

The 7 Deadly Sins

Greed
Lust
Gluttony
Pride
Lesson Five: Envy
Anger
Laziness

Introduction

Welcome to our Bible study on the Seven Deadly Sins. We recognize that every sin is deadly because every sin we commit is a violation of God's law. With every sin we become lawbreakers, thus falling short of the glory of God. But throughout the history of the Christian Church these sins have been recognized as being especially insidious. They are all too common and all too easy to fall into. They are "besetting sins," that is they can easily entrap and entangle us in an attitude or a lifestyle that is very hard to change.

Today we consider the sin of envy. A person described envy as the only deadly sin which gives us absolutely no pleasure. It is, he says, the most miserable of all the deadly sins. Whereas lust, greed, anger, sloth, gluttony, and pride all offer the sinner the pleasures of sex, money, power, ease, food, or self-esteem, envy offers the sinner nothing but misery. Even unlike Greed, its closest relative, it refuses to be satisfied with more until you – the envied one – has less; a scenario which could only happen in your private kingdom.

Consider and discuss the following points:

- Synonyms of envy.
- What do these words of God mean? I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God. (Deuteronomy 5:9) Could the word envious be substituted for the word jealous so that the sentence reads – 'I, the LORD your God, am an envious God'? What does the passage teach about God? Is it a sin if a husband is jealous if his wife is dating another person?
- Although as we speak today, it seems that envy and jealousy are often used interchangeably yet the Bible shows that they are somewhat different. What does the following passage show? Galatians 5:19-21 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 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.
- *Envy* – Envy has been defined as "a feeling of discontent and ill will (being irked) because of another's advantages, possessions, abilities, etc.; resentful dislike of another who has something that one desires." Begudging

What commandment forbids coveting?

Envy—A Heart Problem

In what way is envy a heart problem?

Romans 7:7-8 *Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire.*

What do you think about this? A radio announcer said that he cared only about actions, not about attitudes and motivation. Notice what Jesus says, "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'" (Mark 7:21-23)

Envy usually leads to other sins.

- James 1:13-15 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death
- James 3:16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

Examples from the Bible

- **Genesis 26:14-15** *Isaac had so many flocks and herds and servants that the Philistines envied him. So all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the time of his father Abraham, the Philistines stopped up, filling them with earth.*
- **Psalms 106:16-18** *In the camp they grew envious of Moses and of Aaron, who was consecrated to the LORD. The earth opened up and swallowed Dathan; it buried the company of Abiram. Fire blazed among their followers. (Read Numbers 16)*
- **Matthew 14:3-5** *Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, for John had been saying to him: "It is not lawful for you to have her." Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered him a prophet.*
- **Matthew 27:17-18** *So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him.*
- **Luke 15:11-32** Parable of the Prodigal Son

Example of Followers of God being envious

Psalm 73:2-3 *But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. (See all of Psalm 73, a very interesting Psalm)*

Give examples of envy from life today (or even from your own life) of envy leading to other sins.

Envy can be subtle. Envy isn't always obvious; sometimes it's something we do almost without thinking. When there's someone at work who is a rising star, we may engage in gossip and defamation that undermines their reputation or tarnishes their image. We may do this at times in an unreflective manner; we diminish or belittle others and their accomplishments through careless and insensitive remarks. We often do this because we need to knock others down in order to feel better about ourselves. This is envy. Sometimes we show envy passively by failing to praise or encourage others or by not calling attention to their accomplishments.

Keep in mind the following as we tackle the envy in our own hearts

Motivation

1. Our God tells us "Do not covet." In our Catechism there are two commandments about coveting.
2. Our God moves us to obey by His kindness and forgiveness. *Titus 3:3-7 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*
3. Love one another *1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*
4. Pray "Create in me a clean heart, O God."

Be Satisfied with how God has blessed you

1. God blesses us but also in different ways and varying amounts of possessions. He has given people different talents and abilities, physical characteristics, health. Be content with whom you are. For example, if God has made you a male, don't be envious wishing you were a female, etc.
2. Envy blinds you to your own giftedness and uniqueness. God didn't make you to be like somebody else. God made you to be you. *Psalm 139:13-16 says, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." Why is it a good thing that God has blessed us differently?*
3. "Bloom where God has planted you." If you are a petunia, be satisfied. Don't envy the rose.
4. Why be envious of others? God has given you all that you need. He has redeemed you. You're heaven bound.

Opposites of Envy – Being Happy for others even and especially if others have more! Being content.

Philippians 4:11-13 *I am not saying this because I am in need, for 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.*

Some Considerations

Is there a special danger of envy creeping up in families? If so, why? (Cain & Abel; Jacob and Esau; Joseph and his brothers)

What are your thoughts about 'keeping up with the Joneses'? Is it always envy?

What are things to keep in mind so that instead of envying another person's blessings and having a begrudging attitude, we rejoice with him/her?