

The Discouragement of Comparison

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Do you like being compared to someone else? Usually when this happens it is because there is an area in your life that others think ought to be better and they use this comparison to “encourage” you to change. However, it really just feels like plain old condemnation. Yet, we do the same thing to ourselves.

I know that admiration is not a bad thing in itself, but there is a sinister side to it. When you look up to someone, or aspire to to become like someone, it's because there are qualities in them that you wished you had. Yes, this can become an incentive to be a better person, but in most people it tends to discourage them. Why? Because you were never intended to be like anyone else and not to be compared with them.

Mankind's ability to recognize patterns and trends leads us to be very comparative. We relate one thing to another. In many ways it is the base of our ability to comprehend abstract ideas. We take information we receive and compare it to understandings we currently possess. This can benefit us greatly, but it can hinder us too. Especially when we are seeking to be all that God created us to be.

I relate this mostly today to people in ministry and the growth of our churches. It is amazing how a little preacher in a small community in the corn fields of Indiana will compare himself with many of the nationally known ministers pastoring in communities of hundreds of thousands. His members will do this also. Example: Who do you wish your pastor was more like? This can only work to discourage a pastor and his church. This applies to worship teams too. I've seen congregations laboring with all their might to imitate nationally known recording artists, becoming discouraged because they cannot reproduce the sound nor muster the same response out of people.

I think it is a disservice to the body of Christ to assume that one person ought to be like another, or for that matter, that one level of growth ought to resemble another. If we do not recognize this, then those who are accomplishing much for the kingdom of God will despise those who do little and those who are doing all they can, where they are, will become discouraged by the massive results of some ministries.

Let me just take this a step further. It is also a mistake to compare our spirituality to others. When we do this we will either feel better than others or worse than them. What do other people have to do with who you are anyway? Are you not a unique person created by God for a specific purpose? There is no replacing you or what you do.

*“Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes.
He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts.
At that time each will receive his praise from God.”*

1st Corinthians 4:5, NIV.

We must truly get a handle on this and rather than spending so much time in comparison, we ought to focus on being faithful and effective to the call of God on our individual lives. Each part of the body is crucial to the health of the whole. Finding significance in this world and in our labors is recognizing that not everyone was created the same, gifted the same, or called to the same endeavor in life.

Take time to search out God's plan and calling for your life. There is deep satisfaction in it. You will discover a deep sense of purpose in it. This knowledge will help you to brace yourself against the comparisons people throw at you, telling you that you need to be more like someone else. Whether it be a minister, a church, or just one little believer, what they do matters. Everyone matters.

I was not sure how much the Bible addressed this issue of comparison when I began this blog, but the Lord began to drop Scriptures into my spirit about this as I sat here writing. I believe it may be because someone needs to hear this today. Your value is set by the price that was paid for you, not by the things you accomplish in this life. Let me ask you this, "Is your love for your children based on how well they perform compared to others?" Thank God what I do in this life is not going to be compared to what Billy Graham accomplished. Thank God he doesn't use a sliding scale or grade on a curve. God's judges each of us individually by our obedience to what he has asked us to do.

*"¹⁷ Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially,
live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.*

*¹⁸ For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold
that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers,*

¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."

1st Peter 1:17-19, NIV.

For myself, I have learned over the years not to compare myself with others, so it bothers me very little what people think of my accomplishments, or lack thereof. What I have also learned to do is commit myself to God as faithful to him and him alone. Yes, I have commitments and obligations to others, but the significance of my life is only compared to my obedience to my calling. Like the Apostle Paul said, "*I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.*" Your vision in life comes from God, not from what others think you ought to be or do.

So, what has God spoken to you? Are you pursuing this vision for your life or are you still being tossed about by what others think you ought to be and do? Also, don't give into this comparison game yourself and begin condemning yourself through your own comparisons. Some people even condemn themselves by comparing the person they think they are to the person they think they should have been. You realize this is called pride, don't you? Wise up. Maybe you are exactly where God wants you to be, or did you think you made it this far on your own?

*"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."*

2nd Corinthians 10:12, NIV.

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