



Don't Measure Up?

How to stop comparing yourself to others
By Maggie Paulus

God's hands made us. He knit us together when we were in our momma's tummy ([Psalm 139:13](#)). He breathed life into us. Fashioned us in his own image—in the likeness of him who calls himself Immanuel—God with us, and the great *I AM*. He knows how many days we'll have here on this planet. And he's got plans for us—good works for us to do as co-laborers with Christ ([Ephesians 2:10](#)). And he seeks to bless us. Yes, this God of all the glory—he aims to lavish grace on the people that he's made—to look right our way and shine.

But how often do we forget all that? It's *so* easy to take our eyes off our Maker and we dive right into a dangerous habit that trips us up: We begin to compare. We get out the measuring sticks and size each other up.

The familiar, discouraging, voice

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The other day I was with a couple of my friends. At first, I was just simply observing. I couldn't help but notice how hip they dressed. And how fit they were. And how nice their hair looked. But before long I began evaluating myself next to them and soon came that old familiar voice in my head: *Um . . . you're a dweeb. You don't look like them. You don't fit in. You don't have what it takes. You don't measure up.*

Thankfully, I only entertained the notion for a minute because I recognized it for the sabotaging lie that it was. I know that comparison is a thief. I'm onto its ways. Far too many times I've let it steal my joy and take away my peace.

I'm learning to take my [thoughts captive](#) and make them obey Jesus, so I grabbed those suppositions up by the scruff of their good-for-nothing necks and marched them right up to the King of Kings. I felt him reassuring me: *Don't compare yourself with others, Maggie. It's not wise.*

So, I sat down and enjoyed my friends for who they were. (Well, mostly. Except for the part where I wondered how I could get my hair in little braids like one of them.)

Comparison: a no-win situation

Today I did it again. I felt like a friend (with a lot of shining accomplishments) hadn't sufficiently valued something I'd made. I dwelled on it and read into something she said. I kept right on reading into it until I was mad at the world, all full of people who might reject me or think I don't have what it takes. Because what else do you do when you set out to create something beautiful from that vulnerable place in your heart and people don't like it? What do you do when you know you shouldn't take it personally, but still you do take it personally, as if it's *you* that they don't think is all that great?

Or where do you go when you notice that someone is succeeding at something that you desperately want to succeed at and they're getting all the praise? Do you crawl into a hole and attempt to drown the world out? Do you stomp the ground and tell everyone to shut up? Do you decide to just call it quits and never take another risk again? Seriously, I consider these things.

But today Jesus whispered it sweetly again: *Maggie, don't compare. Don't compare yourself with others. It's not wise.* I think I know why.

On the one hand, I might gauge myself against another and think I'm somehow better; I might come out of the comparison feeling rather superior with a puffed-up head. Or, on the other hand, I might compare myself and come out feeling like a doofus. I might conclude that I don't amount to anything, and that might sink me into despair. Comparison is a no-win scenario.

Getting my attention

Scripture reminds us how foolish this is: "For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (2 Corinthians 10:12 NKJV). But why is it so hard to see the folly of comparing myself with others? All comparing ever does is distract me from God and his love.

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It's not wrong to search for significance. We all ache to be a part of something meaningful—to fulfill some sort of purpose. It's what sets us apart from all the other created things. But Jesus calls us to [abide in him](#). He's the [source of life](#)—the one our hearts are truly hungry for. And isn't he worthy of our full attention? To set our minds on him? To fix our gaze on him?

Yet how can I truly focus the eyes of my heart on Christ if I'm all tied up trying to determine my importance in relation to my neighbor? Is it really possible to [love God with my whole heart](#) if I'm stuck in this place where all my attention is on myself? And what about loving my neighbor as Jesus has loved me? Isn't that lost the very moment I start wondering if they've got more Facebook likes or Twitter followers than I do? Or if they're more qualified than I am or more confident than me?

I'm learning that when I stack up my accomplishments or my image or my anything against someone else's, I reduce that person to a mere standard of comparison. But a person is not a tool to be used for calculating worth! He or she is someone intricately fashioned in the [image of God](#). A person who God loves and wants to bless. Someone his hands have made ([Psalm 119:73](#)).

Putting down the measuring sticks

The God who made me is a God whose heart is always *for me*! There aren't any moments when I'm not wholly accepted or steadfastly loved.

When I need a frame of reference to compute my value and worth, I have only to look at the splintery cross where Christ's blood drained down and his love came running for all of us. There is no need to seek significance by sizing myself up in comparison with others. The God who made me is a God whose heart is always *for me*! There aren't any moments when I'm not wholly accepted or steadfastly loved.

So instead of hanging my head low in despair or standing in front of the mirror repeating self-help phrases like "*You are a rock star! There's no one like you!*" I return the gaze of my heart to my Maker. I take God at his word and decide that it's just not wise or worth it to compare.

The world may get out the rulers and size each other up, but we can find solid footing in the truth that nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate us from Christ's immovable, unshakable, never-failing love ([Romans 8:38–39](#)). Because there aren't any moments when we're not loved, we can set down the measuring sticks, too, and rest. When we see our neighbor through the lens of Jesus, we're free to lavish love the way he has loved us. No more comparing! Instead, we're free to bless.

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