

What Makes You so Special?

I was blessed to be born into a family with a loving mom and dad. I have two older brothers and a younger sister. Notice, I did not comment on whether my siblings were blessings or not. They were - at least most of the time they were. Like most children, I had a fairly normal childhood. I had my good days and bad, my strengths and weaknesses, and my highlights and my dark times. Through it all, I did okay.

I have great concern for children today because they are faced with many struggles throughout their adolescent years. One of the difficulties that I remember struggling with is lack of self confidence. That lack of self confidence was particularly stressful during my middle school years. I was a shy and quiet kid with low self esteem; seldom spoke up, stepped up, or showed up at activities and events that might bring attention to myself. It was a dark time and I remember thinking, "I am nothing special, I am not good enough, I am not talented enough, and I am not even wanted here."

Luckily, I met a friend in High School that taught me the value of believing in myself and not being afraid to speak up and be seen. His name was Woody. He radiated confidence. He could talk to anyone but more importantly, he would listen to anyone. He would have a conversation with anybody, young or old, it didn't matter. He made people feel that he really cared what they had to say and that he really cared for them. Everybody loved Woody! He was a great friend and he showed me how much easier life can be when you are confident, engaging, and when you like who you are.

It has been several years since my childhood. Much to my family's embarrassment, at times, I am not that shy and quiet kid anymore. I like myself. I am self confident - at times, maybe overconfident. I tell my wife that there is a fine line between confidence and arrogance, we often debate where that line is. Yet, there are those times when those childhood feelings return.

During the past couple of years, I have been looking for a better work situation. I have numerous resumes' and have had several job interviews. I don't know if there is a more humbling exercise for an adult than the job interview. I am not sure which is worse, questioning your mistakes during the interview or feeling that you have nailed it. I have had interviews that went great. I was confident. I answered all

the questions directly and accurately. I could not think of any way that it could have gone better. I had given it my best. My best wasn't good enough. "I am nothing special, I am not good enough, I am not talented enough, and I am not even wanted here." That is humbling. That is when the shy and quiet kid comes back.

How do we put that shy and quiet kid back where he belongs? How do we feel special when the world tells we are not so great? One verse that helps me: ***¹⁰For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*** Ephesians 2:10.

I remember a bumper sticker that said: "God don't make Junk!" Be confident that God created you and me to do good works. That is his plan for us. That is what makes us so special.

Jeff