



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

This or That / Week 1

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SERIES SUMMARY

THIS OR THAT

A three-week series on comparison.

WEEK 1: God doesn't compare you to others.

WEEK 2: When we stop comparing, we can better celebrate others and ourselves.

WEEK 3: God wants us to see ourselves the way He does.

SCRIPTURE

Oh, don't worry; we wouldn't dare say that we are as wonderful as these other men who tell you how important they are! But they are only comparing themselves with each other, using themselves as the standard of measurement. How ignorant! (2 Corinthians 10:12 NLT)

When people commend [or compliment and praise] themselves, it doesn't count for much. The important thing is for the Lord to commend them (2 Corinthians 10:18 NLT).

Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life (Proverbs 4:23 NLT).

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- Different units of measurement are used around the world to measure weight, distance, height, etc.

- While we may have different standards of measurement from other countries, one measurement all people use is comparison.
- Comparison is when we measure something about ourselves against something about someone else.
- It's the way we measure *this* in our lives against *that* in someone else's life.

TENSION

- Comparison can lead us to believe things that aren't true about ourselves and others.
- It can make us feel that our *this* will never measure up to their *that*.
 - Comparison can . . .
 - Lead to disappointment.
 - Cause frustration.
 - Make us feel hopeless.
 - Motivate us.
 - Cause us to think we're better than others.
- Regardless of how comparison makes us feel about ourselves and others, it never takes us anywhere; it's a cycle of always trying to live up things that are unattainable.

TRUTH

- In a letter Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he said that when we compare ourselves to each other, we're using the wrong measurement, and we're looking in the wrong place. (2 Corinthians 10:12)
- Paul went on to say that it's not about how we measure up in comparison to others, but instead it's about how God sees us. (2 Corinthians 10:18)
- God sees us and doesn't compare us to others.
- We can look at the way Jesus treated people as proof of how God sees us today.
- God views us through His eyes and His love.

APPLICATION

- God sees you and doesn't compare you to others.
- Comparison starts in our hearts because something in us feels unhappy when we compare ourselves to others.
- To avoid the negative feelings that come with comparison, we need to guard our hearts. (Proverbs 4:23)
- We can guard our hearts by:
 - Paying attention to our feelings and noticing what makes us feel negatively when we compare ourselves to others.
 - Figuring out what's fueling our comparison.
 - Celebrating what we have to be thankful for instead of comparing ourselves to others.

LANDING

- Everyone struggles with comparison in different areas of their lives.
 - How does comparing myself to others usually make me feel?
-

THINK ABOUT THIS

Identifying what they like about other people—things they wish they had in themselves—is probably going to be easy for most middle schoolers. That’s because they think a lot about that! The way they see themselves is influenced primarily by their peers in this phase, so it’s easy for them to identify something they see in a friend or fellow student that they don’t see in themselves. It’s more difficult for middle schoolers to recognize things in themselves that they like or that make them unique. That’s because most middle schoolers lack self-awareness, and that makes seeing themselves realistically a challenge. And if they do recognize those good things, they may be hesitant to say them for fear of being made fun of or sounding like they’re bragging.

INTERACTIVE: THIS OR THAT?

OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you’ll use two signs to help define comparison as measuring our “this” against someone else’s “that.”

WHAT YOU’LL NEED

- 2 poster boards, one with the word “THIS” written on it and one with the word “THAT”
- A bold, permanent marker to write on the poster boards
- A way to display the two poster boards (like chairs with backs or easels)

HOW-TO

- Set up the poster boards on stage with enough space to move between them.
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TEACHING SCRIPT

This or That / Week 1

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

BOTTOM LINE

GOD DOESN'T COMPARE YOU TO OTHERS.

INTRODUCTION

2 MINUTES

By this point in your middle school careers, you've probably been taught a little bit about different measuring systems. In Europe, the standard measuring system is called the Metric system. So there, people use things like grams, meters, and liters to measure distance, weight, and more. In the United States, we measure distance or height with inches, feet, and miles and use things like teaspoons, tablespoons, and ounces for other measurements.

Now, while we may have different standards for measuring things like how much flour we should put in the cake we're making or how far it is to our best friend's house, there's one standard of measurement that *all* people use, whether they realize it or not: **comparison**.

INTERACTIVE: This or That?

This is where you'll use two signs to help define comparison as measuring our "this" against someone else's "that." Any time throughout the script you say "this" in comparison to "that," you'll move or motion to the corresponding sign on stage.

You've heard that word before, right? **Comparison is simply when we measure something about ourselves against something about someone else.** We take *this* about ourselves and measure it against *that* about someone else.

You think *this* pair of sneakers you have is awesome, until you see *that* pair the kid in your Small Group has. You think *this* grade you got on your paper is pretty good, until you hear about *that* grade your best friend got. You think *this* guy you're dating is pretty cute, until you see *that* guy your best friend is dating.

See what I mean? **Comparison is the way we measure *this* in our lives against *that* in someone else's life.** And it affects more of our lives than we probably even realize!

TENSION

3 MINUTES

But here's the thing about comparison: **It can lead us to believe things that just aren't true—things about ourselves and others!**

When we compare ourselves to others, we can start to believe their lives are better than ours in some way. Because they have so many followers on Instagram, or made the game-winning shot, or got to take that girl to the school dance, or have more friends than we can even dream of having. Their lives are pretty much perfect. They have everything they could ever want—everything we want. And because of that, we assume their lives are amazing. Even though we may know that's not true (because nobody's life is actually perfect!), the **comparison still leaves us feeling like our *this* will never measure up to their *that*.**

And when that happens? Well, for some of us, the comparison leads to **disappointment**. We're disappointed that we don't have what they have. We wonder why they got to have the cool new house, or the starting spot on the team, or the happy family. We think, "*Why not me?*" And the more we compare, the more disappointed we are with what's in front of us.

Others of us **get frustrated**. Simply put, we don't think it's fair. Don't we deserve to have the cool stuff, or the big friend group, or the part in the school play? The fact that someone else has what we want—what we think we deserve—well, it just doesn't feel fair. And that makes us mad!

Maybe for you, the feeling comparison brings into your life is **hopelessness**. Not only do you see something in someone else's life that you want, but you feel like you'll never have it. No matter what you do or how hard you try, you'll never be able to get where they are or have what they have. And that makes you feel hopeless!

Or maybe, **comparison motivates you**. Instead of giving up, you decide to try harder, push faster, do whatever you have to do to get to where they are. And while motivation and hard work aren't bad things, they can be unhealthy when comparison is the reason behind them.

Maybe when you compare yourself to others, you actually **feel really good about yourself**. You might even think that you're better than someone else—that you're more deserving of what you have than they are anyway. You might look down on others because you feel like your life looks pretty good in comparison.

Regardless of how comparison makes you feel about yourself or others, here's the thing that's true: **It never really takes you anywhere**. Because as soon as you reach the thing you want—as soon as you go from your *this* to their *that*—you find something else to compare. It's never enough. The cycle never ends. And you end up struggling with those same feelings of disappointment, frustration, hopelessness, and more all over again.

I don't know about you, but I'm sure there has to be a better way!

TRUTH

3 MINUTES

Luckily for us, there is actually a better way. A way that doesn't leave us stuck in the cycle of comparison. And it can be found in the Bible.

The passage we're going to look at today was written by a guy named Paul. Paul was a leader in the spread of the Christian faith, and he often wrote letters to encourage believers in churches in different areas. In the letter we're going to look at today, Paul addressed issues born out of comparison to a group of church members in a city called Corinth.

Here's what he said:

Oh, don't worry; we wouldn't dare say that we are as wonderful as these other men who tell you how important they are! But they are only comparing themselves with each other, using themselves as the standard of measurement. How ignorant! (2 Corinthians 10:12 NLT)

Even though Paul was specifically talking about some false teachers who were bragging about their spirituality, the same truth applies to us today. Basically, Paul was saying, "Listen, comparing yourself to other people stinks. It's not smart. It's not wise. It's not helpful. So let's not do it, okay?"

Why? Well, because I think what Paul wanted us to know was that **when we compare ourselves to each other, we're using the wrong measurement.** When we hold our real life up to someone's life on social media, when we compare the way our family looks to the way another person's family looks, when we look at what we have in comparison to what someone else has—well, we'll always end up on the losing end. And that's because we're looking in the wrong place.

And I know this is true not only because of the way comparison makes us feel, but because of something else Paul said in this very same letter. Take a look:

When people commend [or compliment and praise] themselves, it doesn't count for much. The important thing is for the Lord to commend them (2 Corinthians 10:18 NLT).

It's not about how we measure up in comparison to other people. It's not about how our *this* stands in comparison to their *that*. As Paul said, that doesn't count for much.

But what does count is this: how God sees us. *That* is our standard, the place we can look to see how we measure up. And the good news is this: **God doesn't compare you to others.**

How do I know? Because of Jesus! We can look at the way Jesus treated people while He was here on Earth as proof of how God sees us today. Jesus didn't rank the people around Him from best to worst. He didn't compare one single person to His own perfection. Instead, He turned the whole system upside down, basing the way He sees all people on one thing and one thing only: **God's love.**

See, God isn't using the people around you as some sort of measuring stick to determine your worth or value. Instead, He is simply looking at you through His eyes. He's seeing your life through His love. And that's a place you will always measure up.

APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

So, since this is true—since **God doesn't compare you to others**—then what can we do to stop comparing ourselves?

There's just one more truth I want to share with you that I think can help. It's some wisdom from a book called Proverbs that will give us an idea of where to start:

Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life (Proverbs 4:23 NLT).

Comparison starts in our hearts. It starts because something in us feels unhappy with *this* in our lives when we see it compared to *that* in someone else's. So, if we want to avoid that feeling, we have to stop it where it starts: our hearts! As this Proverb says, we have to guard our hearts.

So here are some ways you can guard your heart:

- **Pay attention to your feelings.** Notice the way your mood or outlook changes when you start to compare yourself to someone else. Do you feel disappointed? Frustrated? Angry? Anxious? Those feelings may be clues that you're heading down the path of comparison. They're a signal that you need to guard your heart.
- **Find out what's fueling it.** What are you looking at, thinking about, or doing when you start to feel those things? What's fueling your negative feelings of comparison? Is it a post on social media? A TV show you're watching? A circumstance in your life you wish was different? If it's something in your control, take a step away from it. Close the app, turn off the TV, take a break from that friend group for a day or so. Take a step to guard your heart from the things that cause you to compare. And if it's something you can't control, talk to someone about it. Maybe you're unhappy with something about your home life, or have a friend you're jealous of, or you wish you'd gotten the top spot on your team. Things like that can cause you to compare. Your Small Group Leader is a great person to help you identify steps you can take to change and guard your heart in those areas.
- **Celebrate what you do have.** Instead of filling your heart with comparison, fill it with the acknowledgement of the things you do have. The things that you're thankful for. The things you like about yourself and your life. Again, the way God sees you is the best place to start! Make a list of the ways He sees you. Send an encouraging text to someone you appreciate, or write down all of the things you're grateful for in your life. When you're tempted to compare, fill that space in your heart with gratitude. Fill it with something that reminds you of the truth that **God doesn't compare you to others.**

LANDING

1 MINUTE

If you're sitting here thinking you're the only one struggling with comparing yourself to others, it's not true. Every single one of us struggles with comparison in different areas of our lives. The good thing is that we don't have to struggle alone. One of the reasons we have Small Groups is to give you a place to talk about these things and become more aware of them.

So, as you go into your Small Group today, I want you to think about this question: **How does comparing myself to others usually make me feel?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
