

1.) WHAT IS ENVY?

The Most Common Problem That Nobody Has

I. THE PROBLEM WITH ENVY

- A. Envy killed the body of Jesus Christ when He came to this planet the first time, and it's still killing His body – the church – today.
- B. We're sometimes offended that someone would even *suggest* that we might have a problem with envy. Oh, how easily our hearts deceive us!

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. (Romans 12:3)

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. (Philippians 2:3)

- C. God cannot honor our efforts when they are driven by impure motives.

1 LORD, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? 2 He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart... (Psalms 15:1-2)

- D. Perhaps we resist pinning the label “envy” on the struggles of our own soul because of the implications that word carries with it. If we own up to envy, we are having to admit to some powerful weaknesses.

2 I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. 3 You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? 4 For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men? (1 Corinthians 3:2-4)

- E. Attitudes of envy:

1. I am not fully established and at rest in my identity in Christ.
2. I have insecurities that have not been fully healed through the power of His grace.
3. I am ungrateful for what God has given me. His gifts are not enough for me; I also want what He's given another.
4. I am striving against God's sovereignty and wisdom by questioning His giving differing gifts and endowments of grace to both me and my brother or sister.
5. My heart is motivated at a fundamental level by an element of self-interest, self-preservation and self-promotion. I am not able to fully celebrate my brother's successes because of underlying feelings of competition and ambition in my soul.
6. When all my energies should be focused upon the war against the enemy of our souls, some of my energy has been diverted to struggling over the successes of my fellow believers.

F. When envy becomes easy to confess, greater levels of victory are within closer reach.

II. DEFINING THE “E” WORD

A. Envy = the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others. The pain or distress we feel over another’s success.

B. In listing the works of the flesh, Paul includes both envy and jealousy.

19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. (Galatians 5:19-21, 26)

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor." (Exodus 20:17)

III. THE DOWNSIDE OF SUCCESS

A. Those who climb the ladder of success faster are envied by the other climbers.

B. When God chooses you for blessing, just get ready for the downside, because envy from other people is one of the “occupational hazards” of receiving God’s blessing.

14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly (rooted in the natural realm), unspiritual (based on data received from the five senses rather than from the Spirit of God), of the devil (inflamed by demonic activity). 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. (James 3:14-16)

C. Jesus taught His disciples to give alms in secret and to pray in secret and to fast in secret, but in all three cases He repeated a consequence.

...so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you [openly]. (Matthew 6:4) see also vv. 6,18

D. What you do in secret is seen by nobody but your Father in heaven; but when He rewards you openly, the rewards are seen by men. Men don’t see the price you paid; they only see the dividends received.