

There are terrible consequences for those who continue in this sin. The curse that you have prepared for another will come upon you, and the blessing that you have prepared for yourself will be given to them.

Remember the story of Haman and Mordecai in the book of Esther? Haman was the first Hitler. He committed himself to murder a whole race just because he was not sufficiently honored by one Jew. But what happened? His honors went to Mordecai and his own family was destroyed. He lost his life on the gallows prepared for his enemy. Ezekiel 35:11 is a reference to similar judgment. *"Therefore, as I live," declares the Lord God, "I will deal with you according to your anger and according to your envy which you showed because of your hatred against them."* (Ezekiel 35:11)

You may ask, "How do I deal with jealousy in my own heart?" There are four things at the root of these thoughts and feelings.

### The Roots Of Jealousy

1. *A distorted picture of self.* Do you know how really beautiful and valuable you are to Jesus? We live in a performance oriented world that presses



us into its mold of conformity. We must compete with others through our position, appearance, and possessions, or we face rejection. Like salmon leaping at the waterfalls of opportunity, we struggle to dominate others lest we amount to nothing. Poor exhausted child, Jesus' Kingdom is not like that. The basis of your value and your beauty is really your uniqueness. You were "fearfully and wonderfully made" and never need to envy another. You are an original creation. There has never been a person like you before and there never will be again. Rejoice in your uniqueness, secure in God's love. Only you can fulfill your particular destiny and ministry. We need you.

2. *An inflated picture of self-pride.* James 3:14 says, *"But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth."* Humility is to see ourselves as we really are. We don't even deserve to live. Your next breath should be drawn with gratitude to God for His mercy. Jealousy is often rooted in self-righteousness. Let us go back to the cross and *"humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God."* (1 Peter 5:6)



3. *A twisted picture of God in His justice.* Is God always fair? Of course He is. Then why are we bent out of shape when somebody else receives a blessing? We are failing to see the mercy of God in our own lives and failing to admit our own partiality. Trust your heavenly Father. He does what's best for you.

4. *Fear and insecurity in your relationship with God.* Why do we become depressed when that other woman has a new baby or that other family moves into a beautiful new home? Why are spiritual leaders encouraged, yet also strangely discouraged, when they hear reports of a great victory in another person's ministry? It stems from the subconscious belief that the blessing of others is a sign of God's greater love for them. Psalm 49:16 says, *"Do not be afraid when a man becomes rich, when the glory of his house is increased."*

Each of these four roots is in some way a distortion of the truth about ourselves or about God. We must honestly face up to our need and ask God for a further revelation of His loving heart.

### Content In Christ's Arms

Just like you, I have had my struggles with jealousy. My only hope is Jesus. His strength is perfected in me when I daily acknowledge my weakness. He is everything that I am not; the most secure, successful Being in the universe, and He dwells within me. What a wonderful testimony we have in the apostle Paul's statement *"It is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me."* (Gal. 2:20)

### Responding To Jealousy

How do we respond wisely to jealousy in others? That's a whole new subject, but let me give you these five suggestions.

1. Don't provoke jealousy through unwise communications. *"Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another."*
2. Minister grace to others by declaring their value to you and your need of them.
3. Withdraw from a person demonstrating open hatred or destructive manipulation. The Bible says, *"...avoid such men as these."* (see 11 Tim. 3:1-5)
4. Do not fear. Psalm 27:1 says, *"The Lord is the defense of my life; whom shall I dread?"*
5. Bless those that curse you. Pray down every blessing on those who through insecurity and pride have stumbled in their relationship with us and are manifesting the marks of jealousy.

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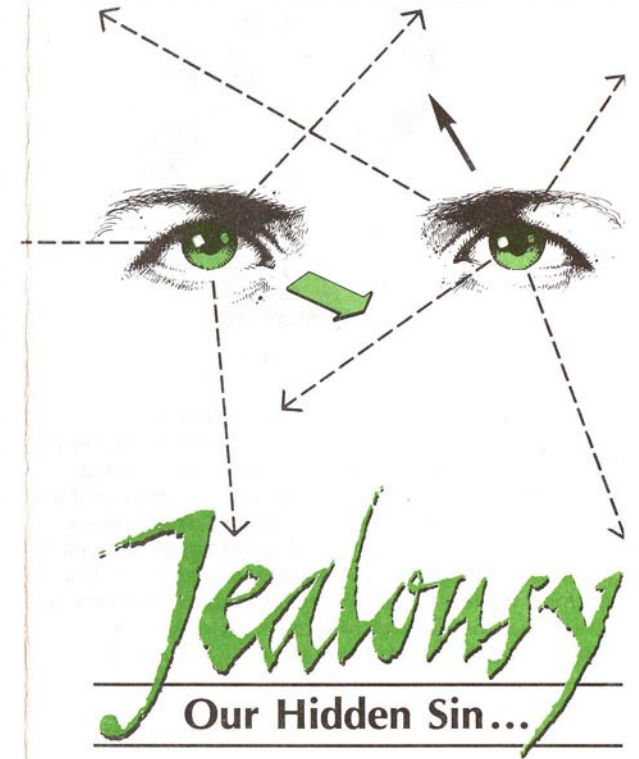
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by John Dawson



**D**o you have jealousy in your heart? How much of your motivation comes from this apparently fickle feeling? "Not much" you might say, but do you really understand the devastating power and subtlety of this inner passion?

You'll be surprised at God's perspective on this subject. In our daily lives jealousy towards God is simply evidenced by our refusal to give Him credit for what He alone has done. We withhold from Him that acknowledgement of His worthiness. Thanksgiving and praise are stifled by jealousy and envy.

### A Handful Of Nothing

●Jealousy is the *universal motive* of the human heart in *all* work and skill development unless the life of Jesus is being lived through





us on a daily basis. We find this sweeping statement in the book of Ecclesiastes 4:4,6: *"Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work comes from a man's envy of his neighbor. This also is vanity and a striving after wind. Better is a handful of quietness than two hands full of toil and a striving after wind."*

• Jealousy is *totally ruthless* and uncaring. It is a common motive for murder and cruelty and lays at the root of the actions of a mass murderer like Hitler. *"Wrath is fierce and anger is a flood. But who can stand before jealousy?"* (Proverbs 27:4) *"Jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame."* (Song of Solomon 8:6)

• Jealousy is *hidden* at the root of other motives, influencing our thoughts and actions. As new Christians we quickly deal with areas of obvious sin, but jealousy can lurk in the heart of even a spiritual leader as the deepest motive for apparently noble conduct. The Bible says, *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,"* and poses the question *"Who can know it?"* (Jer. 17:9) Only the Spirit of God can discern for us the root of our own motivation. We need Jesus desperately!

### The Motive For The First Murder

Let's look at the painful story of the first two little boys who grew up, Cain and Abel. *"So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. And Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became*

*very angry and his countenance fell. Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.'* And Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him." (Genesis 4:3-8)

Have you ever really grasped the startling ruthlessness we are capable of when this sin is entertained in our hearts? These brothers lived in a comparatively sin free world as part of the first family. Do you think they had affection for each other? Of course they did, but one murdered the other because of jealousy.

Men are frequently tempted by the lust for honor and recognition. Abel was honored by an authority, Cain was not: v.4 *"And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering."* A loving heavenly Father counseled with Cain in the midst of his vexation (see verse 7) but he still chose to destroy his brother to satisfy the passion of his jealous soul. The Hebrew word for jealousy is QIN'Á, meaning deep emotional desire. Never underestimate the power of this sin if unrestrained in your own heart. You may not stoop to murder, but are you a character assassin, destroying the good name of another by innuendo or accusation? Give credit where credit is due. Envy is the enemy of honesty.

The story of Joseph and his brothers in Genesis 37:1-11 is another example of jealousy cruelly tearing brothers apart. *"And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind."* After Joseph had declared his dream, his dad took him seriously and regarded him as a young man of importance and destiny. This was the last straw for his brothers who conspired to murder him even though he was the youngest.

Then there is the astounding story of David the shepherd boy and Saul the king in 1 Samuel 18. Saul began by loving David, but was angered by an underling being *honored* with a greater reputation. *"Then Saul became very angry, for this saying displeased him; and he said, 'They have ascribed to David ten thousands, but to me they have ascribed thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?'"* (1 Samuel 18:8)

### Jealousy Among Men

Men are more vulnerable to jealousy than women in certain areas, particularly in their desire for power, position, and title. We compare ourselves instinctively without thinking about it. Every time we look,

everything we see—we compare ourselves: our status, our possessions, our reputation, our relative positioning to that person, to that institution, that object. We live in a performance oriented world where we are taught to compete. A man's desire for possessions often has more to do with the *prestige* he hopes to gain than either the love of an object or the desire for security. All of us need loving appreciation, but to collect envy from the eyes of those whom we have outperformed is a hollow victory indeed. There is no real respect for such a winner—only alienation and loneliness.

### Jealousy Among Women

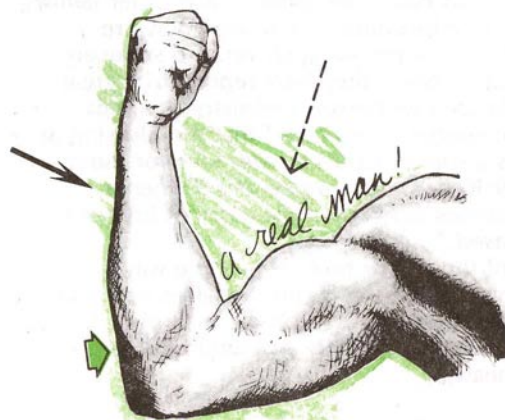
The story of Rachel and Leah in Genesis 30 reveals to us some of the particular temptations that affect women. Two sisters are miserably locked into a contest for acceptance and security—as well as the object the other has, whether it be a child or a handful of flowers.

Terrible roots of insecurity are revealed in Leah's statement, *"Happy am I! For women will call me happy."* Or Rachel's *"With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister."* A summary of this passage would lead us to conclude that a jealous woman must possess the *object* another has, must gain *security* through performance, and must gain the *acceptance* of an authority.

Another obvious vulnerability among women is the status associated with health and beauty. Women are cruelly expected to conform to the images of female beauty present in every culture.

### Comparing Ourselves

Let's examine two more Biblical examples that reveal the devices of the human heart:



**1. Envy when comparing ourselves with leaders.** The children of Israel envied Moses and Aaron. *"They quickly forgot His works; they did not wait for His counsel, but craved intensely in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. So He gave them their request, but sent a wasting disease among them. When they became envious of Moses in the camp, and of Aaron, the holy one of the Lord, the earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and engulfed the company of Abiram."* (Psalm 106:13-17)

We are so quick to resent the *privileges* given to those in leadership, but we fail to see the *price* that has been paid in many years of apprenticeship under God. Moses began to pay that price as a newborn baby. He was set in a basket and floated down the Nile. Those who raged against him did not begin their lives in such danger, and a just God, who measures all things, judged them harshly.



**2. Envy when comparing ourselves with new or unlikely people God is using.** Do you know why the religious leaders murdered Jesus? Pontius Pilate had a hunch concerning their motivation, so he offered them Barabbas to find out. Barabbas stood for everything they had previously condemned. Jesus stood for everything they were supposed to uphold. *"When therefore they were gathered together, Pilate said to them, 'Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?' For he knew that because of envy they had delivered Him up."* (Matt. 27:17-18)

Well, how do you feel? These are the temptations common to us all. Look up to your heavenly Father in simple prayer and ask for His mercy and forgiveness.