

June 7, 2009

L E S S O N 1

UNIT 1: Dealing with
Our Emotions

**LESSON
SUMMARY**

jealousy

STUDENT TENSION: Why are jealousy and envy so dangerous?

FOCUS: Jealousy and envy are emotions that are harmful to us and our relationships. Only by relying on God's power can we overcome these feelings.

BIBLICAL REFERENCE:
Genesis 4:2-16; Deuteronomy 5:21;
Galatians 5:19-21, 26

OPTIONAL RESOURCES:

- ▶ *Who, What, When, Where, and Why* handout [Youth Connections]
- ▶ *Jealousy Tips* handout [Youth Connections]
- ▶ Green and white cards
- ▶ Clip act of jealousy or envy
 - ▶ DVD or VHS player
 - ▶ Assorted candy bars
 - ▶ Props for skits
- ▶ White board, chalkboard, or flip chart

Teens know that jealous feeling. A guy watches his girlfriend go off with his best male friend at teen camp and feels cheated, frustrated, and angry at the thought that someone has stolen the object of his affection. Teens know what envy is. A girl discovers that one of her female friends has that really expensive outfit from the trendy clothing store and can't stand the thought that someone else got something she wanted before she was able to buy it first.

Our purpose in this study is to help students understand the biblical perspective that jealousy and envy, unless recognized early and uprooted in open confession to God, will distort their self-image, rob them of contentment, and obscure God's blessing in their lives. However with the Holy Spirit's help, our students can learn to win the battle over these enemies.

The intense emotion we label "jealousy" has both a positive and negative "charge." When expressed positively, it can be the instrument by which we protect, preserve, and defend someone we love. We discover in the Bible that God is jealous of His chosen people and all those He has redeemed. Parents often express a "jealous concern" for a child whose unwise friendship may be leading him or her down a dangerous path.

When expressed negatively, jealousy, with its tragic potential for bitterness and resentment, often leads to destructive behaviors. It first reared its ugly head in the sibling rivalry recorded in Genesis 4. Cain, in a fit of jealousy because of God's perceived favoritism of Abel, decided to kill his brother.

Your students can be reminded of the role jealousy played in other biblical stories, like the brothers of Joseph who are resentful of the partiality that their father Jacob shows to Joseph; or King Saul's jealousy of David's growing popularity among the Israelites that prompted his attempts to murder David; or the expressed resentment of some of the disciples at the request of James and John for special privileges in Jesus' kingdom.

Jealousy vs. Envy

Jealousy is almost always triadic (involving three)—*someone* harboring jealousy of *someone else* because of his or her relationship with yet a *third someone*. Its twin, envy, on the traditional Top Seven List of deadly sins to avoid, is almost always dyadic (involving two) and relates to an inappropriate desire for *something* that someone else owns. Your students can keep the distinctions clear by learning to associate the emotion of "jealousy" with "someone" and the sin of "envy" with "something."

Three of the several ways that jealousy expresses itself are probably familiar to teens. First, like the recorded competitiveness in the Cain and Abel story, most of them will know something about jealousy that arises from sibling rivalry. Even those without brothers or sisters will have experienced some measure of jealousy in their familial relationships.



Another way your students will understand jealousy is in the area of peer relationships. As social skills develop, they often become jealous of others whose relationship with a close friend seems to pull that close friend away from them. Or they might see a coach showing extra attention to their chief rival on the playing field.

A third way they will understand the subtle yet powerful influence of jealousy is in the area of love and romance. It is not at all uncommon for teenagers already battling feelings of insecurity, to become spiteful over losing the affection they receive from a boyfriend or girlfriend to someone else. In these circumstances, jealousy can be insidious and especially destructive.

And what does God think about envy? The 10th commandment speaks explicitly about envy when it addresses the sin of coveting. To “covet” something that someone else owns means that we “envy” that person’s possessions. When we envy, or covet, we break God’s law and open ourselves to other sins, like stealing, cheating, or lying, in order to possess what is not rightfully ours.

When jealousy is expressed in a negative way, or when envy becomes fixed in one’s heart, harmful dissatisfaction and resentful frustration are the fruits. Unchecked or unchallenged, both can become cancers of the human spirit.

Jealousy and envy, among a list of several social sins that Paul warns us about, will keep us from inheriting “the kingdom of God” (**Galatians 5:21**). We will want to help our students understand that if we tolerate jealousy in its destructive forms, if we allow envy to take root in our hearts, we cannot at the same time claim God as King in our lives. The kingdom of God cannot coexist with jealousy and envy, nor does it tolerate any of the other social sins that Paul names in Galatians.

Walking in the Spirit

How can we encourage our students as they learn to walk in the Spirit? First, we need to reassure them that feelings of jealousy or envy are not sin, but that they will *lead to sin* unless they are confessed and resisted by the Spirit’s help. Second, they need to be reminded that God will provide all that they need, and that whatever God provides is enough. Contentment is a virtue to be learned as one pursues a godly life and is a weapon against envy. “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Timothy 6:6). Third, by learning to be content both in their relationships and with material things, they will discover the Holy Spirit’s strength to turn away from jealousy and envy.

THINK ABOUT YOUR TEEN YEARS:

- ▶ Did you ever struggle with jealousy or envy? What were the circumstances?
- ▶ How did you see jealousy and envy expressed in others?
- ▶ How did you deal with feelings of jealousy and envy?

THINK ABOUT YOUR LIFE NOW:

- ▶ Are jealousy and envy problems for you?
- ▶ Have you ever helped someone deal with either of these feelings?
- ▶ What steps do you take to overcome the negative influences these feelings can have on your life?

THINK ABOUT YOUR STUDENTS:

- ▶ What does our society teach them about jealousy and envy?
- ▶ Do they recognize the difference between “good” jealousy and “bad” jealousy?
- ▶ Are you aware of any circumstances of jealousy or envy in your class right now? How can you use today’s lesson to help them deal appropriately with those feelings?

HUMAN PLANNING
 VISION TRUTH LIFE

ACTIVITY	LESSON Xpress	BEST FOR	DESCRIPTION
Jealousy Test			
Define Jealousy	X	M/J/S	Students discuss the difference between jealousy and envy.
Candy Bar Bartering		S	Students share experiences to define jealousy.
Jealousy Skit		M/J/S	An edible illustration about jealousy and envy.
Who, What, When, Where, and Why	X	M/J/S	Students act out the Bible passage and discuss.
Jealousy Tips		M/J/S	Students use the handout to explore today’s scripture passage.
I Statements	X	M/J/S	Four keys to dealing with jealousy.
Teacher Talk		S	Students personalize the lesson.
		M/J	The teacher wraps up the discussion with some important closing thoughts.

Lesson Xpress—if class time is short, consider choosing these activities.
 M=Middle School; J=Junior High; S=Senior High

Choose from among the following activities to build your unique lesson plan.

Jealousy Test

Students may have a difficult time when it comes to distinguishing between jealousy and envy. Ask students if they have ever heard the expression “green with envy.” If so, have several students share what they think the expression means.

Then pass out one green card and one white card to each student. Read the following statements below and ask students to determine whether or not they believe the statement includes or describes jealousy and/or envy. If they think it is jealousy or envy, they hold up the green card. If they think it is neither, they hold up the white card.

Read the following statements:

- ▶ **Your friend gets a new pair of shoes, and you would like a pair just like them.**
- ▶ **Your brother or sister gets a gift for Christmas that you think is better than yours. Inside, you ask why you didn't get a gift as good as that one.**
- ▶ **Your boyfriend or girlfriend is talking to someone of the opposite sex. You begin to feel angry inside.**
- ▶ **Someone takes your place in the starting lineup of the basketball team. You determine in your heart you are going to work hard and get your starting place back.**
- ▶ **You dislike someone because he or she is a better student than you.**
- ▶ **You see your friends at the mall, and they didn't invite you. You feel like going up to them and telling them how mad you are.**
- ▶ **You and your friend are on the ballot for youth council at church. Your friend gets elected. You are disappointed about it, but understand there is always next year.**

TRANSITION: Jealousy and envy can rear their ugly heads at any time. Whether it is over relationships, material possessions, or circumstances, feelings of jealousy and/or envy can be destructive. Today's lesson will help us find ways to deal with these emotions.

Define Jealousy

Begin by asking your students to think of a time when they have either been jealous or envious. Have several share their experiences.

Then ask the following questions. You may want to jot some of the students' responses on a chalkboard, white board, or flip chart for later reference.

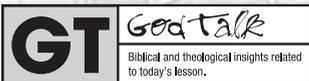
- ▶ **How would you define “jealousy”?**
- ▶ **How would you define “envy”?**
- ▶ **What causes these feelings?**
- ▶ **What are the effects of these feelings?**

Say, **Jealousy almost always involves relationships—we become jealous of someone else's relationship. Envy focuses on things—it arises from an inappropriate desire for something someone else has. Both of these feelings can be deadly to us and our relationships with others, including our relationship with God.**

TRANSITION: Jealousy and envy are powerful feelings. If we don't deal with them in a godly way, they can drive us to do awful things. Today we're going to discover what help God offers us for dealing appropriately with these feelings.



Teens get jealous of many things. This is a time in their lives where they're trying to establish who they are as persons and seeking their independence. Since each of your students comes from a different set of circumstances, there are going to be times when someone is jealous of someone else or envious of what that person has. Teens can be jealous or envious of another person's grades, friends, car, athletic ability, musical talent, family life, job, allowance, or a multitude of other things. As a youth worker, ask God to help you recognize times when your students need help overcoming feelings of jealousy or envy.



The Bible says that God is a jealous God (Exodus 20:5). It's important that your teens understand the key concept in that verse. Jealousy is a part of love. For God to be jealous when we worship others than Him is appropriate and righteous. Jealousy can be good when it seeks the good of others. However, when we experience jealousy toward another person, we are allowing our own selfish feelings to destroy our relationship with that person and with God.

Candy Bar Bartering

Before class, get enough candy bars so that each student will have one. Some of the candy bars should be popular brands, and others should be for specific tastes. Get some that are king-sized, some that are regular, and some that are miniature.

When class begins, assign each of your students a number. Then pass a candy bar to each student, but tell them not to open it yet. Be sure to mix the bars up as you pass them out; evens and odds should both have some of each size and variety. When everyone has a candy bar, tell your students that everyone who was assigned an even number *has* to trade with someone else, whether they want to or not. Then say everyone who was assigned an odd number can trade candy bars with someone else, but only *if* they want. Give your students a few moments to work the situation out, and observe the interaction.

After your students have had several minutes to work out who has what, allow them to eat the candy bar they have if they want. While this is happening, move on to the transition statement.

Ask, **Does anyone have any idea what we're going to talk about in class today?** (Allow for a few responses, then continue.)

TRANSITION: Today we're going to focus on jealousy and envy. Some of you probably didn't like the fact that you had no choice but to trade. Others were probably happy to trade. And some of you were content with the candy bar you got. Today we're going to look at the feelings of jealousy and envy, and see how they can affect our attitudes and our relationships. Let's see what God has to say to us about these feelings.



If your youth budget does not allow for candy bars, you can do this activity with anything that comes in some variety that your kids would like. You could also introduce a negative standpoint into the activity by mixing in things that students will not want to keep.



YOUNGER CLASSES

Show a video clip from a cartoon, movie, or television program that depicts an act of jealousy or envy. A possibility might be the movie "High School Musical." Have students discuss the effects jealousy or envy had on everyone involved in the scene.

Choose from among the following activities to build your unique lesson plan.

Jealousy Skit

Have a volunteer (or several volunteers) read **Genesis 4:2-16**. Then divide your class into two groups.

Have some props ready (any hodgepodge of items will do—it encourages the students to be creative), and distribute some props to each group. Instruct each group to create a skit of the Bible story, using the props they have. Allow between 5 and 10 minutes for your groups to work out their skits, and then have each group take a few minutes to present its skit to the rest of the class.

After each group has presented its skit, read **Galatians 5:19-21, 26** and **Deuteronomy 5:21**. Encourage the class to talk about what they tried to convey in their skits, and about what they saw the other group communicating. Ask the following questions, and allow time for your students to answer.

- ▶ **Why was Cain angry?**
- ▶ **What did God mean when he told Cain to master sin?**
- ▶ **Describe a time in your life when you either struggled with jealousy or envy or when you witnessed someone struggling with it. What happened?**

Then spend a few minutes giving a minilecture based on the Lesson Summary. Be careful to distinguish for the students the primary difference between jealousy and envy. Be sure to offer them help in this area by pointing out the three steps to overcoming negative jealousy as outlined in the closing of the Lesson Summary.

Finally, ask the following questions:

- ▶ **How does our society generally portray the issues of jealousy and envy? Does it encourage or discourage them?**
- ▶ **Is jealousy or envy something you struggle with?**
- ▶ **As you've studied today's passages and as you've thought about it, why do you think jealousy and envy are so destructive when not dealt with in an appropriate way?**
- ▶ **How does God help us overcome these feelings?**

Who, What, When, Where, and Why

Give each of your students the *Who, What, When, Where, and Why* handout and a pen or pencil. Then split your class into teams or pairs, whichever suits your class best. Instruct each group to read the scripture passage at the top of the handout, and to write two questions for each category (based on the passage) for the other groups to answer. Be sure your students write two questions for each part: *Who, What, When, Where, and Why*. Encourage your students to be creative in their questions.

Once your teens have had enough time to write their questions, have one team read its *Who* questions, and give the other group(s) a chance to answer the questions. Then move on to the next group, have it ask its *Who* questions, and give everyone else a chance to answer. When all the teams have read their *Who* questions, start again with the *What* questions, and continue on through the rest of the categories.

After allowing the students to finish this task, provide a minilecture based on the material found in the Lesson Summary. Be careful to distinguish for the students the primary difference between jealousy and envy. Be sure to offer them help in this area by pointing out the three steps to overcoming negative jealousy as outlined in the closing of the Lesson Summary.

30
30-Second Skill Builder
Helpful ideas to build your skills as youth leader and teacher.

Sometimes asking your students to act out skits or Bible stories is a creative way to get the point across and to get everyone involved. For these occasions, it can be helpful to keep a stash of props on hand. Props can be anything from old clothes to items you might normally put in a garage sale or give to charity. They can be useful for games as well. Collect a few plastic tubs and fill them with old clothes, plastic fruit, baskets, garden tools, kitchen utensils, and even an old telephone.



Choose from among the following activities to build your unique lesson plan.

Jealousy Tips

Give each of your students the *Jealousy Tips* handout and a pen or pencil. Go through the handout with them as a class. Discuss each of the following tips for dealing with jealousy.

The four keys for dealing with jealousy from the handout are listed below.

1. **Be content with what you have (Philippians 4:11-12).**
2. **Develop a biblical self-image (Psalm 139; Ephesians 2:10).**
3. **Develop a biblical view of possessions (Matthew 6:25-34).**
4. **Keep a strong relationship with God (Matthew 6:33).**

Encourage students to keep this handout and refer to it whenever they are dealing with feelings of jealousy or envy. Close in prayer, asking God to help students in dealing with these feelings.

I Statements

Divide your class into pairs for this activity. Sometimes it is good for the teacher to partner up students so that they don't always pair up with their closest friend. These pairs will be prayer partners throughout this unit. Instruct each pair to finish the following statements and to talk about their answers with each other.

- ▶ **I get most jealous when . . .**
- ▶ **I sometime get envious of . . .**

After your students have had time to discuss these answers with their partners, instruct each student to take a few moments to pray with his or her partner about the issues of jealousy and envy, and to specifically ask God to help that person deal with the times when he or she is tempted to become envious or have negative feelings of jealousy.

Teacher Talk

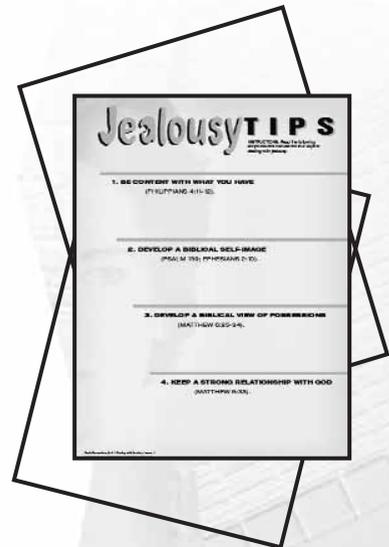
This subject may hit close to home with your students. Consider wrapping up this time together by reading or paraphrasing the following paragraph to your students.

Say, **Jealousy can damage our lives. When jealousy and envy are not dealt with, they can lead to bitterness and pain—or worse. They can manifest themselves in our behavior in a way that destroys relationships—with God and others. So how can we deal with feelings of jealousy or envy? The first step is to recognize these feelings and ask for God's help in dealing with them.**

Then ask:

- ▶ **What are some other steps we can take?**
- ▶ **What are some positive ways you dealt with them in the past?**
- ▶ **How can a godly view of possessions and relationships help in dealing with jealousy and envy?**

Close the class session by praying with your students as they deal with difficult emotions, especially jealousy.



OLDER CLASSES

Give your teens a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. Instruct them to rewrite the Bible story ending, as if the jealousy that Cain felt was never involved, or at least was dealt with appropriately.