

## Feelings of Inferiority

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**E**valuating ourselves by comparison to others is a double-edged danger. On the one hand, if our standard is someone below us, we run the risk of pride and arrogance. On the other hand, if we compare ourselves with someone more advanced, we run the risk of envy and jealousy. In either case, we fail to make true progress because ungodly feelings distract us from “*the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*” (Eph 4:13).

While some suffer from an exaggerated sense of superiority, I wonder if more damage is not done by feelings of inadequacy and self-pity than pride.

Our society brings both overt and subtle pressure on us to be the best: the fastest, the smartest, the richest, the most aggressive, ambitious and attractive of the lot. Once we internalize these standards, our lives become governed by the need to satisfy them. We wearily toil away at the elusive goal of being “the best” in some category, and most of us will never fulfill that expectation. Some potential problems:

**Embarrassment.** Embarrassment may begin from our own self-consciousness of perceived inferiority, but this may be magnified by the assumption that *others are aware of it as well*. We begin to think that *everyone* notices it, and we then imagine what *they must be saying (or thinking) about us*. It is interesting that those who were truly taken with Jesus were oblivious to social protocol: Bartimaeus, who shouted for Jesus’ attention (Mt 20:31); the sin-laden woman who intruded into the festivities at Simon’s house (Lk 7:37-38); Zacchaeus, who climbed a tree to get a glimpse of Jesus and who exuberantly expressed his penitent heart (Lk 19:4-8).

Acute feelings of inadequacy and embarrassment will eventually drive us away from others or avoid the spotlight. The more isolated we are, the more vulnerable to Satan’s influence. Just ask Peter. Self is magnified, not in arrogance but in pity, and this kind of self-focus inevitably undermines joy and perhaps even faith.

**Envy:** When we externalize our extreme inferiority, it can lead us to ungodly feelings toward others. We may resent what others are or have that makes us feel so inadequate. Almost unconsciously, we may begin to criticize and find fault in an effort to ease our inner agony. Thus Paul warns the weaker brethren not to “*judge another’s servant*” (Rom 14:4), and he reminds the Corinthian brethren who felt inferior that “*God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased*” (1 Cor 12:18).

So, dear sisters, do you find yourself criticizing others because you perceive yourself to be less attractive than they? Or are you reluctant to entertain in your home because you feel it is substandard? Do you shun teaching because others are “better at it” than you are?

Brothers, do you avoid talking about your job because it isn’t “white collar?” Are you ashamed of your car because it is older or the “wrong model?” Do you feel everyone else is smarter than you, thus avoiding meaningful conversation for fear that you will be “exposed?” Thoughts:

1) Be thankful for all of God’s blessings to you. 2) Define yourself by God’s standards. If He is pleased with you, who else matters?! 3) Rejoice in the blessings God has given others, for we are one body and all share in the richness of each other.