

Confessions of a Pastor  
*I Often Feel Insecure*

For most of my life I've felt insecure and inadequate. There, I've said it. Now I really feel insecure and inadequate since I've just told all of you and a whole lot more people will find out because this is posted on the internet.

What's interesting is, there's lots of you who can feel insecure in life but you'll never get up and say anything about it. Just like I wouldn't be saying it if I wasn't doing this sermon series. Over the years I've had countless people in counseling situations admit their insecurities.

They feel like they can't handle school, they can't handle relationships, they can't handle marriage. They feel inadequate as a parent, as a spouse, or at their job. Christians feel inadequate in serving God. That's one of the reasons why people say, "I'll help out with that, but I don't want to be in charge."

There are a variety of feelings of insecurity.

I certainly have them. For 18 years we worshipped in a little 5000 square foot building. We had 2 services and we used that building hard. But in the last month before we dedicated this new building we averaged about 225 people a week in worship. The first Sunday we met here we had nearly 400 people in worship. I remember sitting on the front row praying before the service, "God, what have I gotten myself into? How am I going to effectively minister to that many people? I'm far less than adequate for the job."

Why is it that we often feel inadequate for the responsibilities of life? If you think about it there's any number of reasons.

We come into this world as helpless infants who are totally dependent on others. We begin to grow as kids and we look around and realize that all the important people in our life like parents and teachers and coaches are all bigger, stronger, smarter than we are. They all have the authority and we just do what they say.

Here's the primary reason most people have some sort of inferiority complex. We start off life inferior. We're programmed that way by life itself.

But there's another, even more consequential reason for feelings of insecurity. The Bible says that God created us in His image. Of all created life, only people are made in the image of God. The image of God includes the human ability to think and reason, to use language and art, to make moral decisions, which involve self-awareness and social awareness, and the ability to have a relationship with God.

Michael Morrison writes, People who have low intelligence and limited dominion are, if they love God and neighbor, closer to the desired image of God than a wicked genius dictator is. Mental skills and rulership are God-like only if they are used in a moral way. Morality is the standard by which thoughts and actions are judged, so I conclude that, although cognition and dominion are aspects of the divine image, morality is a more significant aspect.

When God created Adam and Eve they were innocent. They hadn't sinned. At that point they shared the image of God in a unique way.

But then the Bible tells us that Adam and Eve chose to disobey their Creator. God had warned Adam *"Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."* Genesis 2:17

Eve and Adam both ate in spite of God's warning but neither of them dropped over and died physically. They did die that day though. They died spiritually, and eventually they died physically.

The Bible teaches that from that day on everyone is born into the world spiritually dead. We're descendants of Adam. That's why we need a new, spiritual birth from God. We're born into the world with that "image of God" marred and distorted.

At first Adam and Eve weren't struggling with feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. They knew where they came from, why they were here, and what their future was and had confidence in their God.

As soon as they sinned everything changed. All of a sudden their lives were characterized by fear, guilt, and confusion. Their confidence was gone because their perfect, unbroken relationship with God was now shattered.

Fast forward to us and our lives. We put our trust in Jesus Christ and we're born again. We're given a new life. We're made part of God's eternal family.

We're given a new life but as long as we're walking this earth we still have that sin

nature we were born with. We saw this a few weeks ago. The Bible says, *The sinful nature does not want what the Spirit delights in. And the Spirit does not want what the sinful nature delights in. The two are at war with each other. That's what makes you do what you don't want to do.* Galatians 5:16-17 NIRV

It's that sinful nature that reinforces those feelings of insecurity. So what's the answer?

*I. Our Sufficiency Comes From God*

### **Turn to II Corinthians chapter 3 Page 1026**

This is the second letter of an apostle of Jesus named Paul to a church in Corinth Greece. Paul was a brilliant, well educated man. But when he first arrived in Corinth he was the only Christian in town. Corinth was a wicked, cosmopolitan city.

Think about how you'd feel. He was there to start a church with a bunch of pagans who didn't know the first thing about the Bible. Where do you even start?

Here's how Paul described that initial visit. *I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.* I Corinthians 2:3 His knees were knocking. I can relate to that.

He ended up starting a church that grew into a real thriving ministry. But after he left other religious teachers showed up and told the people that Paul was a phony apostle and not to listen to him.

That wouldn't have bothered him so much if it was just about him but those teachers were turning the people away from God's truth. So Paul writes II Corinthians as a defence of his apostleship.

### **Read 3:1-3**

Apparently these religious teachers who were confusing the church had some kind of recommendation letters. They said, "Hey, this Paul doesn't have credentials like we do."

Warren Wiersbe writes, "It's a sad thing when a person measures his worth by what people say about him instead of by what God knows about him."

So Paul writes, "Do we need letters? We've got them. It's you. You're our letter written by God's Spirit."

## Read verses 4-5

Here's the first step to dealing with our feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. Realize that for all practical purposes we are inadequate. If we try to do life on our own with our defective image of God and all our human limitations we may accomplish some things, but they won't be spiritually lasting.

This is why so many people reach their goals in life and then turn around and say, "Is this all there is? I've made the money, I've earned the title, I have the house and the cars and I'm realizing there has to be something more to life."

God is a spiritual being and when He created us in His image He made us body soul and spirit. We can so focused on the material part of life that it's easy to try to live as if the spiritual doesn't matter.

When Jesus said in John 15:5 *I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing*, He didn't mean we can't get an education, or grow a business, or even start a church.

What He meant was without Him we can't do anything in the spiritual realm and the spiritual realm is the only thing that's lasting. The spiritual realm is the ultimate, eternal reality.

Jesus was real clear about the future of this world. He said, *Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.* Luke 21:33

How about this II Peter 3:10 *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*

The Apostle John lets us in on the vision God gives him of the future: *Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.* Revelation 21:1

The material is temporary, the spiritual is forever.

Now, the Bible teaches that everything in life has a spiritual dimension. **Turn to Colossians 3 Page 1047**

**Read verses 12-13** This is interpersonal relationships

**Read verses 17** That's an all encompassing statement that introduces the next verses

**Read verses 18-24** Wives, husbands, children, parents, employees

Here's why Jesus said, Without Me you can do nothing. Here's why we're not sufficient in ourselves but our sufficiency is from God. Because God says all of life is spiritual.

If we compartmentalize our lives and think that work, family, school, and relationships are all just stuff we have to do, but coming to church, reading the Bible, praying are spiritual and we need God it's no wonder we can feel insecure and inadequate for life. We've left our source of sufficiency out of the equation.

*I. Our Sufficiency Comes From God*

*II. We Are Able To Do Whatever God Has For Us*

### **Back to II Corinthians 3 Page 1026 Read verses 5-6**

This morning we're not going to get into the whole subject of law and grace that's being introduced by verse 6 but I just want us to focus on the statement, *who also made us sufficient...*

The Paul who wrote these words had quite a resume. He was a Jewish man who could say this about himself: *If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.* Philippians 3:5-6

Paul was trained at the feet of one of the greatest rabbis of the day, Gamaiel. But when he became a believer in Jesus and God sent him to the non-Jewish world of his day he didn't have anything to stand on but the message of Jesus and the cross.

This is how he describes first coming to Corinth. *And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.* I Corinthians 2:1-2

The Greeks loved debate and rhetoric but this was a spiritual job so Paul didn't want to try to talk anybody into believing anything. He just spoke to the pagan Corinthians about Jesus.

We can do whatever it is that God has for us. Ultimately it all comes down to being willing to be used by God and being willing to apply the simple straightforward commands of the Bible.

I was raised in an extremely dysfunctional family. When I got married I didn't have much to draw on from my growing up years. But as I let God control my life and Sandy and I made Him the center of our marriage I could be the husband I'm supposed to be. I learned it from God through the Bible.

When it came time to raise children I was in the same boat. I was woefully inadequate and I knew it. But I also knew that I could do whatever God had for me so again I used His Word, the Bible, to give me the direction.

You know what really encourages me, as I look at my rather ordinary talents and abilities? I just look at the men that Jesus chose to be His disciples. He chose some fishermen, a hated tax collector (who would have been considered a collaborator with the occupiers since he worked for the Romans), and on the opposite end of the spectrum a revolutionary.

In Acts 4 Peter and John are referred to as "uneducated and untrained" men. These were ordinary men who were nobodies as far as the religious world was concerned. Jesus didn't choose one Pharisee or Sadducee, or scribe. Those were the spiritually elite guys but Jesus passed them all by.

He chose 12 ordinary, sinful, insecure, often confused people to be the men He would entrust with the most important mission in the whole world.

In the Gospels we get to see these guys fight with each other about who was the greatest among them, respond to some of Jesus' questions with absolute cluelessness, and then hide in fear after Jesus crucifixion even though Jesus told them it was coming but He was going to rise from the dead.

That encourages me. That tells me there's still hope for me. In fact listen to this: ... *the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.*

*But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. I*  
Corinthians 1:25-29

Craig Groeschel writes, "If you feel like me- too stupid, too sinful, too mistake prone...if you feel like you'll never measure up, that you don't have what it takes...if you feel like

your best isn't good enough...embrace this:  
God has prepared you to make a difference in the world."

You may not make the front page of the Washington Post but God has called you to make a difference in your little corner of the world, which He will use to make a difference in the rest of the world.

God will use us if we come to Jesus Christ by faith and then yield ourselves with all our insecurities to Him.

Back in that Acts 4 passage where Peter and John are called uneducated and untrained, Peter had just spoken to some of Israel's spiritually elite. He had just spoken boldly to some of the same guys who had orchestrated the crucifixion of Jesus and this is what it says: *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.* Acts 4:13

This is the same Peter who cursed and swore and denied he even knew Jesus when Jesus was arrested. Now he's put his fears and his insecurities behind him and just let God have control of his life and it's obvious to everyone around that Jesus had rubbed off on him. That he'd been with Jesus.

That's a question we need to answer for ourselves. When people look at our lives and our attitudes, when they hear our speech and see our actions do they marvel and say, "She must have been hanging out with Jesus." "He must have spent time with Jesus because he's just an average guy."

- I. Our Sufficiency Comes From God*
- II. We Are Able To Do Whatever God Has For Us*
- III. God's Strength Is Made Perfect By Our Weakness*

**Back one last time to II Corinthians, this time to chapter 12. Page 1032**

We looked at this a few weeks ago when we talked about dealing with the same sins over and over in our lives.

Paul was a privileged man. He'd been in some face-to-face meetings with God Himself. Paul could have easily been pretty proud and arrogant. He could have thought, "You know, I'm really special. This isn't happening to anyone else so God must think I'm better than the rest of these common, average peons."

So God headed that off at the pass **Read verse 7**

There's some debate about exactly this "thorn in the flesh" is but we do know from other passages that Paul had severe eye problems and had to dictate his letters to someone who could see to write.

**Flip back a page to 10:10 Read verse 10.**

It could be that what ever was going on with his eyes gave him a funny appearance.

**Back to Chapter 12 Read 8**

He says, " I prayed repeatedly that God would heal this thing so that I could just get on with traveling around, starting churches, and serving Him."

**Read verses 9-10**

Think about what's being said here. If we were just the greatest natural born parents, husbands, wives, students, Bible teachers, pre-school teachers, or whatever, then when we did a great job all the attention would be on us. People would say "Aren't they just the greatest!" We'd be in the spotlight.

We don't deserve to be in the spotlight. We don't need to be in the spotlight. God does. Without Him we're nothing.

It's because of Him that we have life. It's because of Him that we can think and communicate. It's because of Him that we're forgiven. It's because of Him that we have the direction in the Bible for living life.

It's not about us at all. It's all about Him.

So God delights in showing His perfect strength through our weakness.

How about another example? Let's take a look at Moses. **Turn to Exodus 4 Page 53**

When you think of Moses what do you see? Do you see some big guy who looks like Charlton Heston in his younger years giving these bold, eloquent speeches? Do you see a fearless, bold leader with his hair blowing in the wind?

Listen to this. God calls Moses to lead the Jewish people out of slavery in Egypt. And just to really encourage him God shows him he can turn his walking staff into a snake and then pick it up and turn it back into a walking stick. That's impressive.

But instead of zeroing in on God's grace and power Moses turns it all around and

makes it about himself.. **Read verse 10**

Moses says, "I'm no public speaker. I wasn't before this whole burning bush thing and I certainly not now. Besides, I stutter and stumble over my words."

Of all the people for God to choose to address the Pharaoh of Egypt, the most powerful man in the world at the time, He chooses a guy with a speech impediment.

And Moses says, "God you can do better. Choose some one who loves public speaking and can pronounce his words right. God, I know you're omniscient and all that but You've made a big mistake here. I'm not the guy for the job."

Can you identify with that? When you hear messages here, or read Bible passages on parenting God's way, or forgiving others, or sharing your faith, or having a godly commitment to generosity, or living a moral life do you think, "God, you must be talking to someone else because that's just not me. God you must have made a mistake here."

Listen, God never makes mistakes. He knows you. He knows your insecurities, your weaknesses, and all your failures.

One man said "God doesn't choose the prepared, He prepares the chosen."

You don't have to be ready for God to use you. If you're like me you'll never feel ready. God prepares us with on-the-job training.

Look at this. God speaks to Moses greatest point of insecurity by asking him some questions. **Read 11-12**

Here's the point. God will use you in spite of your insecurities. In fact, He'll often use you where you're most insecure.

I got a D in a freshman English class at Indiana University because we had to do public speaking. I'd just get up and blank out. I was going to leave school if I had to do any more speeches.

Some of my first sermons, along with being pretty disjointed, were sheer terror for me. I'd say to Sandy, "I think I have the flu. I'm hot and feel like I'm going to be sick to my stomach."

I had to preach a message at Faith Bible Church in Sterling, Virginia when I was doing my internship for seminary. When I was finished and was walking down the hall a guy who had been in the children's ministry and missed the message said to the guy

next to me, "What was his main point?" The fellow thought for a minute and said, "I don't know." He turned to me and said "What was your main point?" You know what the really scary thing was? I didn't know either. I didn't have a clue. Obviously there was no main point to the message.

God's had to do a boat load of work on me. And He still does. But some how I get up here week after week and you keep coming back.

I don't feel qualified. I've already told you I struggle with some of the same sins over and over, sometimes I'm afraid to give God complete control, and I have an ADD prayer life. Now I'm admitting I go through life feeling insecure and unqualified.

All that's true but here's the key for me. I've come to experientially understand what it really means when the Bible says *All things were created through Him and for Him.* Colossians 1:16

Life isn't about my abilities and strengths. And it's not about your abilities or lack of abilities. It's about God's abilities and strengths. And God's abilities are unlimited.

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