

Envy

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[0 : 0 0] Hey, good morning, everybody. After that great appeal, those of you who don't know me, my name is Jesse, and I am the pastor, one of the pastors here. I get to lead this amazing site of One Harbor Church, and I want to say a big hello to those who are listening to this online later on in the week. And guess what? This is the last sermon in our Proverbs series, and so either you're very excited about that or you're very sad about that, but that's okay. Today, we're going to be tackling this topic of envy. We're going to be looking at the ugliness of envy. And I just want to say from the outset, man, I am not preaching at you guys. This was definitely in preparation of preaching to myself, and I had to just remember some very embarrassing moments in my life, some things that I had to, oh yeah, I remember those moments of envy. And I have to be honest with you, envy isn't something that is just a moment in my life or a few moments in my life. This is something I battle with practically every single day. And I would venture a guess we all battle with envy in one form or another, one degree or another. But just because something is so commonplace, like envy, doesn't mean we shouldn't take it seriously. Proverbs shows us actually how insidious envy is. Proverbs 14.30 says this, a tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot. And what this passage is saying is that envy, what it does to you and to me, it slowly destroys us from the inside out. Envy slowly destroys us from the inside out. I mean, the descriptive picture in this verse, it's not pretty, right? It makes the bones rot, rot that slow decay over a long period of time. That's what envy does to us. It sucks out the marrow of life. It eats away at our soul until we become a shell of a person. And this slow decay, this very long, long decay, this long rot is the very deception. It's the great deception of envy. Because honestly, for many of us, man, envy starts with, oh, that was just a harmless thought, something that I kept to myself, something that was inside.

Nobody else knows about it. It didn't really hurt anybody. Now, I want to say that it's not evil to desire things, right? But that doesn't mean everything we desire is good. Desiring breakfast, hey, that's a good thing. It's okay. But desiring your neighbor's wife, it's a bad thing. I think we'd all agree on that. But even the good things we desire can run amok in our hearts. We can run, we can desire more knowledge and wisdom and talent and wealth, and that's okay. But the question becomes how much until we are satisfied? And that's the native problem that we all share. Our sinful nature, what it does, it turns good desires into demands, into further demands and further demands. And this is the pathway to envy. At the root of envy is coveting, this disordered, over-impassioned yearning for what you don't have. Now, today, we're pretty familiar with this. We call it FOMO, right? Adam and Eve were the first to have FOMO, all right? Nothing is new under the sun. They took the forbidden fruit because they didn't want to miss out. But here's the thing about envy. Envy refocuses our FOMO onto the people around us. It creates contempt and rivalry with others. And this is a very real way that envy destroys your life. Envy fills you with contempt for others. See, envy isn't just wanting what others have. It's hating others for having what you want, okay? Envy isn't just wanting what someone else has. It's hating them for having what you want. And guys, this destroys friendships. It destroys families. It even destroys churches. Proverbs 24 says, wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy? Right? Wrath and anger, man, they make us do some cruel things.

But this verse is saying, you know what? Envy is jealousy. It will produce a kind of anger and hatred and wrath that cannot be rivaled. Now, to understand this better, let's look at a story at the very beginning of the Bible. And you know what? If you want to understand the root of sin, the root of sin, you can't do better than starting at the beginning. Adam and Eve's sin of coveting, right? They took the fruit. What it did, it gave birth to jealous envy, figuratively and literally in the person of Cain. Genesis 4 verses 1 to 5, it says, now Adam knew Eve his wife, which is like the PG version of you know what? And she conceived and bore Cain saying, I've gotten a man with the help of the Lord.

And again, she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep and Cain a worker of the ground. In the course of time, Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground. And Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. Now check this out. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering, he had no regard.

[5 : 37] So Cain was very angry and his face fell. So Cain's envy of Abel resulted in anger. Cain didn't see Abel as a brother anymore. He saw him as a rival. Abel had what Cain wanted. And Cain was so consumed in his heart with envy that he lost his ability to love his brother. And this envy slowly boiled in his heart like a pressure cooker. And just like a pressure cooker needs a relief valve, so does the envious heart. Envy doesn't just make you think cruel thoughts about others, it will lead you to do cruel things. Envy will make you do cruel things to others. You know, in Cain's case, it was murder, right? Probably for many of us, that's not the relief valve we get to, I'm assuming.

We may think it, but we don't do it. For many of us, the relief valve is something else, something like slander or gossip or defriending or ghosting people. Physical and emotional abuse come out of this. And these tactics have a common end goal, and it's to hurt somebody. It's to make them pay. And the irony here is that envy creates a victim mentality in us. It convinces you and me that, you know what, we're the victim here. And as a victim, I have the right to fight back.

So we act out of our own hurt in order to hurt others. And when we do that, man, it just feels like this release valve. We're just letting some steam out of our envious hearts. And man, does that feel good for a moment. Relieves a little bit of pressure for the moment, which gives us a false hope. And we think that letting out steam, doing those things in the moment, oh my goodness, that is going to be so satisfying. And it gives us a false sense of satisfaction, but that's where we're dead wrong. It's not satisfying at all. There's a particular kind of cruelty to envy. Proverbs 27 20 says, Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied, and never satisfied are the eyes of man. Envy is never, ever satisfied. You know, no matter how many times you or I let the steam out of our envious hearts, the envy never goes away. Because like death in the grave, the envious heart always has room for more. It's always looking for the next thing to feed on, the next person to hate. So our hearts are never calm. They're always restless, wandering around to find that elusive satisfaction. And envy what it does, it feeds itself on offenses. It looks for problems in others. It looks for slights. It looks for ways to feed our contempt for others.

And that doesn't sound like the kind of heart any of us want, right? Nobody wants a heart like that. Isn't it interesting that the judgment of God upon Cain for his envy was that he would wander the earth?

[9 : 06] Cain sought satisfaction for his heart in murder. But instead of being satisfied, instead of finding the joy and the peace he was hoping for, he became a restless wanderer. He became a restless soul.

And this is the great irony of sin, even the sin of envy. It makes us believe that the problem is out there. All the while, the problem's in here. So what needs to change in our hearts? That's the question we have to ask ourselves. Is the answer to just stop desiring things? You know, are we called to be Shaolin monks, detached from all wants, dead to all emotions? Now, that can make you great at Kung Fu, but it's not going to heal your heart. And healing here, it isn't having a tranquilized heart that feels nothing, but it's having a tranquil heart. Proverbs 14.30 says, a tranquil heart, a calm heart, a peaceful heart gives life to the flesh. So the question we have to ask is, okay, how do we get there? What makes the heart tranquil? 1 Timothy 6.6-8 gives us some insight.

It says here, now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. God's cure for envy is learning contentment. And this is so unnatural to us. From the time we are kids, we're thinking this, I don't want the toy I have, I want the toy you've got, right? All of us who have kids say amen to that. Those who don't, you should go and serve in kids ministry and learn some good doctrine. All right? Being a Christian, becoming a Christian, doesn't make it magically go away. It doesn't make that instinct, that impulse magically go away. We just learn to cover it up better. It seems, you know, here's my little confession for you. It seems like in the past year, some of my closest friends have all been getting Jeeps. And I love Jeeps. I would love to have a

Jeep. I drive a little Ford Fiesta. And my last friend that got a Jeep, I was just like, oh, really? I didn't want to be happy for him. I wanted to pity myself. Why can't I have one of those?

And I had to struggle and I had to fight to be happy for my friend who got this great car that he loved and he enjoyed. But it was hard for me to be content. It's hard for me, it's hard for us to stay content. But God gives us some tools for growing in contentment. When we look at these verses we just read in 1 Timothy, notice the first thing. It says, for we brought nothing into the world.

[12:09] We brought nothing into the world and we can take, we cannot take anything out of the world. And here's what this is saying. Contentment grows when you realize you don't deserve anything.

If you can start there, you know what? Everything I have, I actually don't deserve it. You know, our grand entrance into the world for every single one of us here is anything but grand, right? Like none of us come out of our mother's womb bearing gifts. You know, we're not giving to the doctor, hey, here's a new driver for your golf game. We don't come out saying, hey mom, I wrote you a four-page sonnet because you're so amazing and great job on the delivery. Now, what do we, we come out bloody and naked and crying. Pretty unimpressive. You know what? We go out unimpressively as well. And let me just say this at the risk of sounding insensitive, nobody looks impressive in a coffin. I won't. We come in unimpressive, we go out unimpressive. The problem is the middle part of our lives, that's when we get so full of ourselves. But this humility of numbering our days can help us not to take ourselves seriously. And it fights against entitlement. When everything you have is seen as an undeserved blessing, you know what?

[13:39] You're going to be a lot more thankful for it. You're going to enjoy it a lot more. And that's why it's a good habit to remind yourself of the blessings that you have. The next part of that verse we're looking at in 1 Timothy verse 8 says, but if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. And this gives us some good insight. You know what? Counting your blessings increases contentment. That's what Paul's doing here. He's counting his blessings. You know what? The envious heart, it burns for what it doesn't have. A thankful heart is content with what it does have. Notice he doesn't say, man, if we have a big house, a nice car, lots of money, two and a half kids, with these we will be content.

His list is small and basic, food and clothing. Let's start there. You know what? You may not be eating filet mignon at night, but you can be thankful for that Salisbury steak microwave dinner. When do you take time to stop and consider all the blessings you have? When do we do that? Too often, our eyes are fixed on screens and magazines that show us all the things we don't have and remind us all the things that we want to have. And every sinful desire, you know what? It starts there. Every sinful desire starts with looking in the wrong place. Adam and Eve looking at the wrong tree.

David, King David looking outside his house at another man's wife. What are your eyes feeding on every day? What are your eyes feeding on every day?

Is it feasting on other people's blessing? Is it soaking in the marketing machine of consumerism in America that's telling you this is all the stuff you need? Here's an unshakable truth, guys.

[15:48] Your habits will shape your heart. It's true. Your habits will shape your heart. And this brings me to one of the best habits you can adopt.

A praying life builds contentment. A praying life builds contentment. The Apostle Paul writes to one of his young apprentices, Timothy.

He had left him in Ephesus to lead the church in that city, the church that Paul had planted. And his leadership advice to him.

He says to Timothy, first order of business, my young Padawan, was this. 1 Timothy 2 verse 1. First of all then, first of all then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people.

[16:48] All of those things he listed are types of prayers. Paul isn't tacking that on in the fine print of his instructions to Timothy. It isn't a drive-by comment.

No. He puts it in bold. It's the big headline. Leadership 101. This is what you do. This is the way to lead a church. Just a few verses later, Paul reiterates in verse 8, the same chapter.

I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger and quarreling.

Men and women, what is God's desire for us? It isn't scrolling through social media hours on end, filling our souls with pictures of what we don't have, of the life we wish we could lead.

It's not going online and blasting our opinions and anger and making quarrels about everyone and everything, taking ourselves and our opinions too seriously.

[17 : 54] It's interesting that two ways men hurt people. It's with our mouths and with our hands.

We waste words on Facebook and Twitter and Instagram and TikTok. Can I just say, can we just pick one of those and stick with it?

I mean, seriously. Or we waste them in person. Ugly words, mean words, hateful words, quarreling words, divisive words.

We raise our hands to do horrible things. What does God call us to do as men?

Man, pray with your mouths. Give thanksgiving with your mouths. Give supplications with your mouths. Petitions to God with your mouth.

[18 : 55] Praise with your mouth. What do you do with your hands? Lift holy hands. Right? That idea of lifting our hands, holy hands, what does that look like?

Act of surrender. Humility. An act of peace. An act of dependence on God.

Instead of hating and hurting the people you envy, you're called to pray for them. You're called to pray for their success. You're called to pray for God to even bless them more.

Envy will make you rejoice when people suffer, and it will make you mourn when they rejoice. But in prayer, what we practice is the habit of rejoicing when they rejoice and mourning when they suffer. And that's hard. That is really hard to do. I was thinking back at a time a few years ago. It was me and Donnie and Tom.

[20 : 02] We were the pastors at the church, and it was all by ourselves. And I had a lot of responsibility. And I was kind of involved in every little piece of leadership in the church.

And then some new elders came on, and I had to give some of my responsibilities away to my friend Brian Hart. And I had to watch him do what I used to do, but he was way better at it than I was.

And it was hard. It was hard for me to rejoice in my brother doing well. Isn't that crazy? And that happens at the pastor. That happens in my heart all the time.

It is hard to rejoice when you look at people that are doing stuff that you want to do really well, but they're better at it than you. It's hard to rejoice with them. And you know what?

I had to fight on a regular basis through prayer and confession and giving thanks for my friend, giving thanks for my brother in Christ, giving thanks that, you know what, God?

[21 : 02] You have gifted him in these ways way better than me. And I had to learn in my identity in Christ that, Lord, thank you for how you've made me in both the gifts that you've given me and the limitations you've imposed upon me as well.

There's one perfect man who is good at everything, and his name was Jesus. It's good to reckon with that so we don't take ourselves too seriously. Be like, you know what? I could be happy with how God has made me.

And I could find my role in the body of Christ. That I'm not the hand and the foot and the eye and the elbow and the toenail. Man, I just get to be a hinge on a finger or something.

And you know what? That's great. That season taught me a lot of things, and what I learned in that season is above all things, man, practicing those habits, they don't really work until I was rooted and established in one thing.

Proverbs 23, 17, 18 gets at this. It says, Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue. Here's the key. Continue in the fear of the Lord all the day.

[22 : 21] Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off. What is this saying? Some big stuff here. Don't envy man. Man is sinful.

They're imperfect. No matter how righteous they seem, don't envy them. Fix your eyes on God. That's continuing in the fear of the Lord. Living before the face of God.

God being so real, so big. Bigger and outsizing everything else in your life. And in him, there is a future. In him, there is a hope that can never be taken away.

Contentment is only possible when you have the assurance of God's love. Contentment is only possible when you have the assurance of God's love. Let's get back to that story of Cain and Abel.

Remember Cain's envy over his brother Abel? He had something that he wanted. What was it?

What did Abel have that Cain didn't? In verse 6, the Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry?

[23 : 23] And why has your face fallen? Check this out. If you do well, will you not be accepted? Abel had God's acceptance.

Abel had God's favor. And so God looked at Abel's sacrifice, and he was pleased with it. But when he looked at Cain's, it said he had no regard.

He had no regard. And when you look at the Hebrew, literally that word means God turned his face away from Cain's sacrifice. He didn't even want to look at it.

Friends, nothing in the world is going to satisfy you except the assurance of God's love, the assurance of his favor, the assurance that he has accepted you.

And you know what? You can't earn it by doing the right things. Cain offers sacrifices just like Abel. But the problem wasn't in the method. The problem wasn't even in what he sacrificed.

[24 : 33] The problem was in Cain's motive. Hebrews 11.4 says this, By faith, By faith, By faith, Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous.

God commending him by accepting his gifts. You can't earn the one thing you really need to satisfy your restless soul.

Except by faith alone. And it's by faith alone in Jesus alone. By his death on the cross, he was the greater sacrifice by which God accepts us, by which God loves us, and by which God calls us his children.

And if you are struggling to count your blessings because they are sparse, count the blessings that are yours in Jesus.

Blessings that you can't earn. Blessings you can't lose. And we can give thanksgiving for this. We can go to him and say, Man, Jesus, in you, my sins are forgiven.

[25 : 53] They're washed away. They're remembered no more. In you, Jesus, I thank you that I have... Your righteousness is reckoned to me. Your resume, your perfect resume, is now my resume.

Jesus, in you, I have the love of God. Jesus, in you, I am called your son or your daughter. You are my father in heaven, and you care for me. In you, Jesus, I have a secured eternal life with you forever, where there's going to be no pain and no sorrow.

And I get to be with you, looking at you on the throne of heaven forever and ever. Man, all these things we get to give thanks for.

And you know what? They're ours by faith alone. My question for you today, Christian or not Christian, do you have faith that Jesus alone is enough?

If you're here and you're not a Christian, the answer to that question for you, if that is a no, is man, faith is believing that Jesus is the son of God, that he came and he died for your sins.

[27 : 06] And the call for you is to repent and to believe. And join us. Join the people of God in the life of thanksgiving to him, to him who has given us the greatest blessing that we can count on, himself.

If I could have the musicians come up, we're going to close in this. If you stand with me, we're going to take communion together. I'm going to lead us in communion.

You should have received it when you came in. communion is this meal of thanksgiving.

It's the practice of counting our blessings in Christ's salvation alone. He is all that we really need. He is what our hearts really want.

And so as we take this today, let's remember that. When Jesus, on the night that he was betrayed, he was with his disciples in a room sharing a meal with them and he stopped and he took bread and he gave thanks.

[28 : 30] He prayed over that bread and he blessed it and he gave thanks. And then he broke that bread and gave it to his disciples and he said, this is my body broken for you.

Take and eat. let's take in thanksgiving. And then Jesus took the cup and he said, this is my blood, the blood of a new covenant, the blood that is going to forgive you of your sins.

And he gave thanks over the cup as well. And he blessed it. And so, in memory of that, let's drink of the cup with thanks.

so let's pray. And then, Phil and Rebecca are going to lead us on to a final song, worshiping God.

Father, we are reminded today that we are imperfect people, that we are sinners. We're not deserving of your favor, your grace, and your love, but you give them to us anyway.

[30 : 03] We weren't deserving for you, Jesus, to come and sacrifice yourself in our place, but you did that. And so, Lord, we are thankful that we can count our blessing.

It doesn't matter what is going in our life. We can stop and we can count our blessings that we have in you, Jesus Christ. Blessings that aren't dependent on our circumstances, but blessings that will never, ever, ever change.
Your love, your acceptance, and the promise of a sure future. Amen.