

KILLING GIANTS SERIES #3
“KILLING THE GIANT OF JEALOUSY”
Genesis 4:1-8, James 3:13-18, Romans 13:8-14
March 7 & 8, 2020

A pastor had performed a marriage for a young couple. “During the premarital counseling sessions, he detected a strong jealous streak in the young man. He mentioned this to both of them, but they passed it off as not that important. The young man assured the pastor he ‘used to struggle a little with jealousy,’ but no more.

“Following their honeymoon and the first few months of marriage, they returned for some follow-up time – and what a change! Brimming with anger, she blurted out, ‘This man is so jealous of me, before he leaves for work in the morning he checks the odometer on my car. Then when he comes home, sometimes even before he comes into the house, he checks it again. If I have driven a few extra miles, he quizzes me during supper.’ (He wanted to know what she had done, where she had been and who she had been with.) Lacking trust and encouragement, she was dying slowly, sadly, angrily.”¹

Welcome to the giant of Jealousy! Its tentacles wrap around us and intertwine themselves around our heart so that we cannot trust or believe others. No matter what we are told, there is doubt as to the truth of the words. There is skepticism about the actions of the other, and everything is in question.

“Here’s the way it works. I love something very much, indeed, *too much*. I pursue it with zeal, I desire, in fact, to possess it completely. But the thing I love slips out of my hands and passes into another’s. I begin to experience the gnawing pangs of jealousy. Strangely, the feelings of zeal and love begin to change. (What I had come to honor and respect, I now question and compare.) By the dark, transforming power of sin, my love turns to hate. Once I was open, happy, filled to the brim with exquisite delight, but no longer! Now I am closed within a narrow compass of inner rage, intensely and insanely angry.”²

¹ (Charles Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Book of Illustrations & Quotes*, [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998] pg. 311)

² (Charles Swindoll, *Killing Giants, Pulling Thorns*, [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994] pg. 29-30)

This giant is raging all over the planet today. It's in government, it's in international and national businesses, it's in schools (primary, secondary and graduate levels among the students and the faculty), it's in non-profit and for profit organizations, it's in clubs and social groups, it's in sports at all levels, and it's even in the church. This giant is powerful and has the capacity to turn friends into enemies, associates into adversaries, and colleagues into collateral damage. Left unchecked or even challenged, the giant of Jealousy can bring chaos to any group or relationship.

“Jealousy will decimate a friendship, dissolve a romance, and destroy a marriage. It will shoot tension through the ranks of professionals. It will nullify unity on a team...it will ruin a church...it will separate preachers...it will foster competition in a choir, bringing bitterness and finger-pointing among talented instrumentalists and capable singers. With squint eyes the giant of Jealousy will question motives and deplore another's success. It will become severe, suspicious, narrow and negative.”³

All we need to do is to look at the Scriptures to see what jealousy will do. The Old Testament lesson of today of Genesis 4:1-8, gives us a great look at the early start of jealousy in the history of humanity. Abel and Cain were brothers, but when God looked more favorably at Abel's sacrifice, Cain fell victim to the giant Jealousy. God saw it right away and confronted Cain about the scowl on his face; *“Why are you angry? Why that scowl on your face? If you had done the right thing, you would be smiling; but because you have done evil, sin is crouching at your door. It wants to rule you, but you must overcome it”* (Gen. 4:6-7).

We are not told what Cain did wrong in his sacrifice, but we are told that Abel gave the best of his flock, while Cain gave common goods from the produce that his crops produced. Yet when God looked favorably at Abel's sacrifice, Cain became overwhelmed with jealousy and “...became furious...” (4:5) even though God warned him about it. And that uncontrolled anger led Cain to kill Abel, his own brother, in order to get rid of the competition and obtain God's approval. Unfortunately, committing murder is not the way of gaining God's approval. Instead Cain received rejection and

³ (Swindoll, *Killing Giant...* pg. 31)

repulsion from God. And Cain spent the rest of his life either angry at God for his punishment, or resentful for his brother's better sacrifice. Jealousy is the epitome of comparison, and that selfish pride within each one of us roils up anger and even hatred at those around us. Jealousy is the instigator of all bitterness, causing us to believe that we deserve the best, in fact, better than everyone else. And if we don't get or lose even what we do have, jealousy drives us to get even or have revenge on anyone who would dare try to take it away.

Jealousy has a very close cousin named Envy. They are quiet often used interchangeably, but there is a distinct difference. Envy is defined as pain or discontent excited by another's superiority or success. It is a begrudging emotion because a person doesn't have what another person does have. Out of the emptiness or lack of something, envy wells up to bring malice toward that other person for what they do have. Envy leads to covetousness, wanting what another person has to the point of doing whatever is necessary to get it, even to the point of punishing or getting rid of the other in order to obtain what they have.

But Jealousy is a bit different. While the same feelings of malice comes to the person, it comes because of the fear of losing what that one does have. Jealousy begins with uneasiness through fear of, or on account of, preference given to another. It is the apprehension of rivalry. It is anxiously fearful or careful primarily about losing what we already have. A young man may become jealous of the attention and affection shown to his girlfriend by another guy. A woman may feel jealous about the attention or affection that her husband shows to other women. There is the fear of losing what is already there. Jealousy leads to possessiveness and greed leading those infected by this giant to do whatever is necessary to keep what they have. Jealousy leads us down the slippery slope of suspicion, watchfulness, mistrustfulness, and even distrust.

So how do we defeat this giant called Jealousy? What steps can we take to overcome all of the emotions that jealousy produces in us? Let me share some important words from Romans 13. These verses from the Apostle Paul give us guidance in how to effectively defeat this giant in our lives.

(READ Romans 13:8-14)

Here in this teaching, Paul lifts up the importance of love for those around us. In fact, he says we are to only have one obligation to others and that is to “...*love one another*” (Rom. 13:8). Let’s be clear on this, however. Jealousy starts out by loving what we have, but this kind of love is not a self-giving love as Jesus teaches, but rather a selfish love. The kind of love that Jealousy offers is a possessive love, a love that drives us into thinking we have an ownership of those things or loved ones. This is a greedy love that prevents us from sharing anything or anyone. It is an over-lording mindset where the one has complete control of what they have.

The love that Paul is lifting up is “loving your neighbor as you love yourself” love. And here we can begin to lay out ways to defeat the giant of Jealousy. In the love of God for us, we are to love one another, “*regarding one another as more important than yourselves*” (Philippians 2:3). As we love others and respect them and lift them up as being more important than we are, Jealousy has no chance to get a grip on our lives and we can begin to serve the Lord freely and perfectly. **Loving others before yourself is the best way to defeat the giant of Jealousy.**

A second way to defeat Jealousy is **Trust**. Jealousy produces suspicion and worry about losing what we have. To trust another to keep their commitments and stay faithful to their vows is vital in opening up love to live fully through the other. The young man in the opening story had to come to trust his new wife would be faithful to the vows of marriage they had must made with each other. Trust in the other builds the loving relationship and allows freedom within those vows. Trust relinquishes ownership and allows for freedom, confident that there will not be any loss in the process of giving love to each other. Without trust in a relationship, that relationship is short lived because love demands trusting each other.

Jealousy also builds on the active imagination of the individual under its influence. In the mind of the young man, his wife could be seeing another man, or going places that were inappropriate, or giving her time and affection to another that could lead to greater and more dangerous things. Trust wipes out

the “what-ifs” of the imagination and allows life to be lived.

A third way to defeat Jealousy is **Communication**. This means being transparent with each other so that an understanding is there about what is happening. This involves making sure that the other knows how you feel about them, that your love for them is still strong, and that your commitment to them is more than in anyone else. It is sharing deeply from your heart and talking about the events of the day and rejoicing in each other’s presence. Communication asks questions, yes, but not inquisition style, “Where did you go today?” but informationally, “So how did everything go today?”

The young man may have thought that his wife’s mileage was off because she was cheating on him, when in fact there may have been an accident on the highway that demanded a detour. Asking how things went would give the wife a chance to tell the account of getting stuck in traffic and being diverted 30 miles out of the way so that she could get home at a decent hour instead of waiting hours on end for the accident to be cleared up. Communication allows the information to come naturally, allowing the love in the relationship to continue to grow.

A fourth way to defeat Jealousy is **Prayer**. Once jealousy has entangled us within its tendrils, prayer is the most powerful way of finding release. When we realize that we are hopelessly caught in the influence of jealousy, praying that God would bring His release is so vital. The giant of Jealousy is not easily defeated, but it is possible. We are assured in Philippians 4:13, “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*”

Private prayer asking God to release us from the grips of jealousy calls us first to repent of our selfishness and our pride. As we acknowledge the problem we have, then we can lift it up to the Lord and allow Him to begin working on us. Then we can begin to trust and communicate to one another, praying with others is important to help keep us accountable and on track to finding a jealous-free life.

Faith in God’s gifts to us is a fifth way to defeat Jealousy. God has endowed each one of us with specific skills and abilities to use for His glory. We are not the same, so our skills range in different levels. Though we may be gifted above other people’s level, there are some who are better

than we are. While we could give in and become jealous of their gifts and skills, why not have faith that God can use you right where you are with those specific skills at that particular level to bring Him the greatest glory?

I've found the temptation over the last few decades to become jealous of others getting special solo parts in bands or choirs that I have participated in. I found myself asking "Why did they get the part and not me?" But then I realize that I am needed in my own section to carry the others along, and if I were the solo part, there might not be enough support in my own section. So I have to remind myself that we are all in the band or choir together, and that it is the group that makes the best music. There are times and places for special pieces, but together we make the best music. Once I realize my jealousy, I consciously listen carefully and enjoy the music the others are presenting, thanking God for their gifts and skills that glorify Him so well. Giving thanks for the others' gifts defeats the jealousy that comes knocking at my door. Having faith in my God-given skill, having faith in God to use me with that particular skill, keeps my head to the right size and keeps my heart from demanding more or demeaning others because they have different gifts.

I came upon a story that tells this well. There was a young man who desperately wanted a part in school's upcoming play. He read through the play, selected the part that he wanted to be in the play, and then worked hard at doing that part. His mother was concerned about all of this, for this young man became very sad when he was disappointed. The day came for the tryouts, and the young man gave it his best. And his mother was worried about him all day long. When he finally came home from school that day, she tentatively asked how the tryouts went. The young man said, "Well I did the best I could, and I was chosen to be a major part of the production. In fact, everyone at the school got parts. I was chosen to be with the team that clapped and cheered for the rest."

You see, we all have important parts in life, and when we accept God's different gifts and have faith in what He has for us, we can then delight to be even among those who clap and cheer. It's a great way to defeat jealousy.

Assurance in God's purpose for us is a sixth way to defeat Jealousy. Jealousy comes out of insecurity in ourselves, and when we let God help us grow in our confidence in Him, we are less likely to let differences lead us to jealousy.

In the Old Testament, I Samuel 19 – 20, we see a great example of the assurance of the Lord given to Jonathan, son of King Saul. Jonathan was now in line to be the next king of Israel, being Saul's son, but Jonathan knew that David was the chosen one of God to take over after his father, Saul. While Jonathan could have been very jealous of David, and joined forces with his father, King Saul, to kill David, Jonathan knew his place. Instead of being jealous, Jonathan befriended David and they became like brothers. Because he knew that God had chosen David to follow his father, Jonathan did his best to protect David and allow him the position of King. God used Jonathan in marvelous ways to defeat the enemies of Israel, but he knew he would not be king. Jonathan's assurance in God's purpose for him gave David the opportunity to become king after Saul is killed in a battle against the Philistines (I Sam. 31).

The same can be true for us as we have the assurance from God that we have our own particular purpose. Instead of yielding to jealousy, we can claim God's plan for us, large or small, and do the best we can to fulfill God's purpose for our own lives. Never mind that others might be lifted up to prominent positions around us. When we have the assurance of God's plan for us, we are released from the temptation of jealousy to do our part for the Lord. And then we can do great things for the Lord through our own purpose

A seventh way to defeat the giant Jealousy is through **Humility**. Pride leads us to jealousy very quickly, so as we truly consider who we are and humble ourselves before the Lord, Jealousy is disarmed and becomes limited to its effect on us.

So many people today fall for the message to look out for your own #1. Our society crams our heads full of being the best, the most important, the greatest, and the most valuable. We're told that we deserve the best, that we should not settle for anything less than the best, and that we need to do

whatever it takes to climb that ladder of success to get to the top. But as we do that, as we look out only for our own personal interests, we allow Jealousy to rule in our hearts and we become convinced that we deserve whatever we want. And then we begin to treat others with disrespect, we scratch and claw and demand we get the most we can with as little effort as we can. We become entitled to get the same things as others, forgetting that most often we are not suited well to have all the things that everyone else has.

But as we humble ourselves, as we allow God to bless us according to His plans and His way, and as we look at others to help them along the way so that they can enjoy God's blessings, too, our lives become much less complicated and we can begin to enjoy what we have, even if it isn't what the neighbors have or what the rest of the family has. As we humble ourselves to God, He meets our needs and provides for us in so many wonderful ways and this can help us to see how richly blessed we really are. A simple life of humility is much better, by far, than one that is complicated with jealousy.

And that leads us to a final way to defeat the giant of Jealousy – Generosity. We are driven to jealousy many times because of greed. We want what we want when we want it, and we want it yesterday. But we don't need the latest and greatest and biggest and best. TV advertisements are designed to convince us that what we have isn't good enough and in order to be SOMEBODY, we have to get what they're selling. Listen folks, it's a trap.

There's a very attractive commercial on TV lifting up the restaurant deliver service called Grub Hub. Have you seen it? "I want it ALL!" is their mantra, and it shows this guy with 30-40 people at his door with stuff from whatever restaurant. With that mindset, we convince ourselves WE'VE GOTTA HAVE IT ALL. And when we don't get it all, that drives us to jealousy. Well, kill that giant of Jealousy and live within your means, and surprise someone with a great gift of something for them. Be generous to be a blessing to others and it will help you kill that giant, Jealousy right there at your door.

Start with love and go from there to trust, communication, assurance, prayer, faith, humility, and generosity. Kill that beast Jealousy, and find hope again, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.