

“THE QUIET GIANT OF JEALOUSY”
by Rom A. Pegram (8/30/20)

We're big into scouting around here, so maybe this will hit home for you... [A] first-grader came home and proudly reported to her dad that she was now officially a "Brownie." Not to be outdone, her three-year-old brother, Christopher, rushed up to Dad and proudly announced he was a "cupcake!" It begins early, doesn't it? This QUIET GIANT called JEALOUSY ... and that's where we're going today...

In 1 Corinthians 3:3, Paul says, "...you still live as the people of this world live. When there is jealousy among you and you quarrel with one another, doesn't this prove that you belong to this world, living by its standards?" The Church had split into cliques ... some on Paul's side ... and some on the side of Apollos—all directing their energy into being jealous of each other. Finally, the Church could no longer do anything productive, so Paul had to step in and put a stop to it...

The words jealousy and envy are often used interchangeably, even in the Bible. But, there's a subtle, yet significant difference between the two...

ENVY appears benign and subtle. It's the behavior of the 'have-nots,' as they resent everyone else who 'does have.' It's quieter and sinister, ready to rejoice over someone else's misfortune...

JEALOUSY, however, tends to refer to having something ... and living in fear of losing it! It's always on the lookout for some new rival. Far from being benign and subtle, jealousy is often coarse and cruel. Shakespeare called it 'the green sickness.' Sir Francis Bacon said that 'it takes no holidays.'

Today, like scripture does, *I'm probably going to use the words interchangeably* ... but don't let that confuse you. There may be a difference in how people 'act out' when living with these GIANTS, but *they're very similar, too* ... on what they do to people—how they entrap people...

Proverbs 14:30 tells us that "Peace of mind makes the body healthy, but jealousy is like a cancer." The Quiet Giant of Jealousy is one that can absolutely eat you alive ... if you don't deal with it. If you slay all the other giants we've ever talked about, but don't slay this one, it can be deadly. So, let's get down to 'dealing with it,' shall we?

I want to first go over some of **THE CIRCLES JEALOUSY TRAVELS IN**. It shows up in some very specific places in our lives ... and we need to be aware!

Jealousy travels in *proprietary circles*... Genesis 26:13-14 – Isaac had *stuff*, and plenty of it; The Philistines couldn't handle the amount of *stuff* he had, and they began to covet it. Does anyone remember Commandment #10? That's right... THOU SHALT NOT COVET!

Jealousy also travels in *power circles*... Look at Numbers 16:13 or Psalms 106:16—the history of the kings of Israel... Or look at the Sanhedrin in Acts ... upset with the new Christian believers (Sadducees); this is what eventually led to the Passion! Then...

Jealousy travels in *performance circles*... ‘Ever been in a church choir before? Or, another music group within a local church? Or, on a church staff? The list could go on & on... Unfortunately, it slithers through the halls and pews of the Godliest congregations and tears at the Body of Christ. And the only antidotes are heaping helpings of love and grace! Jealousy really does travel in performance circles—even in the Church!

Jealousy travels in *professional circles*... Philippians 1:15-16 speaks to this: “It’s true that some are preaching out of jealousy and rivalry. But others preach about Christ with pure motives. ¹⁶ They preach because they love me, for they know I have been appointed to defend the Good News.” So, what about that co-worker ... two offices down from you? It’s amazing how petty we can all become when we give in to the GREEN GIANT... This is also true about jealousy:

Jealousy travels in *personal circles*... Yes, I have saved the BEST ‘til last ... or at least the one the Bible deals with most frequently. Did you know that jealousy begins at home, and before any other institution, it seeks to destroy the family? Think of all the examples in scripture...

- Cain and Abel...
- Jacob and Esau...
- The prodigal son ... and his older brother (Luke 15:29). Listen now to the end of this very familiar story (Luke 15:25-32, NLT)...

²⁵ “Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, ²⁶ and he asked one of the servants what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother is back,’ he was told, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.’ ²⁸ “The older brother was angry and wouldn’t go in. His father came out and begged him, ²⁹ but he replied, ‘All these years I’ve slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. ³⁰ Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!’ ³¹ “His father said to him, ‘Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. ³² We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!’”

And, of course, there’re other examples too ... like the sons of Jacob ... sticking Joseph down a well to die, and the list could go on and on...

Folks, it’s been said that ‘jealousy comes in the front door ... and sends love out the back!’ They cannot co-exist together. That’s a fact... And there are two more **CHARACTERISTICS OF JEALOUSY** you need to know: Do you know what the Quiet Giant of Jealousy actually destroys?

- ❖ First, *jealousy destroys OTHERS*... People lose their lives because of someone else’s resentment; most murders in our world’s history has had something to do with this. We wonder how this can happen, but ‘the green

monster' makes no claim to advanced logic—just single-minded domination... It destroys OTHERS; then...

- ❖ *Jealousy destroys US...* Here is *the deeper victim* of jealousy or envy—the person who envies or allows jealousy to get the better of them. It's been said that *ENVY shoots at others and wounds herself*; JEALOUSY runs in circles, and it always seems to come back around to US...

So, what do we need to do? How in the world do we face this Quiet Giant head on? How do we slay this giant once and for all? You knew I'd have a plan for you, didn't you ... right out of God's word? So, here it is: folks, WE MUST FACE JEALOUSY HEAD ON IN THESE WAYS:

Renounce jealousy as sin... We learn in the Gospel accounts that Jesus was handed over to the Roman authorities and put to death, basically, because of envy or jealousy. Look what it says in these Gospel accounts...

- From Matthew 27:18 – As Pilate was questioning the Jewish leaders, he was asking which prisoner to release during Passover (a tradition to help appease relations with the Jews). He asked them if he should release Barabbas—a known hoodlum, or Jesus, the one called the Messiah. And then, in parentheses, it says this—like a side note: “(He knew very well that the religious leaders had arrested Jesus out of envy.)” Isn't that something?
- Then from Mark 15:10 – Here we read a similar account by Mark. It says about Pilate (so it must have been well-known what Pilate was thinking or feeling)—again, in parentheses: “(For he realized by now that the leading priests had arrested Jesus out of envy.)” Shame on them!

Here, we see the Green Giant of Envy/Jealousy rising up within the Church of the day! Shame on them ... and it sent Jesus to the cross! So, why 'shame on them'? What were they up to? I mean, what were they really up to? This sounds almost bizarre, but the religious leaders of the day were up to ... SIN. If we want to rid out lives of this Quiet Giant of Jealousy, we have to begin by calling it what it is: SIN...

Scripture backs this idea. For instance, in 1 Peter 2:1 we read: “So get rid of all evil behavior. Be done with all deceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind speech.” Then, in James 3:16 we find: “For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.” And, finally, in Romans 13:13, Paul states: “Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don't participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and jealousy.” So, very clearly the Bible lists the Quiet Giant of Jealousy with other sins to avoid. Go ahead and begin by calling it ... *SIN*. That's the first step to conquering this giant. Then:

Remember your rival in prayer... If you find yourself falling for this 'green sickness' (as Shakespeare called it), a sure-fire remedy for jealousy is to begin to pray for the one you're jealous of! Yes, you heard me right! Pray for those you're jealous of...

One of the things I remember from when I was a kid was going in my father's study at the house. I just loved spending time in there & Dad didn't mind, as long as I didn't touch anything. I discovered all kinds of things in there that helped me grow in my faith ... like letters to God on Dad's desk. I've always remembered that habit of Dad's where he'd write things down he really wanted to talk to God about ... and it worked for him. And then I remember silly little things like this postcard that was taped to the wall above his desk. It was a cartoon of one guy squeezing the living daylights out of another guy, picking him up off the ground, and the caption read: "Love your enemies. It'll drive 'em crazy!"

Folks, pray for those whom you feel the slightest twinge of envy ... in order to rid your life of this Giant! Jesus himself said in Luke 6:27-28: "...love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. ²⁸ Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you." Those you're jealous of... Then:

Reaffirm God's goodness to you... One thing I've learned about jealousy is this: It's almost always because we don't think God's been as good to us as we think God should have been. If we are jealous of another person, it's because we want the blessings God's given to them. We don't understand why God's blessed them and not us ... and so forth...

The quickest way to put an end to that kind of thinking is to ... take inventory of our own blessings. How does the song go? COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS ... ONE BY ONE. It'll be hard to continue in a jealous frame of mind toward anyone when we begin to realize just how much God's already done for us! THANKSGIVING is one way to douse the spark of jealousy! In Psalm 69:30-31a the psalmist tells us, "Then I will praise God's name with singing, and I will honor him with thanksgiving. ³¹ For this will please the LORD...." Thanksgiving should be our daily attitude! And finally...

Rekindle God's love in your heart... Look at 1 Corinthians 13:4 and you'll find the KEY to defeating the Quiet Giant of Jealousy. What does it say? LOVE IS NOT JEALOUS (does not envy)...

Where love is, envy cannot abide. The two cannot co-exist! If envy marches in the front door, love will sweep it out the back door. If jealousy sneaks in the back, love will usher it out the front! THE HOUSE OF LOVE HAS NO ROOM FOR JEALOUSY to even visit, much less take up residence...

So, intentionally rekindle God's love by reading God's word and through prayer. Then act on your prayers by manifesting the love of God to any person whom you've felt envy or jealousy...

Your walk must match your talk when it come to slaying this Giant—when it comes to love winning out over jealousy. When God's love fills your heart, it'll push jealousy right out of your life. Again, they cannot coexist! That's how you slay that Giant ... so let's do our part, trusting God for his part...