I've been hearing a lot of buzz about the evils of comparison lately.

Many blog and Facebook conversations distill down to one conclusion:

comparison is proof of pride.

I won't disagree.

But I will pose this question:

What if comparison isn't always evidence of an over-inflated ego?

What if comparison sometimes attests to an agonizingly absent sense of personal identity?

**"Sense of Self"**

Years ago, I read a research article about what makes girls susceptible to eating disorders. Turns out that the #1 common quality of girls with eating disorders is "a profound lack of sense of self."

I re-read the article several times, looking for a definition of "sense of self." When I couldn't find one, I spent the rest of the day trying to figure out what that phrase might mean.

I finally concluded: if *I'm struggling this much to understand what a "sense of self" is, I may not have one.*

**The Pole and the Posters**

As far back as I can remember, I've tried to piece together who I am by making myself more like everyone else.

I've been like a telephone pole plastered with posters.

*Look at her gorgeous curly hair; I'll get a perm so I can have gorgeous curly hair just like her!*

Plaster that poster to the pole.

*Mother admires how she plays piano; I should practice until I can play just like her!*

Plaster that poster to the pole.

*All the teachers laugh at how funny she is; I need to be funnier just like her!*

Plaster that poster to the pole.

**Playing the Game**

Perhaps like me, you spent your formative years perfecting the game of poster plastering.

The rules are simple:

1. Find someone who's got what you want.

2. Become her.

*See how she earns love?*

Plaster.

*See how she gets acceptance?*

Plaster.

*See how she buys belonging?*

Plaster.

Until you're nothing…

…but

poster upon

poster upon

poster.

**Changing the Rules**

If you've read this far and have no idea what I'm talking about, I envy you.

Well, actually I don't.

Not any more.

A few years ago, I would have envied you so much I would have hated myself for days and punished myself a myriad of ways for not being you.

I would have grabbed your poster and used hundreds of staples to try to plaster you over me.

Now, I'm glad for you, glad that some women figure out who they are when they're young.

For those of us who are still trying to find a sense of self, here's what I've learned:

**A Treasure Hunt**

Comparison isn’t always proof of pride. Sometimes, **comparison is proof of pain.**

Plastering yourself with posters *hurts*.

So the next time you feel envy welling up inside, just pause.

 Set down the stapler.

 Open up your journal.

 Prayerfully ask, *What is this momentary comparison telling me about my true self?*

You see, finding your sense of self isn’t a game.

It's a discovery process.

A treasure hunt.

Let comparison become a clue to the real you.