

inscribed

A COLLECTION OF STUDIES BY WOMEN

Make your MOVE

Finding Unshakable Confidence
Despite Your Fears and Failures



Lynn Cowell

— Endorsements —

Lynn Cowell has crafted my favorite kind of Bible study—practical, relatable, doable—wrapped around stories of women in Scripture. Her writing voice is warm and confident, and it's clear she's done her research, yet it never overshadows her enthusiasm for God's Word and how it can and will change our lives for the better. Grab your Bible and pen and *Make Your Move!*

—**Liz Curtis Higgs**, bestselling author of *Bad Girls of the Bible*

Like a snowflake in the palm of my hand, confidence seems to melt the moment I grasp it. One moment I'm buoyed with purpose and significance; the next I'm riddled with reminders of what I yet lack. My one comfort? God knows what I need, and He's promised to give it. If you need a confidence boost—one that won't evaporate in the heat of real life—join Lynn Cowell as she digs into biblical stories of women who discovered a God-delivered confidence they could count on. Always.

—**Michele Cushatt**, author of *I Am: A 60-Day Journey to Knowing Who You Are Because of Who He Is*

Do you sense God is calling you to take a step of faith and move outside your comfort zone? It might be a new job. Starting a Bible study. Ending a relationship. Opening a nonprofit. Going back to school. Adopting. You want to say yes, but you lack the confidence and courage to make that move. Through God's Word and personal stories, Lynn's book will help you identify your fears and insecurities and equip you with the courage and unshakable confidence you need to fulfill that call and reach your potential in Christ.

—**Wendy Blight**, member of Proverbs 31 First 5 Writing Team; author of *I Know His Name*, *Living So That*, and *Hidden Joy in a Dark Corner*

I long for studies that challenge me and help me walk out my faith. Lynn Cowell has accomplished that in *Make Your Move*. It's fresh, interactive teaching. It feels like I'm sitting across from Lynn in a coffee shop, discovering how to depart from where I feel stuck to find deeper waters together. If you long to make your move, this is a book that will help you do just that.

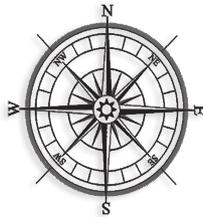
—**Suzanne Eller**, bestselling author, blogger, international speaker, and Bible teacher

Self-doubt and insecurity have taken a toll on our lives for far too long. It's time to take back freedom and assurance that is ours in Christ, so that we can live in the fullness of God's purposes and plans. Don't let past failures, fear of future rejection, or everyday troubles hold you back any longer. Let Lynn Cowell show you how to boldly experience confident faith that will move you forward!

—**Renee Swope**, former Proverbs 31 Ministries radio cohost; bestselling author of *A Confident Heart*

Make your MOVE

Finding Unshakable Confidence
Despite Your Fears and Failures



Lynn Cowell



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

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To Julie,

I've spent a lifetime watching you make
your move toward God despite your fears
and failures. What a beautiful thing it
has been, my friend. I love you!

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Introduction

I consider myself a pretty cool mom, but when my daughter, Madi, said she wanted to jump out of a plane together, I thought *no way*. She was thirteen years old when she started this concerning conversation: “Mom, for my eighteenth birthday, we’re going skydiving.” *Yeah, right!* I thought. I’m all about the experience and I love the outdoors. But there is a difference between exciting and absurd.

Not wanting to diminish her confidence, I joked with her for many years, trying to keep it light. To think that my girl wanted to do something so adventurous with her mom, of all people, was heartwarming. But deep down, I hoped she’d forget it and move on. The mere idea of floating in the open Carolina blue sky made me . . . well, let’s not go there.

There is something you should know about me before we go any further. Sometimes, I can be all talk. Like the time I went on and on describing to my husband all we would see when we went snorkeling on a trip that he had won from his company. A girl from small-town Iowa, I grew up in the middle of seas of corn, not schools of fish. I knew nothing about the ocean. And it was obvious when I refused to leave the shore. The little mask sealing off the only airflow I had (or so it seemed) felt like a death trap. *Who in the world can possibly breathe this way?*

Heartbroken, I stood baking on the beach, as Greg called for me to come and see all God had created below the ocean’s surface. I just couldn’t. While my heart was floating next to him, immersing in cobalt blue, tangerine orange, and sunshine yellow sea life, my leaded feet were captive in the quicksand of the shore. I never found the courage to move.

You can understand then why I started freaking out as Madi’s eighteenth birthday approached and she began reminding me of my promise. My girl really wanted to do this. All my bravado had gotten me in a whole lot of trouble!

So, I created a plan, a plan to get me out of this mess! I asked *her brother* to jump out of a plane with his sister in my place. When he agreed, my heart settled down. I could keep my promise. Well sort of . . . I paid for a promise. Now, I could look forward to the big weekend and to living vicariously through my kids. But when the day finally arrived, her brother couldn't come through!

Now what? The jump had been paid for. Two nonrefundable reservations confirmed. The hammering of my heart and moisture gathering on my palms reminded me that I couldn't let my daughter jump out of a plane alone. Someone had to jump.

Did that someone have to be me?

My guess is that you've never found yourself in a situation where you were pressured to free-fall through the air. But maybe there has been a time when your life has felt like it was spiraling . . . and your confidence was falling with it.

The hot summer day when I drove with my family to the airfield was not the only time I've felt like I needed a grit I didn't have. Raising children whom I didn't always understand, overcoming rejections I couldn't avoid, and trusting God when my calling didn't make sense have all given me plenty of opportunities to lean into Jesus. I've needed to find a confidence that holds my head up when my heart is hanging low. The sort of confidence that doesn't slip away with each new obstacle and won't disintegrate when I need it most.

If you're anything like me, you're looking for the courage you need to make your move in spite of the fact that you sometimes feel fearful or possibly like a failure. Picking up this Bible study tells me you are looking for the source and how to tap into it.

That sweltering June day, I needed to jump out of a plane. Someone had to go with my girl and that someone needed to be me.

Sometimes, I think finding confidence means making a move even when, and most often when, you think you can't. I have found there are many people, including women in the Bible, who have needed confidence

to act when they had none. Making their move was part of the process to finding God's confidence.

The sense of soaring while skydiving was both terrifying and thrilling, and it was one of the most exhilarating experiences in my life. I am so glad I jumped!

That leap would never have been possible had my body not been attached to the body of another that day. My jumper, the expert who had skydived thousands of times, knew exactly what he was doing. During the entire experience, he spoke directly in my ear, telling me exactly what to do next. His instructions made the jump safe and successful. As long as I was connected to my jumper, listening and obeying, the dive was amazing. But before I could dive, I had to willingly and intentionally secure myself to him.

Jesus is *our* jumper. Our first move in this journey of obtaining unshakable confidence is to secure ourselves to Jesus through His word, worship, and listening and talking to Him every day. This study will help you do just that!

Knowing I was dependent on the parachute above my head and the jumper attached to my back was unnerving yet comforting at the same time. I knew I was not alone and had all I needed for this amazing adventure.

I think that's what God wants us to experience with Him. The thrill of leaping into the great unknown, reaching our full potential in Him, fully equipped yet completely dependent. And that is done one small, brave jump at a time.

So, friends, let's do just that! God's Word will be our equipment and the Holy Spirit our expert jumper. Together, we will dive into God's Word and discover the women (and a few men as well) who found the power, confidence, and courage needed in God to do the work God called them to.

Make Your Move can be read individually or with a small group using the DVD video teachings. Small groups allow for deeper discussion as well

as accountability and encouragement to draw closer in relationship with the Lord.

You will notice that I use different Bible translations throughout the study. I do so to bring variety and find deeper meaning in the text. No matter what translation you prefer, you will have no trouble using it for this study.

Make Your Move will lead you through six chapters containing personal stories as well as the stories of women (and men) in the Bible. Each chapter opens with a prayer and a memory verse. Begin your time with the Lord each day in prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to bring His personal revelation to you through the study. The memory verse is provided so that you will carry God's word into your entire day. Type it into your phone; write it on a card. However you choose to memorize these verses, let's be intentional to write God's Word on our hearts.

Each lesson includes teaching, a section for Digging Deeper into the Bible, and a section to Apply It. Here is where you can write your own personal revelations that have come through the Scripture and study as well as thoughts you want to continue to reflect on. I also like to have a journal or notebook next to me because often I want more space for reflection or personal revelations I have had.

If you haven't already, be sure to get the six-session video study available in both DVD and downloadable formats (sold separately). These messages not only take the teaching each week deeper, there are also new ways God discloses Himself through the women we are studying and introductions to more not-so-very-known women in Scripture. These videos were created to be viewed after studying each chapter and before a small group discussion time, if it is being done in a group.

Friend, I have prayed for you and believe that God will reveal to you in a very personal way what He has for you in *Make Your Move*. You may find it written here in the words of this book or it may be a word He whispers to your heart. Let's get started, believing that together we will find His confidence to make our move!

WEEK
TWO

The Daughters of 3

WHEN CONFIDENCE
IS CHALLENGED



PRAYER: *Jesus, I'm so looking forward to learning new things in Your Word. You say in Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." This is what I want. I want Your Word to go into my soul and spirit, taking my thoughts and attitudes to where Your life in me gives me Your confidence. Thank you for the gift of Your Word; I am ready for it to do Your work. In Jesus's name, Amen.*

MEMORY VERSE: "But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him."—Jeremiah 17:7 (NIV)



DAY ONE



Stuck

I WAS IN WAY OVER MY HEAD . . . and I knew it.

Trying to land my first professional job in a way-too-big city, I had been entirely too ambitious. Having moved five hours from my small-town home, I was in desperate need of a job to fund this big step. If I tanked, what would I do? Certain that I had oversold myself, my mind began to spin.

What have I done? Am I really as competent as I said I was? What about all the jargon I don't know? Why, oh why did I interview for this position? Am I even capable of this? What was I thinking? I don't even have a college degree! I should have just stuck with what I am comfortable with because now I'm really in trouble!

My mind kept pushing me closer and closer to the cliff of failure. I couldn't take the doubt inside of me. Skepticism stole my peace by day and my sleep by night.

I decided I just couldn't sit around and wait for failure. On my first day, I located the Human Resources department, sat down with the gal who hired me and . . . talked myself right out of the job. Yes, I did! My employer was kind enough to find another position for me in another department that didn't require me to dress a certain way or sit at a high-profile desk. My new position (in the warehouse) was out of sight—and probably out of my employers' mind.

How's that for lacking confidence?

Are you that woman? If so, you won't be for long.

Maybe you've talked yourself out of so many opportunities that you question whether or not you *can* actually move forward. In fact, numb could describe how you feel on many days, simply surviving.

Don't be too hard on yourself! Surviving is not actually an entirely bad place to be. We all want more than survival though. We want to know we matter. We want to live a life that makes a difference and in that process experience joy, peace, and hope—the abundant life Jesus spoke of.

I've discovered that finding confidence often means making a move when (and most often when) I think I can't!

Remember that skydiving jump? Honestly, I didn't think I had it in me.

Sometimes we have to do what we need to do even when we don't have the confidence to do it. And the process of doing the thing we need to do when we don't have the confidence to do it is just what helps us *find* the confidence we need!



*Sometimes we have to do what we need
to do without the confidence to do it.*

I think God actually orchestrates this whole thing, putting us in situations that demand our dependence on Him. That's how it appears to me as I've been studying the Bible.

So . . . good news, then! You're in great company. If you feel like your confidence is lacking or lost, then it's the perfect time to act. *Make your move especially when you think you can't!*

To make this move, we're going to need at least enough confidence to get us moving a bit. So, let's start by defining what confidence means.

According to dictionary.com confidence means: “full trust; belief in the powers, trustworthiness, or reliability of a person or thing.”⁸

I have confidence that my car will start when I insert the key. I have confidence that my house will cool off when I turn on my air conditioner and that my coffee will make me feel cozy in the winter.

But what about when the thing we place our trust in doesn't come through?

There was a group of women in the Bible who experienced just that. What they were counting on didn't come through. It forced them into a precarious situation—not by choice but by default.

To give us a bit of context, we'll go back to Exodus 2 again, when God's people were slaves in Egypt. They cried out to God to set them free. God heard their cries and called a man named Moses to lead them out of Egypt and move them to a new home: the Promised Land.

The next book in the Bible, Numbers, is the setting for our story. The word *Numbers* is a Hebrew title meaning “in the wilderness” as it tells of the trip from Egypt, through the wilderness, to the Promised Land. A 200-mile journey, that should have lasted approximately two weeks, took the Israelites over forty years. The Israelites wandered in this wide and vast desert space, often as a result of their own choices, which led to a disconnect with God.

We're going to enter this narrative at a very exciting time. Toward the end of this journey, God calls for a census to be taken before the Israelites can finally leave the wilderness and move into the Promised Land.

God qualifies exactly who is to be counted in Numbers 26:4: “men twenty years old or more.” It is important to note not just the age but also the sex God calls to be counted in the census. (You can read the entire inventory of names in Numbers 26.) In verse 33, we meet for the first time the women we are going to zero in on and the *only* women listed in the entire 65-verse genealogy (except for a daughter of Asher):

“(Zelophehad son of Hepher had no sons; he had only daughters, whose names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah and Tirzah.)”

Whether I call them the daughters of Zelophehad or Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah, and Tirzah, their names are as long to type as they are hard to pronounce! For the sake of time and writer's cramp, let's call them the daughters of Z.

Zelophehad is singled out for one reason: he had no sons.

God then describes to Moses how the land was to be divided among the tribes, specifically to the sons of each tribe.

This reminds me of my extended family. Both of my parents came from farming families in Minnesota. While my parents stopped farming before I was born, many of their siblings continued. As my uncles began aging, they started passing on the family farms to my cousins, keeping the land, and the inheritance, in the family. As I think about my extended family, I can't think of any of my relatives who are passing on their farm to their daughters. Each of my uncles is passing on his farm to one or more of his sons.

This is similar to what is happening in Numbers 26. The land is being divided up among the sons of the tribes of Israel.

This situation is where we find our potentially-out-of-confidence women.

Digging Deeper

Read Numbers 27:1-4.

Numbers 26:33 tells us Zelophehad had no sons, but it is not until chapter 27 that we discover Zelophehad is dead. Not only has he passed away, but Numbers 27 also makes it clear that his daughters were without brothers, husbands, or sons.

Single women with no father, no brothers, no husband, and no sons in this culture meant *no land*. Because of the tradition of handing down property only to men, these women were not going to get *any* acreage as the Promise Land was divided.

So where are they supposed to live? How would they take care of themselves?

Women have come a long way since ancient Bible times. While some women without means can still face similar problems, most women today are able to find work, get a paycheck, and find a place to live. Imagine how much different our lives would be if this were 1800s America instead of 2000s America. *None of us*, simply because we are women, would be permitted to own land. Without the chance for landownership, all of us would be completely dependent on a man (father, husband, or son) to provide housing of some sort. Where would we live if we didn't have a man?

That is what the daughters of Z were facing: homelessness.

They were stuck.

Describe a time in your life when you have felt stuck. A time when a solution to a problem seemed like it just couldn't be found.

The culture these women lived in presented only one way for their provision: a man. And they didn't have a single one! It would appear that they had no choice, but in fact they did. They had the choice to accept the voices of their culture as well as the whispers in their own heads, or they could make their move.

Make the move they needed to make even if they didn't have the confidence to make it.

Reread Numbers 27:2–4.



What advance did these ladies make?



Why was this a big deal?



Describe a time in your life when you were low on confidence, but had a big need for it.

Read Exodus 25:1-9.



Numbers 27:2 tells us that the daughters approached “the entrance to the tent of meeting.” Based on Exodus 25:8, what is the significance of this place where the daughters met with the Israelite leadership?

This was the time before God’s people “were filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4). Where God’s Spirit dwelt was crucial to how the people related to Him. The Tent of Meeting was where the priests and Moses went to meet and consult with God. So, when the daughters of Z approached the Tent of Meeting to speak with Moses, they were going to meet with the one God had appointed to be their intermediary.

It could be compared to our modern-day going to court.

There the gals are, in a state of despair, looking for justice.



Read Psalm 82:3–4. What do these verses tell us about God’s view on the most vulnerable of society?

The women knew God’s heart toward the weak, fatherless, poor, oppressed, and needy. They knew because that is exactly who the Israelites were when they were slaves in Egypt. And what had God done? He had brought them justice and rescued them from Pharaoh. *This* was the God whom the women served. He defended the Israelites cause before the Egyptians, and He would defend the cause of these homeless women now.

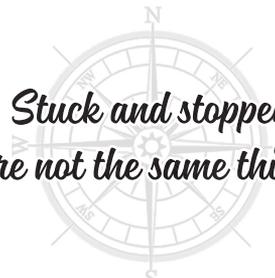
Yet even knowing that, the women would be required to step out. They believed God said the land was for *every one* of His people, and that included them. Still, they would have to be vulnerable. Their actions show that they trusted that God would reward their vulnerability; He would care for them.

Maybe today you are feeling just as vulnerable as the daughters of Z might have felt. You sense God nudging you. Maybe you have felt compelled to a specific action, but instead of finding the land of opportunity, you’ve reached a dead end. No right, no left, no options, and you don’t have what you need or what it takes to create any.

Stuck!

That’s where the daughters of Z were too.

Yet the sisters decided they wouldn’t give up even though it seemed everything was against them. Stuck and stopped are not the same thing! They believed what the Lord said was true. They chose to move.



*Stuck and stopped
are not the same thing.*

Look at these gals!

They didn't shrink back because that is "just the way it was" or hide behind their culture's norms. Their society said "normal" was having a man provide a place for them to live. They did not let that message paralyze them from finding a solution to their problem. They refused to remain stuck.

We don't have the chance to get inside the heads of the daughters of Z, but I can only imagine doubt and fear might have come rolling in before they made their move. *No one has ever done this before. Who do we think we are? What will the leaders think of us? Will the women of our community think we're too bold? Troublemakers? What if the panel of men say no?*

Our fear of failure can push us down before we even get up. The majority of our battle with confidence happens in our head. We listen to what has been said and what we have told ourselves and we believe it. This is why God makes it so clear that we need to write His Word on our hearts (Proverbs 7:3).

I'd love to think that I am as bold and sure of God's promises as the daughters of Z, but that's not always so. Culture constantly makes us aware of "our place" and challenges whether we have what it takes. *Who do you think you are?* For me, my lack of education has been a source of insecurity. *Who am I to share with you what I've learned in God's Word?* Maybe you hear these deafening whispers too.

In life, there will be times when we have to do what we need to do even when we don't have the confidence to do it. This is the perfect setup for God to show up. Stuck and stopped are not the same to Him. He can and will help us make our move. He has promised us, "[We] can do all this through him who gives [us] strength" (Philippians 4:13). I am going to take Him up on it! Won't you too?

Apply It

I look at the daughters and wonder *why* and *how* they acted so boldly. How did they go against the norms of their culture to get what they believed God had for them? No one, especially the leaders of their tribe, would have expected the women to ask for land because no one had ever done that before. Their faith was groundbreaking.

Tomorrow, we will begin our search to understand why the daughters of Z had the level of confidence they had in a situation where their confidence made no sense.

For today, begin by simply sharing with God where you might be feeling stuck. Ask Him, like the daughters of Z, what is the move He would have you to take in His strength.



DAY TWO



Build One Another Up

MEMORY VERSE: “But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.”—Jeremiah 17:7 (NIV)

WOW COULD SHE SING! As I watched my TV screen, a young girl, maybe ten or eleven years of age, belted out the national anthem like I had never heard before. Her darkened glasses, though inside an arena, revealed she was visually impaired. Yet neither her age nor her disability held her back from sharing her gift with all those who were blessed to hear her.

Where did she get confidence like that? Did it have something to do with her parents? What had her teachers said to help her become so brave? Was there a doctor in her life pushing her forward?

These are the types of questions I often find myself asking, so it wasn't uncommon that I found myself wondering the same things about the daughters of Z. What was the source of their confidence? We're not specifically told in the Scripture of anyone speaking confidence into their lives.

I am blessed to have many encouraging people pouring into my life. My husband constantly encourages me. Friends tell me to keep going even with my latest rejections, and my kids often encourage me

with their texts. How did the daughters of Z, who apparently had no one, gain the confidence they needed to go before such powerful men in their community, including Moses himself? Weren't they intimidated?

Digging Deeper

Looking at clues provided in Scripture, let's start with what we *don't* know about these women:

1. *Their ages*

There isn't one word about the ages of these five daughters. We know from Numbers 36 they were single, and in Jewish tradition, girls married young—twelve to fourteen years old. Maybe they were *really* young, or maybe they were older and had just never married.

We just don't know.

Like the daughters of Z, I am one of five daughters. In fact, I am the youngest of five daughters; number seven of eight kids. It can be a bit of a struggle to find your place when you're in a big family, let alone one of the youngest. Although we might make an issue of age, we know God doesn't. When it comes to being used by God, age does not matter.

Read 1 Timothy 4:12.

What does Paul tell his mentee, Timothy, in regard to how he should allow others to treat him because of his youth?

Does your community encourage young people to use their gifts and talents, or do the older members fill most of the needs?

The daughters of Z could have been teen girls when this situation took place, and if they were, their youth did not matter to God.

Conversely, they could have been older women—and it still wouldn't have mattered.

Read Job 12:12.

How does or does not our culture emulate this verse?

If the daughters of Z were older, according to Job 12:12, age was on their side!

2. *Their appearance*

Again, we know nothing. Nada. Zilch. Zero. Not a single word is said, *nothing at all*, about their appearance. Tall, small, heavy, thin, dark skin or lighter?

Since the Bible doesn't tell us anything about their appearance, I'm drawing this conclusion: these details didn't matter in the daughters of Z's story because appearance doesn't matter. Appearance does not affect God's will for them or us.

We put people in categories based on what we see. *We* decide just how far someone can go. *We* decide if we think they are the wrong size, wrong sex, or wrong shade. **God never does.** He never has and never will.



*Neither our contour nor our
color affect God's calling.*

Read 1 Samuel 16:7.

 In our culture, community, and churches, in what way do we make it clear appearance *does* matter to us?

Culture tries its hardest to make the external all too important. It's hard not to do the same and judge each other even within the body of Christ. Ladies, no one is worse at this than us!

Like smoke from burning pancakes, the tension in the stifling air rose. We waited shoulder-to-shoulder for the doors to open. The concert promised to be the best of the year, but the frustration with the stuffy space was sucking all the happiness out of me. My husband and I tried to make the best of the situation, making small talk about our day, when suddenly, a grimace of sorts came across his face. The question followed: "Why, when a woman walks in the room, do all the other women size her up?"

Oh no! He noticed! He knows!

Honestly, I wanted to lie to cover for us. I thought this thing we women do was known only to us and totally on the inside. I had no idea guys could see or sense the unspoken judgment we pass on each other. How do I explain to a guy the deep insecurity we girls all too often struggle with? Even as I began, I could just hear how sad the truth sounded.

This notion we have, that *her* beauty, *her* success and *her* confidence detracts from me and mine, slowly seeps into our hearts undetected. Infiltrating our hearts and minds, it's a deception that poisons the way we think of our teammates, our *sisters*! It demands control over how we think, speak, and act toward one another.

Even if we make up our minds to fight it, like a terrible infection, it returns unwanted again and again. It's a lie and a powerful one at that.

Pulling us in, this horrible wrong sucks us under—before we’ve even spoken a word.

What’s worse is that we can even feel like we’re not to blame—our upbringing or society is. Regardless, we need to call *it* what *it* is: sin. Judgment is sin.

Paul shares the cure for our illness, and I don’t know about you, but it’s a tough pill for me to swallow.

Read Romans 13:8–10.

How do you think this Scripture applies when it comes to the way we women judge one another’s appearance?

Maybe you’ve heard, as I have, that Jesus paid it all. That in Him we have no debt. And it’s true that when we ask, He forgives us for all of our sins just as 1 John 1:9 tells us. This passage in Romans 13 makes it clear, though: We *do* have a debt. We have an obligation to love one another, and that means breaking the girl code. When it comes to cutting another down, we have a command to do the complete opposite: build her up. First Thessalonians 5:11 tells us, “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up.” Love does no harm to a neighbor, not ever.

*When it comes to cutting a sister down,
God commands us to build her up.*

God doesn't qualify or disqualify anyone based on our looks. How could He? He created us! Friends, it's time we stop disqualifying each other and ourselves.

Here's what we *do* know about the daughters of Z:

- ▶ They were single. Numbers 36 makes this fact clear.
- ▶ They were from a large family.
- ▶ The daughters didn't fit in. They had no father, brothers, husbands, or sons to provide for them in a society where men were required for survival.
- ▶ We also know their heritage.

When I was growing up, I liked to make up stories of relatives I had that were brave, wealthy, and stood up to tradition. Key word: *made-up*.

Every Monday and Wednesday of third grade, the big, yellow paneled truck would pull into the parking-lot-turned-playground-at-noon at St. Patrick's Catholic School. *Martin Brothers*, painted in big, bold, black letters on the side revealed the owners' names. I decided it was a good idea to tell my friends this business belonged to my dad and his brother. (Insecurity can be really powerful, even in third grade!) They did not own that business. My dad worked in the brass foundry down the street; his brother worked at a school. But the power of that story, even in my case a story that wasn't even true, made me feel confident. It made me feel like I was a somebody.

Stories can have so much power in our lives; especially stories of our heritage. They can define us and have the ability to pull us up or put us down.

I can't help but think that the same thing happened in the lives of the daughters of Zelophehad. They had a very confident grandfather that they may have gained confidence from as well. We'll learn more about him in our next section.

We need to remember that love never does harm to a neighbor. Because we are loved, we can confidently choose to love others, never cutting down and only building up our sisters in Christ.

Apply It

 How has your age and appearance influenced your confidence level?

 How has age and appearance impacted how you view others?

Many influences that come in and out of our lives have the power to impact how we view others. Some common prejudices include: age, ability, class, color, sex/gender, weight, economic status, and country of origin. Take a few moments with the Lord. Go over this list, one by one, and ask Him to reveal to you two things:

1. How do you hold a prejudice against others in each of these areas?
2. How do you feel prejudice, in any of the categories, has impacted your life?

Where you have discriminated against others, ask Jesus to forgive you. Ask Him to begin to open your eyes to see how prejudicial thinking is affecting your day-to-day life. Pray for power to overcome these negative thoughts toward others so that you can be a force of change in this world through His love.

Ask Him to show you where you need healing from experiencing prejudice. Pray for the power to forgive those who have held you back and changed the way you see and feel about yourself through their words and actions.



It's All in the Family

MEMORY VERSE: “But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.”—Jeremiah 17:7 (NIV)

WHAT A DISCOVERY! When my mother revealed to me in elementary school that I was related to the American President James Garfield, I took full advantage of the confidence this gave me. Being related to someone famous—didn’t that make me important? (I’ve since learned my great, great, great grandpa and President Garfield’s father were second cousins. So glad I didn’t know back then just how far apart the connection actually was!)

The daughters of Zelophehad had much more to be proud of than I!

Numbers 27:1 reveals the famous patriarch Joseph was actually in their direct ancestral line; he was the sisters’ great-great-great-great grandfather.

In what way might it have mattered that the daughters of Z were related to Joseph?



In Jewish culture, passing on family stories was very important, even commanded by God in Deuteronomy 4:9: “Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.”

Similar commands to teach our children our histories with God can be found in Deuteronomy 6:7 and Deuteronomy 11:19. At times in Israel’s history, God even tells them to write a song to be taught to the Israelites so they would sing it and not forget His words (Deuteronomy 31:19–22; 32:1–43).

Based on these verses, I have no doubt these gals would have grown up hearing about their great-great-great-great grandfather, Joseph. Joseph represented the epitome of the word *confidence*.

Digging Deeper

Read Joseph’s story beginning in Genesis 37:1–4.

Why was Joseph “Daddy’s favorite”?

Read Genesis 37:5–11.

Have you ever had any dreams that you believed were from God?

Joseph’s life would have many twists and turns as well as many, many years before these spiritually significant dreams would come to pass.

Read Genesis 37:12–36.



List a few of the things Joseph lost or had taken from him.

Here are a few I found:

- ▶ Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. He lost his family.
- ▶ Joseph became a slave. He lost his freedom.
- ▶ Joseph lived in a foreign country. He lost his home.
- ▶ If you choose to read on in Genesis 39 and 40, you'll see that when convicted of a crime he didn't commit, Joseph lost his reputation and his position. Thrown into prison and forgotten, he lost his future (or so it would appear).

What was the *one thing*, through it all, that Joseph didn't lose?

His confidence in God's promises.

His confidence was the one thing he didn't lose or have taken from him. Though all else was taken, his confidence in God and in the future he believed God had for him was never lost.

God Himself was the one thing Joseph had even when all else was gone.

And because of Joseph's confidence in his Father God, Joseph never quit believing. He never gave up.

Let's begin looking at a few things we can discover about Joseph that might tell us *why* he was so confident.

Read Genesis 39 and 41.



List a few ways Joseph demonstrated confidence in these chapters.

Remembering what we read in Genesis 37 and using the new information we just gained in Genesis 39 and 41, here are a few facts that stand out from Joseph’s life:

1. Like the daughters of Z, Joseph was also single.
2. He too came from a large family, a *very* large family. He was one of twelve sons.
3. He didn’t fit in the culture where he was living as a slave.
4. According to Genesis 39:6b, he “was well-built and handsome.” Appearance here *does* matter because it becomes a detail of his story. It gets Joseph in trouble since his boss’s wife makes a move on him, calls it rape when he resists, and Joseph is thrown in prison.

We also know, based on his actions, Joseph had a confidence that stuck.

I can’t help but think that just as I found confidence in the stories of my relatives, both real and not so real, the daughters of Zelophehad built theirs on the very real story of Joseph. Growing up hearing of Joseph’s brave confidence may have empowered them too!

- ▶ He wasn’t afraid to stand up to Potiphar’s wife when she made a move on him (Genesis 39).
- ▶ He wasn’t too intimidated to interpret Pharaoh’s dream (Genesis 41:1–39).

- He showed no fear when he was made second in charge to Pharaoh of all of Egypt—at the age of thirty (Genesis 41:41–57). I didn't have confidence that looked anything like that at thirty!

Culture commands us to build our confidence on things that God does not, such as age and appearance. Joseph's life is a demonstration that confidence built on God can withstand even the most confidence-defeating situations.

Apply It

In both the lives of Joseph and the daughters of Z, family actions and stories had a monumental impact on their lives. They can on our own lives as well. We can believe things about ourselves that can empower us or imprison us.

When we look at our own family histories, we too have stories we have heard or witnessed that have impacted our own level of confidence.

Briefly describe one positive story (like the daughters of Z) that you can lean into and/or one negative story (like Joseph's) that you need to put behind you. Then, finish your time today by thanking the Lord for those positive influences and asking Him to do His deep work to heal you of those that were negative.



DAY FOUR



Some Place and Some One Are Shaky Ground

MEMORY VERSE: “But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.”—Jeremiah 17:7 (NIV)

BEFORE I WAS BORN, my parents took many courageous steps to try to better their lives. These brave actions meant that my life would look significantly different than each of their childhoods.

Moving from the state they had grown up in, they took their family and started a new life in a new state. They left behind generations of farming to seek out more security. They stepped out of what was comfortable to discover and encounter God in a personal way. They left the formal worship their families had practiced for generations to find a new intimacy with God.

Their bravery became my example of not looking to the temporary things of life for security. Believing God was directing me too, six weeks before school began, I withdrew my college enrollment. Instead, I chose to move over a thousand miles from home to attend a training school for those who felt called to ministry. Preparing to leave behind a boyfriend I planned to marry when I returned, I packed my things

to go to a place I had never seen. My parents drove me to the training school on a ranch in the middle of a Texas range. Within an hour, they were back on the long road home. I was left in what felt like a foreign land where I knew no one. The terrain was different and the people spoke with a different accent. Believing God had told me to go, I unpacked my things and with timidity prepared for what God had for me next.

Like my parents before me, I bravely did what I felt I was called to do, not what felt comfortable. They had taught me, through their actions, confidence doesn't come from a place.

As I had learned from my parents, maybe the daughters of Z learned from Joseph not to build your confidence on a place. Joseph lost his place, his father's wealthy estate, when his brothers sold him. In the foreign land of Egypt, no one would have cared about his rich father's business far, far away. If Joseph had built his confidence on a place, his confidence would have disappeared just like he did from the pasture.

For many reasons, places are important to us. We find comfort in the stability of our homes and dream of owning one of our own one day. We have been taught that the fulfillment of that dream is a mile-marker of success and stability. Working hard, we sacrifice, sometimes the things we shouldn't—time with our family and being generous—in order to achieve this pinnacle: a place of our own.

Through the life of Joseph and through stories of our own friends and family, we know that this sometimes-illusivive idea of obtaining a "home" is a dangerous place to put our trust. All too often, things outside of our control strip us of our places . . . and take our confidence with it. The daughters of Z didn't have a "place" on which to build their trust. They had no home and yet here, in their homelessness, they demonstrated you don't need a place of your own to have the confidence of God. We don't need a someplace in order to put our trust in Him.

The daughters of Z, hearing their grandfather's story, could have learned that Joseph didn't base his confidence on *someone*, certainly not his family. Genesis 37:4 says, "[His brothers] hated him and could not

speak a kind word to him.” If anything, his family’s rejection would have caused him to *lose* whatever self-esteem he had. He couldn’t have found confidence in his marriage or children because he wasn’t married and didn’t have children when he experienced all his trouble. Joseph didn’t build his confidence on *someone* because he didn’t have a *someone*.

After finishing the training school program, my life came to an intersection. I had to decide what to do next. A thousand miles from home, I needed a plan . . . and the confidence to move, not back home, but almost 4,000 miles away to continue my schooling. Because I was still young, and my original plan had been to go back home and marry my boyfriend, I contacted my parents, seeking affirmation for my next steps.

Affirmation is not really what you would call my father’s words. In fact, he said he didn’t want me moving so far away until *after* I was married.

After I was married? Honestly, his words really irritated me. *Why after I’m married?* My boyfriend and I had broken up and there wasn’t anyone waiting in the wings! This was all I could think as my dad shared his thoughts. Though I didn’t agree, I respected his advice. I believed God was using him to speak to me (even though it didn’t feel like it made sense).

I wonder if Joseph ever experienced pressure to find a spouse and begin a family, which I often see in the lives of the singles I love. It’s as if there is some sort of time clock, ticking away, sending the covert message: *Your life doesn’t begin until you’re someone’s someone.*

Sometimes, like my father said to me, we can say to our Father God, “I can’t move forward until my relationship status changes.”

Read 1 Corinthians 7:8, 34–35.

Paul’s advice goes directly against my dad’s, I know!

How do you see Paul’s wisdom played out in your own life if you are single or in the life of one you know who is single?

Paul goes on to shoot straight with the Corinthians: “But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this” (1 Corinthians 7:28).

Paul states that the greatest status *is* single status. If you are single and are able to see this and direct your energies to serving your First Love, Paul says you have the opportunity to reach your potential distraction-free! Key word: *if*.

Here is another opportunity to go against culture’s message that you need someone to be someone, to not base our “success” on whether or not we have a significant other. Yes, God absolutely created relationships. He created Adam . . . and then He created Eve. Rich and intimate relationships enhance our lives, making them richer and fuller. But we do not need *someone* to complete us. We are not “less than” or a partial person until we find someone. We are already complete in Christ; deeply loved by Him.

It is on this truth that we build our self-worth: we are the bride of Christ. *This* relationship status will last forever and will forever stay the same!

Our reality is that any one of us could go to bed married tonight and find ourselves alone tomorrow, while the reverse could also be true. Not so in our relationship with the Lord! Song of Songs 6:3 tells us, “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.” And that is not going to change!

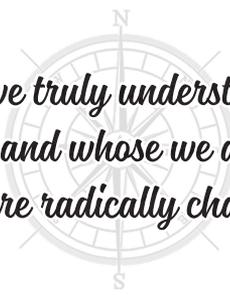
Wise Joseph didn’t build his confidence on the faulty foundation of a human relationship status.

Although I didn’t completely grasp the whats and whys of her actions, as a young girl I witnessed my mother reading her Bible every day. Sitting in her chair with God’s Word in her lap, she began each day by filling her heart with God’s truth.

Growing up, Mom’s family life was more than shaky. She had not seen unconditional love; quite the opposite. At the time when she came to know Jesus in a personal way, her confidence was all but gone. She had come to know Him out of her desperation. As she built her newfound faith, she began to overcome her unstable confidence, and by doing so

she taught me how powerful our God is. I learned by watching her: true security comes from Someone, Jesus.

When we truly understand who we are and whose we are, our lives are radically changed!



*When we truly understand who
we are and whose we are, our
lives are radically changed!*

Emerging from the van, the stench pushed me back. Having never witnessed deep poverty like this before, the raw sewage and animal waste filling the trench-lined streets caught me off guard. Even the fumes couldn't extinguish my excitement for the day, though. This day, my friend Amy Carroll and I were witnessing firsthand the life change God was bringing to small, slum communities through the work of Mission India.

Steps from our vehicle, Josh, our Mission India host, led us to the home we were invited to visit.

Slipping off my shoes, I stepped across the threshold and there she stood. Strong. Beaming.

The soft, delicate, blush-shaded sari swirled around her slender frame as Sunita stood at the entrance greeting us. Her gentle, yet sparkling eyes twinkled as a smile swept her sun-worn face.

Her grace in this residence of deprivation, her loveliness amidst the stench of sewage and sights of scarcity, were so out of place.

Josh introduced this woman, now recognized in her community as a leader, as a woman who brings change. She had not always been.

Unable to read or perform basic math, Sunita had been trapped in poverty without these necessary life skills. Sunita is a part of a social class that for centuries told those in it that they are worth less than nothing.

This social class is not small. Hundreds of millions of Indians have been trapped in poverty, and continue to be, simply because of the origin of their birth.

Her culture has also told her of another strike against her: she is a woman. She has been told from her very beginning that she has no value; she is an untouchable.

Then several years ago, Sunita was invited to a literacy class by Mission India, where she would be given the one thing she had never experienced: opportunity. She took it.

In this Bible-based class, Sunita gained not only the power to read and calculate, but she met Jesus. Her life was transformed. Her religion had taught her, based on the social class of her birth, she was less than nothing. The cows roaming the streets of this village were of greater worth than Sunita.

Through the Mission India literacy class, the lies spoken over her and to her were slowly stripped away. Sunita began to see just how the One True God saw her, as His precious daughter, His bride, the one He was compelled by love to come for. Through the Scripture shared in the literacy books, she learned that she was not worth less than nothing; just as Proverbs 31:10 says, she was worth more than rubies!

This was what I saw beaming through Sunita's smile and the joy radiating from her eyes. Eyes that before would have only looked at the ground now could look me eye-to-eye. She is of great worth and now she knows.

Through our translator, we began to hear her story. With this new and powerful knowledge of Christ, Sunita's heart began to burn to bring this life-changing Truth to the women of her community. She became an informal teacher, bringing her newfound hope to the poor in her slum. When five families in community came to know Christ, she was inspired to become a project manager, overseeing five Mission India literacy classes.

The confidence Sunita found in Christ was contagious. Sitting in the classroom that afternoon, I could see the same sparkle I witnessed in her

eyes on the faces of the beautiful Indian students in that room. They had gained knowledge; they could read to their children and calculate their costs at the market. But they were obtaining so very much more: confidence in their newfound identity as the bride of Christ.

What changed Sunita was truth. Truth changed the way she thought about herself, and when her thinking changed, she changed.

Like Sunita, we too can gain God's confidence when we fill our hearts and minds with His truth. When we build our confidence on Someone: Jesus.

Apply It

As you reflect on your life, where can you see in your past or in your present that you have built your confidence on someplace or on someone?

Today, write out this week's memory verse on your phone notes or a small card that can fit in your pocket. Set an alarm to remind yourself midway through your day to reflect on this truth: "But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him" (Jeremiah 17:7).



DAY FIVE



Some Thing Has Got to Go

MEMORY VERSE: “But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.”—Jeremiah 17:7 (NIV)

YESTERDAY WE REFLECTED ON JOSEPH and the foundation of his confidence. We saw that clearly he did not build his confidence on someplace or someone. He lacked both of these and yet demonstrated an unshakable faith in His God.

Joseph’s story also reveals that he didn’t build his confidence on something. If Joseph had built his confidence on something, such as his family’s wealth, it would have slipped away the moment his new owner started the long trip to Egypt. Yet it never did.

The things we own can give us so much happiness and just as quickly cause us so much sorrow. So shiny and new, they glitter and twinkle as they promise boundless bliss. We work hard, sacrifice our time, energy, sometimes even our emotions to obtain them. Our hearts tell us, “When I finally get _____, then I’ll have arrived.” Finally, we can be happy and secure.

I know, we’ve been told: “Follow your heart.” But that has been very unwise advice. In fact, God’s Word tells us just the opposite: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who



can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9 ESV). We can’t follow our hearts. They lie to us! Burdening us, causing us to feel as though we don’t have what we “need,” we fix our happiness on obtaining what seems out of reach. I know; I’ve done it and regretted the results.

I’ve found that all too often these belongings, these things that we had to have, become baggage at some point down the road. The house has to be kept up, taking away time from those I love. Other possessions come first with payments, later with repairs. The resources I would have shared with others instead are used to keep my “thing” going. When times are hard and the thing we *had* to have, now needs to go, will our confidence go with it?

There are so many “things” that can fill the description of *our* something: decorating, fashion, makeup, fitness, vacations, nature, career, and the list goes on. They have all been my “thing” at some stage of my life. They are not bad; in fact, most of them are good. But things are to be the “add-ons” in life, the icing on the cake, not the substance of it. When we look to things to fill the deep needs of our hearts, we are regularly disappointed.

 **Take a moment to reflect on your life. List some things you have used to bring you happiness and security.**

 **What has been the result?**



Read 1 Corinthians 7:31.**What does Paul warn us about our things?**

Sometimes our things are not tangible. Consider knowledge, for instance. *Education? How could gaining more education ever be wrong?* When we choose to build our confidence on it. When our worth and self-esteem rest on our scholarship, we can slip all too easily into self-reliance and self-righteousness. Anything on which we can build our confidence rather than Christ has the ability to work against us.

Joseph could have easily relied upon his intelligence. He was obviously one smart man to land a job as second in command of all of Egypt! Yet, as we see him interact down the road with his brothers, he lays down his social status that has come with his intellect and success and relates humbly with his brothers (Genesis 42). In fact, like the women of Exodus, he states that the reason for his actions is his fear of God (42:18).

Read 1 Corinthians 1:19-21, 26-31.**Why would God make such a promise in verse 19?**

Knowledge is so enticing. Education is good, but there is a line in gaining knowledge where temptation crosses over and we become prideful. We can ask ourselves: For what purpose am I learning? To build my own self-worth or for the purpose of glorifying God? If we look at Genesis 3:6, we can read how giving honor to God was not Eve's motivation for gaining knowledge because she disobeyed God in order to obtain it. Life

is dangerous when our confidence is based on our knowledge. There will always be someone smarter or wiser to knock us off the top.

What if Joseph's something that he built his confidence on was his looks? We're told he was handsome. This ended up being the very thing that got Joseph thrown in prison; his asset caused him a deficit! He lost his freedom.

Getting ready for work, the radio commercial arrested me. *Be ideal! Everyone deserves to be their best!* From there, the ad promised to help me get rid of anything I didn't like about my body and replace it with whatever I wanted. As I looked in the mirror, frustration took me over. *Be ideal?* God has already said I *am* ideal! In fact, Song of Songs 4:7 says, "You are altogether beautiful, my darling; there is no flaw in you." That's one to write on your mirror!

Joseph didn't build his confidence on someone, someplace, or something—all things that could and were taken from him. He built his confidence on the one thing *that could not be taken from him*; he built his confidence on God.

If the daughters of Z had based their confidence on someone, like the men in their family supporting them, they would have had none. Often, we rely on the support or approval of someone to take courageous steps. I don't see that type of support surrounding the sisters, yet they moved forward.

If they had looked to the Israelite leadership remembering them and coming through for them, their confidence would have been gone when they were forgotten. Maybe like me, you've had others say, "We're behind you. Go for it!" Yet, when the time came for action, the backing that was promised was nowhere to be found. The Israelite leadership didn't come *to* the women and say, "It's time you get what you have been waiting for!" The sisters had to push past rejection again and again, persevere, and remind the leadership of what God had promised them. They had to keep their eyes on the One who made the promise.

Having a someone, whether that is a significant other, a best friend, or a supportive family, is wonderful and good for us. Placing all of our faith in them is not.

If the women had based their confidence on someplace, such as having a home, a place where they belonged, their confidence would have faltered. They didn't fit into the standard for their society. They didn't belong. They had to keep their focus on the One to whom they belonged.

If they had based their confidence on something, such as success, education, position, or even physical beauty, as time waned their confidence could have waned as well. They had to keep their confidence on one thing: God's Word. He had said that *all* were to receive an inheritance.

Based on their perseverance, we can determine that the daughters of Z had a confidence that did not come from someone, someplace, or something, but on God, the One who would not forget them. The One who would never change His mind. The One who would keep His promise.

We too must not build our confidence on someone, someplace, or something, but on God, the only One that cannot be taken from us.

Apply It

As we wrap up our time this week with the daughters of Z, what have you faced or what are you facing that is blocking the way of you being a more confident you? What is standing in the way of you making your move?

Is it a dream like Joseph's that hasn't come to pass yet, so you've thought: *I guess that wasn't God. Life is passing me by; it's too late now.*

Maybe like the daughters of Z, you have had something taken from you; something has been lost. Your family, your home, your health, your reputation, your hope, or what you thought was your future is gone.

Maybe you've felt that in order to be confident, you needed more. You see others experience the success you want, but you don't have the confidence it takes to step out and take a risk. You've seen others receive the affirmation or the "yes" that you are looking for, and each day you



compare yourself to *them*. You know who they are. *No wonder she's confident. I would be too if I had what she's got. If I just had more.* You think what you don't have is holding you back: a lack of education, opportunity, connections.

I get that. I've been there . . . as in last week. Rejection still comes even after you've experienced success a time or two. I too have faced situations when I felt I needed more. I needed more education, more connections, more creativity, more opportunities, more favor, more energy, more personality.

 **Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you what is truly in the way of you stepping out. If specific words come to mind, write them below.**

Now, pray and ask Him to do what only He can do.

Dear Lord,

I need healing; heal me.

I need to forgive; empower me.

I need courage; fill me.

I need approval; reveal Your approval to me.

I need hope; open my eyes to Yours.

Lord, do in me what only You can do. In Jesus's name, Amen.



Group Discussion Questions

Read this week's memory verse aloud as a group, or select an individual to do so: "But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him."—Jeremiah 17:7 (NIV)

1. Lynn said, "Each time you have attempted to step out in a direction you feel God calling you to, your confidence was challenged." Have you experienced this in your life? Why would this be?
2. What does "stuck and stopped are not the same thing" mean to you today?
3. What do you think is the root of the belief that we don't "deserve" the blessings of God in our lives?
4. Genesis 16:13 says that one of God's names is "the God who sees." When you hear this name, what is the first thought that comes to mind? Share a time in your life when you have felt God *didn't* see you.
5. What do you resonate with most about the example of confidence we have in the daughters of Zelophehad?

Read together Numbers 27:1–2.

It didn't just take courage to approach the Tent of Meeting; these women believed in the Lord, that He is faithful and that He would provide.

End your time together praying one at a time for the confidence of the daughters of Z to approach the Lord and ask for what you need today.