

Problem of Comparing and Competing

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Comparing and competing are major problems of the human heart. These are rooted in the fallen nature, of envy and jealousy. This is the problem of measuring ourselves with others, trying to out-do others. To be better than anyone else. This is the spirit & thinking of this world. Our real problems our spiritual.

Psychology / human analysis never solve the real problems of our heart. But God has an answer for every problem in our hearts. Solutions for spiritual problems should be sought for the Scriptural way—by using the Word of God.

The Word of God discerns the real motives and intentions of our hearts (Heb.4:12). The Word of God is a light that searches and discovers our real needs, and then offers us the true remedy (Psa.119:130).

Psalm 119:130 - The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

The source of inner turmoils are not discovered by human analysis. So, we want to go directly to the root of the problem, straight to the heart. Therefore, I would like to offer ten Scriptural solutions on how to overcome the problems of comparing and competing, envy / jealousy.

I want to encourage us to look to the Word of God for our answers.

We will start by *defining* envy and jealousy, *analyzing* them, finding examples in the Bible, and then using practical illustrations to gain the victory in our lives. Let's define envy:

Envy by definition is “to dislike, or have bad feelings against someone because they have some advantage or something superior.”

Isaac's neighbors, the Philistines, envied him because he was mightily blessed of God, they urged him to leave by stopping up all his wells. It is interesting that envy is a major reason for the stopping of revival wells (Gen.26:12-16).

Genesis 30:1 tells us that "Rachel envied her sister" because Leah had children but she was barren. Joseph's brothers hated him because his father made him the heir. See also Genesis 37:5; Acts 7:9.

Envy *blinded* the theologians of Jesus' time so that they were unable to recognize their Messiah or understand His teachings. They were well aware that His authority was far superior to theirs, for "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mt.7:28-29).

Thus, they envied Jesus. Even Pontius Pilate understood that it was *envy* that was driving the chief priests to deliver Jesus to him to be crucified (Mt. 27:18; Mk.15:10). It was envy that nailed Jesus to the cross. Envy is one of the works of the flesh mentioned in Galatians 5:21. Carried to an extreme, envy can destroy the soul.

The Problem of Jealousy

Jealousy can be summed up as "the demand to be number one." Jealousy opposes all rivals. When David became competition to King Saul, he tried to kill him. "Jealousy is as cruel as the grave" (Song 8:6).

In Exodus 34:14, God's very title is *Jealous*, yet He alone reserves the right to demand to be Number One because He is the owner of the universe. However, when *man* tries to exalt himself and draw men to himself, he is cursed with a perverted, vexatious spirit of jealousy.

Envy and jealousy have separate meanings, yet have several things in common: both revolve around the sin of competing and comparing with others, and both are the result of an uncrucified ego.

Envy and jealousy originated long before man. It started with comparison. Lucifer looked at the One on the throne and coveted His singular position. Lucifer wanted to be the center of attention and the object of all worship. Envy / jealousy have motivated Satan ever since.

In the future Satan will produce *an imposter* to the world, and indwell a man who “magnifies himself above every god” (Dan.11:36; 2 Thes. 2:3,4).

This “beast” will show great animosity toward anyone who does not worship and hail him as number one. Jealousy is portrayed by Haman who sought to exterminate the Jewish race because one man (Mordecai) did not bow to him or acknowledge him (Est. 3:5,6).

With the fall of mankind in Eden, envy and jealousy soon became the instruments that brought about the first murder. Abel’s life and offerings were acceptable to God but Cain’s were not. Comparing himself with his younger brother who was more righteous than he, Cain hated him and slew him (1 Jn. 3:11,12).

Envy and Jealousy (called *emulations*), are among the works of the flesh mentioned in Gal.5:19-21. Carried to an extreme, these can destroy the soul eternally if they or not brought under subjection.

Ten Cures for Envy and Jealousy

1.) A Pure Heart – Pure Motives – This means our whole objective is to bring glory to God, and help others, and stay hidden behind the cross. When a man has pure motives, he will never be tormented with jealousy, but that is not the case for those who seek their own glory.

Paul tells us that even some ministers “preach Christ out of envy and [rivalry]” (Phil.1:15). Are we building our own kingdom, or God’s? Are we driven with ambition, or striving to make God number one? Are we exalting His name, or trying to make our own name great?

2.) No Comparing – Paul tells us that by measuring and comparing ourselves with one another, we are not wise (cf. 2 Cor.10:12). The Word of God forbids us to do this!

Peter looked at John one day and said, “Lord, what will this man do?” (Jn. 21:20,21). The Lord answered and said, “It is not important to know what your brother is doing, just follow me.” This is the Lord’s counsel to us too.

“Just keep your eyes on me, not on what your brother is doing.” Do not compare or measure yourself with anyone else.

3.) No Competing – Even the twelve apostles were not exempt from the spirit of competition as they argued around the communion table “who should be accounted the greatest” (Lu.22:19-26). What did it take to break the spirit of competition in these early apostles? It required the deathblow of *failure*—for they all forsook Jesus in the Garden.

Then they saw their Lord brutally beaten and slain. Several weeks after these things we find them all together in the upper room *in one accord*. See Acts 2:1. Here is another cure:

4.) Do Not Care Who Gets the Credit – Our former president, Ronald Reagan said: “There is no limit to what a man can accomplish if he does not care who gets the credit.” If we are only seeking to draw attention to God and not to ourselves, why should we care who gets the credit for anything that is accomplished for Him?

Remember, “The Lord who sees in secret shall reward you openly” (Mt.6:6). Do we really believe this or does our faith need more purifying? (1 Pet.1:7). Are we seeking to glorify God, or are we seeking our own glory?

5.) Esteem Others Better Than Yourselves – This is the setting aside of the ego and putting on the garments of humility and brotherly kindness. Paul exhorts: “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind *let each esteem other better than themselves*” (Phil.2:3,4).

Also, he tells us “in honor preferring one another” (Rom.12:10). Humility is the key to unity, and it is the key to conquering envy and jealousy. To honor others and put others before ourselves is the secret for overcoming all competition and all envy and jealousy.

6.) Have Your Own Promises From God—When you have your own promises from God, it gives you a great sense of security. Then you do not look at others or measure yourself with them.

Abraham had promises from God. Therefore, he never worried about people taking anything from him. When there was strife over land, he gave Lot the first choice of territory (Gen.13:5-9). He could afford to be generous because he knew that one day he would be the owner of all the land anyway. If you have promises you never have to worry.

Ask God for personal promises, even promises that go beyond this life into eternity. When you have promises you will win the victory over envy and jealousy and you will be a *very secure* person.

7.) God's Acceptance of Others is Not His Rejection of You — The Jews believed that they were God's chosen people above all others. Therefore, when God accepted the Gentiles and made them fellow-heirs of the same promises, they were moved with jealousy.

They did not want to share their position of being number one with anyone else. Therefore, they greatly opposed Paul's message. See Acts 13:42-45. The Jews should have accepted the Gospel with joy and rejoiced to share it with all the other nations of the world.

God's acceptance of the Gentiles was not a rejection of the Jews. It was actually to their honor that the Good News came to them first and was going out from Israel to all the other nations of the world. “To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.”

8.) Appreciate the Function of Other Members of the Body – Think of the human body. Every organ has a different function, but is vital to the well being of the rest of the body. We are only a part of the Body of Christ, but we are interdependent upon one another for survival. Therefore, we should appreciate the function of other members rather than compete with them.

Sometimes people struggle with self-rejection because they feel their function is less important than others. Paul deals with this attitude in his writings to the Corinthians. See 1 Corinthians 12:15,16:

“The foot cannot say, because I am not as important as the hand, therefore I am no good at all. Or, the ear cannot say, because I am not as important as the eye, I am not important at all.” No! This is insecurity and self-rejection, and this brings envy.

Some parts of the body are covered and some are seen, but this does not mean that the parts that are covered are not as important. There are many keys on a piano, and some are sounded more than others, but this does not mean the keys that are used less often are not important. What would a piece of music sound like if certain keys were missing?

9.) Realize That We Are All in Different Seasons – This is another reason we cannot compare ourselves with others. The Apostle John is only mentioned by name twice in the book of Acts (in chapter 3 and chapter 8). However, Peter stands out as the predominate figure in much of the book. Peter blossomed earlier in life but John came forth later in life. John emerged to the forefront thirty years after Peter had died, when he wrote the book of Revelation and his Gospel in 96 A. D.

Every one of us is unique. God has His own specific plan for our lives and it is actually foolish to compare ourselves with one another. Please remember this illustration with Peter and John. Peter came forth early in life, and John came forth later in life. Every one of us is profoundly different. God’s time-table and plan for you will differ from anyone else.

10.) Have the Love of God Perfected in You—First Corinthians 13:4-6 tells us that love does not envy, and does not seek her own interests. Love is not *self-seeking*, which is the root of jealousy. Envy and jealousy are the exact opposite of divine love.

Love is unselfish, but envy and jealousy are self-seeking and self-grasping. The young Corinthians envied one another and the immature Galatians devoured one another, Paul calls them “little children”(1 Cor.3:1-3; Gal.4:19).

Let us grow into spiritual maturity, which is reflected by the unselfish divine nature of brotherly love and unity, for it is *here* that the Lord commands the blessing, even life forevermore (Psa.133). Unity is the result of humility.

As we conclude this little study on envy and jealousy, I want to encourage all our readers to search for their answers in the Word of God rather than in psycho-analysis. The Spirit of God knows exactly what our needs are, and He can reveal them unto us from the sacred Scriptures. The Word of God discerns the thoughts and intents [motives] of the heart (Heb.4:12).

Let us review the ten cures for envy and jealousy:

- 1. Have a pure heart.** Seek God’s glory, not your own.
- 2. Do not compare yourself with others;** it violates 2 Cor.10:12.
- 3. Do not compete with others** or try to outdo them.
- 4. Do not care who gets the credit.** Do not seek man’s praise.
- 5. Esteem others better than yourself;** honor others not yourself.
- 6. Have personal promises;** it makes you a very secure person.
- 7. God’s acceptance of others is not His rejection of you.**
- 8. Appreciate the function of other members of the Body.**
- 9. Realize that we are all in different “seasons” in our lives.**
- 10. Have God’s love perfected in you.** Love does not envy.

