

The Encouragement Newsletter



2 Corinthians 10:12

We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise. (NIV)

Sitting at the desk reviewing files for an important project. Victoria could easily track the career path of her co-workers. In the review she began thinking about her own career path— comparing the differences and similarities. As she thought about why they were different, she remembered why she chose not to climb “career ladder” as others. She thought of her own personal conviction, which did not make her better or less than anyone. It was simply the will of God for her life. If she had done things like everyone else, she may have sacrificed her family at the expense of climbing the ladder. Then she thought of her children, who are just about grown. She is so proud of them and does not regret the time she invested in them, nor the sacrifices she had to make. Then she decided to look through her own files and saw how the Lord favored her with opportunity for advancement. Although she did not experience the same type of growth and development as others, she had experienced the true blessing of God. She thought to herself, “Who wouldn’t want to make more money. Uh...six figures would look good”, but the Lord had not allow her path to reach that level...yet.



If you are like me, you have been guilty of comparing yourself to others. Looking back, I believe comparison has been the reason for unfulfilled dreams, delays in moving forward, conflicts, looking at others through a narrow lenses without seeing their potential. The woman, Victoria, in the opening is actually me. That incident really happened while I was preparing this newsletter and I included it to show that although I have made a lot of progress in comparing myself with others, I am not ashamed to say that thoughts still cross my mind and I have to fight them off to regain my Father’s perspective every time.

Paul’s statement “not wise” in 2 Corinthians 10:12 (above), refers to an attitude, character or behavior pattern. I have found that when I have compared myself, gifts and abilities with others, I experienced the sense of having upper hand”. Both attitudes, if unchecked, will hold me back from obtaining the best. We can easily fall into the trap of comparing everything—the size of our home, our cars, our clothes, the schools our children attend, our church size and the activities it has, our doctrine, our looks, our lips, our eyes and our hips. You name it, it is compared.

I believe there is also a tendency to compare, look at others and think the gift and abilities we have been given is not “good enough”. At times, our comparison is like comparing an apple to an orange. Both are fruit, but they look and taste different. There is something unique about each fruit and that is my point. God created our uniqueness, but comparison is what destroys the beauty and power of that uniqueness He has given.

As I sat and thought about how I have compared myself to others, I began to think about some important factors. Those factors include - education, upbringing, standards, opportunity, resources, connections, personal convictions and faith in God. All of these factors are real and true. They impact our ability to get where we want to be and when we want to get there. However, when we have a destiny from God (and we all do) and continue to pursue that purpose, it all works out.

He will see to it that we are successful according to the way He sees success. We look at the factors as obstacles, but they are actually opportunities for God to demonstrate His miracle working power and work the impossible for us.

Comparing places limitations on ourselves will keep us back from seeing the impossible.

What Happens When We Compare

Comparison starts with how we think and feel. It is something we dwell upon and sometimes take a while to move past. Unfortunately, most of the time, we err on the side of negativity, which results in -

- Frustration
- Pride
- Discontentment
- Envy
- Jealousy
- Ungratefulness
- Competition
- Negatively striving to make it or be better than the one to whom we compare ourselves.
- We may not ask for help because we may look like we are not at a certain place spiritually or naturally.
- Pressure to be like another. Or, to be at a place where we have not developed or have the maturity to stand.

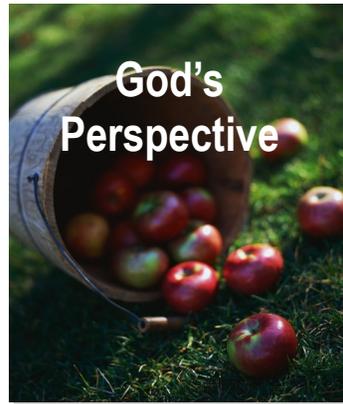
Comparing can also leave us with a sense of despair, guilt, dissatisfaction with what we have been created to be and low self-esteem. These attitudes and dispositions grieves the heart of God.

Comparison can cause us to make excuses why we cannot do better and improve ourselves. Excuses include, "Well, my family was not well off like them. So, I can't expect anything better"; "I can't do better because I am not him or her"; "Well, I am broke."; "I cannot do better because I was dealt a bad hand"; "I am just not good enough"; "That's for them, but not me"; or "Some things are reserved for a certain class or group of people. Excuses bring limitations and feelings that we are not deserving and underprivileged. With this mind set, we will not step out of the box with a "can do" spirit. We can short change ourselves by allowing comparison to hinder our pursuit of really heart felt desires and goals.

If we are really honest about what we compare or to whom we compare, we are comparing things that fade away and one human being to another (man to man, woman to woman). We are not comparing man or woman to God's standards. Sometimes what people excuse God condemns and what God approves people condemn. It can be really strange as we try to please both. Our goal, however, should always be to hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant".

Another Perspective

Paul said it was unwise to compare because the end result was strife, division and pride—the works of the flesh and the standards of the world that we should not live by, but in this section, I want to provide another perspective. There are some positive aspects of comparison that leads to a change in behavior. Comparison could inspire one to pursue the impossible. For example, listening to someone share their life and by comparing their story to yours, can actually be the fuel that inspires and ignites a passion to pursue new things, a dream or goal. We should definitely provoke one another to good works and good deeds. So, if when in comparing your life or lifestyle to another you are provoked to do good, that is what I call positive comparison.



Paul provided us God's perspective in verses 13-16 of the same chapter (2 Corinthians 10). The text states, "We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the field God has assigned to us, a field that reaches even to you". The field (field of activity or assignment) assigned by God is where Paul was limited. He could boast or rejoice and have joy about this assignment. He did not want what another had. Nor did he

boast or take credit for their work. He wanted to work what he was given. He was not going to be looking over at another's field (assignment) wishing he had their field, talking negatively or begin feeling superior or inferior because of his field. All of this would have been ineffective.

With that said, what should we do? Be content and secure in our field, which is the measure of grace or ability we have and then work it. Do not venture into something else because we want to be like someone else and get off course. Verses 10 shows that Paul experienced many accusations, but that did not move him or cause him to be distracted. He kept working. We have to grow to the place where accusations do not matter. It actually comes with the territory. We have to learn to deal with them and the other things designed to discourage. We have to stay determined to stay within our measure because in the end, we have to answer to God for what we have and have not done. If we compare our assignments, we will potentially get caught up in what the other person is doing versus what I am doing (or should be doing). Now I can learn a lot by looking at another's assignment. I can get some tips, but once I start comparing...I am on a slippery slope downward as I walk toward disobedience.

I want to end this section with verses 17-18, which tells us—"Let him who boasts (glory, rejoice and have joy), boast in the Lord. For it is not one who commends (approves) himself who is approve, but the one whom the Lord commends (approves). In the end, it is really all about the Lord and His opinion. I believe thoughts of comparison will always be a fact of life. It is one of those things that will do good or evil, depending on how we respond. Some thoughts of comparison we need to immediately dismiss because we know where dwelling on that thought will lead us.

CoMpArIsOn

Conclusion Every person on the face of the earth has been given a gift, ability, talent, measure or field. It is something each individual is specifically designed to do and accomplish while on earth. We are all piece of a puzzle—we are not the entire puzzle. Many have multiple gifts and talents and do them all well. Some specialize in a specific thing and are considered an expert. Some try to be the jack of all trades, but the master of none. Reading I Corinthians 12, we find that everyone is unique and have been given something for the common good (vv. 4-7), all according to the plan of God. The problem comes when we want to do something that we have not been given the ability to do. We all have looked at someone and wished we were like them in some way. In and of itself this is not the problem. The problem comes when we compare what we have to another and devalue ourselves., which does not honor the Giver. Why not make a decision today not to compare and devalue what has been given. Be grateful for whatever you have. Perhaps you do need to improve upon what you have been given. Make a plan and go forward. Not to be better than anyone and go from comparison to competition. But, do so because you have been given a responsibility to work the field God has given and please the Father.

1 CORINTHIAN 12: 6-7 (NLT)

God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us. A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.

Don't cry over the past. Compare yourself only to the standard of the word of God (Romans 12:2) - not fads, fashions, society or the opinions of people—all of which will pass away. Endeavor to work the field you have been assigned. If you would, as you finish reading this newsletter, please pray the prayer to the below.

Lord Jesus, I repent for comparing and measuring myself to others. I repent for responding in ways that grieve your heart. I thank you for the sphere, the measure and the field you have given me to work. From this day forward, I will work at your pace and not at the pace of society or other people. With your help I will be completely focused and committed to what you have given because I want to please You.

I receive your forgiveness and your grace to be one that will work while it is day and be about my Father's business. I will not stop until you say so and have fulfilled you work within me. Thank you for your word that changes me and enables me to walk according to your standards. Thank you for strengthening my hands to work and the ability to remain faithful to your will. I worship and thank you for all things. In Jesus' name Amen.

Now go forth as sons and daughters of a loving Father.

**Jesus Christ is the Author & Finisher of My Faith
Veronica B. McCray, Co-Author
Fred McCray, Sr.- Editor**

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