

A Thief Called Comparison
Part 1: Diagnosing The Disease
Discussion Notes- October 5, 2025

1. When you were younger, who was someone you often looked up to or wanted to be like?

Comparison is something we all wrestle with, often measuring ourselves against others to decide if we're "enough." But whether we feel less-than or better-than, comparison always robs us of joy, peace, and purpose. It's a race with no finish line.

Read Ecclesiastes 4:4-8

"Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind. The fool folds his hands and eats his own flesh. Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind. Again, I saw vanity under the sun: one person who has no other, either son or brother, yet there is no end to all his toil, and his eyes are never satisfied with riches, so that he never asks, 'For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure?' This also is vanity and an unhappy business."

Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, observed that much of human striving comes from envy, yet it only leaves us empty and dissatisfied. Social media and culture fuel this "obsessive comparison disorder," making us exhausted, discontent, and even resentful of others. The gospel reminds us that we can't follow Christ and chase comparison at the same time. Our worth is found in God alone, freeing us to love others without secretly hoping they fail.

2. Why do you think comparison is such a natural tendency for us, and what does it reveal about our hearts?

Read 1 Samuel 18:8-9, 28-29

"And Saul was very angry, and this saying displeased him. He said, 'They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands, and what more can he have but the kingdom?' And Saul eyed David from that day on... But when Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him, Saul was even more afraid of David. So Saul was David's enemy continually."

King Saul is a powerful example of how comparison and jealousy can destroy a person's peace and purpose. When David began to rise in success, the people praised him, and Saul compared himself to David. Instead of celebrating David's victories, Saul grew bitter, insecure, and jealous; eventually plotting to kill him.

3. In what ways has comparison affected how you see other people? Do you ever secretly hope someone else fails?

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul is writing to a church that was struggling with division, pride, and rivalry—people were comparing themselves to one another, boasting about their gifts, and competing for status. Paul reminds them that true love cannot coexist with envy or comparison. Love is patient, humble, and celebrates others instead of secretly hoping they fail. This connects directly to our sermon: whenever we compare ourselves and wish others would fall short, we block our ability to truly love them. Comparison not only steals our joy but also damages our relationships and our witness as followers of Christ. Living free from comparison allows love to thrive, bringing unity and encouragement instead of rivalry and resentment.

4. How might our relationships and church community look different if we fully lived free from comparison?

Read Proverbs 14:30

“A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot.”

Comparison steals our joy because it shifts our focus from gratitude and contentment to envy and dissatisfaction. Proverbs 14:30 says, *“A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.”* When we compare ourselves to others, our hearts become restless and discontent, and what should be a life full of joy and peace feels heavy and draining. Envy literally “rots the bones” because it eats away at our spirit, leaving us anxious, frustrated, and unable to appreciate God’s blessings in our own lives. Choosing to release comparison and focus on what God has entrusted to us restores our peace and allows joy to flourish.

5. What’s one area of your life where comparison has been stealing your joy, and how can you invite God into that space this week to find contentment in Him instead?

Prayer/Closing:

- Pray for a heart free from comparison and envy.
- Pray for contentment and gratitude for what God has given.
- Pray for the ability to genuinely celebrate others’ successes.

Deeper Dive: Solomon – A Life Examined Through Comparison

Solomon spent much of his life reflecting on the human tendency to strive after success, wealth, and recognition, often comparing ourselves to others in the process. Beyond Ecclesiastes 4:4–8, we see in Ecclesiastes 2:1–11 how Solomon experimented with pleasure, wisdom, and accomplishments, only to conclude that these pursuits alone could not satisfy the soul.

Read Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

“I said in my heart, ‘Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself.’ But behold, this also was vanity. I said of laughter, ‘It is mad,’ and of pleasure, ‘What use is it?’ I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine—my heart still guiding me with wisdom—and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their life. I made great works. I built houses and planted vineyards for myself. I made myself gardens and parks, and planted in them all kinds of fruit trees. I made myself pools from which to water the forest of growing trees. I bought male and female slaves, and had slaves who were born in my house. I had also great possessions of herds and flocks, more than any who had been before me in Jerusalem. I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the treasure of kings and provinces. I got singers, both men and women, and many concubines,^[b] the delight of the sons of man. So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me. And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.”

He also writes in **Ecclesiastes 5:10**, *“Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless.”* Solomon recognized that striving for more (whether in possessions, status, or achievements) can become an endless cycle when motivated by comparison rather than God’s calling.

Read Ecclesiastes 7:16–18

“Be not overly righteous, and do not make yourself too wise. Why should you destroy yourself? Be not overly wicked, neither be a fool. Why should you die before your time? It is good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand, for the one who fears God shall come out from both of them.”

Solomon warns against extremes and urges balance, highlighting that obsessively comparing ourselves or pursuing what others have can lead to folly and dissatisfaction.

In the New Testament, this idea is echoed by Jesus in Matthew 6:25–34.

Read Matthew 6:25-34

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Jesus encourages His followers not to worry about what others have but to trust God for provision and seek His kingdom first. Both Solomon and Jesus teach that peace and contentment come not from measuring ourselves against others, but from living in alignment with God’s purposes.

1. In Ecclesiastes 2:1–11, Solomon experiments with pleasure, wisdom, and accomplishments. How do you see the danger of comparing your achievements or possessions with others in your own life?
2. Matthew 6:25–34 reminds us to trust God for provision and focus on His kingdom. How does focusing on God’s priorities help us resist the temptation to compare?
3. Reflecting on Solomon’s observations and Jesus’ teaching, what is one practical step you could take this week to shift from comparison to gratitude and trust in God?