

The first thing we notice is that **God says "I will be with you". He promises Moses his presence.** That's the presence of the actual real Living God!

We're slow to believe that aren't we! I suppose because we can't see him. And because you have to step out first before you sense his help. I'm sure you have your stories, but I've lost count of the number of times, like right now...when I've stepped out of my comfort zone and found his help to be real.

The second thing to notice is that God has been working on this plan for a **long** time. It's not random. Moses was born as a Hebrew baby who should, by order of Pharaoh, have been thrown in the Nile. But he was rescued by Pharaoh's daughter and brought up in the palace. A member of the Hebrew people, sharing in their identity, but also, with knowledge of and access to the court. **God has specially raised and positioned Moses for this.**

I wonder if we dare to think of our own lives like that? Who are we uniquely positioned to love? What tasks are there that I can do because of who he made me and where he put me? **Our confidence will grow if we could just see how precious to him is the part each of us plays in his Kingdom building.** It doesn't have to be big in the eyes of the world. I don't have to have huge social circles. I can have confidence that it's **his** big picture, **his** story. Ordained from before the creation of the world. He heard his people cry and he sent Moses. He heard his people cry and he sent Jesus. He has heard his people cry and he sends you and me to be his hands, his feet and his voice to our families, our neighbours, our friends, our colleagues and our church family.

Maybe you just see that as massively daunting like Moses did? Maybe in the circumstances of your life right now, your world is very small, your capacity very limited. But will we **let the honour in being chosen and called heal the roots of our sense of inadequacy and bring security and purpose to our identity.**

But Moses is back in his head again. Wondering if he really knows God, and if he is to be trusted. Visualizing the worst-case scenarios and fearing what others will say. Listening to the doubts and voices in his head rather than the ultimate reality of who God is.

So, God reassures Moses and gives him some reasons for confidence.

First, **God gives him and the people of Israel a name.** Something they can call him.

His name is I am who I am. Meaning that he alone is the one absolute unchanging reality, no one made him, nothing exists outside of him, he is utterly independent and everything else is utterly dependent on him.

For Moses that should have been enough, all the authority, courage and incentive he needed. A people in slavery have the One true and living God on their side, coming to their rescue. Moses' confidence might be small but God IS.

For us too, there is nothing more solid, more real, more dependable, more absolute. Confidence in anything else is misplaced. The world says dress the part and you'll feel the part! Think positive thoughts! You are enough! You can do anything you put your mind to! But in the face of all the challenges we face, all our insecurities and fears ... **God's answer is simply to speak his name to his children. I am who I am. I give you myself as the ultimate grounds for confidence. It's so personal and loving.**

Second God uses what Moses has. Moses has a simple staff. Think what God uses that stick for in the coming days. Miraculous events that show his power. Hail storms, plagues, parting the Red Sea. Jesus did the same. He took the loaves and fish from a boy's packed lunch and fed 5,000 people.

Do we feel like we have very little of significance to offer?

When my children were little, I had very little capacity to do much else. God brought me a friend who had just become a Christian and was very unwell. One thing I could do was provide a safe place for her to be and I could look after her little boy. God took those simple offerings and over time brought my friend to healing. Not only that but he established a friendship of depth which continues to bear fruit and she in turn ministers to the hurting people around her.

We can have confidence because when we bring what we have to God, he can do great things because it doesn't depend on us, but on him.

Third God gives Moses signs. It's not the right time to go into the symbolism of the signs God gives Moses. Those signs of the snake, the leprous hand and the blood all point to his authority and power to judge and to save. But those signs point to the ultimate way God would save through his Son Jesus. **The cross and the resurrection are the fulfilment of those signs. They demonstrate once and for all God's authority and power to save. Jesus' death and resurrection are everything we need to know that God can be trusted.**

One of the things I have learned to hold onto when lack of confidence threatens to derail me.....is that there is nothing I can do or not do that will change his love for me. His love doesn't hang on my performance or capacity. The cross reminds me that Jesus' perfection covers all my imperfections. I will never live up to my own standards, but Jesus lived up to God the Father's standards in my place. There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. The cross reminds me that I am known and loved completely and unconditionally of what I do and how I do it.

The cross invites me to rest in his love instead of striving. The cross invites me to come to him and follow him, not to hide away in fear. The cross invites me to bring my failures and sense of

inadequacy to him. The cross invites me to believe that he is good and that he wants me to flourish.

And of course, the cross should convince me that with God, anything is possible.

When our confidence is low, will we look to the cross?

Oh Moses! We **so** identify with him! He hasn't finished with his doubts and objections yet.

He has heard all God's reassurances now he says to God "never mind all that, I'm just not good and actually please God send someone else instead!

I see two more things to learn from God's dealings with Moses.

I don't know what you make of God's anger at the end of our passage. I can kind of relate. Have you ever spent ages reasoning with, persuading, reassuring and boosting a child's confidence about something but they're just not hearing you....and at the end of it they're still digging their heels in. It's exasperating.

I think we can be like that sometimes. We've heard what God says in theory, but we stay stuck in our rut. It's just safer to stay in that trapped place of our own insecurities and limitations. It's ok to apply it to someone else, but not to myself. **Will we let God's reassurances filter down into our belief about ourselves and God's trustworthiness and will we let that truth grow us?**

And last of all. Do you see how wonderfully gracious God is to Moses. In his loving Fatherly exasperation, he doesn't stomp off. He answers every one of Moses' objections **AND** He lovingly provides a brother who can be a mouthpiece for Moses.

God doesn't get fed up with us. He lovingly provides another tangible sign of his reassurance. He gives us each other. **He gives us those to go with us, to support us, to encourage us.** Those with different gifts.

I'm so grateful for the people who have patiently prayed for me and encouraged me when over and over again I doubt that I can do something. Just within the Women Together team I have regular crises of confidence about events and quake at the feeling of responsibility, but God puts me in a team of ladies with wonderful gifts and I remember I'm not alone.

Have we gone underground with our struggles with confidence, or will we open up to each other and **receive** the encouragement God intends us to receive from each other? Will we **be** the ones to encourage and support a friend who is struggling with their confidence, to remind them of all of this?

