

Don't Trip Over ENVY

Genesis 4:1-16 Phil 4:11b-13 Matthew 20:1-15

March 21, 2021

Pastor Dave Bolte



Envy is an insidious sin. **Envy** pits one person against another; or one group of persons against another group. There are several examples of it in the bible.

- ⇒ Cain **envied** Abel's sacrifice to God; and his **envy** drove him to kill his brother.
- ⇒ Joseph's brothers **envied** Joseph's relationship with his father Jacob, and they staged his death and sold him into slavery.
- ⇒ Saul **envied** David's triumph in battle, and tried to kill him with a spear
- ⇒ Herod **envied** Christ's kingship, and killed the babies of Bethlehem in search for Christ.

Envy is a dangerous sin!

Envy is a deep-seated “coveting” of someone else's possessions, qualities, or position in life. The New Testament word comes from the Greek word for “eye”¹ – and was used to describe an attitude of discontent and resentment that gave your neighbor an “**evil eye**.” **Envy** begrudges your neighbor the things he has.

St. Augustine, an early church theologian from the 4th Century, described “**envy**” as “**sorrow over men's good fortune; and joy over men's misfortune.**” In more modern times, **envy** has been called the “**green-eyed monster**”.

¹ ὀφθαλμός This is a Greek word for “eye”, where we get the English word Ophthalmologist, an eye doctor. In Greek usage, it doubled as a term for envy, an “evil eye” towards your neighbor.

Envy is a dangerous sin to get tangled up in. Like a weed, it will grow and grow and take over your heart and mind and influence your words and actions. Once Envy takes root in your heart, it is hard to get it out. Bitterness takes over your attitude. Envy can easily consume you, like it did Cain, Saul, and Herod. Envy is **even more dangerous** because it is a SECRET SIN that lurks in your heart.

- ✓ Envy leads to rivalries & dissension; it leads to gossip, slander, and resentment
- ✓ Envy leads to theft, murder, hatred, strife and malice.
- ✓ Envy creates rivals out of friends; pits one brother against another; one worker against another; it divides nations
- ✓ Envy is a denial of God's generosity and goodness in your own life and a resentment of God's goodness and generosity to someone else.

Envy is a sin of your heart; a corruption of your attitude; and a lack of love toward your neighbor: it's a rejection of God.

Envy is a **strong desire** that you benefit more than your neighbor; a **secret wish** that your neighbor will fail and you will succeed; Envy **actually rejoices** when something bad happens to someone else -- especially if that person is perceived to have "more" than you.

ENVY is a serious sin . . . and it leads to all kinds of other sins. Here is a sample of how the Bible talks about it:

- ⇒ Envy is an act of the sinful nature– one of those sins by which those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of Heaven. Galatians 5:19ff
- ⇒ Jesus said that Envy comes from the heart and makes a man unclean Mark 7:20ff
- ⇒ The Proverbs say that Envy rots the bones Proverbs 14:30
- ⇒ And James says that where you have Envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. James 3:16
- ⇒ St. Paul says that Envy comes from a depraved mind. Romans 1:29

Envy is a serious sin . . . and it leads to all kinds of other sins. It's clear that the Bible considers Envy a dangerous sin... and so should you. After Envy has worked its poison in your heart, you will have gained nothing; you will be left empty-handed, bitter, separated from others and alienated from God.

The worst part of Envy is that it reveals a **dissatisfaction with God** --- an attitude that **God has not given you what you think you deserve**. You think that God has “*short-changed*” you. You think that God is not “*fair*”. You become *disappointed, disillusioned, and dissatisfied* with God's care, goodness, and blessings in your own life.

ENVY IS A DANGEROUS SIN!

God's Will for you is that you repent of Envy in your heart; that you actively avoid and overcome Envy in your thoughts and attitude. The way to combat envy is through **repentance**. Renounce Envy in your heart and humbly confess it to your Heavenly Father. Believe that He forgives you because of Christ.

By repentance, you do not let Envy become a habit in your thinking; you renounce it and have nothing to do with it. The Bible says that “*if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just, He will forgive you your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness.*”

Through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, **God forgives you all your sins**; including the secret sin of Envy that hides in your heart and eats away at your life. Recognize Envy as sin, renounce it, humbly confess it to God, and receive forgiveness through Christ the Savior.

When you are battling Envy in your life, there are two things to keep in mind:

1) Don't compare yourself to others; rather, **focus** on what God has blessed you with. Comparing yourself to others is *the match that ignites Envy into a waging, uncontrollable fire!*

I have learned to be **content** whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned **the secret of being content** in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Philippians 4: 12-13

CONTENTMENT acknowledges God's generosity and goodness in your life. Contentment trusts that God the Heavenly Father is caring for you and providing for you. The saying **COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS** has a lot of meaning; and can help you combat the secret sin of **Envy**.

The first thing to keep in mind is **don't compare yourself to others**; rather, count **your** blessings. Comparing yourself to others is *the match that ignites Envy into a waging, uncontrollable fire!* Rather, **focus** on what God has blessed you with.

2) Cultivate the thoughts that are **exactly opposite** of **Envy**.

Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another.
Romans 12:15-16

This really a variation of loving your neighbor. *Develop the habit of rejoicing with those who rejoice and mourning with those who mourn.* This is exactly opposite of what **Envy** does: perhaps the way to develop this habit of rejoicing with those who rejoice and mourning with those who mourn is by **actually doing something** when you have opportunity. Whether that is sending a card, making a phone call, send a text, using social media, or make a personal visit; **do something** to demonstrate that you rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn. **Do something** that shows that you love and care for other people. Cultivate the thoughts that are **exactly opposite** of **Envy**.

Through **forgiveness, contentment, and love for others**, you combat **Envy** in your thoughts, your heart, and in your attitude.

Envy is a seriously dangerous sin that you can get tangled up in and it will destroy your faith. It **divides people** and **alienates you from God**. **Envy**, at its core, is a **dissatisfaction with God** because He has not given you what you think you deserve. **Don't get tangled up in that!** AMEN!