



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Caught Up / Week 3

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

SERIES SUMMARY

A 3-week series about comparison **with Toni Collier**.

SERIES BOTTOM LINE: Breaking free from comparison.

WEEK 1: God doesn't compare you to others.

WEEK 2: Celebrating is better than comparing.

WEEK 3: Choose to see yourself the way God does.

SCRIPTURE

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect (Romans 12:2 NLT).

So, since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't (Romans 12:6 MSG).

TEACHING SLIDES

All scripture, bottom lines, and prompts that are bolded in this script are also provided as teaching slides for Premium Tier Subscribers.

OPTIONAL MEDIA

OPTIONAL MEDIA available in the Annual Subscription to the XP3 MS Media Package:

- Caught Up Countdown Video (10 minutes)
 - Caught Up Week 3 Teaching Video
 - Caught Up Week 3 Integrated Teaching Video
 - Caught Up Week 3 “Have You Ever” Interactive Video
 - Caught Up Week 3 “Take A Step Forward If . . .” Interactive Tutorial Video
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TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

- Who is somebody you look up to right now?
- *Tell a personal story about someone you idolized when you were in middle school and how you wanted to be like them.*
- We all know what it’s like to look up to someone so much that we want to be like them, but eventually we realize that we just can’t compare to them.

TENSION

- Comparison is when we compare something about ourselves against something about someone else.
- We often compare ourselves to people we look up to.
- Looking up to someone or being inspired to be like someone can motivate us to work hard, make changes in our lives, or reach new goals.
- The problem is that when we compare our lives to others, we often feel like we aren’t enough.
- *Complete the “Take a Step Forward If . . .” Interactive.*
- Not feeling like we’re enough is a human thing. We all experience this cycle of comparison in one way or another.

TRUTH

- Paul, a leader in the church, wrote a letter to Christians thousands of years ago. In it, he wrote about the temptation to compare themselves to others, especially to those who weren’t Christians like they were.
- *Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect (Romans 12:2 NLT).*
- Paul wrote to not try to be like the people we compare ourselves to and to let God transform the way we think.
- When we choose to follow God, God changes us into a new person and gives us a new way of thinking. We start to understand what God says is true about us and how God sees us.
- When God’s Spirit transforms us, we can begin to break free from comparison because we see how much God values and loves us.

- Choose to see yourself the way God does.
- *So, since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't (Romans 12:6 MSG).*
- When we compare ourselves to others, we focus on what we're not and miss out on seeing who we are and what we really have.
- We were each made by God, and we are loved by God.
- We were made with specific gifts and traits that make us more than enough.
- That's how God sees us, and that's how God wants us to see ourselves.
- God wants us to change our thinking so that we see that, in God, we're always enough.
- Choose to see yourself the way God does.

APPLICATION

- To break free from comparison, try this:
 - Identify what's not true, especially in areas where you compare yourself to others.
 - Change how you think about yourself. Ask God to help show you what's true and not true when it comes to how you see yourself.
 - Replace old thoughts with what God says is true about you.
- Seeing ourselves the way God does isn't always easy, so start with remembering that we can choose to see ourselves the way God does.

LANDING

- Your small group is full of people who support you, care about you, and see the wonderful ways God made you unique. Share some of your struggles and victories with your small group when it comes to comparison.
- Question: What's one thing you love about who God made you to be?

NOTE TO THE COMMUNICATOR

Caught Up is a series about comparison created in collaboration with Toni Collier. As you lead your middle schoolers through this series, make sure you check out the awesome additional resources Toni pulled together to help you, your students, and your volunteers believe the truth that, with God, we're all enough just as we are. Listen to the roundtable discussion curated specifically for ministry leaders and volunteers, participate in three short self-care challenges each week explained via audio and video, and learn something new in the list of resources designed to help leaders and volunteers continue on the journey of breaking free from comparison.

THINK ABOUT THIS

Thinking about the way God sees them may be a challenge for your middle schoolers. For some, that's because it has never occurred to them that God even thinks about or sees them at all! For others, that's because they struggle to see beyond how they feel. If they see themselves a certain way, it doesn't matter what anyone else tells them; what they feel becomes fact. And finally, for others it's because they believe they don't deserve to be seen the way God sees them. Keep these things in mind as you encourage students in your message this week. Not only do you want them to understand that God does see and think about them, you want them to know exactly what God thinks so that it can change their thinking in a good way! Encourage your students to be vulnerable in their small group conversation this week. It's great practice in not only choosing to be honest with others but also in listening and creating a safe space for others to do the same.

INTERACTIVE: TAKE A STEP FORWARD IF . . .

OVERVIEW

For this Interactive, you'll illustrate how we've all compared ourselves to others by asking students to take steps forward if they've ever felt like they weren't enough in the scenarios you'll read out loud.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- All of your middle schoolers
- Space for your middle schoolers to take a several steps forward

HOW TO

- When prompted in the Tension section of your Teaching Script, lead your students through the activity where they will take a step forward if they've ever felt like they weren't enough using the provided list within the script.

OPTIONAL MEDIA available in the Annual Subscription to the XP3 MS Media Package:

- Caught Up Week 3 "Take A Step Forward If . . ." Interactive Tutorial Video
 - Caught Up Week 3 "Have You Ever" Interactive Video
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TEACHING SCRIPT

Caught Up / Week 3

BOTTOM LINE

CHOOSE TO SEE YOURSELF THE WAY GOD DOES.

INTRODUCTION

3 MINUTES

Hi everybody! We're in the last week of our series on comparison called *Caught Up*. We've been talking all about the ways we can get caught up in comparison and what we can do to break free from it.

As we kick off today, I want you to think for a second about this question: Who is somebody you look up to right now? The person you think is the BEST at doing what they do or being who they are? *[Pause for students to respond.]*

TELL A PERSONAL STORY

Tell a story from your own life that illustrates the following ideas . . .

- Talk about a person you idolized when you were in middle school. Maybe a friend, an athlete, a celebrity, a parent, or a sibling. Bonus points if you have a picture!
- Focus on what you admired about that person at the time. What was it about them that made you think they were so amazing?
- The goal here is to set up the idea that this person was someone you wanted to be like. They were a standard you wanted to reach.

We all know what it's like to look up to someone so much that we want to be just like them. The problem? Eventually we realize that we just can't compare to them.

TENSION

5 MINUTES

In this series, we've been talking a lot about **comparison**. **That's when we compare something about ourselves against something about someone else.** Often, whether we realize it or not, this is what we're doing with the people we look up to.

This is what makes comparison difficult! **Looking up to someone or being inspired to be like someone isn't a bad thing.** It can actually be a great thing! It can motivate you to work hard, or make positive changes in your life, or try to reach new goals. The problem comes when we compare our lives to theirs. When we think that in order to be enough, we have to achieve what they've achieved, do what they've done, become like them. That kind of comparison will always leave us feeling like we're not enough.

INTERACTIVE: Take a Step Forward If . . .

This is where you'll illustrate how we've all compared ourselves to others by asking students to take steps forward if they've ever felt like they weren't enough in the scenarios you'll read out loud.

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In fact, everyone stand up right where you are. *[If you need your students to move to a space in your environment to do this activity, let them know now.]*

I am going to say some phrases out loud in just a minute that have to do with this whole idea of not feeling like we're enough. Now, this is going to require some bravery from every person in this room. If you've ever felt this way before, I want you to take a step forward. If you haven't, stay standing where you are.

Take a step forward if, in any situation, you've felt like you weren't . . .

- Cool enough.
- Smart enough.
- Popular enough.
- Tall enough.
- Creative enough.
- Strong enough.
- Rich enough.
- Funny enough.
- Loud enough.
- Quiet enough.
- Fun enough.
- Athletic enough.
- Talented enough.
- Good enough.

Thank you for being brave enough to be honest here. I want you to look around the room. So many, if not all of us, are not standing where we were before this activity. Because not feeling like we're enough is a human thing. We ALL experience it in one way or another. As soon as you finally feel like you're enough of one thing, you start to think you aren't enough of something else. This is what happens when we get caught up in the cycle of comparison.

TRUTH

3 MINUTES

The good news is that we aren't the first ones in history to struggle with feeling like we aren't enough. To help us with this, we're going to take a look at something a guy named **Paul**, a leader in the church, wrote to other Christians thousands of years ago. The people he was writing to in this particular letter were dealing with the temptation to compare themselves to others around them, especially those who weren't Christians like they were.

Here's what Paul had to say to them:

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect (Romans 12:2 NLT).

Paul told them right away not to copy the people around them. Not to try to be the same as the people they were comparing themselves to. I don't know this for sure, but I have to think that Paul probably knew this wouldn't be an easy thing to do. We all struggle with comparison! I think that's why Paul didn't just tell us to stop comparing or copying the world around us. He went a step further to tell us how to do it.

By letting God transform the way we think! **When we choose to follow God, God changes us into a new person and gives us a new way of thinking.** We start to understand what God says is true about us and how God sees us. As we let God's Spirit transform us, our old way of thinking changes. And that has the potential to change everything! It takes your eyes off someone else's life and focuses them firmly on what God has for you and who God created you to be. It helps you understand how much God values you. It helps you see yourself the way God does, which is the best way to break free from comparison!

Choose to see yourself the way God does.

A few verses later, Paul went on to write this:

So, since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't (Romans 12:6 MSG).

I love the way Paul put this so much! When we're comparing ourselves to others, our focus is on one thing: **what we're not.** Because of that, we never feel like we're enough. When we keep our eyes on that and spend our energy trying to be something we're not, **we miss out on being able to see who we are and what we really have.**

Of course, I think each and every one of you has so many amazing and unique things that make you more than enough. But Paul pointed to one thing that I want you to know is true: **You were made by God, and you are loved by God.** You were formed and created with specific gifts and traits that make you more than enough! That's how God sees you, and that's how God wants you to see yourself. God wants to change your thinking so you see that, in God, you will always be enough.

In other words, **choose to see yourself the way God does.**

APPLICATION

2 MINUTES

Believing this truth has the potential to help you break free from comparison. It has the power to help you change your thinking. To help you realize that you are enough.

To start, try this:

1. **Identify what's *not* true.** In order to really change your thinking and start believing what is true about you, you've got to first identify what's *not* true. Ask yourself: What areas of my life leave me feeling like I'm not enough? Look for the places in your life that you compare yourself to others.
2. **Change how you think about yourself.** It's easy to compare ourselves and believe the lie that we aren't good enough, but the truth is this: *You are enough*. So, instead of feeling like you can't compare, stop those thoughts right in their tracks! Do what Paul instructed and let God transform your thinking. Talk to God about it! Ask God to help show you what's true and not true when it comes to how you see yourself.
3. **Replace old thoughts with what God says is true about you.** Think about some of the negative things you think about yourself on a regular basis. Identify the negative thought and then replace it with a thought that is true about who God made you to be. Let those new, true thoughts help you break free from the cycle of comparison!

For some of us, loving ourselves and knowing our worth can be difficult. Seeing ourselves the way God sees us isn't always easy. That's why we need God's help! Maybe for you, the best place to start is to remember and write down the truth we're talking about this week: **We can choose to see ourselves the way God does.**

Let that be the place you start to change your thinking and replace your thoughts. Over time, I think you'll begin to see God open your eyes to more amazing things about who you are and how God created you. You'll begin to see that in God, you're enough.

LANDING

1 MINUTE

Another place to look for help with this comparison stuff? Your small group and small group leader! These are people who support you, care about you, and see all of the wonderful things about the way God created you. Small group is a place to go to be reminded of the truth that God loves you and wants you to know your worth. So, I hope you'll share some of your struggles and victories when it comes to comparison with your group today.

As you head that way, I want you to think about this: **What's one thing you love about who God made you to be?**



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS



GAME

Fly Swatter

This game is written to be played as a stage game but can be adapted to an all-skate or small group game.

OVERVIEW

Ping-pong balls will fly through the air as one team launches their ping-pong balls past the other team whose goal is to swat them out of the air.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- Large bucket of ping-pong balls
- Stopwatch
- 2 pairs of safety goggles
- 4 large plastic cups
- 4 balloons
- 4 rubber bands
- Roll of painter's tape or gaffer's tape
- A large table
- Scissors
- 2 fly swatters
- 4 middle schoolers

HOW-TO

PREP

- Assemble 4 ping-pong ball launchers by following these steps:
 1. Cut out the bottom of each cup with scissors, creating cylinders.
 2. Tie a knot in each balloon.
 3. Use the scissors to cut off a small section of the bottom of each balloon, opposite of the knot.
 4. Stretch each balloon over the bottom of each cup opening. (The knot should be in the middle of the cup opening.)
 5. Secure each balloon around every cup with a tightly-fitting rubber band.

Note: You'll only need two launchers for this game, but we recommend making four in the event that they break during game play.
- Place the table on one side of the stage and a line of tape 8-10 feet in front of the table.

- Put the launchers on the table with the bucket of ping-pong balls.

PLAY

1. Select four students to come on stage.
2. Ask two students to stand behind the table and two behind the taped line.
3. Give the team members behind the line a fly swatter and pair safety goggles each.
4. Demonstrate for the team members behind the table how to use the ball launcher. (Simply put the ping-pong ball in the cup, hold the cup with one hand, and pull and release the balloon knot to launch.)
5. On your, "Go!" players will shoot as many ping-pong balls as they can at the fly swatter team.
6. The fly swatters will attempt to swat the balls out of the air.

7. After two minutes, have the teams switch places.
8. At the end of these two rounds, the team with the most ping-pong balls to get past the swatters wins.

Variations

- Blur out the goggles with wax paper or Vaseline. (If you do this, don't have students stand on stage!)
 - Give two fly swatters to each person so that they have one for each hand.
 - Make more launchers and have more students launching at one time.
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SMALL GROUP LEADER GUIDE

Caught Up / Week 3

BEFORE GROUP

BOTTOM LINE

Choose to see yourself the way God does.

SCRIPTURE

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect (Romans 12:2 NLT).

So, since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't (Romans 12:6 MSG).

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To encourage students to recognize the way God sees them and to practice seeing themselves the same way.

THINK ABOUT THIS

Thinking about the way God sees them may be a challenge for your middle schoolers. For some, that's because it has never occurred to them that God even thinks about or sees them at all! For others, that's because they struggle to see beyond how they feel. If they see themselves a certain way, it doesn't matter what anyone else tells them; what they feel becomes fact. And finally, for others it's because they believe they don't deserve to be seen the way God sees them. Keep these things in mind as you encourage students in your conversation this week. Not only do you want them to understand that God does see and think about them, you want them to know exactly what God thinks so that it can change their thinking in a good way! Encourage your group to be vulnerable in their conversation this week. It's great practice in not only choosing to be honest with others but also in listening and creating a safe space for others to do the same.

This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the questions and activities as needed, and don't feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here.

DURING GROUP

DISCUSS THIS

1. Who is one person you look up to?
2. How can looking up to someone be a good thing?
3. How can looking up to someone be a not-so-good thing?
4. What's one thing that might make someone feel like they're not good enough?
5. On a scale of 1 to 10, how hard is it for you to believe that God thinks you're good enough?
6. What might change if you believed God loves you just the way you are?

DO THIS (EXPERIENCE) 1

Ask your students to use the provided journal page to write down a few negative thoughts they have about themselves along with new, positive thoughts that can replace the old ones. Model how to do this by giving them an example from your own life!

DO THIS (EXPERIENCE) 2

Have your students read through what they wrote down on their journal page and pick one thing they know is true about who God says they are. (Things like worthy, chosen, loved, wise, seen, special, unique, etc.) Have them write down that word on a name tag and either wear it or take it home to place in a spot they'll see often.

NEW THOUGHTS

NEW THOUGHTS

GOD
BELIEVES

YOU ARE GOOD ENOUGH

AND LOVES YOU JUST THE WAY YOU ARE!

TO START SEEING YOURSELF THE WAY GOD DOES, THINK

ABOUT THE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS YOU HAVE ABOUT YOURSELF AND HOW

YOU CAN REPLACE THOSE THOUGHTS WITH NEW, POSITIVE ONES.

GOD
BELIEVES

YOU ARE GOOD ENOUGH

AND LOVES YOU JUST THE WAY YOU ARE!

TO START SEEING YOURSELF THE WAY GOD DOES, THINK

ABOUT THE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS YOU HAVE ABOUT YOURSELF AND HOW

YOU CAN REPLACE THOSE THOUGHTS WITH NEW, POSITIVE ONES.

THOUGHT 1

THIS IS AN OLD, NEGATIVE THOUGHT I HAVE ABOUT MYSELF:

THOUGHT 1

THIS IS AN OLD, NEGATIVE THOUGHT I HAVE ABOUT MYSELF:

THIS IS A NEW, POSITIVE THOUGHT I CAN REPLACE

THE NEGATIVE ONE WITH:

THIS IS A NEW, POSITIVE THOUGHT I CAN REPLACE

THE NEGATIVE ONE WITH:

THOUGHT 2

THIS IS AN OLD, NEGATIVE THOUGHT I HAVE ABOUT MYSELF:

THOUGHT 2

THIS IS AN OLD, NEGATIVE THOUGHT I HAVE ABOUT MYSELF:

THIS IS A NEW, POSITIVE THOUGHT I CAN REPLACE

THE NEGATIVE ONE WITH:

THIS IS A NEW, POSITIVE THOUGHT I CAN REPLACE

THE NEGATIVE ONE WITH:

