

Dreamer  
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Genesis 37:1-28

Let's talk about "Respectable Sins." That is the title of a book written by the late Jerry Bridges. His question: *"Have Christians become so preoccupied with the major sins of our society that we have lost sight of our need to deal with our own more subtle sins?"* What are some examples of respectable sins Christians might minimize or ignore?

Genesis 37 (the story of boastful Joseph and his hate-filled brothers) is the text Pastor Jeremy cited in his first sermon in the series on the "Power of Forgiveness." That message, from the perspective of Joseph, taught us when we experience injustice from the actions of others, we need forgive them and give our pain to God, the only one Who can heal our pain and use it to shape our character.

As we focus on Joseph's brothers in this passage, we see a warning about one of those "respectable sins" -- the danger of unleashing the corrosive emotion of **jealousy**.

- In his play "Othello", Shakespeare called jealousy a "green-eyed monster."<sup>ii</sup>
- Dr. Gary Chapman writes, *"Jealousy eats away at relationships like acid. It's corrosive and destructive. It destroys trust and intimacy."*
- Proverbs 27:4 says, *"Anger is cruel, and wrath is like a flood, but jealousy is even more dangerous."*<sup>iii</sup>
- In contrast, Proverbs 14:30 tells us, *"A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot."*<sup>iv</sup>
- Jerry Bridges said simply, *"The cure for the sin of envy and jealousy is to find our contentment in God."*<sup>v</sup>

The point: Trust in Christ says, *"Lord, I can't believe how good you've been to me!"* Jealousy says, *"Why are you better to THEM than you are to me?"* If jealousy is indeed an emotional acid, we should never take the cap off that bottle. Instead, we should ask God to give us a tranquil heart to be content with His blessings.

As we look at this text, beginning in verse three we see where the trouble began: **(NLT)** — **3** Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other children because Joseph had been born to him in his old age. So one day Jacob had a special gift made for Joseph—a beautiful robe. **4** But his brothers hated Joseph because their father loved him more than the rest of them. They couldn't say a kind word to him. **5** One night Joseph had a dream, and when he told his brothers about it, they hated him more than ever. **6** "Listen to this dream," he said. **7** "We were out in the field, tying up bundles of grain. Suddenly my bundle stood up, and your bundles all gathered around and bowed low before mine!"

**8** His brothers responded, “So you think you will be our king, do you? Do you actually think you will reign over us?” And they hated him all the more because of his dreams and the way he talked about them. **9** Soon Joseph had another dream, and again he told his brothers about it. “Listen, I have had another dream,” he said. “The sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed low before me!” **10** This time he told the dream to his father as well as to his brothers, but his father scolded him. “What kind of dream is that?” he asked. “Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow to the ground before you?” **11** But while his brothers were jealous of Joseph, his father wondered what the dreams meant.

As Chapter 37 continues we see that Joseph’s brothers are away from home tending the sheep and Jacob sends Joseph to check on them. His brothers saw him approaching and seethed with jealous rage: *“Here comes the dreamer! Let’s kill him!”*

The oldest brother Reuben *“came to Joseph’s rescue. “Let’s not kill him...let’s just throw him into this empty cistern.” Reuben was secretly planning to rescue Joseph and return him to his father.” (37:18-22)*

**23** So when Joseph arrived, his brothers ripped off the beautiful robe he was wearing. **24** Then they grabbed him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it. **25** Then, just as they were sitting down to eat, they looked up and saw a caravan of camels in the distance coming toward them. It was a group of Ishmaelite traders taking a load of gum, balm, and aromatic resin from Gilead down to Egypt. **26** Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain by killing our brother? We’d have to cover up the crime. **27** Instead of hurting him, let’s sell him to those Ishmaelite traders. After all, he is our brother—our own flesh and blood!” And his brothers agreed. **28** So when the Ishmaelites, who were Midianite traders, came by, Joseph’s brothers pulled him out of the cistern and sold him to them for twenty pieces of silver. And the traders took him to Egypt.

- Let’s look at the behavior of the players in this drama.
- Let’s start with Jacob. Where did Jacob go wrong? What can we learn?
- Where did Joseph go wrong? What can we learn? Imagine him on social media!
- What about Reuben? How was he right, yet what could he have done differently?
- The horrific actions of the evil brothers are obvious so let’s look at their motivation for the terrible things they did to Joseph, our main topic: **jealousy**.
- To begin, in your own words how would you define jealousy?
- Scripture certainly says that jealousy (and envy) are bad.
- How does it also speak of good or godly jealousy? (See Exodus 20:5)
- The Dictionary of Bible Themes: Jealousy is *“a strong feeling of possessiveness, often caused by the possibility that something which belongs, or ought to belong, to one is about to be taken away. The word can be used in a positive sense (e.g., the jealousy of God), meaning a passionate commitment to something which rightly belongs to one. It can also be used in a negative sense (e.g., human jealousy), to mean a self-destructive human emotion similar to envy.”<sup>vi</sup>*

- Jerry Bridges describes jealousy as the *"intolerance of rivalry."* In other words, *"I can't stand anyone who seems richer, prettier, smarter, or better than me."*
- What does the Bible say about jealousy?
- We already cited two verses in Proverbs, here are other verses:
  - **Exodus 20:17 (NLT) — 17** "You must not covet your neighbor's house. You must not covet your neighbor's wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor."
  - **Romans 13:13 (NLT) — 13** 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.
  - **1 Corinthians 3:3 (NLT) — 3** for you are still controlled by your sinful nature. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your sinful nature? Aren't you living like people of the world?
  - **Galatians 5:26 (NLT) — 26** Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another.
  - **James 3:15–16 (NLT) — 15** For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. **16** For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.
  - Jesus warned in **Mark 7:21–23 (NLT) — 21** For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, **22** adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. **23** All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you."
- When we think about those "respectable sins" compared to "major sins" it's helpful to look at **Galatians 5:19–21 (NLT) — 19** When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, **20** idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, **21** envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.
- Looking at that list, what sins do we tend to "skip over" in the middle?
- How can I spot a spirit of jealousy when it shows up in my heart?
- Here's a thought. I call it a "bobble-head" blessing. ["Good for you!" NOT].
- Quoting Jerry Bridges again: *"Envy is the painful and sometimes resentful awareness of an advantage enjoyed by someone else."*
- Just how dangerous can it be to open that bottle of "jealousy acid?" Is it that big a deal? How far could it go? What bad behaviors can result from jealousy?
- I read several articles on how jealousy can motivate obsessive cosmetic surgery or taking on overwhelming debt as people strive to get ahead of perceived rivals.
- Taken to the extreme jealousy can lead to murder (ie. Cain killed Abel.)
- Remember Columbine High School? *"...Dylan Klebold envied the social successes of the school's athletes. In his journal, he wrote, "I see jocks having fun, friends, women." In another entry he wrote, "I hated the happiness that they*

*[jocks] have." In contrast, he wrote about himself as being so different from everyone else that he seemed to believe he was not truly human or capable of functioning like a human being."<sup>vii</sup>*

- There is no question that is an example of mental illness. None of us in this room would allow jealousy to drive us to violence much less murder. However, what did Jesus say? *"If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.' But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment!"* (Matt. 5:21-22)
- Ever "mentally kill" someone who makes you feel jealous?
- So, how can we overcome the sin of jealousy? Any thoughts?
- Here's Great article from Christianity.com:  
<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-life/how-can-i-overcome-jealousy.html>
- Here are some other thoughts on overcoming the sin of jealousy.
  - First, we need to see jealousy as a sin and deal with it like any other sin by confessing it to God and asking Him for forgiveness.
  - We should focus on how God has blessed US and THANK HIM.
  - We should break our habit of comparing our life to that of others. Maybe take a break from social media to help with that!
  - We should remember that outside appearances can be deceiving and if we went behind the scenes of our perceived rivals, we would likely not want to trade places with them. The grass may look greener because there is a "septic tank" under there (apologies to Erma Bombeck.)<sup>viii</sup>
  - We should pray God's best for those who spark our jealous feelings.
  - We should be careful how we "advertise" our own blessings to others, especially on social media. Humility is the key, and it can be hard not to brag when our families are so wonderful and our blessings so abundant.
  - Finally, we should be careful, especially as parents, not to play favorites.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- As Jerry Bridges said, *"The cure for the sin of envy and jealousy is to find our contentment in God."<sup>ix</sup>*
- Trust in Christ says, *"Lord, I can't believe how good you've been to me!"*
- Jealousy says, *"Why are you better to THEM than you are to me?"*
- If jealousy is indeed an emotional acid, we should never take the cap off that bottle. Instead, we should ask God to give us a tranquil heart to be content with His blessings.
- This week if we find ourselves giving someone that "bobble-head" blessing, let's turn it into a confession to God asking Him to help us stay focused on His goodness to us without comparison to others.

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<sup>i</sup> [https://www.amazon.com/Respectable-Sins-Jerry-Bridges-ebook/dp/B01N56NUIG/ref=tmm\\_kin\\_swatch\\_0?\\_encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=](https://www.amazon.com/Respectable-Sins-Jerry-Bridges-ebook/dp/B01N56NUIG/ref=tmm_kin_swatch_0?_encoding=UTF8&qid=&sr=)

<sup>ii</sup> Othello - Definition, pictures, pronunciation and usage notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com](<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/othello>)

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iii Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [\*Holy Bible: New Living Translation\*](#) (Pr 27:4). Tyndale House Publishers.

iv [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Pr 14:30). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

v [https://www.azquotes.com/author/1899-Jerry\\_Bridges](https://www.azquotes.com/author/1899-Jerry_Bridges)

vi Manser, M. H. (2009). [\*Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies\*](#). Martin Manser.

vii <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/keeping-kids-safe/200905/murderous-envy>

viii <https://www.amazon.com/Grass-Always-Greener-over-Septic/dp/0345471725>

ix [https://www.azquotes.com/author/1899-Jerry\\_Bridges](https://www.azquotes.com/author/1899-Jerry_Bridges)