**Series Road Map**

**Series Overview: Poison is the thing that kills growth. It comes in all shapes and sizes. In relationships, Poison is what ruins healthy relationship, connection, and community.**

**Week Overview: Each week will have a different tagline, which equals the poison of the week. This week the poison is COMPARISON. The poison of comparison leads us to believe lies about where we are currently, where we’re going, and who we’re with.**

***Outline:***

**Grab the Room (Intro):**

Catchy clip

If doing creative video teaching, a possible skit/interaction staged between students

Generic overview of Poison (all weeks); could focus on something that kills growth. For example, an environmental catastrophe like an oil spill, ash borer disease, termites, etc. Open to ideas

**Tension (what’s the struggle):**

In relationships there are small, subtle things that, when they go unnoticed, ruin and affect our everyday lives. Comparison has to be near the top of today’s poisons.

1 Thessalonians 5:22 – Abstain from every form of evil

**Text**:

* 1 Corinthians 15:33 – Do not be deceived: Bad company ruins good morals.
* Philippians 2:3 – Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.
* Galatians 1:10 – For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

**THP: Comparison Kills Community**

**Supporting Points:**

When you have a relationship with Jesus, he sees you as a new creation. You need to leave the old behind and embrace your new life.

**Application (call to action)**:

Find your community and feed it. Community is a two-way street; there needs to be some give and some take. If all you do is compare compare compare, you’ll never find your true community

There is no secret to growth. Healthy things grow. You water a plant, it grows. You feed a fire with wood and oxygen; it grows. You give a baby or toddler milk and food, it grows. Almost any person you know, if they’re honest, wants to grow. They want to grow in many different ways.

Relationships are no different. We want to grow in our interaction, friendship, and connection with those around us. So, what is it that keeps us from growth?

Poison. It comes in all shapes, sizes, and forms; and it ruins our relationships.

Over the next few weeks, we are going to look at the poisons we let creep into our relationships. Some of these will be more obvious than others, but they all stem from the same root.

\*\*Catchy intro we think would connect best here\*\* *see top for options*

By definition, Poison is “a substance with an inherent property that tends to destroy life or impair health OR something harmful or pernicious, as to happiness or well-being.” (dictionary.com)

For this sake of our teachings, poisons are those things that ruin or harm our relationships.

Another way you might often hear this described in regard to relationship/friendship is the idea of being toxic. Which, if you were to say that simply, means you’re not adding any value. If we were all honest with ourselves, we know exactly when we are or have been toxic and we also recognize when someone or something else is toxic towards us. The idea of toxicity and poison in our relationships are essentially the same thing.

The way the Bible might describe this is by using the word ‘evil’ and in 1 Thessalonians 5:22, it says, “abstain from every form of evil”.

We have to be aware of and fight against all forms of evil, especially ones that might damage or ruin our relationships. This week, the poison we will examine is comparison.

You see, just like a science experiment where a biologist looks at how a poison affects a plant, we will take a poison each week and see how it influences our relationships.

**Comparison kills community**

Community is king. It’s what we strive for here at Northview Students, and a big reason why we as a church have campuses in different locations. We need community. We need relationships. We need connection. God designed us for all of these.

But when we sit here and compare. We miss out.

When we compare, it won’t help.

When we compare, it minimizes importance and value.

When we compare, others will notice.

**Comparison kills community**

Comparison usually starts as just an individual poison, but can quickly leak into your Life Group, sports team, neighborhood friends, and maybe into your family. It can start with just a simple thought.

Those thoughts might sound like:
“Why don’t I…?”

* Have those shoes
* Smile that much
* Look like her/him

Or “what if I…?”

* Was that smart
* Had that ability
* Lived in a house like that

This is where comparison starts and community stops. Because we will quickly learn to judge, diminish, and downplay so many areas in our own lives.

Then those comparisons become part of our conversations, our text messages, snap/IG stories, etc. which influences those around us to feel this poison too. We won’t be able to build the true, Godly community that we need, because we’re too focused on comparing our lives.

True, Godly community should fill your life full of joy, excitement, and passion.

Comparison is the thief of joy (Teddy Roosevelt); is a common phrase I’ve heard before; which means its poison.

The Bible is full of ways to combat comparison, to fight against this trap that so many people fall into.

One example is found in 1 Corinthians 15:33, “Do not be deceived: Bad company ruins good morals”. The people you surround yourself with matters. If you struggle with this, please don’t compare, that will not allow you to focus on what’s next. Simply take some time, find the people you trust most, and give them permission to help lead you towards more of the right people.

I’m not saying that you will ever find this “perfect” group of people that don’t ever compare anything, but if you do, please share that information with everyone! We’re just challenging you to take a look at who’s around you.

Dealing with toxic and poisonous people/relationships is not always easy but if I could give you two steps to follow, they would be: 1) set healthy boundaries and 2) know when to end a relationship.

Who you are right now and who you surround yourself with right now, will determine who/what you surround yourself with in the future.

**Comparison kills community**

\*\*Share personal story\*\*

Humility is a great antidote or kryptonite to poison. It gives you the ability to see others differences and not view that as a problem. When you see others as different, it will cause you to compare and possibly treat them as “less than”. That is clearly not the goal.

But what we can strive for in our relationships, is what we read in Philippians 2:3 – “Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”

So the next time someone close to you shares a story about a hard conversation or experience they had, consider them as “better than you” and resist that urge to say something like, “well this one time I… \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank)”.

\*\*Right here would be another place to include very specific examples/scenarios\*\*

Why does this matter? Why is this so important?
Because if we continue to allow the poison of comparison into each of our relationships, we will never fully experience all that God has for us. When we choose to follow Jesus, we choose to love. No matter what, love anyways.

And if we’re being brutally honest with ourselves, who are we aiming to please when we keep comparing over and over? You or God? Galatians 1:10 says, “For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

Please don’t fall into the trap and poison of comparison. Choose to surround yourself with people who we lead you towards a life of purpose and meaning, not towards “what ifs” and “why nots”.

God’s word is full of stories of those who have faced comparison traps of their own but chose to follow God’s direction and remove themselves from comparison’s clutches.

We can do that as well against comparison by being mindful of ways we compare ourselves to others and reminding ourselves of the joy in our lives through blessings from God and opportunities to serve for Him. Comparison may have stolen moments of happiness in your past, but it doesn’t need to steal your present state of joy.

Nathan: Love the first topic. I think this will be a good intro to the series, and I think it will hook students too because we all struggle with comparison.

One area I’d love a little more is building the tension in the beginning. I know you’re adding grabber/attention getter with one of suggested intros, but I’m thinking something more along the lines of helping them see that they are “drinking” poison earlier in the script rather than just introducing the topic... you could say something like “what if I told you that you were drinking a poison that is slowly killing you each and every day...this isn’t a physical drink, but it’s something we fill ourselves with, and it will slowly kill us if we keep going... this poison is comparison...and comparison also kills community...” I think it helps students lean in because they have a visual of drinking poison and it should create an emotional reaction, too.

Also, I’d love to see a little more action steps or expansion for the Bible verses. Those verses are so good for this topic, but I’d love to hear more of how those play out or a way to create community. Or, how does the poison steal at community? Does it keep people away from me? Does it make me push them away? I think you can play more with these to give it that extra point to drive it home, but I really like the illustration and the tag line for this week!

Great week 1 s

Scott: love the series idea. it brings to mind those videos of quick cuts of chaos and decay and screaming like in a horror movie. I really like the idea of using something like that to draw them in and convey the ugliness and chaos of poison/comparison. We could really bring discomfort and ugly feels right off the bat.

I’d like to see more of how the poison of comparison eats away at the person we are. When we compare ourselves to others and desire what they have, we diminish the things that make us who we are and destroy/hide the gifts that God’s given us to share. Comparison makes us shrink into ourselves until there’s nothing left but insecurity and doubt. We need to appreciate peoples’ differences and specifically our own uniqueness. Live with confidence, appreciation, and joy in who God has made us to be.

I’m excited to see this how this series progresses week to week! Keep it up bro!