



COMMUNICATOR GUIDE

Measure Up / Week 1

PRELUDE

SOCIAL

WORSHIP

STORY

GROUPS

HOME

BOTTOM LINE

Trying to measure up only brings us down.

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

To help students see the disadvantages of constantly comparing themselves to other people; and to help them understand the benefits of letting that comparison go.

SCRIPTURE

And I saw that all toil and all achievement spring from one person's envy of another. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. Fools fold their hands and ruin themselves. Better one handful with tranquillity than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind. Again I saw something meaningless under the sun: There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. "For whom am I toiling," he asked, "and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?" This too is meaningless—a miserable business! (Ecclesiastes 4:4-8 NIV).

CONTEXT OF SCRIPTURE

Solomon noticed that people were basing what they pursued and tried to achieve on envy, competition, and discontentment. In other words, they were trying to measure up to an expectation they thought they needed to reach. But Solomon says this is meaningless, miserable, and like chasing after the wind—a futile pursuit, and one that only brings us down.

TEACHING OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

I don't know about you, but I love shoes.

TENSION

Why does it feel so bad to gauge ourselves based on somebody else's life?

I think we all have a desire and fear that works like this: We want to measure up.

There's something in all of us that looks to the left and right, trying to figure out: *How am I doing?*

And here's what we're hoping to see when we look left or right: Basically, we all want "er" added to the adjectives that describe us.



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TEACHING OUTLINE

You feel dissatisfied with you. The voice in your head says something like: *You'll never be as _____ [fill in the blank] as them.*

For some of us, we don't feel dissatisfied; we feel something worse—superior.

TRUTH

Solomon has something to say about our tendency to compare ourselves to each other in an effort to measure up.

Solomon saw people determining who they were based on who everybody else was.

But Solomon shares that comparison and trying to measure up is like chasing the wind. It's fruitless.

He explains that it's better to have one hand open. Meaning, if your hand is open, God can put in or take out whatever He chooses.

Because when you've tightened your fingers around every single thing you can get, there will always something you can't get.

And Solomon is saying, "Left to ourselves, we simply take our

cue from the people to the left and right of us. We compare ourselves with them and compete with them in hopes of measuring up."

Trying to measure up only brings us down.

Because here's the truth: There's no win in comparison.

APPLICATION

So the question I want to leave you with is this: Where are you looking? Where are you chasing the wind?

So I want you to ask yourself these questions. And I'd love for you to answer them honestly:

- 1) Who are you trying to keep up with?
- 2) What do they have that you don't, that's keeping you from enjoying what God has given you?
- 3) Who would you secretly enjoy seeing fail?
- 4) Where are you clenching your hands?

LANDING

Remember, trying to measure up only brings us down. There's no benefit.

As you head out, imagine how it would feel to let that comparison go.



TEACHING SCRIPT

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BOTTOM LINE

TRYING TO MEASURE UP ONLY BRINGS US DOWN.

INTRODUCTION

1 MINUTE

I don't know about you, but I love shoes. Like, love them. I love Adidas, Nikes, Jordans, Vans, Toms, and I can even get on board with some Sanuks if the time is right.

The only problem is, I don't have enough money to support my passion. But from time to time, I'll splurge, like I did on a pair of NMD Ultra Boosts. The day I got these was a good day. I was feeling pretty good about myself. I decided to snap some of my friends to make them jealous.

But then I opened Instagram and scrolled down to my friend Jamey's latest post. It was a pair of Yeezy's—some of the coolest, most expensive, most difficult-to-get-your-hands-on pairs of shoes. I went from feeling like a 10 to a 2. Those shoes were amazing.

TENSION

4 MINUTES

Has that ever happened to you? Maybe not with shoes, but with something else? Like who you're hanging out with versus who *they* are hanging out with. Your house versus their house. Your accomplishments versus theirs. Be honest. We've all been there. **Why does it feel so bad to gauge ourselves based on somebody else's life?** Why does it deflate us? Why does it bother us so much?

It may be because we're competitive. Or because we get jealous. Or because we want to feel unique and like we have an exciting life.

TEACHING SCRIPT



But I think there's more to it than that. I think we all have a desire and fear that works like this: **We want to measure up.** And we're afraid we're NOT measuring up! We're worried we'll find out that we're not as popular, liked, up to date, or talented as someone else.

Social media isn't the only thing that makes us feel this way. It's everywhere. We feel it hanging out with friends at school. We feel it playing sports. We feel it in the clubs we're involved in. We feel it when we watch TV.

There's something in all of us that looks to the left and right, trying to figure out: How am I doing? Am I acceptable? Am I measuring up?

And here's what we're hoping to see when we look left or right: Basically, we all want "er" added to the adjectives that describe us. We want to be cool-er, pretty-er, rich-er, skinny-er, tall-er, happy-er, smart-er, hipp-er, talented-er, right? I want more "er" than you because then I would feel better about me.

But it doesn't just stay with us. If we're dating someone, now we want our boyfriend or girlfriend to have some "ers" too, right? I want them to be rich-er, skinny-er, nice-er, handsome-er.

Then, there's another group of us: "Er" isn't good enough. We don't want to be rich-er, we want to be richest. Smartest. Happiest. Retweeted-est. We want to be in a category all by ourselves so when people look at us, they're like, "Whoa. I wish I could be him. I wish I could be her."

This is why some of you constantly feel dissatisfied with yourself . . .

- Every time you look in the mirror.
- Every time you look on Snapchat.
- Every time there's a test in class.
- Every time you go to play or choir practice.
- Every time there's a basketball game.
- Every time there's a dance and you need a date.

You feel dissatisfied with you. **The voice in your head says something like: You'll never be as _____ [fill in the blank] as them.** *You'll never be that happy, have that much attention, be that athletic, look like that, drive that car, or be able to get into that college.*

But there's another side to it.

For some of us, we don't feel dissatisfied; we feel something worse—superior. Some of us really do have more "ers" than others. We look at the people around us and think: *They're a little heavy-er, slow-er, poor-er, short-er, and nerdy-er.* And this, in some twisted way, makes us feel good, and maybe a little proud.

We know we shouldn't feel that way, but we can't help it. **It feels good for a second to feel better than someone else.**

So what do we do about this part of us? Here's the amazing thing: Scripture actually has something to say about this. In fact, even if you aren't sure about this Jesus thing, you can still get something great out of what we're talking about today.

TRUTH

6 MINUTES

We're going to look briefly at a couple of things said by a king named Solomon. The Bible calls him the wisest man who ever lived. Solomon's not somebody you want to compare yourself with—he'll win every time. He did more than you'll ever do. He had more money than you'll ever have. Kings and queens traveled to sit at his feet and ask for wisdom. He was *the guy* to be.

And Solomon has something to say about our tendency to compare ourselves to each other in an effort to measure up. In Ecclesiastes 4 he says:

And I saw that all toil and all achievement spring from one person's envy of another (Ecclesiastes 4:4a NIV).

Basically he's saying, "I've been watching people, and for the most part, the thing that drives their behavior is *competition*. They're looking over their shoulder at what everyone else is doing: what they're driving, what they're wearing, and who they're hanging out with. And all of it is driven by what they see other people doing."

That was 3,000 years ago. Which means that the attempt to measure up has been going on a long time. **Solomon saw people determining who they were based on who everybody else was.** He's saying, "I looked around, and everybody based their lives on their view of the lives around them." Then he says this:

This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind (Ecclesiastes 4:4b NIV).

Can you imagine someone chasing after the wind? Running around their yard trying to catch it? Not only would they look ridiculous, it'd be a lost cause. **Comparison and trying to measure up is like chasing the wind.** Solomon goes on,

Fools fold their hands and ruin themselves (Ecclesiastes 4:5 NIV).

In other words, "I'm not telling you to not be ambitious—to sit around and do nothing. Only fools would do that." Okay, so what is he telling us to do? He continues:

Better one handful with tranquillity than two handfuls with toil and chasing after the wind (Ecclesiastes 4:6 NIV).

Translation: It's better to have one hand open. Meaning, if your hand is open, God can put in or take out whatever He chooses. Having only one hand to clutch what you can is better than having two fists clenched, hanging on to everything you can get. Why?



TEACHING SCRIPT

Because when you've tightened your fingers around every single thing you can get, there will always something you can't get. And there will never be peace. It will be like chasing the wind. Solomon goes on:

Again I saw something meaningless under the sun (Ecclesiastes 4:7 NIV).

It's as if Solomon is saying, "Here we go with the next point in my 'meaningless' sermon." He explains,

There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother (Ecclesiastes 4:8a NIV).

In this culture, that just means he had nobody to leave stuff to, because women couldn't inherit anything (lame, right?). The verse goes on,

There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth (Ecclesiastes 4:8b NIV).

Solomon is saying there's people who work and work, yet they're never content. There's always more to do. There's always another goal. There's always something else to achieve. And then Solomon says that this never-ending worker asks a question:

"For whom am I toiling[?]" (Ecclesiastes 4:8c NIV).

In other words, "Why am I doing all this? What's the point of all this? Why am I constantly looking to the left and right, wondering if I'm okay and measure up?"

"For whom am I toiling," he asked, "and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?" (Ecclesiastes 4:8c NIV).

"Why is it that I can't stop and enjoy what I've spent my entire life to get? What am I really doing this for? What's driving me?"

And Solomon is saying, **"Left to ourselves, we simply take our cue from the people to the left and right of us. We compare ourselves with them and compete with them in hopes of measuring up."** And then he summarizes it this way (you can probably guess by now):

This too is meaningless (Ecclesiastes 4:8d NIV).

In fact, he says it's a *miserable business!* (Ecclesiastes 4:8e NIV).

As long as you have two handfuls clinched while you wish you had a third hand to grab more stuff, you won't be able to enjoy your life. No matter what you accomplish, how many games you win, or how cute your girlfriend is, it'll still be miserable business as usual for you. Bottom line?

Trying to measure up only brings us down.

Because here's the truth: **There's no win in comparison. There's no win and there's no end to our quest to measure up to the ideals of culture and the "perfect lives" we see on social media.**

And that's because measuring up is impossible. Even if you're more ____ than one person, there's always someone else who is more ____ than you. In fact, as long as you're comparing yourself to other people, I can promise you this: You're *never* going to feel like you measure up!

And that's why you've never gotten one good thing from comparing yourself to others. Not one. The only thing you've ever gotten is more insecurity, worry, discouragement, discontentment, distraction, overspending, bad decision-making, or a seriously bad mood.

Trying to measure UP only brings us DOWN. It's like chasing the wind. It's meaningless. It keeps you captive to some imaginary standard of "good enough" that you'll never quite reach—or never reach for long. It sets you up to never enjoy your successes, and to be miserable with your failures.

APPLICATION

1 MINUTE

It's true that there's something in all of us looking for something to tell us, "You're okay. There's nothing wrong with you. You're right where you need to be. You're good enough."

When we believe that we are enough and open our fists, we stop trying so hard to grasp at what others have. And that, my friends, is a 100% freeing moment!

So the question I want to leave you with is this: Where are you looking? **Where are you chasing the wind?** Where are you living dissatisfied because you aren't "er"? Prettier? Smarter?

Does a person or group of people create your dissatisfaction? Is it a performance or looks thing? Is it a social status or number of likes? Solomon says that if you look to your left or to your right, eventually you'll clench your hands and grab onto things, but you'll never feel like you're okay.

So I want you to ask yourself these questions. And I'd love for you to answer them honestly . . .

1. **Who are you trying to keep up with?**
2. **What do they have that you don't, that's keeping you from enjoying what God has given you?**

TEACHING SCRIPT



3. **Who would you secretly enjoy seeing fail?** (Do you feel like you're holding onto an imaginary, better-than-others title that makes you feel like you measure up, and that makes you cheer for others to fail?)
 4. **Where are you clenching your hands?**
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LANDING

1 MINUTE

Remember, **trying to measure up only brings us down.** There's no benefit. So together, let's fight the urge to look to our left and our right to find out if we're okay. Let's stop chasing the wind. Let's stop clenching our fists around the things that make us feel like we're better. In fact, let's choose to let go of those things altogether.

As you head out, imagine how it would feel to let that comparison go. Imagine how much less you would worry, how much less exhausted you'd be. Your feeling about life would go up if you stopped trying to measure up!



TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS
