

## ENVY AND SELFISH AMBITION

James 3:14-16

### CONSEQUENCES OF ENVY

- It keeps us in a place of immaturity, unable to take in the deeper truths of the Word (I Cor 3:1-4)
- It impacts our physical well being (Prov. 14:30)
- It is an open door for confusion and every form of evil. (James 3:16)
- Leads to fighting, divisions, murder (James 4:1-2)

Envy and selfish ambition are identified as root evils. This should cause us to be careful to periodically evaluate our relationship to others and to recognize the opportunity we have to be light in darkness by living counterculturally.

### DEFINITION OF ENVY

Greek: zelos, dzay-los, properly, heat. Zeal (in a favorable sense, ardor; in an unfavorable one, jealousy, malice.)

Webster: Envy is a painful or resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by another joined with a desire to possess the same advantage

Wikipedia: **Envy** is an [emotion](#) which occurs when a person lacks another's quality, skill, achievement, or possession and either desires it or wishes that the other lacked it. Envy can also refer to the wish for another person to lack something one already possesses so as to remove the equality of possession between both parties.

From ChatGPT: Coveting is wanting what someone else has; envy goes further - it grieves when others succeed, rejoices when they stumble and causes you to think, "That should have been me." when they are blessed. It is the restless resentment that rises when someone else's blessing exposes what we wish we had.

### DESIRES

One word that is evident and repeated in these definitions is desire.

Where does desire come from?

Lack of something/need

Lust - see something and you want it

Natural bent

Desire can come as a gift from God:

Comparison

\*Being content until seeing what someone else has

Expectation

\*Natural: (If I work hard, I will earn)

\*Spiritual (If I pursue God, I will prosper in a certain way)

God puts his stamp of approval on some desires:

Pursue love and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophecy. (I Cor 14:1)

If anyone desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good thing. (I Tim 3:1)

Desires are not inherently bad, but envy and selfish ambition are desires gone bad...

The process of desire going bad described in James 1:13-18

- Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desire and enticed.
- Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin.
- Sin when it is full grown brings forth death.
- Do not be deceived my beloved brethren; every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

Desire alone does not produce; it must unite with another force (truth or deception) to give birth, and what it brings forth is either life or death.

Deception has always worked to entice desire. When desire surrenders to deception, it conceives an action or attitude that brings forth sin which brings forth death...

The deception is ancient

- God is withholding something good from you.
- He cannot be trusted
- If you desire it, it is good for you
- If you think it is good for you, you have a right to take it
- Taking it on your own will be satisfying
- You are owed what you have earned

This deception is called the "wisdom of this world" in James 3:15...But if you have bitter envy and self seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.

According to Eph 2:3, it's how we conducted ourselves in the world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind

Example of Cain's life:

Gen 4:3-8 (So the Lord said to Cain), "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted (exaltation)? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door and its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."

God spoke to Cain in the vulnerable time of desire being enticed by deception and laid out the choices of life and death from Cain's as of yet unmet desire.

Rule over the envy - exaltation

Give into envy - give yourself over to sin

What does it look like to rule over envy and deception?

James 4:1-12 outlines main principles of overcoming.

Function in the principle of asking; asking versus earning or taking is the core principle in the kingdom of God.

Submit to God/resist the devil begins in meditation of the truth. Know what you believe about who God is. (My meditation scriptures in the realm of receiving: James 1:17, Psalm 16:5-6, and Psalm 37:3-8). Submitting is practiced with the understanding that waiting will be involved.

Cleanse your hands and purify your hearts comes through honest confession.

Lament and mourn and weep. Often the source of envy is grief or disappointment, and learning to discern between anger and grief is essential. Grief leads to lament, which opens us up to the comfort of the Spirit. Grief is a more difficult emotion to allow ourselves to feel, so it is easily converted to anger, which we are usually better at processing, but doesn't lead to healing and keeps us in a perpetually vulnerable state.

Do not speak evil of one another. Put off our judgments toward the person who is blessed.

#### CREATING A CULTURE OF UNITY VERSUS ENVY

Romans 13:7, I Peter 2:17: Creating a culture of unity begins with practicing acknowledgment—honoring others even when it costs us some attention or credit.

Roman 12:15: Rejoice with those who rejoice.

Phil 2:3-4: If you are the one being celebrated, use that moment well. Notice and name the efforts of others. Use your influence to elevate someone else who might otherwise go unseen.

Allow God to be the definer of good and evil in this world and in your life.

#### THINGS TO CONSIDER

Is there any place in my life I am harboring envy or selfish ambition?

Is there anyone I need to release from my envy and bless their abundance?

Is there anyone I am withholding honor or acknowledgment from when it is due to them?

Is there any place of grief in my life that needs to be shared with God?

Is there anything I desire that I need to ask of God?

How can I acknowledge/honor those around me today?