



## Part 6: Envy | Pastor Michael Hockett | May 24, 2009

### A. Fellowship Time (10-15 minutes)

1. Chitchat. Perhaps offer coffee, tea, or a cold drink with some snacks.
2. Pray (or invite someone to pray) to open the discussion.

### B. Review Time (Read the summary below to the group: 5-10 minutes)

We've been looking at the Seven Deadly Sins, and this week we're *envious*! When envy bites, we end up viewing other people as competitors or enemies because we believe their things or lives should be ours. It completely counters Jesus' teaching in **Matthew 22:37-39**, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.*" **Genesis 3** tells us that envy began with Satan's resentment of God's relationship with humanity, which he immediately attacked. And envy produced humanity's first physical death in **Genesis 4** when Cain murdered Abel because of his relationship with God. But before Cain acted, God warned him about the trap he was triggering and showed him the way out [read **Genesis 4:6-7**]. Envy is crouching at our door too, but if we seek God, He will gladly help us. That is how we master all sin. Let's look at how envy lays traps for us and what we can do with God's help.

#### 1. The traps of envy.

**a. The trap of envying others' goods.** The Tenth Commandment in **Exodus 20:17** says, "*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.*" Coveting is having a strong desire for someone else's possessions. It's dangerous to allow the desire for other people's goods to take root in our heart. That's how David got into trouble with Bathsheba. [Read **2 Samuel 11:2-4**.] David coveted something that belonged to his neighbor. As God did with Cain, He provided a way out as explained in **1 Corinthians 10:13**: "*No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*" God reminded David through a servant that Bathsheba was loved and protected by others. But like Cain, David chose to ignore God's warning, and this cocktail of deadly sins led him into adultery, lies, betrayal, and murder. Envy not only wants what rightfully belongs to another, but allowed free reign, it will completely derail us from the mission God has given us to love the people He has put in our lives.

**b. The trap of envying others' lives.** Sometimes we envy who people are. We elevate them and discredit ourselves. Hopefully none of us would ever murder anyone out of envy, but think about what we do to them in our hearts because of it! What we do in our heart matters just as much to God as what we do with our hands. So what can we do? After God confronted David about his sin with Bathsheba, David prayed, "*Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me*" (**Psalms 51:10-11**). We need God to create in us a pure heart. It's only through this new, pure heart and the power of the Holy Spirit that we can counter the traps of sin. God tells us what comes from a pure heart under the influence of the Holy Spirit in **Galatians 5:22-23**: "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*" Kindness and peace are particularly useful for countering envy.

**2. The counter of kindness.** The Greek word for kindness means to look for ways to be good, benevolent and useful to each other. We're to rejoice in each other's well being and in our neighbor's good. **Roman 12:15** says, "*Rejoice with those who rejoice.*" It's very hard to envy someone when we're rejoicing with them. If you want God to develop this kindness in you,

practice the spiritual discipline of service. When we serve others, we take on Christ's heart and serve out of love. God develops kindness in our hearts, and our own joy will abound. Service also leads us to practice another form of kindness: giving to others in need. Instead of looking to see what others have that we don't, we look to see what they *don't have* that we can supply.

**3. The counter of peace.** God designed our souls to find lasting contentment in Him. No earthly possession will ever truly satisfy us. If we seek God first, our material desires will be met. If we seek material desires first, we'll neither satisfy them nor find our soul's deepest longing, which is rest in God. Look at what Jesus teaches us in **Matthew 6:28-33**. [Read this passage.] But sometimes we're not so much envious of what others have as of who they are. What can we do when we envy someone's looks, personality, giftings, or abilities? Here are two spiritual disciplines that help with both these issues: First, practice simplicity. Read what Paul wrote in **1 Timothy 6:6-9**. We need to recognize how much God has blessed us and say, "Enough—I'm satisfied." Second, we can practice celebration, which comes from gratitude. We can focus on what's positive and good in our lives. Read what Paul teaches in **Philippians 4:8-9**. We often forget how blessed we are as members of the human race who are made in the image of God. **Genesis 1:27** records, "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*" And we read in **Psalms 139:14**, "*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*" And **Ephesians 2:10** proclaims, "*. . . we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*" When we understand that life is a gift from God and allow the Holy Spirit to develop kindness and peace in us through the spiritual disciplines of service, simplicity and celebration, envy will not take root. We'll find true contentment in living the life God intends of loving Him, loving others, and loving ourselves.

**C. Life Group Questions** (select, revise, and add as desired: 20-40 minutes)

1. The sin of envy is addressed by the Tenth Commandment: "do not covet." When have you coveted something that a friend or neighbor has? Reflecting back on that experience, how did it affect your thoughts and feelings about that person?
2. **1 Corinthians 10:13** promises that "God will provide a way out" for us when we are tempted. What are some "ways out" God has provided you to protect you from sinning?
3. Have you ever felt admiration for another creep toward envy? What helps you counter that reaction? How does the kindness of serving those who are *less* fortunate help? What are various ways you *could* or *do* notice others in need and serve them out of kindness?
4. Greed and envy can be one wicked set of partners! How are they different, and how do they set each other off? How do simplicity and celebration help you find peace—contentment—with what you have and who you are? When have you gained a measure of peace by simplifying some part of your life? What are great ways you've found to celebrate and show gratitude and appreciation for God's good gifts, including each other?
5. Remembering that we are each unique creations that reflect an aspect of the image of God can help us be at peace with ourselves. What are some of God's characteristics that you see in members of this group and therefore better understand and appreciate?

**D. Personal Application** (1-3 Minutes)

- Practice looking for what others around you need that you have this week, and serve them in kindness. This includes looking for opportunities to "rejoice with those who rejoice!"
- Look for ways to simplify and celebrate this week, and see what these practices do for your level of peace, or contentment.

**E. Prayer Time** (As a whole group or subgroups of 3-4: 10-15 Minutes)

- Thank God for who you are and what you have—you are His treasured masterpiece.
- Pray for God's peace in your lives, and ask that He would continue to develop His loving kindness in you as an outcome of that peace.
- Thank God for making you with and for a purpose; pray for Him to help you fulfill it well.
- Offer any other praises or requests that arose during the discussion.