

COMPARISON TRAP

CREEK
STUDENT
MINISTRY
COTTONWOOD CREEK CHURCH

Comparison Trap

By the end of this series, learners will be able to recognize and combat comparison traps in their life by memorizing scripture that will refocus their hearts and minds on how God sees them and where their focus should be.

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Comparison Trap: Who is better?

By the end of this lesson, learners will understand that the way God views them is determined by Christ's work on the cross, not by anything they do or don't do.

Week 1

Learning Activities

- Give each student a pen and paper, and have them draw a Venn Diagram that fills their page. Have them compare/contrast two things (ex: dogs and cats, snow cones and ice cream, Marvel and DC, Big 12 football vs SEC football, etc.) Once they've completed it, have them share some of the similarities and differences they found.
- Play a game of "Would You Rather". "Would you rather" questions are great for practicing critical thinking because they require you to evaluate two different but seemingly equally appealing (or unappealing) options and choose one. Ask students the questions and have them go around in a circle to answer.
 - Ex:
 - Would you rather be able to fly or turn invisible?
 - Would you rather jump into a pool of marshmallows or a pool of jello?
 - Would you rather have a head the size of an orange or a watermelon?
 - Asking the questions is great, but you can step it up by having kids come up with their own questions. Writing these questions requires kids to not only create two options but also to evaluate whether or not those options are roughly equal in appeal. Part of the process is answering the questions, so be sure and give students an opportunity to share their questions with the rest of the class.

Learning Readiness

Today we are identifying our tendency to think that the more good we do, the more God will love us. So often we compare our obedience to God to other Christians' obedience, and we gage our status in the Kingdom of God based on how "good" or "bad" we are in comparison to others. Asking your students about what their idea of a "good" Christian is will help you identify what they believe about God's view of them, and whether or not He compares them to other Christians.

Say: We may not realize it, but we all have some idea of what God thinks about us. We sometimes can think that God views some people as "better" than others.

Ask: How would you define a good Christian?

- Make sure you let your students answer/talk for a while before immediately correcting them. Obviously we want them to understand that God doesn't love them any more or less than the "most holy" person they can think of, but letting them verbally process their thoughts is important when helping them understand what they have been believing.

Bible Study

By the end of this lesson, learners will understand that the way God views them is determined by Christ's work on the cross, not by anything they do or don't do.

Read: 2 Corinthians 10:12, 2 Corinthians 10:18

Knowledge Questions:

1. List things that we are called to do as God's children.
 - a. *(Ex: Love God and Love others (Mat 22:37-39) Make disciples (Mat 28:20) Follow Jesus, be transformed by him, be a fisher of men (Mat 4:19))*
2. Define what makes a person a Christian.
 - a. *(Students may answer things like "someone who goes to church" or "someone who reads their bible". It is important to help them understand, in a loving way, that being a member of a church, attending services regularly, and giving to the church does not make you a Christian. A true Christian is a person who has put faith and trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ)*
3. 2 Corinthians 10:18 uses the word "approved". What are some synonyms for the word "approved"?
 - a. Accepted, confirmed, certified

Comprehension/Understanding Questions:

1. In your own words, explain what Paul is saying NOT to do in 2 Corinthians 10:12?
2. Explain what Paul means when he uses the verb "measure" in verse 12. Does he mean to literally measure the length/width of someone, or does he mean to figuratively measure? What are they measuring?
 - a. *(Paul's was speaking to the Corinthian Christians who thought highly of themselves. They thought in a very worldly manner, measuring each other by comparing themselves. This was wrong because it only measured on a human scale, focusing only on outward appearance. When we let the Holy Spirit measure us through God's Word, He measures us on God's scale, and He looks at the heart.)*

Applications:

1. How can you relate to the first century churches struggle of looking around at other people to measure their holiness instead of looking at God?
2. Considering 2 Corinthians 10:18, identify how we are to measure who is approved?

Synthesis Question

1. How does 2 Corinthians 10:18 reconstruct your understanding of who is "approved" or "good"?
2. What would be the issue if our good works did cause us to gain more favor with God? How would that affect our faith?

- a. *(If our status as a Christian was based on anything we do or don't do, then that would mean that Christ's work on the cross was not sufficient. We go to church, read our bibles, participate in community and prayer, because we love God and want to grow in our relationship with Him.*

Evaluation Questions:

1. How does knowing God's love for you is solely dependent on what Christ did for us on the Cross change how you view your relationship with God?
2. As a group, brainstorm scripture that can help you remember how God sees you.
Commit to memorizing one verse this week.
 - a. *(2 Corinthians 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.
Galatians 2:20 - I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
Titus 3:5 - He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,)*

Conclusion

- By the end of this lesson, learners will understand that the way God views them is determined by Christ's work on the cross, not by anything they do or don't do. Our world will tell you to measure your success based on how others are performing, but this is opposite of what God's word says. Our status before God is based solely on the work Christ did for us on the cross. It is imperative that we keep our focus on the Lord, because when we start looking around at those around us we will begin to compare and this will lead us to destruction.

Announcements

- Leaders, communicate any announcements for your group and the ministry.

Comparison Trap: Comparison is the Thief of Joy

By the end of this lesson, students should recognize that comparison fueled by pride robs them of joy, and that when we stop comparing, it leads us to better celebrate ourselves and others and better serve the church and glorify God.

Week 2

Learning Activities

- Play a Game of “This or That”
 - Ask questions and have students answer in a circle. Encourage them to explain why their choice is “better”
 - Dog or Cat? Netflix or YouTube? Phone Call or Text? Waffles or Pancakes? Ice Cream Cone or Snow Cone? Mobile Games or Console Games? Whataburger or in-n-out?
- Similarities/Differences
 - Have students line up shoulder to shoulder.(can be a couple feet away for safety if need be) Tell them you are going to name some concepts, items, and activities and if they like/enjoy that thing, they will take a step forward.
 - Ex: Icecream, Sports, rap music, playing an instrument, I am short, I am tall, I have a brother, I have a sister, Books, Vegetables, Pizza, action movies, cartoons, etc.
 - After each concept or item, allow students time to move and look at where their peers moved.

Learning Readiness

- The purpose of both of those activities is to reveal similarities and differences amongst the students. After the activity, get students in a circle -
- Ask: *“What kinds of things tend to divide us at school/church?”*
 - You can provide prompts like “Hobbies? Where we live?”
- Point out that while some things may divide us, other things can unite us — even simple things like ice cream.
- Ask: *name some of the things that unify their group, have them think about the topics/things that most of them agreed on.*
- After some dialogue, Ask: *Who/what unifies the entire church?*
 - Make sure you let your students answer/talk for a while before immediately correcting them.
 - Say: *Our belief in Jesus and His life/death/resurrection unifies the entire church. We all have been saved by grace through faith, and that puts us all together on an equal playing field. God has given all of us a specific set of interests/giftings in order to serve his church, but sometimes we can get jealous when we compare our giftings to someone else's.*

Bible Study

By the end of this lesson, students should recognize that comparison robs them of joy, and that when we stop comparing, we can better celebrate ourselves/others and better serve the church and glorify God.

Read: Proverbs 14:30, 1 Samuel 18:8-9

- **Context for 1 Samuel 18:8-9, share this with your students after reading the passage:** David had become very popular among the people of Israel and among Saul's servants. The people began to sing, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands". When the people of Israel started singing about David's victories, everyone knew David was more popular than Saul. However David was not trying to gain the favor of the people, he was merely being faithful where God had led him.

Knowledge Questions:

1. Relate the situation between Saul and David to your own life/relationships. Have you ever had an experience like this? Were you "Saul" or "David"?
2. Define the word "rot". What do you think about the Bible verse that compares being jealous to rotting bones? Does that make you think differently about jealousy?
 - a. *(Rot: decay or cause to decay by the action of bacteria and fungi; decompose. The process of decaying.)*

Comprehension/Understanding Questions:

1. Describe the real issue at hand. Is Saul really mad about David's success? If not, what is he really upset about?
 - a. *(We can infer that Saul is not upset with David's success, he is wrestling with his own pride that wants all the glory for himself.)*
2. Put Proverbs 14:30 in your own words, as if you were giving advice to a friend.
 - a. *(Ex: A heart that finds rest in the grace of god will be at peace, but the sin of envy will only lead you to destruction.)*

Applications:

1. All of us will face circumstances in our life similar to Saul's situation with David. Put yourself in Saul's shoes, Sally (someone else gets what you wanted, someone is more popular than you, someone has more friends) how can you prepare now to respond in a God-honoring way?
2. When you focus on being thankful for what you have, is it harder to be jealous of others? Why do you think that is?

Synthesis Questions:

1. Let's think through Saul's response. He was first selfish and wanted all of the glory for himself which made him jealous of David's fame and popularity, which gave way to anger, which eventually led him to try to kill David. Identify the root of Saul's problem.
 - a. *(His focus was on himself and not on honoring the Lord.)*

2. Explain why selfishness/self focus would lead someone to comparison and jealousy.
 - a. *(Pride wants glory for yourself and does not see others as necessary to the church but only as threats to self - glory. When pride fuels comparison, jealousy and selfishness is the result.)*

Evaluation Questions:

1. I want you to think about today: What did you think most about? Did you compare? Were you jealous? What are some of the things you find yourself being jealous over the most? We talked about how being selfish leads to jealousy, and being focused on the Lord will lead to selflessness. Describe some ways you can better focus on the Lord this week?
2. Write down the areas you find yourself falling into comparison, and next to each thing/person write a scripture that will help redirect your focus.

Conclusion

- Ultimately, comparison is not in and of itself bad. We need comparison to understand what holiness is. God's laws and instructions fundamentally help us to see what we are and are not, what we should and shouldn't be. But when comparison stops being fueled by godliness and starts being fueled by pride, we get ourselves in trouble. When we get our eyes off of ourselves and onto the Lord, we are able to better celebrate others and glorify God. Don't let comparison steal your joy this week.

Announcements

- Leaders, communicate any announcements for your group and the ministry.

Comparison Trap: How does God see me?

By the end of this lesson, students will have learned about how they have been made new and are being transformed by Christ, causing them to live differently than the rest of the world.

Week 3

Learning Activities

- Play a “Transformation Game”
 - To “transform” yourself means to “change” yourself. Let’s play a little game of “Transformation!” (“Change!”) Everyone will have 30 seconds to transform themselves. You can change your body position, change your facial expression, change your hair, put on a hat or change some clothing. When the 30 seconds are over, take a moment to look at the transformations (changes) everyone made. Talk about the transformations (changes) you like the best.
- Ask your group to think of things/people/animals that undergo a transformation.
 - Ex: butterfly, babies to adults, cakes when they are baked, tadpoles to frogs.
 - Once many examples are shared, ask them if those things could ever return to their original form? (ex: a butterfly returning to a cocoon and becoming a caterpillar, a cake returning to batter, etc)
 - The answer is NO! And you wouldn't want them to anyways!

Learning Readiness

- Ask: *Do you ever think about the everyday choices we make? Why do we dress the way we do? Why do we talk and act the way we do? Why do we hang around the people we hang with? Why are we sitting in this room right now?*
- Say: *Before today is over, I want you to ask yourself three questions...*
 - Who makes my choices?
 - How am I making my choices?
 - Why am I making them?

Bible Study

By the end of this lesson, Students will understand that we are supposed to look different than the world because we have been made new in Christ.

Read: Romans 12:2

Knowledge Questions:

1. Compare/contrast the words “conformed” and “transformed”

2. Who or what pressures us to do what we do? (what we wear, how we talk, what we listen to/watch)
 - a. (If we are honest with ourselves, we would say that the culture around us has a huge say in what we do, what we wear, how we act, and how we talk. And when I say culture, I'm talking about social media, movie stars, recording artists, athletes, where we live, the school we go to, and the friends we hang out with.)

Comprehension/Understanding Questions:

1. Why do we let friends/culture shape our decision making?
 - a. *(Ex: Desire for acceptance and fear of rejection)*
2. Give examples of how following Jesus should impact the way we make our choices.
 - a. *As a disciple of Christ, we should be seeking to follow him and imitate him in our daily life. Jesus was patient, so I will choose to be patient. Jesus was compassionate, so I will choose to be compassionate. Jesus forgave, so I will forgive. Jesus was honest, so I will choose to be honest.*

Applications:

1. Do your choices impact the way God sees you (does he like you more/less)?
 - a. *(NO! The issue here is fellowship, not salvation. Nothing we do/don't do will change our salvation. However, our sin does affect our fellowship with God. God does not see you any different because of your choices, good or bad. The Christian who temporarily walks in darkness is still saved, but not in fellowship with God. When you make Godly choices, you are walking in the light as God is in the Light and therefore experiencing fellowship with God. When you are walking in darkness, you are not in the light as God is in the light and this affects your fellowship with him.)*
2. Why would someone change their way of living, if it does not impact the way God sees them?
 - a. *(The goal of obedience is not to gain favor with God. The goal of obedience is to gain more of the Lord and glorify Him. When we are obedient, we are loving and trusting God most and believing that living by His design is where we will flourish most.)*
3. Think about the choices you made today. How would they have changed if your sole motivation was to honor the Lord?

Synthesis Questions:

1. Hopefully by now you understand that if you are a Christian, God sees you as made completely new in Christ and your choices do not/will not affect your status as a child of God. But as Christians we have all entered into something called sanctification. Sanctification is just a big fancy word that means the process of becoming more like Christ. In what ways does your decision making need to change in order to better reflect Christ and not the world?
2. Summarize in your own words what Paul is calling us as believers to do.

Evaluation Questions:

1. If someone at school were to ask you why you weren't joining in on the gossip/bad language/partying/lying/cheating/etc, how would you respond to them?
2. Going against the crowd can be really hard and can become tiresome. What are some ways you can maintain focus and energy while chasing after the Lord?
3. What scripture can you memorize this week that will encourage you when you feel tired from going against the crowd? Brainstorm as a group how you can remind yourself of scripture throughout the day/the week.
 - a. *(Ex: Alarm/reminder on your phone that goes off during the day, Writing scripture on your mirror with an expo marker, Leaving post its around your house/car/school books and notebooks)*

Conclusion

- We are called to look completely different than the rest of the world. Paul often refers to believers as "exiles" or "aliens" to remind us that this earth is not our forever home. Think about going on a trip to another country for two weeks. Imagine yourself as the classic tourist. Your clothes will look different than the locals, you will speak differently than the locals, all you have with you is what is in your suitcase, and this all makes sense because you are not from there! You are expected to be different. This is the mindset we need to have with our life here on earth. We are exiles, living in a land for a temporary time before we get to go home. Now this doesn't mean that we don't relate to the people we are with, even Paul was familiar enough with the greek culture to quote greek poetry (Acts 17), but our lives are not consumed by worldly culture. We have been made new in Christ and our citizenship is now in heaven, and our lives should reflect this new identity.

Announcements

- Leaders, communicate any announcements for your group and the ministry.