

JEALOUSY

Objective

To understand what jealousy is, why it is a sin and what I can do to remove it from my life.

References

The various writings of the Church Fathers on jealousy – www.ccel.org

Scriptural Verse

“Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.” Romans 13:13

Lesson Guidelines

1. Definition of envy

- “Envy is sorrow for another’s good”.
- Envy is the feeling of being upset and threatened by another person’s success because you perceive that this person has surpassed you.
- Envy started when the devil wanted to be like God.

2. The distinction between envy and zeal

- Zeal – grieving over another’s good because I don’t have it but I am happy for the other person.
- I will strive to attain this good because I believe it is good for me.
- Zeal is necessary in the spiritual life – Galatians 4:18.
- Learning from each other helps us see our own faults and therefore gives us the desire to change.

3. Why is jealousy a sin?

- It prevents us from truly loving others because perfect love does not envy - 1 Corinthians 13:4.
- It is the source of strife, and therefore destroys unity between people, even family members. It caused one brother to kill another - 1 Corinthians 3:3.
- “Envy has alienated wives from their husbands and changed that saying of our father Adam ‘This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.’ Envy and strife have overthrown great cities and rooted up mighty nations” - St. Clement.
- A self-seeking mentality – James 3:16.
- It directly contradicts the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ that one should make himself last in order to be first in the kingdom of Heaven - Galatians 5:26
- It creates discontent with one’s life and with God’s blessings in one’s life which can lead to the withholding of God’s blessings – Proverbs 14:30.
- Disqualifies us from the Kingdom of Heaven – Galatians 5:19-21.

4. How can I overcome envy?

1. Uproot the thought/feeling before it takes over – Rom 13:14. Pray a silent prayer and thank God for what you have.
2. Learn contentment- Concentrate on what you have rather than what you don’t have. St. Paul stated that he had learned to be content in whatever state he was in. Being content is an acquired and learned characteristic. At first it may be hard to have that mind set, but after a while it will take over your attitude.

3. Examine your life, take ownership and work on ways to improve yourself and never mind what others are doing – Gal 6:4.
4. Share the joys and sorrows of others -if you cared for someone during their sorrow, then when something good happens to them you will rejoice for them.

“As for your own envy, you will be able to check it if you rejoice with the man whom you envy whenever he rejoices and grieve whenever he grieves.” St. Maximous the Confessor

Conclusion

Envy is a sinful feeling characterized by a sense of sorrow for another's good. Envy is a source of strife and is present where love is absent. Envy comes from a self-seeking mentality which contradicts Our Lord's teachings that we should be last. Envy can be rooted out of the heart through prayer, developing a sense of contentment, and sharing in the joys and sorrows of others.

Discussion Points/Activities

Think of scenarios in the Holy Bible and in your own life where envy led to strife and disharmony.

1. What are things that make you envious of others?
2. What are things you can do the next time you are attacked by envious thoughts and feelings?
3. Can you change your feelings from being “jealous” to being “zealous”?