



Enough with Being Enough: Comparison

Text: 1 Samuel 18

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1. When are you tempted to compare yourself? Who are you most likely to compare yourself to if you are honest? When you compare yourself to others, how does it affect your self-esteem? What are some of the ways you compare yourselves to others? Money? Status? Physical appearance? Children?
2. Why do you think we are constantly comparing ourselves to one another? What does it accomplish?
3. When you really get to the root of the matter, what drives your need to compare yourself to others? Are you trying to prove your worth to yourself? Are you seeking the approval of others? Are you trying to earn God's love?
4. Timothy Ateek says that the cross of Christ helps us stop comparing ourselves to others. Why would focusing on the cross of Christ help to prevent us from falling prey to comparison?
5. Read Colossians 3:1-4. What does Paul mean when he says, "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."? How have we died? According to verse 2, how do we make it so that our lives are "hidden in Christ"? Practically, what does it look like to "set your mind on things that are above"? How does this help us stop comparing ourselves to everyone else?
6. As believers, we fight the lies of comparison and the enemy with God's truth. (Watch Postscript for more). Read the verses below. Which ones are most encouraging to you? Which ones do you need to journal, memorize, or say out loud to yourself or someone else to believe God's truth about who you are? Are there other verses that encourage you and ground you in God's truth?
 - a. Genesis 1:26-31
 - b. 1 Samuel 16:7
 - c. Psalm 139:13-16
 - d. Matthew 6:25-34
 - e. Matthew 10:29-31
 - f. Romans 5:8
 - g. Romans 8:32
 - h. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10
 - i. Ephesians 2:4-10

Challenge: What is one thing you can do this week to allow God's opinion of you shape who you are and not fall into the trap of comparison?

Prayer: Lord, please help me to find my security in You and Your view of me, not in sizing myself up against others and trying to come out ahead. Give me a humble heart that is focused on pleasing You and help me to remember that apart from Jesus, there is nothing I can do to impress You or anyone else. Instead of comparing myself to others, help me to compare myself only to Jesus and then rely on Your strength to make me more like Him, not anyone else. In Jesus' name, Amen.

STUDY DEEPER

Find Contentment by Killing Comparisons

Ever wonder why contentment seems elusive?

Being a Facebook user, I love posting prayer requests or sharing photographs with friends and family members. Within seconds news travels through cyberspace, lessening the distance between family and friends. Unfortunately, this also becomes a temptation for comparisons, which lead to discontent.

We log on and see one of our friends has happily posted an achievement. Instead of responding with heartfelt congratulations, we turn a little green. Isn't this the same thing I've labored on for years with few results? Defeated, we log off, busying ourselves with something else.

What can we do when we are tempted to compare ourselves with others? Why is this such an obstacle to contentment?

Making comparisons is nothing new. Cain compared himself to Abel. Jesus' disciples struggled with this too. In one conversation, they tried to determine which of them would suffer in the future, and who would be spared. Jesus asked them, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?" (John 21:23).

When we compare ourselves with others we are not walking by faith. Instead, we are trying to control things. Comparisons get us into trouble for at least two reasons.

- 1) They can make us feel better than the person we are comparing ourselves to, leading to pride. Remember the publican who thanked God that he wasn't a sinner? The enemy of our souls loves it when we struggle with pride. It was his downfall.
- 2) They can make us feel worse than the person we are comparing ourselves to, leading to low self-esteem, which still keeps our focus on ourselves. Although it says in James that God is not a respecter of persons, we do not believe this if we believe God is withholding something from us that is rightfully ours.

To be content, we need to swap lies for truth

Sometimes we even compare how God is working now with how he has worked in the past. In this way we bring God down to our level, judging his track record. This is arrogance. God tells us in Isaiah 55:8, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord." In other words, we

don't think like God. He wants us to walk in step with his Spirit. That means we are not to run ahead of him pulling him where we want him to be, nor are we to get behind him pushing him in the direction we want him to go. God is immovable.

As much as God wants us to walk by faith, Satan, the enemy of our souls, is determined to point out little things we hold against God. When Satan introduces these lies to us, we need to refute them. The only way we will be equipped to do that is if we saturate ourselves with the truth. The lies he tells us have a little truth mixed in, making them harder to recognize as lies. Only as we learn Scripture can we sort them out.

The world is forever pointing out things that should be ours, creating in us a sense of entitlement. Then Satan points us to those who have attained the things we hope for, pushing us farther down the road of discontentment.

Focus on the Lord when you are tempted to compare yourself with others. David, whom God called a man after his own heart, was given armor to wear when he was going to fight Goliath. The armor was too large for his small frame, but David didn't go searching for different armor so that he could replicate others who went out in battle. Instead, David's focus was on God's character, not on his opponent. God, who had helped David in the past, would continue to help him as he faced Goliath. All of us have had experiences of trusting God. We need to remind ourselves of his faithfulness.

To be content, we need to praise God in all circumstances
God is always looking out for our good. Knowing this about God is essential for us during our times of trial, when some things don't make sense. God is more concerned about transforming us into the image of his Son than he is about how it will temporarily affect us.

The apostle Paul was beaten, imprisoned, stoned, and shipwrecked. Still, in prison chains, he wrote to the church that he was content no matter his circumstances. He tells us to be content in our circumstances, not thankful for our circumstances. When things go wrong, what can we praise God for? We can praise him for who he is. Our circumstances do not diminish his character. He never becomes less than he is.

If we just start praising him, as David did in the Psalms, we will be reminded of other reasons he is worthy of praise. Satan is the only one who doesn't want us to praise God, so he will continually try to get our focus off the Lord. Satan loves it when we focus on what we don't have, what God hasn't done for us, or how God has seemingly let us down. Satan is the original killjoy.

Too often we praise God only when we feel like praising him. Offering God praise has nothing to do with our feelings. Instead, when we are going through a difficult time, our praise becomes a sacrifice to him.

Charles Swindoll says that life is 10 percent what happens to you and 90 percent how you react to what happens to you. We act as if it's the other way around. The apostle Paul encourages us to rejoice in the Lord always. That is much different from rejoicing in what is going on with us. If Solomon had told us to rejoice, we might have a problem with that. After all, wasn't Solomon the richest man around? But Paul was talking to us with chains on.

To be content, we have to kill the dragons of comparison

I have started challenging myself lately. When I see a status on a newsfeed that ruffles my feathers, I ask God to help me to pray for that person. It makes things easier when I'm honest with God, telling him how I feel. He knows anyway. Then, I begin to praise him.

Try singing to the Lord. When my heart is singing, whether I'm on key or not, my mind moves off of myself. I sing old hymns, such as "Jesus Never Fails" and "How Great Thou Art," because they are loaded with truths about the Lord. A couple of lines into a hymn and I find that I no longer wonder when I'm going to get the thing I'm working toward, but instead am thinking about God and all the wonderful things he has done.

Contentment is attainable, but first we must kill the dragons of comparison. And they will die as long as we keep our eyes focused on the King of Kings, the only one worth looking at.

The stick I made for measuring
I used most every day.
It helped me to compare myself
with others on my way.
I watched all those behind me,
or further down the road,
and I would readjust my pace
or lighten up my load.
The only real drawback
with how I ran my race
was watching everything around,
except my Savior's face.

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/biblestudies/articles/spiritualformation/findingcomparisons.html?start=2>