

28 Days to
Build **Authentic**
Confidence

Why Not You?

- Identify your Confidence Quotient
- Conquer doubt, hesitation and insecurities
- Face the real source of your fears
- Eliminate your biggest confidence stealers

Valorie Burton

Author of **Listen to Your Life**

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WATERBROOK
P R E S S

WHY NOT YOU?

PUBLISHED BY WATERBROOK PRESS

12265 Oracle Boulevard, Suite 200

Colorado Springs, Colorado 80921

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ISBN 978-1-4000-7336-8

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Burton, Valorie, 1973–

Why not you? : twenty-eight days to authentic confidence / Valorie Burton. — 1st ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-1-4000-7336-8

1. Self-actualization (Psychology)—Religious aspects—Christianity. 2. Success—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Title.

BV4598.2.B875 2007

248.4—dc22

2007001289

Printed in the United States of America

2007—First Edition

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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An Introduction
to Authentic
Confidence

Why Not You?

Before I began writing books and speaking, I often studied authors and speakers who were doing what I wanted to do with my life. Their lives seemed somehow magical, as if they knew some special secrets that I didn't.

Of course, that wasn't true.

I had within me everything I needed to begin living the purpose for which I was created.

But what these other authors and speakers had that I didn't was confidence. Perseverance. That belief in yourself and your potential for success—so much so that you refuse to give up when success doesn't happen in your own timing.

I began asking myself, *Valorie, why not you? Why don't you fulfill your vision of inspiring others through your writing?*

Can you relate to that kind of internal questioning? Perhaps it's a similar area of life for you—a professional or business aspiration—or that conversation in your head may be about your weight, your dream of

home ownership, your finances, or a successful relationship. Perhaps doubt or uncertainty results in your remaining quiet when you really want to speak up.

I had my moment of insight about the importance of boldly and confidently stepping into God-given opportunities, and it came within just a couple of years—back in 2001—after I began asking, *Why not me?*

Around five o'clock one Wednesday afternoon in October 2001, my phone rang as I was preparing to leave for a six-o'clock book signing at Black Images Books in Dallas. I lived in Dallas then; it was an exciting time. I was in the midst of a tour for my first book. *Rich Minds, Rich Rewards* had been self-published nearly two years earlier, but a major publisher had picked it up, and now their edition was on the shelves. I'd already been to Chicago, Detroit, and Los Angeles for interviews and book signings; now I was stopping back in Dallas for two days before heading out to Atlanta early the next morning.

When I answered my home-office line on the second ring, I recognized the voice on the other end immediately. "Hi, Valorie," said Rosilyn. We'd met six weeks earlier at the Texas Trailblazer Award luncheon, which I was chairing. Rosilyn was one of two representatives sent when Sister Serita Jakes, my pastor's wife—whom I'd invited to give the invocation—couldn't make the lunch because of her travels. I'd enjoyed Rosilyn, and we'd e-mailed back and forth a couple of times, promising to get together for lunch sometime. We hadn't managed to put a date on our calendars yet, so I thought this may be why she was calling.

It wasn't.

"Listen," she said. "Bishop Jakes is launching a new daily television show."

"Oh, yes, I've heard about that," I replied. "That's really exciting." Trying to contain my own excitement, I wondered, *Is she going to ask if I want*

to be a guest on the show!? My first book had just been released, and I was overjoyed at the idea of being on Bishop Jakes's television show. I'd been up late one night when, during a broadcast, I heard Paul Crouch, founder of Trinity Broadcasting Network, offer a yearlong timeslot to Bishop Jakes if he would provide a daily show for the viewers. Mind you, Rosilyn was still in midsentence, and already my mind had launched ahead to figuring out the reason for her call. Of course, if I would just be patient and listen, I'd find out soon enough.

"We haven't yet found a co-host for the program," she continued.

Maybe she wants me to recommend somebody? I thought before she had a chance to finish.

"I know you're not a television person..." she said, almost apologetically.

No, she can't be asking if I want to co-host a national television show?

"But we're here in the studio, and I prayed about it, and your name is the only name God dropped in my spirit."

Did she just ask me..., I started to wonder.

"Would you be willing to serve as our co-host for the first few weeks while we figure out what direction to take?" Rosilyn finally asked.

"Wow. Um, yes," I said. "I would love to." I was excited and in a state of disbelief. After all, it isn't every day that someone calls you out of the blue to ask you to host a national television program with someone you greatly admire and respect. *Is this really happening?*

She explained that I would need to come to the studio right away or at least by the next day and that I should bring an assortment of clothes.

Oh no, I thought, and then I had to explain that I was already on the way to a book signing that would start in an hour and that I was scheduled to leave before sunrise the next morning for a flight to Atlanta. I wouldn't be back until the weekend!

But maybe...

I suggested, due to their schedule and my book tour, the only option was for me to rush over after my book signing.

“Could you?” Rosilyn asked.

That’s exactly what I kept asking myself as I packed my clothes and headed off for a whirlwind evening. *Can I do this?* I wondered as I finished the book signing at Black Images downtown and headed to the studio about twenty-five miles north.

It was going on nine o’clock, and when I arrived, there were about ten people there—producers, camera people, and ministry staff. They explained what was needed, a few ins and outs for five days worth of programming, and just one catch.

There was no script, and I wouldn’t be able to see the show I’d be referring to on-camera.

Oh.

I took a deep, quiet breath for composure. I was unsure, but there was no need to show it.

They sat me in a chair, aimed a camera at me, and “Three...two...one,” the director said as his fingers counted down. On “zero,” he pointed at me.

I prayed and then felt a sense of confidence rise within me. I’d spent the previous three months being interviewed weekly on KXAS-TV (NBC5) in Dallas, so I’d begun to get used to talking into a camera. I decided that experience must have been God’s preparation.

To calm my nervousness, I did a reality check and took stock of the situation. I knew if I thought of this as a big deal—a show that would be seen daily around the country and in multiple foreign countries—I’d get nervous. So I told myself, “You’re just talking to some people while they start their day by enjoying great biblical teaching from T. D. Jakes.” I reminded

myself that television is experienced one person at a time. By thinking in these terms, I was able to find a peaceful place from which to speak.

I've since pursued my passion of inspiring others to live fulfilling lives, and along the way, I've gained tremendous confidence in God's ability to carry out His purposes through each one of us. It's our confidence in Him that bolsters our confidence and belief in ourselves. Knowing that God created you and wants to use you also means acknowledging that He accepts you as you are. Simultaneously, He's offering you daily opportunities to grow into more of the person He created you to be. He accepts you, despite the criticisms, doubts, or insecurities you may impose on yourself and the obstacles you erect for yourself.

So why is the issue of overcoming doubt and building confidence one of the most important for you to address?

Maybe because it impacts your:

- relationships, as in whether you stand up for yourself, set good boundaries, and choose mutually beneficial friendships
- finances, since insecurity and self-doubt are leading contributors to overwhelming credit-card debt as people attempt to fill a void through overspending
- ability to parent your children effectively
- chosen career (or the career you don't choose), including how quickly you advance and how much money you earn

In fact, to see the depth of the effects of lacking confidence, take this little self-quiz: Which of the following statements would you like to be able to say are true about you? Check the statements that are true for you now, and give yourself one point for each.

- I can walk into a room full of strangers and introduce myself, be friendly, and feel comfortable.

- I can successfully make a presentation in front of a group of people.
- Fear doesn't stop me from asking for what I want.
- If I purchase something that proves faulty, I can return it to the store that has an unfriendly refund policy and ask for—and receive—a refund.
- I don't have to chase after success. Because I work hard and live my purpose, the right opportunities, people, and resources find their way to my path.
- I always trust myself to finish what I start.
- If I make a mistake, I never try to cover it up or explain it away with excuses in order to look good. I'm comfortable with being imperfect.
- I have (or am moving toward) exactly what I want in my life. I haven't settled in any way.
- I'm financially confident and have proven myself to be a good steward of money.
- I can walk into a dinner party and feel confident about how I look. I don't size up other attendees and compare my looks, clothes, jewelry, or other characteristics with theirs.

If you're like most people, you weren't able to truthfully check all ten statements, because doubts, fears, and insecurities creep into our lives in ways we often don't even notice, let alone identify as a confidence issue.

I have written *Why Not You?* as a personal companion to help you confront these things and build your confidence over a twenty-eight-day period—a progressive plan to maintain or increase your confidence, boldness, and self-esteem throughout your life in order to live fully and freely, to realize your potential, and to be faithful to God's will for you.

Confidence is essential because it's a tool that empowers you to do everything God created you to do. With confidence, you never have to look back on life with regret wondering what you "coulda, shoulda, woulda" done...if only you'd had the confidence.

Strengthening your confidence empowers you to say yes to God consistently and without hesitation.

In an effort to gain confidence, thousands of people undergo surgery every year to change their looks. They hope that if they're more attractive, they'll finally feel secure and confident enough to pursue the life they really want. There's no doubt that cosmetic or material improvements may help people feel better, and surface results can be obtained quickly. Just drive a more expensive-looking car and notice how certain people treat you differently. Slip on an expensive piece of jewelry before you go shopping and notice how much more attentively you're treated by some of the salespeople in stores.

Yes, there are quick remedies to calm our insecurities and doubts. But if the change is only physical, authentic confidence will never emerge, and the glimmers will never last. Purely surface changes attract surface results.

Is that all *you* really want?

What I want you to know is that who you are right now is enough.

In fact, it's more than enough for you to walk, speak, and live confidently in every situation you face in life. You don't need to be more attractive, more talented, more connected, wealthier, or anything else to be confident.

You are enough because God is enough.

As you turn the pages of this book and go deeper in trusting God's perfect plan for you, I challenge you to notice how you'll lose your desire to be around people whose interest in you is based on what you have, how

you look, and what you can do. You'll naturally begin attracting relationships based on who you are—your purpose, inherent value, and divinely created uniqueness.

Are you ready to move to a new level of living in some area of your life? Are you ready to stop holding your tongue, shrinking from opportunities, and allowing pesky insecurities to sabotage your relationships, finances, or career? Are you ready to deal with the doubts about your abilities and your dreams that creep in from time to time?

We've all stood in awe of those we view as successful, believing they have something we don't have and—worse yet—something we may never get. The truth is, we'll never really be successful doing anything other than the things each of us were uniquely and specially created to do.

The time has come for you to make a major change—a change that empowers you to believe fully and confidently in yourself. Now is the time for you to break out of any self-imposed limitation and allow the real you to fully emerge.

I know that nothing but good can come from doing so. And here's one reason I know. I stumbled onto the need for this topic in 2005 when respondents to a questionnaire in my weekly e-newsletter, *Rich Minds, Rich Rewards*, said that what held them back most in life were insecurity, doubt, and lack of confidence.

I had simply been asking questions to discover the personal growth topics of greatest interest to my readers, and about fifteen hundred people from across the United States and in many other countries responded. I asked about twenty questions, most of them multiple choice, with a couple open-ended questions too, such as, "What's the biggest obstacle to achieving your vision?" And, I admit, I expected the most common responses to be fear, money, or lack of knowledge.

To my surprise, the most common answer was some variation of these responses:

- Karen, 36, in Sunrise, Florida, said, “I can’t seem to overcome the persistent feeling that I’m not good enough. I wonder if I’m intelligent enough and if people will take me seriously.”
- Tammy, 34, from Illinois, said, “I don’t have enough self-confidence to pursue my dreams. I’m not sure how much potential I have.”
- Alex, 37, from Holland said, “My biggest obstacle is self-confidence—or lack thereof.”
- Karen, 51, in Fargo, North Dakota, said, “I know my vision. I’m just missing the confidence and know-how to do it.”

Confidence. Self-esteem. These two engines that take us places are, more often than not, missing. Why is that?

It’s one of the first lessons we’re all taught, and yet so quickly forget later when we’re finally able to step into our dreams and goals.

Do you remember, when we were children, hearing such things as, “If you just put your mind to it, you can do anything”?

It may have been a schoolteacher who said this or a parent, relative, or actor speaking on some children’s television show.

I remember the intrigue I felt the first time I heard the story of the little engine that could, who made it up the hill repeating the mantra, “*I think I can, I think I can, I think I can...*”

Did the engine really make it because he thought he could? I remember asking myself.

Even then, though I didn’t understand why thinking he could do something enabled him to do it, I chose to believe that this approach would work!

Adults are quick to encourage children about what’s possible in life.

That's a good thing. In fact, it's biblical. "As he thinks in his heart, so is he," reads Proverbs 23:7 (NKJV).

But I think children assume that adults believe their own rhetoric. Too often, we don't. The disappointments and negative experiences of life can steal your confidence if you allow them to, jading your attitude and diminishing your sense of optimism.

Building authentic confidence is an essential element of personal growth. You can know what to do, how to do it, who can help you, and where to go, but if you lack confidence that you can accomplish certain things in your life, none of that knowledge will matter.

I'm afraid that too many people hear Scripture, and even repeat it, but don't believe God's Word for themselves:

- "With God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).
- "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13, NKJV).
- "As he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7, NKJV).

The Scriptures are not just sayings to be memorized. They're truths filled with wisdom by which to live our lives.

You are fully equipped to do and be all that you were meant to. Even those who have confidence by the world's standards often lack authentic confidence—that is, confidence by God's standards. Authentic confidence is self-confidence built on a foundation of faith. It's a clear understanding that your abilities, when teamed with God's power and will, are unstoppable.

And yet authentic confidence gets beaten out of people. I discovered that while researching this book. I created an informal confidence survey and questioned more than three hundred people. The respondents had diverse backgrounds, but many experienced very similar challenges around the issue of confidence. You will see comments from these respondents

throughout the book. My hope is that you will see some aspects of yourself in their triumphs and struggles. You're not alone on this path. Here are some basic facts about the survey respondents I'll refer to from time to time throughout the book:

- Age: 24 percent are twenty-five to thirty-four years old; 45 percent are thirty-five to forty-four years old; and 22 percent are forty-five to fifty-four years old.
- Highest educational level attained: 35 percent have some college education, vocational training, or an associate's degree; 32 percent have earned a bachelor's degree; 20 percent have earned a master's degree; and 4 percent have earned a terminal degree (doctorate, law degree, medical doctorate).
- Gender: 94 percent of respondents were women.
- Residence: 98 percent reside in the United States and the remainder, in Canada and Europe. Respondents from the United States hail from forty states and the District of Columbia.
- Career: Their careers include entrepreneur, attorney, administrative assistant, engineer, retail manager, teacher, nurse, college professor, sales executive, cake decorator, journalist, and stay-at-home mom.

I've written this book so that you might internalize and manifest the truth of God's Word in your life by living confidently every day. What does it look like for a person to know the Scriptures yet not truly believe them? He or she—or you—might do one of the following:

- shrink from opportunities out of fear you are not good enough, smart enough, attractive enough, and so forth
- put others on a pedestal
- buy or seek material possessions in an effort to prove or display your worth

- try to stack up credentials in an effort to achieve things God has uniquely prepared you to do
- not stand up for yourself
- allow negative experiences from your past to steal your confidence
- display arrogance about abilities and/or achievements
- lack humility
- buy in to the notion that you've achieved success because you're "better" than others
- regularly measure your value by comparing yourself with others, whether professionally or personally
- have more confidence in yourself than you have in God's ability to orchestrate situations to your advantage

Both arrogance and timidity stem from a lack of knowledge and wisdom about God's Word, His promises, and His character. Arrogance and timidity are manifestations of insecurity, self-doubt, and fear that lead to a lack of authentic confidence.

In *Why Not You?* we'll explore the basic pillars for authentic self-confidence as well as shifts and changes you can make beginning today to become a more faith-filled, confident person over the next twenty-eight days.

I encourage you to read this book with a partner or group, so that you may talk out the issues discussed and hold one another accountable as you take steps forward in faith. If you choose to read it alone, that's fine! Don't allow not having a partner or group to be an obstacle. I offer actions and confidence-building exercises that can be done in a group or individually.

In this book, I open my own life to you and share many personal examples as well as stories from the lives of people like you. From every example are drawn practical, spiritual lessons.

What I want for you is to be so sure of yourself, so confident in your

potential, that you experience all that God has in store for you. I don't want you to shrink any longer from who you really are in order to make others happy or to stay inside your comfort zone. When opportunity knocks, I want you to be ready to answer and fully confident about doing so.

I've experienced the pain of allowing doubt to overwhelm me in a moment of opportunity. I've also learned to step up to the plate—despite the persistence of doubts that crossed my mind.

“Be prepared in season and out of season,” the apostle Paul advised Timothy (2 Timothy 4:2). Authentic confidence will empower you to be ready to serve God in any situation.

Remember my moment of empowerment in front of the television cameras? Isn't it amazing the way God can supernaturally infuse you with confidence if you ask Him to? And remember Jesus's promise: “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7).

We never know the ways in which a lack of confidence usurps our success because often multiple opportunities are born out of one simple connection. So it's essential to your personal and professional success to be ready and confident when opportunities cross your path. Many times you simply won't have time to research and prepare. You'll need to stand on what you already know and do your best with what you have in that moment. Authentic confidence will empower you with that skill.

For nearly a year in 2001 and 2002, I served on the air as the co-host of *The Potter's Touch*, and I also helped create show ideas and coordinate guests. It was an awesome and divinely orchestrated opportunity. I grew and learned a lot quickly.

In addition to the terrific broadcasting experience it gave me, the television program also opened doors for me to meet two wonderful friends. One of them is like a sister to me, and the other connected me with

the person who introduced me to an editor of my current publisher. Had I not had the confidence to rise to the occasion when the opportunity presented itself, these doors might not have opened.

Why Not You? is a twenty-eight-day program written in twenty-eight small chapters so that you may digest the information and take action daily over the next four weeks.

At the end of each chapter are three important tools for you to use to connect more deeply with yourself and God—and to stretch yourself so that God can shape you into a more confident person:

- *Confidence Prayer*: A simple way for you to direct your thoughts to God and ask Him for the strength and wisdom you need in the particular area addressed in that chapter.
- *Confidence Journal*: This is the assignment part, but you don't have to be a writer. Journal if you choose, or just make notes in response to the simple question or series of questions designed to empower you to unearth your potential by addressing the issues, challenges, and possibilities that lie ahead of you. I recommend you get a special journal or notebook in which to write your answers and thoughts.
- *Confidence Builder*: This is the all-important action step—and this book isn't meant to be read passively. It will only work if you step out in faith and take action toward becoming a more confident person who daily conquers doubt, hesitation, and fear to enjoy success in every area of life.

Don't skip over these three tools! If you use them over the next twenty-eight days, you'll transform your level of confidence and significantly enhance your quality of life.

Throughout this book, you'll also notice that the topics addressed can be categorized in four ways:

1. *Truth.* It's important to see the reality of where you are. What are the issues you need to address? What aspects of your past hold clues to the doubts or insecurities that are most persistent in your mind? Are you stuck in a rut of overachieving in order to compensate for other areas? As your coach, I'll help you get a grip on your truth as a starting point for building authentic confidence.
2. *Faith.* Since authentic confidence is based on faith in God's will and plan for you, absolutely key is your spiritual foundation as a cornerstone. We'll talk about how to conquer doubt, just be yourself, put a stop to competing and comparing yourself with others, unravel cultural lies, manage emotional behaviors that sabotage your success, and discover the power of body language to make you feel more confident.
3. *Preparation.* Authentic confidence will enable you to take steps toward realizing your potential, and that means not waiting for God to hand you your desired circumstances on a silver platter. Rather, it's about maximizing what God has already blessed you with and preparing for the opportunities that will ultimately come, so that when it's time for you to perform, you've no reason to lack confidence. My aim is to encourage you to prepare intentionally so that you'll be ready for opportunities when they do cross your path.
4. *Transformation:* Last, I'll encourage you to strengthen your courage and faith so that you can transform your behavior with new actions that reflect your authentic confidence. You'll learn the powerful influence of humility, how to set healthy boundaries, how to overcome the temptation to lapse into old habits, how to develop the effective technique of "cross-confidence," and how to be confident even when you do not feel confident.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving as your coach and friend on your journey to authentic confidence. It will be an experience of self-discovery and becoming more of who God intends you to be!

Ready?

Let's get started.