

# Confidence IS AN INSIDE JOB

Conquer  
Self-Doubt and  
Embrace God's View  
of You

SNEAK  
PEEK



SAMPLE  
ONLY

UNCORRECTED  
PROOF

Ashley Henriott

Foreword by Cassandra Speer

*Confidence*  
Is an Inside Job

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CONQUER SELF-DOUBT AND  
EMBRACE GOD'S VIEW OF YOU

*Ashley Henriott*



WATERBROOK

This is a work of non-fiction. Nonetheless, some of the names of the individuals discussed have been changed in order to disguise their identities. Any resulting resemblance to persons living or dead is entirely coincidental and unintentional.

Details in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

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To you, the woman who's flipping the pages of this book,  
who's searching for what it truly means to be confident in Christ:

loved, bold, and accepted.

Maybe you've been told you're not smart enough.

Or pretty enough.

Or good enough.

Or wise enough.

Maybe someone hasn't treated you the way they should.

Maybe that someone is you.

I want you to know something, friend:

You don't have to stay there.

You don't have to wait for someone to tell you that you belong.

You don't have to be enough for anyone anymore,

because you are already enough for Jesus.

Remember: You were made for *more*.

More love, more joy, more trust in yourself.

And above all, you were made for more confidence in yourself and  
in your Savior.

That's what I hope you learn as you make your way through this  
book.

I'm so proud of you for choosing *you* today, sis.

I can't wait to go on this journey with you.

## Foreword

CONFIDENCE IS A STRANGE THING, ISN'T IT? IT'S LIKE AIR. WE CAN'T see it, but we know we need it, and we can't survive without it. The culture of this world tries to convince us that our sense of self is wrapped up in literally everything but God. Yet none of those things seems to satisfy our soul's desperate longing for worth.

When I first stumbled upon Ashley Henriott online, her humor caught my attention, but her heart kept me coming back for more: more wisdom, more biblical insight, more honesty, and of course, more lighthearted laughs. You may not realize it, but those who bring the greatest joy into the world often carry the deepest wounds—and Ashley's scars run deep. As a fellow survivor of child abuse who has been diagnosed with complex post-traumatic stress disorder, I heard echoes of my own story within Ashley's, but more importantly, I saw with profound clarity God's sovereignty in all our stories.

In this book, Ashley tenderly walks her readers down memory lane, revisiting the heartache of her childhood and the victories and hard-won wisdom that came along the way. Ashley isn't a stranger to tragedy or trauma, and she doesn't attempt to sugarcoat the bitterness of life. Her words are wrapped in empathy, her sincerity is palpable, and she has the remarkable ability to both challenge us and comfort us with each turn of the page. I can't think of anyone more qualified to speak into this generation of women on the topic of confidence in Christ than my girl, Ashley.

Drawing on powerful biblical teachings, she emphasizes that your identity and self-worth must be found first and foremost in the belief that you are God's beloved child. Then you can conquer self-doubt and embrace your God-given confidence—confidence that the world cannot give you and therefore cannot steal from you.

As you read, I pray that your heart would be softened and receptive. I pray that your eyes would be opened to the truth of God's heart toward you, and that you would hold tightly to the wisdom poured out onto these pages and allow the power of God's Word to fill you with confidence. May you know the nearness of God within you and may the power of the Holy Spirit transform you.

If you're ready to overcome the barriers that the enemy of your soul has placed before you, keep reading. It's time to take agency of your life and become the person you were created to be, confidently.

CASSANDRA SPEER, author, Bible teacher, and  
vice president of Her True Worth

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## Introduction

I keep my eyes always on the Lord.  
With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

PSALM 16:8 (NIV)

CLOSE YOUR EYES, AND PICTURE YOURSELF ON A RED CARPET.

Maybe it's the Oscars or the Grammys. Maybe it's a movie premiere, and the actor you crushed on all through your childhood is standing five feet away from you. Normally, you'd be a melting puddle of goo, ready to take your bedhead and three-day-old sweatpants and go hide in a corner. Except . . . you remember you're on the red carpet. And the last time you looked in a mirror before you hopped in the limo, you thought to yourself, *Wow, I look good*. Your hair is full and luscious, like you're starring in a shampoo commercial. And your dress—where did you get this *dress*? It's a step up from your usual Amazon Prime find. It hugs your curves and drapes your body in the most elegant way, and guess what? It has *pockets*. Your ears and neck and wrists are dripping with diamonds.

You've come a long way, baby, from sweatpants—heck, even from a past you'd like to put behind you. You're the total pack-

age, and this is your time to shine.

As you stand just outside your limo, getting ready to walk the carpet toward the entrance of the theater, you realize a crowd has formed in front of you and blocked your way. And this isn't just any crowd; you look at each face, and they all look familiar. You see your mom first. Then your dad. Your grandmother. Your loud aunt. Your friends from church. Your pastor. Your favorite influencer has even made an appearance. But you can't see past them to go where you're supposed to. In an instant, panic sets in. You're still smiling for the cameras, calm and poised, but on the inside, your brain is moving a thousand miles an hour as you ask yourself, *What's everybody doing here? What do they need? What am I supposed to be doing right now?*

Before you can venture another thought, the crowd made up of your favorite people begins to yell things at you: "Why are you walking this way? You need to go over *there*." You always listen to your people, so you stop to think about what they're saying and how to please them. But you realize: You're not sure where *there* even is.

What is going on?

Clearly, they must know something you don't. The entrance where you *thought* you were supposed to go is just beyond them, so you'd have to make your way past them to get there. But you also trust these people. Surely they know where you're *really* supposed to go. So you try to keep moving in the direction they're pointing you—over there. Wherever that is.

As you try to figure out your next step, you pause to take a ragged breath. Your heart is pounding in your chest. You're so anxious, trying to think about how to do All the Things and please All the People, and you're not sure how.

So, even as your gut is screaming for you to stop, you step off

the red carpet.

All of a sudden, your people surround you. You're rushed into a side room, where they have another gown for you to change into. It's a whole new look—a dress that your mom might pick out. It's not completely *you*, but these are your people. They know what looks best, and they want the best for you. So you decide to trust them and change into the new dress. You look in the mirror and don't feel as foxy as you did before, but that's okay. This has to be the right thing.

After one last look in the mirror, you turn as someone thrusts a new itinerary for the evening into your hands, telling you what to say, what not to say. What to do, what not to do. Where to go, where not to go.

It's all starting to feel like too much.

You step out of the room, this time flanked by your entourage. They're still yelling directions at you, but now they're all yelling different things.

"Lose the necklace!"

"No, keep it!"

"Let's get you over to the theater!"

"No, you're needed back in the studio!"

"C'mon, this way!"

If you were confused before, you're *seriously* paralyzed now.

Desperate, you look back toward the red carpet, and in the distance, you see Someone else who looks familiar—he's at the entrance where you were headed in the first place. He's calm and sure, standing and waiting. In the chaos, you're trying to make out what he's saying, and you *think* you hear his soft, warm tone: *Just follow my voice—and trust me.*

He's the calmest one around and also the most gentle. He's never steered you wrong before. As you hear his reassuring

words, you make a decision: You're going to go with him. And you'll do whatever it takes to make your way over to him.

And just like that, the fog begins to clear, the fluttering in your stomach vanishes, and you feel an overwhelming sense of empowerment. You realize that although you love the people who are trying to shepherd you, you aren't supposed to go with them. You *have* to get to that entrance, over to him, no matter what. It's not an easy path. All those people are still yelling: "No, not that way—this way! Right over here!"

Their hands begin to reach for you, but you push them away. Someone's fingers close over your gown, and your forward momentum tears it. But you keep your eyes on the entrance, knowing it's the only place for you to go. The only way out of this chaos.

As you get closer, the crowd of your people is still there, but their voices aren't loud anymore; they're fading into the background. Now the only thing you can see is him. Standing there. Waiting for you. Saying to you over and over, *My voice is the only one that matters. Come to me. Follow my voice.*

You feel at peace as you arrive at the entrance, even if you've looked . . . better. Your once-perfect hair resembles your regular tousled mop. Your dress is in tatters. You can feel the blisters forming at your heels after you pushed so hard in your pumps to make it here. But you don't care. He doesn't care either. And in spite of everything, in spite of your weary body, your spirit feels resilient, confident that, with him, you can make it through anything.

As you step onto the red carpet just as you are, tatters and all, suddenly you're transformed. Now you're even more stunning. You're beautifully confident as you walk right where you're supposed to be: arm in arm with Jesus.

. . .

FRIEND, THIS ISN'T A FAIRY TALE. THIS KIND OF CONFIDENCE IS REAL. I know, because this journey down the “red carpet” has been my own. And trust me when I say that confidence—this life-changing belief in yourself and what you're capable of, especially when you're walking beside a Savior who loves you—can be yours too.

Now, will you still want other people to like you? Will you still want to be in relationship with other people, listen to their counsel, and enjoy bringing happiness into their days? Absolutely—there's nothing wrong with that. But, sis, you can't base your worth on the expectations of others. You can't derive your confidence from what people around you think of you. That's a recipe for disaster, because you will never ever live up to their expectations.

You might be thinking, *Okay, Ashley, how am I supposed to be confident? Where does that come from?* Well, I'm going to show you.

First we're going to walk through what, exactly, confidence is. We'll reach into our backpacks (Did you know you're carrying a backpack right now? Yep, you are! We'll talk about that more in a bit), and one by one, we'll look at the tools packed in our bags, each given to us by God to help build our confidence from the inside. We're going to talk about some of the biggest confidence killers and how to overcome them. Then we'll end on how to put all the steps together so we can confidently walk our God-given path with our mission in mind.

At the end of each chapter, I've laid out three sections to guide you as you begin to work on your confidence: “The

Foundation,” “The Tools,” and “The Build.” “The Foundation” section is for those TL;DR moments, because—let’s be real—we all have those days when an entire chapter is too long to read. There I give you takeaways from each chapter (though I do recommend you read through the chapter when you have the time). “The Tools” has quick tips and practical pieces you can use in your life *today*. Finally, “The Build” has questions for you to do the internal work of building confidence. Sit with them; journal the answers in a notebook or in your Notes app; talk about these questions with a friend—however you choose to tackle them, don’t skip these questions. Wrestling with big questions isn’t easy, but it’s so important for you to sit with the hard stuff for a minute as you build your confidence from the inside.

Sis, your best self is inside you—right now, this very minute! And she doesn’t have to care what others think. Together we are going to find her, strengthen her spirit, and help her walk the path she was called to live.

Are you ready?

I can’t wait to take you by the hand and walk with you on one side, with Jesus on the other, as you realize something about yourself: that confidence is an inside job.

PART I

*Confidence*  
*101*

## Chapter 1

# Why Do We Care So Much?

This is what the LORD says:  
“Stand at the crossroads and look;  
ask for the ancient paths,  
*ask where the good way is, and walk in it,*  
*and you will find rest for your souls.”*

JEREMIAH 6:16 (NIV)

IT WAS THE FIRST DAY OF KINDERGARTEN. I WAS IN MY FAVORITE PINK dress and the cutest white high-top tennis shoes, which I had to beg my mom for because they were white, and she absolutely knew they wouldn't come home that way. (She was right.) My hair was pulled back into pigtails, my favorite style, because my grandma always told me how cute I looked when my hair was that way.

*Precocious* was the word most adults used to describe me, which just meant “loud and in charge.” I was a force to be reckoned with wherever I went. “Too much” is what my dad would say. “Ashley, remember when you get into class today, just don't be too much. Tone it down. Don't draw too much attention to yourself if you want the other kids to like you.” That was Dad, though, always telling me to take it down a notch. It's safe to say my big personality was *not* his favorite thing about me.

But the second I entered the classroom, Dad's advice went right out the window. I walked in on top of the world. Confi-



dence was never a problem for me back then, and on this particular day, I felt especially pretty. I quickly sized up the other kids, making eye contact right away with girls and boys who seemed like best-friend material.

“Hi! I’m Ashley,” I’d say, a little too loudly and a little too close to their faces.

Later that morning, my teacher announced we were going to make a fun project for our first day of school by drawing a life-size picture of ourselves. She gave each of us a large piece of white butcher paper, and then she paired us with a partner who would draw our outline while we were lying on the floor.

The girl I was paired with rolled her eyes and whispered to her friend next to her. They both looked in my direction and giggled. I wondered what was so funny and hoped she’d tell me while we were working together.

I traced her outline first, taking extra-special care to get it just right. Then it was her turn. She traced me, giggling again as she tried to outline around my pigtails and the flare of my dress. She didn’t talk much, but her silence didn’t bother me. I could easily carry any conversation by myself.

Once we were finished with the tracings and added details, everyone laughed as they looked at their classmates’ drawings. My boys have each made one of these outlines on their first day of kindergarten, and I imagine you or your kiddos might have done one as well, so you *know* what they look like. The phrase “Picasso goes to kindergarten” comes to mind.

I looked at my finished drawing and felt such pride in my work. Did I look silly? Absolutely. We all did. But my tracing partner and her friend seemed to be especially interested in pointing out everything wrong with *my* picture, which was obviously a stand-in for my actual appearance. My pigtails were

too babyish. My dress was too fancy. And who wears *tennis shoes* with a *dress*? (Can you tell this was the '90s and not the 2020s?)

It was the first time I really remember caring what someone else thought about me. And I remember how it made me feel: panicky.

Heat flooded my cheeks. My breath came in spurts; my heart was beating out of my chest. My thoughts started spinning a million miles an hour, jumbling together as I tried to figure out how in the world I was going to make friends with these girls—and what I might have to change about myself to do it.

This was in *kindergarten*, y'all. My heart breaks for little five-year-old me.

When I (thankfully) got off the bus that afternoon, I ran straight into my mom's arms and cried. "They don't like me, and I don't know why!" I moaned into her shoulder.

I don't remember what she said to comfort me. I'm sure it was something moms say to comfort little hearts, but I've never forgotten that day—or the pain of those girls' words.

So I vowed that from that day forward I would do whatever it took for those girls not to just like me but to *love* me.

## PEOPLE-PLEASING 101

The need to feel liked, accepted, included, starts when we're young, doesn't it?

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*The need to feel liked, accepted, included,  
starts when we're young.*

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In reality, searching for acceptance starts way before we head off to kindergarten, long before the influence of friends or social media. From our earliest ages, we begin to adjust our behaviors based on what we sense as pleasure and displeasure from others.

How do I know? I've seen it in my children from the time they were little.

Ever played the “throw it on the floor” game with a baby in a high chair? They throw something on the floor. You laugh, pick up what they tossed, set it back on the high chair, and what do they do? They throw it on the floor again, right? The more you laugh, the more they sense your approval, and they keep throwing the object on the floor. Of course, it's not so funny when things escalate and they throw their bowl of oatmeal on the floor, but the whole interaction is based on the good feelings they get from pleasing you.

We are encouraged by the praise of others. That encouragement feeds us in a way that triggers all kinds of happy brain chemicals, and we start to chase praise when we're very, very young. It's not something we ever really outgrow. And there's a reason for that. We were never intended to outgrow our desire to be accepted.

Because God made us that way.

From the moment God created Adam, he was pleased. Then when God saw that Adam needed companionship, he created Eve. And he was pleased with her too. In fact, the Bible tells us that “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good” (Genesis 1:31, NIV).

The Bible doesn't talk a lot about what Adam and Eve were thinking in those early days in the garden. But since we still talk about the Garden of Eden today as a place of paradise, I'd like to think that, in this perfect place, Adam and Eve were happy and

content. They were in relationship with God and with each other, and there were no outside forces compelling them to pull away from one another.

But that didn't last forever, did it?

You know the story. The serpent convinced Eve to eat fruit from *the one tree* in the garden God told her not to eat from. Satan convinced her to eat that fruit by making her feel like something was missing in her life, something God didn't want her to have. Once she'd eaten the fruit, she convinced Adam to eat it too. Perhaps without thinking of the consequences, Adam and Eve decided to separate themselves from God. And God decided to show this separation physically by banishing Adam and Eve from the perfect paradise he'd made.

Oh man, the lessons we can take away from one little (but oh-so-huge) story.

First, when I said that people-pleasing has been around for a while, *I wasn't kidding*. This is the story of the very beginning of human history, and it's about people-pleasing. So don't feel bad if you struggle with trying to make everyone around you feel happy—because humans have been struggling with it literally since the dawn of time.

Adam cared a lot about pleasing Eve. And why wouldn't he! She was his wife, his BFF. They were thick as thieves in the garden. But here's the problem: When he decided to take that fruit from Eve, he cared more about pleasing his wife than he cared about pleasing God. And God doesn't make his rules in a "because I said so" sort of way. He doesn't need us to obey him for an ego boost. I mean, he's *God*—he can do what he wants. He makes these rules because he knows what's best for us. He created guidelines because he knew we'd need them, like instructions in a recipe.

Adam and Eve decided they didn't really *need* the instructions and were going to start making decisions without God. And you know what? It isn't hard to see that acting against our own best interests (like, you know, listening to what God has for us) to please someone else can quickly backfire. And backfire it did.

And that's really the problem with people-pleasing. Making others happy feels good. Meeting the needs of others feels good. When others approve of us, we feel good. But honestly, working so hard to please other people is a bit shortsighted, because what feels good in the moment isn't always good for us in the long run. When we believe that pleasing other people is the only way to contentment and the only way we're worthy of love and belonging, that's a big fat lie from Satan—a lie that's easy to believe. Clearly.

*But hold on, Ashley, you may be thinking. Am I just supposed to make people mad all the time? How am I going to have any friends if I'm just ticking people off? How are my loved ones going to continue talking to me if I don't do anything that makes them happy?*

Okay, valid question. I get why you're asking it: Who wants to be Debbie Downer, who keeps to herself and doesn't laugh or do anything fun with anybody? No one—that's who. And that's not what I'm telling you to do here. Sharing joy with other people is one of the best parts of connection; there's a reason Proverbs says, "A joyful heart is good medicine" (17:22, ESV). So rest assured, I'm not telling you that doing something kind for someone else, whether it's baking spider cookies for the neighborhood Halloween party or watching your friend's kids one night when she asks, is bad and you're doing something wrong. Absolutely not. But what I *am* saying is that there's a difference between giving of yourself in a healthy way that brings joy, connection, and flourishing to a relationship and the not-

so-healthy giving of yourself that has you believing that your contribution to someone else is the *only* thing that brings you worthiness as a human being. And when you believe that your worth comes from your actions? Well, that's a recipe for resentment, anxiety, and burnout at best. At worst, it puts you on a path that leads away from God's mercy and love, which contribute so much to the person he wants you to be.

So how do you know if you're making a decision to be kind to someone else and contribute to a group or if you're spiraling into some self-destructive people-pleasing? Here are a few red flags to look for:

- Have you ever made a decision you *knew* was the wrong one, but you didn't want to hurt someone else's feelings by going in another direction?
- Have you ever stopped yourself from communicating any hurt or anger you feel, because you just wanted to keep the peace?
- Do you feel like you *need* the praise of your friends to feel good about yourself?
- Have you ever apologized for something you didn't do, because it was easier than continuing the argument?
- Have you ever felt loved or unloved based on the number of likes or comments you received on a social media post? (*Ouch*. That one hurt a little.)

These are all signs that you might be making decisions from a people-pleasing place.

And you know something? Even when we're aware that making choices to please others instead of God isn't great for us, because it takes away our flourishing, we still wonder time and

again, *What will other people think of me if I do (or don't do) this?*

Did you just feel a shot of adrenaline in your veins? I did too. Because even though I know—I *know*—I'm not supposed to care what other people think about me . . . I do. I very much do. It's something I struggle with a lot, and I bet you might too.

It's okay, sis. You're not alone here. But you may be wondering why we struggle so much with that.

Well, it's because we all have a very deep need to be needed and known.

## **NEEDED AND KNOWN**

Abraham Maslow, renowned psychologist, developed what has come to be known as Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This hierarchy tries to explain how our needs drive our choices and behavior.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is often shown as a pyramid graphic with the most basic needs (like food, safety, and love) toward the bottom of the pyramid and the highest need, which he called "self-actualization," at the top.<sup>1</sup>

I don't think Maslow gets nearly enough credit for his theory. I mean, I *know* people are aware of the hierarchy of needs, but we should've given this man all the prizes. Because so many of our choices can be explained by this one simple pyramid. And lucky for you, we're going to nerd out and break it down because this is some fascinating stuff.

At the bottom of the pyramid are the basics of what we humans need: food, water, shelter, sleep—things like that. At the very least, we need these things to function. If we don't have these things, we die. So first and foremost, we base our decisions on whether we have the necessities of life.

## MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS



Once we have our basic needs met, we turn to safety. And in this stage, we find stability, which brings an order and calm to our days. We have a job that helps us pay our bills, and we focus on personal care, like going to the doctor, moving our bodies, getting haircuts, and buying clothes. These things are also important.

Then when our lives feel safe and stable, we can start making our decisions based on the next tier: emotional needs. In this tier, we have love and belonging. We thrive on connection, so we need strong relationships with other people. Humans figured out pretty early on that we survive a bit better out in the wild when we work together, because someone else has skills that you don't, and vice versa. But we're also just *happier* when we have strong relationships. And we all know that happiness has a strong correlation to resilience and our ability to survive harsh circumstances a bit longer.

After relationships with others, we move to the esteem tier. How much do you respect yourself? How much do you trust



yourself? Maslow's explanation of this tier also includes the esteem we receive from others, or rather, how other people regard us based on what we've done. Do other people respect us? Do they acknowledge our efforts? (Spoiler alert: This is the tier where *confidence* comes into play, but we'll get to that later.)

Finally, if we have all our physical needs and emotional needs met, then we ascend to what Maslow called "self-actualization." That's where we put all the puzzle pieces together and start to reach our potential. I like to think of it as being my best self, filled with purpose as I walk toward fulfilling my mission on this earth.

So what does this have to do with a chapter called "Why Do We Care So Much?"

Look with me for a sec: Maslow put the esteem tier above the love and belonging tier. Both are important—that's why they're there. But to get to a place of self-actualization, when we're walking in purpose and on mission, we've got to master the esteem tier. And that means we need to like who we are and trust ourselves to act in ways that align with our faith, our values, and our flourishing. That's when we're confident in ourselves.

But to get to the confidence tier (aka the esteem tier), we must first master our relationships with other people. And here's the thing you need to know about relationships: God created us to be connected to other people. Remember in the garden when God said that it wasn't good for Adam to be alone? I wonder if God knew that Adam had a desire to be needed by someone else. Not just wanted, but needed. But God doesn't need anyone. So, he filled Adam's desire by creating Eve (#woman-power). It's the same for us. God created us to be needed and known.

I remember the first time I heard someone say those words. I

was watching a church service, and the pastor said that, beyond food, water, and shelter, the two things humans need most are to be needed and known (he's kind of right—just glance over at the hierarchy of needs). His words immediately resonated with me, awakening something deep inside me that felt so true.

*I do need to be needed and known, by someone and for something. I need to matter to someone.*

In his message, the pastor related our desire to be needed and known to our God-given desire to have a purpose, to feel like we were created for something and for someone. But we *have* to examine our motivations behind this desire.

When the Holy Spirit stirs our souls and says, “I gave you strengths and gifts for a reason, for my kingdom. Now get out there and use them,” that's a healthy kind of motivation.

But just like with anything else, the Enemy can also use that stirring to make us want to be needed and known in an unhealthy way. Thinking back to earlier in the chapter (because I love a good callback), I believe Satan used Eve's desire for more in the garden. Because the serpent said to her, “God knows that when you eat [the forbidden fruit] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5, NIV).

When the serpent said this, perhaps Eve heard, “You were created for more than this garden. Think about it. If you have knowledge of good and evil, you'll be like God, and doesn't God want that for you? Isn't that the goal, to be more like him? I bet he wants that for Adam too. You'd be helping him. Go on. Take it. Eat it.”

That's the lie: that God needed Eve to help him.

So she did. She ate it.

And from that day forward, humans have s-t-r-u-g-g-l-e-d to

remember that the only way to feel fulfilled is to believe we are wanted and known by our God rather than working to be needed by God or our people.

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*To feel fulfilled is to believe we are wanted and known by our God rather than working to be needed by God or our people.*

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We want to be needed and known by someone. It's just human nature.

In kindergarten, I wanted to be needed and known by the mean girls who made fun of my drawing.

In middle school, I wanted to be needed and known by a group—any group. I wanted to feel good about myself, and the way to do that was by their approval. And to gain their approval, I transformed myself into whoever I needed to be so I could be accepted. It didn't matter if they were doing things I knew were wrong. If I was going to be approved by them, I had to do those things too.

By high school, my homelife had exploded and my only need was to feel loved. I gave my heart and my body to anyone who would help me feel that way.

By the time I was a wife and mom with three kids and another one on the way, I had no idea who I was. Was I the unloved girl, the popular girl, the girl who needed attention? I had no identity of my own, and I constantly looked to others to tell me who Ashley really was.

Perhaps you've been there, too: lost, lonely, caring way too

much what others think of you, and exhausted from trying to please everyone.

Sis, I can promise you this: You don't have to stay there.

Breathe, cry, feel seen, and know it's okay to want to be loved. It's okay to admit that you want to be liked by others, that you want to find belonging with other people.

So how do we have healthy relationships with others, where we're needed and known by them, while also making decisions that honor our values, our faith, and our flourishing? How do we have strong connections with others without people-pleasing and, instead, trust ourselves enough to walk with purpose on the path God has for us?

I've found the answer to those questions is *confidence*.

## *Building Your Confidence*

DID YOU KNOW THAT WHEN YOU WRITE SOMETHING DOWN, YOU'RE using part of your brain that's linked to memory? That means when you write your thoughts or things you're learning, you're more likely to remember them. It's like puzzle pieces start to click in your brain. Pretty cool, right?<sup>2</sup>

So here's what we're going to do: At the end of each chapter, I'm going to invite you to think about what we talked about and give you a sec to practice some of the ideas. You don't have to show this to anybody or even tell them you're doing it. This is a zero-pressure way to get some of your observations down on paper and think about how you want to show up in the world. It's almost like you're visualizing who you want to be. And before you know it, what you practice on these pages will make its way into your everyday actions. Think of these as some baby steps toward building your confidence.

### *The Foundation*

- Confidence comes when we like who we are and trust ourselves to act in ways that align with our faith, our values, and our flourishing.
- We're wired to please from our earliest ages. But we often misdirect this desire to please away from God (who has our best interests at heart) to other people (who maybe have motives that are a little less altruistic).
- Why does pleasing God matter? Because he wants us to flourish. And he's set out principles for us to follow so that we can

reach that place of flourishing.

- Having healthy relationships with others while staying true to our values is possible through real confidence.

## *The Tools*

**Spotting the red flags of people-pleasing.** Wanting to be needed and known by others is okay! But when you're in a relationship with someone and wondering if you're acting out of a place of health or people-pleasing, look for red flags that show your focus is on the outside instead of the inside:

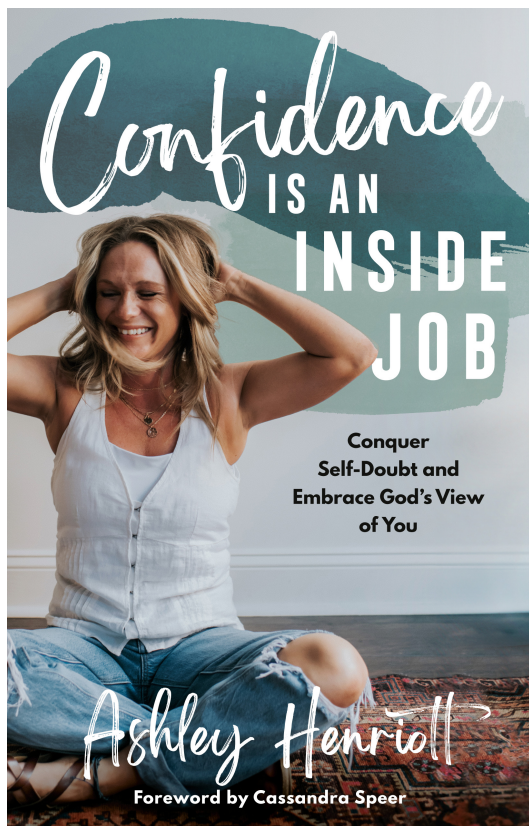
- Are you going along with someone else just to get along?
- Are you squashing the hurt you feel because you want to keep the peace?
- Are you apologizing for things that aren't your fault?
- Do you feel like you need someone else's praise to feel good about yourself or what you've done?

## *The Build*

- Do you think the person you are on the inside matches the person you are on the outside? Why or why not?
- Think back to a time when you molded yourself to fit someone else's expectations. How did you feel in that scenario? Think about how your body reacted to that moment: shortness of breath, sweaty palms, racing heart. Now think about releasing that need to change yourself. How does your body feel?
- Take a look at the hierarchy of needs. Which tiers do you feel

like you've mastered? Which tiers do you struggle with most?  
What might be the obstacle(s) keeping you there?

- Is there someone who helps you feel like the real you? Why and how do you think they're able to do that?



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