



COMPARISON

12•8•2025

JOHN 4:29

One winter weekday in 2007, the Big Valley Christian Lions seventh grade boys basketball team was locked in a contest with the representatives from Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School, the Falcons. The score wasn't particularly close; it was, as they say, "a lot to a little" in favor of the Falcons, and during a timeout in the fourth quarter of this blowout, a young Josh Douglass was called on in the huddle to enter the game for the first time and play out the rest of the running clock. You'd think this would be an exciting moment, but for an insecure, undersized, two-years-young-for-his-grade Josh, the huddle was marked by instant panic. A quick check of my teammates' faces to see how they would react revealed a smattering of jokes, disses, and sneers from boys who were doubtlessly as insecure and scared as I— as I was.

The game ended the way you would think, and while walking through the parking lot with my dad after the game, I started to cry. "What's wrong?" he asked. "Dad, they dissed me in the huddle," I said through gasps and sniffles. My dad responded with words that have been burned into my brain for 17 years: "Why does it matter to you what they think?"

He went on to explain that if I let the opinions of others dictate my wellbeing, I would find myself lost and blown around by the wind. The alternative was to find my identity in Christ, rejoice in the fact that I got to play the great game of basketball at all, and know that I was loved by him and my mom no matter what those boys thought of me.

As we move through Advent and ask what God might have for us in this season, take this moment to think about the

way you're comparing yourself to others. Whether it's money, success, put-together-ness, or like seventh-grade Josh, the opinions of others, sin within us often sounds like the voices of the masses declaring, "You're not good enough," "Everyone's staring at you," "You're behind," and so on. These voices take God's loved ones into deep pits of despair and angst and leave us feeling alone and unloved.

Encouragement can be found in seeing God made strong in the weakness of people like stout Zacchaeus, runty David, and speech-impaired Moses, but the Samaritan woman at the well reminds us that even in self-inflicted circumstances, the presence of Jesus and the power of the Gospel free us not just from sin, but from the opinions of others. A woman who, despite her present state and the chorus of societal jeers attached to it, finds relief, peace, and the exuberant joy to shout from the mountaintops that the life-giving tranquil heart spoken about in Proverbs 14:30 only replaces the rot of envy by the piercing, redeeming love of the Creator.

As we tell the world of the One who loves us in the midst of everything we are and have done, we pray that all would come and see him and know "that this is indeed the Savior of the world" (John 4:42, ESV).



PRAYER

Father, have your hand of peace on us in this season. Give us rest that only you can provide and remind us constantly that we are yours; and that is more than enough. Amen.



BY JOSH DOUGLASS

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