

Foreword by Ed Welch

the secret to



confidence

How Believing in Jesus  
Changes Everything

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REBEKAH HANNAH

“My friend Bekah Hannah shows how our endless quest for identity—even when infused with good theology—becomes an emotional black hole that is never satisfied. She offers a better way, helping us break free from the self-focused search for identity so we can root our confidence in Christ, the immovable anchor of our souls. Read this book slowly and prayerfully, allowing the gospel truth within it to read you.”

—**Brian Walker**, director of operations, Anchored Virtual

“Like a skilled artist, Rebekah Hannah adds rich depth to our understanding of identity in Christ. She invites us to not only see but also to savor the confidence that becomes ours as we rest in who Christ is and what he has done. Through engaging stories, wise insights, and biblical clarity, Rebekah consistently brings us back to what matters most: True confidence is not found in self-assurance but in a personal, abiding relationship with Jesus Christ.”

—**Jonathan D. Holmes**, executive director, Fieldstone Counseling

“If you have ever felt unconfident, identity confused, or hopelessly messed up, here is a book to gently guide you to what will steady your heart and compel you toward a life of purpose. Rebekah Hannah’s new book, *The Secret to Confidence*, opened my eyes to fresh insights about my identity and union with Jesus that caused deep biblical truths to somehow drop down more deeply into my heart. I hope it will for you too!”

—**Ellen Mary Dykas**, Bible teacher and author of  
*Toxic Relationships: Taking Refuge in Christ*

“Modern identity creation is exhausting, while having our identity in Christ often feels like a tired trope shaped by our desire for self-esteem. Using honest, authentic stories, Hannah anchors the static idea of identity in the dynamic reality of Jesus. She moves us from simply knowing the theological position to experiencing the relief of active confidence in the only Person who determines our stability when we cannot.”

—**Dr. Michael Keller**, senior pastor of Redeemer  
Presbyterian Church-Lincoln Square

“Rebekah Hannah reminds us that confidence is not found by looking inward, but instead by fixing our eyes on the person and work of Jesus Christ. With humility and humor, she weaves biblical insight and counseling wisdom into an accessible, practical, and richly pastoral resource. I read *The Secret to Confidence* during a season of sorrow and discouragement—I was convicted, challenged, comforted, and ultimately led to a renewed confidence in Christ. I believe you will be too.”

—Eric M. Schumacher, author of *The Good Gift of Weakness: God’s Strength Made Perfect in the Story of Redemption*

“As someone who works with teens often and knows quite well the roller-coaster ride of identity formation, this book feels like a breath of fresh air. It puts words to what I aim to communicate. I’m grateful for Bekah’s gentle yet clear reminder that our identity can never be in performance, experience, or role; instead, we must root ourselves in the Giver of our identity. This book helps readers better understand what that means in everyday life and the freedom it brings as we place our confidence in Christ.”

—Kristin L. Kellen, EdD, PhD, associate professor of biblical counseling, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Even though I am fully aware of what the source of my identity should be as a believer, at the time I picked up this book, I was in a season of paralyzing insecurity. Do you, like me, long to be filled with confidence but find your container a bit leaky? My friend Rebekah Hannah gently and graciously exposes the holes in our faulty thinking—and then patches them with gospel truth that bridges the gap between our heads and our hearts. What emerges is a working theology that actually holds. Bekah disarmingly goes first—laughing at herself, magnifying Christ, and inviting us to stop looking inward for confidence and start receiving it from a source far more secure than ourselves.”

—Abbey Wedgeworth, author of *Help! I’m Ruining My Kids* and the Training Young Hearts series

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REBEKAH HANNAH



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*To Manna and Jacki,  
who taught me that “normal” is overrated,  
and that real confidence doesn’t come  
from having it all together,  
but from the One who holds it all together.*



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# FOREWORD

BY ED WELCH

Think of this book as identity 2.0. Many of us have read about our identity in Jesus, and we have been inspired. But, too often, that identity feels just out of reach. If we keep trying, perhaps we'll get it. Other people seem to be thriving in it, so we must be missing something or slow to catch on. If we keep saying that our value is in Christ, the never-being-enough feeling might finally recede. The alternative is that maybe we really are failures, and we just have to learn to live with it. That is where this book begins.

Identity can be elusive. It's not quite the same with confidence—you know it when you see it. Some people seem to come by it naturally; others must have access to something sturdy, such as the security of a parent or spouse or competencies that assure them that they are up for the job.

From this small yet hopeful starting point, all of Scripture is eager to direct you to the Confidence of confidences. The Refuge, the Trust. The One who is a secure dwelling and a quiet resting place. It is God's desire that you know him as your confidence, which means that you can hold him to it. You can ask that he blesses you with it, and you keep asking until you notice that it

takes hold. That is where author Rebekah Hannah will partner with you in what is ahead.

The key is to hold loosely those things within yourself or your world that are sources of confidence. They are not necessarily bad. Many of them are gifts, and among them are those who love you well. They are intended to bless, encourage, and be enjoyed. They were never intended to be your confidence. So, you will be asked to identify those people and things that receive your trust. The experience of ancient Israel will help. They trusted in money and storehouses, which are the ancient equivalent of insurance policies. They trusted in their strength, their king, their family, their wits, and their ability to attract others. They trusted that they were *somebody*. With those confidences identified, the people were reminded of how God loved them when they were quite small. “It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is because the LORD loves you” (Deuteronomy 7:7-8). Then comes the satisfying process of divesting ourselves from false confidences and knowing God in Christ who introduces himself as if Confidence were another name by which we can come to him.

That is the gist of this book. For me, it reached into everyday life. It is hopeful, always helpful.

*Ed Welch, PhD,*

counselor and faculty member at the  
Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation

# INTRODUCTION

The irony that I don't feel confident about a book on confidence is not lost on me. I confessed this to my friend Jonathan, and he said to me, "Start there."

I've taught about confidence in Christ on and off throughout the last several decades. I'll readily admit, I'm not sure my engagement with these truths has gotten easier even as my understanding of them has deepened. If anything, the reality of a fallen world has crept into my perspective and showed me how much my confidence is not rooted in Christ more than I care to even know. My confidence, all too often, ebbs and flows along with my experiences. Sometimes it plummets right along with my circumstances, like an anchor not tethered to a boat. Other times it soars during my successes, like a balloon easily taken away into the sky. It can also flatline when I fail, like old, dead batteries that can't be resuscitated. I frequently catch myself relying on my job, my people, or my abilities. But those fail me time and time again, leaving my confidence plummeting to the depths. *Am I good enough? Am I smart enough? Will I make it? Do I have what it takes?* I may not be cognitively aware that I'm asking myself these questions, but I constantly function as if I need to have them answered.

This is typically where a conversation about identity comes to life. Whether it's friends writing books or pastors preaching a sermon, identity is a primary piece of Christian thought. This seems to be the go-to option when Christians are trying to figure out issues like life trajectories, theology of work, self-esteem, or suffering. How should we think about ourselves? Is it about self-love? Is it about self-care? God created us to be drawn toward glory, so we love to talk about value and worth. As humans, we long to be known, loved, and cared for. But all too often we wield God's glory as a self-help tool and build a shallow view of self-confidence, always leaving us wanting more.

Truth be told, I should be confident in how God made me. My being was made by God, the perfect artist, and my value comes from him. I am God's child, but I'm a work of art that's broken. I'm a chronic sinner-sufferer. I will always fall short. I will never get anything perfect. I will continually fall down and fail. I will fumble the ball and come up short. To have self-generated confidence in a fallen state is like putting a toddler in the NFL. We'd never do that to the poor thing. They'd get pummeled and die. Gruesome picture as that is, it's what happens when we try to have self-derived confidence based on ourselves. I can be a confident lawyer because I'm good at law. I can be a confident preacher because I study the Scriptures. I can be a confident soccer player because I run drills. But even after my best efforts, after my hard training and discipline, even after all my hard work, I will still have moments where I come up short.

When I don't measure up, am I supposed to be okay with it? How do I stay confident? How do I keep from wallowing in self-pity? What do I do when I'm feeling awful about myself? What do I do when I'm not who I want to be? How do I move forward with confidence when I sin? How do I enter hard conversations and take criticism when my value feels up for discussion? How do I obey Jesus when I know I'm a sinner? How do I teach the Bible knowing I'm a hypocrite? How do I parent my children amid the reality that I'm going

to mess it up? How do I raise kids to be confident in a culture that's constantly changing and sending them a different message other than Christ's? When I get rejected, when friendships fail, when I don't get the acceptance I so badly crave, how do I keep moving forward? When you don't want to be single, when your spouse has failed you, and when your bank account is empty, how do you move forward with confidence, especially when fear is palpable?

We don't and we can't. Not apart from Christ anyway. Not when left to ourselves and our own devices. If you met me, I would probably come across as a fairly confident person. But even the most seemingly stable people have their insecurities. Even the most prolific speaker stumbles over their words. Even the most affluent person doesn't have it all. Even the most gifted athlete fumbles the ball. Identity matters because it's God-given; it gives a clear description of who we are. We need that, but if we are going to leverage it just to make us feel better in moments of strain, we're missing out. Identity is set in stone. It comes from the person of Jesus. It was made certain on the cross; it is not up for discussion, nor does it change with the seasons of life. It's not based on how well we do or how much we fail. It just is. While identity in Christ makes our eternity sure, that security doesn't exist because of me. True stability comes from confidence in Christ alone. There is comfort in knowing I have identity in Christ that will never change, but identity is neither the object of my faith nor the producer of my value. If I'm confident in my identity, it will be because I'm first confident in Christ. I'm not *more* valuable because I'm found in Christ. Value doesn't come from what we own or what we are given. I'm valuable because I'm made by God the Creator.

Therefore, confidence doesn't come from my given identity; it comes from the Giver of my identity. Without that recognition, my identity won't change, but how I live my life will. That's why I've written this book. Identity answers who you are and what you have

because of Christ. You are a beloved son or daughter belonging to the King of kings. But not because you deserve these titles. Your value and confidence come from outside yourself—from your Maker. As you read, please know understanding confidence in Christ isn't a quick fix. It's a lifelong journey, part of being "perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1:4). But as you close the last page, my prayer is that you have something to come back to time and time again. This is a guide to remind you that confidence in Christ isn't just a good idea, it's a beautiful anchor for anyone who desires stability for their whole life.

**PART 1**

**WHERE  
IS YOUR  
CONFIDENCE?**



## CHAPTER 1

# WHAT IS YOUR IDENTITY?

*It's like everyone tells a story about themselves inside their own head. Always. All the time. That story makes you what you are. We build ourselves out of that story.*

PATRICK ROTHFUSS, *The Name of the Wind*<sup>1</sup>

Have you ever lost something and suddenly felt like you didn't know who you were anymore? Maybe as a child, it was a stuffed animal. In high school, perhaps it was a boyfriend or girlfriend. It could have been the unexpected divorce of your parents that began to unravel your expectations of life. Maybe you moved across the country, leaving behind beloved friends and family. This lost thing could be a career path you thought would define your life, or the death of a loved one, creating a void so deep it reshaped how you saw yourself. Losing something, whether seemingly small or life-altering, can disrupt the foundation of who we think we are and how we view our lives.

I attended a big public high school in Texas in the late nineties. Stereotypical or not, I was a cheerleader. As a freshman new to public high school, I skipped the ninth-grade squad and made junior varsity.

This role gave me a sense of belonging in an overwhelming new environment, though it also earned me a few enemies as the new kid. My sophomore year, I made varsity alongside my best friend, who was a couple of years ahead of me. Halfway through high school, I felt like I had finally secured my place. As one might imagine, we had a blast. But junior year everything changed. A disastrous tryout and a string of unfortunate circumstances led to my biggest disappointment yet: I didn't make the team—at all. Not varsity. Not junior varsity. Nothing. For a teenager, it felt like my entire world had been turned upside down. Determined not to let failure define me, I tried out again the next year and reclaimed my spot for my senior year. A week later, I blew out my knee.

In a matter of months, my carefully built identity, my place, and my security were gone. As a 17-year-old senior in high school, I suddenly had to figure out, “Who am I if I'm not this?” This story, of course, is light suffering amidst a whole lifetime. Since then, I've lived a dozen lives and have now experienced life and death, joys and sorrows. But looking back, failing to make the team and tearing my knee was the first of many moments where God used loss to redirect my life. He gave me something good without it being what I wanted.

It wasn't the last time I would lose what I thought was a fundamental piece to my identity. I would go on to blow the same knee out multiple times throughout the years. I would also find that difficult relationships, job transitions, moving to new cities, ministry experiences, learning how to be a mom, growing in marriage, having illnesses, financial hardships, and even my successes would all play a role in shaping how I viewed myself.

As we grow older, our losses tend to pack a heavier punch. Sometimes it's the death of a lifelong friendship that you've cherished and has meant the world to you. Maybe it's a failed career or the collapse of a lifelong dream. Maybe it's a betrayal that turns your world upside down. Maybe the duplicity of a friend, a tragic accident, or a bad

diagnosis shakes the foundation of everything you've ever thought or believed. The reality is that life doesn't always go as planned. We can't fully protect ourselves from change or pain, and outside forces often hold more power over our lives than we realize, even in the good moments.

### **ROLES THAT SHAPE US**

We all have experiences in our lives that tend to shape how we think about ourselves and the world around us. What are those things for you? What do you identify with? Obviously, you're not a high school cheerleader in the late nineties, but what are you today? What is something that if lost, would cause you to be unsure of who you are? What are the labels that you carry around?

Maybe you're an accountant.

Maybe you're a husband.

Maybe you're an athlete.

Maybe you're a sports fan.

Maybe you're a teacher.

Maybe you're a mom.

Maybe you're a lawyer.

Maybe you're a chef.

Maybe you're single.

Maybe you're a grandma or grandpa.

Maybe you're a pastor.

Maybe you're wealthy.

Maybe you're a college student.

Sometimes we identify ourselves with our material belongings. For some, it's how much money they have in their savings or perhaps the brands they wear. It could be the aesthetic you choose for your home. In New York City, where I live, it's how big your apartment is or what neighborhood you live in—bonus if you have outdoor

space. Maybe it's your appearance or how athletic you are. Maybe it's a sickness that you have, like cancer. Maybe it's a diagnosis of some sort, and that's who you are. *I am infertile. I am diabetic. I am bipolar.* Perhaps you identify yourself by what you eat or what you *don't* eat. It could be how thin you are or how much you work out. Maybe you're a runner. Maybe you're a victim. Some would identify themselves by the role they have at work or even at church. Maybe you identify yourself by how faithful you've been. Perhaps it's your political or religious preference. Maybe you're a Baptist or Presbyterian or adamantly opposed to it all. Maybe you're an immigrant.

You get the point. We all have something that we attach our identities to, and each one of them tends to be a bit different. They can be great things, and they can be terrible things.

At this stage in my life, I identify with many things. I'm a mother, wife, sister, and daughter. I'm someone's best friend. I'm a Christian. I'm a New Yorker. I'm a writer. I'm a ministry leader. I'm the president and CEO of a nonprofit. I'm a church staff member. I'm an adjunct professor. I'm a counselor. I'm a class mom. I'm a teacher. I'm a listener. I'm a long-distance walker. I'm a middle-aged woman. I'm a builder. I'm a processor. I'm a reader. I'm a coffee drinker.

### **ATTACHING ADJECTIVES TO OUR ROLES**

Once we clarify what particular roles in life we've been given or assumed, we quickly attach adjectives to them. I'm a *deep* processor. I'm a *moderate* coffee snob. Sometimes, I'm a *fun* parent. Occasionally, I'm an *effective* communicator or *wise* leader. In my best moments, I'm an attentive counselor who helps someone in the hardest of tragedies. On other days, I'm a thoughtful spouse who is encouraging. Every so often, I'm a spiritual guide leading my kids to see Jesus and his beauty in a successful teaching moment. There are times when

I'm really in the pocket. I meet someone for coffee, we have a great conversation, and I leave on a proverbial high. I make a good financial choice for my budget and we're in the black. It feels as though I'm becoming who I hope to be.

Years ago, after stepping out of vocational ministry, I began renovating homes. I truly had no idea what I was getting into, but I had grit and a budget. So, I bought a sledgehammer and went to work. I started by demoing an entire house by myself. The first house was a huge success for a novice. In fact, the next several houses turned out beautifully and, most importantly to my investors and husband, profitable. I was a *successful* house flipper—until I wasn't. Nothing tragic happened, but the economy shifted and I became a worried homeowner in a world of high interest rates. In an economic instant, I was facing a significant problem. I went from confident and proud to exhausted and fearful. But the truth is, this wasn't the first time my self-perception had turned on a dime.

As it turns out, I don't always hit the mark. Sometimes I'm a short-tempered parent. An impatient spouse. A lousy friend. A fearful Christian. I can procrastinate and be a workaholic. I can also be disorganized and unprepared. I can be a faithful Christian one moment and someone who desperately seeks comfort in the world the next. I can yell at my kids to get them out the door, have a dirty home, be reclusive, and not want to read the Bible or talk to Jesus. I can be downright irritable and annoyed with my own presence. I can be unfeeling and judgmental in a moment but then heartbroken and overwhelmed in the next. My roles remain the same, but the adjectives swing dramatically.

Sound exhausting? It is. And I know I'm not alone.

## **SEEING OURSELVES THROUGH OTHERS**

We don't just assess our roles; we absorb how others experience us. Every relationship becomes a mirror. Some people have seen me get

frustrated with my husband or unkind to my children. Others have disagreed with the counsel I have given them. I've upset others by missing an email or not replying to a call in a timely manner. To them, perhaps I'm a nagging wife, an incompetent counselor, or a disorganized person. To my employees, perhaps I have been a perfectionist or a micro-manager. I constantly fail in countless ways, and the way I fail or succeed shapes the adjectives others assign to me, contouring my self-perceived identity to the perspective of others.

I'm not afraid to tell you how I disappoint myself or others in my roles. Not because I'm proud of it, but because it's also your story. I don't have to know your name and role to know you've succeeded and failed. If we sat down together, I'm certain you could share the ups and downs that define you as a person. We all do this. We think of ourselves in terms of our roles, *what* we spend our days doing, *how* we are doing in those responsibilities, and maybe how *everyone else* thinks we are doing. We tend to attach adjectives to our roles that dictate how we feel about our identity.

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We tend to attach adjectives to our roles that dictate how we feel about our identity.

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### THE ROLES RECAP

The reality is, I can attach my identity to a million things. For starters, I can attach it to my different roles: mom, author, leader. Then, I can attach my identity to how I describe myself in these roles: good employee, lucrative investor, angry friend, terrible cook, loving wife. Add in how others perceive me, and our vulnerable minds and hearts ride petulant waves that crash back and forth. Our identity, and therefore confidence, endures whiplash from feeling to feeling and

moment to moment. It can be an erratic roller coaster as we ride the ups and downs of our stories.

We can try to get our confidence from personal successes, in how others perceive us, or even by syphoning Christ's value through our God-given identity, but our belief is inconsistent, our abilities eventually fail, and others will see our shortcomings faster than we will. What this book attempts to answer is: What do we do when self-confidence fails? How do we find confidence in Christ instead of this identity roller coaster?

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Our identity, and therefore confidence,  
endures whiplash from feeling to  
feeling and moment to moment.

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Before we move forward, it's worth pausing to examine your own story. The Lord created us with particular personalities, and he has given each of us meaningful work. The roles you have in your life are yours for a reason. Some responsibilities are ones we pursue and work hard to obtain, while others come naturally. Together they shape the contours of our lives. What are your roles? Are there roles you've longed for or pursued that haven't come to pass? When you think of who you are, how your life is spent, what fills your time, and what occupies your energy, what roles rise to the surface?

**QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION**

1. What are the top five most important roles in your life?

I am a \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
\_\_\_\_\_ , and \_\_\_\_\_ .

2. Add an adjective to each of those roles.

I am a \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ , a \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, a \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
a \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ , and a \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ .

3. Where do you feel like you are succeeding in those roles?

4. Where do you feel like you are failing?

5. If you lost one of those top five roles, how would you respond?

6. How does the perspective of others influence how you see yourself?

7. Where does the identity pendulum swing in your own life?