

3 Essentials for Your Vital Victory Over Self-Doubt

What does the self-talk in your head sound like? What do you tell yourself? Perhaps like so many people, you keep second-guessing yourself, wondering whether you've got what it takes. The self-defeating messages keep screaming, and you feel paralyzed. Is there an antidote to self-doubt?

In one sense, you don't have what it takes. Does anyone? Jacob, the father of the 12 tribes of Israel, grew up in a seriously dysfunctional family. (Gen. 25-35, 45-49) Paul, missionary to the Gentiles and author of much of the New Testament, violently persecuted Christians (Acts 9, 11-28). Condaleeza Rice, former U.S. secretary of state, grew up in a deeply segregated Southern city. Michael Jordan didn't make the senior high school varsity basketball team. Billy Graham was turned down for membership in a youth group for being "too worldly." Nobody has what it takes.

And in another sense, you have exactly what it takes. God has this miraculous ability to take the unique ingredients of your life and build something priceless. He did it with Joseph, Moses, David and Paul. The very things you imagine disqualify you are the very ingredients God is using to build you for the role He needs you to fill. Nothing, *nothing*, in your life need be wasted.

So how do you deal with the self-talk, the negative messages? Here are three ways to get over self-doubt and move forward. These are steps you can embrace today, and will need to continue embracing throughout your life here on earth.

1. Study Yourself

I've learned something about myself: When I'm physically or emotionally tired, I can get easily depressed. Small problems

look like insurmountable mountain ranges, and the future looks hopeless. I've become tuned in to the negative messages my brain tells me at such times.

And I've learned not to trust those messages. I've learned to put up a mental stop sign when I begin feeling that way, and to do something about it. For me, that usually means doing whatever it takes to get a good night's sleep, regardless of what remains undone. And the world looks entirely different in the morning.

Pay attention to practical things that trigger your self-doubt. You might need some sleep. Or you might need some reasonably healthy food, a good cry with a friend, a walk in the fresh air, an hour of listening to music or a day away from work. God never intended our engines to be revved continuously. Especially in our postmodern world of constant noise and information, be intentional about getting the rest and soul nourishment you need.

2. Get Over Yourself!

Oh, the joy of getting over yourself! Self-doubt and fear of failure largely come from thinking about yourself more than is wise. No one who has ever accomplished anything has done so without failure—from falling down while learning to walk to failed rocket launches on the way to outer space. If you need some healing from past trauma, do the necessary work of healing and then get on with it.

As C.S. Lewis said, humility is not thinking less of yourself; it's thinking about yourself less. What freedom!

When I first began speaking on the radio, and then when I began doing video work, I worried incessantly about how I sounded or how I looked on camera. I don't worry about that very much any longer. Yes, I put great effort into bringing my best self to the public, but not because I worry what people think about me. My mental energy now is focused on what value

I can bring to people who need what God has entrusted me with, and how I can bring them that message most effectively.

Here's a news flash: *It's not all about you!*

Who has God put in front of you to help? How can you help them? Get over yourself and focus on how you can bring value to their lives. This is the primary differentiating factor in Level Five Leaders, those who make the biggest impact long-term.

3. Look Up!

If you're not focused on yourself, what do you focus on? God has given you a mission, a purpose. You won't understand everything about that, but to whatever degree you do know, focus on that. As Jesus said to His parents when He was just 12 years old, "I must be about my Father's business" (Luke 2:49b). If you're clearly focused on whatever you understand God has given you to do, you won't have any mental energy left to doubt yourself.

Instructors teach young people learning to drive to look far down the road and steer accordingly. The pilot of a fighter jet needs to focus miles ahead to navigate effectively and act accordingly at those speeds. Yes, there will be things in your peripheral vision you may need to account for, but relentlessly keep your eyes on the prize.

Even Jesus had to keep His eyes on eternity; "who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). You will have to keep your eyes focused up ahead as well.

You won't do that perfectly; keep going anyway. Moses, David, Peter and Paul all messed up, but they kept moving toward the future God had shown them as best as they understood it. You will fall down; that's how you learn.

But when you fall down, don't stop. Look up, get up and be about your Father's business!

Your Turn: *Have you been wrestling with self-doubt? Which of these steps do you need to embrace most? Leave a comment below.* {eo}

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This article originally appeared at .