

JULY 3, 2022

The Comparison Trap

WITH FELIX CHAN

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In John 3:26, John the Baptist's disciples worry about losing their influence and status. How have you experienced similar worries or insecurities?
2. Where do you tend to place your value or worth as a person?
3. What are some ways you may fall into the comparison trap?
4. What are some practical ways you can ground yourself in the acceptance of Jesus?
5. How can you adopt the same humble attitude of John towards Jesus?

Many of us have experienced the truth of the saying “comparison is the thief of joy”. No matter our stage in life, it's something we all struggle with to different degrees. Ultimately, continually comparing ourselves to others often leads us to jealousy, pride and shame.

Yet the Gospel reminds us that we are fully known and loved by God. How do we ground ourselves in God's acceptance instead of seeking validation elsewhere? This week we'll look at the example of John the Baptist in John 3:22-30, and how he remained grounded in his identity. Let's learn more about how to live satisfied and with joy, no matter our social status, wealth or influence.

John 3

22 After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. 23 Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were coming and being baptized. 24 (This was before John was put in prison.)

John 3

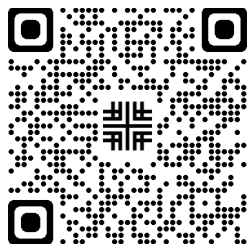
25 An argument developed between some of John's disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. 26 They came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan—the one you testified about—**look, he is baptizing, and everyone is going to him.**”

John 3

27 To this John replied, “A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. 28 You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him.’ 29 The bride belongs to the bridegroom.

John 3

The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. 30 He must become greater; I must become less.”



CONNECT

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- Make Comments
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“Our culture is obsessed with image. With looking good over being good. With applause and accolades from people, rather than attention and approval from the Father. It’s exhausting. Always trying to keep up. Stay cool. Stay informed. Well read. We end up living with our emotional state rising or falling based on what people are or aren’t saying about us.”

“We end up living into a stereotype from our culture, to act/dress/think a certain way), rather than our identity and calling from God. Living under the tyranny of the approval or disapproval of other people.” -John Mark Comer

REFLECTION

- + What are our “everyone is going to him” concerns and fears?
- + How have we fallen into the comparison trap and lacked confidence in our identity?

John the Baptist’s Origin Story

- + Conceived miraculously to very old parents (Elizabeth and Zechariah) - Luke 1
- + “What then is this child going to be?” For the Lord’s hand was with him. -Luke 1:66

John the Baptist - Witness (John 1)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John the Baptist - Witness (John 1)

1:6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John.7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

John the Baptist - Witness (John 1)

“I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way for the Lord.’” 24 Now the Pharisees who had been sent 25 questioned him, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?” 26 “I baptize with water,” John replied, “but among you stands one you do not know. 27 He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.”

John the Baptist - Witness (John 1)

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is the one I meant when I said, ‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’ 31 I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel.”

John the Baptist - Witness (John 1)

32 Then John gave this testimony: “I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him.33 And I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ 34 I have seen and I testify that this is God’s Chosen One.”

John the Baptist - Witness (John 1)

35 The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. 36 When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” 37 When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.

John the Baptist - Witness

38 Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, “What do you want?” They said, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?” 39 “Come,” he replied, “and you will see.”

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How do we break free?

1. Look for our comparison and confess it
2. Preach the Gospel of acceptance to ourselves
3. Preach the Gospel of acceptance to others
4. Cultivate gratitude

“Therefore, the Christian needs another Christian who speaks God’s Word to him. He needs him again and again when he becomes uncertain and discouraged. He needs his brother man as a bearer and proclaimer of the divine word of salvation. The Christ in his own heart is weaker than the Christ in the word of his brother; his own heart is uncertain, his brother’s is sure. -Dietrich Bonhoeffer