

Why Comparing Yourself To Others, Make You Sick?

Do you suffer from “comparisonitis,” a sickness that can make you very unhappy?

Do you compare yourself to anyone?

How does that work for you? Does it inspire you or make you look down on others?

There are a few positive effects we can learn from watching others:

First, you get the confidence you can do something because you see someone else accomplish something.

You have a better idea of how to do something because you watched someone else show you the way.

However, most of the time, we find people to compare ourselves to that make us unhappy.

The glorious vacations, the enviable professional accomplishments, the perfect children and spouses we see on our friends' Facebook pages are just one sliver of their real lives. It's the truth, but not the "whole truth and nothing but the truth." A friend may proudly announce the publication of their new novel, but conceal the 12 rejections their manuscript received before being published. We may envy the smiling suntanned family we see on a tropical vacation, although we're not privy to the fact that the 30 seconds of smiling came after three hours of squabbling and sniping. If we knew others' whole truths, we might not feel so inadequate when comparing ourselves to their carefully crafted public images of "perfection."

Life isn't fair. Some people are born with more advantages than others: A perfectly symmetrical face. Rapid-fire metabolism. Wealthy parents. Social connections that help them score a coveted job. Yet when we compare ourselves (unfavorably) to others, we often beat ourselves up for not trying hard enough. It's much more likely that the differences we see reflect an uneven playing field. Hard work just isn't enough sometimes

Comparisons turn friends and allies into rivals. In a perfect world, we would celebrate and genuinely enjoy the joys and accomplishments of others. Yet if we use others as a benchmark to evaluate ourselves, that creeping

twinge of jealousy may undermine our ability to truly cherish the good things that come to others. Just remember: Over time, things may even out, and a friend's success may enable him or her to support and make opportunities for others (including you).

What Does The Bible Say?

9 Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: 10 “Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. (Luke 18:9–10 NLT)

Two guys go into a church.

11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: ‘I thank you, God, that I am not like other people—cheaters, sinners, adulterers. I’m certainly not like that tax collector! 12 I

fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.’ (Luke 18:11–12 NLT)

The Pharisee compares himself to people who make him feel better about himself.

13 “But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, ‘O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.’ (Luke 18:13 NLT)

The tax collector compared himself to God. Therefore, he saw himself as he should.

How Can You Obey?

14 I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” (Luke 18:14 NLT)

When we compare ourselves to Jesus, we are naturally humbled.

Keep your eyes on Jesus and not others.

Comparisonitis will leave you unhappy, ungrateful, and prideful.

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Notes:

Today's Talking Theology comes from Daryl Aaron.

Understanding Your Bible in 15 Minutes a Day (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publisher, 2012), 23.

Explore:

The story begins simply enough: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector” (v. 10). The intended contrast is evident. Tax collectors were the scum of Jewish society, third-level lackeys of the Roman tax system. Rome imposed taxes on its conquered peoples, but the collection of those taxes was delegated to private Roman contractors (tax farmers), who then employed Jewish underlings to do the dirty work, their pay being whatever extra they could extort from their fellow Jews. Such tax collectors were considered monsters, and in fact some were. They were religious and political traitors to Hebrew society—utterly despicable.

They were disallowed from public office and were barred from giving testimony in court. They were outcasts, untouchables. In today's culture, the closest social equivalent would be drug pushers and pimps, those who prey on society, who make money off others' bodies and make a living of stealing from others.

On the other hand, the Pharisees had justly earned the reputation as, in Josephus' words, "a body of Jews known for surpassing the others in the observance of piety and exact interpretation of the laws" (Jewish Wars 1.5.2, 110). They were the most highly esteemed group in Jewish society. No Pharisee would ever sell out his people for gain. Like everyone else, they too were victims of the tax collectors. You could count on a Pharisee to love the Law and attempt to uphold it. What a contrast these two made when they went up the temple mount to pray. The mere thought of a publican praying was jarring in itself.

To read the parable properly through first-century Jewish eyes requires starting with a positive image and expectation for the Pharisee (he was the “good guy”) and a negative expectation for the tax collector (the crook).

R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 192–193.

Explore:

Again we have a study in contrasts. The Pharisee talked to himself and about himself, but the publican prayed to God and was heard. The Pharisee could see the sins of others but not his own sins (7:36–50), while the publican concentrated on his own needs and admitted them openly. The Pharisee was boasting; the publican was praying. The Pharisee went home a worse man than when he had come, but the publican went home forgiven.

Justified means “declared righteous.” It is a legal term that means all the evidence has been destroyed, and there is no record that we have ever sinned. It also means that God no longer keeps a record of our sins (Ps. 32:1–4; Rom. 4). Instead, He puts to our account the righteousness of Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). All of this comes from the mercy of God (Luke 18:13) and not the merits of man. We are justified by faith (Rom. 5:1–5).

In contrast to the proud Pharisee are the little children that Jesus welcomed and blessed (vv. 15–17). His own disciples had some of the spirit of the proud Pharisee in the parable, and Jesus had to lovingly rebuke them. The publican, however, was childlike in his humility and faith and entered the kingdom of God.

Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 189–190.

Explore:

This is by Jesus' own authority as the Messiah, King, Son of Man. "I tell you," He says. The second man returned to his house declared righteous rather than the Pharisee. At the root of the difference is the explanation: everyone who exalts himself, in this case in regard to who and what he depends on for righteousness, shall be humbled, even rejected. The opposite is the way of blessing, "but he who humbles himself," here in respect to who and what He counts on for righteousness, shall be exalted, or counted as having a right standing with God.

Principles for prayer are graphic. First, prayer that meets with God's pleasure is based on trusting Him for His presence, gifts, salvation and all things. The principle has its application in the attitude when a person first comes to salvation, and also every time of praying. If one regards iniquity in his heart, the Lord will not hear him (Ps. 66:18), and those who pray with wrong

motives do not have God's smile (Matt. 6:5–8; Jas. 4:2–4).

Second, a humble spirit willing to acknowledge sin and submit to God's mercy has the green light in prayer.

James E. Rosscup, *An Exposition on Prayer in the Bible:*

Igniting the Fuel to Flame Our Communication with God

(Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2008), 1749.

Question 1 of 5

Does it help you to think of the Bible as one big story? Would you please explain why or why not?

Question 2 of 5

Why do comparisons turn friends into rivals?

Question 3 of 5

Why do we pick people to compare ourselves to that we think are inferior to us?

Question 4 of 5

Why was the tax collector more humble than the Pharisee?

Question 5 of 5

Why did Jesus say that the sinner was justified before God and not the Pharisee?