

Set Free From
Comparing Yourself to
Others and Needing
Their Approval
January 25, 2022

Set Free

5 week study
January 11 - February 8, 2022



*“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.
Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”*
Galatians 5:1

David’s Encouraging Example

If you were with me for the study on the life of David, you remember the great example we find in him when he refused to take on King Saul’s armor and insisted he had to fight Goliath the way he knew how to fight—with a slingshot.

Be who God has created you to be, using the gifts and experience God has given to you. Get over trying to wear someone else’s “armor.” Use your own slingshot!

Paul wrote to his young disciple Timothy:

“For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands” (2 Timothy 1:6).

This is a good prayer—that God would help you to fan into flame the gift of God in you, rather than trying to be like someone else.

The Sin of Comparing

Usually when we compare ourselves to others we come to one of three conclusions:

1. *We’re better than they are.*

Luke 18:9-14:

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God have mercy on me, a sinner.’ I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

When you read this story, what do you think about the Pharisee?

What comparisons did the Pharisee make?

What kind of things are we likely to compare that make us feel better than someone else?

1 Samuel 16:7:

“Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

1 Corinthians 4:6-7:

Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, “Do not go beyond what is written.” Then you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other. For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

2. They're better than we are.

Matthew 25:14-30:

“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag,^[a] each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money.

“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.’

“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

“The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’

“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

“Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

“His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

“‘So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Can you imagine how shocked people were to hear how Jesus told this story? They’re feeling sorry for this poor guy who only had one talent, and Jesus calls him a wicked, lazy servant!

The lesson here is that God does not compare us with others, but he does expect us to make very good use of the resources that have been given to us.

Notice what happened to this third servant as a result of his attitude of comparing himself to those who had more:

- First, it made him fearful.
- Second, he became lazy.
- Third, it led him into sin.

James 4:17: "If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them."

- Fourth, he lost what he had.
- Fifth, he lost his reward.

3. *We envy them and feel that we've been cheated.*

Jesus's prophecy to Peter was:

"When you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God
(John 21:18b-19a).

Then Peter asked Jesus:

"Lord, what about John?" Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me" (John 21:21b-22).

When we start looking at others and thinking they've got it easy and we've got it hard, then we're in for trouble. That is envy, that is lack of trust, and that is sin.

Proverbs 14:30:

"A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones."

One of the attributes of real love, as described in 1 Corinthians 13, is that "It does not envy ..." (v. 4).

Appreciating Yourself

You are unique; there's no one else like you in the whole world. God is so infinitely creative, that He's able to give each of us unique traits and personalities, and He has designed you to be yourself. Scripture says that you are fearfully and wonderfully made, that God knit you together in your mother's womb (Psalm 139). Consider what this means:

- First of all, you're not a mistake. You are designed according to God's plan.
- Secondly, you bear the same image/attributes/personality as God.

God wants you to be pleased with the way he has created you, for it shows that you trust him. We can appreciate who we are as God's unique creation, while also appreciating his creativity in others.

Learning to accept who we are doesn't mean you give up on trying to improve.

Needing the approval of others

Have you become addicted to needing the approval of others?

Why do we need the approval of others?

We're all born with the need for approval and we seek it from our earliest years. But how do we become addicted to this need?

It's always helpful to understand the source of our struggles but using them as excuses does nothing but keep us powerless, in bondage to them.

How do we get over our need for the approval of others?

Instead of wanting and expecting other people to meet your need and finding that it is never completely satisfactory or never quite enough, you need to instead live your life for the approval of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:9:

So we make it our goal to please him (the Lord), whether we are at home in the body or away from it.

Galatians 1:10:

Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 2:4, 6:

We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts ... We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else.

1 Thessalonians 4:1:

We instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.

Notice in Galatians Paul says he is not *still* trying to please men, which means he had tried to at some point in his life. He switched his need for approval from people to God. That's our assignment, too.

Is there someone in your life whose approval you have needed and sought needed but never received? Do you want to be set free from that approval addiction?

If so, it begins with prayer. Choose one or two of the verses above and pray it into your life each morning.

Ask God to show you whose approval you have been addicted to, and why you needed their approval so much. Then take all that to the Lord daily until he delivers you from that approval addiction—which he can do!

Living Free from Needing the Approval of Others

Don't try to stop pleasing people; just start trying to please God.

Become a Dispenser of Approval

Recognizing how powerful approval can be, ask God to show you how to give approval to others when they deserve it, in order to encourage them.