

The Comparison Game  
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John 21:15-25 NIV

15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” 16 A second time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” 17 He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. 18 Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.” 19 (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, “Follow me.”

20 Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; he was the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?” 21 When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, what about him?” 22 Jesus said to him, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!” 23 So the rumor spread in the community that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?”

24 This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true. 25 But there are also many other things that Jesus did; if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version. (1989). (Jn 21:15–25). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

## 1. Introduction

I have two sons. I have seen this countless times. I give one a chore to do and instead of an “okay” its, “But what chore does HE have to do?”

John seems to be including this story for one reason - to clear up confusion about what Jesus said and meant concerning John’s future – but I love this story because as usual Peter shows himself to wonderfully flawed in a way we can all identify with. In the face of the clearest, most direct instructions that Jesus can give him, Peter responds with: “Okay, but what about *him*?”

## 2. Why we compare

- Issues of fairness. Even though we heard our parents say, “Life ain’t fair,” and even though we know that fairness is in the eye of the beholder, we still want things to be... Balanced somehow. And when we think we are being asked to give or do more than our fair share, it pushes our buttons.
- Jealousy. Last we heard Luke’s version of the last supper story, and learned that the disciples were arguing about whom among them would be the greatest. Maybe Peter felt that toward John. The next time you find yourself comparing, ask yourself: Am I just plain ol’ envious?
- Work avoidance. I feel like this is what is going on with my kids when they start debating the various aspects of chore division. The longer we debate, the longer we put off the hard work.

3. Individuals: Compare ourselves to other Christians: Jesus isn’t going to ask you why you weren’t more like Moses or Mother Teresa. Jesus is going to want to know: Why were you more like YOU?

4. Congregations: Comparing ourselves to other churches: Each congregation has a unique witness to offer.

Do congregations compare themselves?

Do they do it for reasons of

Fairness?                      Why does God seem to be blessing other churches, but not us?

Jealousy?                      The church down the street is growing, has a better this or a bigger that

Work Avoidance?              Denominational debates

West Valley has its own song to sing, its own legacy to live. From our viewpoint in Christian history, we can see how silly it would be for the apostles to be comparing themselves to each other. Peter and John made wildly different contributions to the way we understand Jesus, live as disciples, and see God’s world. We don’t compare them to each other except to see how impoverished we’d be without them.

5. The big question – the ONLY question for us is: Jesus, what do you want for us?

- The work we are to do: May we be receive the sheep you send our way, Lord, and not be envious of other shepherds and their sheep.
- The focus we keep: Living Jesus day by day, moment by moment.
- The cross we bear: Accepting the suffering that comes when we follow Jesus into a broken

world and allow our hearts to be broken by what breaks God's heart.

What is the important-but-hard word you need to hear from Jesus this morning?

- Feed my sheep: Give all of yourself to the work I have given you to do. Do your best at your work. Don't worry about the work I give someone else to do.
  
- Follow me: Stay close to me. Make my opinion the only one that matters.
  
- Accept my cross: When your life turns out to be much harder than you thought it would be, don't make that the basis for complaints or comparisons. Bring that pain to me. Allow me to teach you about love in ways that only suffering can.

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