

St. Matthew A.M.E. Church  
Bible Study  
Monday, January 14, 2008

Jealousy and Envy  
(Genesis 29-45)

Jealousy is a landmine that strikes hard. It has the ability to cause a great deal of harm to our faith, preventing us from enjoying God's richest blessings. Just because we see someone advancing before us does mean that God is withholding His goodness toward us. He may be simply preparing us for what will come in the future. God wants to bless us, but He also wants to reveal the deeper motivation of our hearts. This is what happened in the lives of Joseph's brothers. Joseph was the first of two sons born to Rachel, who was the love of his life. Because of this Jacob loved Joseph more than his other sons. The first time they witnessed their father's love for him, they might have cringed. The second time, they might have rolled their eyes in disgust. The third time, they were ready to strike out in frustration and anger. Joseph also had a dream that one day he would rule over his brothers. From that time on jealousy began to build and His brothers sold him into slavery.

Whenever we sense feelings of envy and jealousy growing, we must answer two questions:

1. How will I respond to the jealous feelings?
2. How will I deal with my actions, which usually include feelings of anger?

Before launching a full blown assault on the person you believe is your offender, you need to remember Satan's primary goal: shift your focus away from God and onto your circumstances. He wants you to become jealous, distracted, and prideful. Don't become caught in this trap. God knows our future. He also knows what it will take to prepare you for the blessings that He has for you.

Detonating the Landmine of Jealousy

When we set the focus of our heart on pleasing God, we may go through times of envy when we feel as though our Christian walk is leading us nowhere fast. However, as long as we maintain our desire to live for Him, He will show us how to right our course so that we do not drift away from the center of His love. Feelings of jealousy can blind us to His goodness.

Some of us have heard me say and may be wondering doesn't God say He is jealous for us? The answer is yes, but it is a different type of jealousy; it is not the kind of jealousy that leads to envy and sin. It is a protective jealousy that is much greater than a loving parent would have for a son or daughter. God is not envious of us; He is jealous for us, which means He desires our fellowship and love. He has a passionate commitment for us because we rightfully belong to Him and He wants to protect us from evil. Therefore, He watches over us with extreme care. (Joshua 24:19-20)

Learning to let go of jealous feelings is a process. At some point, everyone has been tempted to envy what another person has. But if we could see what God sees, we would never struggle with this feeling. He tells us it is wrong because He knows it divides our minds and creates an atmosphere of resentment in our hearts. As with all sin, He wants us to acknowledge it to Him and then turn away from it. Jealousy can create an atmosphere of anxiety and fear within our hearts. The old adage "one thing leads to another" is very true. It also describes the tactical outline that Satan has in mind. If we have a problem with jealousy, we need to know that this is not the only landmine that we will trigger. The flow will go something like this: jealousy leads to envy and envy to anger and anger to fear. The cycle will continue until we become paralyzed or until we turn to God and ask for His intervention.

### Jealousy Is a Matter of Choice

Sin always involves choice. When we are jealous, we have made a choice to be envious of others. Joseph's brothers never considered God's will and purpose for their futures. They saw how Joseph was being treated, and they felt left out, threatened, jealous, and angry. Sin always begins with a single thought. It is at this point where we can choose to hold onto it or let it pass through our minds. If we cling to it, we will end up doing what Joseph's brothers did. We will take matters into our own hands and become jealous along the way.

### A Victim of Jealousy

Like Joseph, we may be a victim of jealousy. Someone is envious of us and we can feel the heat of anger and resentment toward us. Time is a key factor in God's battle plan. Though Joseph's brothers treated him poorly, God did not rush to his aid. Instead, He preserved Joseph's life. He was with him in his time of sorrow, heartache, and extreme disappointment. We may cry out to God repeatedly, asking Him to release us from our troubling circumstances, but not sense His movement on our behalf. He used Joseph's unjust situation to train him for a greater purpose.

One day he became a leader over his brothers. His dream came true, but not until Joseph had been broken and humbled and disciplined. When we are ready for God's blessings, He opens the doors. Up to that point, He calls us to wait in attentive, humble obedience.

### Our Situation from God's Perspective

Jealousy starts inside us, usually with a thought or a feeling that another person has more than we do. Our first inclination is to deny its existence: "I'm not really jealous." Deep down inside however, we look for ways to undermine the other person. There is a simple principle we must not forget and that is given in God's word, "we will reap what we sow."

The earmarks of jealousy include the following:

\*comparison – we notice a friend or coworker who has something we want. We tell ourselves, "I wish I had her talent, gift, or beauty."

\*competition – whether it is on the job or in your neighborhood, a competitive attitude can breed anxiety, depression, and hopelessness because it tempts us to ask, "am I as good or better than her?" The question we really need to ask is "am I doing my best?"

\*fear – a jealous person is fearful of being replaced by somebody or something. It is very destructive because it draws us off the course that God has planned for us to travel.

### The Consequences of Jealousy and Envy

The consequences of jealousy and envy are deadly.

\*A critical spirit – we become negative in our thinking. Another's success generates negative feelings and we look for ways to undermine their efforts

\*A divided mind – we are not be able to focus clearly and become distracted, unable to discern God's direction for our lives

\*Anger, bitterness and resentfulness – our attitude becomes dark and our countenance changes, we become angry, bitter and resentful to those of whom we are jealous and envious. (Proverbs 25:23, Genesis 4:6)

\*A sense of insecurity – we become unsure and lack confidence in who we are in Christ and His purpose for our lives

\*The wrong focus – whatever has our focus also has us. Our focus is not on the things of God and our lives become distorted (James 3:16)

\*Indecisiveness – we fail to focus on God’s principles and do not know the things that God wants us to do. We continually think about the person who seems to have more or know more than us.

\*Struggle with feelings of depression – feelings of despair and depression become a battle within us

\*Broken fellowship with God – we can read our Bible and pray, but something will be missing because there will be a wall between us and the Lord. Jealousy is a self-centered emotion and instead of grateful hearts we spend time thinking about what others have or what we wish we had. Fellowship with God becomes a second, third or last choice.

\*Physical sickness – bitterness, resentment, hostility, anger, jealousy, and envy can be stepping stones to physical disease. Our bodies are affected by the inner turmoil we fuel through sinful thoughts and actions.

#### How to Deal with Jealousy in our Lives

1. We need to admit that we are envious. We need to acknowledge it to the Lord in prayer
2. We need to acknowledge that we are in conflict with God as well. By doing this we acknowledge that we need God’s help and can become open to His instruction.
3. We need to thank God for what He has done in our lives and even for the people who are the source of our conflict. This may seem difficult, but acknowledge our problem, confess it and thank Him for revealing this struggle in our life. Ask Him to help us see our lives from His perspective, brimming with hope and blessing. Once we grasp the good plans He has for us, jealousy will no longer be a landmine in our lives.
4. We need to pray and ask God to help us see the heart of the other person(s) who are the cause our jealousy. We may be jealous of the person who is just being the person that God has created them to be.
5. We need to be willing to wait for God to work. God has the last word in all things.
6. We need to ask God to help us hear His voice over the clamor of the world. Jealousy shouts for attention. We must be determined to hear God’s voice and know His mind for your life and situation.
7. We need to delight ourselves in God. When we do, we will find that He will give us the desires of our hearts. (Psalm 37:4)

