

SE7EN

Envy

Matthew 20:1-15

Today, we are continuing with our teaching series on the Seven Deadly Sins with envy. As we begin, I want us to read together the verse at the top of your outline. It's found in **Hebrew 12:**, and it's our key verse for this entire series because it tells us what sin does to our lives. "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily hinders our progress and let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us." I want you to **underline** that second line, those three words, **slows us down**. Because that's exactly what sin does to us. In fact, sin is anything in our lives that keeps us from being what God created us to be. Sin is anything in our lives that keeps us from living the life that God created us to live. God wants to strip off that sin from our life and replace it with something better.

When you were a kid, did you ever imagine what it would be like to be a super hero with super powers? I know I did when I was a kid because super heroes all have super powers that we wished we had. There are two specific super heroes that I was really jealous of, that I wished I could be. One of them was Superman. And I think I could have made a great Superman. Superman had the super strength, and the super speed and he had the best super power ever, which was what? He could fly. I thought that was the greatest super power ever. So I was envious of Superman.

So during the Question of the Day, which super hero did you want to be? Did anyone besides Pastor Ernie want to be Wonder Woman?

The reason we admire super heroes is because we wished that we had their super powers. In fact, the underlying theme, the underlying reason for our admiration of super heroes is envy. We are envious of their super powers. Now, when you are a kid and you want to be a super hero and you are envious of their super powers that are pretty harmless. But I want you to understand. It's not harmless when we grow up and we are adults and we look around at the people around us and we become jealous, and we become envious of the lives that other people have, of their possessions, of their wealth, of their career, of their families. When we are jealous and envious of those, that is harmful. In fact, it is deadly, and that's why envy is one of the Seven Deadly Sins. As a matter of fact, go ahead and look inside your message notes. I want you to pull out. . .find your message notes.

Envy is the desire for other's traits, status, abilities or situations. And of all the Seven Deadly Sins that we are going to talk about during this series, envy is different. Envy stands out from the others, for a couple of reasons. **First** of all, envy is the only deadly sin that is also in the Ten Commandments. In fact, the tenth commandment that God made to Moses is "Thou shalt not covet." In other words, God is saying—do not envy. But **secondly**, envy is also different in that it is the one sin on the list that has no pleasure in it whatsoever. You see from the beginning to the end, envy is no fun at all. All of the other sins can be enjoyed for a moment, for a temporary period of time, it can be pleasurable. In fact, look at the list of the Seven Deadly Sins in your notes. Even the Bible says—pleasure of sin last for a season. If you look at the sin of pride, pride makes us feel good about ourselves, at least for a little while. Look at the sin of gluttony. Have

you ever had the satisfaction of stuffing your face with your favorite dessert? That's enjoyable at least initially. Look at the sin of anger. Have you ever felt the relief from just riding out your anger on somebody. That can feel good for a moment. Greed, greed entices us with visions of expensive vacations and fast cars and that can be enjoyable as well. Sloth, who doesn't enjoy sleeping late? There is enjoyment in that. Then lust. I don't even have to explain why lust is enjoyable for a season.

No one really wants to feel smaller than someone else. No one really wants to wish for something that they don't have. No one really wants to wish they were someone that they are not, and who they can't be. That's misery. In fact, Henry Fairly said this about envy—he said, it's appetite never ceases, yet it's only satisfaction is endless self torment. But when envy takes hold in our lives, it's very difficult to shake off. So if there is no enjoyment in being envious, then why do we all struggle with it?

The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard.

Matthew 20:1-15

The biggest point in the parable is God's love for us, no matter when we come to Him, if we come late in life, or if we come to God after making a lot of mistakes. God is going to forgive and He is going to bless us abundantly. But there is a subplot in this parable about envy and about how envy will rob our lives of joy and will turn our hearts from God. It says, "For the kingdom of Heaven is like the owner of an estate." And the owner of the estate in this parable represents God. So it says, "Heaven is like the owner of an estate who went out early one morning to hire workers for his vineyard." And by early in the morning, it means 6 AM, that's when the workday starts. 6 AM. "Though he agreed to pay the normal daily wage, and sent them out to work. At 9 o'clock in the morning (three hours later), he was passing through the marketplace and saw some people standing around doing nothing, so he hired them, telling them he would pay them whatever was right at the end of the day. At noon and again around 3 o'clock, he did the same thing. At 5 o'clock that evening," that's one hour before the end of the workday, which ended at 6 PM, "At 5 o'clock that evening, he went to town again and saw more people standing around. He asked them, 'Why haven't you been working today?' And they replied, 'Because no one has hired us.' So the owner of the estate told them to go on out and join the others in my vineyard. That evening he told the foreman to call the workers in to pay them beginning with the last workers first. When those hired at 5 o'clock were paid, each received a full day's wage."

Now, I want you to stop right there for a moment. Imagine this. Imagine you have been out in the sun working all day. You get lined up at the end of the day and the owner of the vineyard is about to pay everybody, and he starts with those who have just been there for one hour and gives those who have been there for just one hour a full day's wage. What would you be thinking? If he's going to pay them that much for one hour, imagine how much he is going to pay me. "When those hired earlier came to get their pay, they assumed they would receive more, but they, too, were paid a day's wage. When they received their pay, they protested. 'Those people only worked one hour and yet you paid them just as much as you paid us who worked all day in the scorching heat.'

He answered one of them, 'Friend, I haven't been unfair. Didn't you agree to work all day for the usual wage? Take it and go. I wanted to pay the last workers the same as you. Is it against the law for me to do what I want with my money? Should you be angry because I am kind?'" Envy swoops in and ruins the workers' day. It makes me feel sorry for

myself, and it turns what could have been joy into misery. In fact, it does five negative things in my life.

Envy robs me of happiness. You see in our story, all the workers were treated fairly. All of the workers were paid fairly for their work. And they were all happy until they looked around and saw that other people were getting a better deal than they were. We aren't teaching this series on the Seven Deadly Sins because we are afraid if you commit these sins you are just going to have too much fun in life.

The reason why we are talking about the Seven Deadly Sins is because we know these sins in our life keep us from enjoying life the way that God intended for us to enjoy life. Envy is a robber of happiness from our life.

Proverbs 14:30

“A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.”

And here the word is jealousy, and envy, they mean the same thing. These are powerful words. You see envy causes stress. Causes depression. It causes high blood pressure. Envy rots away the quality and the quantity of your life. It makes your life shorter but that's not all that envy does.

Envy causes conflict in my life

Conflict between me and the person that I envy, whether it be a spouse, who might have a better job than I do. A friend who has a better apartment than I have. A co-worker who got promoted ahead of me, even though I think I am more qualified, and now they are my supervisor. Or maybe even it's a friend and we are both in entertainment, we are both in acting, and they got their big break. It seems like they are moving ahead and leaving me further behind. Envy ruins relationships. But see, in our story, once the workers became envious, they became belligerent. And I guarantee you that after they were paid, they were angry with the workers who got the same amount they got paid for less work. I imagine that there were some words exchanged, and there was some bitterness there.

James 4:2

“You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.”

And it causes unnecessary and damaging conflict in my life.

Envy makes me a resentful person

See in our story, envy causes a worker who has been there all day to immediately change from being friendly and thankful, to being resentful and bitter. You see, envy is a selfish emotion. It makes me resent the fact that someone can play music beautifully and wish instead that I could do that. It makes me resent the fact that someone has a happy marriage and instead I wish that marriage could be mine. It makes me resent the fact that someone else got a promotion at work, and wishing instead that that promotion was mine. It makes me resent that someone is good looking or famous or wealthy, and wishing instead that those things belonged to me. Now the resentment that envy causes in our life, it always leaves a bitter taste.

Titus 3:3

“At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.”

Envy makes us feel smaller than the people we are comparing ourselves to. It makes us feel sorry for ourselves and leads to resentment. And I want you to understand, when you

let envy in your life, it causes you to be resentful and bitter, other people notice and they view you as pathetic. There is nothing more pathetic than someone who is resentful and bitter because they are envious of what others have.

Envy leads to other sins

Envy leads to other sins. See, one of the big dangers of the Seven Deadly Sins is that they are instigators to even bigger sins in our life. And envy is probably the sin, more than any of the others, even when we keep it hidden, that pushes us to make stupid mistakes in our life. In fact, just look at stories from the Bible in which envy led to greater evil. You think at even at the beginning of the Bible, Cain was envious of his brother, Abel, and it led him to murder Abel. Jacob was jealous of his brother, Esau, and it led him to betray him and steal his birthright from him. Joseph's brothers were jealous of Joseph and so they sold him into slavery. King Saul was jealous of the boy, David, and spent his entire life consumed with anger in trying to kill him. Even Jesus' disciples were envious of each other, and that envy turned friends into adversaries and they were fighting over Jesus' attention.

James 3:16

“For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.”

You see, when we are envious of someone and we don't deal with it, it will usually surface later as a bigger sin that hurts everyone involved. I think the biggest tragedy with envy is that it takes our attention off of God's best for our life, and turns our attention towards God's plan for the lives of other people around us. You see, we begin to pay attention to what God is doing in someone else's life, and we miss God's best plan for our own life. God wants our attention. “Look at me, Sherman, I have something great for you.” But I am busy looking at someone else and saying, “God I want what they have.” I miss out on God's best plan for my life because I am so worried about what God is doing in the lives of those around me.

I want you to pull out your Connection Card that we were talking about earlier. And I want you to flip it over to the back and as you are doing it, I want you to look at the second Next Step. Our worship team is going to come and they are going to lead us in a song right now, and I don't want you to leave because the service isn't over. And in a minute I'm going to be back to talk about three steps that God wants us to take to overcome envy. But right now, I want you to look at your Connection Card. On the back, that second Next Step says—pray and ask God for contentment in the area of _____, and there's a blank. Right now as our team leads us, I want you to name your envy. Maybe it's a person. Maybe it's a spouse. Maybe it's a sibling. Maybe it's a friend, a co-worker, an acquaintance. Maybe it's not even a person, but it's an area of your life where you are jealous of everyone who has a better in that area. I want you to be honest right now, and I want you to write down the area where you are envious and jealous. Because until we admit it, until we claim it, God is not going to be able to come into our lives and help replace that envy with something better.

Song

Mark Twain wrote, **“A man will do many things to get himself loved, but he will do all things to get himself envied.”**

It would seem if envy is the one deadly sin, that has no up side to it, and it has all this negative baggage that we just talked about connected to it, it would be one of the sins that

would be easiest to avoid. Right? Well, wrong. Because the enticement to envy is everywhere around us. In fact, envy is the driving force behind our economy. It's behind every advertisement that you see. In fact, there isn't a management campaign that doesn't use envy to get us to purchase what they are selling. Envy is the primary reason why we run up so much credit card debt. It's why we buy the flat screen TV that we can't afford, why we move into the apartment that is way outside our budget, why we buy the clothes that we don't need because we are envious of what other people have. In fact, How do we overcome the trap of envy? Let's look at three steps that we can take to overcome envy. Here's the first one:

**I Overcome Envy When I
Stop comparing myself to others.**

Philippians 4:2

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.

It's interesting, but envy is the exact opposite of pride, the deadly sin that we talked about last week. Envy and pride, they find their root in the same thing, and that is comparing yourself to someone else. With pride, I compare myself with someone else and I come out on top. And the same thing with envy, I compare myself to someone else, but they come out on top. Whenever you compare yourself to someone else, nothing good will come of it.

Have you ever taken one of those personality profiles? Staff has done this a couple times and I come out as a little competitive. OK – a lot competitive. Being competitive can be a good thing. It can mean you are driven. It means you get things done. But the problem with competitiveness is that it has a dark side, and the dark side is that I often compare myself to others to see if I am a success or if I am a failure. No matter how much God blesses our church there is always someone out there who I can find and point to that God is blessing them more or that they are doing better. There is always someone that I can find that will make me so miserable, that will make me feel like a failure. It's not just that I want to have what they have, but I want to be better than they are. I want to have more than they have, that I get so good, that I get so much better, that we do so well, that we pass them and that's great unless it means that they have to fail. That's the ugly side of envy. Comparing yourself to others is a stupid and miserable way to live.

Inevitably you are going to compare yourself to someone this week. When you feel that happen, I want you to hit the pause button in your life and pray this short breath prayer.

“God, thank You for making me, me, and, help me to stop comparing myself to this person.”

Show kindness to the person I envy

Philippians 4:3

Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

In this series on the Seven Deadly Sins, we aren't just telling you to stop doing the Seven Deadly Sins. You can't just stop being envious of other people. Instead, in this series, we are talking about replacing the deadly sins in your life with Godly virtue. God wants to remove the envy in your life by replacing it with kindness. Specifically, kindness toward the object of your envy.

Start being thankful for who I am and what I have

Philippians 4:6-7

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Satan’s favorite weapon is to take our eyes off of how God has blessed us and then to turn our attention to how He is blessing others. Instead of thanking God for what He has blessed us with we find ourselves shaking our hands and saying, “God, You are so unfair.” Envy leads you to resent others & to blame God for not giving you what God gave to someone else. To overcome envy just express thanks to God.

Underline that word “peace” and “thankful”. Now draw a line between peace and thankful. Because you see it’s when we are thankful and acknowledge how God has blessed us, and the good things that He has brought into our lives, it’s only then that God’s peace comes into our life and that we experience God’s peace with other people.

Godly actions precede Godly feelings.

In other words, sometimes I have to do the thing that I know I should do even when I don’t feel like it. And for me to experience that feeling, I first have to do the action. So I may feel jealous, but if I’m just waiting for the feeling of envy and jealousy to go away, it’s not going to go away. Sometimes, I have to do the act of kindness before I feel kind. Pull out your Connection Card again. Think about that person that you wrote on the back of your Connection Card, that you were envious of, or the situation or the circumstances that caused you to be envious and jealous. What if this week you approached that person, or, situation with kindness. Maybe you have heard the phrase “they killed me with kindness” well why not kill your envy with kindness. I guarantee you it will change your life. It will begin to free you from the misery, from the bitterness and the resentment that envy causes. In fact, if you try it this week, I want you to do me a favor. My email is on the inside of your program, if you try it this week, I guarantee you are going to feel differently, and I want you to email me and tell me the results of that, if you get a chance. If you experience that in your life. You see, the ultimate goal for your life from God’s perspective is this, in fact, look in your notes. Envy we defined as the desire for other’s traits, status, abilities and situation so

The Goal today would be: contentment with my traits, status, ability, situation.

Now, I want you to understand by saying contentment, I’m not saying complacent. You see, contentment and complacency are two different things. You should try to be the very best that you can be in everything that you do. You should try to be the best in your field. You should try to be the best you that you can be. Everything that God created you to be, don’t be complacent. What I am saying by contentment is this—don’t be consumed with what you don’t have. Don’t be consumed by what others have. You see, the secret to contentment isn’t having more. Having something that no one can ever take away from you. The secret to contentment is having something that no one can ever better. Now, the Bible says that contentment, that happiness, that security comes in a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and there is no other way to get it. True contentment comes from knowing that you were created specially by God, that you were created specially for God, that you were loved specially by God, and that there is no one else on this planet that God loves more than you and that there is nothing that you could do and nothing that you could be, there is nothing that you could become that would make God love you any

more or make God love you any less. So because of that, you don't have to envy anyone else ever again. Look at our memory verse. It's found in

Philippians 4:11-12

“I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.”

Father, everyone of us here knows what it feels like to be envious and jealous. We know what makes us miserable and turns us into miserable people. It keeps us from being able to enjoy the life that You have given us. It distracts from Your best plan for our lives.

Father, beginning today, help us take our eyes off of others and put our eyes on You.

God, help us to be who You created us to be. May we not envy any more, and God may we instead, be thankful. Father, if there is anyone here today who has never experienced Your unconditional life, Your unconditional acceptance, I pray today that they will ask You to come into their lives for the very first time. Father, we pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

MY NEXT STEP TODAY IS TO...

- Memorize Philippians 4:11-12.
- Pray and ask God for contentment in the area of _____.
- Restart my First Fifteen this week.
- Receive information on being baptized.