

Hard Feelings, Jealously

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Day One

Do you struggle with jealousy? This hard feeling is a state of showing envy of someone and their achievements or advantages, being suspicious of someone's unfaithfulness in a relationship, or being protective over one's possessions. Most of all, this hard feeling can be sinful when it becomes a stronghold in your life.

We will look at different ways jealousy can manifest at work, but today let's consider the righteous jealousy of God. When is God jealous? Certainly, he isn't envying our achievements, but God is jealous in our unfaithful to our relationship with him and in his mighty protection over us as his greatest possession.

You shall have no other Gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an image... You shall not bow down to them or worship them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God... (Exodus 20:3-5).

It is clear—God commands our faithfulness to him. He does not want us serving idols, and even tells us he is jealous. The idols we have today are different than the carved images in the Old Testament, but we can consider an idol today anything that takes us away from God. What are you putting before God? Is it work, maybe sports or a hobby? Anything that keeps you from putting God first will make him jealous.

We are God's greatest possession. *The Lord has chosen you to be his treasured possession* (Deuteronomy 14:2). While this was directed toward Israel, we also see in 1 Peter 2:9, God calls us a people for his own possession. Treasured and his own. Why are we so important to God?

Genesis 1:27 tells us God made us in his own image—Imago Dei. He made us for himself. He does not wish any of us should perish but that all should reach repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

God made us in his image, for himself. His great love for us as his treasured possession is so richly shown in John 3:16.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

After years of jealousy that turned to righteous anger at Israel, God gave us Jesus.

With our definition of jealousy, we must ask ourselves if we are making God jealous. Certainly, we know God hates our sin, and the sins of the world. He hates them so much he offered the ultimate sacrifice for our sins—his only son.

The only good jealousy is a jealous God. He is sovereign over all things, especially his treasured possessions.

Day Two

Why are they being forgiven? They really messed up! Have you ever been jealous when someone has received what seems like undeserved compassion? Perhaps the scales seemed to tip in someone's favor that you felt wasn't deserving of that second chance at work. Or maybe you are friends with a group at work that has welcomed someone into the group who had previously gossiped about people in the office, and you are aggravated.

Jonah was so jealous of what he felt was God's undeserved compassion on Nineveh that he fled from God's command! God calls to Jonah to go to Nineveh to *call them out for their evil* (Jonah 1:2). You know how this story goes, Jonah was so against this he got himself a ticket on a ship going the opposite direction, disobeyed God, made God angry, was thrown overboard, and was swallowed up by a giant fish. Jonah spent three days in the belly of the fish praying to God for mercy. The fish spit him out, and he begrudgingly went on his way to Nineveh where God called him in the first place. He carried out the calling from God, and the people of Nineveh repented.

When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened (Jonah 3:10).

Jonah was angry God showed what he felt was undeserved compassion on the people of Nineveh. One could say he had jealous envy of God's compassion.

If you know this story, you know this is a very short paraphrase, and when I look at this story, I am struck at how Jonah missed the compassion God showed to him in his disobedience. God kept him safe in the belly of a fish, gave him a second chance, and at the end of the story even gave Jonah shade from a plant as he sulked in his envy. He completely missed God's compassion for him! Have you found yourself jealous of God's compassion on someone else? You might consider spending time reflecting on God's undeserved compassion on you. I know this helps soften my heart when I feel someone else may not be deserving.

Day Three

One of the definitions of jealousy is being protective of one's possessions or envy. This protection over our possessions or being envious of someone else's possessions can quickly lead us to breaking one of God's commandments. Exodus 20:17 tells us, *thou shall not covet*.

Coveting is an unlawful desire to have something that doesn't belong to you. At the root of jealous envy can be covetousness.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32 shows the jealousy of one brother toward the undeserved compassion and celebration of his brother who had taken his inheritance and gone away to lead a sinful life.

I think we can all picture these hard feelings. Someone you know is given a lot—maybe what they are owed. You continue to work hard and show diligence but never ask for more. Then, this other person comes back, having wasted all of what they had, and they are given more. Plus, everyone is excited to see them! Wait, what? Hello? What about me? I have been here all along with no fanfare, or celebration. Why are we celebrating this person?

In the parable of the prodigal son, we see again how the perception of another being undeserving caused deep jealousy when he was celebrated. We were told the prodigal son had already taken his inheritance, which meant when he returned, a portion of what he was given probably belonged to the brother who was working hard and being obedient. The hardworking brother was coveting what his

prodigal brother was being given both in the attention he received and in the things he was being given. He was jealous, and even angry.

Jesus tells us *watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions* (Luke 12:15).

What are you coveting that shows up as jealousy? Are you desiring a possession that is not yours? Seeking celebration and attention because someone else has received it?

A desire to have abundance and to be celebrated is not wrong. In fact, God wants this for us! God celebrates us! In Zephaniah 3:17 we are told he rejoices over us with gladness and exults over us with loud singing!

It is wrong when this desire for abundance and celebration is born of coveting what someone else has.

Day Four

Whether at work or at home, we can all experience the feeling of working harder than someone else. We are examining the hard feelings of jealousy. We have seen how jealousy can truly be rooted in envy, and in this case, it is envy about the perceived advantage someone may have when they don't work as hard as we do.

For some of us this could have started back in school. Were you the one who studied and toiled on papers only to get a C while another student in class never touched a book and magically got an A? While they were off having a great time, you were stuck at the library with your nose in your books! Fast forward, you are working on a project team. This time, it isn't about working for a grade but to get an important project done. One of your colleagues spends all her time in the boss's office, talking about the project deliverables, but doesn't do any of the work. When the project is complete, she receives equal accolades for the project's success. You are quick to schedule a meeting to tell your boss about what she didn't do because you are jealous of the advantage she had receiving credit and not pulling her weight. To your surprise, your boss doesn't feel this way. In fact, she tells you how much she appreciated your colleague keeping her posted about the project.

This scenario is not unlike my two favorite sisters in the New Testament, Mary and Martha. In Luke 10:38-42 we learn that Jesus goes to their house to spend time with his disciples and teach. While Martha toiled and served, Mary sat at Jesus feet to listen to his teaching. Frustrated because her sister is not working to serve alongside her, she goes to Jesus asking him to get her sister to work. If you know this story, you know Jesus says Martha is anxious and troubled about many things. She was jealous of the position Mary took at the feet of Jesus.

God doesn't want us to compare our work to the work of others. When we fall into this comparison, it can lead to feelings of jealousy. And, as we have seen, jealousy can lead to even deeper feelings rooted in sin. Focus on doing your very best. I find when I think about what someone else is or isn't doing it takes my eye off doing my very best.

Day Five

When jealousy gets to have a stronghold in your life, it can be sinful. We have seen jealousy of undeserved compassion, coveting possessions and celebrations, and the envy of someone's perceived advantage. Today, we will consider the jealousy of exaltation or fame.

Have you ever felt a twang of jealousy when someone receives a compliment? It could be something small like a passing great job, or something bigger like a crowd cheering for someone else's accomplishments.

In the Old Testament, Saul burned with jealousy over David. In 1 Samuel 10-31 you can read the entire saga between Saul and David. But, if you recall, the Lord had given Saul as a king to the people. God blessed Saul with much success in battle, and filled with pride, he sets up a monument for himself. Saul loved being recognized, and he loved the power of being King. God regreted appointing Saul king and sent Samuel to anoint a new king.

When David was anointed, we are told he had beautiful eyes and was handsome. David didn't become king immediately. In fact, we aren't even told David knew he was to become the king. He served Saul by playing the lyre to calm him and carried on as a shepherd. Eventually we know David defeated Goliath. This is where the jealousy ensues. You see, the women of Israel had celebrated Saul in his battle victories, but now they celebrated David. Saul struck down thousands and David his ten thousands.

Saul was very angry; this refrain displeased him greatly. "They have credited David with tens of thousands," he thought, "but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?" And from that time on Saul kept a close eye on David (1 Samuel 18:8-9).

Saul was jealous of David's success, and the fame he received from his success—so much so the remainder of the book of 1 Samuel tells of Saul's plots to kill David.

When jealousy over someone's success at work stirs you to tear them down, you really have a problem. Maybe you start gossiping to highlight things that make the other person look bad. Worse, maybe this a person who works for you, and you aim to get them fired because they take the spotlight off you as a leader.

Maybe you aren't Saul in this story, but you are David. I know I have been in this position professionally, and it has drawn me closer to God.

First, if you feel jealousy rising up, find someone to talk with about these feelings and confess them to God. If you are on the other side of someone's jealousy, pray. But also do something practical and document your accomplishments well.