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## **The Crisis of Confidence in America**

### **Dr. Keith Johnson, The Confidence Coach**

I've heard it said that a recession is anytime people lose confidence in the future. I agree.

What is America's economic crisis all about? Lack of confidence. Consumers lack the confidence to spend in fear of future financial collapse. Lenders lack the confidence to lend, and borrowers to borrow. Shoppers have stopped shopping, and retailers have stopped hiring. Salespeople are hesitant to close the deal, and buyers are taking fewer risks. Homebuyers lack the confidence to even tour for-sale homes, and home builders are waiting, hoping.

Fear, insecurity, and worry have hijacked the majority of American minds. They have lost confidence in the leadership of our country, of Wall Street, of our financial institutions, and the positive outcome of their futures.

When people are unsure or afraid of the future, they do nothing! They don't act. They don't buy. They don't sell. They don't borrow. Scared or unsure people just sit, wait, watch, and worry, wondering if things are going to get better or worse.

### **Why Is America Great?**

The greatest strength of the United States of America is not our great riches, beauty of our lands, our military powers, or our resources—our strength lies in our mental toughness. Americans have always been the most confident-thinking citizens in the world. We dream big, think big, build big, talk big, dress big, live big, act big, and give big. Why? Because confidence is a natural part of the American DNA. We live in a confidence-producing environment, modeled every day by good, decent men and women who accomplish their goals and dreams.

**Then Why Is Our Confidence at an All-Time Low?** I believe there are two major reasons:

### **1. Leadership Crisis**

Many Americans have lost confidence in our leaders because of their lack of character-centered leadership. Leadership is built on trust. When leaders lie, cheat, make decisions based only on what is best for them, and have immoral failures in their private lives, confidence is lost. Recent surveys reveal that 80 percent of Americans believe we are experiencing a crisis in leadership across the board, from government to business to financial institutions to nonprofit organizations.

Confidence is built on two major ingredients: credibility and integrity. Nobody has confidence in someone who does not do what they say. United States President Dwight Eisenhower said, *"In order to be a leader a man*

*must have followers. And to have followers, a man must have their confidence. Hence, the supreme quality for a leader is unquestionable integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, a football field, in an army, or in an office. If a man's associates find him guilty of being phony, if they find that he lacks integrity he will fail. His teaching and actions must square with each other. The first great need, therefore, is integrity and high purpose."*

History has proven time and again that corrupted morals equal bad economics and moral integrity equals great economics. Our lack of confidence is the result of immoral leadership. When leaders lack integrity, the nation's citizens eventually pay the cost and feel the pain, emotionally, financially, and spiritually. The first price we pay is a loss of confidence, and the problems get greater and costlier.

## **2. An "All or Nothing" Mentality**

The media profit from disseminating information about fear, crisis, and tragedy. The media thrive on negativity because that's what sells. They present an "all or nothing" perspective of the economy. You have heard it, "*Everybody's* business is down this year. *Nobody* can get a car loan. It is hard to buy a house unless you have outstanding credit. *Nobody* is selling any houses. *Everybody* is losing money in the stock market." Is this true or is it hype?

A few instances to the contrary: My organization had our best financial year in 15 years. I recently talked with a vice president of a major fast food restaurant chain who said they had their best year ever and set many company records. An entrepreneurial friend of mine started a new business at the end of 2007 with \$1 million, and he grew his business to \$400 million in one year. One of our local car dealerships is offering 0 percent financing. Someone I know had his credit damaged because of a divorce; however, he received a loan from a major lending institution for 4.9 percent and bought a beautiful four-bedroom home with a pool. A real estate friend in Florida told me she sold four homes in one week.

The truth: some people have had the very *best* year of their lives. Yes, some people are having tough times—but not "everybody" as the media would have you believe.

America desperately needs leaders in government, media, business, and the church who will be voices of confidence and optimism within their world of influence. We need leaders in times of crisis to show fortitude, strength, and confidence to those looking to them for hope.

## **Regaining Our Confidence**

Confidence is the byproduct of predictability. When something predictable is removed or a sudden change happens in our personal lives or organizations, people tend to feel insecure.

To restore your confidence, you must:

### **1. Ask yourself the right questions.**

Profound questions produce profound answers. Ask yourself, "What predictabilities have been removed from my life?" Then, "What immediate action can I take to make my life more predictable?"

A couple of my favorite questions that I ask myself during times of feeling insecure: "What three things can I do in the next 90 days that will make a 50 percent difference in the rest of this year?" "What one major problem do I need to solve that will make my life more predictable?" Start looking for solutions instead of focusing on problems. You must believe there is an answer to your current problems. If you will confidently believe that there is an answer to the problems you are facing, your mind will design a road map to find it. If you don't believe there is an answer, your mind will not create one.

## **2. List your former successes.**

You can increase your confidence by using your memory. Your mind is designed to recall past events. Great achievers learn to replay the memories of their past successes. You can actually use your past success to supercharge your confidence. Listing your former successes and accomplishments will fuel your confidence to try it again. Your list will empower you with the confidence to say, “I did this before, I can do it again.”

## **3. Focus on your strengths.**

Ask yourself, “What is my greatest strength?” You might not know right away, but simply ask yourself, “What do I do that seems to be very easy for me, but it is hard for others?” When you answer this question, you have discovered your single greatest strength. Design your life around your strengths and you will notice an instant confidence boost.

## **Conclusion**

What one person calls a crisis, another person calls an opportunity. No matter what kind of challenges you are facing, remember that no one can stop you but you. Confident people do not sit around waiting for someone or something to tell them what their future is going to look like—they create it. Leadership guru Peter Ducker said, “The best way to predict the future is to create it.” I suggest you do the same.

You are a leader! You can be the voice of confidence to a fearful world. Promote, support, and vote for leaders of integrity and not leaders of charisma.

Stop listening to the voices of negativity. Build your confidence to an all-time high. This year can be your golden opportunity—go for it.

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You can, as long as you include this complete statement with it: Keith Johnson PhD is the Confidence Coach. He has spent the last 15 years teaching over 120,000 leaders how to maximize their confidence, potential, and effectiveness through his keynote messages, consulting programs, and his books. Get your free e-book entitled *10 Habits of Highly Confident People* from Keith Johnson now at: [www.TheConfidenceCoach.com](http://www.TheConfidenceCoach.com)

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