

**Wanted: Confident People**  
**From the Series, "Holiday Season Want Ads"**  
**By Phil Brainerd**  
**Presented on Sunday, November 29, 2020**

**Introduction**

As we begin the Advent season, we look around us and see mixed emotions. On the one hand, we have Christmas and the new year. Those are always positive times. They're time for celebrations and gift-giving.

On the other hand, we look back at the past year. For many years, this isn't so bad. However, this year, the past year is 2020. For many, it was a terrible year. This year, I feel like a broken record saying the same things month after month. We started out looking good. We had one of the best economies America had ever seen. Record low unemployment. Then, the virus. People got afraid. Some people got sick. Some people died.

That wonderful economy dried up when we had to institute lockdowns. People began to worry about their jobs. They began to worry about paying bills. So right now, we have a lot of people experiencing worry and fear.

I saw a meme the other day entitled, "Prayer for 2020". Here it is: "Please Lord, make it stop." How do you blend the holiday season with all the uncertainty that we're seeing this year? Let me give it a shot.

Today, we'll begin an Advent message series. Here's the Title: "Holiday Season Want Ads".

Maybe you know someone who's looking for work? Before you throw that newspaper out, you might want to turn to the want ads.

**What's in a want ad?**

Normally, want ads contain two things. First, vocational requirements for a job. You want to see that candidates have training and/or experience that qualifies them for a job. Secondly, some employers will add personality requirements - Things like "outgoing", "disciplined", or "self-motivated".

Well, here's our want ad for this session - Wanted: Confident People.

## **Confidence: Why we want it.**

Why would an employer ask for Confidence? Confidence is a valuable character attribute. Here's what the magazine "Psychology Today" says about it:

"Confidence is a belief in oneself, the conviction that one has the ability to meet life's challenges and to succeed—and the willingness to act accordingly. Being confident requires a realistic sense of one's capabilities and feeling secure in that knowledge. Projecting confidence helps people gain credibility, make a strong first impression, deal with pressure, and tackle personal and professional challenges. It's also an attractive trait, as confidence helps put others at ease."  
(Psychology Today Website: "Confidence" Accessed 11/28/2020)

So, confidence is valuable.

## **Confidence: Definition**

What is confidence? We'll start with our classic approach: We need a definition. "Psychology Today" started us off: "Confidence is a *belief in oneself*"

Let's go further. Let's type the word "Confidence" into a Google search. We get the following:

Confidence: the feeling of self-assurance arising from one's appreciation of one's own abilities or qualities.

Example: "she's brimming with confidence"

So, when we look for a definition of "Confidence", we get related words. We get words like "Assurance". Most importantly, we get a source: people. Sometimes, we have this assurance from other people. Sometimes, we get it from ourselves.

## **Confidence: How do you get it?**

How do we become confident? How do we acquire this quality? Let's run over to the bookstore and see what they say. If I go to the Amazon web site and simply type the word "confidence" into the search, I get lots of results. Here's one of the top finds: "The Confidence Creator" by Heather Monahan. Here's the book summary: "Confidence is the one thing that will change everything for you. In Confidence Creator you will learn how to create confidence in any moment."

There you go. You want confidence? It's easy! You can just create confidence at any moment. All you have to do is pay some money and buy a book.

Since we're into buying books, here's another one: "The Confidence Gap: A Guide to Overcoming Fear and Self-Doubt" by Russ Harris and Steven Hayes PhD

Well, we have some men, one with a PhD here. Having a PhD means they have to be right. Notice the sub-title here: "Overcoming fear and self-doubt". A moment ago, we tried to find out what "confidence" means, and we got some similar words: words like "Assurance". Now, we get some opposites: fear and doubt.

### **Confidence: Does the world's definition and approach work?**

Right about now, I think people are experiencing a problem. The world is a mess. A lot of things are broken. As we said, a lot of people are worried. A lot of people are afraid. There's something about all these books and articles that doesn't seem to add up. Let's add something here: A lot of people feel let down.

We have all kinds of experts in our world. We have medical experts. They're all supposed to know exactly what to do when people get sick. We have economists. They're supposed to know what to do to protect us when the economy gets bad. We have government leaders. They tell us that they will be able to handle all problems - At least, that's what they tell us at election time.

Whatever these people know, they were not able to protect the 250,000 people who died from the effects of the Coronavirus as of this date. All of these leaders will say, "Well, we usually know what to do. - This virus was so bad it threw us off." Fair enough, but all these people were happy to accept our confidence prior to the attack.

Here's the problem: The way the world defines confidence, its source is people. Confidence, we're told, can be generated inside of us. But sometimes, the world throws things at us that are so big, no human can stand against it. Not the strongest or brightest of humans. Not the best collection of strong and bright humans. In fact, history is full of times when humans were no match for the attacks that came against them. ***That's why we need something bigger than humans.***

It's the Christmas season. Christmas is where we learn about something bigger.

### **The Biblical Concept of Confidence, Assurance, and Hope**

The Bible has a concept of confidence and assurance. However, it's very different than our normal human experience. Whereas confidence is normally something focused on humans, the Bible focusses this concept on God.

To the words confidence and assurance, the Bible adds the word, “Hope”. I spoke at length about the biblical concept of hope in a message last year during the Advent season. The message was entitled, “God Gives Us Hope”. If you go to our web site message page ([TrinityTeaneck.org](http://TrinityTeaneck.org)) and type the word “hope” into the search box, you’ll see it. For now, let’s just say that the Bible uses the word “Hope” in the way that we would use the word “Confidence” and “Assurance”.

Hope is a prominent theme during the Christmas season. We see it when we sing the well-known Christmas Carol:

Oh little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth, the everlasting light  
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.  
(O little town of Bethlehem, Lyrics by Phillips Brooks (1868))

At Christmas time, we learn something important: our confidence must be in God. At Christmas time we are reminded that God visited the face of the earth almost 2000 years ago.

### **The Biblical Reasons for Confidence: Power, Wisdom, Sovereignty.**

Why should we put our confidence in God? Let’s look at something said by the prophet Jeremiah:

Ah, Sovereign Lord, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you. (Jeremiah 32:17)

This verse tells us two important things. First, God is powerful. He created the heavens and the earth.

The second thing we learn is that God is sovereign. Sovereign is a word that was invented to describe great kings. When a king has total control over a kingdom, he is said to be sovereign. God has total control over our world. More than that, he has total control over the whole universe.

We can place our confidence, our hope, in God, because he is powerful. We can place our confidence, our hope, in God, because he is the sovereign king over his whole creation.

Let’s look at another passage.

Before the mountains were born  
or you brought forth the whole world,  
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.  
(Psalm 90:2)

Look at this: “Before the mountains were born”. Can I see the hands of all the people who were around before the mountains were born? I don’t see many. We are limited, but God is eternal.

Being the Creator, God existed before his creation. “From Everlasting to everlasting, you are God.” Look back into eternity past, God is there. Look forward into eternity future, God is there.

We can put our confidence in God because he is eternal. This compliments what we’ve learned about him so far. God is powerful. He was powerful in eternity past. He’s powerful now. He will be powerful for all eternity. He will never run out of power. God is sovereign. He was sovereign in eternity past. He is sovereign now. He will be sovereign for all eternity. He will never stop being in total control of his universe.

We can put our confidence, our hope, in God because he is power, he is sovereign, and because he is eternal.

Now, I can tell you the Bible says this. I can say I believe it. Is there anything more? There are different traditions in the Advent celebration. We start with the first candle of Hope, or confidence in God. Some traditions start with a related topic: Prophecy.

### **The Proof of God’s Power, Sovereignty, and Eternality: Prophecy**

Among the traditions of Advent is the reading of prophecy. Prophecy occurs when God talks to humans through the prophets. One mark of a true prophet involves predicting the future. It’s not so much an ability. It’s more that God speaks to certain people and tells them what he’s going to do. He’s powerful, sovereign, and eternal, so what he says comes to pass.

One of my favorite Advent prophecies that I like to read every year at this time is found in the book of Micah, chapter 5.

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
though you are small among the clans of Judah,  
out of you will come for me  
one who will be ruler over Israel,  
whose origins are from of old,  
from ancient times.”

(Micah 5:2)

The prophet Micah lived around 700 B.C. God spoke through him. He said that one day, something would happen in a little place known as Bethlehem. It wasn't a big place. In fact, Bethlehem was so small at that time, no one thought it mattered. Nevertheless, something important would happen there - Someone was going to come from there. That someone was no ordinary man. We're told, he would be ruler over Israel. That's strange for town so small that no one cared about it. And this was not just any ruler. Micah said his "origins were from of old, from ancient times." That's not a normal person.

700 years later, Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem. His life was filled with miracles. Here's just one:

23 Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. 24 Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. 25 The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" 26 He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. 27 The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!" (Matthew 8:23-27)

Imagine that. Jesus looked like any other person, but he could do amazing things. He could tell a storm to quiet down. He did many more amazing things. What kind of a person could do things like this in the number that Jesus did them? No mere mortal could.

The prophet Isaiah spoke about Jesus centuries before:

For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
(Isaiah 9:6)

Jesus was born a child. Yet look at the names given him: "Might God", "Eternal Father" – Some say that should be translated as "Father of Eternity". Jesus was God visiting the face of earth. He was fully God, yet fully man. Micah predicted the birth of Jesus 700 years before it happened. God's power is shown through this and many other prophecies.

We can put our confidence, our hope, in God because of Bible prophecy.

## Summary So Far

So far, we've said that confidence is a valuable thing. However, the world sees that as coming from people. That is surely going to leave us disappointed, because people are limited. Sometimes the world throws things at even the best-equipped of humans that are too large to handle.

When we open the pages of the Bible, we see that confidence and hope are wonderful things. However, we need to place our confidence and our hope in God. Maybe we should re-title our want ad? "Wanted: People who are confident *in God*."

So once again, how do you do it? If your source is people, then good luck. You can wander every book store and every web site known to man and come up short. Fortunately, if you're looking to God, we have the words of Scripture to guide us.

Let's talk about the steps to placing our confidence and our hope in God.

### Steps to placing confidence and hope in God.

#### I. Admit your need.

The first thing you need to do is admit that you haven't been placing your hope and confidence in God. You've been placing your hope and confidence in other places.

Some people need to start right at the beginning:

We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.

(Isaiah 53:6)

The Bible states that everyone on the earth has a problem. We have all turned away from God. That's called sin. The Bible also states that Jesus loves you so much that he was willing to have all your sins placed on him. One day, Jesus died on a cross to take away the sins of the world - Your sins and my sins.

We all need to ask God to forgive us. If you've never done this: If you've never asked God to forgive your sins through Jesus Christ, this is the time. You can visit us at Trinity Church (info on our site: [TrinityTeaneck.org](http://TrinityTeaneck.org)) or you can visit Billy Graham's excellent site, [PeaceWithGod.net](http://PeaceWithGod.net).

Others have asked God to forgive their sins, but the world keeps calling to us. We keep turning away. To those people, the Apostle John wrote this:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (I John 1:9)

Every time you find yourself turning away, confess your sins and ask God too help you return.

So, the first step is to admit our need.

## **II. Ask God to show you how.**

The second thing we need to do is ask God for help. This has two parts.

### **A. Ask for wisdom.**

You can ask God for wisdom:

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. (James 1:5)

Do you need to learn how to do something? Ask God to teach you. Ask God to give you wisdom on how to accomplish what you're trying to do. James says God happily gives wisdom to any who ask for it.

### **B. Ask God to open your eyes.**

The second thing you need to do is ask to God to open your eyes. Here's how the Apostle Paul prayed for his friends:

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. (Ephesians 1:18-19)

Do you have trouble placing your confidence, your hope, in God? **Ask him to show you how much he's worth it.** That's what Paul did for his friends.

### III. Understand the Path

Finally, we need to understand the path to hope and confidence. Paul talks about it in the book of Romans.

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:1-2)

This passage needs a whole sermon. For now, we'll hit the highlights.

Here is someone who has admitted their need before God. God has forgiven them. They have been justified, which is one of the things that happens when God saves us from our sins. This has happened through faith in the work and character of God. It's happened through Jesus Christ. Now, this person can boast in the hope of the glory of God. This person can place their hope and confidence in God. That's the first part of the path.

Here's the second. Earlier, we mentioned that in the world's eyes, confidence is easy - Just go out and purchase a book. We should all be a little suspicious when we hear things like that. In fact, the path can be difficult at times. Let's read more about what Paul tells us here.

3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. (Romans 5:3-5)

So, part of the path involves suffering. Think about this. If we could make it through life with no help. If it were possible to do everything without God, why would we need to place our confidence, our hope, in him? The world is broken. Without God, the world would crush us sooner or later. However, God, who is the sovereign king of the universe, can use the brokenness to teach us things. He can teach us to trust him - To put our confidence and our hope in him.

For us to learn to stop trusting ourselves, for us to learn to stop trusting in others, sometimes we need to experience the brokenness. So, we lose something. We hurt. Maybe we hurt a lot. Maybe we face a pandemic? Maybe we face a world-wide economic breakdown?

At those times, we learn something that the Apostle Peter shared:

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:6-7)

When the brokenness hits, the Holy Spirit reminds us that God cares for us. He can use suffering to make us grow. He can use our pain to help us become something better.

At those times, we need to remember one of the main reasons Jesus came to the earth. Jesus could have lived comfortably in heaven, but he came to the earth so that he could experience the brokenness along with us. He came so that he could feel our pain. He came so that he could understand.

## Conclusion

Let's pull this all together. Confidence is a valuable quality. However, confidence placed in humans will disappoint sooner or later. Right now, the world is full of people who have been disappointed because they placed their confidence in themselves or other people.

At this time that we look forward to Christmas, we can learn an important path forward. We can learn to put our hope and our confidence in God. He alone is worthy of our trust. He is Powerful, the maker of the heavens and the earth. He is Sovereign; he's in total control. He is Eternal, he was powerful and sovereign in ages past, and he will always be.

At Christmas we learn that a long time ago, a child was born in Bethlehem. He was God visiting the face of the earth. He came to fulfill prophecies, proof that God is all the wonderful things we've discussed.

You can put your confidence in him.

There's a beautiful hymn that captures the things we've been talking about today. Here are the words:

Be still, my soul: the Lord is on your side;  
bear patiently the cross of grief or pain;  
leave to your God to order and provide;  
in ev'ry change he faithful will remain.  
Be still, my soul: your best, your heav'nly Friend  
through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

(continued on next page)

Be still, my soul: your God will undertake  
to guide the future as he has the past.  
Your hope, your confidence let nothing shake;  
all now mysterious shall be bright at last.  
Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know  
his voice who ruled them while he dwelt below.

(Be Still My Soul - Lyrics by Kathrina von  
Schlegel)

At this Christmas season, in a broken world, put your hope and confidence in God. The world will make more sense when you do.