

Envy Kills

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[0 : 00] Join me in Proverbs chapter number 23. Don't worry, I'm not tonight special, okay? That would be special and unique. Proverbs chapter number 23, and we're going to look at the topic of envy tonight.

Typically, those that are in the service get to hear things and know things that those watching online don't know. In this case, tonight, the opposite happened. My microphone was still on when I walked over the piano and asked Charlotte and Jonathan how things were going in their dating relationship.

And they answered, and those watching online learned that everything's going well, all right? And so you should know that. And I also said, I don't know that I can preach for 45 minutes tonight. And so everybody online heard that as well, all right?

So I might as well let you know that. But my wife does not doubt my ability to feel every minute I've always been given. But we're going to study the topic of envy, Proverbs 23, 17.

Three times we're told not to envy here in Proverbs in 23, which we hadn't finished that chapter. And then we get to chapter 24, verse 1. It's the same reminder. And so that's one of the themes of Proverbs that we haven't addressed head on.

[1 : 08] And that's what we're going to do with our time together. Proverbs 23, 17 says, Let not thine heart envy sinners, but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

Let not thine heart envy sinners, but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long. And if you'll turn over to chapter number 24, verse 1, Be thou not envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them.

Two Proverbs in a short amount here, the time where we look at this thing called envy. If I was to ask you in here what envy is, I think your answers would be pretty similar, but none of us would have the exact same definition.

Of the sins, it's a little harder to realize it. And we're going to look at several passages tonight. But I actually have a picture of it. I caught it right here, okay?

This is envy. You see this kid right here? Looking at his sister with the ice cream cone? There it is. All right. Personified. That's envy. You ever been there before? Been so excited?

[2 : 14] There's an old McDonald's commercial. Not old McDonald's, the farmer. An old commercial by McDonald's. And the kids got second place. One team has a trophy, and they're on one side of the soccer field.

And the second place team, the parents brought them all Happy Meals. And the kids are all celebrating like they won, even though they got second place. And the kids on the other side of the field are looking at the kids with the Happy Meals, and you can see the envy coming from them.

But we recognize that in our lives. Shakespeare, and you all know I read a lot of Shakespeare, right? Shakespeare said, It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock the meat that it feeds on.

It's a green-eyed monster that mocks the meat that it feeds on. Another definition I found, it says, we're speaking about envy. It says, We feel envy in spite of ourselves.

Even though we do not want to, it is the great unsought sin. We don't seek for it, but we find ourselves there. Here's a definition. Envy is a mingling of a desire for something with the resentment that another is enjoying it, and you are not.

[3 : 24] That's what takes us back to that picture. That kid was looking at that ice cream cone, and his sister enjoying it, and he knew he wasn't, and he had envy. It's very much akin to jealousy, that a jealousy would come out of envy.

Jealousy is a kind of envy that is directed towards another person when they're getting the affection that you wish you had. So maybe it's hard to get a hold of as a definition, or maybe it's hard to protect you.

You wonder, How do I keep from doing this? You don't normally see it coming in your life. You find yourself suffering from it, but you really feel it. Proverbs 14.30 says, A sound heart is the life of the flesh, but envy is the rottenness of the bones.

And so I ask you, Have you ever felt the ache of envy? Have you recognized it? You didn't seek it, but you felt yourself just being miserable from this envy that you're feeling.

Both Satan in heaven, and then Eve in the garden, both of them yield to this temptation. One, Satan wants to be like God, and then Eve is told that you will be like God.

[4 : 31] Envy is a part of the original sin, and so it's no wonder that it makes such a regular appearance all throughout the Bible. Envy draws us away from God to look for someone else to give us praise, to find our confidence in them.

John 5.44 tells us, How can you believe which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?

Envy makes us want to live valued by something here on this earth. We don't envy people and say, Hey, I just am really envious of how much God loves Paul.

I'm really envious of how much Paul is serving the Lord. We are envious in areas in which we feel like Paul is getting something from this world that I wish that I was getting.

And so if we're going to, as we'll see, how do we attack this thing of envy? How do we protect our hearts? It really comes to this idea in John 5.44, is that seeking honor from things of one another as opposed to God.

[5 : 35] We even see it in the life of disciples. It's almost comical. If you look in John 21, verse 18 through 23, we're going to see a conversation between Jesus, Peter, and John the Beloved.

John 21, verse 18 says, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself and walkest whether thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whether thou wouldst not.

This spake he. And so if you're in verse number 18, you're saying, I'm not exactly sure what he was saying. He spake here signifying by what death he should glorify God.

And when he has spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. Jesus tells Peter how he is going to die. And then when he gets done, he says, Follow me.

Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved. And who was that? John. Following, which also leaned on the breast at supper, and saith, Lord, which of he that betrayeth thee?

[6 : 36] Peter, seeing him, saith unto Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Speaking of John. And Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he will tarry till I come, what is it to thee?

Follow thou me. Peter, what is it to you if John gets to stay alive until I come back? And in misunderstanding, then it, this went, this saying abroad, verse 23, Among the brethren, that the disciples should not die.

Yet Jesus said not unto him, you shall not die. But if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Jesus said, I didn't tell you he wasn't going to die. I'm telling you, what is it to you if I decide that you're going to die, but I'm going to decide that he gets to live?

So Jesus asked the question, you know, what is it to you? And so we see here beneath the surface, it's envy in Peter's heart. It is a, hey, that's not fair.

You know, I'm going to follow you and I'm going to die, but he gets to live until your return. And so envy seems to be born of a restless heart that does not find God satisfying, or in that case, that Jesus' answer was not satisfying to him.

[7 : 56] But envy happens when we just say, I, my heart is restless because the condition in which God has placed me is not satisfying. And I desire to be in your place because that seems to be like a better position for me.

The quote by Stephen Whitmer says this, very convicting. It says, envy is a stingy and demanding master. It's stingy because unlike many other sins, there's absolutely nothing pleasurable about experiencing it.

Most sins bait the hook. Lust offers excitement and escape. Greed promises wealth and pleasure. Gossip promises power and participation in the inner circle.

And many sins are at least temporarily pleasurable, and that's why we do them. But with envy, it's all hook and no bait. There's no upside to envy, not even a small or temporary spike of guilty pleasure.

That's why no one consciously plans or schemes to envy as you might plan to satisfy a lustful desire. We feel envy in spite of ourselves. And even though we don't want to, it is the great unsought sin, the aching that we have in our hearts at times that we wish we could get away from.

[9 : 14] Envy is also terribly demanding. Although it delivers nothing, it requires much. It can absorb and dominate a life. It can poison pleasure and still joys and waste time.

Envy can make your own blessed life feel shabby and inadequate. It is, in fact, one of the sins that presents the most obvious affront to the sovereignty of God. It questions God's plan, choices, and goodness.

Envy is rebellion. When we looked at the sin of covetousness that Jesus warned the Pharisees of, we talked about how it's not just simply to have something in life, it's to have something in contrast to other people.

That's why inflation doesn't make us feel better. You know, pretty soon we will all be millionaires, all right? But we will need to be millionaires to fill up our cars and to buy groceries. But when we all become millionaires, it is not going to do anything for our pride because then everybody becomes a millionaire.

So it isn't just gathering stuff. We have to gather stuff in our pride that is in great contrast to everybody around us. And envy has to do with this contrast of you seem to be in a better position, which means that I question God's plan for my life and believe His choices are wrong.

[10 : 29] I question His goodness and its rebellion. Envy is earthly, it's unspiritual, it's demonic, and it is often accompanied by other sins.

James 3, 14 through 16. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, that's a good question that we should ask ourselves today and every day.

But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth. The wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

But where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. That's why envy always accompanies sin. Envy is going to bring itself out in our lives of sin, and it also creates a life of confusion, which is not one that we want, right?

That is not how we sell people on ideas. None of us want a more crazy or hectic life, one of confusion, but we want one of a simple faith in our Lord. So envy questions God's plans, choices, and goodness.

[11 : 36] Envy is rebellion. Thomas Watson in his book, The Godly Man's Picture says, That is such a convicting thought.

A humble Christian is content to be laid aside if God has any other tools to work with which may bring him more glory. You ever heard the statement, It's amazing what can be accomplished when nobody cares about getting the credit?

It's something like that. Every time I hear that, I always tell the person, You know I said that first, right? All right? But it's amazing what can be accomplished when you don't care about who gets the credit. But a godly, humble life says, God, I am grateful you use whatever person that you want.

If you choose to use me in this way, wonderful. If you chose to use my brother or my sister in Christ in this way, that's also wonderful. As long as you are brought glory.

That is a great place to live, isn't it? Where you can sincerely be excited for one another. And then what is the opposite? Where you can't be happy for anybody but for yourself.

[13 : 02] And that is such a small world in which to live. And so let's look at some of the symptoms that we would have of envy. It's because it's subtle in our hearts.

We don't often recognize it. It's not even a word that we use very much, I don't think. When we say, I'm living a life that's not right. It's full of confusion. What is really at the heart of it?

And it could be envy. It's something that we are given to at times and we need to be aware of. So let's see what some of the ways we would recognize it. Proverbs 24 verse 8. He that devises to do evil shall be called a mischievous person.

In verses 1 and 2 of chapter 24 it says, Be thou not envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them, for their hearts studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.

So the envious towards evil people is being envious towards people who study destruction and who will be talking of mischief. And so we're warned against that.

[14 : 00] We are warned against desiring something. The most common when you think of, many of you when you would think of envy, you would think about Asaph. And what is that? Psalm 73, I believe, where he says he was envious at the foolish and that his foot was well nigh slipped until he entered into the sanctuary.

So he was just looking at these people and it's like their life just seems to be so much easier. The way that they give what they go after, they just seem to always get it. And the Bible warns us about being envious of a mischievous person.

And it gives in Proverbs here these three warnings. 24, 1, Be thou not envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them. Why? What is the reason given that we should not be envious of these evil people?

And the Bible tells us, Proverbs 23, 17 and 18, that their future is bleak. We should not be envious of these people because let not that heart envy sinners, but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long, for surely there is an end and thine expectations shall not be cut off.

There is an end in sight for the envy for the sinner. And we should not desire that. We should have a sorrow for them. The only way that we could look at a sinner and envy their lot in life is if we lost any understanding of eternity.

[15 : 23] We'd have to be living life completely underneath the sun because the people that we should be looking at with compassion, understanding that our life, that we have all eternity and we compare ourselves to them and they seem to have so much and we have so little, the only way that's possible is if you forget about the fact that there's a whole eternity.

And if we saw eternity, then we would look at those people and instead of envying them, we'd be moved with compassion for them. Proverbs 24, 19 and 20. Fret not thyself, don't worry because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked, for there shall be no reward to the evil man.

The candle of the wicked shall be put out. There is a promised outcome, the people who live in an evil way against God, and we should never be envious of them.

Galatians 5, 21, New Testament speaking on the same matter. Envyings, murder, drunkenness, revelings, and such like. It seems to be an odd place for envying to be put beside murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such alike.

Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in the time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God, that the envious heart will not be a repenting heart.

[16 : 42] Remember last Sunday morning in 1 John chapter number 3, when it told us that we were to, one of the signs of being born again, one of the signs of really being a believer, is that we would love one another, and then the contrast that was given was Cain.

And then I said, well that's a really strong example of all the unloving people, and all the people in the Bible that seem to be hateful. Why did we have to go to the very first murderer in the Bible?

Because Cain did not have a love for his brother. Cain had envy towards his brother. Instead of learning from his brother, instead of following an example, he had an envying, which would lead towards a murderous heart, because envying is only possible, and it leads to a hatred for one another.

So envy doesn't allow you to have a proper relationship with those around you. And so if envy is the result of unbelief, we should fight it accordingly. Proverbs 23 verse 17, Let not thine heart envy sinners, but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long.

And so we are told not to envy, but we are told what the antidote is, which is to fear the Lord. If you'll turn with me to Psalm chapter 37, verses 1 through 7, and we will look here at this psalm that will help us when it comes to fighting the unbelief that leads us to envy.

[18 : 02] Psalm 37, 1 through 7, Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.

Trust in the Lord and do good. So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it the pass. And He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Fret not thyself because of Him who prospereth in His way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices the pass. So we look at the opposite of envy, and the first, don't envy, but trust the Lord.

You can learn a lot in the Bible, in the Proverbs, as they contrast each other, or in Psalms, to know what the difference is. It's hard to know exactly what envy is, but we can know what the opposite is, which is, if trusting the Lord is the way we don't envy, then envy must be a result of a lack of belief.

[19 : 12] And so trust here is the opposite of envy. And we need to fight envy, just like King David did, in trusting the Lord. Trust in the Lord and do good. Verse 3, So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

And so there's a promise here made about trusting. It says, If we will trust in the Lord, and that we will do good, that in doing this, we shall dwell in the land, and we shall be fed.

That we shall be fed. That speaks of enjoying security. That speaks of being fed on His faithfulness. That speaks of being fully satisfied in Him, and not rebelling against Him.

Being able to be happy and delighting, verse 4, And delight thyself also in the Lord, and it shall give thee the desires of thine heart. So instead of envy in the heart, verse 3 says, There should be trust, there should be delight, and then there's a commitment.

And then verse 5, again, there's trusting again. Protecting our heart on both sides comes down to trusting the Lord. Because we do not want to be in the shoes of that other person.

[20 : 18] We would not want to wear them. That person we would envy against, verse 2, They should be soon cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Or verse 9, For evildoers shall be cut off, but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.

Or 1 John 2, 15, Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loved the world, the love of the Father is not in him. We should not have any love for this world, because we understand it's in, so we'd never want to trade shoes with them.

Read a story about two shopkeepers, and they lived, and they were right across from each other, and they didn't care how much money they made. They would sell something, and they would look up, and they would smile across the street at the other guy to let him know they had sold something.

So the end of every day, really what mattered to them wasn't how much they sold, it just had to do with how much they made in comparison to the other one. So somebody comes to them and says, I can offer you any wish that you want, okay?

Whatever you want, you can have, but the person across the road, your enemy here, they're going to get double whatever you have. So if you have great health, they're going to be twice as healthy.

[21 : 26] If you have great riches, they're going to be twice as rich. So the man thinks about it, and he says, what am I going to get? And he says, I would like to be blind in one eye, all right?

And so that his guy crossed through it, well, if I explain it, it ruins everything, all right? And so it's that desire that he would rather see affliction upon that other person than have him blessings in his life, and that's where envy leads us to.

It is really just the desire to see somebody else's failure. It is just desire to be so consumed about what's going on in their life. An obsession with somebody else's life, an obsession with how well they're doing, is really the sign of an unhealthiness in your heart.

It really has to do with an envy, because you're saying, I can't trust the Lord, so I'm waiting for some kind of sign to say that the way I believe that the world is supposed to be is really happening.

And so when the person that you are against, or that you're envying is blessed, then you believe that God is continuing to be unfair and worth that relationship. Then it means that we have to trust that God would vindicate, which I know is such a strong word, but it means that just God would set right, that he would give the judgment.

[22 : 39] Psalm 37, 6, and he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as noonday. So we're talking about fighting against envy.

We have David here writing a psalm. Think about, put yourself in David's place for a little bit. Where would envy come into David's life? There would be many opportunities for David to be envious of King Saul, and there's many examples in the Bible that we would see of envy that would happen.

And so here we have, it says, that judgment at noonday. And so there's a trust in the Lord, but what kind of trust? Trust in God's judgment, verse 39, for evildoers shall be cut off, but those that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth.

But the meek shall, verse Psalm 37, 11, but the meek shall inherit the earth, and all shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. When you're dealing with envy, you can trust the Lord, and you can trust his judgments.

One of the things that lies behind envy oftentimes is the feeling that things aren't going as well as they ought to go. And so Isaiah 64, verse 4 says, For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he has prepared for them that wait for him.

[23 : 58] God works for those that wait on him, that God would be the one that gets to decide in life what is right, and we would not make our own judgments for them.

We've seen it throughout the Bible. You see Joseph and his brothers. Joseph's brothers were at a place where Joseph had something good said about their dad, and so what did Joseph's brothers do?

Their heart was turned towards their brother, and what did they... They needed to balance the scale in life. They needed to do something that was wrong because they thought they needed to settle the score in this world because their heart had decided that there was an imbalance in this world.

You ever let your kids... I saw a parent do this one time, and it would be a great way to do it. If your kids are cutting a piece of cake, right, you let one of the kids cut, and then the other person gets to decide what side of the cake they get.

That's the only fair way to do it. But if you've ever let a kid divide anything in this world, you know that they have already decided that before the other person cuts it that they're cheating them.

[25 : 05] Daniel and Eli, is that how it would work? If you two were to split something right, would you trust the other one to divide it? Well, an envious heart is one that would say that it cannot be trusted, and we see that in the life of Joseph, and we see it all throughout the Scriptures from the disciples, and we see it in the garden, and it continues into our lives today.

And so we must be people that trust the Lord, and we trust Him that His judgment is correct because we have already read that a life of envy is a life of confusion and sin.

James 3, 16, For where envy and strife is, there is confusion in every evil work. For envy and strife, there is confusion in every evil work.

Could you consider that just for a moment here? What is it? How restless is your heart? Or what is causing your heart to be restless? What is causing your heart to just not be completely satisfied in Him?

What has caused you to be obsessed with somebody else? We live in a really weird time because in the time we live in, you can check up on anybody, you know? You can check up on somebody that you went to school with.

[26 : 17] One of my friends sent me something from one of the people in high school, and for a moment they said, Hey, look, this person did something really dumb, and we both laughed about it. And because for a moment I was back in high school again, being picked on this person, and now I'm getting to glory in the fact that this person was making a mess of their lives.

That's a horrible place to be, but we live in a life where we can constantly check on people. And so if you're feeling bad about yourself, you go check on your friend that you knew you're doing better than. You ignore another person.

But that is a restless heart, one that's not satisfied with the life that God had given you. And those who envy are those that must carry their God. Let me explain that. You see, in Isaiah, God contrasts Jehovah with the Babylonian gods.

Bel and Nebo are the Jupiter and Mercury of Babylon. They are helpless as their falling images. They have to be carried. Their subjects have to work for them.

But the Lord of Israel is the creator, and he does not need carrying. Isaiah 46, 1-34 says, Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth.

[27 : 24] Their idols were upon the beast and upon the cattle. Your carriages were heavy laden. They are burdened to the weary beast. They stoop. They bow down together.

They could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity. Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are born by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb.

And even to your old age am I he, and even to the whoreheads, which means gray-headed, will I carry you. So even late in life will I carry you. I have made, and I will bear.

Even I will carry, and I will deliver you. That is an expression of what it means to trust in the Lord. So when you get to those places of temptation where you're tempted to envy somebody else in life, it makes your heart restless.

You're not satisfied, which we've already seen that leads to all kinds of sin in your life. You need to trust in the Lord and say, I don't have a God that I have to carry. I don't have a world in which I have to be the one who does everything.

[28 : 34] I can just say, God, I need you to carry me. What a strong picture, right, of a God that you would have to carry. So every one of you, and I'm sure Paul and Amber have seen it, you know, in the Paul, they have literally been walking down the sidewalk and seeing somebody carry an idol and move it.

You know, if there's a flood that was coming, they would need to save it. It was said, but not our God. And you would see just a God that you need to move around, one that isn't fully God, but one that has to be cared for.

When you're having an envious heart, it's as if we had a God that was so small that he doesn't carry you, you need to carry him. And so it's like you would take God and say, hey God, I know you're seeing something from this position, but you can't perfectly see everything.

And so I'm going to need to move you over here so you can see things. You have made yourself very large and you've made God very small. And I'll end with this quote here by David Jeremiah that is so convicting when it comes to envy.

I'm going to read this to you. And we're going to take a little bit of time of reflecting because we need to examine our heart. The Bible warns us against envying. And one of the ways that we can tell that envying is in our heart is by that restlessness.

[29 : 47] That restlessness, that obsession with something that's outside of your own life. That obsession with somebody else. That obsession with trying to be the judge and not let God be the judge.

But we forfeit so many things when we do that. My little brother, he wrote me something a couple weeks ago that has just been on my heart as I think about it. He said that I've really not been living these last so many years.

I have traded all the wonderful things in life just for this one thing, for the ability to eat pills or ability to do this. I have taken my whole life and I've shrunk it down to this one obsession.

And until I was able to move on from that, I'm not able to enjoy life at all. You in here may not have that same problem, but maybe you're in here, you deal with an envious heart and it's a family member, it's a friend, it's even an imaginary situation in your life where you thought you were supposed to be in life, but where you're really at in life.

And so you look at it and you're envious of where you think you should be. And so you don't fully trust God. Can I tell you, we're in the same situation that my little brother is in. We're forfeiting all that God would have for us by an obsession with a small thing that may or may not even exist.

[31 : 05] So David Jeremiah says this, when love comes in the front door, it will push envy out the back. When envy comes in the front door, it will push love out the back.

But when you rekindle God's love in your heart, God's love will be so overwhelming that envy won't be able to exist in the environment. You have a restless heart tonight.

You don't understand why you have a restless heart. Might you consider that it's an envious heart and that the solution for being an envious heart is not trying to change your circumstances and to balance the scale, but it's simply the let go and to trust God and say, God, I'm going to let you carry me.

I'm going to let you be the one who decides where I should be at in life. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, I thank you for addressing these matters of the heart where I could not even imagine where I would be at, where my brothers and sisters would be at if you were silent in this world.

Father, I fully admit to you that I have felt the ache of envy in my heart at times, that it's created a restlessness, Lord, that has led to sin, Lord, that it's created a restlessness that has hurt relationships.

[32 : 23] It's created something, Lord, where I could not rejoice with those that are around me because I was so obsessed with just one or two things. Father, I thank you for the grace that is offered for that and the life that is found beyond and past that.

With every head bowed and every eye closed, you pray where you believe that you should pray, but would you examine your heart and ask if the restlessness that you may be dealing with is a result of the envy that comes from not trusting God.

The imaginary life that you think that you're supposed to have that you're missing out on, that's something that needs to be cast down. That's in a vain imagination. The life that somebody else is living that you think belongs to you, if that was the life that God wanted for you to live, then you would be living it.

Trust Him. Let Him carry you through those seasons of temptation.