

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR *Real Life*

63. The Distraction of Comparison Says “Be Like Her”

You are listening to episode 63 of the Encouragement for Real Life Podcast titled, The Distraction of Comparison Says "Be Like Her." Well, welcome back to the podcast, friend. It's a joy to journey together today! If you've listened in or followed me for any time at all, you probably know I'm passionate about helping women live encouraged and less distracted. Because living distracted is not God's best for us. He never designed us to be so distracted. But this is the world we live in, right?? It's full of distractions. And one big one is the subject of today's episode. Because I recently had an encounter with this distraction, and let me tell you, it completely threw me off-course. Hang out with me here for the next short while and together we'll find help and hope for our real lives today as we address the distraction of comparison. Let's get to it.

Let me begin by saying this:

I know not to compare.

Really, I do. I used to be an expert at comparing myself to others. In fact, I think I was the master of it! If there was ever an Olympic sport centered around comparison, I think I could have brought home a gold medal. You see, God gave me a competitive spirit. I like to compete, yet that same spirit, when combined with my flesh, can get way out of hand. Like the time I lost in a bags (or corn hole) tournament and I allowed my feelings to overtake me. Or like the time I missed a huge goal and reacted awfully. Or like the time I failed miserably in my conduct at my daughter's high school volleyball tournament. Talk about an ugly mess! Yep, that was me.

With God's help I've gotten better handling this competitive spirit over the years, and I'm not as tempted to compare myself like I used to. But last week the distraction of comparison reared its ugly head within me once again. And I wasn't ready for it.

I know all the reasons why not to compare myself. Because God made me to be me, because I'm not to envy or be jealous of someone else, nor am I to covet what another person has. I know giving in to comparison is not God's best for me, because if He wanted me to be someone else, He would have created me to be someone else.

Comparison is not God's best for us, and it can be a big distraction for many.

I also know what happens when I give in to the distraction of comparison. I get discouraged. Completely down in the dumps. I feel like a failure, less-than, and I trample on my own self-worth. My heart becomes heavy and my steps follow in carrying that weight.

Because when I compare, I'm looking at what someone else has and what I don't.

Or what she has achieved and what I have not. Or how she does a certain thing and how I don't. Who ever wins when we give in to comparison? Uh, no one.

So, I know better. And I assume you do, too. This isn't your first time around the sun. This isn't your first rodeo. You've been there, and done that. Right?? And you know how it feels when you compare yourself to another women.

Her hair is prettier.

Her body is thinner.

She is more successful.

Her teeth are straighter.

She is happier.

She has more friends.

Her home is bigger.

She has a perfect marriage, perfect children, a perfect life.

We could continue this list all day, couldn't we? But we won't. Because we know what happens if we do.

Can I be transparent with you today?

Please don't judge me, because I'm just a girl over here in rural Iowa who is still working through real-life issues. Some days I still struggle. For example, last week I compared myself to someone I consider a friend. She and I have similar goals, yet she might be closer to reaching her goal than I am to mine. She had something really good happen to her, and instead of me being thrilled and happy for her and her success, the distraction of comparison caused me to turn the focus on myself, instead. *Why not me? When will it be my turn?* I put on a happy face, yet I was bothered by her good news. Then I was even more bothered that I was bothered by her good news.

Then my internal dialog began.

What is up with that, Julie? Get a grip and for goodness' sake, be happy for her.

But when will it be time for my good news? What about me?

The distraction of comparison is sneaky.

It causes us to think of only ourselves, no matter if we are the superior one in the comparison or the inferior one. It fills our hearts with envy and jealousy instead of good will. And it prevents us from being the person God desires us--and designed us--to be.

This distraction of comparison diverts our attention away from serving God and others in ways God has called us to. It distracts us from what's truly important. And it prevents us from being effective women of God. The distraction of comparison robs us of our peace and our joy.

And it whispers lies to steer us further off course.

Comparison says, "Be like her," when God says, "Be who I created you to be."

So which voice are we listening to today? The voice of comparison or the voice of God?

Sometimes in an instance similar to this, it helps me to review Psalm 139, and how God created me, how He formed me, how He designed me magnificently. It reminds me when I compare, I'm saying in essence that I wish God would have made me different than who He made me to be. Yikes!

God made you to be you and me to be me.

This Psalm proves it. I encourage you to read all of Psalm 139 sometime soon, but I'll share verses 13-18 in The Message translation. It's long, but friend, it's powerful.

*Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out;
you formed me in my mother's womb.
I thank you, High God—you're breathtaking!
Body and soul, I am marvelously made!
I worship in adoration—what a creation!
You know me inside and out,
you know every bone in my body;
You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit,
how I was sculpted from nothing into something.
Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth;
all the stages of my life were spread out before you,
The days of my life all prepared before I'd even lived one day.

Your thoughts—how rare, how beautiful!
God, I'll never comprehend them!
I couldn't even begin to count them—
any more than I could count the sand of the sea.
Oh, let me rise in the morning and live always with you!*

Oh, isn't that beautiful, friend? Isn't God so good to us? How He created each of us wonderfully, marvelously! He didn't miss one detail. Not a single one.

So, I have no reason to compare myself with another. And friend, you don't either. No matter how loud comparison yells, "Be like her!," remember God, in His still small voice says, "Be who I created you to be."

Paul in the book of Romans says it this way in chapter 12 verse 6a (MSG),

"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."

This encourages us so, doesn't it??

So, can we refuse to allow the distraction of comparison to rob us?

To sidetrack us? To entice us away from what we know is true? Can we help each other overcome it by staying accountable to one another? Can we kick it to the curb once and for all?

Because I firmly believe this is a tool the enemy of our souls uses against us. I know he uses it against me, because it always appears right before something important. It appears when I least expect it or when I think I got it mastered. The enemy of our souls knows how to push our buttons, and he knows

what affects us the most. So, he knows me and my competitive streak within me will be affected by this distraction he throws in my path.

So, how do we overcome this distraction?

Once I realized what was happening last week, especially after that internal dialog I had with myself, I turned to God in prayer. This distraction of comparison was trying to ruin my day, my hopes, my life, and I knew I couldn't fight it on my own. So, I prayed, and in my journal I asked God to remove this distraction from my life, and to equip me to live in the freedom He has for me through Jesus. For Him to protect my thoughts, that they would be His thoughts, and for Him to help me take every thought captive to Christ.

And to focus on Philippians 4:8 (MSG):

Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse.

To fill my mind with what's true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious, the best, the beautiful, things to praise. And let me tell you, what a difference that made!

How do we over come the distraction of comparison?

We pray!

Yes, taking it to God made all the difference. But as I was praying, I realized this can't be a one-and-done prayer for me. It has to be a daily prayer, at least for right now. Because I don't want to miss one single thing God has for me, and you don't want to miss what God has for you either, right? And that's exactly what happens when we're distracted with comparison. We miss what God has for us in the here and now. We miss the present moment. And we miss what we can never get back. Precious times with Him and those around us.

If you don't struggle with the distraction of comparison, I'm praising God for that today. But the thing is, we each struggle with something. If comparison isn't it, what do you struggle with? I invite you to take that to God in prayer, too, just as I mentioned a minute ago. When we give God our struggles, we find He gives us His peace, His presence, and His provision in them and over them.

We're taking this conversation over to our Encouragement for Real Life Community on Facebook. We're discussing how this distraction of comparison affects us and our lives, and what we can do to rise above it. Stop on over and check it out. It's a beautiful space of encouragement and hope. The link to this group is in the show notes.

Also, if you're looking for some extra ways to stay encouraged, visit my Free Resources on my site. There you'll find printables, lock screens, social posts, and other fun tools to encourage your heart and add a lift to your step. You'll even find some fun scavenger hunts you can bless others with. The link to these Resources is also in my show notes.

If you were encouraged through this episode today, I invite you to rate it and /or review it so others can find this encouragement too. Also be sure to subscribe to the podcast so you never miss an episode.

To close this episode today, friend, if you struggle with the distraction of comparison too, know this. God can handle it. God desires better for us. And God will guide our minds to better things to think about. All we need to do is ask. May we remember what God invites us to do, not to be like her or anyone else, but to be who He created us to be. God loves you, friend. I'm grateful we get to journey through this life together. Thanks for being here. God bless you.

Julie Lefebvre