

## Comparison, Identity, and Pride

If you're reading this, you most likely struggle like I do in one of these areas, or if you're really like me, these lies meet at an intersection that is all too familiar in your day to day routine. Before I get started in this letter, I want to outline my intentions in writing this. I am going to be very real in this letter in explaining my experience with these issues. I am going to be equally as straight forward about the promises of God that are the cure to this seemingly never-ending cycle. From the beginning, I would like to say that I am a man writing on this. Our culture says men do not have identity issues, but I could not disagree more. I am actually of the opinion that more men struggle with their identity than women. And while men and women are obviously different, the heart of the sin matter is so similar between us. So, no matter your gender or personal experience, I hope my story will get your attention. With this being stated at the outset, let's dive in.

First off, the idea of comparison can be a good thing. Because looking at your brothers/sisters in Christ and seeing their strengths can drive you into deeper awe of the Lord and what he can do through the life of a wicked sinner. We are to be imitators of those who imitate Christ, and this cannot happen without a certain level of comparing. What we must seek to imitate is the pure humility Jesus has displayed for us in His life and death.

My experience with comparison however has sin embedded at its very core. My entire life, I have been chasing after the passions of my flesh. I have been chasing after who I want to be, for the sake of my fame, and my fame alone. I work, and work, and work until I can claim the status that I rightfully deserve. I go to whatever extreme I must to prove that I am simply better than you in what matters to me. (In this, we see the heart of the matter is a mind that is idolatrous, and seeks its own self-glory.) This happened growing up within the context of family relations with siblings, relationships with close friends, relationships with teammates, and the list goes on. As a result of this being my mindset, I was a combative and selfish friend, an arrogant brother, and a teammate who was more of a cancer than a leader. This pride-filled inclination had worked its way into every single interaction I had with human beings, and the sin, shame, and arrogance that have resulted from my insecurities have ruled my flesh since I can remember. You would think that after my heart was changed by the Holy Spirit; this cycle would die. However, as a Christian man, my struggle with this has not only taken on new form, but it has amplified. (This makes sense, because now that I am in Christ the devil seeks out ways in which he can manipulate me with even more power than ever before. And what better way than this for me, in my inherently prideful flesh.) I am constantly measuring up my good works against the backdrop of a fellow brothers works. I am never content with who God has made me to be in this world. And my life is restless because of it. I desire the gifts, talents, and intellect that my peers have. Why is this an issue? Because I want it for me! My deceitful heart yearns for these abilities for the sole end that is to make much of myself. And in this process, I am driven further away from the things of God and his kingdom, once again.

To truly get to the bottom of this, we must view the subject through the scope of the gospel in the word of God. Look to the true and living Vine for life, for joy, and for fulfillment. Jesus bought your complete satisfaction on Calvary's tree, and He is faithful to continue to draw near to you through sanctifying your flesh. Brothers and sisters, if you leave this letter remembering one thing, let it be this: Jesus Christ has shed His blood for you that you might come to know the abundance of joy that comes with living a life walking with the Prince of Peace. Jesus has

created you with gifts to leverage for the purpose of making His name more famous among the world. Sinner, live from repentance. Worship the Savior who deserves all your praise, and who has purchased your identity with a price. If you have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, you have partaken in his death, and the joy of the Lord is your strength. In passing from death to life, you have entered into a new identity. You are a child of the Most High.

“You stir man to take pleasure in praising you, because You have made us for Yourself. And our soul is restless until it finds its rest in You.” – Saint Augustine

*strugglewell.allthings@gmail.com*

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