

## Easter Production 2008

# EMPTY

**The purpose of the message today:** Over the last several months God has placed this message, "Empty," on my heart. There were several challenges turning it into an inner active script that could carry a healthy theme of the message. I am elated with the three empty things that God has provided for us as we celebrate this Easter weekend. All the while, I'm frustrated at Satan's attempt to get us to hold on to three deadly sins which entombs us, things that will never provide the fullness of what the cross has to offer. Today I pray that you will be enriched and made more aware of the three empty things that are wonderful and three things that steals, kills and destroys a life meant for the fullness of God. Much of this message today was taken from Ed Young's book, 7 Fatal Distractions, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 2000. I would encourage anyone desiring to grow in the core foundations of their life to purchase a copy of this book and prayerfully read it. I find it to be incredibly insightful and confrontational to what we all deal with on our spiritual journey.

**Intro:** As we were trying to find an appropriate title for our message today we looked for the perfect fitting title that would say it all. As we discussed the purpose of this message and its content, it kept falling back to one word, EMPTY. It's not really an appealing word is it? Empty? It sort of stands alone. If you wait too long after saying it you become to get a little uncomfortable because the more time spent in silence after saying it, the more it becomes real.

Here in America, there are many things that are offered to you and I to assist us in living free of empty. If I were low on gas for my car and didn't have the appropriate funds, a credit card is available to help me from being on EMPTY. If I were low on energy and I needed to get through the rest of the day, there are "power boosters" and "super drinks" to help me from running on EMPTY. If I were low on feeling good about myself, I mean, I'm running on EMPTY when it comes to self confidence and self esteem, I can always find something as simple as a sale at a store or a brand new car that will boost my "EMPTY" situation.

But these are all tangible things. These things are really more visible than the feelings and attitudes that drive them. How we fix EMPTY is the real problem, and it has been for thousands of years. **That's why Jesus Christ came, He came to fix empty.**

***"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."***

**John 10:10**

Here, the Bible says that Satan's number one goal is to empty your life of any significance and substance. He wants to do three things to you: 1.) Steal, 2.) Kill and 3.) Destroy.

- I've never met anyone who has become the victim of theft that did not feel like they were personally violated and a bit insecure. When a thief comes, it leaves you empty of the security that you thought you had. **Satan loves empty. His goal is to get you there.**
- I've never met anyone whose loved one lay in the casket because of an untimely death that did not experience the trauma of absence of that life. There was a huge gapping hole where that individual stood in their life. **Satan loves empty. His goal is to keep**

**you there.**

- I've never met a **couple whose marriage** was destroyed by anger and bitterness or unfaithfulness that there was not a loss, a destructive loss to a dream of what they thought life would bring them one day. The dream is over now, but there's something that is still lingering, it's like a cloud...empty, waiting to be filled. **Satan loves empty. His goal is to destroy you there.**

But I love the rest of this scripture,

***"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."***  
**John 10:10**

That's a huge statement that Jesus is making. He is saying that His purpose for coming is that you and I would have to opportunity that when...

- ...When Satan attempts to steal things from your life...you still have a life.
- ...When Satan attempts to kill the things you love the most...you still have a life.
- ...When Satan attempts destroy the very core of your being...you still have a life,

And not just a life, an abundant life. That is an exceptional, exciting and fulfilled life.

**We rarely recognize Satan's strategies and tactics.** As a matter of fact, if Jesus has not really had the opportunity to work your life, then the Bible says that you have a devious nature that works in you, it is called the "sin nature." **This nature causes us to be blind to the real motives behind the EMPTY issues of our life.**

- **This sin nature magnifies what people do to us without us ever realizing what we are doing to ourselves. We make others responsible for the emptiness we have inside.**
- **This sin nature encourages us to ignore that there could be something wrong with us. It minimizes that we have any problems in our personalities, errors in our attitudes, or failures in our behaviors. To admit that the sin nature is active in us may sound ridiculous, but the only way to continue to ignore the empty issues of our life is to continue to build upon the last problem, the last error or the last failures of your life and think that you are going to have different results.**

**But we need to see for ourselves who we really are according to God's view. When we do that, we are probably going to see some things we don't like. The good news is that there is a two part solution that God offers us through His Son Jesus Christ:**

1. **You don't have to remain the way you are.**
2. **You can have much more to life if you are willing to respond to God's plan for your life. Jesus called it an abundant life, a full life.**

### **The Tomb Yard**

Many people don't realize that when Jesus Christ was buried after his crucifixion, that he was placed in a tomb that probably had other tombs around it. In this particular case, the tomb where Jesus was buried was a new tomb of a man the the Bible calls, "Joseph of Arimathea," he was a wealthy man and a prominent member of the Council, (Mark 15:43), who had secretly become a disciple of Jesus, (Matthew 28:57-61), and was waiting for the kingdom of God to come, (Mark 15:43). He was a good and upright man who had not consented to the

decision and action of the rest of the counsel, (Luke 23:50-51). He obviously had some influence in the community because when he asked Pilate for Jesus' body, the Bible says that he asked "boldly," and Pilate immediately order a centurion to hand Jesus' body over to him. There were actually two men who secretly believed in him in Jesus a were part of burying Jesus, (John 19:38-42; John 3:1, 7:50), as already stated, **Joseph of Arimathea** was one of them and **Nicodemus** was the other. This tomb, more than likely, had other tombs around it, not like our grave yards today, but further apart than what we are familiar with. It was important to the Jews to have designated places for their dead. **Joseph** and obviously had connections with **Nicodemus**. If you don't remember who Nicodemus is, he was a member of the Jewish ruling council who came to Jesus late at night, (John 3), because he could not ignore the fact of how Jesus was fulfilling the requirements of the one to come, the messiah, the savior of the world. But he was afraid of responding to Jesus' message in broad daylight for fear of what others would think. **But Jesus, in His kind way was patient with Nicodemus and it was to Nicodemus that Jesus spoke two of the most profound statements in the New Testament, one was a prophetic statement about Himself and the other was a sin nature ending statement,** look what Jesus said to Nicodemus,.

***"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."***

**John 3:14b-15**

Jesus said, "Nicodemus, you are familiar with every story found in the Old Testament, do you remember the one found in Numbers 21:8-9? Well in the same way that the serpent lifted up on a stick in his day saved the lives of everyone who looked upon it, the same is true to everyone who will look upon me. Nic, I'm telling you how I'm going to die and what you can expect and how you should respond to it."

Then Jesus makes another profound statement following this last one that almost everyone could quote:

***"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."***

**John 3:16**

The two of them, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took the body of Jesus, and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth. The Bible is even very clear on this matter. John 19:38-40 is very precise in indicating that Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus prepared Jesus' body in the manner of the Jews for proper burial. This procedure involves extensive wrapping of the body, while including about 70-100 pounds of myrrh and aloes that would get placed between the various layers of cloth. Specifically, John 19:40 says that "Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury."

The amount of myrrh and aloes used in this ritual was a sign of the respect for that individual. It was common to use great quantities of spices for embalming the dead. In preparing a body for burial according to Jewish custom, it was usually washed and straightened, and then bandaged tightly from the armpits to the ankles in strips of linen about a foot wide. Aromatic spices, often of a gummy consistency, were placed between the wrappings or folds. They served partially as a preservative and partially as a cement to glue the cloth wrappings into a solid covering. (from: The Reality of the Resurrection).

This complex and involved wrapping of many narrow strips of cloth would naturally have stuck together so strongly as to effectively make a relatively rigid 'cocoon' around the body.

The head and hair were anointed with the nard unguent, but the powdered spices do not appear to have been applied to the head or face. A small separate 'face cloth' or 'napkin' was generally placed on the face or around the head. John 20:7 refers to this separate cloth, so this aspect of the custom was definitely used regarding Jesus. Rather than ONE piece of cloth, certainly at least two separate pieces are described here.

Jewish custom did not involve using a single cloth to wrap the body, but rather a number of long strips of linen that were tightly wrapped many times around the body. The presence of the myrrh and the nard would have made the burial clothes become extremely rigid. The burial clothes were never extended to cover the head or face but only wrapped the body.

John 19:39 shares in detail that Nicodemus provided a mixture of about 75 pounds of myrrh and aloes that he and Joseph of Arimathes wrapped Jesus in. The myrrh and aloes were placed in between the strips of linen as they wrapped Jesus in the strips of linen. After they had prepared the body, they laid him in the tomb and then rolled the stone over the entrance as Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and Solome. (Mark 15:40-41; 47), looked on.

Like I mentioned before, **many people don't realize that when Jesus Christ was buried, he was placed in a tomb that probably had other tombs around it.** They were filled with people who had different lives and different stories. One thing is for sure, they didn't have the opportunity to see what had just happened to Jesus. What their life was like, was now finalized. **But these people are really no more different than we are. They deal with the same issues of the sin nature and the emptiness of their hearts.** Today I would like for you to see what entombs others around Jesus that day and how it relates to the stories of our lives today!

The Bible says that there are basically **two types of actions of our sin nature, sins of commission and sins of omission.** Sins of commission are sins that we willfully and knowingly commit against God's directives. Sins of omission are things that we could have, would have, or should have done, but we didn't do them. We knew what was right but we just fail to do them. The apostle Paul stated very plainly:

***"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."***

**Romans 3:23**

**It was common in the Old Testament that when a person turned from sin that he would pour dust over his head and rip his clothes. So from time to time you would read in the Old Testament that they would go through the motions of saying the right words and doing the right things but it wasn't long until they were back doing what they did before. Nothing really changed.**

**Then God sent a prophet by the name of Joel. He brought a new word to get to the root of the problem, (Joel 2:12-14). He came before the nation of Israel and essentially said, "You really don't have a behavioral problem, you have a heart problem. Stop tearing your clothes and putting dust on your head. You need to tear your hearts**

**before God in true sorrow and true repentance."**

*<sup>12</sup> "Even now," declares the LORD, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." <sup>13</sup> Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. <sup>14</sup> Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing— grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God."*

Joel 2:12-14

**Sin produces death. God looks on the heart of man and he judges the issues of the heart. See, the heart reflects who we really are; our actions reflect merely what we do. And who we are is always much more important than what we do. There is no one verse in the Bible that lists the seven main deadly sins, but there is an accumulated list that a group of theologians developed that can entomb everyone in a life of emptiness and separation from God. These sins kill a person's spiritual potential, cut off a person's ability to enter into the fullness of God's blessings, and drive a wedge between a person and God. Today we are going to look at three of them.**

**Let's look at the first person today who is trapped, entombed in the emptiness of pride.**

## **PRIDE**

Pride is an interesting word. You can't say the word pride that the long I does not ring loud and clear. Pride, P ride, it's a trip one takes, the ego trip. It's a trip that takes us to the land of Me, Myself and I. Pride is defined:

**"an inordinate amount of self-esteem."**

Its synonyms are not pretty either: egotism, vanity, conceit, arrogance, boastfulness. Pride is puffed up, stuck up, and stiff-necked.

Often when we think of pride, we often picture a loudmouthed individual who is overbearing and heavily opinionated. But a prideful person and also seem to be meek, mild, and conservative.

Pride makes all the other sins deadlier. "I'm not proud; I'm just self-confident."

- **Pride whispers** to the over spender, "You deserve this! Even though you have two credit cards maxed out, other people have as much debt, maybe more."
- **Pride whispers** to the alcoholic or drug addict, "You can stop whenever you feel like it. Just have another drink, take one more hit of cocaine. Smoke a little more dope, you can stop when ever you want."
- **Pride says to the controller**, "If you don't tell people what they should do, who will?"
- **Pride says to the blamer**, "It's your parents fault. It's your coaches fault back in Junior High. It's your boss's fault. It's your ex-spouse's fault."
  - Pride keeps score
  - Pride keeps one in unbelief that a person can change
  - Pride keeps us blind to the great relationships we lose
  - Pride keeps whispering as if it is a friend when it is out to kill, steal and destroy.
- **Pride tells the one packed full of knowledge**, "No one knows as much as you. Everyone else is ignorant or they would listen to me. They all really have a problem."

The way that self-esteem is taught so often is, "You need to do whatever makes you feel good about yourself."

- I deserve to be loved
- I deserve to be happy
- I deserve to be rich
- I deserve to have things
- I deserve that position
- I deserve to be respected

I, I, I, me, me, me. The person who bases his life solely on feeling good about himself doesn't realize that he will be spending his whole life in a search to fill that void, that emptiness. The pride ride is all about feeling good about self.

Some of the last words of Lucifer that he stated before he was kicked out of heaven was,

*"You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."*

Isaiah 14:13-14

Satan's goal in getting you on the pride ride is so you will take part of his own failure. That's exactly how he enticed Eve in the garden of Eden to sin against God, "...you will be like God..." (Genesis 3:4-5).

**The Pride ride pushes us from the heart of God.** It causes us to have less and less to do with Him. When you are on the pride ride you really have less and **less time to know Him** in prayer **but more time in asking** for God to bless you, to help you, to give to you.

We have got to review our own heart. In this inventory process review your involvement in the assistance of others, Jesus said, "If you want to become great, become a servant." (Matthew 23:11)

**The Pride ride doesn't celebrate the blessings of God.** When we win something, get a promotion, have a creative idea, or give a good talk, and we think, "*I did it. I'm really disciplined, so creative, such a leader! I have such a contagious personality! I'm something else!*" The credit goes right to our head.

**The Pride Ride keeps you from others. If you are not being open and honest with others, you are distancing yourself from them. Pride hinders you from being openhearted.**

Suppose someone hurts you- I mean really stabs you in the back. Most likely you will put some distance between yourself and that person. In most cases, you are likely to say that the other person needs to begin the reconciliation process since, after all, the other person started the pain. But the Bible says, though, that the moment we receive Christ, we are given the ministry of reconciliation. We are to take the initiative in restoring a broken relationship. Marriages are destroyed because of pride. Great relationships are severed and businesses become coals of fire because of pride. Pride keeps us from being openhearted toward others.

Pride is dangerous because it can cause us to use people to make ourselves look better. Parents can use their children, individuals can use their friends and even pastor's can use their congregation. Pride is not only a ride, it's a runaway train!

People don't recognize pride in their own life. They don't understand why people stand off at a distance from them. There is a protection to guard their own consensus about themselves.

- Valaree Vanity- that is extremely concerned about their appearance.
- Eddy Education or knowledge- "degree dropping" or giving academic credentials.
- Anna Accomplishment- displaying all the awards, titles and honors.
- Ronny Reverse- the opposite of everyone else. Looks extremely different, behaves extremely different. He thinks himself better than those he criticizes.
- Ned the name-dropper- He wants everyone around him to know that he knows important people.
- Martha and Marvin Materialism- Their world revolves around the acquisition of things.

What fuels your behavior, what is covering up the emptiness of you heart? Appearance, degrees, possessions, affiliations, accomplishments? Pride and the peace of God can not coexist. Pride is a poison that must be removed or it will create incredible damage.

***"...clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."  
I Peter 5:5b***

Humility is not demeaning yourself- that is "false humility." True humility is becoming other-centered and is not worried about themselves.

***"...God (resists), opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."  
I Peter 5:5b***

It takes great humility to say I'm sorry. It takes great humility to say, "I am having a struggle with you and I'd like to resolve this conflict."

One of the greatest ways to confront pride and abolish it from your life is to get involved in a ministry from people you may dislike or who are not your style. Complete this sentence: "I would never want to be \_\_\_\_\_." You have just identified the person or group of people to who you should minister. **Don't let pride keep you down from God exalting you up. There is no upside to the downside of pride. There are no long-term benefits to pride, just many short-term relationships, jobs and encounters with others. It kills you spiritually, emotionally, and physically.**

Let's look at the second empty tomb, not empty of a person, but filled with an empty person.

## **ANGER**

Anger is everywhere. It is a bad guest in our homes, a frequent visitor on our job and accompanies us in our car. It is one of the commonly cores of our painful tombs. Anger is not always dislikes, sometimes it's excused or explained away as "blowing off steam," "venting," or just "talking out loud."

Many social commentators have labeled this decade as the "Age of Rage." We have pipe bombs, drive-by shootings, church attacks, wife beatings and games that award the next level up by cutting off the head of an opponent, something is wrong!

Anger is an emotion that raises our blood pressure, causes our mouths to get dry, we tense up and our adrenaline begins to shoot through our veins. We feel ready to fight far too often. **What we do with with anger will have a great affect on what anger will do with us!**

- **Toxic Waste Approach**

They take it and bury it deep within themselves and pretend everything is alright. But over time, sometimes over the years the anger begins to leak out and contaminate them. It enters the stream of their thoughts and causes all kinds of sickness.

- **Volcano Approach**

Some deal with anger like a volcano, it's not if it will erupt, it is when it will erupt that is the question. This type of anger comes up without any warning. You can be in a great mood when you leave home, but then the moment someone cuts you off on your drive to work, there it goes, boom!

Volcanic people can rumble and rumble for days, weeks and even years. Then they come to the point of explosion, without warning, "I've been taking this for five years, and I'm not going to take it anymore," or, "That's the last straw!"

The spew of lava and burning ash of a volcanic person leave you charred and wounded. It leaves young boys beaten down, young girls fearful, wives abused and husbands dishonored.

Volcanic people never apologize for their actions because in the moment it never feels quite that bad, it seems so short of an incidence, surely it's not that bad, but it is.

- **The Snow Cone Approach**

The snow cone approach is when a person becomes upset they immediately turn on the big chill. They give the person who has wronged them an ice-cold shoulder, and the icicles virtually drip off the eaves of their words: "No, northing's wrong. No, Nothing at all."

- **The Microwave Approach**

These are people who operation like a microwave. Their anger is so close to the top of the surface that when a situation arises their three second timer goes off, beep, beep, beep, bam! They explode with a short fuse.

## **Good and Bad Anger**

I believe that God gave us two emotions, fear and anger so we would get up and do something about our situation, without those emotions, nothing would get done, people would die, we would constantly be victims of our own making. But, these two emotions can rule and ruin your life and the life of those around you. This is why it is one of the most deadliest sins. Oh, by the way, I should mention that bad anger is a sin.

***“Be angry, and do not sin...”***  
**Ephesians 4:26**

Like I said, I believe that God gave us anger for a healthy cause, to take positive action on an evil and unjust cause. Anger is actually neutral. It's like a crowbar, it can be

used to open a jammed window or it can be used to break into a house. The crowbar is not the issue, how use is.

Jesus became angry in a positive way in John 2, when he discovered the temple was basically turning into a mall. His anger moved him to weave a whip, turn over table and drive people out of the temple...is this the picture of Jesus you have on your walls? Jesus' anger motivated Him to set things right in the temple.

Anger is deadly, negative outburst and long rumblings of unforgiveness will kill valued relationships. This anger causes us to open our hearts to one of the most common of crimes, unforgiveness. The unforgiveness will fester, thoughts of revenge can occupy the mind, all the while the other person may have no idea of the incident at all.

The longer you wait to deal with the matter, the harder and more callused over the situation becomes, the more you find reasons to justify you position, the more the relationship losses potential to be restored. Satan wants to kill, steal and destroy your relationships. He wants anger to be a key to that in your life.

***"Be angry, and do not sin..."***  
**Ephesians 4:26a**

You can be angry, but it is to motivate you to do things right...do not sin in it. The very next portion of that scripture continues the thought,

***"...do not let the sun go down on your wrath..."***  
**Ephesians 4:26b**

It's easy to think that if you go to sleep, everything will be better in the morning, WRONG! Losing sleep in the night is not near as bad as losing an opportunity to resolve conflict. I have never benefited from a long nights sleep with unresolved conflict sitting there waiting to be dealt with.

Anger sometimes is the action to help avoid the situation of a healthy journey, it distracts us from our real need, to be forgiven, to be loved and restored.

***"Be angry and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil."***  
**Ephesians 4:26-27**

In Genesis 4, Cain had a problem with his brother basically because Able, his brother had gifts that God accepted, but refused Cains. Cain was jealous and became angry with his brother over the incident. The Bible says,

***"Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell."***  
**Genesis 4:5**

Cains anger affected his whole countenance. It swept through his body and you could absolutely tell that something was wrong, this was so unlike him. I think Cain was the kind of person that was great at expressing happiness, and it became so obvious when it was gone. God asks him a pertinent question,

***"God spoke to Cain: "Why this tantrum? Why the sulking? If you do well, won't you be accepted? And if you don't do well, sin is lying in wait for you, ready to***

***pounce; it's out to get you, you've got to master it."***  
**Genesis 4:6-7**

**God was telling Cain that he had a choice. He could deal with this properly and set things right or you can open a door to anger and allow sin to master you, to kill, steal and destroy your best relationships, your family, your job, your future!** It's leaving you empty, entombed in a cemetery where so many others have ended their life.

In Cain's case, his sin led to revenge in the form of murder. How many people today are spending their time trying to destroy and discredit someone they are angry with! They say, "I'll get back at my coach," "I'll get back at my Dad or Mom," "I'll get back at my boss," "I'll get back at my ex-wife."

We get back with words. We use them as weapons, what was meant to be used as a healing tool becomes a raging fire!

***"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."***

**Ephesians 4:29**

- Don't allow this anger to build up in you as toxic waste.
- Understand how harmful the Volcano anger can explode and send lava and burning ashes on all of those around you.
- Realize the harm of the ice cold snow cone shoulder that you put on people that upset you.
- Become aware of your short fuse, the microwave three second beep.

**God is telling us today that he has a choice. We can deal with this properly and set things right or we can open a door to anger and allow sin to master us, to kill, steal and destroy our best relationships, our family, our job, our future!**

### **Respond To Healing, Not Anger**

When anger has had its way, the best thing to do is to do the right thing to restore the relationship. If it's a personal relationship, let the other person know, "I value you and I value our relationship." Let the other person know that you love and care for them. On a job, let them know you value your job and your desire to work there. Be affirming. Use "I feel" words rather than "you," "always" and "never." Keep the volume down, Proverbs 15:1 says, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." And set on resolving the "real" issue, not what's on the surface. Release the person and set them free.

### **ENVY**

Envy is ugly as sin, because it is sin. Green has always been associated with envy, "green with envy." No one wants to have a greenish tint to his skin, that would mean he was sick or from Mars. That's what makes green so ugly, those who have it seldom recognize it, but it is obvious to all those who see it.

The other two entombed people we discussed have a singular opposite. The opposite of

pride is humility, the opposite of anger is forgiving love, but the opposite of envy is "other's oriented." Envy in itself desires no good thing for anyone but themselves. They are enraged at the blessings, opportunities and gifts of others. It is so subtle, it whispers in your ear,

- It's alright to get another **credit card** even though you already have two maxed out, you deserve it.
- It constantly reminds you that you **deserve to be happy**, getting on the internet and talking to someone miles away is not wrong, why limit yourself to someone who doesn't understand you or refuses to acknowledge how great you really are.
- It urges you to **pressure your kids** more and more, to perform better and better so others will see how wonderful of a parent you are.
- It drives you to **endless hours of work** and separation from family so you can have the things that you must have...even if it kills you, even if it steals your most valuable relationships, even if it destroys your own life.

Envy is defined in the dictionary as "an evil eye." It begins with a look at something that catches your eye and eventually catches your heart. It's possible guys that porn addiction is envy to the max. When a beautiful woman walks into the room the other women in the room cast the "evil eye." Envy is casting an evil eye on the position, opportunities, success and blessings of others. **Envy is a consuming desire to have every other person be as unsuccessful as you feel.**

There is a story of an envious merchant who lived by the sea. He was particularly envious of his number one competitor in his small town. One day as this man was walking along the shore he found a bottle. After picking it up, he rubbed the sand off of it and out of the bottle emerged a "Genie." This genie looked at the envious merchant and said, "Sir, your wish is my command. There is only one catch, whatever you wish for, I will give in double measure to the person you envy the most." This man thought for a second and then he responded, "I wish I were blind in one eye!"

**Envy is hoping that another person will fail as much as you want to succeed.**

Envy is a destructive force to unity and agreement in the church and in a typical family. See, a salesman is not envious of an artist- they are envious of another salesman. A mother doesn't envy a professional athlete- she envies another mother whose children seem to be smarter, better dressed and more accepted. Ministers are not envious of real estate developers, they are envious of other ministers and the opportunities that they have. Envy asks the question, "Why not me?" It becomes divisive. It attempts to form opinions, separate and take sides. It happens among teachers, among musicians and friends.

***"For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice."***

**James 3:16**

You find discrediting and doubt encouraged about others when envy prevails. Ridicule and manipulation sabotages the simplest of statements and kind efforts. Avoidance takes place where others are present. Gossip and back biting is the undercurrent of those obsessed with an individual because of envy.

Envy will ignore the warning signs of danger and avoid the calls of caution to get what they want. An envious heart will eventually accept a lie or lie to themselves to support and envious

cause. Cain's sin was actually an envious observation that became obsessive anger. This is a sin, it leaves you empty, depleted, hungry for more, starving for what it cannot supply. Satan wants you to remain in that position. He want to steal what you have for what you think you want. He wants to kill your true potential and lessen it's importance and value so you will chase after things that will exhaust you and ruin your life. He wants to destroy your future by dangling an unrealistic carrot in front of your nose moving you past the most important relationships and accomplishments of your life.

Envy is listed in the New Testament with some other ugly things: deceit, rudeness, murder, drunkenness, orgies, hypocrisy, slander, and stealing, (Romans 1:28-32; Titus 3:3).

Solomon, the wisest man in the world made a statement over two thousands years ago that is still absolutely true today,

***"A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones."***  
**Proverbs 14:30**

## **Four Ugly Faces of Envy**

### **1. Envy Damages Who We Are**

Psychology Today magazine once conducted a survey of twenty-five thousand people, and the editors found that envy is the core root cause of a poor self image. The feelings of inferiority, worthlessness and failure is in most cases in context to comparison to someone else. We can become preoccupied with comparing ourselves to other people wondering what's wrong with us, what do they have that we don't? The truth is, there is always going to be someone who is stronger, smarter, faster, richer, prettier, and bigger than you are. You name it, there is someone who has already wrote the book on it. Today we are not only obsessed with other people, we have now become envy of what could be. We fail to measure up to what no one else has never measured up to. Comparison is futile. It does not reap any benefit.

This envy leads to back handed compliments, "She does have pretty hair, but did you see what she was wearing?" "He's good at what he does, but have you seen how he takes care of his yard?" These fake praises to get in a jab are sings of envy.

There are condescending statements. My wife and I are planning on going to Hawaii in the next few weeks, but envy would say, "Hey, it's beautiful there but have you been to the Cayman Islands? It's beautiful in the Cayman Islands, you should go there." Envy is the basis for cutting other people down, making sarcastic and cynical remarks about every success story they hear.

***"Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, but who is able to stand before jealousy?"***  
**Proverbs 27:4**

### **2. Envy Creates a Lack of Contentment**

Contentment is a learned behavior. Paul tells the Philippians,

*"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in **need**, and I know what it is to have **plenty**. I have learned the **secret of being content** in any and every situation, whether **well fed or hungry**, whether living in **plenty or in want**. I can do everything through him*

***who gives me strength."***

Philippians 4:11-13

The envious person does not know contentment. He is discontent and discounts whatever he has or has done. He is not patient, never satisfied and has a hard time trusting God. When the prodigal son returned home and had been fully forgiven, the brother who had stayed home was full of envy. He sulked and pouted, and he refused to enter the house with him there. He told his father, "I've done everything you've asked and you haven't thrown a party for me." And his father responds, "Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found, (Luke 15:31-32)

Are you concerned today what you don't have and what somebody else does have? Do you not recognize what God has blessed you with that you crave what someone else is enjoying?

**3. Envy Keeps Us from Enjoying the Success of Others**

If you are envious of another person. King Saul was such a person. He was a decorated war hero but became envious, obsessed with a young country boy whom God used in a great way by the name of David, (1 Samuel 9:2). He wasn't envious of David when he killed Goliath, the giant, but it was when he heard some women who ran out singing,

***"Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."***

**1 Samuel 18:7**

Something got caught up in his spirit and it would not leave him alone, no matter how many times he was caught and confronted with it. Saul died a helpless man and separated from God, despised by the people around him because he could not let David alone and be somebody. Envy is a desire to possess things, people, and honors that are not rightfully ours to have.

**4. Envy Is a Denial of the Goodness of God**

What is your first response when you hear of a relative or acquaintance receiving an unexpected large inheritance from another relative? Frustration, anger, expressions of laughter...not because you are happy but because you know it will be gone in no time?

What is your first reaction when someone has the opportunity to move up on the job or moves to another one with more benefits, salary and freedom? What happens when someone you know shows you a huge diamond on their finger as an engagement ring and you have been married for over twenty years and there is no comparison of yours to that.

God gives out of the abundance of His loving heart. Jesus tells a story of some men who was hired to come to work. Some came at the early shift, one was three hours later, another three hours later, a fourth three hours later and finally the last one at the last hour of the day. When he gathered them all together at the end of the day he paid them all the same. Envy shot through the roof, they couldn't stand the fact that others

had been equally blessed. **Envy struggles with the fairness of God and is frustrated with the grace of God.**

## **Four Things to Do To Rid Yourself of Envy**

### **1. Call It What It Is**

Stop denying the fact that it is interfering with your progress as a Christian. Own up to the envy you have harbored in your heart. Quit lying to yourself and to God. Admit what you are fixated on. Call it what it is!

***"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."***

**James 5:16**

**It is liberating to confess to God the envy you feel, but God already knows what is in your heart, but you need to "come clean" with God.**

### **2. Develop an Attitude of Gratitude**

***"Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn."***

**Romans 12:15**

The envious person rejoices with those who weep, and weeps with those who rejoice. Don't be concerned about what other people are gaining, thank God for their success and trust God to provide for you exactly what you need to fill you and fulfill you. Envy is exposed when you express how you "don't need" what other people need. That is arrogance and pride mixed with envy. Satan wants envy to steal the blessings you could experience by recognizing what God has done for you. He wants to kill your joy and the promises of God to you by getting you focused on another person's promise. He wants to destroy you by having you lose all identity and drawing off of every other person's success for your own worth.

### **3. Expect Envy**

No one is entirely immune from envy, just as not one is completely immune from pride or anger. When you recognize envy rising up in you by the feelings of worthlessness and a loss of self-esteem increase your praise and worship before God. Avoid being around other people who you know will agree with your emotions and negative opinions about others. Refuse to engage in conversations that are demeaning or jealous filled by walking away...they will get the picture.

Fast going to a mall, go through a fast and refuse to dress up to impress, ask God what He would have you wear. Yes, hear God on what clothes to wear. Fast some friends who tolerate your envy and place yourself among those you are not familiar with to create a new awareness of real people and real life. Go to the hospital, write an encouraging card or letter. Make a significant encouraging phone call. Listen to God who He would have you encourage through out the week. Defy your emotions to be so capitalized and occupied with those who hold so much of your worth. Make random decisions to praise and thank God and touch others in a cheerful and kind way.

### **4. Practice Pursuing God**

*"Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation..."*

I Peter 2:1-2

*"Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other."*

Galatians 5:25-26

God is calling out to us, "Pursue Me, not the things of this life." He says that there is no conflict with your emotion when your desires are set on Him. Get God's agenda and you will find God's purpose. Talk about passion of life rather than fighting the passions of life.

### **Conclusion:**

Satan wants to weigh us down, to become burdensome with his deadly sins, to get us to own pride, anger and envy as a way of life, excused by the behavior of others and circumstances we face. We are all well aware of the traps and distractions that offer us opportunity to slip away from the challenges of life. We realize that these three things pushes us into traps and blinds us to the reality of the way things really are. Satan wants you empty, But Jesus Christ has come to fill you up! As you will find out today, you can be free, really free, but we must own up to the empty things that Satan offers us in place of God's true purpose and plan. Let God work in you today so that God can have His full work in us.

- Accept His grace to forgive you for the sin that you have lived in, that you have failed to overcome, that you may have excused.
- Respond to His call by repenting, which is asking for forgiveness of these actions and the hurt that it has caused in others.
- Receive not only His forgiveness because of His grace provided by Christ's work on the empty cross, but allow His power to come into your heart represented by the empty grave.
- Lastly, stopped being entangled in the grave clothes. Refuse to go in the same direction and continue to be entombed in the emptiness of what Satan offers you. Receive the complete healing and restoration provided by the work of the Holy Spirit. Allow Him to take charge and lead you into all truth. Let Him shine the light on the Word of God and renew your mind. Today is a day of restoration, renewal and freshness. Today is a new day!