

WHEN JEALOUS THOUGHT INVADE

The word “jealousy” is used in two different ways in Scripture, and this fact must always be borne in mind. There is a good jealousy and a bad jealousy. God describes Himself on one occasion as “jealous” (Exodus 20:5), and Paul said to the Corinthians: “I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy” (2 Corinthians 11:2). These are expressions of a good jealousy – a passion and zeal for the one loved, not for one’s own interests or concerns.

The word “jealousy”, however, is rarely used in this sense in today’s world. When we speak of “jealousy” in ordinary conversation we usually refer not to good jealousy but to bad jealousy. Bad jealousy is the feeling of coldness and resentment we experience when others against whom we match ourselves in thought, appearance or accomplishment are singled out for praise or commendation. Jealousy is not normally directed against those who are far above us in attainment; it is focused on those in our immediate circle, those we regard as being on a par with ourselves or inferior to ourselves. A Latin proverb puts it this way: “The potter is envious of the potter, the smith of the smith.” Jealousy is rooted in a wrong comparison with others. “It is envy born of some deep love of self,” says one preacher.

The practice of comparing ourselves with others can swiftly lead to sin. If we feel another is not as good as us we can fall prey to pride; if we feel he or she is better than us we are tempted to imply they are hypocrites; if they are more successful than us we often slide into envy.

Jealousy can be dealt with only by keeping our eyes firmly fixed on Jesus and satisfying the impulse for comparison by comparing ourselves with Him alone.

O God, forgive me for my mistaken acts of comparison – comparing myself with others when I ought to be comparing myself with Your Son. May I be so taken up with Him and so secure in Him that I can look at others with love, not envy. In Christ’s Name I pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURES ON WHICH TO REFLECT

1. Advice concerning wrong comparisons.

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. ... For it is not the one who commends himself who is approved, but the one whom the Lord commends. (2 Corinthians 10: 12,18)

2. **Continued jealousy – a mark of immaturity and worldliness.**
You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? (1 Corinthians 3: 3)
3. **Love – the only answer to jealousy.**
Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. (1 Corinthians 13: 4)
4. **We must compare ourselves constantly with Christ.**
Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12: 2)
5. **Jealousy upsets the physical system.**
A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.
(Proverbs 14: 30)
6. **A decision all Christians must make.**
Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. (1 Peter 2: 1)
7. **Jealousy dies in a heart where Christ truly lives.**
This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. (1 John 3: 6)
8. **Fix your eyes only on the Lord.**
My eyes are ever on the Lord, for only he will release my feet from the snare. (Psalm 25: 15).