



WEEK 6

ENVY // CHARITY

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JAMES 3:13-16

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

HENRI NOUWEN, SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Resentment and gratitude cannot coexist, since resentment blocks the perception and experience of life as a gift. My resentment tells me that I don't receive what I deserve. It always manifests itself in envy.

The word "schadenfreude" in German means "pleasure at seeing other's misfortune." While we don't have an exact equivalent in English, you are still probably familiar with the feeling. Probably the closest word we could point to is, Envy.

Envy is the pleasure at seeing other's misfortune and the frustration at seeing other's joy. Like many of these vices, envy is intertwined with several others. Envy comes with a host of other sins in tow like jealousy, covetousness, resentment, hatred, and most especially pride. Envy cannot stand the blessing of others, for envy poisons our ears with thoughts of "why not me?" And while coveting is focused more on the object, envy is an opposition to the person. We are envious of people, and we want to see them fall. Perhaps the most devious scheme of envy is the way it hides from our attention. We might think that envy is for those who are widely successful, musicians, actors, or politicians. While we might desire their life, true envy hides in our personal relationships.

It is not the success of Taylor Swift that makes us envious, but the success of our sibling. It is the success of those closest to us that whispers in our ear, "that should have been me." It is our coworker who is promoted above us that forms the root of envy. Not those who are outside of our realm of reach, but those who we know, intimately connected with us. It is the other mom in the playgroup, the other couple from church, or church across town. Our closest relationships have the potential of being a great encouragement or a breeding ground for envy. In the dark, envy poisons our mind towards others, embitters our souls, and causes us to act out our frustration on others.

This is exactly what happened to Jesus. It was envy that drove the crowd to deliver Jesus over to Pilate to be crucified (Matt. 27:18). The root of envy had grown strong and they delivered him over to death. But Jesus went willingly to the cross to pay the debt of our sin, and to break its power over us (1 Cor. 15:56-57). It is in the unmerited favour of Jesus that we find our freedom from envy. Grace is a gift that we have not deserved; no one has earned or deserved the forgiveness of Jesus. In Christ we already have been given more than we have ever deserved, we have gained forgiveness, a place in God's family, and eternal life with Him. When we have gained so much in Christ, why would we spend our time worrying about what others have gotten? We can respond to all things with gratitude towards God.

It is the grace of Jesus that allows us to, *"Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep"* (Rom. 12:15). When we recognize how much we have been given, we can respond to others with the same grace that God has given us. This is the source of Christian charity. When I have received what I have not earned, I do not hold back the same grace to others. The death of envy is found in thankfulness to God, and charity towards others.

JERRY BRIDGES, RESPECTABLE SINS

The cure for the sin of envy and jealousy is to find our contentment in God.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Is there someone in my life that I don't want to see succeed? How do I respond when they get something and I don't get it?
- How can I focus more on the blessings of Christ this week? How can I grow in my thankfulness? Write down a list of all the blessings Christ has given you and how you can be thanking God for them.
- What are ways that I can go out of my way to show charity towards others? Who can I encourage? Is there someone I need to apologize to and ask forgiveness?

WEEKLY FAST

Fast from Social Media.

- The easiest way to allow envy to grow is to keep our eyes on what other people are doing. Remove that reality from your observation as much as possible this week.
- While Social Media can help us connect or appreciate one another, more often than not it breeds envy and jealousy.

Practice the Kingdom Virtue of Encouragement and providing Help to others.

- Spend the time you would use on social media or seeing and assessing what others are doing and what they have, giving yourself to intentional encouragement and help of others.
- Show charity toward others by celebrating their accomplishments and seeking to truly wish them well from the heart.
- Preach and pray the gospel into your heart, reminding yourself of all that you have in Christ, and pray for contentment.

ADDITIONAL READING

Proverbs 23:17, Mark 7:20-23; Galatians 5:19-25; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; 1 Peter 1:22-2:1

R.T. Kendall, *Jealousy – The Sin No One Talks About: How to Overcome Envy & Live a Life of Freedom*