



# COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

This or That / Week 3

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[PRELUDE](#)

[SOCIAL](#)

[WORSHIP](#)

[STORY](#)

[GROUPS](#)

[HOME](#)

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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.

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## SCRIPTURE

*Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect (Romans 12:2 NLT).*

*So, since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't (Romans 12:6 MSG).*

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## TEACHING OUTLINE

### INTRODUCTION

- Who is your idol or the person you look up to the most right now?
- Tell a personal story about the person you idolized when you were in middle school.
- Regardless of who we look up to, we eventually feel that we'll never measure up compared to them.

## TENSION

- Comparison is when we measure *this* in our lives to *that* in others' lives.
- Looking up to someone isn't a bad thing; it can actually motivate us. The problem comes when we measure our lives next to theirs because it leaves us feeling like we're not enough.
- Trying to measure up to others is a cycle that never ends.
- The more we feel that we don't measure up, the more we feel insecure, unhappy, and anxious.

## TRUTH

- In one of Paul's letters, he encouraged Christians to not try to be the same as the people they were comparing themselves to. When we choose to follow God, He changes us into a new person and gives us a new way of thinking. We can take our eyes off of comparing ourselves to others, and instead, focus on what God has for us and who He created us to be. (Romans 12:2)
- Paul went on to say that when we compare ourselves to others, we concentrate on what we're not, and we miss out seeing who we are and what we do have. So instead, we should remember that we are made and loved by God. (Romans 12:6)
- God wants us to change our thinking so we see that, in Him, we're always enough.
- God wants us to see ourselves the way He does.

## APPLICATION

- To help you change your thinking and view yourself the way God does, start with this:
  1. Identify what's not true and talk to God about it.
  2. Change how you think about yourself and focus on how God sees you.
  3. Replace your old negative thoughts with new, positive thoughts.
- God wants us to see ourselves the way He does.

## LANDING

- Your Small Group and Small Group Leader see your worth, care about you, and support you. It's a place to be reminded of the truth that God loves you and that you are enough.
- What's one area of my life where I need God's help to see that I'm enough?

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## THINK ABOUT THIS

Thinking about the way God sees them may be a challenge for your middle schoolers. For some, that's because it's never occurred to them that God even thinks about them or sees them at all! Or for others, it's because they struggle to see beyond how they feel. If they see themselves a certain way, it doesn't matter what anyone else tells them; what they feel becomes fact. And finally, for some it's because they believe they don't deserve to be seen the way God sees them. Keep these things in mind as you encourage students in your message this week. Not only do you want them to understand that God does see and think about them, but you want them to know exactly what He thinks so that it can change their thinking about both Him and themselves.

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## INTERACTIVE: HOW GOD SEES US AND HOW WE FEEL

## OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll use two signs to help explain the struggle between how we feel when we compare ourselves to others and believing what God says is true about us.

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 2 poster boards, one with the words "HOW GOD SEES US" written on it and one with the words "HOW WE FEEL"
- 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 3

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[PRELUDE](#)

[SOCIAL](#)

[WORSHIP](#)

[STORY](#)

[GROUPS](#)

[HOME](#)

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## BOTTOM LINE

GOD WANTS US TO SEE OURSELVES THE WAY HE DOES.

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## INTRODUCTION

4 MINUTES

Let me ask you a question: Who is your idol? The person you look up to the most right now? The person you think is absolutely and completely the best at doing what they do or at being who they are? Maybe it's an athlete, a YouTuber, an older sibling, a rapper, a parent, a designer, or someone at your school.

### TELL A PERSONAL STORY

*Tell a story from your own life that illustrates the following thoughts or ideas . . .*

- Talk about a person you idolized when you were in middle school. Maybe a friend, an athlete, a celebrity, a parent, or a sibling. (Bonus points if you have a picture!)
- Focus on what you admired about that person at the time. What was it about them that made you think they were so amazing?
- The goal here is to set up the idea that this person was someone you wanted to be—a standard you wanted to reach.

So maybe your idol looks different than mine. Maybe the person you look up to the most right now has a different talent, or career, or personality than mine did. But still, we all know what it's like to idolize someone so much that we want to be just like them. The problem? Well, eventually we realize that our lives, our talent, our skills, our fame—it will just never measure up compared to theirs.

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# TENSION

3 MINUTES

In this series, we've been talking a lot about comparison. **Comparison is when we measure *this* in our lives against *that* in theirs.** And often, whether we realize it or not, this is what we're doing with the people we idolize or look up to.

So maybe you love Billie Eilish and want to be a singer just like she is. But when you compare your talent to hers, you just don't feel like it measures up. Or maybe you love Steph Curry. But when you look at his scoring record next to your own, you don't feel like you'll ever be able to be as good as he is. Maybe you look up to your older brother. You want to be as popular as he is, but when you think about how many friends he has compared to how many friends you have, you feel like that dream may never be a reality.

See, here's what makes comparison like this tricky. **Looking up to someone or being inspired to be like someone isn't a bad thing.** It can actually be a great thing! It can motivate you to work hard, or make positive changes in your life, or try to reach new goals. **The problem comes when we measure our lives next to theirs.** When we think that in order to be enough, we have to achieve what they've achieved, do what they've done, become like they are. Because the reality is, that kind of comparison will always leave us feeling like we're not enough.

## **INTERACTIVE: How God Sees Us and How I Feel**

*This is where you'll use two signs to help explain the struggle between how we feel when we compare ourselves to others and believing what God says is true about us. Any time throughout the script where you talk about feelings that result from comparison or how God views us, move or motion to the corresponding sign on stage to help emphasize your points.*

As middle schoolers, I think you know exactly how this feels. Because every single day, you see someone you could compare yourself to. A kid at school, a girl in your Small Group, a boy on your team, even a best friend or older sibling. On your own, you feel okay about who you are and the way your life looks. But as soon as you compare *this* in your life to *that* in their life? Well, just like that, that comparison causes you to feel like you're not enough.

You're not cool enough, smart enough, attractive enough, talented enough, rich enough, funny enough, popular enough, good enough—you fill in the blank! **We all know what it feels like to struggle to reach an impossible standard—to measure ourselves up to something we'll never be able to reach.**

And if we do get that thing—if we do finally feel like we're enough in one part of our lives—well, there's a new piece of ourselves that we'll realize falls short just as fast. It's a cycle. As soon as you start to feel like you're smart enough, you look around and think you're not popular enough. And as soon as you think you're popular enough, you start to think you aren't good looking enough. The cycle goes on and on!

And the more we feel we don't measure up compared to someone else, the more we start to feel insecure, unhappy, anxious, and more.

So, the question is this: Are we always going to feel this way? **Will we ever feel like we're enough?**

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# TRUTH

3 MINUTES

To help us with this, we're going to take a look at something that Paul wrote in one of his letters to other Christians thousands of years ago. Paul was a leader in the early Christian church, and even though their lives were totally different than ours today, the people Paul was writing to back then had similar struggles. The people he was writing to in this particular letter were dealing with the temptation to compare themselves to others around them, especially those who weren't Christians like they were.

So, here's what Paul had to say to them:

***Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect (Romans 12:2 NLT).***

Paul told them right away not to copy the people around them. Not to try to be the same as the people they were comparing themselves to, for better or for worse! Now I don't know this for sure, but I have to think that Paul probably knew this wouldn't be an easy thing to do. We all struggle with comparison! That's why I think he didn't stop there. He didn't just tell us to stop comparing or copying the world around us; he told us how to do it.

By letting God transform the way we think! **When we choose to follow God, He changes us into a new person and gives us a new way of thinking.** We start to understand what He says is true about us and how He sees us. *[Turn the "How God Sees Us" sign forward to face your audience.]* So the old way of thinking—the comparison that tells us we'll never be enough—is not the way He wants us to think or feel. As we let God transform us, we'll change the way we think, and we'll learn the way God wants us to live. We'll see ourselves the way He sees us.

See, **changing the way you think allows you to start living out God's plan for your life.** It takes your eyes off someone else's life and focuses them firmly on what He has for you and who He has created you to be. It helps you understand how much He values you. Because **God wants us to see ourselves the way He does.**

A few verses later, Paul went on to say this:

***So, since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't (Romans 12:6 MSG).***

I love the way he puts this so much! **When we're comparing ourselves to others, our focus is on one thing: what we're not.** Because of that, we never feel like we're enough. And when we keep our eyes on that, we miss out on being able to see who we are and what we really do have.

And while I think each and every one of you has so many amazing and unique things that make you more than enough, Paul pointed to one thing that I want you to know is true of all of you: *You were made and are loved by God.* You were each formed and created with specific gifts and callings—things that make you more than enough! That's how God sees you, and that's how He wants you to see yourself. He wants to change your thinking so that you see that, in Him, you will always be enough.

In other words, **God wants us to see ourselves the way He does.**

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# APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

Believing this truth has the potential to change the way you see yourself. It has the power to help you change your thinking. To keep you from comparing. To help you realize that you are enough.

So to start, try this:

1. **Identify what's *not* true.** In order to really change your thinking and start believing what's true about you, you've got to first identify what's *not* true. So, ask yourself: What areas of my life leave me feeling like I'm not enough? Is it the way I look? A talent I wish I had? A friend group I want to be a part of? Look for the places in your life that lead you to compare and believe you aren't enough. Then talk to God about it! And ask Him to help show you what's true and not true when it comes to how you view yourself.
2. **Change how you think about yourself.** I get it, it's easy to compare ourselves and believe the lie that we aren't good enough. But the truth is this: *You are enough*. That's how God sees you and that's how He wants you to see yourself. So instead of feeling like you don't measure up, stop those thoughts right in their tracks! Do what Paul instructed and let God transform your thinking. Focus on the good and perfect plan He has for you. And focus on how much He loves and values everything unique that makes you, you!
3. **Replace old thoughts with new ones.** Think about some of the negative things you think about yourself on a regular basis. Maybe things like, *I'm not good looking enough*, or *I'm not popular enough*, or *I'm not smart enough*. Identify the negative thought and then come up with something positive to replace it with. Maybe, something like, *I'm a great friend*, or *I'm generous*, or *I'm really good at playing the guitar*. Whatever it is, pick something that celebrates who you are and who God made you to be. And use those thoughts to replace your old ones.

For some of you, this will be easier than for others. Maybe you can identify some things you love about yourself, like that you're kind, you really are a good friend to others, or you make people laugh. But for others of you, I recognize this could be a struggle. I know that loving ourselves and knowing our worth can be difficult. Seeing ourselves the way God sees us isn't always easy. That's why we need His help! So maybe for you, the best place to start is to remember and write down the truth we're talking about this week: **God wants us to see ourselves the way He does.**

Let that be the place you start to change your thinking and replace your thoughts. And over time, you'll begin to see God open your eyes to more amazing things about who you are and how He's created you. You'll begin to see that in Him, you're enough.

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# LANDING

1 MINUTE

God knows you're amazing. And you know who else thinks you're pretty great? Your Small Group and Small Group Leader. These are people who support you, care about you, and see all of the wonderful things God has made you to be. Small Group is a place to go to be reminded of the truth that God loves you and wants you to know your worth.

And as you head to Small Group, I want you to think about this: **What's one area of my life where I need God's help to see that I'm enough?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS

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