

## THINK CONFIDENT

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With Rev. Richard Maraj

Good morning again, everybody! So today we're talking about confidence. So my question is: What does confidence mean to you? And what difference does confidence make in your life?

Now, I have to admit, I'm not feeling very confident today, because I've got a joke I want to tell you [Congregation laughs] ... on confidence that doesn't give me a lot of confidence. But you know me; that doesn't stop me! Here we go!

One day, brave Captain Smith and his sailors were on the sea sailing, and then suddenly on the horizon there loomed a ship with skull and crossbones raised on the mast. The crew was frantic and seeking refuge, and asking the captain what to do. And Captain Smith looked at the oncoming ship, thought for a second, and he said, "*Bring me my red shirt.*"

And at once the cabin boy brought it, and he put on the shirt. And then he instructed the person at the wheel to go straight after that pirate ship. They crashed; there was a fight. The ship was almost destroyed, but they were victorious. They won!

And then all the sailors were recounting all the individual triumphs and their collective triumphs, and one of them said, "*Hey, Captain Smith; why is it that you said, 'Bring me my red shirt'?*"

And he said, "*Well, in case I got wounded and I was bleeding, I didn't want any of you to know, because I didn't want you to lose your confidence. I wanted you to keep fighting. I wanted you to keep on to the victory.*"

And then everybody was so impressed; they even loved him as a leader more. They thought he was even braver and even better than they thought he was before.

So then a week goes by, and then they see 10 pirate ships coming after them. And then the crew is again panicking; they're fearful. They look to Captain Smith for some leadership.

And then he looks at the situation, sees the 10 ships coming at them, and he says, "*Boys, bring me my brown pants.*" [Congregation laughs]

Alright! [Laughs] Can you see why I wasn't that confident telling that joke? [Congregation and Rev. Maraj laugh]

So where in your life are you feeling a lot of confidence? And where in your life are you not feeling much confidence right now? Where in your life do you have more confidence now than you used to have before? And where in your life are you lower on the level of confidence than you have been before?

You know, the fact is: Confidence absolutely makes a difference on the quality of our lives. Our confidence affects our level of happiness and fulfillment. Because our confidence affects our attitude and our mindset and our perspective. Our confidence is a thing that makes a difference of how much stress and anxiety we feel as compared to how positive we feel. Feeling confident, we tend to make better decisions. Feeling confident, we tend to be less reckless and impulsive. When we are confident, it tends to impact the quality of our relationships; we tend to be more honest and more vulnerable, and we are more open-hearted. We communicate better. When we're confident, we tend to be more motivated. We tend to be more proactive. It helps us in so many ways!

Confidence absolutely affects the quality of our lives.

So how many people have ever doubted or second-guessed yourself? Anybody ever want to do something, but you didn't have the confidence that you'd succeed, so you just didn't even try? And one last thing: Think of a time when your confidence was really high, and a time when your confidence was

really low ... and did it really make a difference in how you felt; how you performed; and what outcomes happened?

When I was in high school, I was a pretty good basketball player. Not a great basketball player, but one thing I could do is: I could shoot free throws well. I shot 92 out of 100 free throws in a shoot-a-thon. And you know that game "21"? Shooting free throws? I used to do pretty good in that.

And I'll tell you, I was so confident sometimes that ball was in before it left my fingers. You ever had those kind? That you felt so much confidence? And then there were times my confidence wasn't great and, no matter how good my mechanics were or how much I concentrated, I couldn't get a basket. You know the saying, "*You couldn't hit the side of a barn door?*" That kind of thing. It was really, really bad. It is amazing the impact that confidence has in not only how we feel, but how we perform, and the results and the quality of our experiences.

So what is this thing we call confidence? I would say that it is a belief in ourselves. It is a belief in how capable and resourceful we are. It is a belief in our value and our self-worth. It is an acceptance of ourselves and feeling comfortable in our own skin.

I'll tell you what confidence is not: It is not bragging. It is not arrogance or being cocky. It is not being hyper positive. It is not trying to control everything and everyone. It's not being reckless. It's not about how much money we have, how many accomplishments we have.

It is really a mindset and a feeling that we have about ourselves and how we relate to the world. It is a feeling of groundedness and being centered in the truth of who we really are, and being true and authentic in how we live our lives. And when we are confident at that level, we tend to be more engaged and more present in our lives to ourselves, our feelings, our desires, our relationship, and our sense of purpose.

And so even at the highest level of confidence that we could feel in our lives, the fact is: we all have self-doubts. We all have feelings of uncertainty. We all have certain fears and insecurities and anxieties and sometimes even feelings of unworthiness. Even feeling powerless at times.

So the thing about confidence is: It is not static; it's dynamic. It changes. And so it behooves us to make sure that we cultivate confidence on a regular basis. That we nurture it. That we maintain it; renew it; and develop it.

Let me give you a couple of examples about how confidence makes a huge difference. And I apologize I'm using combat sports examples, but how many of you have heard of the UFC or MMA fighting? There was this lady, and her name was Ronda Rousey. If you've heard of her, she was the most dominant female fighter. She won 12 fights; she won them by armbars. Everyone knew she was going to do the armbar; they couldn't stop it. Her confidence was so high, people were afraid they'd lost even before the fight started.

And then on her 13th fight, she got knocked out. She was so shocked -- accustomed to winning, winning, winning and being so dominant -- that she lost, and it rocked her confidence. And then her next fight, she lost even worse! She lost even faster. Her confidence was so shattered, she didn't fight again. It absolutely changed. Her skill was the same; the other opponents didn't suddenly all get better. What the difference was: She lost her confidence, and it affected her performance. It affected her well-being and mindset.

Another example: Mike Tyson. He went 19-0. He won his first 19 fights, 12 of them by knock-out. He became the youngest heavyweight champion at the age of 20 years old. And I think it was the Holyfield fight that changed him. I mean, he was so dominant, and he lost and really never got back the kind of success that he had. And really, what changed? Nothing but his confidence. He lost his confidence.

Confidence absolutely makes a difference!

And so how do we increase our confidence? How do we gain confidence? How do we live more confidently? Because the fact is: If you want to be confident, you've got to think more confident. And so we're going to look at three things today that are going to help us increase and raise and live more confidently.

And the first one is to remember who we are. To **REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE!**

You know, most of us don't realize how great and incredible we are. We are so much more than we give ourselves credit for. We are so much more talented and beautiful and brilliant. Our lives make so much more of a difference than we allow ourselves to realize. Sometimes we think that we aren't good enough, or not tall enough or smart enough, or whatever "not enough."

But the truth is that all these things -- whether it's our education, success, money, how strong our bodies are -- that is not where our true confidence comes from. And that is never going to produce a lasting confidence.

Real confidence comes from connecting with the awareness that we have been created in the image and likeness of God. That there is a Spirit and an essence in us; there is intrinsic value. There is intrinsic beauty. There is intrinsic intelligence and gifts and greatness. You know, we are created in the image and likeness of the Creator. The image and likeness of God; the image and likeness of love. And that beauty and greatness is in us, but sometimes we just don't remember it. Sometimes we don't connect with it.

Jesus said, *"You are the light of the world."* In John it says, *"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never overcome the light."* That's something we should be confident about! That, regardless of the outer situations that are going on, or successes or those other things, there is always a steady, consistent source for us to feel confident in and about.

You know, last week I went to see "The Lion King" at Gammage. And it was just fabulous! I think everybody knows the story. And the thing that impressed me in it that was most amazing was the father, Mufasa, would take Simba out and tell him, *"You're going to be king. You're going to be king; it is your heritage. It is your calling; it is your purpose. And know that all the other great kings and all that great knowledge and strength is available to you, because it is in you."*

And so he's coached in remembering that this is him. This is his essence; it's his greatness. And then an accident happens; he thinks he kills his father. And he's so devastated by this mistake; he's so down that he abdicates the throne and just runs away. He runs away and hides, losing not only his confidence, but any feeling of self-worth at all.

And then later on, Rafiki -- the wise monkey -- shows him his father, Mufasa, in the sky. And he says the famous words, *"Simba, remember who you are!"* And what he was saying: *"Simba, remember that you're a leader! Remember your power! Remember your greatness! Remember your calling! Remember your responsibility! Remember all the gifts that you have! Remember all of that!"*

And so he was able to reconnect with the truth of who he was. And that is what gave him the confidence to go back.

And the fact is: Every one of us, we sometimes forget who we are. We lose connection with our greatness. We lose connection with our value. We lose connection with our talents. And we abdicate the good life and the great opportunities that are available for us.

I mean, the first thing -- if we want to be more confident -- is: You've got to remember who you are! You're an amazing spiritual being; you've been created wondrously and uniquely with such incredible value and beauty and talents and goodness. And we just need to remember that! It's not arrogance; it's just reconnecting with the truth of who we really are.

In the Book of James, it says some beautiful lines. It says, *"Be doers of the Word, and not merely hearers. For if there are hearers of the Word who do not do, they are like a person who looks at themselves in the mirror and, upon walking away, forgets what they look like."*

And that's what happens with us a lot. Sometimes we just forget; some mistake happens or some change happens, and we forget who we are. We lose our confidence; we feel powerless; we feel hopeless; we feel unworthy. And what we need to do is remember who we really are.

One of the great experiences of my life is I got the chance to meet Mohammad Ali. A friend that I knew made a connection where he and I actually met after his therapy session and got to spend a little bit of time together. Mohammad Ali is probably one of the most charismatic, talented, brilliant, beautiful human beings/athletes in the world. He held so much and was so dynamic. It was incredible.

Well, when I met him was well into his disease. He wasn't able to speak. He had to use a walker; wasn't able to move. So he lost the most important things: his voice; his charisma; his ability to articulate; the health of his body ... not just his athletic ability, but even just to move around.

And yet, my experience with him: He radiated an energy and a presence and a confidence and a greatness that I couldn't believe. And I had to ask myself: Where did that confidence come from? Where did that energy and vibration of greatness come from? And it is his spirit. Mohammad Ali was a Muslim and prayed consistently five times a day, connecting to his Source; connecting to God; connecting to his spirit; connecting to his purpose and his essence.

And all the way through ... One of his favorite quotes was, *"To those who are given much, much is expected."* Mohammad Ali believed all the way; he used his life -- even after his Parkinson's -- to be a symbol of hope and care and connection to all people. He never lost his confidence!

And I'll tell you, what I think maintained his confidence after all the boxing greatness was his consistent prayer life. He consistently connected with that Spirit in him, and that Spirit radiated with no need for words, with no need with being able to move around.

Well, interestingly, Jesus also prayed five times a day. And the point of this -- remember who you are -- is to stay consistently connected with your spirit. Consistently connected with your Source ... and that begins to radiate -- that essence within us -- beyond our body, beyond our words.

Is this making sense, everybody? Oh, good! Because it's all I have, so it's a good thing ... [Congregation laughs] So ... [Laughs]

So the very first thing -- if you want to increase the level of confidence -- remember who you are. Remember the truth about you. Not just your job; not just your accomplishments. Remember your spirit, and five times a day, connect with it; connect with it; connect with it ... and it will radiate and express more from us than we realize.

The second thing .. Remember who you is number one. Number two is to **REALIZE THE REALITY.**

Here are the things -- the reality of the things -- that affect our confidence. Number one: Life always has change! Things will always change! There will be things to adapt to and adjust to in our bodies; in our careers; in our relationships. There will be losses and changes of all different kinds. And sometimes our confidence can waver in those.

Another one is: In life, Jesus said there will be trials and tribulations. There are going to be some obstacles and some problems and some struggles. And sometimes those things also affect our confidence.

And the third thing is that everybody doubts. Doubt creeps into everyone's life in some way. We start wondering, *"Am I good enough? Is this going to work out?"* We doubt, doubt, doubt! There are all kinds of ways that we absolutely doubt on a regular basis. Sometimes we take things very personally.

I know somebody who didn't get invited to a friend's party. And then they heard from all the other friends. And they kept thinking, *"What?!? They don't like us? Do they hate us? Is it because I said that thing that I was only joking about? How could they not ... How could they do it? They're probably doing it intentionally to hurt me! What kind of people are these; I'm shocked I was even their friend in the first place! Heck, I don't need them in my life!"* And then the next day, they get the invitation; it was delayed in the mail. [Congregation laughs]

But do you ever just make stuff up like that? Sometimes we can rock our own confidence by misinterpreting or exaggerating or taking things personally.

And so, in all these things, we need just to remember that we can handle these things! Be aware; realize the reality. These things happen! Change happens; struggles happen; and our doubting mind happens. And we don't need to let them affect our confidence when we are aware of them; when we realize them. And still know that, *"I'm greater than this. I can handle this!"* Whatever this might be. When we find ourselves getting our confidence -- having it plummet or get shattered -- we just need to, *"I can handle this; everything's going to be okay. I've got this! God and I are greater than this."*

Another thing is that, for confidence, is: We've got to remind ourselves of how good we are. We are so good at minimizing and putting ourselves down. I always say we undervalue who we are, and we overvalue who we're not. I have people say, *"Oh, what do you do?" "Oh, I'm just a teacher." "I'm just a homemaker." "I'm just a ... whatever."*

Sometimes we'll have a hard time getting a compliment. Someone will say, *"Oh, I really love that dress!" "Oh, this old thing?"* [Congregation laughs]

Or, *"That meal was so good!" "Oh, I just threw it together."*

You know, it's like, *"Your hair looks fabulous!" "Oh, I just brushed my fingers through it."*

We want to minimize instead of just accepting that we are beautiful! We are fabulous! And it's not about us being arrogant or cocky; it's just a matter of owning our own greatness.

In the Book of Deuteronomy it says, *"Let the weak say, 'I am strong!'"* So sometimes when you doubt yourself, tell yourself, *"I am lovable. I am capable. I am good enough. I am worthy. I am successful."* We need to remind ourselves of the truth that we sometimes don't let ourselves own and accept.

And the next time someone tells you how good your hair looks or your food is, just say, *"Thank you."* Because when we keep pushing away and resisting our good and our compliments, how are we helping our own confidence? By not being willing to accept that we're actually really great! We're talented! We're wonderful! We're beautiful!

And the third aspect I think that's important about confidence we need to remember is: Confidence doesn't mean that you're going to do everything well. Confidence is accepting there are just some things you're not meant to do well. You could try, but everybody isn't supposed to do everything well.

Michael Jordan was the greatest basketball player ever. He was not a great baseball player. [Congregation laughs] He was never going to be a great baseball player, because he wasn't meant to be. It was nice that he tried, and I'm sure those were great experiences; they're good things for us to try. But to hold a pressure on ourselves thinking we need to be perfect and great; that is not confidence.

Confidence is someone who realizes, *"I'm good at this; I'm not good at this,"* and they're comfortable with it. They're at peace with it. You know, we have to come to terms and accept the fact: maybe you're not good at math. Maybe you're not a great handyman. Maybe you're not good in being organized or with electronics. Maybe you're not good at art; maybe you're not good at music. Maybe you're not a natural leader. Maybe you need to accept that you're not a great cook. Maybe you need to accept that you're not good at speaking Spanish. Maybe you need to accept that you're not good at parallel parking. [Congregation laughs] Or whatever it might be!

You know, sometimes you have to get to that place to say, *"Hey, I might not be good at parallel parking, but I'm okay with myself, and I'm still happy. And I have a great life."* And it sounds kind of silly, but the things that we hold against ourselves for not being great or perfect at everything: that's not confidence. I think that's more abuse and punishment and putting ourselves down. And that's not being loving and supportive to ourselves.

Remember who you are. And then realize the reality. And the last one is to **RENEW YOUR COURAGE.**

Several writers -- from Norman Vincent Peale to C.S. Lewis to Maya Angelou to Eleanor Roosevelt, lots and lots of people -- have all said the same thing. And they said this: *"The greatest virtue is courage."* Because if we didn't have courage, there wouldn't be other virtues. It takes courage to live. It takes courage to believe. It takes courage to have faith. It takes courage to hold on. It takes courage to let go. It takes courage to forgive. It takes courage to change. It takes courage to ask. It takes courage to say, "yes!" It takes courage to say, "no!" It takes courage to dream. It takes courage to start. It takes courage to stop.

Life takes courage! And it takes courage for three things. One: We hold some high expectations of ourselves. And we hold ourselves against some pretty high standards. Sometimes we can be perfectionists. So it takes courage to fight against our own mental frames and standards.

A second one is what society tells us we should be or do. Sometimes society isn't very supportive, and it's not easy being true to ourselves in certain places.

And the final one is that other people's judgements and expectations. Sometimes even your own family will throw cold water on your dreams

It takes courage to live! It takes courage to be true to ourselves. And without courage, we would not develop confidence. Confidence comes from that belief in the truth of who we are, but it also comes from experience. And courage requires us to try new things; to risk; to dare; to go after our dreams.

And courage is about trying things, but it doesn't mean that you always have to succeed. Because sometimes just in the trying alone, we can gain confidence and wisdom. Bryce Courtenay says that, *"You will learn more from a well-executed failure than a dreary success played within the confines of what you already know."* And what he's saying is: You're not going to gain confidence by just playing everything safe. By staying within your comfort zone. That you will gain more confidence trying and failing and having the courage to put it out there; you will gain more and you will expand yourself and your confidence more.

Question: If you had all the confidence and courage in the world, what would you do differently than you're doing now? What would you try? What would you change? What would you become? What would you create that's different from what you're creating right now?

You know, the word "heaven" comes from a word and it means "expansion." That a heavenly experience comes when we expand our heart and love; when we expand our faith; when we expand our joy; when we expand our compassion. That, as we expand ourselves and courageously step out beyond our comfort zone, that is a heavenly experience! To close thing off is a more negative and limited experience, and that's not how we are meant to live.

Winston Churchill says one of my favorite quotes. He says, *"Success is going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm."* [Congregation laughs] And what he's saying: That no matter what happens, keep going! Keep having the courage to continue; to keep moving forward and to keep expanding and growing yourself. Because that's how we have a fuller and richer life and experience.

Every one of our levels of confidence will waver from time to time. And what we need to do is to cultivate it; to nurture it; and to develop. And do it consistently and regularly. And how is: to remember who you are. Remember that spirit and essence -- that truth -- and cultivate it five times a day: connect with it; connect with it; connect with it, and it will begin to radiate beyond your being.

Then realize the reality. Life changes; there are trials. There are doubts. But affirm that you can do it. "I can handle this!" Affirm that you're smart and you're talented, and accept there are some things you just don't do great. And be confident with who you are and comfortable in your own skin just the way you are. And finally, renew your courage. Step out of your comfort zone. Give it a try, and that will increase and expand you in great ways.

If you want a better life, I guarantee you that confidence is a game-changer. Confidence is the key. And if you want to be more confident, you've got to think more confident.

God bless you all! [Congregation applauds]

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