



## Season 1, Episode 2 “Comparison: What’s Eating You?”

### **Michelle Schroeder:**

Hey guys, Michelle here. Welcome to the Life on Life podcast. In this episode we're going to try something a little different. Today, Punky and I are going to have a conversation about comparison. In order to be women who are better together doing womanhood well, we have got to recognize that one of the enemy's most fiery darts aimed at us is comparison. In order for us to love others well, we have got to first love the woman in the mirror. So let's get started. I'm going to read from Romans 12:3-6 in the Message version.

“The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him. In this way, we are like various parts of the human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we're talking about is Christ body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as part of his body, but as a chopped off finger or a cut off toe, we wouldn't amount to much would we? So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and a marvelously functioning parts in Christ 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 that we aren't.”

### **Punky Tolson:**

I love that translation and the message. It is so accurate because that's really what comparison is. We just measure ourselves by everyone else and then we end up trying to be somebody we're not – somebody that God did not create us to be. But it's crazy how much that preoccupies us and takes up and eats up so much of our life, you know?

I think that over the past... It's probably been about the past 10 years as I've led Bible study and then spoken at different women's gatherings and conferences, I've given them a response card.

## It's a little survey that's just two questions asking women:

1. *What is the biggest thing they struggle with personally themselves?*
2. *What is the biggest thing they struggle with in terms of other women?*

Without question, I would say almost 100% of the time the top responses in both those categories are the thing we struggle with ourselves about, the biggest struggle we have is **busy-ness, feeling, overwhelmed, stressed, insecurity, uselessness, loneliness and comparison.**

And then likewise, what they comment in regard to their *struggle with others* is **comparison, jealousy, trust, authenticity in friendships, and competition.** I mean it's across the board every time. And I just, I go back to what we were talking about last week, that we have got to remember that this war that Satan has with women, his biggest target is going to be pitting women against one another and pitting us against ourselves, and having us look in the mirror and always, always, always coming up short. Not enough. Just always less than. And I've struggled with it, I'm sure you've struggled with it.

I don't know a woman who hasn't struggled with it. *But one thing for sure, if we're going to do this whole womanhood really, really well thing to the glory of God, we've got to start exchanging some of those things. Doing away with some of those things and exchanging that chronic comparison for genuine contentment.*

We can truly live in contentment. And I think that's really the opposite of comparison. **Comparison saying I don't have enough, contentment saying I have enough.**

Comparison is saying I'm not enough, contentment is saying **I am enough and I have enough in Christ Jesus.** We've got to compare how we are comparing ourselves to how God talks about us in his word.

We've probably heard this quote a lot, "comparison is the thief of joy." Teddy Roosevelt was one that said that.

*But God talked about it first* and he knew that that would be such a big deal. I love that the apostle Paul addresses that so often in his writings, which tells us clearly he struggled with it as well. I mean that's refreshing too, to know that he did that and he gives us an antidote for it later, which we'll get to. But in 2 Corinthians 10:12 he writes this "for we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves, but they are measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves among themselves and it

is not wise." Another translation says it's just stupid. It's just foolish. So when you and I measure ourselves by what we see in other people, and we use that as the standard, it's not just unwise, it's unloving because God does not measure us that way. He created you uniquely. He created me uniquely, just one of a kind. ***So the only thing he measures us with is his love because out of his love he created us.***

There's a great illustration that underscores all of this and it's from one of the books in CS Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia. It's called The Voyage of the Dawn Treader. And we see the main characters again, Lucy, Peter Edmond, and Susan, they're siblings. Lucy, the youngest sister, the main character, at this point in her life has grown up a bit and really idolizes her sister Susan. She sees all this love and beauty in Susan and she desires that. She compares herself to Susan because Susan is not only beautiful, she's witty, she's popular, she's well-liked, she's sought after by men. Lucy sees that and she starts to mimic that image of love and beauty that she sees. Really, what she's asking here is, gosh, *do you think I look anything like Susan? And am I beautiful? Am I loving enough? Am I enough?*

That's the basic question there. So in the process of this adventure they're on, in this novel, she comes across this book of incantations that break spells over people and she finds one in there that basically is an incantation for if you don't like who you are, just say this little poem here and you'll be instantly turned into what you want to be. And so she takes this incantation and she recites it as she's looking into a mirror... and all of a sudden she sees herself as her sister, Susan. But she realizes as she watches this scene play out, that that spell has actually *turned her into* her sister Susan. And she looks at herself and says, "I'm beautiful!" So she's actually seeing herself as somebody she's not. And then she finds herself in this world without Lucy, without herself, and they're saying in the scene like, *remember Lucy? Whatever happened to Lucy? Where is she?*

So as she is looking at all this, she starts to become horrified and realizes there's no Narnia and there's no Lucy in Narnia and she doesn't like it. And she starts to become frightened and thinks whatever happened to Lucy? *She had lost her identity completely.* And then mysteriously and wonderfully, Aslan the lion, the Christ character in the story, appears over her shoulder and looks in the mirror with her and says "Lucy, Lucy, what have you done, child?" And Lucy is just horrified. And she says, "oh, I don't know. I don't know. It's just awful. I've disappeared" and Aslan says, "but you chose it, Lucy." And she says, "but I didn't mean to. I didn't mean to choose it at all. I just wanted to be beautiful like Susan. That's all." And Aslan says, "but when you did that, you wished yourself away. And with it so much more, your brothers and your sisters wouldn't know Narnia without you, Lucy. You discovered a=it first, remember?" And she said, "I'm just so sorry."

And she was so brokenhearted and she was so remorseful and she said, "I'm just so sorry." And Aslan ends with this, "Lucy, you doubt your value. Don't run from who you are." And I want to say that to each one of us. It kind of chokes me up thinking about it. ***Don't doubt your value and how God sees you and how God measures you. Don't doubt your value. Don't run from who you are because when you do, when you measure yourself by everyone else, you wish your own life away.*** See comparison, comparing ourselves, measuring ourselves with or to another is one of the most unloving things that we can do to ourselves.

*When we compare ourselves, we wish ourselves, our own true self away.* We talked about this in the previous episode, that God tells us through Jesus that the greatest commandment is to love him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and also to love others as we love ourselves. The priority of that love is love God first, love yourself and then love others. And we cannot love ourselves to any greater degree than we know and believe God's love for ourselves. And we certainly can't love others to any greater degree than we love ourselves.

So, looking in the mirror and learning to love who that woman is, is a huge part of it. And to have compassion for her and to find contentment and not just contentment, but to find joy in the person God's created you to be and in the life he's given you to live.

I think it's really important to remember just how unique we are. And I don't mean that in a cliché way. Look at your finger. Just if you can right now, just hold your finger up to you and look at the back of your finger. There's a fingerprint on there. In fact, all 10 of your fingers have a print. There is nobody else on the planet that has ever existed or will ever exist that has a fingerprint and a DNA mark like you do. So right there, that tells me I'm a one of a kind and I am unique. And in Ephesians 2:10, Paul writes that we are *God's workmanship*. We are created in Christ Jesus to do good works that he prepared for us to do before the foundation of the earth. And we're supposed to do those works – walk in them, actually walk them out.

So we look at that uniqueness and you think, okay, I've got a spiritual gift. You've got a spiritual gift. I've got a calling in life. You've got a calling in life. And somebody else might have a similar calling, but it doesn't look the same on them. It is only going to look like what God ordained for it to look like coming through your life and coming through my life. And if we don't walk it out that way, it doesn't get walked out. If we don't live the life in the calling and with the gift and God's created us for and created us to do, then it doesn't get done. And basically it's like the Chronicles of Narnia book. The life doesn't get lived. We wish our life away and we're not happy and we're not full of joy and we're not fulfilled and we don't feel a purpose because we are so busy trying to be her. Trying to be that other person.

And so I think it really is critical. Again, it's not just a matter of us looking in the mirror and saying, *gosh darn it, people just like you. You're awesome.* It's a matter of looking into the mirror of God's word and saying, ***this is who I am.***

This is who he created me to be, and to find our fulfillment in knowing that the God who created us loves us and has a plan for our lives that we can't live out any other way except through him. Not trying to be somebody else. Just me being the me that he created me to be, and you being the you that he created you to be. And that doesn't leave room for comparison. In fact, it totally leaves comparison out of the picture because it can't get done if we're comparing.

So yeah, we've got to exchange this chronic comparison for genuine contentment and it's like you read in the beginning from Romans 12 out of the message Bible, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be without enviously or privately comparing ourselves with each other or trying to be something that we aren't, because that in essence is saying, we're saying to ourselves, you're not very valuable. You're not worth very much. And so you've got to try to be somebody else. When God has said, ***not only are you worth something, you're worth everything because I gave everything in my son to die for you. I shed his blood for you. That's how much you are worth to me.***

And in the beginning of Ephesians, he says, you are not just picked out. You are blessed, chosen, adopted, highly favored, redeemed, forgiven and gifted and sealed with the Holy spirit and you have an inheritance in store for you. And I mean if there's not value wrapped up in that, we don't need to add value to our lives when we are in Christ. He makes us valuable.

**Michelle Schroeder:**

Punky, this is so good. I want to ask you a clarifying question because our current self-help culture is all about self love, self care. And not that that's a bad thing, but what is the difference between that message that's in pop culture right now versus what biblical loving yourself, self-love looks like?

**Punky Tolson:**

That's a really great question. And even though I think that there's some merit in self-help books, I think that there's only minimal help to be found there. *It's the difference in loving yourself with words and loving yourself with wisdom. Wisdom comes from God's word.* It's the Word of God, not the "words of God." There are words in the Bible that we need to embrace and listen to, but the Word of God is Jesus Christ himself. And I say so often that **Jesus is the language God speaks.** So it comes from a relationship with Jesus Christ, but

it's also that healing that his word brings to that place in your life where you have been unloving.

And so I don't think that self-help books can help us get to that source because again, God made us and so he knows best how we work. He made our heart and he knows best how our heart works and he knows what our heart needs. The kind of love that comes in and brings healing and brings not just healing to a broken heart, but a broken mind as well.

And so that's the primary way that we've got to love ourselves is by leaning into the Lord himself and letting him speak to us in his word and understand what that means and then let it do its work in and through us. It says in Hebrews that the word of God is living and active and it's able to judge the heart and the intents of the heart and cuts into the bones and the marrow. So he goes deep in and does a thorough work in our heart. Loving ourselves comes first in knowing and believing God's love, for me, and letting him come in and fill up those empty places and start to reprogram our thoughts and our mind with his truth.

Because that's the biggest thing the enemy wants us to believe. It's one of the lies he just spits in our face with is that you are not enough. You're not enough. And I'll tell you that, personally speaking, that was such a battle for me for such a long time until I actually started to take what God said and not just repeat it and not just write it on a sticky note, but start to really metabolize it into the situations in my life. And I grew more loving with myself. Along with that, I grew more loving toward others.

**Michelle Schroeder:**

So when you say that, *metabolize that in myself*, what does that look like? Like how do you do that?

**Punky Tolson:**

Again, great question. I think we can sit in Bible studies and we can study the Bible and we can know a lot about what it says. But unless we do something with it, it's not going to happen. So for instance, when it says in the Gospels, when Jesus says, if you know that someone's got something against you, if you know there's a breach somewhere, if there's a fracture in a relationship and you know forgiveness needs to happen, if all I do is write that on a sticky note or memorize that verse, it really hasn't done anything.

I mean, Jesus says in John 14:15, if you love me, you'll do what I tell you to do. He didn't say, if you love me, *you'll memorize* what I told you to do. No, he said you'll do it. So there has to be some action. There has to be some follow through.

One of the most loving things I can do for myself is make sure that I am not out of alignment in my horizontal relationships. First all, I'm going to think it through. I'm going to ask the Lord, search my heart, show me if I've got an unloving heart or an unforgiving heart towards somebody and then maybe I'm going to write that name down on a pray for that person and then, if it requires me going to them and asking for forgiveness, I need to make that happen and I need to have somebody hold me accountable to when I'm going to do it, where I'm going to do it, how I'm going to do it, and then what happened when I did it.

Because to forgive someone else frees me up. And that is a very loving thing that we can do for ourselves. To forgive yourself. I mean, there was a time I had to have just deep time with the Lord and letting him walk me through how to forgive myself for some of those things too. Again, you've got to get action behind it. It can't just be something you study about and know about. And I firmly believe that is one of the primary ways that we can love ourselves is taking God's word, understanding what it means. And then as I say, metabolizing that into my life in a way that it starts to live out.

**Michelle Schroeder:**

So what if it's not forgiveness that someone needs to do? What if it's, I don't know, some other aspect of the comparison that they're... that's just breeding discontentment.

**Punky Tolson:**

I'm talking to believers here right now for this, because there are about 58 "one another" passages in the Bible, and so there's pretty much an answer for any issue that you're struggling with in terms of comparison. The scripture says *encourage one another*. So if I'm discouraged because I've been comparing myself to Judy down the street who's all this and a bag of chips and her kids are always dressed to the nines, they never have a spot or wrinkle on them or a runny nose, their birthday parties are just outrageous and they're equipped with bands and clowns and all... you get the idea.

If I'm comparing myself to that, I think the thing to do is do the ***opposite*** of how it's making you feel. So if it's discouraging me, I want to do something to encourage her in some way. Write a note of encouragement. Thank her for inviting your kid to the party. Tell her she's got a beautiful yard. Tell her the chocolate chip cookies were the best ones at the party, something like that.

This is what I've said to myself for years. ***What's the thing that's eating you?*** What's the thing that's eating your lunch? Whatever it is, starve it. And how do I starve it? I feed it the opposite or I don't feed it at all. So what am I doing that's feeding that thing? **Do the opposite.**

I have found that the places that we become the most self-absorbed in comparison are the places of our particular season in life. Are we married or single? Our calling. Am I a mom? Am I a head of a corporation? Am I a ministry leader or a giftedness? Am I someone who has the gift of hospitality? Am I a Bible teacher? Am I a shepherd of some sort of people? And we start to look at other people in that season, in that calling, in that gifting and we start to compare ourselves. And then that turns into competition but that's next week's discussion.

*We have to be so aware that that's where we're most vulnerable to the attack of the enemy – where we have been given something by God to use for the body of Christ. If we've been called in some way by God to do something in the body of Christ.*

I mean you probably can relate to this like I can. We were single for a pretty long time. I'll just speak for myself. It got to be so bad that I was starting to get wedding invitations from kids I had taught in Sunday school and I would throw them across the room. True confession.

I would say, *what is up with this Lord? Like, they're teenagers still. What have they got that I don't have? What's wrong with me?* And just start to compare myself instead of saying, okay, here's what I know about God. He's good. He only does good things. He only has a good plan for my life. He has heard my prayers and he will either answer them with a yes, no, not now, but wait, it's coming.

I know that if he says *no* to something, he always has a *better yes*. Because he always is going to do the thing that is the best for me and in the fulfilling of what's the best thing and fulfilling his ultimate plan and part of his big kingdom plan on this earth. I'm part of the plan, you're part of that plan. So if I remind myself of that, does it take the sting away? No, it does not take the sting away. But it puts me in a better headspace.

**Michelle Schroeder:**

Well, and it gives you space for His joy.

**Punky Tolson:**

For his joy, and for him to come in and fill me up in ways that I know something's empty, but I didn't know it needed filling that way.

You're right, because it's always brought me to a place of joy and we know joy is not circumstantial. Joy is a fruit of the spirit that only happens through the spirit of God in us, from God. Happiness means a roll of the dice. It's a crapshoot and it's wherever you happen to be at the time. If it's good, you're happy. If it's not, you're not.



**Michelle Schroeder:**

But contentment...

**Punky Tolson:**

Contentment is so much different. *Contentment is the opposite of comparison.*

Paul the apostle Paul set it up so beautifully in Philippians 4 where he says, "I've learned whatever season I'm in, wherever I'm in, whatever I'm doing, I've learned to be content, whether I'm well fed or I'm hungry. Whether I have much, whether I have little". He says, "I have learned to be content" and I think it's important to remember contentment is not a spiritual gift. It's something Paul learned and where did he learn it?

**Michelle Schroeder:**

Jail.

**Punky Tolson:**

He was in jail. He was in jail with everything that was screaming on the outside and could distract him, was pulled away and he had this capacity and this freedom to just right out of the overflow of his relationship with Jesus. Words that we needed to hear. He learned contentment in prison. *He learned that the secret to that contentment was, I can do all things through Christ who gives me the strength.* And that verse can be taken out of context sometimes where we think it only means I have the strength through Christ to get through this bad day, to get through this bad season. And of course it applies to that. But look at it contextually.

He says that in regard to learning to live with contentment, in a contented place and saying, I have enough. And I not only have enough, I am enough.

Comparison says I'm not enough. Contentment says, not only do I have enough, I am enough in Christ Jesus.

**Michelle Schroeder:**

You know, I like when you said that contentment is not a spiritual gift because it's not. It's actually a spiritual *practice*.

**Punky Tolson:**

Right. So it has to be practiced. I think with regard to comparison, and as I said earlier, that thing that's eating us, we want to starve it. We've got to put something into practice in order to starve that and learn to be content. And so again, do the opposite. So that's your spiritual life hack for this week.



## SPIRITUAL LIFE HACK

*Whatever is eating you, name it and then starve it. I suggest make a list of those things that are really bugging you – whatever it is and how it's making you feel, write that down.*

*If there's a name of a person associated with it, write that down and then do the opposite. Send a letter of encouragement. Make that apology. Do something that turns it around and makes you do the opposite of how you are feeling. That's the way that we walk it out. That's the way we start to break the bar, the yolk of that thing that's been strangling us.*



### **Michelle Schroeder:**

And I would say too, if you're listening to this and you have just a general discontentment but you don't know what it is that you're struggling with in the area of comparison, ask the Holy Spirit to show you, and he will.

### **Punky Tolson:**

We have to remember God knows our heart. He knows what's in our heart. I love the Psalm that says, "every morning I come to you, Lord, and I put out the pieces of my life on your altar and I wait for your fire to come down." I mean, if we can't talk it out with God... that's where it starts for me with the Lord in the wee hours when it's quiet and my brain is just not cluttered with noise and I can say, Lord, that thing is hurting me again. Lord, this thing is beating me up on the inside of my head. Let's just get that out there and let him have his way with it in his word. He knows, he already knows. So if we can't just take it all to him and empty our heart, I mean start that way every day. Empty your heart out. Give it out there and confess the sin of comparison. Confess the sin of having an unloving spirit toward yourself and not being a person that a woman that loves who God's made her to be and then start praying for that.

In fact, let's just pray this together now and close with this:

*Father, we thank you that in your infinite wisdom and in your creative mind and in your deep loving heart you created each and every one of us to be uniquely and specifically who we are. I*

*pray, Lord, as women who desire so much to do womanhood well and to become every bit the women that you've created us to be, that you would give us a supernatural love for who we are, that you would help me to love the me that you've created me to be, that you would help each one of my friends out there to love the them, that you've created them to be.*

*Father, help us to see ourselves through the lens of your scripture, to know and believe that you who have called us and created us have a unique and beautiful plan for our lives. That there's no one who can live our lives for us, but us, and the life that you've created us to live. Help us Lord, help us today because we need it Lord. And we want so very much to be the women you've created us to be women who so strongly resembled Jesus and it's in his name that I pray.*

Okay guys, we've got some work to do. We are going to exchange this chronic comparison for beautiful contentment.

All right, that's that for that. We'll see you next week and don't you forget that you are greatly, dearly, and *uniquely created* and loved by the King.

xo -P

