

In **2 Timothy 3**, the apostle Paul warns young Timothy that the end times will be especially dangerous because of the moral degeneration of mankind

“For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,”

(2 Timothy 3:2–3, NKJV)

- And of course, this is the world in which we are now living

In the world, we now live it can be easy to feel defeated and overwhelmed yet the Bible shows us that through Jesus we are More than Conquerors

“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

Romans 8:37 NKJV

In this series, we will see how we can be over-comers and live in victory in every area of life!

The Apostle John says we have the capacity to overcome the world and everything that is the enemy of Christ

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” **(1 John 5:4–5, NKJV)**

Overcoming Comparison

Sometimes we can be inspired and educated by comparison

- You may see how another person loves their spouse or how another couple parents their children
- We see where we can do better, and we can learn from their example
- That is a good comparison

However, the kind of comparison that is used by the devil to implant negative thoughts about God, ourselves, or others is the type of comparison that is used as a ploy by the enemy to keep us from being the people God wants us to be

“So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep. Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished;

but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.” This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me.” Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?” Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, “But Lord, what about this man?” Jesus said to him, “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me.” (John 21:15–22, NKJV)

- This is the third time that Jesus has appeared to His disciples after the resurrection
- The disciple whom Jesus loved in this account refers to John the writer of this Gospel
- Just days earlier Peter had openly denied Jesus
- Jesus warned him that he would do this three times
– **Matthew 26:34**
- Even though Peter had vowed not to, he did just that

Jesus says to Peter, *“Do you love Me?... Feed My sheep.”*

- He is establishing Peter as the preeminent apostle among the others as He is restoring him into ministry
- Jesus establishes love as the only legitimate basis for serving and following Him
- Why? When we love Jesus we love people
– **Matthew 22:37-39**

In **verse 18** as Jesus is restoring Peter He does something shocking

- He tells Peter how he will die
- Church history records that what Jesus prophesied here did come true for Peter
- He was crucified via the Roman tradition
- However, the apostle declared, *“I am not worthy to be crucified like my Lord”*
- So they crucified him upside down instead

Why does Jesus tell Peter he is going to die?

One reason could be that Peter was a coward

- Remember the threat of martyrdom caused him to deny Jesus three times
- I believe that Jesus wants him to understand the cost of taking on the responsibility of sharing the Gospel
- Jesus wanted him to know this upfront

Another reason Jesus makes this revelation is to settle Peter’s problem with insecurity and comparison

- The disciples regularly argued about which of them was the greatest
- James and John even asked Jesus to let them sit on either side of Him when He returned in glory

You never feel the need to scramble to the top when you feel secure

- When we are constantly fighting for a position it is always based on insecurity

“Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.” (Luke 22:24–27, NKJV)

- Jesus had twelve disciples but Peter, James, and John were especially close to Him
- These three shared special experiences with Jesus that no other disciple did
- Such as witnessing Jesus’ transformation on the mountain – **Matthew 17:1-13**
- The healing of Jairus' daughter – **Mark 5:37-43**
- Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane – **Matthew 26:36-42**

Peter, James, and John likely felt some rivalry, each wanting to be the greatest follower of Jesus

I believe this is why after Jesus tells Peter that he will die a terrible death he immediately turns toward John and asks...

“Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, “But Lord, what about this man?” (John 21:21, NKJV)

- His meaning is obvious
- He wanted Jesus to tell him that John was going to die a terrible death as well
- If we are honest we all can be like that
- We are obsessed with how we compare with others all the time
- We are happiest when we are equal to or greater than others
- We are the most miserable when we are less than others in any significant way

Peter certainly wants to hear that John will suffer as much as himself, but that is not what Jesus answers him

“Jesus said to him, “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me.” (John 21:22, NKJV)

- Jesus is not promising that John will live forever
- He is simply telling Peter that his role is to follow Jesus
- Not worry about anyone else
- Jesus has no sympathy for comparison

Peter could not have accomplished his mission if he was obsessed with comparing himself with others, and neither can we

Comparison Produces Arrogance And Insecurity

When you compare yourself with other people, you may think you are better than them, which leads to pride, or you may feel like they are better than you, which leads to insecurity

- Comparison is one of the top reasons for insecurity
- *Statistic: More than 90% of fashion models have a very low self-esteem*
- You would think just the opposite
- Why do they have such low self-esteem?
- They are endlessly compared to other women
- Constant comparison with others will always beat you down

Comparison Keeps You Focused On People Rather Than God

This is why Jesus told Peter, *“You follow Me.”*

- In other words, *get your eyes off John*
- When I am constantly comparing I am not following Jesus
- I cannot be focused on Him when I am vigilantly comparing myself to everybody else

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” (Romans 8:5–6, NKJV)

Comparison Hinders Our Trust In God

It may be at a subconscious level, but comparison keeps us mistrustful of God and offended at Him

Like Peter, we begin to compare ourselves with others

- What about people who are richer and better looking than you?
- What about those who are smarter, happier, or have better marriages?

There will always be someone who seems to have everything better than you

Comparison not only has the potential to create a barrier between you and others but also plant seeds of mistrust and offense against God

Comparison made Peter think, *“Does Jesus love John more than He loves me? Why would He have me martyred and let him live forever.”*

- This is the way the enemy plants seeds of mistrust that separate us from God

Parable of the Sower

“Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.” (Mark 4:18–19, NKJV)

Rejection of who God has made us to be is the root of comparison

Something will never be right in our relationship with God, and we will never be free until we sincerely thank Him for...

- Who we are
- What we are
- And where we are

Comparison makes us believe that God loves other people more than He loves us

- That is not true at all
- We are all His favorites

Comparison Makes Us Resentful And Rejecting Of Others

Comparison causes us to be resentful and rejecting of others who have what we want

If we cannot celebrate other people's blessings there is something wrong with us, not them

“A sound heart is life to the body, But envy is rottenness to the bones.” (Proverbs 14:30, NKJV)

“For wrath kills a foolish man, And envy slays a simple one.” (Job 5:2, NKJV)

Comparison Makes Us Try To Be Something We Are Not

Comparison makes us try to be something we are not to measure up and feel good about ourselves

- The surest way to fail is to try to change the unchangeable
- You can only be you; you cannot be someone else
- Every person has a unique calling and destiny
- God created you to be you so the only thing you can succeed at is being you

God loves us all equally but expresses that love in different ways

- He loves all of us according to a unique plan He has for each of our lives

“Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.” (Psalm 139:16, NKJV)

- Focusing on comparison and trying to be something you are not can abort God’s plan for your life

Comparison Is An Open Door For The Devil To Work

“But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.”

For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.” (James 3:14–16, NKJV)

- Envy is the basis for almost all comparison

Envy Definition: *“a feeling of discontented or resentful longing aroused by someone else's possessions, qualities, or luck.”*

- The children of Israel rebelled against Moses because of envy – **Psalm 106:16**
- Jesus was turned over to the Romans because of envy – **Matthew 27:18**
- Envy says, *“I don't like that you are better off than me. I do not like it that you have more power than me.”*

Envy is a boundary violation

- It refuses to recognize God's sovereign right to parent and bless as He pleases

When we envy others two things are certain:

- God is not my source
- The fruit of the Spirit is not evident in my life

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22–23, NKJV)

We must remember that nobody gets the whole package

“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.” (1 Corinthians 12:12, NKJV)

- None of us is the whole body by ourselves
- We all have value
- We are ONE Body

Do not give up impact to acquire influence when God has called you to impact

We often compare ourselves with those who have a big platform

- We tend to desire influence over impact
- Impact is more common and even more necessary
- A teacher has an influence on more children than an individual parent does
- However, a parent has more impact on their children than the teacher
- The President has more influence over the entire country
- The governor or mayor has more impact on you personally
- An Evangelist can have more influence over thousands even millions through speaking, video, books, TV
- Your pastor, group leader, or friends have more impact directly

People who have a small circle of influence have the greatest impact on our lives

“And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.” (1 Corinthians 12:23–25, NKJV)

- Within the Church, we tend to think that the greatest gifts are on the platform
- The truth is the greatest gifts are in the congregation
- God doesn't want the church to have a hierarchy like the world has
- The Church will not succeed without honoring and accepting every individual as gifted and important
- God gives different gifting to each of us so we can honor and minister to one another

Remember that increased responsibility, influence, and authority come with a much higher level of stress

- Many people in high-stress positions envy those in lower-stress positions

We all deal with insecurity

- I wish I had her body
- I wish I had his friends
- I wish I had their house
- I wish I had their marriage
- I wish I had their family

How To Overcome Comparison

Thank God for who you are and accept yourself

- Don't ever think, *"I am just not that special. I just don't measure up?"*

Instead say, *"God I thank you for who you made me to be. I thank you for what you made me to do. I thank you for placing me in the exact place You want me to be."*

- You are special in the Lord!

Trust God With Your Needs And Desires

Rather than focusing on others focus on being the person God wants you to be

- You don't have to drag others down to pull yourself up
- If you don't trust God for favor and opportunity, you will take matters into your own hands
- You will become competitive, jealous, envious, and covetous
- We are all equal in God, but we are all different as well
- Comparison leads to manipulation, gossip, and tearing others down

Trust God's Work in Other People

- If you don't let God be God in other people's lives, He will not be God for you

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." (Romans 12:15, NKJV)