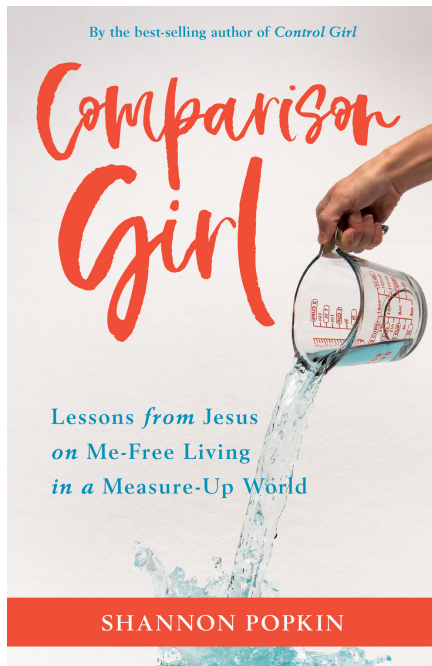


Comparison Girl

by: Shannon Popkin

The words of Jesus provide relief from the effects of comparison.

Contact: Erika VanHaitsma, Ministry Assistant to Shannon Popkin
(231)690-6794 or erika@shannonpopkin.com



Women compare constantly.

On social media, at work, in the neighborhood, or at church, they glance sideways, wondering, *How do I measure up?* Comparison might drive one woman to push herself to exhaustion, and another to shrink back in shame. Either way, comparing leads to self-focused bondage, distraction, and isolation.

Is there a way to stop comparing and be free?

Author and speaker, Shannon Popkin invites fellow Comparison Girls to consider Jesus's response to those weighed down with measure-up concerns: **He invited them to live me-free.**

With humor and vulnerability, Shannon shares about her own measure-up fears and get-ahead pride in *Comparison Girl: Lessons from Jesus on Me-Free Living in a Measure-Up World*. Throughout this study of the conversations Jesus had and the stories he shared with people who also were comparing, Shannon invites women to choose Jesus's me-free way of living by lifting others up and pouring themselves out.

Chapter Themes Include:

- **Two Kingdoms:** In the world, things stack up a certain way. If you want to be somebody, you have to outdo somebody else. A woman often fall into a trap of jealousy, insecurity, or drive to get ahead, oblivious to the evil one who designed this measure-up system to destroy her. One day, all will be realigned under King Jesus and the tables will turn. The lasts will be firsts. The servants will be the greats. Jesus invites her to live now the way she'll wish she had then.
- **Stop Measuring, Start Pouring:** Suppose there's a measuring cup, representing your your life. Satan would point to the lines on the side and tell you to prove you have more in your cup than somebody else—or to feel ashamed if you don't. But Jesus would point to the spout and invite you to live as He did, emptying yourself and pouring your life out. When you tip your measuring cup, the lines become irrelevant. If you want to stop measuring, start pouring.
- **Comparing Like Jesus:** Jesus never told us to stop comparing. Actually, he often invited us to compare—but in his upside-down way. He told comparison stories constantly (like the Good Samaritan), compared people in real life (like the widow who gave *more* than the rest), and shared comparison statements (like "the last will be first") to help realign our thinking, so that we might see ourselves and others from His kingdom perspective.

- **Sideways Disgust:** Disgust is always communicated from a position of superiority. Disgust compares down, saying, "I would never!" The woman who's been around church the longest often feels most comfortable voicing her disgust over the way others are wrong, while she is right—and this might be accurate. But as she voices her disgust, she shows how *she* is wrong.
- **A Diverse Unity:** In the world, our differences are cause for attitudes of inferiority or superiority. We divide into groups and decide who doesn't belong. But in God's family, everyone belongs—not because we're the same, but precisely because we're different. Our goal is unity, not uniformity. As we give each other a place to belong, we're free to celebrate each other, not compete. We're free to be inspired by each other, not intimidated.



Features:

Comparison Girl goes directly to the Bible for help and perspective on comparison. Each lesson opens with a Bible reading, in which Jesus is responding to either the disciples, Pharisees, tax collectors, sinners, or others who were comparing. Each lesson closes with several application questions, often about cross-referenced Bible verses. The meditation at the end of each lesson offers an encapsulated truth, theme verse, and prayer.

Comparison Girl invites real life application. The lessons are peppered with funny, vulnerable, and inspiring stories from Shannon's own life, or shared with permission from others. Both the stories and heart-probing application questions will challenge the woman of every age and stage to consider her own measure-up mindset, and find practical ways to realign herself to Jesus's me-free way of living.

Comparison Girl devotes a chapter to each of the following ways women tend to compare: comparing sin, comparing wealth, comparing appearances, comparing ministries, and comparing status. Each chapter is divided into lessons which allow the woman on a time budget to engage a complete train of thought, and consider how God is inviting her to respond.

Women will find more information about the leader's kit and teaching videos, along with free bonus resources, at ComparisonGirl.com.

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More Information:

Website: ShannonPopkin.com

Facebook: [shanpopkin](https://www.facebook.com/shanpopkin)

Instagram: [shannonpopkin](https://www.instagram.com/shannonpopkin)

Pinterest: [ShannonPopkin](https://www.pinterest.com/ShannonPopkin)



Shannon Popkin is a writer, speaker, and Bible teacher who loves to blend her gifts for storytelling and humor with her passion for Jesus. Shannon regularly speaks at Christian women's events and retreats, inviting women to live like God's Word is true.

Shannon is the author of ***Comparison Girl: Lessons from Jesus on Me-Free Living in a Measure-Up World***, ***Control Girl: Lessons on Surrendering Your Burden of Control from Seven Women in the Bible***, and co-author of ***Influence (Building a Platform That Elevates Jesus (Not Me))***. She's been featured on ***FamilyLife Today***, ***Revive Our Hearts***, and ***Proverbs 31***.

Popkin and her husband Ken have been married for twenty-five years and live in West Michigan. They have three young adult children, and two shih tzus, who (unlike the kids) have no plans of moving out.

Praise for *Comparison Girl*:

"If you struggle with measuring up, if you're worried about what people think, if you dread someone seeing you in a less than ideal situation, then you're human. We all struggle with comparing ourselves to others. That means we all need Shannon's honest and wise words on the pages of this book. I know I did, and I'm betting you do too!"

—**Jill Savage**, author of *No More Perfect Moms*

"Shannon Popkin has masterfully written another must-read to speak to the struggles of our soul. Like a dear friend she sits with us and soothes us with the truth of how purposefully we were created, how intentionally we have been gifted, and how infinitely we are loved. Inviting us to listen to the tender truths of God and silence the enemy's lies, Shannon shows us how to live freely in a culture of continual comparison. For every woman who wonders if she is truly enough—here is your answer."

—**Erica Wiggerhorn**, author of *Unexplainable Jesus*

"Have you ever felt less than another Christian woman because she seems to love Jesus perfectly and you may have cussed in the church parking lot last weekend? In *Comparison Girl*, Shannon combines Jesus's teachings with brilliant spiritual insights and powerful tools like the 'Disgust Factor Challenge' that invite you to leave comparison behind in favor of freedom in Christ. If you want to love people more, let go of beating yourself up, and shake off our culture's me-first mindset, then grab *Comparison Girl* and gather some friends so you can share this experience together."

—**Barb Roose**, speaker and author of *Surrendered* and *Winning the Worry Battle*

"Shannon Popkin helps us take a fresh and challenging look at the everyday mindsets we wrestle with. Showing us God's higher ways straight from the life of Jesus, she calls us from our me-focused thinking to His kingdom-focused purposes. After this study and with the power of the Holy Spirit, I won't allow those thoughts to stay around any longer."

—**Lynn Cowell**, author of *Make Your Move*

"Comparison. We all fight it. But for many of us, it feels like we are losing the battle. Why? Because what we need to combat comparison is not simply the knowledge that it hurts us, but the tools to resist it, and that is exactly what Shannon Popkin has given us. With fresh insight, biblical grounding, and light-hearted humor, *Comparison Girl* offers practical steps for curbing this temptation. If comparison is your struggle, this book is your guide!"

—**Sharon Hodde Miller**, Author of *Nice: Why We Love to Be Liked And How God Calls Us to More*



Comparison Girl Interview Topics:

Comparison & the Christian Woman

- 3 Destructive Effects of Measure-Up Comparison
- How Jesus Responded to Comparison
- Why Me-Focus Isn't The Answer (and Me-Free Living Is)
- How to Tear Down Comparison Walls and Invite Community

Comparison in Friendships

- 3 Questions To Ask When You're Tempted to Compare
- How to Be Inspired (Not Intimidated) By Exceptional People
- 3 Messages Your Disgust is Sending
- 3 Ways You're Losing the Comparison Game (And Why You Shouldn't Play)
- How to Connect (Not Compare) With Your Friends

Interview Topics (*continued*):

Leadership/Women's Ministry & Comparison

- Three Ways to Stop the Measure-Up Mindset at Your Church
- How to Celebrate (Not Compete With) Gifted Women
- 3 Effects of Disgust on Your Ministry
- Why You *Should* Compare at Church
- How Comparison is Robbing Your Ministry Team

Parenting & Comparison

- When Your Child Feels "Less Than"
- How to Help Your Child Connect, Not Compare
- 3 Truths to Compare-Proof Your Kids
- Why Measure-Up Moms Create Stressful Homes
- 3 Dangerous Messages Your Disgust is Sending Your Kids
- How Comparison Creates Isolation Among Moms

Money & Comparison

- Four Ways Your Wealth Might Be Costing You
- 3 Ways Generosity Frees You From Money Stress
- Why You *Should* Compare Your Wealth
- How To Collapse The Walls Your Money Creates
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Marriage & Comparison

- Comparing Wife, Miserable Life
- Why Comparison in Marriage is Lose-Lose
- 3 Messages Your Disgust is Sending Your Husband
- Why Measure-Up Wives Create Stressful Homes



Suggested Interview Questions for *Comparison Girl*:

1. Is comparison something you've wrestled with, personally?
2. You find it ironic that we call comparison a game. Why do you take issue with referring to the "Comparison Game?"
3. Why are we usually oblivious to the enemy's influence, when we fall into comparison? Why do you say that Satan doesn't fight fair?
4. What are three destructive effects of measuring ourselves against each other?
5. How did Jesus respond to people who were comparing? How do these responses restore our freedom and joy?
6. You use a metaphor of a measuring cup to contrast Jesus's way of comparing with the world's. Could you share that metaphor?
7. How does living by the "spout" not the "lines" create unity among diversity?
8. Why is self-focus an unhelpful response when we're feeling "less than"?
9. What does it mean to live "me-free"? How does me-free living allow us to be inspired by others instead of intimidated by them?
10. How does comparison (especially on social media) impede community? What can we do to create connection?
11. How is disgust a sinful response? Why are church people often blind to the divisiveness of their disgust?
12. How does "flipping the ruler" help us overcome a critical, judgmental attitude?
13. As you were writing *Comparison Girl*, which chapter impacted you most?
14. Share the format of *Comparison Girl*. What extra resources do you have available to individuals and groups?
15. What final encouragement would you offer someone who is struggling with jealousy, inferiority, or perfectionism?



Notable Quotes from *Comparison Girl*:

In this world, there's a system in place, which works like this. If you want to be somebody, you have to outdo somebody else. If you want to be honored, you have to get ahead. If you want to be important, you have to prove that you have more or are more. In short, you have to measure up.

I hope it makes you angry to think of Satan lobbing comparison attacks at your naïve, middle-school self. But I hope it makes you even *more* angry to think of him keeping you in bondage decades later, using the same tired strategy.

Our enemy doesn't care whether we compare and emerge with an inflated ego or a sense of deflated worth. Either way, our enemy wins by dividing us.

The measure-up comparison that traps me is entirely me-focused.

When Jesus invites us to follow him and live under his rule, it's not with promises that he will finally fulfill our measure-up dreams. Jesus wants us to be great—but according to *his* kingdom's value system, not the world's.

When I tip my measuring cup, the lines become beautifully irrelevant.

Me-free living is what guards against me-first comparison.

Comparison-fed pride keeps us from connecting, but in humility-clad community we defend ourselves against enemy attack.

When I put someone else ahead of me, I naturally stop trying to get ahead of her. And when I lift her up, I simultaneously stop looking down on her. And when I bend down to serve her, I forget to measure myself against her.

A me-free mindset allows me to be inspired—not intimidated—by those who are exceptional. It allows me to connect, rather than compete.

Trying to solve the problem of self-focus with more self-focus isn't helping; it's making things worse.

My differences don't add to or detract from my value; they offer me unique ways to serve. Lifting up God and others with what I have and who I am gives me a place to belong—which isn't exhausting; it's exhilarating.

In God's family, everyone is celebrated—not because we are all the same, but precisely because we are *different*. Our goal is to create unity, not uniformity. If everyone were uniform, why would we need unity?

When I look down on someone in disgust, I do so from a self-elevated position.

Living by the spout, not the lines, is the way Jesus reinstates our freedom, confidence, and joy.

Jesus asked us to remember him by an emptied cup.

Those of us with extra in our measuring cups often walk through life's doors assuming it's okay to go first. Privilege never *feels* like privilege. Our perspective is never going to change unless we position ourselves to see differently.

Our money always tells the true story of how we see God and how we see ourselves.

Whatever story of pride or worthlessness you're telling about yourself, Jesus—our restoring king—tells a better one.

Jesus came to make each of us beautiful and clean. Because of him, we can all stop whitewashing and stop maintaining our perimeters. As we move toward each other in vulnerability, our flaws are exposed, but there is no risk because God sees the masterpieces that we really are, and his eyes matter most.

The enemy wants us to measure ourselves against each other, then back away from each other in fear, insecurity, shame, or pride. Jesus invites us to draw together in unity—appreciating differences, rather than being divided by them.

Humility is the choice to see ourselves as small. It's a "littling" of self, but to be clear, it's not a *belittling* of self. The humble person does not set aside her own dignity or pretend that her measuring cup is emptier than it actually is.

Jesus has made a way for exhausted Comparison Girls like us to stop our endless striving to fill our measuring cups. As we bend down to serve each other, we stop worrying about measuring up. As we collectively tip our cups forward, we give each other a place to belong.

