



No Comparison Necessary *By Madison Heath*

Comparison is a funny thing. As a teenage girl, a youth leader, a perfectionist... I know it well. Except, it's not funny. It's actually really devastating. You see, I have struggled to come to peace with the fact that there will always be someone more beautiful, more successful (by my personal standards), or maybe more talented. More spiritual. More confident. More musical. More efficient at managing their time. More disciplined. Simply... *more*. I was crushed as a child when I discovered that I wasn't the best at anything, rather, *pretty* good at many things. I was well-rounded in my abilities, but that was never enough. I often still find myself wishing I had every one of the gifts God has to offer, not content with the unique set of abilities and circumstances He's *entrusted* to me. We're all guilty of it. In what areas of your life are you competing with others, falling short in your own eyes until you've reached their level of _____?

"We can strive and push and strain to be something that we aren't, but in the end, we will still be where we were before, if not farther behind and more discouraged."

Here's how I see it... It's like finding a needle in a haystack, and the needle is contentment, drowned by our perception of what our lives should look like. When we finally find what we think is nirvana, it stabs us with the reality that there is still something more, something that we don't possess. Something shinier... And so we keep searching for those *glittering* needles and keep crying out to the Lord when we bleed. Thankfully our gracious Creator forgives us for being unsatisfied with His creation in and through us. He could easily give up and say, "You know, Madison, you're right. I have no idea why I didn't make you like so-and-so," but He doesn't because He knows *exactly* why He created you and me the way we are. Every gift, ability, circumstance, and opportunity that you're presented with is part of His uniquely Divine, immaculate purpose for *your* life. He doesn't need our approval to know that His plan

is only for our good.

Recently, I heard Robert Madu preach. Right off the bat he made the audience roar with laughter about how he hates running at the gym. Lifting weights is apparently no problem for him, but he fears that Hell will be "*running* and gnashing of teeth." However, comically, he admitted that the *instant* someone begins running on a treadmill next to him, it's a race. He's suddenly rejuvenated when he has competition. He referenced **Hebrews 12:1-2** several times throughout his message:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.



Photo Credit: Jenifer Heath

Sarah, one of our faithful volunteers, showing Dillon some love.

No Comparison Necessary - continued



Ashton taking Opie for a jaunt.

And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Robert Madu was extremely passionate about casting off every weight that hinders us in our pursuit of Christ, which most certainly includes our comparisons. We don't realize how heavy they are until we release them at the foot of the cross. Madu talked about how, if we have our eyes fixed on Jesus as the Word instructs, then *we don't have the ability* to focus on the runners next to us without taking our eyes off of Jesus! He also pointed out later on in his message that running on the treadmill

takes a tremendous amount of effort... yet we stay in the same place. Comparison is exhausting. We can strive and push and strain to be something that we aren't, but in the end, we will still be where we were before, if not farther behind and more discouraged. My mother told me about two of our horses that illustrate this concept beautifully.

My mom witnessed Dillon, a 21 year old paint, attempting to *race* against Opie, a 5 year old, lean, appendix (part quarter horse, part thoroughbred) that had a history in racing. They were relaxing in the pasture, and Opie was feeling sprightly, galloping around the greenery. Dillon witnessed Opie's grace and speed and tried to imitate it, only to be outpaced easily. Why? Because, at this point in his life, God has not equipped Dillon to run like the wind. He is not the same breed as Opie. He is not the same age as Opie. He doesn't have Opie's training. So how is that comparison going to benefit Dillon? He may feel some temporary exhilaration followed by exhaustion, and he might even injure himself. From the outside, we can tell that his efforts are silly, that he is valuable to the Haven Acres youth program for reasons other than being young and big and fast. There are kids who come out to the ranch that have never given Opie a second glance because they connect more with Dillon's wounded past and gentle spirit. See, Dillon has endured a lot of things in his life and, if given the choice, he probably would have preferred to be a race horse because that sounds really luxurious, right? But God had a different plan.

All the horses at Haven Acres are special and dearly loved for different reasons. Opie is amazing. He has a lot of energy, and he needs a bit more training, but he's amazing! Dillon sustained an injury to his pelvis and can't be ridden as much, but the kids love his rare cremello paint coloring and how sweet he is! Each horse has their specific strengths, just as each of us has a skillset specific to us. Instead of seeing our success as points on a scoreboard (or as the speed on a treadmill), we should see our strengths as a customized set of qualities, carefully chosen to perfectly fulfill our purpose.

Disclaimer: Competition is not the problem. The problem is lacking contentment in how we are created because we wish to be created like/ have a similar life to somebody else. God made me for a reason. God made you for a reason different from me, and that's beautiful.

C.S. Lewis has such a vast number of spectacular quotes to glean wisdom from, but I selected one of my favorites for *us* to reflect on today:

"The more we let God take us over, the more truly ourselves we become – because He made us. He invented us. He invented all the different people that you and I were intended to be... It is when I turn to Christ, when I give up myself to His personality, that I first begin to have a real personality of my own." —C.S. Lewis

As we continue to discover the amazing, unique purpose that the Lord has for us, our vision set on Him, He will change our perspective and will give us gratitude, honor, and humility as we grasp the fact that we are so blessed to fulfill the role that He designed for *us*. No comparison necessary.

Round-Up 2017

Our 4th Annual Round-Up was a great success! We are so thankful for our many volunteers, donors and vendors that made the event a great day of memory making! The event boasted food, fun, and great fellowship for young and old alike. Here are some of our favorite highlights...



Photo Credit: Isabel Tomb

A Parent's Perspective

A year ago we discovered that our daughter, Kendal, was suffering from severe OCD. The anxiety that she had struggled with for years had now elevated to a new level beyond our understanding. We needed some powerful prayers and immediate support.

I reached out to Haven Acres, and I was so appreciative of the level of support I received from Jenifer. However, getting Kendal to be cooperative in attending the first lesson was going to be a challenge.

I decided to keep my contact with Haven Acres very quiet. I actually told Kendal that I was taking her to a place where she could learn about horses, help with chores and groom them. I knew if I said anything else, it would be an enormous struggle to get her to her first lesson. You see, Kendal had told me that she had lost her faith in God. She told me He wasn't listening to her, and He wasn't helping her get better. It was a struggle just to get her to go to church.

When we pulled into the driveway at Haven Acres for the first time, she recognized the Heath family and turned to me and asked hesitantly, "Mom, why are we here?" With all the faith-based biblical explanations I could have said to her that wouldn't have made any sense at that moment, I just hopped out of the car, smiled, and said, "Let's go!"

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things... And the God of peace will be with you." Philipians 4:8-9

These verses remind me of Kendal every time I read them. In the midst of her struggles, she is still worthy of His peace.

From that very first day at Haven Acres until now, a year later, I see such a different side to my daughter after each lesson. Not only is Kendal growing in her faith, but she's found such a peaceful happiness working with the horses. She looks so forward to lesson days and afterwards is talkative and happy all the way home. She knows all the horses by name and shares stories about them. Kendal has even chosen to miss athletic practice on lesson days, knowing it means sacrificing playing time. To her, the "plays" she makes at Haven Acres are the ones that count the most. This is where she finds true inner joy and feels the abundant blessings and rewards of God's love. —Amy



Photo Credit: Amy Fauske

Comments from the Kids



Photo Credit: Isabel Tomb

The past two years of my life have been such an amazing experience at Haven Acres! My mentor has taught me so much about horses and God.

Ever since I was four years old, I have struggled with anxiety. It has been controlling my life for a long time. Things like school, basketball, or just getting called on by the teacher would trigger my anxiety and make me physically sick. I felt like a different person sometimes. Coming to Haven Acres and being with Holly and her horse, Ruby, would make me forget about everything.

My favorite lesson was when Holly spoke about stained glass windows and how they related to us and the horses. Each horse came to Haven Acres because someone else didn't want them or they were not good enough. But at Haven Acres, each and every horse is good enough and is loved on by everyone! Ruby, for instance, was donated because she has problems with her feet. She used to be an amazing barrel horse, but her feet became too sore, and she wasn't capable of doing it anymore. She was soon retired and donated to Haven Acres. Now she is used almost every day and loved way beyond what you can imagine!!

All of the horses have been broken in some way, but they've been put back together piece by piece, and they are even more beautiful now... just like stained glass windows. The windows are made up of many broken, colorful pieces that when put together create a beautiful piece of artwork. We also relate to stained glass windows because we are all broken in our own ways. We might try to hide them, afraid we're not normal, or afraid we may be made fun of. All of you are so perfect, don't let anyone change that!

The windows aren't truly beautiful without sunlight shining through them. That sunlight in our lives is God. Every single person has dealt with something scary or challenging, but we are never alone because God is with us every step of the way. God is always shining through us. He makes us who we are, helps us overcome our problems and is always with us no matter where we go. He is the light in our lives. Without Him, we wouldn't be able to truly be ourselves. God is amazing, and so are the people at Haven Acres. They help you with your problems, and they pray over you. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else but there! Thanks again!

-Kendal



Photo Credit: Holly Graffunder

Year End Giving

As 2017 comes to a close, please consider Haven Acres in your year-end giving. Visit our website at www.havenacresmn.org to give via PayPal or select Haven Acres as your preferred charity as you do your Christmas shopping online through AmazonSmile. Monthly horse sponsorships are also available. For just \$150/month you can sponsor a horse and ensure that they are receiving the care they need. We want to thank our faithful contributors! We rely on you to provide this service to our community!



Photo Credit: Amy Fauske



2017 Fall Sweatshirts are Here!

Cold weather is here. Christmas is just around the corner, and we've had people asking about sweatshirts. Here they are!

Our 2017 design features Isaiah 61:3. Stay warm, show your love for Haven Acres, and support us financially all in one go! Pullover hoodies in children's sizes! Ends **November 10th.**

Order Online at:

<https://www.customink.com/fundraising/haven-acres-2017-sweatshirts>



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