







AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?

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**CHAPTER ONE**

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CHAPTER ONE

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CHARACTERISTICS OF ENVY

"Oscar Wilde used to tell a fable...The Devil was once crossing the Libyan Desert when he came upon a group of small fiends who were tempting a holy hermit. They tried him with the seductions of the flesh; they sought to sow his mind with doubts and fears; they told him that all his austerities were worth nothing. But it was of no avail. The holy man was impeccable. Then the Devil stepped forward. Addressing the imps he said, 'Your methods are too crude. Permit me for one moment. This is what I would recommend.' Going up to the hermit he said, 'Have you heard the news? Your brother has been made the Bishop of Alexandria.' The fable says 'A scowl of malignant jealousy clouded the serene face of the holy man.'" (Daily Readings; Sangster; page 200)

The Bible tells us to weep with those who weep and to rejoice with those who rejoice (Romans 12:15). Why is it that we find it sometimes harder to rejoice with the rejoicing ones than to weep with the weeping ones? Because we cannot envy people's sorrows, but it is easy to envy people's joy.

Notes William Barclay, "It may be said that envy is the last sin to die. It reared its ugly head even in the apostolic band. The other ten were envious of James and John, when these had seemed to steal a march upon them in the matter of precedence in the coming Kingdom (Mark 10:41). Even at the last supper the disciples were disputing about who should occupy the seats of greatest honor (Luke 22:24). So long as self remains active within a man's heart there will be envy in his life. E. G. Selwyn calls envy 'the constant plague

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of all voluntary organizations, to least religious organizations'. C. E. B. Cranfield says that 'we do not have to be engaged in what is called 'church work' very long to discover what a perennial source of trouble envy is'. Envy can only die when self dies." (Daily Study Bible; I Peter; page 225)

"We may define this vice as pain, grief, or annoyance felt at the happiness, success, or fortune of another; displeasure or regret aroused by the superiority of another - plus a certain degree of malice or malignity and a desire to depreciate the person envied...It was the secret hurt you felt when somebody with whom you had matched yourself in thought or with whom others matched you, surpassed you or was considered to have surpassed you. It was the secret elation and gloating you found in your heart when he stumbled and fell. That was jealousy! It is deadly in its nature and can cast a long shadow over the whole of life." (Secret of Radiant Living; Sangster; page 94)

What is the context from which jealousy arises? "The people we do not know and who completely outshine us do not provoke us to this sin. It is the people whom we do know, who move in the same circle, and who just surpass us, who unconsciously set the trap into which we fall. Let any man, therefore, eager to be on guard against this subtle vice, watch himself in his estimation of those who are doing the same work that he is doing, and doing it in the same circle. Let him mount a DOUBLE guard over himself when he hears them praised - even though the praise may honestly sound extravagant to him. Saul's jealousy of David may already have been a spark in his heart before the women shouted, but it flared into flame at the feminine cry: 'Saul has slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands.'" (Secret of Radiant Living; Sangster; page 95, 96)

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Jealousy destroys physical health. Proverbs 14:30 says, "A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones."

Envy and jealousy are destructive because they cause one to seek for places of eminence and superiority, thus causing mental stress. In his popular book "None of These Diseases", Dr. S. I. McMillan notes: "Psychic turmoil, arising out of our desires to go to the moon or to attain superiority over our fellows, is very common. An outstanding psychiatrist, Dr. Alfred Adler, taught that most modern nervous and emotional disorders grow out of a definite striving for power. Because the average man in his mad drive to power is in a daily race with others for earthly goals, his day is full of failures, frustrations, banged-up feelings and, often, fenders...Is it not a pity that we are cursed with an innate urge to be ever madly racing with one another like the participants in a stock car race? In our excitement to be first we become oblivious to the damage we inflict on others and ourselves. The stock cars that are battered, banged, dented, and noisy are no worse off than bruised humanity broken down with many a disease from life's competitions." (Page 133, 134)

Jealousy destroys human relationships. Envy can spoil friendships and destroy old fellowships. "Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?" (Proverbs 27:4) "We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another." (Titus 3:3) Envy breeds hatred, resentment.

"Envy" has been called the most wicked, the deadliest, the most detestable of all our sinful passions. (Bible Characters; Alexander Whyte; page 30)

"Envy has slit eyes - eyes narrowed and severe. The New Testament Greek phrase for

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envy is literally to have an 'evil eye', to look upon with evil. 'Envy is the consuming desire to have everybody as unsuccessful as you are.' That is only half of it. Envy is the sorrow at another's success and the joy over another's misfortune. What is uglier or more perverse than the face that turns sad and bitter when another has good fortune or that smiles when another one fails? Envy turns Paul's instruction, 'Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep' (Romans 12:15), upside down. We rejoice when others weep and weep when they rejoice. Or, in a more subtle form, we cannot rejoice or can only halfheartedly rejoice when others succeed. Dorothy Sayers says of envy: 'It begins by asking, plausibly: Why should not I enjoy what others enjoy? And it ends by demanding: Why should others enjoy what I may not? Envy is the great leveller: if it cannot level things up, it will level things down.'" (The Jekyll and Hyde Syndrome; H. Stephen Shoemaker; page 51)

Envy and jealousy may not be synonyms, but these two conditions are so similar that they may be called "twin sisters". We will not do much injustice to either of these concepts if we use them interchangeably.

"It (jealously) was that feeling of coldness and resentment that stirred in your heart when you heard somebody else praised, somebody with whom you had matched yourself in thought and of whom you fancied yourself superior. It was that dislike which nearly turned to bitterness when they attracted more attention than you attracted, or sipped the waters of success a little deeper, or took a position you had marked as your own. All these were the stirrings of jealousy. It was jealousy that took the heart out of the congratulations you felt obliged to give; that kept you silent when you heard him unfairly criticized; that made you secretly glad when they stumbled and

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fell. It was jealously, petty, loathsome jealousy, the jealousy which, at its worst, can be incredibly cruel." (He Is Able; Sangster; page 110, 111)

There is a difference between envying another person and admiring him. One may admire another's qualities - his character or his achievements - and not be envious. It is possible to wish to be like another person and even desire to imitate the great qualities in another, and yet not be guilty of envy or jealousy. "There is a sadness over not having another's gifts or accomplishments which can work as an impetus to excellence and achievement. This is not the sin of envy. How can it be a sin to want to do better or be better? But it is a sin when you turn bitter at another's accomplishment and seek to pull them down in order to hoist yourself up...It can become a sin as you turn to self-despising in their presence, when their accomplishment makes you feel worthless. You may not seek to pull them down but you may avoid them or find it impossible to affirm them and like them." (The Jekyll and Hyde Syndrome; H. Stephen Shoemaker; page 52, 53)

Jesus envied no one, even though Jesus Himself was an object of envy by others. Jesus, the "homeless One", could have envied the rich. Jesus, the "sorrowing One", could have envied the comfortable and complacent. Jesus, the "misunderstood One", could have envied those whose traditional teachings were easily understood and accepted. Jesus, the "dying One" who was grossly and unjustly treated, could have envied those to whom justice was carefully granted.

Even though Jesus envied no one, Jesus was the target of envy by others. "How the Pharisees hated him for his success with the multitude! They also were teachers, but they could not 'get the crowd'. They said bitterly: 'The

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world is gone after him'. The priests were as envious as the Pharisees. Pilate saw through them. Mark says that Pilate knew that they had handed Christ over to him 'out of envy'." (The Secret of Radiant Life; Sangster; page 97)

Envyng another's possessions gives birth to greed. Jesus encountered this problem in his contacts with people, during his now public ministry. "Someone in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' Jesus replied, 'Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?' Then he said to them, 'Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.'" (Luke 12:13-15 NIV)

An inordinate self-love and pride is the soil in which envy and jealousy can so easily grow. "Thinking more highly of yourself than you ought to think" (Romans 12:3a) will inevitably cause you to become jealous of others, or others to become envious of you. Pride caused James and John (disciples of Jesus) to seek positions of status and power, which in turn caused anger and jealousy to rise in the hearts of their fellow disciples. Competition for the "top spot" among colleagues will always lead to jealousy and strife. "Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him, 'Teacher', they said, 'we want you to do for us whatever we ask.' 'What do you want me to do for you?' he asked. They replied, 'Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.' 'You don't know what you are asking,' Jesus said. 'Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?' 'We can,' they answered. Jesus said to them, 'You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been

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prepared.' When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John." (Mark 10:35-41) Their "indignation" (anger) was the result of jealousy, for James and John had "stolen the march" on them. "Who are James and John to think that they are greater than the rest of us, to ask the Master to seat them on thrones next to Himself?" Hurt pride caused by jealousy issues forth in anger towards peers who try to "steal the march"! Much of jealousy then is caused because people have an inordinate love of themselves. Humility is one great antidote for jealousy and envy. "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves." (Philippians 2:3) Humility gives birth to gratitude and love for others, but pride offers the occasion or jealousy to seize the heat. But we will say more later about the effective cures for envy and jealousy.

With this brief description regarding the general characteristics of envy and jealousy in mind, in future chapters we will think more specifically regarding the Causes of Envy, the Consequences of Envy, and the Cure for Envy. We will draw heavily (but not exclusively) from the story of Cain's murder of Abel, in our attempt to understand the dynamics (the causes and the consequences) of Envy. To round out our understanding of this delicate subject, we must resort to other Scriptures and examples as well, especially those truths in the New Testament from which we draw our greatest insights regarding the cure for the age-long problem of envy and jealousy.

"Father, help me to rejoice with those who rejoice as well as to weep with those who weep. Enable me to take genuine pleasure in the success of others, regardless of the degree of success I am allowed to enjoy. Uproot the ugly weed of jealousy from my heart

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and plant in its place the beautiful flower of good will and love. In Jesus' magnanimous name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION: Learning to appreciate others without envy makes my inward world peaceful and my outward world grateful!

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CHAPTER ONE QUESTIONS

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1. Why is it that we find it sometimes harder to rejoice with the rejoicing ones than to weep with the weeping ones? (Romans 12:15)
2. Cite illustrations from the lives of the New Testament disciples, prior to Pentecost, when envy reared its "ugly head". (Note Mark 10:41; Luke 22:24)
3. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "So long as self remains active within a man's heart there will be envy in his life."
4. How can "Envy" be defined, and how does "Envy" express itself in the life of the envious person when his opponent fails or falters?
5. What is the "context" from which envy or jealousy arises? On what occasion was Saul's jealousy of David especially incited?
6. What evidence can you cite - from personal experience\observation or from Scriptures - to indicate that jealousy and envy can destroy one's physical health? (Note Proverbs 14:30)
7. Do you agree with psychiatrist, Dr. Adler, that most modern nervous and emotional disorders grow out of a definite striving for power?
8. Socially-speaking, what affect does jealousy and envy have? (Note Proverbs 27:4; Titus 3:3; Galations 5:19-21,26)

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9. Give your interpretation of the following statement: "Envy is the great leveller: if it cannot level things up, it will level things down."
10. How do you distinguish between "envying" another person and "admiring" another person? Is it possible to admire another person without envying him?
11. Is it a sign of envy, and thus a sin, for you to turn to self-despising in the presence of another person whom you estimate to be superior to you? Why or why not?
12. Is it a sign of envy when you seek to avoid a person, or when you find it difficult to affirm a person, whom you consider to be superior to yourself? Why or why not?
13. What evidence is there (from a study of the Gospels) that, even though Jesus was the object of envy, Jesus Himself was never an envious person?
14. Illustrate from your personal life\observation or from Scripture how envying another's possessions gives birth to greed. (Note Luke 12:13-15)
15. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "'Thinking more highly of yourself than you ought to think' (Romans 12:3), will inevitably cause you to become jealous of others, or others to become envious of you." (Note Mark 10:35-41)
16. With what degree of conviction do you believe in the following statement: "Humility gives birth to gratitude and love for others, but pride offers the occasion for jealousy to seize the heart"?

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**CHAPTER TWO**

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CAUSES OF ENVY

Comparing ourselves unfavorably with another is the root cause of all envy. "To practice comparison with one's fellows is often to be trapped in sin. If they are not as virtuous as we are, we slip into spiritual pride; if they are more virtuous than we are, we are tempted to imply that it is only appearance and they are possibly hypocrites; if they have tasted more of the sweetness of success than we have done, we often slide into envy." (He Is Able; Sangster; page 115, 116)

A. Sinful Actions Compared To Righteous Actions

Why was Cain so angry with Abel? His anger was the result of his jealousy towards Abel. Cain knew he was unrighteous in his motives and hypocritical in his worship, while his brother Abel was pure in motives and righteous in actions. "The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door.'" (Genesis 4:4b-7 NIV)

Without the righteous saying a word of rebuke to the godless person, the latter often feel judged by the righteous lives of the godly. The godly man's life, in contrast to the evil man's life, will cause the evil man to have a jealous heart and a downcast look, and perhaps an angry reaction. Jesus' pure life condemned

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the hypocritical lives of the Jewish leaders, causing them to be jealous of Jesus' spiritual success.

"Cain envied Abel because of his goodness, and because his goodness had found him acceptance and praise of God. And in his envy and hate of his brother's goodness and acceptance Cain rose up and slew his brother." (Bible Characters; Alexander Whyte; page 30)

There are people whose sins have "taken their toll". These people no longer have "pleasure" in their sins. What was considered a "sweet morsel", has now turned "bitter" in their mouths! Their sinful actions have brought them poverty and misery. Now these pathetic souls no longer find pleasure in their evil ways, but neither are they willing to repent of their wrongs that they might be healed and be made whole. But, strangely enough, even though they don't want to swallow the "bitter pill" of confession, they do look enviously upon the lives of righteous people who are enjoying the fruits of their holy decisions. The righteous who enjoy physical health, financial prosperity, happy homes, honorable careers - these righteous people become the object of jealous sneers from unrighteous peers. How the unrighteous desire the positive fruits of godly living, even though the unrighteous are not willing to "pay the price" of repentance to find a righteous life-style. Is not much persecution of the righteous by the wicked, the manifestation of secret jealousy in the heart of the wicked? It was so in Cain's life, and it surely must be so in the lives of countless wicked men today who know that the "Abels" around them are accepted by God while they are rejected by God!

Cain could have changed! He could have repented of his wrong. God would gladly have accepted his offering, as well as Abel's

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offering! It was not the content of the offering, it was the attitude behind the offering of Cain that brought God's judgment to Cain and that incited Cain to jealousy and to hatred!

One cause of jealousy and envy is an unfavorable comparison between one's unrighteous life and the righteous life of another. If you find yourself being jealous of another, first ask yourself this question: "Am I jealous of another because he is more righteous than I, and because my wrong motives and evil actions have caused God to look upon me with disfavor in contrast to my 'brother' whose righteous life has brought the 'smile of God's approval' upon him?"

"Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous". (I John 3:12) Much of the evil man's persecution of the righteous as based on the fact that the wicked are convicted of their sin, as they see their sinful lives in contrast to the righteous lives around them.

It is not only a depressed sinner, looking at the favorable "fruits" of a righteous man's life, that can cause the sinner to become jealous-ridden. It is easy for envy to seize the heart of even a professing believer when he is caused to feel inferior as he compares himself unfavorably with a more dedicated or more mature Christian than himself. "Let our brother worship God alongside of our alter also, and let him find more acceptance with God and with man than we find; let him be better gifted of God and better placed by God; more approved of God and of God's people than we are, and you will soon see Cain. Praise the talents, the industry, the achievements of our very best and dearest friend, and it is gall and wormwood to us. But blaspheme him,

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belittle him, detract from him, pooh-pooh and sneer at him, and we will embrace you, for you have put marrow into our dead bones, and gave good wine to him that was of a heavy heart. Praise a neighboring minister's prayer, or his preaching, or his pastoral activity at another minister's table, and you will upset both him and his listening house for days." (Bible Characters; Whyte; page 30, 31)

### B. Prosperity Of The Wicked Compared To The Poverty Of The Godly

If the root cause of all envy is found in the fact that one makes an unfavorable comparison of himself with another person, then a specific way in which some persons - in this case, believers - fall into the trap of envy is to compare themselves (as godly persons) with unbelievers who seem to be prospering while they seem to be suffering loss. If the cause of Cain's envy was his sense of condemnation as he unfavorably compared his unrighteous life (and motives) with those of his brother Abel, then the cause of envy in the life of the Psalmist (as recorded in Psalms 73) was his sense of moral injustice as he (a godly man) compared his losses with the gains of some wicked persons around him! Wrote the Psalmist, "But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." (Psalms 73:2,3)

Have you ever felt like you took two steps forward and three steps backward, that the harder you tried to live a godly life the more adversities and reverses you seemed to experience? Have you ever felt a spirit of covetousness come over you when you observed the wicked in their prosperity in contrast to your hardships and obstacles and financial troubles? Have you ever wondered why God allows the wicked man to enjoy pleasures and

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power and position and prestige, while God, at the same time, allows the righteous man to suffer hardships of all kinds - financial losses, physical infirmities, heart-breaking sorrows, spiritual depressions? Have you ever thought that health and wealth automatically belonged to you by virtue of your spiritual sonship in God's family, and that, when you weren't enjoying prosperity, God must be failing to keep His promises? Have you ever been tempted to demand an explanation of why some who are not as righteous as you are, seem to get ahead?

If you believe that material prosperity is a sure sign of God's blessings, then you will be very confused, maybe even bitter, if you observe the wicked prospering while you are not prospering! Envy is the result of one person (in this case, a believer) making an unfavorable comparison with another (in this case, with a prosperous wicked man).

"For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." (v. 3) When your next door neighbor - a neighbor who obviously is not a Christian - drives home one night in a brand new car, how do you feel? When your fellow employee - a man who is notorious for his crude language and his godless actions - flaunts his new clothes before you and talks about his newly purchased 4000 square foot home, how do you feel? When your next door neighbor lady friend - an unbeliever - comes to your home for coffee in the midmorning and talks to you about her happy family and her loving husband and you know that you - a believer - are presently having marital problems and disciplinary problems with your children, how do you feel?

If we are honest, most of us would have to admit that the seeming "prosperity" of our unsaved friends, in contrast to our seeming

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"failures", causes envious feelings to rise to the surface of our hearts.

### C. Success Of Believer Compared To Seeming Failure Of Fellow Believer

We have said that envy is a strange phenomenon that sometimes exists in the heart of an unbeliever. At the same time that he is sneering at the godly man, he is secretly envying the good fruits of the godly man's life. We have further said that envy can easily strike the heart of the believer during his times of personal adversity, especially when the suffering believer feels the "unfairness" of his adverse situation in contrast to the wealth and health and success of his wicked peers. (Psalms 73)

Thirdly, we must note that envy can also easily spring up within the fellowship of God's own people who tend to compare themselves among themselves. "The impulse towards comparison is strong in us all. Constantly comparing ourselves with other people can do great spiritual harm." (The Secret of Radiant Life; Sangster; page 98)

It was into this "trap" that Simon Peter fell, when he compared his future with the future of his fellow disciple, John. "Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.' Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, 'Follow me!' Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, 'Lord, who is going to betray you?') When Peter saw him, he asked, 'Lord, what about him?'" (John 21:18-22)

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Do you ever find yourself, as a believer, comparing your talents, or your personality, or your achievements, or your possessions, or your hardships, or your lot in life, or your family with that of some other fellow believer, and, as a result of your unfavorable comparison, you say "Lord, what about him?"

Have you found yourself struggling with envious feelings, as you have asked the Lord, "Why is it that he is given more honor or more recognition than I, when I have worked just as hard as he?" "Why is it that he has it so much easier in life than I do?" "Why am I required to live so sacrificially, to give so generously, to suffer so frequently, to work so diligently, and he seems to get by with so little sacrifice?" "Why am I called to the mission field as a medical doctor to live on a meager salary, when my Christian friend is allowed to practice his medicine in a modern hospital in America and grow financially doing so?" "Why is it that I have worked so hard as a pastor for ten years, laboring diligently to win souls, and my church seems to shrink in size, whereas my fellow pastor's church has doubled in size in only two years time?" "Why is it that all my Christian friends have been led to fine Christian husbands, and yet I have not found a godly man to marry, in spite of the fact that I have prayed for years for a good man?"

These are questions similar to Peter's question: "Lord, what about him?" These above-mentioned questions, along with Peter's question, reveal the stirrings of envy in the hearts of sincere believers who are comparing themselves unfavorably with fellow believers whose lot and status in life seem much more favorable. "Why", asks Peter, "should John not have to die a martyr's death, if I have to? Why should he not also have to experience death by crucifixion as a result of serving you?"

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The stirrings of envy are often experienced amidst a group of sincere believers who fail to keep their focus alone on God and who begin to compare themselves with themselves!

"O God, I confess that jealousy is a serious problem in my life. Help me to rest secure in your unconditional love for me, and to know that I don't have to 'prove' myself worthy of your acceptance through performance and achievement in a world of competitive striving. Dear Lord, don't let me go through life begrudging others of their happiness and success, and at the same time losing my own joy and contentment. Deliver me from my mad pursuit for success and recognition based on a competition with others. Help me to be neither the object or the subject of jealousy, but to live at peace with all men. In Jesus' name. Amen."

AFFIRMATION:

Outdoing one another in showing love and in demonstrating generosity is the only kind of competition that is acceptable and worthy.

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CHAPTER TWO QUESTIONS  
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1. What do you believe is the "root cause" of all "Envy"?
2. Why is it so devastating for one to practice making comparisons with his fellowmen? What are the inevitable consequences - depending upon whether the comparisons are favorable or unfavorable - of making such comparisons?
3. Why was Cain so angry with Abel? (Note Genesis 4:4b-7)
4. Without the godly ever saying a word of rebuke to the godless, what effect does the godly man's life often have upon his ungodly peers?
5. For what reason do the ungodly often "persecute" the godly?
6. Was it the "content" of the offering, or was it the "attitude" behind the offering that brought God's judgment to Cain? (Note Genesis 4:7; I John 3:12)
7. Why does the prosperity of the wicked (Psalms 73) often become an occasion for envy to rise in the heart of a believer?
8. What effects, spiritually-speaking, can envy have in the life of a believer who becomes preoccupied with the prosperity of the wicked? (Note Psalms 73:2,3)
9. Share from your personal life (or from your observations of other believers) occasions when your envy of the wicked took a "serious toll" on your Christian life?

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10. Have you ever thought that health and wealth automatically belonged to you by virtue of your spiritual sonship in God's family, and that, when you weren't enjoying prosperity, God must be failing to keep His promises? Does God, in His Word, promise believers immunity from financial reverses and\or poor health?
11. Have you ever been tempted to demand an explanation of why some who are not as righteous as you are, seem to get ahead?
12. Do you ever find yourself, as a believer (like Simon Peter in John 21:18-22), comparing your talents, or your personality, or your achievements, or your possessions, or your leadership, or your lot in life, or your family, with that of some other fellow believer, and (as a result of your unfavorable comparison) you say, "Lord, what about him?"



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**CHAPTER THREE**

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CONSEQUENCES OF ENVY

We have noted that envy basically is the result of one person unfavorably comparing himself with another. That comparison can be done in several ways:

(a) An unhappy sinner comparing himself to a happy believer whose prosperity becomes the object of covetousness by a godless man who wants the positive fruits of a righteous life without the sacrificial involvement of living righteously. Envy, in this situation, usually manifests itself in persecution of the godly by the godless (as in the case of Cain),

(b) A sincere believer who presently is suffering loss, comparing himself with the prosperity of the wicked person (as in Psalms 73). Envy, in this situation, usually manifests itself in words from the mouth of the believer that express confusion or bitterness or doubt.

(c) A sincere believer who is seeking devoutly to follow God, comparing himself with another devout believer whose life seems to be more blessed by God in terms of visible results and spiritual achievements (as in John 21:18-22). Envy, in this situation, usually manifest itself in questioning divine fairness and in asking, (as Peter did regarding the status and future of John) "What about this man?"

"Constantly comparing ourselves with other people can do great spiritual harm. If we conclude that we are better or abler than they are, we can be trapped into pride. If we conclude that we are less able and clearly

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below them, we can be trapped into inferiority or envy." (The Secret of Radiant Life; Sangster; page 98)

What are some of the tragic consequences of envy, especially as these consequences are illustrated in the life of Cain?

### A. Sadness Rather Than Gladness

When envy seized the heart of Cain, his temper flared and his countenance changed. "Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?'" (Genesis 4:6)

"The Latin word for envy is invidia. It means to look maliciously upon, to look askance. Envy is the sin of an evil eye." (The Jekyll & Hyde Syndrome; Stephen Shoemaker; page 51) One cannot long entertain envious thoughts without the emotions being adversely affected (anger or bitterness or despair) and without the countenance changing (slit eyes and down-cast mouth).

Envy is the great robber of joy. "Envy robs life of all its sweetness. It is endless disparagement of others; it is endless disparagement of self." (Ibid; page 55)

Love for God brings gratitude to the heart, but envy causes one to grumble and to complain to God instead, taking the focus off of the good gifts which God has given already and accusing God for not giving more and greater gifts. Love says this to God: "Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small. Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all." Envy says this to God: "Why God, haven't you given me more and more gifts? I deserve more, while others deserve less!" Notes Stephen Shoemaker, "Envy is a denial of the goodness of God. It wishes to deny God's goodness to others and refuses to recognize God's goodness

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to oneself. Take Jesus' parable of the workers and the hours. Remember, the master recruited workers at 6AM, 9AM, 12 Noon, 3PM and 5PM, and promised to pay them each a day's wages. Then at the end of the day, he lined up the workers, paid the ones hired last first and paid them all the same, a day's wages. The men hired first, the ones who had worked all day, began to grumble and murmur - grumbling and murmuring are the sounds of envy. The master looked into their evil eyes and asked the most probing of all questions: 'Is your eye evil because I am good?' Are you envious because I am generous? (Matthew 20:15). When envy sees that God is generous to others, it cannot see how God is generous to oneself. The grumbling workers refused to see that the master was good to them by providing a fair day's wage for an honest day's work because they were incensed by the master's 'unfair' generosity toward those hired last. How content we are with what we have in life until we see someone else (no more deserving than we!) enjoying more. In envy's denial of the goodness of God, its heart knows no gratitude. Its narrow slit eyes can see nothing for which to be thankful. Ingratitude is perhaps a major symptom of the sin of envy." (The Jekyll and Hyde Syndrome; page 55,56)

Love for others brings gladness to the heart, but envy causes one to begrudge others of the gifts which God has given to them. One who truly loves another is not envious of another's success. Rather, he rejoices with another when he gets a new home or a new car or a new job or recognition and honor. "A small boy once worried his mother for a penknife and at last his importunity wore down her opposition and she bought him one. He was happy just for an hour. He went next door to show the penknife to his friend and came back miserable, and when his mother chided him for ingratitude, he said, 'Jim has a penknife also. But his penknife has three blades and

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mine only has two.' How foolish it is to lose the pleasure of the things we have by dwelling on the slight advantages of our neighbor. But it is not a fault confined to children. It is the daily error of half the world and in our folly we let the spirit of envy filch our happiness away." (He Is Able; Sangster; page 116)

Love for ones self - a humble self-love, not a self-centered self-love-brings confidence to one's own heart. Rather than belittling oneself because one fails to accomplish what others accomplish, the love-filled person learns to appreciate others, but never enviously to compete with others. One evidence of envy in the life of a person is seen when that person turns to self-despising in the presence of another whose accomplishments overshadow his own accomplishments. "Envy is a major cause of unhappiness and self-contempt. Those who envy are never happy with what they are and have. They hate themselves for not being the persons they envy and despise themselves for not possessing what the envied possess." (The Christian Reader; September\October 1987; page 95)

The person who is in a right relationship with God, with others, and with himself, is a person whose joy abounds. He is grateful for God's good gifts to himself; he is glad when his peers are prospering because of God's grace. He is grateful for the unique place that God has designed for him to fill, and thus he has confidence in himself. He despises neither himself nor others, and he is grateful for God's gifts of grace given to him and to others.

Yes, one of the tragic consequences of envy is that it brings sadness rather than gladness to life. Said Joseph Parker, the great nineteenth-century London preacher; "Beware of envy....it is relentless, it will plague your

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life, it will rob every flower of its perfume, it will ban the light out of every window in the house; your dinner today will be no refreshment to you."

### B. Hate Rather Than Love

In the great love chapter - I Corinthians 13 - Paul wrote, "Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud."

"Envy is the reverse side of a coin called vanity. No body is ever envious of others who is not first proud of himself. And the Jewish leaders were proud, racially, nationally, religiously and morally proud. They were proud of their nation's long history of a special relationship with God, proud of their own leadership role in this nation, and above all proud of their authority. Their contest with Jesus was essentially an authority struggle. For he challenged their authority, while at the same time possessing himself an authority which they manifestly lacked....So they felt threatened by Jesus. He undermined their prestige, their hold over the people, their own self-confidence and self-respect, while leaving his intact. They were 'envious' of him, and therefore determined to get rid of him." (The Cross of Christ; Stott; page 53,54)

The proud person is the person whose heart is an easy prey for envy and jealousy and hate. The proud person cannot stand for anyone to outdo him or to overshadow him. If anyone challenges his position or person, he becomes angry or resentful or even hateful.

As we have just noted, envy was one of the chief motivations behind the plot of the religious leaders to have Jesus crucified. Pilate

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knew that it was out of envy that the priests had handed Jesus over to him. (Matthew 27:18; Mark 15:10)

The conviction which Cain felt because of his sin was great. Instead of repenting, Cain choose to allow envy to seize his heart. Envy gave birth to hate, and hate finally expressed itself in murder! "Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous." (I John 3: 12)

Envy is the destroyer of love and the motivation behind many murders! One-time friends can become out-and-out enemies when the wedge of envy is allowed to come between them!

Many have been the times throughout the history of mankind that the following dreadful scene has been repeated: "Now Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let's go out to the field.' And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him." (Genesis 4: 8)

### C. Hardheartedness Rather Than Compassion

After Cain's murder of Abel, "the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?' 'I don't know', he replied. 'AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?'" (Genesis 4:9)

One tragic consequence of envy is that it makes the envious person insensitive to the needs of others. The envious person is self-absorbed, self-centered. We are meant to be our "brother's keeper", i.e., we are meant to help bear his burdens, to give him a listening ear, to have a tender heart, to weep with him when he weeps and to rejoice with him when he rejoices, to be sensitive to his special hurts. Instead of being gracious, the envious are judgemental in their attitude

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towards others. Far from giving others the "benefit of the doubt" and believing only the best about others, the envious are sour and critical towards others. Far from working happily with others, the envious try to act big and try proudly to get into the good graces of important people. Envious people focus on those whom they consider to be "high and mighty", and their envy of those above them causes them to use others beside them as steppingstones on their way to the "top of the heap". In other words, because pride is their chief motivator in life, envious people do not enjoy the company of ordinary folks. It is not worship of God or service to others that occupy their minds it is pride in position which controls their envious hearts. The proud, self-centered man could not care less for his fellowmen. Compassion has no place in his heart. When envy captured the heart of Cain, Abel became an object to be destroyed, not a brother to be served and loved!

Envy makes people tough and calloused and indifferent and self-centered! Are you your "brother's keeper"? Yes, if love fills your heart! No, if you have allowed envy to take possession of your heart!

### D. Alienation Rather Than Fellowship

Cain, the proud one, became Cain the envious one, when he realized that Abel's righteousness, in contrast to his unrighteous acts and attitudes, made Abel superior to him. Envy typically gives birth to contempt and hate for the one who is envied, and hate that is fully expressed leads to murder. This briefly describes the downward spiral in Cain's life. Pride - envy - hate - murder!

As a result of his terrible crime, Cain became an alienated person. Alienated from the earth, alienated from his fellowmen, alienated from his God! Envy which goes unchecked and

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unhealed can lead to total alienation! Said God to Cain, "A fugitive and vagabond shalt thou be in the earth." (Genesis 4:12)

### (1) Alienation From The Earth's Resources

"Said God to Cain, 'Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.'" (Genesis 4:11,12) Previous to his murder of Abel, Cain was a fruitful farmer. He worked the soil. (Genesis 4:2b) It was fruit of the soil which Cain had given as an offering to the Lord. (Genesis 2:3)

Interesting, that what once Cain took pride in - fruit from the soil - now Cain took shame in - barrenness in the soil. Envy causes one to be alienated from the very things that once were the objects of joy. Envy causes barrenness where there was at one time fruitfulness!

The earth and its resources are meant by God to be used by man and to be enjoyed by man, but when envy takes its toll, even things once enjoyed become things now cursed and despised.

### (2) Alienation From One's Fellowmen

Pitiful are the words of Cain, following the murder of Abel, after Cain is driven from the ground that he tilled: "I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me." (Genesis 4:14b)

Love is the great reconciler whose fruits are to be cherished and enjoyed - fellowship, intimacy, unity, understanding! Envy is the great divider whose fruits are bitter and painful - alienation, enmity, fear, loneliness!

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The envious person seeks to possess or to replace others - their position or their things. The very nature of envy is exploitative and depersonalizing. Persons are reduced from subjects to be cherished to objects to be possessed. He who treats others as "things" or as "objects" to be manipulated, only alienates himself from others and will eventually turn himself into the greedy-type of person who becomes the object of scorn by others. Social alienation - as in the case of Cain - is an eventual consequence in the life of the envious person.

### (3) Alienation From The Lord

Sense the agony in the heart of Cain and the terror in his voice, as he makes the following declaration following his indictment: "I will be hidden from your presence." (Genesis 4:14b) Instead of enjoying the sweet fellowship of the Lord throughout the day as he tilled his soil, he became a restless wanderer on the earth. Alienated from his land, from his family, and from his God, he finally became an inhabitant in a foreign (and pagan) land. "So Cain went out from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden." (Genesis 4:16 NIV)

According to Ephesians 5:5, a greedy or covetous person is really an idolater. Instead of making the living God his object of love and adoration and worship, he has made money or power or popularity or something else the object of his desires. Dethroning God from the throne of one's heart and enthroning something else on that throne, leaves the pitiful worshipper bowing at a shrine whose god cannot satisfy the hungry soul. Man is made by God and for God and will always remain restless and lonely until he serves the true and the living God!

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Envy always alienates one from God, for envy is setting one's desires upon something (or someone) other than God.

"Father, help me to compare myself with Christ alone, not with other people. Comparing myself with Christ alone delivers me from stress due to peer comparisons and delivers me from complacency due to easy satisfaction with personal, present attainments. Amen."

AFFIRMATION: God will help me to rechannel my strong impulse towards many outward comparisons with men, to one upward comparison with Christ.

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CHAPTER THREE QUESTIONS  
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1. What are three different relationships in which "Envy" can so easily be initiated and cultivated? (Note Genesis 4, Psalms 73, John 21)
2. What changes are registered in one's emotions and in one's countenance when one entertains envious thoughts?
3. What does the Latin word for "Envy" mean?
4. Why can it be said that "Envy is the great robber of joy"?
5. According to Matthew 20:1-15, what is the "language" of "Envy"?
6. Why can it be said that "the spirit of envy filches our happiness away"?
7. Is it possible for one to appreciate others or ever to initiate the good qualities in others, without becoming competitive or envious of others? Why or why not?
8. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "One evidence of envy in the life of a person is seen when that person turns to self-despising in the presence of another whose accomplishments overshadow his own accomplishments."
9. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Nobody is ever envious of others who is not first proud of himself."
10. Why did the Jewish leaders of Jesus' day feel threatened by Jesus, and what was their consequent reaction to this threat?

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11. In what ways does "Envy" make the envious person insensitive to the needs of others?
12. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "It is not worship of God or service to others that occupy the minds of envious people; it is pride in position which controls their envious hearts, and, consequently, people become not subjects to be loved but objects to be used."
13. What four words describe the downward spiral in Cain's life?
14. From both the life of Cain and from your own life or observations, illustrate the truth of the following statement: "Envy causes one to be alienated from the very things that once were the objects of joy."
15. Contrast the ways of love and envy, in terms of the enjoyable fruits and the bitter fruits, respectively.
16. Why is alienation from one's fellowmen, the inevitable consequence in the life of the envious person?
17. Why is alienation from the true and the living God an inevitable consequence in the life of the envious person? (Note Ephesians 5:5)
18. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Dethroning God from the throne of one's heart and enthroning something else on that throne, leaves the pitiful worshipper bowing at a shrine whose god cannot satisfy the hungry soul."



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CHAPTER FOUR

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CURE FOR ENVY

Envy is the result of unfavorable comparisons, and the consequences of envy can be seen, in general terms, as alienation from God, alienation from one's own best self, and alienation from loving fellowship with others. The cure for envy is found when the envious person turns his sights upwards toward God rather than outwards towards others.

If it is true that Envy wishes to crouch at the door of our hearts, ready to spring on us to devour us at any time (Genesis 4: 7), what can we do to master Envy? Is there a balm for the healing of the debilitating disease of Envy?

What can we do to master our desires? If envy is desire misplaced on the wrong object, how can our affectional system be healed?

A. Supreme Love For God

Set your affection on God and all other loves will be swallowed up in your supreme love for God! "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace!" "The love of the world cannot be expunged by mere demonstration of the world's worthlessness. But, may it not be supplanted by the love of that which is more worthy than itself?...The love of God, and the love of the world, are two affections, not merely in a state of rivalry, but in a state of enmity - and that so irreconcilable, that they cannot dwell together in the same bosom...The only way to dispossess the heart of an old affection, is by the expulsive power of a new one.... It is when God stands

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dismantled of the terrors which belong to him as an offended lawgiver, and when we are enabled by faith, which is his own gift, to see his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, and to share his beseeching voice, as it protests good will to men, and entreats the return of all who will to a full pardon and a gracious acceptance - it is then, that a love paramount to the love of the world, and at length expulsive of it, first arises in the regenerating bosom." (20 Centuries of Great Preaching; volume 3; page 307,308; Thomas Chalmers)

It is not hard to set your affections on things above rather than on things on this earth, when you see how great is the glory of the heavenly world! The power of a new affection replaces the old affections for the things of time which have upon them the marks of decay and dissolution.

How do we get rid of old affections with their vain objects of delight? Not by simply condemning the worldly object, but by replacing the old objects with new objects whose pleasures are infinitely greater than the pleasures of the old objects.

How do you take away an old bone from a dog? Not by pulling it out of the dog's mouth, but by fixing the attention of the dog on a new and bigger bone which has more meat upon it! The expulsive power of a new desire enables one to give up an old desire! Why is the maturing youth, ready to enter into marriage with his beloved, no longer infatuated with his old girlfriend of his early teens? The power of a new affection has replaced the old affection!

Why do some noble souls hate what they once loved in the world? Simply because they have fallen in love with God, and the spiritual feasts which are theirs because of their new union with Christ reveal by contrast what

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their worldly meals really were - slop not worthy for the pigs to eat!

He who falls in love with God soon falls out of love with the things of this evil world! The power of a new affection! Jesus came in order that man might have life and might have it more abundantly. He came to earth, not to subtract but to add, not to destroy but to save, not to condemn but to forgive! The last word of Christianity is not denunciation but affirmation, not sacrifice but salvation, not sorrow over sins but joy over redemption.

What is the answer to your evil coveting? It is learning to covet what God covets, to treasure what God treasures, to delight in what God delights in. Setting your affections on God and on heavenly things, is exchanging the world for heaven, is exchanging the temporary for the permanent, is making the living God the object of your coveting rather than making your false and man-made gods the object of your coveting. Treasuring God and desiring the smile of God's approval and coveting a God-like character - these new affections replace the old affections. It is the object of our coveting that determines whether our coveting is right or wrong. Jesus did not forbid us to lay up treasures, but He did define the kind of treasures we are to lay up, and He did pinpoint the place where those treasures are to be deposited. "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6: 19-21)

Loving God and His eternal Kingdom is one of the best antidotes for evil coveting! He who is preoccupied with trying to please and obey God, is not preoccupied with trying to outdo his fellowmen.

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### B. Total Faith In God

Developing a supreme love for God is doubtless the greatest cure for the devouring disease of envy. One who has a supreme love for God is one who has a total faith in God. Faith in God means that one believes that God is a God of sovereign power, and a God of infinite wisdom, and a God of eternal goodness.

#### (1) Faith In God's Sovereign Power.

We earlier said that envy can easily strike the heart of the believer during his times of personal adversity, especially if during those times of loss the believer is making an unfavorable comparison between his personal poverty and the obvious visible prosperity of the wicked who surround him. (Note Psalms 73) His envy can easily turn to despair or to bitterness, or even result in a loss of faith in God! (Psalms 73:2-3)

The Old Testament prophet Habakkuk felt the unfairness of a situation at a time in history when it appeared that the wicked nation of Babylon was devouring God's chosen people. Boldly the prophet asked the Lord this question: "Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?" (Habakkuk 1:13b) When the wicked man prospers and the righteous man suffers loss, the godly man is tempted to question the justice of God. Doubt and confusion can give birth to anger or to depression. Then it is possible easily to fall into the trap of envy - envying the prosperity of the wicked. Getting one's focus off of God and onto others can cause one to lose his spiritual foothold. "But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." (Psalms 73: 2,3)

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What should a believer do when righteousness goes unrewarded and when evil seems to be rampant, to go unchecked and unpunished? In the midst of a set of circumstances which seemed so unfair, and at a time when the prophet Habakkuk could have so easily succumbed to despair, or to anger, or to envy, he instead learned to flex his spiritual muscles and to put his full trust in his Sovereign God. The Lord instructed Habakkuk during this time of national crisis and moral turmoil: "The righteous will live by his faith." (Habakkuk 2:4b)

Habakkuk chose the way of faith in God instead of the pathways of despair or envy or bitterness. How do you exercise faith in God during a time when, morally-speaking, things are "topsy-turvy" - when the wicked are prospering and the righteous are suffering? Like the Psalmist in Psalms 73 and like the prophet in Habakkuk 3. Faith means you wait for God to vindicate the righteous and to punish the wicked. Said the Psalmist: "As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O Lord, you will despise them (the wicked) as fantasies." (Psalms 73:20) Said the prophet Habakkuk: "Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the (wicked) nation invading us." (Habakkuk 3:16b)

Faith, during a time of personal or national crisis, means that you continue to serve God faithfully regardless of the material or the visible benefits that you derive from serving God. To succumb to envying the wicked is to fall away from faith in God. Faith means trusting God, regardless of results, and in spite of the fact that the wicked appear to go unpunished and unchecked in their wickedness. Said the prophet Habakkuk: "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,

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yet I will rejoice in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights." (Habakkuk 3:17-19 NIV)

### (2) Faith In God's Infinite Wisdom

"Christ is able to convince us that each one of us has a place in the plan of God and that his plan is best. Being convinced of that, we envy no one. We can only wish them well in the working out of God's plan for them. If I am sure that infinite wisdom and infinite love are guiding my onward course, how can I want to change places with others? 'In his will is my peace.'" (The Secret of Radiant Life; Sangster; page 98)

If it is true, as we believe it is, that no one born in the world is the product of mere chance but that he is the result of God's loving design, then we can also say that God has a plan and a purpose for each person. It is not strict determinism that we are advocating, for God has created each person with "free will" and with capabilities and potential that must be developed through diligent human effort and discipline. But, nevertheless, God has bestowed on each person a set of gifts, and each person has a special place in God's "master design". "The simplest servant of the kingdom, quietly confident that he is doing his best, may feel the smile of God upon him....No man remains envious who really sets his whole heart on the approval of heaven because that secures an independence to the praise and blame of earth." (He Is Able; Sangster, page 118)

Because God is all-wise in His bestowal of gifts upon each individual, and because God loves each person unconditionally, there is a basis for confidence in one's own self, and there is also a basis for gratefulness toward

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others for their God-appointed place and for their God-honoring contributions.

The Church is likened unto a human body. All members of the Body are different, but each member is dependent upon all the others. There is no need for any member to compare itself with any other member, for each member has a different function and each member is needed for the healthy functioning of the entire Body.

If God is all-wise, why should it matter to Simon Peter that he is to die a martyr's death while John is not? (John 21:21) If God is all-wise, why should it matter that another fellow believer seems to receive more recognition and honor and success than you receive? God, in His Wisdom, has willed it so, and therefore you are to rejoice in God's plan for others as well as in God's plan for you. Why should you be upset when another believer seems to have it easier than you, when his lot in life is to be married or to be wealthy, whereas it is not God's will for you to be married or to have much money?

"Instead of being resentful and envying those for whom things seem to have turned out better, we are called to trust God and to believe that in the midst of our present circumstances, he will find a way of providing opportunities for each of us to experience joyful service and total fulfillment regardless of the difficult conditions or deprivations which we have had to endure." (Christian Reader; September/October, 1987; Tony Campolo; page 95)

### (3) Faith In God's Eternal Goodness

Notes Tony Campolo, "God wills the very best for you. God is a good God who wills for you all of those gifts and attributes essential for you to live your life in the fullness of

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joy....Giving thanks is wonderful therapy for envy." (Christian Reader; September/October, 1987; page 95)

The one who follows God need not envy the worldling whose desires are inflamed by what the world has to offer - houses and lands, power and pleasure, fortune and fame. Jesus never promised His followers material wealth or worldly power - the things which so many in the world covet. But Jesus did promise "abundant life" here and "eternal life" hereafter. Jesus is the "Water of life", the "Bread of life", and, therefore, Jesus is the answer to man's greatest hungers and man's insatiable thirst! Jesus is a debtor to no one; He really satisfies!

"Peter answered him (Jesus), 'We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?' Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.'" (Matthew 19:27-29 NIV)

Money, Pleasure and Power - these are the objects of desire for most people. Most people covet money, pleasure and power, and look enviously upon those who enjoy their wealth, who indulge their pleasure and who display their power.

Envy is desire misplaced! Faith in God brings with it the legitimate fulfillment of man's desires - in God's way and at God's timing!

Think first of man's desire for things - for money and for material things. Many there are

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in our world who envy the wealthy and who covet their money. "But people who long to be rich soon begin to do all kinds of wrong things to get money, things that hurt them and make them evil-minded and finally send them to hell itself. For the love of money is the first step toward all kinds of sin. Some people have even turned away from God because of their love for it, and as a result have pierced themselves with many sorrows." (I Timothy 6:9,10 Living Bible)

The one who envies the wealthy man and who covets his money, is the one who is spiritually blind! He fails to see the meaning of material things. He forgets that he is steward of material possessions and God alone is the owner of all things. "The basis and foundation of covetousness is the idea that to get what we have not got will bring happiness. The feeling in the mind and heart is: 'If I had this or that, I would be happy. If only I could get this or that I would be satisfied.' All life, from childhood to old age, proves what a delusion that idea is. It is quite true that when we get the thing on which we have set our hearts, there is a brief thrill, but the thrill does not last. It loses its interest; it ceases to give enjoyment; and all that happens is that we transfer our desires to something else, and the whole process begins all over again. It is like a child with a new toy. For an hour or two, or a day or two, he is engrossed with it, and then it is tossed aside, and he is standing looking in at the shop window and setting his heart on something else. It is like the drug-taker who takes his drug and has his moment of uplift or of serenity; then the moment passes; and he needs another dose. It is like the rhythm of hunger and of thirst. There is the desire, the temporary satisfying of the desire, and the rise of the desire again." (The Ten Commandments for Today; Barclay; page 202,203)

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God has promised to supply all of our needs, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. God is the source of all true riches! Faith in God is the only answer to the challenge of Materialism, to the problem of covetousness and greed. Regarding Materialism, Faith says: (1) Contentment does not depend upon the abundance of material things which a person possesses (read Luke 12:15; I Timothy 6:8; Philippians 4:11b-12); (2) Earthly resources are to be used, not selfishly, but unselfishly to help others (read Ephesians 4:28; I Timothy 6:18-19); (3) Don't worry about things; rather, trust God to supply all your needs (read I Timothy 6:17; Philippians 4:19; Matthew 6:25-27; II Corinthians 8:13-15, 9:10-11); (4) Focus on heavenly treasures, not earthly treasures (read John 14:1-2; I Timothy 6:7).

Think, second, of man's desire for Pleasure. Hedonists - i.e., those who worship the god of Pleasure - judge the worth of life's individual experiences by their ability to produce greater and greater pleasure. Men are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God". The philosophy of man is: "Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." There are many in our world today who greatly envy those who live comfortably and who constantly indulge their every appetite. They look with envy upon those who (like the writer of Ecclesiastes) stimulate their bodies with wine and who lay hold of frivolity and the delights of men - mistresses galore. (Ecclesiastes 2:3,8)

What some men most covet - Pleasure - God truly fulfills in the lives of His children. It is God's will that His children be happy - full of joy - but happiness is the by-product of holiness. Seek God and His righteousness - His holiness - and eventually true happiness will be yours as well.

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There is pleasure in sin only for a short time (Hebrews 11:25). Ecclesiastes 12:1 says, "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, 'I find no pleasure in them'". One who continues to pursue the world's pleasure, independent of God, will eventually awaken to the fact that the "evil days" have come and he no longer has pleasure in them. These words will come from the disillusioned sensualist: "Laughter is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?" (Ecclesiastes 2:2)

Said John Lennon on one occasion, "The dream is over. I'm not just talking about the Beatles, I'm talking about the generation thing. It's over and we gotta - I have personally gotta - get down to so-called reality".

The road of Sensual Pleasure is not the way of reality; rather, it is a dead-end road! The temporary sweetness of sensual pleasure turns to the bitterness of remorse.

Following the ways of Christ leads to genuine pleasure and lasting joys. A joy that is unspeakable and full of glory! Notes William Sangster: "The fact that there is a cross at the heart of the Christian faith, and that following Christ involves some rigorous self-denials, does not alter - and cannot alter - this central truth; the fruit of the Spirit is joy....Tertullian said 'The Christian saint is hilarious'....The summons to rejoice is sounded no less than seventy times in the New Testament....Honest men at Pentecost thought that the apostles were drunk and, whenever the living water has burst fresh from the rock again, the same exuberant gladness has been manifested". (Daily Readings; page 144)

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Said Jesus, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete". (John 15:11) "Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive and your joy will be complete." (John 16:24)

Wrote the Apostle Paul: "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment". (I Timothy 6:17) God is the source of real enjoyment in life! The Holy Spirit is the Agent of joy: "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit". (Romans 14:17)

The way of Christ is the way of joy and peace and pleasure. "Come unto me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

Think, third, of man's desire for Power. Covetous people are usually involved in terrible "power struggles". They envy the popular and the powerful and the influential, and they plot to replace those who are socially at the "top of the heap". One famous psychologist believes that the motivating drive of all human beings is the drive to power. It is true that the "will to power and popularity" is very strong in many persons. Of course this drive is selfish and thus sinful, but it needs to be recognized that this power drive is a perversion of a God-given instinct - the instinct to be known and accepted by others. Selfish pride is a perversion of the self-esteem urge. "The search for significance is not wicked in itself; no evil dwells in the desire for

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achievement. To improve our performance adds to self-esteem while making us more productive in the process. If our climb is over the dead and mutilated bodies of other people, then the aspiration for significance has run amuck....The world has been saturated with blood by madmen scrambling for the top. The desire to get ahead, to move up, can incite the worst degrees of selfishness and cruelest forms of ruthlessness within us. The evil that flows from the quest can make our desire for significance nothing more than an animal-like lust to dominate....The quest for worth can become a lust for power; the desire for significance can make us egomaniacs, blind to everything but our own success." (The Search for Dignity; Sproul; page 21)

Everyone needs to feel important and all need to feel accepted and recognized by others. But power struggles, strife, competition, envyings and jealousy are the results of a man who is driven by selfish ambition (Galatians 5:20,21) "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work". (James 3:16) Popularity contests are not uncommon in our society. Many feel that if they were well-known, recognized and applauded, they would be happy and satisfied.

However, the road of popularity and fame is a dead-end. Fame is elusive and short-lived. The Miss America of last year is soon forgotten, as a new Miss America takes her place. One's accomplishments, even though they are spectacular, are soon forgotten by future generations which become preoccupied by their own shallow-minded crowd. One who is popular to the crowd today, may be despised by that same crowd tomorrow. What is "In" today may be "Square" tomorrow! The world's styles, tastes and modes are constantly changing. A ballerina dancer was asked if her fame had not given her much pleasure. She replied, "It is a strange thing, but after many curtain calls,

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much applause and tremendous acclaim, I go to my room. There, when alone, I feel a desert in my heart". A popular "rock-and-roll" recording artist, whose record sales numbered in the millions, was asked what he thought about his unusual success. He replied, "I feel like 'warmed-over' death!" A great actor was dying and said, "Let down the curtain, the farce is over. There is no reality in life; it is a farce". The modern-day "success syndrome" leads to bitter disillusionment.

Why do men desperately seek power and popularity? Perhaps because these power pursuits are attempts to gain recognition and acceptance and remembrance and permanence. Inherent in every man is a basic God-created desire to live - and to live happily and permanently. How can this God-created urge for permanence be satisfied? Not by seeking the world's recognition through power struggles, but by surrendering to Christ and living for Him - even unapplauded. He who serves the Lord God, not seeking the world's applause, will surely be recognized by the God of the Universe! "The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." (I John 2:17) Here is the answer - faith's answer - to the misguided struggles for power and recognition which are so often observed in the world of the worldly men!

The power struggles which Jesus condemns are seen, not only in the world of worldly persons (Galatians 5:19,21), but they, unfortunately, are at times witnessed within the company of professing believers! (Read Mark 10:35-45)

He who leads all must serve all. "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Philippians 2:3-4)

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How do we find ourselves? How do we guarantee that we shall have lasting identity? Is it through the method of fighting for our own advancements, looking out after Number One (Self)? No! A resounding No! Said Jesus, "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it". (Matthew 10:39) We gain by losing, and we find ourselves by giving ourselves away!

We are to serve God with no motives of gaining power or recognition, but we can be sure that the God-created urge of wanting permanent identity (which the worldly power struggles seek to fulfill in perverted ways) will be granted to the believer. "He who does the will of the Father shall abide and remain forever!" (I John 2:17) To the one who has been faithful in serving the Lord, in the spirit of love and humility, the Master will someday say, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!" (Matthew 25:23) There is a God-given drive to power which is often perverted among worldly-minded persons - both unsaved persons and carnal Christians (Philippians 1:17), but this drive to power and rulership will someday be rightfully satisfied when humble Christians will share Christ's rulership in the hereafter. (Read Revelation 20:6, 21:7, 22:5; II Timothy 2:12a; Matthew 25:23)

What a thrilling thought to contemplate: Humble Christians will share Christ's rulership in the hereafter. Wrote Paul, "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?...Do you not know that we will judge angels?" (I Corinthians 6:2a,3a) What this means I do not know, but at least we can say that the saints will exercise great power someday - not because they are seeking that power, but because they are humbly seeking to serve Christ faithfully here on earth!

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Christians may be called upon to suffer on this earth, but it is certain they shall reign with Christ in great power hereafter. "Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life." (Revelation 2:10)

What about the person who has renounced worldly power and who has accepted a humble servant role? Will there be no recognition, no rewards, no fulfillment of that God-created urge for permanent identity, no satisfaction of that God-given instinct to power? For the answer to that important question, read Matthew 19:27-30!

Rewards - unspeakably great rewards, including the exercise of dominion and bestowal of honor - await the humble servant of God. No work done in Jesus' name will go without his reward. Said Jesus, "And if anyone gives a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward". (Matthew 10:42)

The story is told of a missionary who returned from the mission field to America by ship. Standing on the dock after getting off the returned ship, he noticed a huge crowd of people standing on the dock welcoming the President of the United States who had just returned from an overseas trip. The crowds were acclaiming the American President, but there was not one person who was present that day to welcome home the American missionary. The American missionary began to feel sorry for himself: "Lord, here is this large crowd of people welcoming the President who has been gone a few days from the States. Lord, I have been gone from the States for years, laboring hard for you, in a difficult area of the world

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and there is not one person here today to welcome me home"! Then the quiet, understanding voice of the Holy Spirit spoke to the missionary: "But, Henry, you are not home yet"!

For the one who has renounced worldly fame and fortune to take the "way of the cross" in humble service to his fellowmen, there awaits a "Grand Homecoming" in heaven! The crowds in heaven, as well as Jesus Himself, will be on hand to welcome the faithful pilgrim! That is the day of true popularity!

God is in debt to no man. It has not entered into the mind of man what rewards God has prepared for those who humbly and faithfully serve Him.

Yet, in spite of all the truths that we have noted, it is still true that many today are consumed with their passion to possess (materialism), with their passion to enjoy (hedonism), with their passion to dominate (self-centered autonomy). Money, pleasure, and power are the coveted objects of many envious people!

What is the answer to this serious problem of Envy? Total faith in God is the cure for Envy. Faith in God's Sovereign Power. Faith in God's Infinite Wisdom. Faith in God's Eternal Goodness.

God's goodness answers man's need to possess, for in heaven alone is there wealth beyond compare. "It has not even entered the mind of man what God has prepared for those who love Him." In the "Father's House" there are many mansions! (John 14:2)

God's goodness answers man's need to enjoy, for in Christ there are joys which are "unspeakable", and in heaven there are pleasures forevermore! Why covet earth's

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pleasures when heaven's pleasures far surpass  
the greatest thrill that earth can offer?

God's goodness answers man's need to rule and  
to dominate, for in heaven God's saints will  
reign with Him forever and forever.

(Revelation 20:6, 22:5; II Timothy 2:12a)

"Father, your will is my peace. Wanting at  
times to change my place with that of another,  
I confess that I have doubted your infinite  
wisdom and personal love for me. Help me not  
to envy another, but gladly follow you, even  
to death by martyrdom if necessary!"

AFFIRMATION: I will rejoice in the  
God-ordained place which God has given to me  
and not envy God's place for someone else!

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CHAPTER FOUR QUESTIONS

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1. In terms of relationships, what are the consequences of envy?
2. How does turning one's sights upwards towards God, rather than outwards towards others, help solve the serious problem of "Envy"?
3. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Set your affections on God and all other loves will be swallowed up in your supreme love for God."
4. Can "love of the world" be expunged by a mere demonstration of the world's worthlessness? Why or why not?
5. As it relates to dealing with the problem of "Envy", give your interpretation and application of the following statement: "The only way to dispossess the heart of an old affection, is by the expulsive power of a new one."
6. What motivation is strong enough to enable one to transfer his affections from "things of the world" to "things above" Why do some noble souls hate what they once loved in the world?
7. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The answer to your evil coveting is learning to covet what God covets, to treasure what God treasures, to delight in what God delights in."
8. How do you distinguish between "right" and "wrong" coveting?

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9. According to Matthew 6:19-21, where did Jesus say we are to lay up treasures? Why? How does Jesus' teaching regarding treasures help one to solve the problem of wrong desires (carnal coveting)? Do you agree with the following statement: "He who is preoccupied with trying to please and obey God, is not preoccupied with trying to outdo his fellowmen"?
10. Under what conditions did the Old Testament prophet ask God the following question: "Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?" (Habakkuk 1:13b)
11. According to Psalms 73:2,3, what spiritual peril threatens the believer who gets his focus off God and onto others?
12. What should a believer do when righteousness goes unrewarded and when evil seems to go unchecked and unpunished? (Habakkuk 2:4b)
13. How does one exercise faith in God during a time when morally-speaking, things are "topsy-turvy" - when the wicked are prospering and the righteous are suffering? (Psalms 73:20; Habakkuk 3:16b)
14. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Faith, during a time of personal or national crisis, means that you continue to serve God faithfully regardless of the material or the visible benefits that you derive from serving God." (Note Habakkuk 3:17-19)
15. How does faith in God's infinite wisdom help a believer who is struggling with envy or with inferiority?

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16. Give your interpretation to the following statement: "No man remains envious who really sets his whole heart on the approval of heaven because that secures an independence to the praise and blame of earth?"
17. How does the analogy of the "Body" as the church of God, help one to accept himself without envying anyone else?
18. Do you believe that, in spite of your difficult conditions or deprivations which you go through, an all-wise God will find a way of providing opportunities for you to experience joyful service and total fulfillment?
19. Why is "giving thanks to God" such a wonderful therapy for envy?
20. If it is true to say that Jesus never promised His followers material wealth or worldly power, what - according to the Bible - did Jesus promise His followers? (John 4:14; 10:10; Matthew 19:27-29)
21. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statements: "Envy is desire misplaced! Faith in God brings with it the legitimate fulfillment of man's desires in God's way and at God's timing!"
22. On what false assumption is the philosophy of materialism built, and what is "Faith's answer" to the problem of materialism?
23. How would you define and describe the philosophy of Hedonism, and what is "Faith's answer" to this problem? (Note John 15:11; 16:24; I Timothy 6:17, Romans 14:17)
24. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Seek God and His

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righteousness - His holiness - and eventually true happiness will be yours as well."

25. What evidence can you give (from personal experience or from observation) that the "will to power and popularity" is a very strong drive in human nature?
26. What is the God-given instinct of which the "power drive" is a perversion?
27. Tell why you agree with the following statement: "The quest for worth can become a lust for power; the desire for significance can make us egomaniacs, blind to everything but our own success."
28. Why is the "road of popularity" a "dead-end road"?
29. How can the God-created urge for permanence be satisfied? In other words, what is "Faith's answer" to the misguided struggles for power and recognition which are so often observed in the world of worldly men? (Mark 10:35-45; Philipppians 2:3-4; Matthew 10:39)
30. What God-promised rewards can humble believers anticipate in the future, the fulfillment of which will answer man's quest for power? (Read Revelation 20:6; 21:7; 22:5; II Timothy 2:12a; Matthew 25:23; I Corinthians 6:2a,3a)



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**CHAPTER FIVE**

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CURE FOR ENVY (Continued)

The great cures for Envy are all interrelated, and, when applied together, are effective:

- (1) Supreme Love For God - "the expulsive power of a new affection";
- (2) Total Faith In God - faith in God's sovereign power, faith in God's infinite wisdom, faith in God's eternal goodness;
- (3) Genuine Love For Others.

C. Genuine Love For Others

It is Love For Others that we must now think about together. "Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud." (I Corinthians 13:4 Living Bible) It is impossible to love someone truly and , at the same time, to be envious or jealous of him. Wrote Paul, "If you love your neighbor as much as you love yourself you will not want to harm or cheat him, or kill him or steal from him. And you won't sin with his wife or want what is his (coveting), or do anything else the Ten Commandments say is wrong. All ten are wrapped up in this one, to love your neighbor as you love yourself. Love does no wrong to anyone. That's why it fully satisfies all of God's requirements. It is the only law you need." (Romans 13:9,10 Living Bible)

(1) Love Is Humble

It does not boast in its own accomplishment. Instead, the love-filled person thinks of others as better than himself (Philippians 2:3). It is the proud person who competes for

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the "top slot", and who feels threatened by others who attempt to outdo or to overshadow him. Pride that is punctured is pride that turns to resentment and to hate. But the humble person, far from competing with others and far from using others as stepping stones to the "top of the heap", is a person who serves others and who helps others to achieve and to succeed. Far from envying others whose abilities are greater than his, the humble person gladly rejoices in the success of others and genuinely weeps in the failures of others. When Saul, the first king of Israel, replaced Samuel, the last judge of Israel, as the leader of the nation, Samuel did not manifest jealousy towards Saul. Instead, Samuel was God's instrument to anoint Saul as King. Even after Saul miserably failed and was told by God (through Samuel) that his kingship was forfeited because of moral disobedience, Samuel did not take secret delight in Saul's downfall (Note: taking "secret delight" in your competitor's failures is a sure sign of envy!). Samuel loved Saul, even though Samuel was commanded by God to rebuke Saul for his stubbornness and disobedience. Samuel mourned long and hard for Saul, until finally "the Lord said to Samuel, 'How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel?' (I Samuel 16:1a)

Love guards against boasting and bragging. In other words, love does not "toot its own horn"! Says Proverbs 27:2, "Let another praise you, and not your own lips." The love-filled person plays down his own successes. He emphasizes long time brotherhood. That is, he does not magnify new differences in status or attainments or successes. He never deliberately provokes envy in another, either through overt remarks of conceit or through actions of pride. "Let your love be perfectly sincere...allowing one another to enjoy preference of honor." (Romans 12:9)

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"If we are living now by the Holy Spirit's power, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Then we won't need to look for honors and popularity, which lead to jealousy and hard feelings." (Galatians 5:25,26 Living Bible)

(2) Love seeks to serve others rather than to compete with others.

If competition and comparison is the "breeding ground" for jealousy and covetousness and envy, then the serving spirit is the "breeding ground" for compassion and unity and fellowship!

Admitting that the impulse towards comparison and competition is strong in most people, the love-filled person nevertheless disciplines himself to re-channel his tendency towards comparison in more fruitful areas. He seeks to compare himself with Christ alone, not with other people. Comparing himself with Christ alone delivers him, on one hand, from stress due to peer comparisons and delivers him, on the other hand, from complacency due to easy satisfaction with personal, present attainments.

To constantly compare yourself with others is to do yourself great harm. God accepts you just as you are and therefore you don't need to build up your ego by comparing yourself with others in a less favorable condition than you, and you don't need to plunge yourself into despair or into jealousy by comparing yourself with others who appear to be in a much more favorable condition than you.

Unfortunately, competition and comparison is a common way of life in America. We compare mind with mind. We compare bank account with bank account. We compare beauty with beauty. We compare achievement with achievement. We pit wit against wit to outdo our fellows. We

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try to prove that our city, our church, our doctrines, our political concepts, and our ball teams, etc, etc, are the best! This tendency towards power, popularity, dominance, and leadership breeds envy, strife and jealousy. The musical expresses this spirit of comparison and strife: "Anything you can do, I can do better!" Competition and comparison breed jealousy!

Christ calls us to humble service, not to vain striving for glory and for honor among our peers. Said Jesus, "Don't you ever be called 'Rabbi' - you have only one Teacher, and all of you are brothers...and you must not let people call you 'leaders' - you have only one leader, Christ! The only 'superior' among you is the one who serves the others. For every man who promotes himself will be humbled, and every man who learns to be humble will find promotion." (Matthew 23:8,10-12 Phillips)

Dr. McMillan tells of a young woman who wanted to go to college. "Her heart sank when she read one question on the application blank: 'Are you a leader?' Being a conscientious girl she wrote 'No' and sent in the form with a heavy heart. To her surprise she received a letter from one of the college officials which read something like this: 'A study of the application blanks reveals that this year our college will have 1452 leaders. Therefore, we are accepting you because we feel it is imperative that they have ONE follower.'"

Dr. McMillan goes on to say: "We are living in a day when it is not difficult to find people who want to be head cook, but few are available to wash dishes. There are always several hundreds of girls who yearn to ride in the parade as the beautiful queen, but sometimes only a disgruntled half dozen will agree to decorate the float. Organizations have never lacked those who want to be boss carpenters, but they have had to search for

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men to drive nails and saw boards." (None of These Diseases; page 136,137)

"Competition for the top spot" - this too often describes the mood of our modern age. Competition breeds jealousy!

There is another movement in our day which breeds jealousy - the striving for equality. Notes Malcolm Muggeridge, "The notion of equality has been one of the very destructive forces in our society. We're not equals, we're brothers and sisters. It's quite a different thing. And it's that Christian notion of being brothers and sisters that has been an enormous stabilizing influence on the western world. But the minute you begin to follow this fantasy of equality, you don't produce a loving relationship among people, you produce hideous rivalries and envies, which God knows our society reflects. Each person is watching out and trying to see if the other person is getting more than he is, and even whether others are getting more out of life." Comparing ourselves with others can lead to either pride or to envy, depending upon the outcome of that comparison. The spirit of pride and the spirit of envy are neither the spirit of Christ!

The strong instinct towards comparison and competition must be transformed into the instinct towards compassion, caring, and (complementation Pastor Ron, are you sure of this word?). Wrote Paul, "Live together in harmony, live together in love, as though you had only one mind and one spirit between you. Never act from motives of rivalry or personal vanity, but in humility think more of each other than you do of yourselves." (Philippians 2:2-3 Phillips)

"Each for all, and all for each" - this spells harmony! If there is to be comparisons among yourselves as Christians, then "in humility

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think more of each other than you do of yourselves". A great antidote against envy and jealousy is learning to enjoy others and learning to enjoy giving preference and honor to others. The only competition, worthy of the name of Christ, is the competition of love - seeking to outdo one another in acts of compassion and love!

### (3) Love wards off envy through prayer.

No one - not even the saints - are immune to the temptation of envy. When one least expects it, envious thoughts crowd into one's mind. When envious thoughts and jealous feelings seek to undo a believer, he can "nip" the temptation in "the bud" before it fully blooms! A quick prayer of submission and an inner affirmation of love towards the one we are tempted to envy, can do much to neutralize the power that envy seeks to have over us! And even when we fail to resist the temptation, and find that we have fallen unsuspectingly into the "trap" of envy and jealousy, we can, through prayer, cleanse our feelings and re-focus our thoughts on Christ.

"Prayer can be a great purge. It is not possible to pose to Jesus and hide from him the envy that we feel, but if we confess our sin he will teach us how to turn envy into good will. When Dr. F. B. Meyer first went to the Northfield Convention, he attracted great crowds. People poured in to hear his popular addresses, and for some years no speaker was more welcome than he. But in the passing of time Dr. Campbell Morgan came to Northfield and the crowd left Meyer to attend the Bible studies of his brilliant colleague, and to more than one person Meyer confessed that he found himself liable to jealousy. 'The only way I can conquer my feeling,' he said, 'is to pray for him daily, which I do.' That is how the saints deal with this evil growth when they discover, with an awful shock of

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surprise, that it has taken root in their consecrated heart. But their prayers give Jesus the opportunity he is seeking and he plucks it out." (He Is Able; Sangster; page 117,118)

Yes, love (agape) is the great cure for the debilitating disease of Envy. Is this love a human exercise or a divine enablement? It is first a divine gift, and secondly a human exercise. I initially receive the gift from God, but, I must choose to exercise (God being my great Enabler), positive goodwill towards others - compassion - rather than negative criticism towards others - envy and jealousy. The love of God is poured into my heart by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5), and without that supernatural endowment of power from God, I will inevitably be trapped by the sin of envy. But, even with that God-given gift, it is still my responsibility to will only good to my fellowmen. God's power and my willingness combine to win the victory over Envy and Jealousy!

"Father, deliver me from boasting of work done by others and from resentment when others boast of work done by me. Help me to die, both to the praise and to the blame of men, and study only to show myself approved of God. Make me jealous only for your smile of approval on my life! In Jesus' conquering name! Amen"

**AFFIRMATION:** Enjoying the smile of God upon my life and work, I can always bear the scorn of men!

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CHAPTER FIVE QUESTIONS

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1. Is it possible to love someone truly and, at the same time, to be envious or jealous of him? Why or why not? (Note I Corinthians 13:4; Romans 13:9,10)
2. According to Philippians 2:3, what is one of the great characteristics of "love", the possession of which will keep a believer from carnal Envy?
3. Illustrate, both from Biblical examples and from contemporary examples, the truths of the following statement: "Far from envying others whose abilities are greater than his, the humble person gladly rejoices in the success of others and genuinely weeps in the failures of others."
4. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Taking 'secret delight' in your competitor's failures is a sure sign of envy."
5. As it relates to the problem of jealousy arising between two long-time friends, give your interpretation of the following statements: "The love-filled person plays down his own successes. He emphasizes long time brotherhood. That is, he does not magnify new differences in status or attainments or successes." (Note Romans 12:9; Galatians 5:25,26)
6. If competition and comparison is the "breeding ground" for jealousy and covetousness and envy, what spirit in a person helps breed compassion and unity and fellowship?

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7. What two complementary benefits does one receive in his life when he no longer compares himself with others, but instead compares himself with Christ alone?
8. When one practices comparison of himself with others, what two serious problems inevitably result?
9. Whom did Christ declare to be the only "superior" persons among mankind? (Note Matthew 23:8,10-12)
10. Why does "striving for equality" in our society tend to breed jealousy?
11. Give your interpretation of the following statement: "We're not equals, we're brothers and sisters."
12. Tell why you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The minute you begin to follow this fantasy of equality, you don't produce a loving relationship among people, you produce hideous rivalries and envies, which God knows our society reflects."
13. With what degree of conviction do you agree with the following statement: "The only competition, worthy of the name of Christ, is the competition of love - i.e., seeking to outdo one another in acts of compassion and love"?
14. In the moment of temptation, when a believer is tempted to be envious or jealous of another, what steps should be taken to "neutralize" the power of envy?
15. When a believer unsuspectingly falls into the "trap" of envy and jealousy, what should he do?

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16. How can envy toward one's peers (competitors) be turned into good will?
17. If "Love" is the great cure for the debilitating disease of Envy, then how can one experience this "Love" (agape)? Is this "Love" (agape) a human exercise or a divine enablement, or both? Explain your answer.
18. Give your interpretation of the following statement: "God's power and my willingness combine to win the victory over Envy and Jealousy."



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**SCRIPTURE REFERENCE**  
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SCRIPTURES FOR STUDY ON THE TOPIC OF ENVY  
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Genesis 4:1-16 NIV

"Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, 'With the help of the Lord I have brought forth a man.' Later she gave birth to his brother Abel.

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.'

Now Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let's go out to the field.' And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?'

'I don't know,' he replied. 'Am I my brother's keeper?'

The Lord said, 'What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

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When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.'

Cain said to the Lord, 'My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.'

But the Lord said to him, 'Not so, if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over.' Then the Lord put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. So Cain went from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden."

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Psalms 73:2-3 NIV

"But as for me, my feet had almost slipped;  
I had nearly lost my foothold.  
For I envied the arrogant  
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

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Habakkuk 1:1-4 NIV

"The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet received.

How long, O Lord, must I call for help,  
but you do not listen?  
Or cry out to you, 'Violence!'  
but you do not save?  
Why do you make me look at injustice?  
Why do you tolerate wrong?  
Destruction and violence are before me;  
there is strife, and conflict abounds.  
Therefore the law is paralyzed,  
and justice never prevails.  
The wicked hem in the righteous,  
so that justice is perverted."

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Habakkuk 2:4b NIV

"...but the righteous will live by his faith..."

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Habakkuk 3:16-19 NIV

"I heard and my heart pounded,  
my lips quivered at the sound;  
decay crept into my bones,  
and my legs trembled.  
Yet I will wait patiently for the day of  
calamity to come on the nation invading us.  
Though the fig tree does not bud  
and there are no grapes on the vines,  
though the olive crop fails  
and the fields produce no food,  
though there are no sheep in the pen  
and no cattle in the stalls,  
yet I will rejoice in the Lord,  
I will be joyful in God my Savior.  
The Sovereign Lord is my strength;  
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,  
he enables me to go on the heights.  
For the director of music. On my stringed  
instruments."

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John 21:18-22 NIV

"'I tell you the truth, when you were younger  
you dressed yourself and went where you  
wanted; but when you are old you will stretch  
out your hands, and someone else will dress  
you and lead you where you do not want to go.'  
Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death  
by which Peter would glorify God. Then he  
said to him, 'Follow me!'

Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom  
Jesus loved was following them. (This was the  
one who had leaned back against Jesus at the  
supper and had said, 'Lord, who is going to

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betray you?') When Peter saw him, he asked, 'Lord, what about him?'

Jesus answered, 'If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.'

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Hebrews 11:4 NIV

"By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead."

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I John 3:12 NIV

"Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous."