

Envy & Jealousy

QUICK REFERENCE COUNSELING KEYS Excerpt

The Danger of Envy and Jealousy . . .

“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”
(Galatians 5:13–26)

“Envy is the greatest of all diseases among men.”

—Euripides

Q: “Is envy always wrong?”

Yes. Scripture never portrays envy in a positive light. God is never depicted as an envious God.

“Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, ‘Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?’ For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up.”
(Matthew 27:15–18)

Q: “Is jealousy always wrong?”

No. It is natural and normal for feelings of jealousy to surface when a meaningful covenant relationship is threatened by unfaithfulness.

“This is the law in cases of jealousy, when a wife, though under her husband’s authority, goes astray and defiles herself, or when the spirit of jealousy comes over a man and he is jealous of his wife. Then he shall set the woman before the LORD, and the priest shall carry out for her all this law. The man shall be free from iniquity, but the woman shall bear her iniquity.”
(Numbers 5:29–31)

“I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”
(2 Corinthians 11:2–3)

Disguises for Masking Envy or Jealousy¹

- Pretending apathy or indifference to people or situations
- Avoiding problems or people that could produce envy or provoke jealousy
- Offering false praise and congratulations
- Dropping unnecessary, negative information about another
- Projecting jealousy or envy onto another

Envious

- E**ncourages envy in others
- N**eeds to put down others
- V**engeful feelings toward others
- I**nternal pain over the success of others
- O**verachiever
- U**nfulfilled desires or cravings
- S**elf-exalting

*“A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh,
but envy makes the bones rot.”
(Proverbs 14:30)*

Jealous

- J**udgmental of others
- E**xclusive expectations
- A**nxiety/anger over potential loss
- L**eaning on the identity of others
- O**verly possessive of others
- U**nable to trust God
- S**uspicious of the normal behavior of others

*“Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming,
but who can stand before jealousy?”
(Proverbs 27:4)*

Key Verse to Memorize

*“Not that I am speaking of being in need,
for I have learned in whatever situation I am
to be content.”
(Philippians 4:11)*

Key Passage to Read and Reread

Galatians 5:13–26

Replacing Destructive Emotions

Face your feelings and use them as indicators to change. (James 3:14)

Recognize the source of these emotions.
(James 3:15–16)

- Envy is an outgrowth of desire and a result of sinful patterns. (Luke 12:15)
- Jealousy is an outgrowth of love and a natural emotion—but is it godly or selfish? (2 Corinthians 11:2)

Agape love says that you can transcend your natural jealousy and envy. (Galatians 5:13–14)

- Agape is a commitment to seek the highest good of another. (John 15:12)
- Agape keeps us from idolizing another person. (Deuteronomy 6:5)

Pray, pray, pray.

- Learn to be content. (Philippians 4:11)
- Learn to love even your enemies. (Matthew 5:44)

Change your focus to pleasing Christ rather than on pleasing people and their desires.

- Realize that your self-worth comes through Christ. (Colossians 2:9–10)
- Rely on Christ's strength. (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

*“Love is patient and kind; love does not
envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude.
It does not insist on its own way;
it is not irritable or resentful.”
(1 Corinthians 13:4–5)*

Responding to Jealousy— Speaking the Truth in Love

*“Speaking the truth in love, we are
to grow up in every way into him
who is the head, into Christ.”
(Ephesians 4:15)*

Confront in love—speak in love.

Attempt to determine the source of the jealousy—
selfish or godly jealousy.

Decide whether the jealousy is justified or a product
of the imagination.

Encourage disclosure of the pain without placing
blame.

Ask for forgiveness for any possible offenses—
do not be defensive.

Affirm jealous people by declaring their value—
give praise and encouragement.

Work on a plan together.

Withdraw from one who is demonstrating open
hatred or destructive manipulation.

Related Topics . . .

- Conflict Resolution:
Solving People Problems
- Critical Spirit:
Be an Encourager—Not a Critic
- Friendship:
Iron Sharpening Iron
- Lying:
How to Stop Truth Decay
- Self-Worth:
Discerning Your God-Given Value

HOPE FOR THE HEART's *Biblical Counseling
Library Quick Reference* provides immediate,
concise, biblical truths for today's problems.

For more comprehensive help, refer to our
Biblical Counseling Keys . . .

Envy & Jealousy:
Taming the Terrible Twins.

If you would like more information,
call 1-800-488-HOPE (4673) or visit
www.hopefortheheart.org.

For prayer encouragement and biblical counsel
call 1-866-570-HOPE (4673).

1. For this section see Betsy Cohen, *The Snow White Syndrome: All About
Envy* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 25.



*Together . . . Changing Minds.
Changing Hearts. Changing Lives.*

P.O. Box 7, Dallas, TX 75221

Scripture taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*.
Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of
Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.