

## Proven Answers to Self-Doubt

Have you ever heard of imposter syndrome? Imposter syndrome is a term that's given to people that are in a situation, maybe they're at a job or they're with, dating someone and they feel like they don't deserve to be there. They're an imposter. You know, sometimes you hear that phrase, you fake it till you make it.

Well, imposter syndrome is you've been faking it for a long time, but you don't feel like you've made it. It's that self-doubt that creeps up that makes you think, I'm not worthy. I shouldn't be here.

And we might think that that's only something that a few people have that are in situations that are above their heads. But you know, there are people who are some of the highest thought of people that had some self-doubts. Today, we're going to look at a biblical character that might've had some self-doubts and how another biblical leader helped to encourage him to overcome them.

You know, probably one of the most important second generation preachers that come out of the biblical text is that of Timothy. He was Paul's protege, you know, he was not his actual son, but Paul refers to Timothy as my son in the faith, right? He expected Timothy to take on the ministry that he was there. And as you read about Timothy, you see that he'd kind of been set aside by God, by elders.

For his entire life, people had said he was the guy. But yet when you read what Paul writes to Timothy, it seems like he might've had some self-doubt. Consider what Paul writes in 2 Timothy 1, verse 7, we said, God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power, love, and discipline.

That word there, timidity, is basically a fear that comes from an inadequacy, right? You're not enough. And he's telling Timothy, don't feel that way. You know, earlier in 1 Timothy 4, verse 12, he would tell Timothy, let no one look down on you because of your youthfulness.

I don't know if people were looking down on him or definitely Timothy felt like people were looking down on him, but we see hints throughout 1 and 2 Timothy that Timothy might've struggled with self-doubt. And I'm sure that's something that you may struggle with, I struggle with,

everyone struggles with. We struggle with that idea that we're not good enough, that we can't make it.

Well, I want you to consider what some of the things that Paul says to Timothy in 1 and 2 Timothy that will help us to overcome that self-doubt. And let's start by looking at chapter 1 of 1 Timothy. If you go down to verses 13 and 14, it's interesting because Paul here gives Timothy his history.

He says, you know what I went through, you know where I came from. You know, Paul didn't start off as a hero for Christianity, he started off as the enemy of Christianity. And you see Paul telling Timothy that.

Why would he tell him that? Timothy knew these things. Why? Well, he's reminding him, he's saying, look at where I started and look at where God's mercy got me. Paul would say in those verses how he was achieved, why? Because of God's grace and mercy.

But then notice what he says in verse 15, he says, this is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am foremost of all. Paul says, you know my history, you know where I came from, you know what I did. And look what God has been able to do with me.

And he said, here's something that's true for everyone. A statement that deserves full acceptance. Christ Jesus came in the world to save sinners of whom I am foremost of all.

Paul isn't just saying he's the foremost, but we all feel that way. When we sin, we were that sinner. And what he's reminding Timothy here is, you're not perfect.

No one is. You know, sometimes we have so much self-doubt because we know all our imperfections, right? We look around and say, people don't know the thoughts that pop in my head. People don't know the mistakes that I've made.

People don't realize how bad that I am. Let me tell you, God knows those things and he still thinks you're worth it. You're not perfect and that's okay.

You're not perfect. You don't do everything wonderful. You're gonna make mistakes.

And you need to know that. To overcome self-doubt is not to fool yourself into thinking you don't make mistakes. That's just arrogant braggery that leads to ruin.

But true overcoming self-doubt and having confidence comes from realizing you're not perfect. You're a sinner that Christ came to save. And I think Paul here is reminding Timothy, hey, I know I'm not perfect.

I know you're not perfect. But what we do have is a perfect Savior. And because of Him, we have worth.

Notice what he would continue on. If you go to chapter 4, he's talking there in verses 1 through 4 and he's telling Timothy about there are going to be people who fall away. There are going to be people who don't like your preaching.

There are going to be people who want to hear things that only build them up. And he warns them not to worry about them. He says, make sure you're doing what you're doing, right? You're preaching the Word.

In verses 6 through 8, he reminds Timothy to make sure he knows he's doing what he's supposed to. He's preaching the Word. He's doing what God said.

As one person said, he used to tell young people, he says, make sure you're where you're supposed to be, when you're supposed to be, doing what you're supposed to do. And that's basically what he tells Timothy. Make sure no matter what other people are trying to pressure you into, you're doing what you're supposed to do.

Notice what he says in verses 9 through 10, another trustworthy statement. Here's a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. For this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of the believers.

Now why would he say that? He said, this is what we're working for. What? We fixed our hope on the living God. You see, one way you overcome self-doubt is by trying to eliminate who you don't need to be pleasing.

You must ask yourself that question. Who are you trying to please? You know, we may have doubts because people around us are saying we're

not good enough or we're not worthy enough or we're not doing what they expect us to do, but we have to ask ourselves, are those the people we're trying to please? Are we trying to just please ourselves? Is that why we feel like we're not leading up? But if we set our focus on pleasing God, we serve the true and living God, we fix our hope on Him, then we can have assurance. We don't have to doubt because we know what God wants of us.

We know His expectations of us. You know, if you want to eliminate self-doubt, you need to ask yourself that question. Who am I trying to please? Am I trying to please people who will never be pleased, who are always going to be critical, who are always going to be finding fault? Am I just trying to please myself and knowing that I can't do that? Or am I putting my focus on trying to please God, trying to do the right thing? And if I'm trying to do that, then I don't need to doubt what I'm doing.

Notice what later Paul would say if you move over to the book of 2 Timothy. In the first chapter there, we talked about what, in verse 7, where he told that God does not want us to operate in self-doubt, but that spirit of timidity, right? God's not giving us a spirit of timidity, right? He's saying, I don't want you working in a way that you have all this self-doubt and unsureness. But in verses 8-11, he says, you're going to go through some tough times.

Notice what he said there. He said, you know the struggles that I've been through. You know the suffering that I'm going to be.

You know, Paul would say, if you're a Christian, you should expect to suffer. It's going to come with the territory. But notice what he says in verse 12.

He says, for this reason also I suffer these things, but I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am convinced that he is able to guard that which I've entrusted him to that day. He said, I'll go through suffering, but he said, I'm not ashamed. We think of that word, I'm not ashamed.

You know, ashamed means you feel bad, right? Oh, I've done something wrong. And a lot of times when we face difficulty, we think, I must have done something wrong. But don't let your setbacks breed self-doubt.

Trust in God's purpose. What does Paul tell Timothy there? He says, I know whom I have believed in and I am convinced that he is able to

guard that which I've entrusted him to the day. Here he says, I'm not putting my confidence in myself, but I'm putting my confidence in God.

And I know God is able to deliver. So when I have those setbacks, when I have those difficulty, I don't allow it to shake me and make me timid and afraid. You know, in life, you're not always going to be successful.

Nobody wins every game. Nobody ever makes an A on every test. You're going to have setbacks.

You're going to have failures. Even in your spiritual life, you don't go every day being perfect. You probably don't go every hour being perfect.

And if we think we are, well, we've got problems of our own. But what he's telling us here is to entrust into him who can keep us. Put your confidence in him.

Don't allow the setbacks to throw you back. Notice what he goes on to chapter two. In chapter two, he's telling Timothy some interesting lessons.

I call it field training because he uses examples from the battlefield, from the sports field, from the farmer's field. Talking about how a soldier doesn't entangle himself in certain things, right? An athlete must compete according to the rules. The farmer waits for the rain.

You know, he's given these examples here and he tells Timothy, you think about these things and you'll figure them out. Because he knew Timothy was a student of God's word, right? And then in verses eight through ten, he says, but don't forget Christ Jesus. Remember Christ Jesus.

Remember why you're doing this, right? Remember what you've set yourself to. Then notice he gives us another trustworthy statement in second Timothy chapter two in verse 11 when he says, this is a trustworthy statement. If we died with him, we will also live with him.

If we endure, we will also reign with him. If we deny him, he will also deny us. But if we are faithless, he remains faithful for he cannot deny himself.

Now why is he telling Timothy this? Here he's telling Timothy, you know, here's some tips and tricks. Here's some things that you need to be doing. Put your faith.

Remember Jesus Christ. But he says, here's a trustworthy statement. Notice in that statement he says, if we died with him, we'll live with him.

The reference there is we die to the man of sin and are raised anew, right? In baptism, we are buried and raised again to a new life, right? If we've made that commitment, he says, and if we endure, we'll reign with him. In other words, he's telling us that we have this reward that comes from being in Christ Jesus. And if we stay faithful, we'll receive that reward.

But he says, but if we deny him, he will also deny us. But then he says, if we're faithless, he remains faithful. Now you may think, well, is he contradicting himself? Notice when we deny him is when we stop.

Being faithless is different than denial. Denial is when we say, well, I'm not going to do that anymore. What's faithless is we maybe don't do it as good as we're supposed to, as faithful.

But he says, he will remain faithful. You know, a lot of times people let self-doubt keep them from doing what they should do. I remember years ago, I knew a fella and he literally was a semester away from graduating college.

And the only requirement that he had left was to take a speech class. And he was so absolutely terrified of giving a speech that he dropped out of college. He gave up this degree that he had because he was so terrified of this.

And for years, he would do just about anything to keep himself from ever having to do any public speaking. Now for a lot of people, public speaking is a great fear. Right? But he had allowed that fear to keep him.

Well, finally, one day he was put in a class at church where they were training some men to do some work in the church and one of the things was to speak. And he was just about to lose himself and the person said, he goes, what's the worst thing that could happen to you? He said, no one's going to throw tomatoes at you. They're not going to do anything.

He said, you might as well do it. You have the chance. And he said, after he did it, he realized all those fears, they were pointless.

You know, nothing was going to happen. He wasn't going to die. And after he did it, he realized he was pretty good at it.

And there was a lot of potential there. But he would have never known that if he hadn't have tried. Sometimes we allow our self-doubt to keep us from doing things and that's what can cause failure.

You only fail if you don't try. If you try, if you continue, even if you might not be as faithful as you should have, God will deliver you. And that's why it's important we don't allow our self-doubt to keep us from doing things.

So many people, they're doubtful and they think, why even bother? Why not bother? Why not try? Why not continue? Just because you fail doesn't mean it's over. God can forgive. God can lead us to something.

Don't allow your self-doubt to be an end point for you. Overcome your self-doubt. Have that courage.

Consider how many times in scripture when God is talking to his people, he says, do not be afraid. He tells that to Joshua when he's taking over Moses. Do not be afraid.

I'll be with you. He tells his disciples, do not be afraid. Why? Because fear keeps us and convinces us that we're not good enough.

We can't overcome. It's not possible. But that's not what God tells us.

That's not what Paul told Timothy. You know why? Because Paul knew there was something in Timothy. And that's why he encouraged him.

He encouraged him to do more. He encouraged him to press on. He encouraged him to not give up.

He encouraged him to continue in God's purpose. And because of that, Timothy became something great. And his self-doubt didn't hold him back.

He was able to overcome it and become something great in the kingdom of God. And the same thing can happen for you if you don't allow your self-doubt to keep you from serving God.

Give yourself to God.

Follow his commitments.

Put him first.

And you'll find that you'll always be good enough for him.