

## I. Introduction

- A. Welcome to week four in our series called CAN YOU FEEL IT? God's Wisdom on Human Emotion.
- B. An economist from Cornell University researched people's satisfaction relative to their salaries. Basically, the research asked people if they would be happy with a salary of \$100,000.00. Could you live a satisfied, contented life making \$100,000.00 per year?
- C. I think most of us would be happy with that—a few, probably not, but most people.
- D. But they didn't exactly ask the question that way.
- E. They built this scenario
  - 1. Would you rather make \$100,000 per year if everyone else made \$85,000 per year—OR
  - 2. Make \$110,000 per year while everyone else made \$200,000?
- F. If you strip that question of its context it's simply asking if you'd rather make \$100k or \$110k. That's a no brainer, right?
- G. But if you add back in the context, the majority of people would rather make LESS MONEY, as long as it was MORE MONEY than their neighbors.
- H. Today, our topic is Envy.
- I. Ancient Jewish rabbis told a fable about envy.
- J. There were two people, one covetous and the other envious. A rich man promised to grant these two people each ONE WISH, whatever it may be, but whoever asked LAST would get DOUBLE of whatever the first guy asked for.
- K. The covetous guy would not ask first, because he wanted to get the double portion. The envious man would not ask first because he couldn't stand the thought of benefiting his neighbor.
- L. But then the guy with envy solved his problem. For his wish, he requested that one of his eyes should be gouged out. That way the other guy would get BOTH of his eyes gouged out.
- M. Envy says I will make myself miserable if it will make you miserable.
- N. Remember this truth: YOU ARE A SLAVE TO WHATEVER RUINS YOUR PEACE OF MIND.
- O. My prayer for this series is that you would break the chains of emotional slavery.

## II. Working Definition

- A. Here's our working definition of envy. And then I want to do a Bible fly-over and look at what the Bible teaches about this emotion.
- B. Definition:
  - 1. Envy: The feeling you get when somebody else has what you want, and you resent them for having it.
  - 2. Or you resent God that they get it and you don't. Or you're simply unhappy and dissatisfied because you have your sights focused on what you don't have.
  - 3. In fact, you'd be happier if they didn't have it, even if you don't have it either. In philosophy, the person who envies is called the Subject. The person who has what the subject wants is called the Rival. And the thing that the Rival has that the Subject wants is called the Good. So, the Subject resents the Rival because the Rival has the Good—very nice of you. When you envy, your focus is the RIVAL and your bad feelings toward the Rival.
- C. Jealousy is different, but we're not going to make an issue of the difference. We'll use them kind of interchangeably.
  - 1. Technically, Jealousy is the feeling of ownership you have over the GOOD and your anger at the RIVAL for taking it from you. So God is jealous for us; He is angry at any force or person that would take us away from Him.
  - 2. And if that's too much to remember, just get this:
- D. Today, we are talking about the twisted feeling of bitterness over not having stuff you don't really need coupled with resentment of those that have it, and a desire to see them fail—even if that would do you no good.
- E. Now, let's look at some of the Bible's wisdom about envy:

## III. Scripture Principles

- A. The Source of Envy: Your Inner Mess
  - 1. *"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God"* Galatians 5:19-21, NKJV.
  - 2. Envy comes from the dark side of your soul; from your flesh. What we term your Inner Mess. It is part of a complex of emotions that sabotages your relationships, your finances, your health, your marriage, your ambitions, your dreams, and your testimony.
  - 3. Envy does NOT come from your noble side; it comes from your dark side.
  - 4. Let's go back to the image we use of our Inner Mess. Pretend your soul is a bus, and there are a lot of riders on the bus. Some are cranky. Some are flaky. Some are weird. Some are dangerous. Some are noble.
  - 5. All the messed up characters, the Bible calls collectively, your flesh. Your flesh, in the Bible, isn't your skin. It's your dark side.
  - 6. And one of your characters has binoculars. This is your Inner Envier. Your Inner Envier is always scanning the horizon to see who has something bigger, and better, and nicer, and cuter, and more expensive than yours.
    - a) You dieted and worked out all year to fit into that size six dress, and you're happy about that. Then you go to a party, and you see another woman with the same dress on, and she looks better than you. One hour ago you were happy, and now you're miserable—not because you lost anything, but because someone else has something you don't.

- b) You worked hard on an Easter service, and you preached or played your heart out, and 4,000 people came. And you were elated. Until you heard that the other church had 4,500 people, and then you're miserable. Yes, pastors indulge their Inner Envier too.
  - c) You lost your job, and the kid who's wet behind the ears kept his.
  - d) What's going on?
7. As soon as you scan the horizon, your Inner Envier locates somebody with something better, it gets busy. It hooks up with a second character on board your bus.
  8. Your Inner SCARCITY Supervisor: Your Inner Scarcity Supervisor is tuned in to all those areas in your life where you feel LACK. There's not enough.
    - a) Do you ever feel scarcity? Are you starved for affection? Short of money? Down on your luck? Out of energy? No peace? I'm talking to you.
  9. So your Envier runs to the back of the bus, and finds your Scarcity Supervisor and they have a little conversation:
    - a) Envier: Hey, Ricky has a 6,000 square foot house, and it's basically paid for.
    - b) Scarcity Supervisor: My house is only 900 square feet and I have a MORTGAGE...and I'll never pay for it...and that's not fair...and my company isn't doing so well...and my parents weren't rich, like Ricky's...and how come I never get anything...and he always gets all the breaks...and I'm going to die broke...and they're going to bury me in a pauper's grave...and I hate Ricky...and how come he gets everything...and he's a jerk...and God's not fair...
  10. ENVY triggers SCARCITY and scarcity triggers SELF-PITY and SELF-PITY triggers HATRED—a chain reaction that explodes friendships and marriages and churches.
  11. The Bible calls envy a work of the flesh. The source of envy is your Inner Mess.
- B. The Effect of Envy: Self-destruction
1. *"For wrath kills a foolish man and envy slays a simple one"* Job 5:2, NKJV.
  2. *"A sound heart is life to the body, But envy is rottenness to the bones"* Proverbs 14:30, NKJV.
  3. Envy literally saps your strength. It drains you emotionally; it reduces your motivation for EVERYTHING. And this is the difference between ambition (which is healthy) and envy (which is unhealthy).
    - a) Ambition motivates you to take HEALTHY action.
    - b) Envy de-motivates you. It whispers that you are powerless, and weak, and can't do anything, and you'll never have enough money or stuff to be happy.
  4. When you activate your Inner Envier, you automatically trigger your emotional self-destruct sequence.
    - a) Cain envied his brother Abel and he killed him. Cain lived under a curse from God for the rest of his life.
    - b) King Saul envied a young shepherd named David and lost his mind. He became deranged and murderous and died a miserable man.
  5. Envy is a damaged septic system that you've invited into your Inner World. It seeps toxins everywhere—into your marriage, dating, entertainment, career choices, child rearing, home making, and your education. It slays you and it rots you from the inside out.
  6. Think about how messed up you have to be if you can't be happy unless you see another person hurt. Who's really messed up? You are.
  7. Envy's effect is a slow form of self-destruction.
- C. The Danger of Envy: Stunted Spiritual Growth
1. *"Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,"* 1 Peter 2:1, 2, NKJV.
  2. If you don't lay aside envy, you'll stop growing. You cannot grow up in the Lord, and always be comparing your stuff to your neighbor's stuff.
  3. That's why God gave us the 10th commandment:
    - a) *"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"* Exodus 20:17, NKJV.
  4. We're talking about your emotional survival.
  5. This is one reason there are so many immature Christians in our churches. Because we chronically envy other people and their stuff.
  6. You cannot live in envy and grow deep at the same time. You can't live in your Inner Mess and grow mature at the same time. You'll stunt your growth. You'll put your eye out.
- D. The Outcome of Envy: Emotional Train Wreck
1. *"For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there"* James 3:16, NKJV.
  2. Envy makes you an emotionally disturbed and unstable individual. You're a big pain in the butt to be with, because you are never satisfied. You are a whiner, a complainer.
  3. And you are sucked into the dark side of life "every evil thing."
    - a) You will not be satisfied.
    - b) You will not be content.
    - c) You will not be happy.
  4. And you will not be finished getting all the stuff you "need" to get, because Envy won't let you. As soon as you get the next big thing, you'll start craving the next big thing after that, and after that, and after that.
  5. Why do you think so many Hollywood celebrities have so much plastic surgery their nostrils are as high as their eyeballs. They envy a certain look, and have one surgery, and another, and another, and another till their skin looks

like wax paper. Any normal person would say STOP, but they won't stop because ENVY is driving the train right off a cliff.

6. Listen, right now, today, if you are motivated by envy, if you are making choices out of envy—listen to me, and learn a lesson that can save you a lot of grief.
    - a) The force inside you that causes you to envy can NEVER be satisfied, no matter how much you feed it.
  7. The next new car won't satisfy it, the next 10 pounds won't satisfy it, the next post-graduate degree won't satisfy it, the next wife/husband won't satisfy it, having the next baby won't satisfy it, the next \$100,000.00 won't satisfy it, the next job won't satisfy it, the next item of jewelry won't satisfy it, the next drink won't satisfy it, the next hit won't satisfy it.
  8. The force of envy can NEVER be satisfied. And if you are letting envy make your choices, you are nuts. You have to get off that train and "be content with what you have" before you strive to get even one more thing. Envy makes you an emotional wreck.
  9. But it gets worse.
- E. The Spiritual Dimension of Envy: Dark Forces you don't want to mess with:
1. *"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"* James 3:14, 15, NKJV.
  2. There is nothing in your life that wasn't in your heart first. That's why it's crucial to guard your heart. When you don't your heart gets messed up. God designed you to be filled with His truth, His Spirit, and His presence. When you don't do that, you create an emptiness in your heart. That emptiness acts like a vacuum. It sucks in other stuff. It sucks in other stuff besides God's truth, God's Spirit, and God's presence.
  3. This verse tells you three qualities of what the vacuum in your soul sucks in:
  4. Earthly
    - a) You have substituted your priorities for God's priorities. You have a secular side that cares about the world, and a sacred side that cares about God, and you do not put them together.
    - b) You have compartmentalized your sacred side to church days only; on the other days, you are a practical atheist.
    - c) You cannot take God into account and live with envy at the same time. When God is in your equation, SCARCITY isn't.
    - d) To envy means to be earthly. To be earthly means to live as if there is no God. And the next easy step is to be:
  5. Sensual, Natural, and Unspiritual
    - a) There is no good English word to translate the Greek word here. Take the noun "soul" and turn it into an adjective, "soulsh." That's what we have here.
    - b) To be a soulsh person is to act as if you don't have God in your life.
      - (1) You don't read your Bible.
      - (2) You don't pray.
      - (3) You don't worship.
      - (4) You don't have a group that you're growing with.
      - (5) You don't seek Guidance from the Lord.
      - (6) You don't consult God.
    - c) You live a soulsh life instead of a spiritual life.
    - d) So you make major decisions with only minor references to God.
    - e) Here is the soulsh person's recipe for making major decisions: You toss into a big pot,
      - (1) a cup of your own history,
      - (2) a quart of your own moods,
      - (3) a pint of your own philosophy,
      - (4) a gallon of your own dysfunctions,
      - (5) and a half-gallon of whatever Oprah said.
    - f) What you do NOT throw into the pot is obedience to what God has said. You are an earthly person, not heavenly. And you are a soulsh person, not spiritual. And that opens you up to the third descriptor of an envy-driven life:
  6. Demonic
    - a) Emotional problems are spiritual problems, and spiritual problems are emotional problems.
    - b) James 3:15 teaches that if you have bitter envy and selfishness guiding your heart, you are following a wisdom that is demonic.
    - c) Now I don't want to get spooky on you. And I don't want us to run around seeing demons in every corner. What he's saying here is that you fall for the devil's lies.
    - d) We saw the same thing when we talked about unresolved anger; it gives turf to the devil.
    - e) So does envy. Envy opens your heart to dark forces and the devil is sneaky. He's happy just dragging back your spiritual life 10%. He's got all kinds of time, so 10% over ten years, and you're all his. And you never saw it coming.
    - f) Envy is demonic.
    - g) It is so demonic that the Bible says that Jesus died because of Envy. When Pilate put Jesus on trial, the Bible says he knew why the Jewish priests did this:
      - (1) *"For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy"* Mark 15:10, NKJV.

h) They killed for envy. And the demons shouted with joy.

IV. Transition

- A. You don't run your life; your unmet longings run your life. Your jealousies run your life. Your resentments run your life. Not you. You're a slave. You just salute, and say yes sir, and scramble to get the stuff you think will make you happy.
- B. **YOU ARE A SLAVE TO WHATEVER RUINS YOUR PEACE OF MIND.** A slave. Envy is bondage.
- C. You're messing with high voltage wires when you mess with your emotions. God designed you for contentment, for satisfaction, and for love.
  - 1. God designed you to rejoice with those who rejoice.
  - 2. God designed you to celebrate what is good in other people's lives.
  - 3. Not to resent them.
  - 4. Not to envy them.
  - 5. Not to be moody.
  - 6. God designed you to find contentment with your life.
  - 7. He made you to be satisfied with your life and your spouse and your children and your money and your present state.
- D. And if you can't be satisfied, if you can't be contented, if you can't be happy for other people without being miserable for yourself—there is a problem.
- E. And the good news is this is a problem you can solve. How? How can you move out of a life of envy? Two secrets:

V. **SECRET ONE:** Operate in the opposite spirit.

- A. What does that mean? It means whatever your Inner Envier is telling you to do, you have to do the opposite.
- B. Instead of wishing a person ill, pray for God's increased blessing on them. Pray that God blesses them and their house.
- C. Instead of being unthankful for what your husband or wife or kids or boss or God has given you, say thank you. Say thank you even if you don't feel thankful. I'm not telling you how to feel, I'm telling you what to do. Say thank you.
- D. Instead of hoarding your time, money, energy, and stuff—give it away. Share. Give. Be generous. Pry open your fingers from your wallet, and give till you feel like you've given.
  - 1. *"Give and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you"* Luke 6:38, NKJV.
- E. It is the **OPPOSITE** of what your Inner Mess tells you.

VI. **SECRET TWO:** Operate in the Holy Spirit

- A. If you are a Christian, God lives inside you for a reason. He will heal your addiction to envy. He will transform you.
- B. When you envy, you look at an object or person. You long for an object or person. You gaze. You daydream. You think. You yearn.
- C. And here's what happens: **YOU BEGIN TO BOND WITH THAT OBJECT.** You don't just want that Ranger Bass boat—the one you see on the Internet every afternoon—or that new house. Or that body, or that diamond you see on your girlfriend's hand. You don't just want it, you love it. You dream of it. You can feel it. You bond with it.
- D. There is nothing wrong with having desires. That is normal and healthy. There's nothing wrong with desire.
- E. Our problem is that our desires for stuff are bigger than our desires for God.
- F. You need a **STRONGER BOND WITH GOD.**
- G. And that does **NOT** mean that you have to reduce your desire for stuff. Desire stuff greatly, but desire God more greatly, and God can trust you with the desires of your heart.
- H. What it means is that you need to strengthen your desire for God. How? Bond with Him—worship Him. Look at His picture in the Bible. Think about Jesus. Contemplate His Cross. Talk to Him in prayer. Gaze on His majesty. Sing to Him at church.
- I. The whole purpose of a spiritual life is to create a bond of affection between you and God.
- J. That's why we see beautiful senior citizens, who have gazed upon Jesus for a very long time—the sweetest, kindest, bravest, most content, most satisfied, happiest, most generous people on earth.
- K. Bonded to Jesus
- L. And this is what the Holy Spirit will do for you. He will bond you to God emotionally as soon as you do with God the same stuff you do with the objects of your longing.
- M. As soon as you have a bigger bond with God than with stuff, that's when God knows He can trust you with stuff.
- N. The problem with envy isn't that you want stuff. It's that you don't want God enough. You'll never be happy that way.
- O. One verse totally captures how to be free from envy.
  - 1. *"Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart"* Psalms 37:4, NKJV.