



WEEK 3: COMPARISON

BIG IDEA:

Live from the approval of God so you don't have to live for the approval of others.

INTRO:

Who is that one person that gets your goat? You are currently goat-less, because that one person got your goat. They seem to get more than just your goat. They seem to get it all. They got the starting position, they have more followers on Instagram, they have a longer streak with your other friends on Snapchat. It seems like everything works out for that guy or that girl.

As much as we hate to admit it, green with envy is a color we all turn. From time to time, someone gets something and all we get is jealous.

MATT'S EXAMPLE: For me, that person is Chris Applegate. Chris Applegate is a buddy of mine that's a youth pastor in South Carolina. You know how they say, "No matter how good you are, there's someone out there that's better."? I met that someone, his name is Chris Applegate. This dude is amazing. He's a former D1 basketball player, he's smart, he's got great people skills, and anytime you talk to him, he's just so genuine and nice. Now, if you're thinking, "Matt, you're so nice and genuine." Well, you haven't met Chris Applegate. He's more nice and more genuine. And if I really want to let the shallow in me out: Chris is taller, in better shape, and more attractive than me. I'm doing okay in those arenas, he's doing better.

Chris, if you happen to see this online: I mean it, buddy, you're the man.

TENSION:

Has someone else's success ever diminished your self-worth? If the answer is no, great! The rest of us would love to hear how awesome and secure you are! And if you've never met someone that didn't turn you the slightest shade of green, don't be surprised if you meet that person one day.

We know our comparison is ugly but none of us are immune to feeling lesser by someone else's more.

This isn't a high school thing, this is a human being thing. Dealing with jealousy is a cradle-to-the-grave issue. If you were to walk in to one of our church's kids rooms, you could probably find a toddler pushing down another toddler to get her toy. You may have watched an adult in your life buy a boat because his neighbor bought a boat.

You could probably find two grade school kids riding around, one has the new razor scooter, so the other one steals it, wrecks it, leaves it on the curb. Maybe that just happened to me?

Then there's middle school and suddenly clothes is a comparison game. Your buddy got a new Huf tee shirt, some new Diamond socks, and a new Salty Crew hat. He looked like he walked out of a hurricane inside of Pac Sun. And what did you do? You begged your mom to take you take you to Tilly's so you can load up.

Not only is this a universal issue, it's a timeless issue. Comparison is a universal and timeless issue. Today it's who has the iPhone 10 or who has the Nintendo Switch.

MATT'S EXAMPLE: When I was in school, it was who has the NWO tee shirts, the JNCO jeans, and the nano pets. When your parents were in school, it was who has the new VCR and the thigh master. Right? No?

But jealousy and comparison have been around since the first set of siblings. It was around during the days of King Solomon, here's what he said about it:

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. (Ecclesiastes 4:4 ESV)

Even in Solomon's day, the date is BC and pre-dates cars, phones, and name-brand clothing, people are still driven and ambitious to outshine each other. Solomon sees that people work hard and try to gain a lot because they're jealous of what he or she down the street has.

And jealousy and comparison was around when Jesus walked this earth too. His disciples spent a lot of time comparing and wondering, "Who is the greatest disciple?" Can you imagine that? They're walking with Jesus who is fully God, fully man, and they wanna know whose playing for 2nd.

Even after Jesus' resurrection, two disciples in particular are still in this weird, "Whose better?" battle. As Jesus walks with Peter, restoring Peter for denying him 3 times and telling Peter all that he's going to do with his life and his death to glorify Jesus, Peter is hung up on comparison. What was supposed to be this beautiful moment of personal purpose from the mouth of Jesus turns into a jealousy issue.

Look at what Peter says:

[20] Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also had leaned back against him during the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" [21] When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" [22] Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!" (John 21:20–22 ESV)

What's so funny about their feud is that this is the book that John wrote. So when it says, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," John is talking about himself. It's like one last punch to Peter when he wrote the book! "Hey Peter, remember, I'm the disciple whom Jesus loved!"

TRUTH:

Envy is an ugly color. But we all struggle with it. And one of the main places comparison comes out is in our ambition.

So what is this comparison thing? Why is this "jealous ambition" such a universally human problem? Well the bible actually asks this question? And then poses a reason, check this out in James 4.

[1] What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? [2] You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. [3] You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. (James 4:1–3 ESV)

Your neighbor's stuff isn't your issue. Your friend's new shoes isn't your problem. Your best friend getting attention that you're not getting isn't the real issue. The real issue is the war within you. You have passions at war within you. It's our desires, our insecurities, our pride that leads us to compare, to be jealous, and to use ambition to fight for more.

It's the internal war that thinks, "If I had that, then I'd really be a somebody. If I had those friends, that car, their popularity, their respect, their personality, their looks, then maybe I could be someone really important too."

So what is the war within you? It's the need to be important.

The central issue of our comparison may be our need for approval or validation.

The truth is, we can overcome jealousy. But we can't overcome validation. You can stop comparing yourself, but I don't know if you can deny your need for approval. You can stop being jealous of others, but you'll probably still need to feel important.

What if our comparison issue is, at it's core, an importance issue?

What if our jealous ambition is being fueled by this war inside us that's saying, "I need to be someone important, I don't feel like someone important, and if I have this or that then I'll be somebody important."

Can you really turn off your need for approval and validation? Can you act like being noticed isn't important to you?

Now think about God's stance of us. We've talked about how he created us in his image, that when we accept Jesus, we become God's sons and daughters. And that he made us on purpose for a purpose.

The truth is your need to be important is a God-thing, because God made you important. You're already important because he says you are.

So if I am important to God, I don't know if I can turn off my need to be important.

What if your current comparisons are showing you who or what you're looking for approval instead of God? Our comparisons may show us who or what we're looking to for verification, for validation instead of God.

God wants to get to the central issue. He'd rather speak to your sense of approval rather than your symptom of comparison. He'd rather speak to who you are and what he's given you than answer prayers to give you more.

Gaining more doesn't stop the inner war.

APPLICATION:

How do we stop this inner war? How could we solve this validation issue in our hearts?

Here's what Proverbs 29 says,

The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe. (Proverbs 29:25 ESV)

Comparison may be a symptom of an approval issue. And what Proverbs teaches us is fighting our inner war for approval through people is a snare and fighting it through God's approval is safe.

It's a snare vs. safety. A snare leaves you stuck. Safety leaves you secure. Approval from others feels great, but it doesn't get you anywhere. You're snared in. Stuck by your need for approval.

But with God's approval there's security. Security in who you are. The ability to know and be content in who you are and what you have.

Living from the approval of God is better than living for the approval of others because there's security instead of a snare.

It's possible to get on the other side of approval in your life. It's possible to stop chasing approval and just have approval.

What would it look like if you resolved once and for all your need for approval? The answer is anything! Anything could happen. Because you would be out of the trap of chasing approval. You could just create, you could just make things, you could bless and help others, you could go and produce with your life.

So let's cross over to the other side of approval. Let's leave living for the approval of others and start living from the approval of God. Because if you live from the approval of God you don't have to live for the approval of others.

TRANSITION TO GROUPS.