

**A BIG PROBLEM YOU
DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD**



ENVY

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

CHAPTER 1

SUMMARY

Pastor Mike has shown in this chapter that envy is more deceptive and pervasive than we realize—we're all guilty of it, but hardly ever see it for what it is. Envy is resentment, frustration, and an angry grudge at someone who has what we think we ought to have. Before we can remedy our envy we must first accurately detect it, but as with all sin, we see envy more clearly in others than we do in ourselves. God sees into our souls as if we were laid bare before Him, so we can only see our own envy accurately if we gaze into the mirror of His Word. The Bible has numerous historical examples of envy as well as heart-piercing descriptions of envy from Christ Himself. But the good news of the gospel is that envy is not the end of the story—because of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, we have forgiveness of sin and the ability to conquer envy through the power of Christ.

DISCUSSION

- Why is it easier to see envy in others than in yourself?
- When do you feel happy about the misfortunes of others?
- Is it only possible to envy those who have more than you?
- Why does the parable of the landowner in Matthew 20 illustrate envy so well?
- In the story of Saul throwing spears at David, who can you relate to more? Why?
- Describe God's solution to envy and how you can respond.

CHAPTER 2

SUMMARY

It's easy for us to downplay envy because it doesn't seem as bad as murder, adultery and other "big" sins, but its destructive effects are all throughout Scripture. Cain's murder of Abel is a prime example—instead of repenting of the sin in his heart that God warned him about, Cain allowed his festering envy to grow into murder. The Bible clarifies envy by breaking it down into three different words: jealousy, coveting, and envy. Pastor Mike defines jealousy as intensely wanting something we don't currently have—while there is righteous jealousy, such as over a cheating spouse or God's jealousy for His people when they chased after other gods, jealousy becomes sinful when we intensely want or chase after something not rightfully ours. Coveting is always sinful and the antithesis of contentment. Envy is an insidious combination of the two, causing us to see people as less worthy and of less worth than us. Throughout this book, Pastor Mike will dive into what breaking free of envy takes, but it starts with honest confession and repentance.

DISCUSSION

- Why does envy seem like a less serious sin than others like murder or adultery for example?
- Is envy only worth addressing because it can lead to these "bigger sins"?
- Can you see the role envy played in Satan's downfall?
- Have you ever been in a situation like Cain's, when someone else's success made you envy and hate them? Describe your response (good or bad).
- Discuss the differences between jealousy, coveting, and envy. Use examples in your life for each.
- Pastor Mike has used Scripture to open our eyes to how deeply our lives are infected by envy. Take some time to confess your own envy unreservedly to the Lord.

CHAPTER 3

SUMMARY

Unchecked envy will inevitably infect our relationships with hatred. What we try to disguise as simple dislike often has deep roots in envy. But fighting envy in relationships isn't accomplished by avoiding them altogether. God created us as

relational beings and Jesus modeled the perfect balance of deep human relationships and regular solitude before God. We must lean into relationships while leaning into Christ. Several New Testament passages warn us that all Christians will one day stand before Christ for judgment of our motives in this life. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, Romans 14:10, and 1 Peter 1:17 all speak of our future evaluation for rewards from Christ based on how we lived our lives here. An accurate diagnosis of relational envy (desiring and coveting to the point of hatred and verbal “murder”) is laid out in James 4:1-3. Verses 4-11 of the same chapter combine an indictment with the long and difficult solution: sorrow, humility, and repentance, leading to hatred of our envy and sinful ways.

DISCUSSION

- Revisit Titus 3:3—why do you think Paul places envy between malice and hatred?
- How does envy and hatred manifest itself (subtly or not) in your relationships?
- Are you motivated by your future evaluation by Christ to live circumspectly? Why or why not?
- In what ways are you tempted to withdraw from relationships? How does the example of Jesus push against that temptation?
- Think of a time you were the victim (or the perpetrator) of gossip or backstabbing. What role did envy play?
- Reread James 4:4-11a—how is it simultaneously an indictment against and solution for envy?

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY

Romans 1:28-32 describes a society that sounds very much like our own. We live in a culture characterized by envy and all that follows, and things will only get worse as we move into the “last days” before Christ returns. But God shows humanity grace by giving us unequal gifts. Not so we can get ahead of others, but so we can work our hardest at whatever unique task He’s placed before us (Col. 3:23). God’s sovereignty serves as a sustaining grace and comfort, and it gives us the strength to defeat envy and find contentment. While we can’t singlehandedly erase envy from our society, we can live counter-culturally by being grateful in all circumstances.

DISCUSSION:

- Compare Paul's description in Romans 1:28-32 with our culture. In what ways do you see envy's effects?
- Are you part of an "I'm of us" group like Pastor Mike described?
- What part did envy play in the biblical examples Pastor Mike gave (Babel, rebellion against Moses, Israel pining for a king)?
- When does trying your best cross the line into competitive envy?
- How is your gifting and life station unique, and how can you be a good steward of it?
- How can the sovereignty of God help you fight back against a culture of envy?

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY

God wants us to completely eradicate the leaven of sin, and it starts by identifying the roots. While the Bible advocates for strong desire in many areas, that desire becomes sin when it's directed at the wrong things. The world's understanding of desire is indiscriminate—it's all about chasing every desire and finding satisfaction in whatever way we can. But 1 John 2:15-17 says that when the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes are coupled with the pride of life they become unrestrained and self-centered. Our desire and craving for God will push all wrong desires out of the way. But even the desires that are truly righteous and God-honoring can't be grasped tighter than our desire for God Himself. He's sovereign and can justly take or reroute anything in our lives for our good and His glory. Like Paul, our desire for God should be so strong that we learn to want what we already have—accepting every yes and no of God's divine, loving, wisdom.

DISCUSSION

- How is a good offense the best defense in our war against envy?
- What are some examples of strong desires that are encouraged in God's Word?
- Take some time to examine every strong desire and craving in your heart and evaluate it against Scripture to see if you should keep it or "quash" it.

Remember Pastor Mike's example questions:

- Is this particular and specific object or experience in any way prohibited by God's Word?
- Is this desired thing or person something I have a legitimate godly right to have?
- Would the fulfillment of this craving be in some way about self-promotion, personal adulation, or self-serving ambition?
- Think of the good desires Paul had in the New Testament. What was his response when God denied him those?
- Why do you think God would deny you a strong desire for something that seems pleasing to Him?
- What does desiring God look like on a practical level in your own life?

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY

“Love does not envy” (1 Corinthians 13:4). That verse serves more as a rebuke than a sweet nothing. The whole chapter is surrounded by instructions against all kinds of envy. Love is a choice that we might have to grit our teeth and fight for, but true love drives out envy. Love wants the best for others and rejoices in their success, like a parent with their child. Philippians 2:1 lists four benefits of our relationship with God—encouragement in Christ, comfort from love, participation (acceptance, comradery, union) in the Spirit, affection and sympathy—that should weld us together as fellow believers. These four blessings can only be experienced through our brothers and sisters in Christ. That's why it's so critical to love the Body of Christ. The love that defeats envy goes out of its way to serve others—even, or especially, those who are advancing beyond us. Philippians 2:5-8 tells us to have the humble mind of Christ—who washed the feet of His disciples, even the ones who would desert and betray Him. That's true love that does not and cannot envy.

DISCUSSION

- Why is it easiest to envy those closest to you?
- How is 1 Corinthians 13 a rebuke against envy?
- Is it fair that God dispenses varied gifts? How is it good and beautiful?

- Compare a parent's joy in their child's accomplishments to loving your rivals, and name specific ways you can rejoice in their success.
- How do the four phrases in Philippians 2:1 weld Christians together? How are they tangibly displayed?
- Reread Philippians 2:5-8 and reflect on how Jesus washed the feet of each disciple. How far can you go in showing love to those you're tempted to envy?

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY

Truly rejoicing with others as Romans 12:15 commands leaves no room for envy in our hearts. James 1:17 says that every good gift comes from God. That includes not only the gifts we get but also the gifts others get. We can't let feelings dictate how we live—especially if we want to break free of envy. The Christian life requires us to turn our back on certain desires to pursue a better way. That means we need to remind ourselves of all God has done for us, as David did in Psalm 103. Rejoice, or else! We should rejoice in what we have, and what others have. It's a non-negotiable command. Whether or not others get a big head is between them and God. Our job is simply to rejoice alongside others in what God has given them. After we take stock of our own blessings and praise God for His kindness to us, we can then throw the spotlight on others. Time to rejoice—let's get to work!

DISCUSSION

- How do Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 10:4 and 6:7 speak to Pastor Mike's point that rejoicing is a weapon of warfare against envy?
- Do you find it easier to mourn for others' losses than to rejoice in their gains? Why or why not?
- Revisit James 1:17 with somebody you envy in mind. Does the fact that God gave them what they have change your view of them? Does it change your view of God?
- In what ways have you allowed your feelings of envy dictate how you live?
- How does Ephesians 4:17-24 serve as both a rebuke and a solution to being led by envy?
- Read Psalm 103:1-5, then follow David's example of telling your soul to rejoice in both your blessings and the blessings of others.