

Envy and Jealousy

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Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, But who is able to stand before jealousy? (Prov. 27:4).

Envy is defined as a feeling of discontent or covetousness with regard to someone else's supposed advantages, successes, possessions, etc., while jealousy is having vigilance in maintaining or guarding something. Envy and jealousy are two of the most powerful emotions.

Although envy among God's creation is most often motivated by a selfish desire to acquire power or position, and keep as many possessions as possible to oneself (i.e. Satan's motivation; cf. Isa. 14:12-14; Eze. 28:4-6), God's jealousy comes from a selfless place. His form of jealousy guards and protects those He has called out of this present evil world, even during those times when they choose to distance themselves from Him through various distractions. Spirit-beings as well as human beings can envy and desire what is not theirs, but as Almighty God is the owner all creation, envy has no place in Him. His desire is to share His possessions with everyone He has created. However, before this can occur, all His children must be restored in their relationship with Him. As sin separates mankind from Almighty God (cf. Isa. 59:2), He gave His only begotten son as the means through which all the sins that have been committed could be covered, or forgiven (Jn. 3:16). In other words, Christ died as a substitute for everyone who should have died for their sins. If Christ had not done this, no one would be resurrected in the future (Jn. 5:29).

God knows that jealousy and envy cause individuals to act in devious or hostile ways toward each other. Although these actions may appear to take place without ramifications during the lifetime of the offender, each individual will ultimately be held accountable for their actions before God (Mt. 12:36). The seriousness of these emotions is why God addresses them in the core outline of His law, the Ten Commandments. In them, He emphasizes that His form of jealousy is productive whereas mankind's is not,

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
³You shall have no other gods before Me.⁴You shall not make for yourself a carved image-any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; ⁵**you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous (SHD 7067 - only used of God; cf. SHD 7065 - jealousy of men) God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My**

commandments (Ex. 20:2-6; cf. De. 5:9; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's (Ex. 20:17; cf. Rom. 7:7).

Envy can slowly eat away at an individual and their relationship with others,

A sound heart is life to the body, But envy is rottenness to the bones (Prov. 14:30).

Feelings of envy can also be a catalyst to many other negative emotions and may lead to hostile actions, including murder (Num. 5:14-30; Prov. 6:34; Eze. 16:38; 2Cor. 11:2). There are examples of this throughout scripture. Two examples of individuals desiring the possessions of others resulting in murder can be seen in the lives of David and Ahab,

Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold. ³So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, 'Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?' ⁴Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house. ⁵And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, 'I am with child.' ⁶Then David sent to Joab, saying, 'Send me Uriah the Hittite.' And Joab sent Uriah to David. ⁷When Uriah had come to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered. ⁸And David said to Uriah, 'Go down to your house and wash your feet.' So Uriah departed from the king's house, and a gift of food from the king followed him. ⁹But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. ¹⁰So when they told David, saying, 'Uriah did not go down to his house,' David said to Uriah, 'Did you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?' ¹¹And Uriah said to David, 'The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing.' ¹²Then David said to Uriah, 'Wait here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart.' So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. ¹³Now when David called him, he ate and drank before him; and he made him drunk. And at evening he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house. ¹⁴In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. ¹⁵And he wrote in the letter, saying, 'Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die' (2Sam. 11:2-15).

So Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, 'Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house; and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money.' ³But Naboth said to Ahab, 'The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!' ⁴So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, 'I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.' And he lay down on his bed, and turned

away his face, and would eat no food. ⁵But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said to him, 'Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat no food?' ⁶He said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it.' And he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.' " ⁷Then Jezebel his wife said to him, You now exercise authority over Israel! Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. ⁸And she wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who were dwelling in the city with Naboth. ⁹She wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honor among the people; ¹⁰and seat two men, scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, 'You have blasphemed God and the king.' Then take him out, and stone him, that he may die. ¹¹So the men of his city, the elders and nobles who were inhabitants of his city, did as Jezebel had sent to them, as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them. ¹²They proclaimed a fast, and seated Naboth with high honor among the people. ¹³And two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, 'Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!' Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died. ¹⁴Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, 'Naboth has been stoned and is dead.' ¹⁵And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, 'Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead.' ¹⁶So it was, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab got up and went down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. ¹⁷Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ¹⁸'Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who lives in Samaria. There he is, in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone down to take possession of it. ¹⁹'You shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the Lord: 'Have you murdered and also taken possession?' ' ... (1Ki. 21:2-19a; cf. Gen. 37:1-34).

Violence is all the more prolific when individuals feel that their possessions, which can be a source of power, or pride, are threatened (see study: Pride),

Therefore pride serves as their necklace; Violence covers them like a garment (Ps. 73:6).

'Yet your eyes and your heart are for nothing but your covetousness, For shedding innocent blood, And practicing oppression and violence' (Jer. 22:17).

If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, ⁴he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, ⁵useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself (1Tim. 6:3-5; cf. Rom. 1:28-32; Tts. 3:3; Jas. 3:14-16; Rom. 13:13 cf. 1Pe. 2:1-3; Phl. 1:15).

It was because access to God's power and authority was considered the sole right of the Jewish leadership during Christ's earthly ministry, that they became envious toward him. To make matters worse for the Jewish leadership at that time, Christ clearly demonstrated that he was given authority from Almighty God through the miracles he performed combined with his insight of scripture and ability to discern their thoughts and motives. Consequently, they saw Christ as a threat to their position in the Jewish

community as well as with the Roman authorities. Eventually, their envy led to anger (see study: Anger), which culminated in their desire to take Christ's life,

For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy (Mt. 27:18; cf. Mk. 15:10; Ac. 13:45).

In the case of two parties who have committed to a relationship with each other, if one party is drawn away from the other in their desires, it can create feelings of jealousy and begin a process where the two are driven apart permanently. There have been many occasions when Israel aroused jealousy in the Angel of the Lord, who was their espoused spiritual "husband", through various acts of infidelity and idolatry (De. 32:16 ; 1Ki. 14:22; Ps. 78:58; Isa. 54:5; Eze. 8:3-5; 1Cor 10:19-22; Ex. 20:5; De. 5:9; Ex. 34:14). Such acts of "infidelity" can still occur today in the decisions made by each individual God is working with. Each choice has the potential to adversely impact or distract from ones spiritual relationship and commitments.

In order to preserve the relationship, the cause of the problem must be dealt with in an appropriate and effective manner (Dt. 4:24; 6:15; 29:20; Eze. 23:25; 39:19-20; Zep. 3:8). The Angel of the Lord often told Israel to put away their idolatrous ways because he loved them and knew that the path they were choosing would lead to their removal from his presence and protection. Therefore, if the source of the jealousy is swiftly confronted, and the commitment between parties re-established through meaningful action, the process of rebuilding trust and restoring the relationship can begin,

So I will lay to rest My fury toward you, and My jealousy shall depart from you. I will be quiet, and be angry no more (Eze. 16:42; cf. Psa. 79:5 cf. Jos. 24:19; Sgs. 8:6; Eze. 39:25; 1Cor. 3:3-4).

Feelings of envy and jealousy have been a part of all our lives to one degree or another. As with any emotion, it is what we chose to do with it that determines whether the outcome will be negative or positive. We must examine ourselves to see if our jealousy is coming from a genuine concern to help and protect, or from a selfish desire to possess, control, or retain something that isn't ours, especially to the detriment of others. Love, which is the opposite of envy, means trusting that God gives to each individual as He chooses, according to His plan, for the betterment of that person and by extension to all of His creation (Rom. 12:3; 1Cor. 7:17; 12:11; Eph. 4:7). His love has no room for envy or jealousy,

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up (1Cor. 13:4).

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor.11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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