

Comparison is the thief of joy



Sunday 16th October // Jenny Bush

Sermon outline & suggested discipleship group questions:

*Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life of the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every detail of our lives. That means **we will not compare ourselves with each other** as if one of us were better and another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original.*

Galatians 5 v 25-6 (MSG)



We can go through life clutching onto an invisible measuring stick that helps us work out how we measure up in life. We considered who we compare ourselves to, what's behind it all and how we can avoid the comparison trap. Whilst we can recognise someone else's gift (eg of generosity) and be inspired and encouraged to grow in this regard ourselves the danger with comparison is that it focusses on the gap between us and a perceived standard that should be achieved.

Who & Why we compare

In the talk we considered several different scenarios such as comparing ourselves with people we know or who we feel we ought to be. We also recognised that comparison can come from different places such as pride or envy.

Q: What examples can you think of where comparison has been at work in someone's life? Consider Biblical characters and your own experiences. For each example, can you identify what is behind the comparison?

Avoiding the comparison trap

1) Know who you are

Reading the Bible, allowing God to affirm us and knowing the gifts he has given us is vital to being secure in who we are. The more confident we become in these truths the less we need to compare ourselves with others.

Q: What Scriptures do you know that tell us who God says we are? (eg Gen 1:27, John 1:12, Romans 8:1-2, 1 Corinthians 6:20, Colossians 1:14 & 2:10, Ephesians 2:8-10) How does each of these help us avoid the comparison trap.

Q: Are you comfortable with the idea of asking God for direct affirmation? Have you had any experiences of receiving encouragement from God that has helped you feel more secure and confident?

2) **Put away the measuring stick**

Tackling comparison requires a willingness to get rid of our measuring stick! Encouraging one another, being thankful for one another and celebrating each other's successes can all be powerful antidotes to comparison.

We can also fall into the trap of pursuing perfection. This involves believing that there is a certain standard that we have to achieve. Comparison tells us that there is a gap between us and that standard, which can lead to anxiety, self-condemnation and insecurity. Instead of this we can pursue excellence, which is doing the best we can with the skills, abilities and gifts we currently have. This approach helps us celebrate progress and growth along our journey without comparing ourselves to a certain standard we're supposed to achieve.

Q: Do you feel pressure to pursue perfection in any area of your life? If so, how might pursuing excellence instead change how you live in that area?

3) **Beware your triggers**

We can fall into the comparison trap in many ways. Each of us will have areas in which we are more vulnerable to comparison. It is important we are aware of how culture, social media, and particular people, places or situations can subtly, or not so subtly, lead us into the trap. It won't be possible to avoid all triggers but being aware of what can trip us up is helpful in being on our guard.

Q: Is there a particular trigger that comes to mind for you? How can you avoid it or be prepared to deal with it?

The New Me

We finished by recognising that our imperfections are not how God sees us. When we trust in Jesus' death for us he takes on our imperfections and, in exchange, we are given his perfect, spotless right standing with God. Of course, we do not always choose to live in the light of this truth—we still sin and make bad choices. As we follow him, God transforms us from glory to glory making us more and more like Jesus. When we die or Jesus returns we will be that perfect, spotless version of us forever!

Q: Do you live in the light of the truth that God looks at you and sees Jesus' perfection? How does this help when we struggle with comparison?

Q: What one thing could you do this week to take action on the issue of comparison?