

# How To Reduce Envy

When the unofficial biography of Nancy Reagan was published some years ago, 950,000 copies were sold in the first week.

Why would so many people want to read about every bit of defect, dirt and scandal, everything that could be found to discredit the former first lady of the USA?

## **Why do people enjoy reading what is bad news about other people?**

What is it in human nature that makes us feel better if we can bring down people who are well known and respected?

Why do we feel better when other people's faults are exposed?

**The answer is one word. Envy!**

Envy provides the mud that failures throw at success.

**1 Corinthians 13:4** [NIV] *"Love does not envy."*

Envy is different from jealousy.

Jealousy says *"I want what you have."*

Envy says *"I want what you have and I want you to lose what you have."*

I not only want the green grass you have your side of the fence but I want yours to turn brown.

## **Envy can show up in any type of relationship**

**Envy in the family:** The Bible is full of sibling rivalry – Jacob and Esau, Cain and Abel, Rachel and Leah.

**Envy at work:** Professional jealousy, salesmen envy other salesmen, etc.

**Envy at school:** Every day children in the playgrounds compare clothes, boyfriends, mobile phones, athletic ability and good looks, etc.

**Envy among friends:** One lady was heard to say *"I'm allergic to fur, whenever I see my friend wearing a fur I get sick."*

We all live in a very competitive world.

The whole advertising business is built on envy.

*"You buy our product you will be the envy of everybody else."*

## How does envy ruin revelations?

### a) It causes conflict

**James 4:1** [NIV] *“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?”*

Conflict comes from within us as we envy what other people have and we don't have.

Remember the game we played when children *“I'm king of the hill”*, and adults continue to play the same game.

I'm king of the hill:- Look at the kind of car I'm driving.

I'm king of the hill:- Look at the colour of my credit card.

I'm king of the hill:- Notice the kind of clothes and jewellery I'm wearing.

Envy is one of the major causes of conflict in marriage – *“you show more interest in your job than you do me.”*

*“You get more freedom than I do.”*

### b) Envy kindles resentment

**Titus 3:3** [Living Bible] *“Our lives were full of resentment and envy. We hated others and they hated us.”*

Envy always leads to bitterness and bitterness to hatred.

As a result of envy we resent what others have, their wealth, beauty, status, achievements, etc.

You can even envy other people's spirituality.

*“Did you hear that prayer, he and God must be very close”* the best I can do is *“now I lay me down to sleep...dear God Hi.”*

*“How come her husband is more spiritually committed than mine.”*

**James 3:16** [NIV] *“For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.”*

### If we are green with envy we are opening ourselves up to every other evil temptation.

Envy can lead to gossip, stealing, adultery and even murder.

Saul was so envious of David that he tried to kill him.

**Matthew 27:18** [NIV] *“For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him.”*

It was the spirit of envy that crucified Jesus Christ.

The religious leaders of His time were envious of Jesus Christ's influence on the crowds.

**Matthew 7:28-29** [NIV] *“When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.”*

This is what allowed the spirit of envy to influence their minds.

### **c) Envy makes me unhappy and unhealthy**

**Proverbs 14:30** [NIV] *“A heart at peace gives life to the body, but **envy** rots the bones.”*

Envy is to our soul as cancer is to our body, it grows unless controlled.

Envy will eat us up alive. The detrimental effects of our envy on us will last far longer than the happiness of the person we envy.

We cannot be happy and envy at the same time.

## **One of the secrets of happiness is to eradicate envy from our life**

**How do we do this?**

**By changing our perspective.**

### **a) Resist comparing myself to others**

**2 Corinthians 10:12** [NIV] *“We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.”*

All envy starts by comparing ourselves with others.

God tells us this is stupid.

Why?

Because He has made us all different.

We all have been shaped differently by our abilities, intellect, experience and background.

We all have differing strengths, weaknesses and personality.

**Galatians 6:4** [Living Bible] *“Let everyone be sure that he is doing his very best, for then he will have the personal satisfaction of work well done, and won't need to compare himself with someone else.”*

Satisfaction results from a job well done that comes within our own talents. God does not expect us to do jobs for which He has not equipped us.

### **b) Recognise my uniqueness**

**Psalm 139:13** [Good News Bible] *“You [God] created every part of me, You put me together in my mother's womb.”*

Envy is an expression of inferiority; when I am insecure I become envious.

**Envy is caused by low self-esteem.**

When we have low self-esteem we feel threatened by people who are more beautiful, better dressed, or seem to have more status or intelligence, etc.

**Psalm 139:15** [Living Bible] *“You [God] saw me before I was born and scheduled every day of my life before I began to breathe.”* [An anti-abortion verse].

God gave us everything we need to have a full and satisfying life, when we offer all He has given us back to Him in serving Him by serving others.

God said He put us together just as He wanted us to be, we have God created designer genes. There will never be anyone else in all of God’s Creation like us with whom we can compare ourselves honestly.

On judgement day God will **not** ask us why weren’t you more like David, Moses, Ruth, Mary, for He designed us to be like the unique person He created us to be.

God expects us to use to the full all the intellect, talents and time He gives us.

**Luke 12:48** [Living Bible] *“...much is required from those whom much is given, for their responsibility is greater.”*

God only expects of us as much as He has given to us to use in this life.

Don’t however make this an excuse for not accomplishing a great deal, for we may not realise just how much we have received from God until we seek to serve Him to our utmost.

### **c) Rejoice in what I have**

**Ecclesiastes 6:9** [Good News Bible] *“...it is better to be satisfied with what you have than to be always wanting something else.”*

**Instead of focusing on what I don’t have I should be grateful for what I do have.**

**Psalm 37:7, 9** [Living Bible] *“Rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him to act. Don’t be envious of evil men who prosper” ... “for the wicked shall be destroyed, but those who trust in the Lord shall be given every blessing.”*

**Ecclesiastes 4:6** [Good News Bible] *“...it is better to have only a little, with peace of mind, than to be busy all the time with both hands, trying to catch the wind.”*

## **Peace of mind can only come from fellowship with the Prince of Peace Jesus Christ**

**John 14:27** [NIV] *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

We can really rejoice in what we have when we have the Prince of Peace as our Friend.

**John 15:14** [NIV] *“You are my friends if you do what I command.”*

**Philippians 4:11** [NIV] *“I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.”*

**Contentment is not a natural state of mind, it is something that has to be learnt.**

Fellowship with Jesus Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit helps us to switch our focus from the physical to the spiritual. From what is temporary to what is eternal.

This shifts our sense of value from what we have now, that is only on loan for a very short time in this life, to what can be ours for eternity.

This shift of focus brings contentment.

The desire to acquire is rampant in today's society but we are not to be part of that society which is being blinded to what is really valuable and lasting in life, God's character in us.

**We can buy thrills but we can't buy happiness.**

Thrills are very short lived but the joy that comes as a fruit of the indwelling of Holy Spirit lasts for ever.

Things do not change but people are constantly changing.

This is why we re-decorate our homes.

The colours in our room that thrilled us as teenagers become very unpleasant when we are in our 40s, and impossible to live with as pensioners.

When we are envious of other people we are trying to project our problems on to them.

*"The reason I am so miserable is that you are so good looking."*

*"I walk into a fitness gym and see all these muscle men and I feel bad."*

Other people's success should **not** have any bearing on our happiness; if it does, it is only because we are choosing to allow it to have that effect.

**Romans 6:23** [Amplified] *"For the wages sin pays is death..."*

One thing we should always remember is we have all got more than we deserve in our lives.

#### **d) Respond to others in love**

**1 Corinthians 13:4** [NIV] *"Love is patient, love is kind. It does **not** envy, it does not boast, it is not proud."*

*"Love does not envy."*

Love is the most powerful antidote to envy.

**Matthew 22:39** [NIV] *"And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'"*

*"...Love your neighbour as yourself..."*

Love is the most powerful antidote to envy because love is happy when other people are blessed. Love wants the highest good for other people.

Love gets excited when other people succeed.

**Romans 12:15** [NIV] *"Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn."*

This verse describes the very opposite attitude to envy.

Envy weeps when others are blessed and rejoices when they suffer loss.

Now be honest with ourselves. Do we have a hard time handling the success of other people? We all do from time to time!

**Envy is resenting God's goodness to other people, and is based on a mis-belief that says your success means my failure, which is not true.**

God has more than enough goodness to give to everyone. He can bless everyone else and you and I.

**e) Refocus on pleasing God**

**Colossians 3:2** [NIV] *"Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things."*

This is the ultimate antidote to overcoming envy.

Look at life from God's viewpoint, recognise that material things are all temporary, they are not going to last.

We need to refocus on those things that are going to last for eternity.

What are these?

Knowing, loving and pleasing God.

When I focus on making God Number One in my life I see all my physical possessions in a different light, they don't have a dominant place in my affections. This attitude destroys envy by turning it into concern for others who are not blessed with the glorious fellowship I have with my Creator.

If we have ever said:-

*"I have just got to have ..... if I am going to be happy"*  
[fill in the blank]

Do you know what that is called in the Bible?

It is called idolatry! It is breaking the first commandment. We are to have no other god's before God.

If we say of some object or person *"I have just got to have ....."* that object or person is our god.

The only thing we have to have to live on into eternity is a relationship with our Creator, a relationship of trust, then everything else comes a distant second in our goals in life.

If anything other than our relationship with God takes first place in our lives we are setting ourselves up for envy to blight our lives.

This relationship is the only thing that cannot be taken away from us.

We could lose our wife, our family, our job, our home, our health, but not our relationship with God.

The antidote for envy is to be so focused on God's Plan for our lives.

When we do this we will not be bothered with envying what other people are doing.

**Proverbs 23:17** [Good News Bible] *"Don't be envious of sinful people; let reverence for the Lord be the concern of your life. If it is, you have a bright future."*

Envy is a choice and we should never measure our worth by other people.

**1 Timothy 6:6-8** [NIV] *“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.”*

If godliness and contentment are the two major goals in our life we will never be blighted by envy.

**Remember envy is a choice and we can resist making the choice of being envious by:-**

- a) **Resisting** comparing ourselves to others
- b) **Recognising** our uniqueness
- c) **Rejoicing** in what we have
- d) **Responding** to others in love
- e) **Refocusing** our minds on pleasing the Creator

The five ‘r’s of an envy-free life.