

# GROUNDED IN CHRIST: A 40 END GOALS STUDY ABOUT HUMBLE CONFIDENCE

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## SESSION #1: WHAT IS HUMBLE CONFIDENCE

### Opening Prayer

Lord God, daily life shakes our confidence. Challenges, fear, and pain shake us to the core and humble us. Your law reveals our sin and cuts our pride to nothing. Teach us, O Lord, to trust in you as our solid foundation. Apart from you, there is no humility within us; but in you, we find a humility that comes from outside of us. You are our helper so we will not fear. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### Introduction

Adjectives modify nouns. Adjectives describe a thing. What are some other adjectives (besides humble) that could describe confidence?

- Fake confidence?
- Arrogant confidence?
- Self-confidence?
- Fragile confidence?

How does humble confidence differ from these other kinds of confidence?

Fake confidence is a mere façade; someone may appear to be confident, but it's only an act. Arrogant confidence puffs itself up and pulls others down. Self-confidence looks within to find the foundation for confidence. Self-confidence can often give way to fragile confidence; when looking within ourselves for the foundation of our confidence fails us, then our confidence can quickly crumble. Humble confidence, on the other hand, almost sounds illogical. (This is because we often associate confidence with arrogance and pride). Humble confidence, as we will see, is not fake, arrogant, centered on the self, nor is it fragile. Humble confidence in Christ is the only way to have true and enduring confidence amid the challenges of this life. This is a confidence that comes from outside of us and is founded on the humble, salvific work of Christ Jesus for us through the cross and the empty tomb.

### Study

Genesis 2:4-9

- How did God form Adam?  
As we hear in Genesis, God formed his first human creature in a very peculiar way – by the dust of the earth. Being a human creature means being formed of the stuff of creation.
- The word human comes from the Latin 'humus' (meaning ground or earth)  
We frequently use the word 'human.' However, we rarely consider that we are invoking Genesis with this word since human and humus have a common etymology.

Proverbs 11:2-3

- Humility and wisdom are linked together here. In other words, it is wise to be humble. How have you experienced the wisdom of humility? Conversely, how have you seen pride lead to ruin?  
Humility tends to 'under promise and over deliver.' Talking a big game or running your mouth and then failing to back it up with actions is a recipe for ruin.
- The word humble comes from the Latin 'humus' (again, meaning ground of earth). Therefore, to be humble is to be down to earth or grounded. Why might it be wise to be down to earth and grounded?  
Elevating yourself above others is alienating and off-putting. Rather than encouraging others and building them up, arrogance pushes others down. Times of persecution can ground us in the promises of Jesus. For example, in 1 Thessalonians (especially 5:1-11), we hear about how Christians in Thessalonica are suffering under persecution. This persecution humbled them – but it also grounded them in the external Word and promises of God. Paul pointed these people to God's coming wrath against those who fail to believe, and he reminded these believers that, in Christ Jesus, they have hope over their struggle with sin.

When we live as one who is down to earth and grounded, we live a Christ-like life that is full of love for our neighbors. We bear each other's burdens because Jesus has first borne our burdens. Jesus is the one who carried our sin to the cross and turned bad trees into good trees. For example, Luke 6 proclaims how our inability to follow the Law on our own reveals our need for the healer and savior Jesus who has kept the Law perfectly for us. Humbled by the law and rooted in the fullness of the Gospel, we live lives that are down to earth and grounded in the Word of God.

- How does knowing who you are – creature of God created from the dust of the earth – keep you from becoming overly arrogant or self-focused?  
Martin Luther, in the Small Catechism's explanation to the first article offers a very helpful response to this question: "I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them. He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him."

#### Psalm 49:1-15

- Confidence is trusting in something. According to this Psalm, it is foolish confidence to trust in what? (vs. 6)  
It is foolishness confidence to trust in wealth. God will humble those who would seek after worldly wealth – this is an example of the Law accusing and humbling us. In contrast to trusting in wealth, the Psalmist's confidence lies with the Lord and His provision. While this Psalm talks about wealth, we can include accomplishments, accolades, and abilities as additional examples of that which is unworthy of our ultimate trust.

#### Hebrews 13:1-6

- The word confidence literally means 'to have trust' or 'with trust.' This means that to have confidence, you must have trust in something.
- What are some things that you can trust in?

The Book of Hebrews is a letter which aimed to help Jewish believers to see Christ as their great high priest and the sacrifice which accomplishes salvation and fulfills the work of the Levitical Law, once and for all. Hebrews 13 recognizes that people – then and now – wrestle with a number of temptations in this world and might even be broken because of it. Some of these temptations can take the shape of trusting in the wrong things or giving ultimate trust to penultimate things.

For example, we can trust in all kinds of things – we can trust family and friends, medical research and scientific studies, or seatbelts and bridges. Yet, we should not give our ultimate trust to these things. Instead, the Triune God is alone worthy of our ultimate trust. It may be helpful to draw a distinction between trust and ultimate trust (or, as the Small Catechism puts it in the 10 Commandments, ultimate trust is that which we, "fear, love, and trust in...above all things.") There is nothing wrong with putting degrees of trust in seatbelts and scientific studies; however, these become idols when our ultimate trust is given over to these things rather than to God.

- This quotation from Hebrews 13:6 comes from Psalm 118:6. Both of these are suggesting that God should be our confidence and one in whom we trust. Why should our confidence be in God?  
As our creator, redeemer, and sanctifier, the Triune God is alone worth of our ultimate trust. God establishes all things, sustains all things, and in Christ Jesus all things hold together. As such, God alone is worthy of our ultimate trust and confidence.

## Wrapping Up

Think of some scenarios that your teens might come up against where they would need humble confidence. It might be a situation where a friend asks a difficult question of faith. Another might be that they find great success in sports and extra curriculars or if they didn't make the team or the show. Have them in groups of two or three to think through how different responses might be arrogant confidence, fragile or self-confidence and humble confidence. How does Christ Jesus and his humble, salvific work for us create the basis for our humble confidence? Discuss in a large group how their responses might reflect the light of God and point to Jesus, and how others might not do that.

## Closing Prayer

Triune God, You alone are worthy of our ultimate trust. Teach us humility by humbling us through the law and working the trials in our lives according to your will so that we can acknowledge our dependence upon you. Lead us toward humble confidence in you, believing and living in a way that reveals you to be our ultimate trust. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## SESSION #2: THE HUMBLE CONFIDENCE OF JESUS

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, you willingly emptied yourself and became a humble servant in human flesh. For this we thank you and praise you. Enable us through faith to wholly trust in you and follow in your footsteps as we live lives of humble confidence found on your cross and empty tomb. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### Introduction

Are popular people or celebrities often known for their humility? Why or why not?

Some popular figures and celebrities are known for their humility. However, many others are not. For example, social media can easily become a platform for people to puff themselves up and pridefully boast about their awesomeness. As more and more people laud these individuals, it becomes easier and easier for them to believe it and arrogantly boast in their own greatness.

If you want an example, you can look at a video on YouTube where you could see a coach and fellow player of the University of Houston kick a chair and drop a trash can after a difficult game. Then you can see a player who chooses to pick up the trash rather than make the mess worse. It is short and does repeat on a loop. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEIsroVv6AA>

### Study

Read + Discuss – 4 Bible verses

Luke 2:1-7

- How does the birth of Jesus show his willing humility?  
Humility abounds in the birth narrative of Jesus. The Son of God – true God incarnate – was willingly born in a lowly place and placed in a manger for animals. The first dignitaries to hold court with this newborn king were shepherds. Though he did not have to, Jesus humbled himself to come to us as a human being born in backwater Bethlehem.

Philippians 2:1-11

- If Jesus had the humility to 'empty himself,' what does that tell us about God? What does that tell us about humility?  
Theologians talk about the 'humiliation' of Jesus. By humiliation they do not mean embarrassment, but rather humbling. The birth, suffering, death, and burial are all parts of the humiliation of Christ. Since Jesus is truly God, this means that God is not above humility. If God is willing to enter into states of humility, then we should see humility as a good and godly trait and not something to be avoided. If it's good enough for God, then it must be good for us.

John 15:8-11

- How do these words demonstrate the confidence of Jesus? In what or whom did Jesus trust in?

With these words, Jesus makes it clear that he trusts in the Father's love and commandments. Jesus had full and total confidence in God the Father and the Word of God. In Jesus, we get a glimpse of proper confidence and trust. Rather than trusting in false gods and idols, Jesus rightly kept the first commandment as he feared, loved, and trusted in God above all else.

Luke 22:39-46

- Yielding to the will of the Father shows that Jesus placed his confidence in the Father. How is confidence in God different from self-confidence? Self-confidence, as the name suggests, locates its trust in the self. Self-confidence says, "my will be done!" Yet, in Jesus, we do not see self-confidence but rather a God-confidence. Though Jesus is fully God, we see him submit to the first person of the Trinity in complete and total loving-confidence. Instead of looking within to find the source of his confidence, Jesus looked outside of himself to the Father in order to find the source and foundation of his confidence.

### Wrapping Up

The Word and work of Christ Jesus is the foundation for our humility and confident trust in Jesus. How does this external source of humble confidence change what choices we make for our future? Our teens today are often focused on achievement and getting ahead. Being admonished by the Law is a humbling experience that God uses to drive us to greater trust in him alone. Putting our confidence in Jesus, rather than ourselves, might change what we pursue for our futures and how. This is a great opportunity to discuss how this confidence in Jesus might change how God might give us humility that helps us to point back to Jesus.

### Closing Prayer:

Lord Jesus, we marvel at your complete and total confidence in the Father. Send your Holy Spirit to form us around this confidence in the Father. Forgive us when we trust in the wrong things and lead us toward humble confidence in you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



## SESSION #3: JESUS IS OUR HUMBLE CONFIDENCE

### Opening Prayer

Holy Lord, you are the giver of all good gifts. You even give us the gift of humility through trials and our total helplessness to get ourselves out of these trials. By your Holy Spirit, work repentance and contrite hearts within us. Set our feet upon the rock of your promises so that we can live in the humble confidence of Jesus Christ our savior. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### Introduction

What's the difference between earning something and receiving something as a gift? Which is better? Why?

Earning something requires a calculated interchange; someone earns a paycheck by working a specific amount of time for a specific amount of money. Gifts, on the other hand, are neither calculated nor is there expectation for anything in return. While some may argue that earning something instills greater appreciation for something, this is not always true. Receiving a precious family heirloom or receiving an organ transplant – though this may be unearned and purely a gift – causes great appreciation. Therefore, it is obvious that gifts are uniquely wonderful.

### Study

Read + Discuss

Hebrews 4:8-16

- How does being in Christ and receiving his mercy and grace give us confidence?
- The people being written to in these verses were mired in conflict, persecution, and trials. They were confronted with the law in many ways and it revealed their helplessness in the face of sin. Christ's work alone is presented here as the source of their confidence.

These verses from Hebrews describe Jesus as our 'sabbath rest' and 'great high priest.' A priest serves as an intermediary or a go-between. Jesus stands between us and God and offers Himself as a sacrifice for us. Because of this, we find 'sabbath rest' and have confidence knowing that through faith in Jesus we are right with God. Receiving the mercy and grace of Jesus means that our sins are forgiven, our shame is removed, and we are cleansed by His blood. This, in turn, gives us great confidence to face the challenges in life: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

Romans 6:3-11

- How does knowing that you've been baptized into Christ provide you with a humble confidence? How does baptism give you the confidence to lean into the uncertainties of life?

Baptism is being assigned to Christ and his accomplishments. This means that the work of Jesus – His life, death, and resurrection – is yours through baptism. These gifts are not of your own doing, thus the baptized children of God live with a humble appreciation for their status in Christ Jesus. Since you are assigned to Jesus and his 'team,' you can have confidence that you are on the side of victory.

Baptism is God making us His own. As such, this baptismal identity can help a young person feel more able to approach their parents, their pastor, their youth

leader, or other trusted Christian adult when they are struggling with guilt over sin, rather than seeking to cover it up in fear of judgment.

#### 1 Corinthians 6:17-20

- How does knowing that we've been bought with a price give us the confidence to lead lives that are free from sexual immorality?
- In other words, how does it bolster our confidence to hear that we are so loved that we've been bought back (redeemed) by Jesus?

Jesus loved you so much that He willingly gave His very life for you. This means that Jesus sees you as being priceless. This gives us the confidence to treat ourselves and our bodies as though they are precious to both God and us. Since Jesus gave his body and life for us, this means that our bodies and lives are deemed to be of value by God. This gives us confidence to live lives of sexual restraint, to flee from sexual immorality, and to use our bodies and lives in God-honoring ways.

#### Philippians 3:12-21

- Since Christ Jesus has made us his own, we can embrace the adventure of life – the future – with humble confidence. Why is the future often scary or intimidating?
- How does the humble confidence that we have in Jesus keep the fear of the future in its proper place?

The future can be scary or intimidating simply because of the uncertainty that comes with tomorrow. While it's possible that tomorrow may be better than today, it's also possible that it will be worse. Nevertheless, if we are in Christ Jesus, we have a rock-solid promise from God that we are eternally safe and secure in Him. This lets us lean into the future and live life with a sense of intrepid adventure. Since we know our lives are secure in God's promises, then we can lean into today and tomorrow knowing that God's got us!

### Wrapping Up

Open up the conversation to the youth about what kinds of situations might challenge their humble confidence in Jesus, especially when it comes to their body and sexuality as addressed when looking at 1 Corinthians 6:17-20. Discuss what the culture would like them to believe about their body and what the Bible says about who they are in Christ. As you compare those things, help them to consider how they might approach those issues with humble confidence.

### Closing Prayer

King Jesus, rule over our lives with your grace and mercy. Secure us in your steadfast love so that we can lean into the adventure of life with the humble confidence that can only come from being a baptized child of God. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## SESSION #4: HUMBLE CONFIDENCE FOR THE WORLD

### Opening Prayer

Lord God, we know you have given us your Holy Spirit so that we may proclaim the excellences of you. But it is far from easy being a follower of Jesus in this world. Teach us, O Lord, to trust in you as our solid foundation as we share the Gospel of Jesus out in the world. Even when it is difficult, You are our helper so we will not fear. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### Introduction

If Christians had to be likened to a household tool, what would it be and why? This question will likely generate a wide range of response. Be sure to guide the conversation in such a way so that participants see how tools are used in service to others. For example, Christians could be like a sprinkler or water hose that nourishes the world with the lifegiving water of Jesus.

### Study

Read + Discuss

1 Peter 2:1-10

- According to these verses, for what purpose has God made us a people of his own possession? In other words, what are we to do with the humble confidence that comes from being God's people?

Notice how these verses make it clear that Christians are rooted in Christ's humiliation and salvific work. Christ is with you and for you – even when the weight of this world is bearing down on you. As we hear in verse 4, in Christ Jesus you are 'chosen' and 'precious.' Confidently established in the Gospel of Christ Jesus, verse 9 tells us, "that you may proclaim the excellences of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." God has called us out of darkness in Christ Jesus so that with humble confidence in Him we can share the good news of the Gospel.

Deuteronomy 31:30-32:1-4

- Moses had accomplished many amazing things in his life. Yet, he demonstrated a humble confidence by giving all glory to God. What can we learn from Moses' words here? How can our humble confidence glorify God and serve others?

Rather than rhapsodizing on all that he had accomplished, Moses rhapsodized on God's glory and goodness. The humble confidence that we have in Jesus leads us to speak less of ourselves, speak more of God and others. In the words of John the Baptist, "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30)

Micah 6:8

- It is 'good' to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. What are some small ways that you can bring justice, kindness, and humility into your school, teams, or home?



We often focus on the grand gestures of justice, kindness, and humility. However, we shouldn't overlook the small – and far more numerous – opportunities for living out the words of Micah 6:8. This can be as simple as speaking an encouraging word to someone, speaking up when someone is being harassed, or going out of your way to help another.

#### John 17:14-19

- Jesus makes it clear that we been sent into the world. How is it hard to have humble confidence in a world that rejects or dismisses the followers of Jesus?
- In what ways does humble confidence make it hard for the world to reject or dismiss the followers of Jesus?

Make no mistake, it is far from easy being a follower of Jesus in this world. God's Word warns us that this world will not always accept the people of Jesus (for example, the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:16-25). In this sense, the world will work to undermine our humble confidence in Jesus.

Nevertheless, it is hard for the world to outright reject the humble confidence of Christ-followers for several reasons. First, this is a Christ-centered confidence that is not based on our own self-confidence. Therefore, people can chide, ridicule, and mock us all that we want but our confidence is found in Christ alone. Secondly, since this is a *humble* confidence, it is unlike the prideful and arrogant confidence this world is so used to seeing. In this sense, people may find it hard to mock the humble-yet-strong confidence of the followers of Jesus.

#### Wrapping Up

As you are able, pick a few small acts of kindness you can do as a group to help shine the light of the Gospel. This might mean helping with a project on the church campus, making care packages for shut ins, or writing thank you notes for pastors or other church leaders. Talk about how these acts can be not only just a nice thing to do but help you to share the Good News of Jesus to others.

Alternatively, have students create something that could be attached to their backpacks for school and that can serve as a reminder of how they can show humble confidence when living out their vocations.

#### Closing Prayer

Christ Jesus, our confidence is found you. Teach us to use the gift of humble confidence in ways that bring glory to you and serve our neighbors. Grant us your Holy Spirit so that we can decrease and, through our words and actions, Christ may increase. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.