Reframing Jealousy

Episode 7

“Me and jealousy do not know each other. I truly enjoy seeing my friends and family when my glass is perpetually half full. So I’m not usually looking at what someone else has and what I’m lacking.”

“I’ve always struggled with looking at what other people have that I don’t, whether that’s a healthy relationship, the newest or coolest thing, or a nice house. I get jealous when it's not mine.”

“Jealousy is often the thief that creeps into my heart and steals away any contentment that I have.”

Lindsay: Welcome to Reframing Emotions, a podcast that helps us understand what it means to engage emotions from a biblical foundation and through healthy habits. I'm Lindsay Funkhouser with The Austin Stone Institute. And joining me again are my friends and professional counselors Shanda Anderson, Brittany Beltran, and Andrew Dealy.

And today we're going to get into the topic of jealousy. Andrew, can you kick us off with understanding what jealousy is?

Andrew: Yeah. So when we think about jealousy, it's got quite a bit of nuance that we'll get to explore throughout our time together today. Jealousy is the felt experience of somebody else having what you feel like you should have, what you feel entitled to. And
in some cases that feeling may be accurate, that somebody else has something that is rightfully yours. But in many cases for us, jealousy is, in the sense that we see somebody having something that we think if we had it—we had their skills, their gifts, or their particular relationship with somebody else—then we’d have what we need or we’d have what would make things better or right. Or fill in the blank.

And so jealousy is comprised of that which, when we talk about specific emotions within jealousy, that could then manifest in that felt experience of somebody else has what I feel like I'm entitled to, we get into stuff like resentment, anger, sadness, despair. That felt sense [of] I'll never be able to get it can kind of all meld together within the experience of jealousy.

**Brittany:** I think we can also experience shame as we look at something that someone else has, thinking, well, what's wrong with me that I don't have that thing? Or that I don't have that relationship or that I'm not in that life stage or that career. And then this kind of lingering thought of being defective, and then the behaviors that pour out of that are desiring what they have and being discontented with what I have.

**Andrew:** Another way of saying it is, Brittany, just where you landed off right there. This discontentment—we look at the core of what motivates jealousy. There's a sense as I evaluate my circumstance and other circumstances around me, I feel like I'm not getting my fair shake. They've got more of what I need.

And so at the core it's a discontentment with the way things are and of the desire to see that change. Now, this is where I think we can get into anger and depression or despair. Anger is I should be able to get it. My anger is going to motivate me, through my jealousy, to try and reacquire or to get that thing. Despair will lean into, no, I can look at the circumstances and can never get there. And so jealousy will then lead me to a place of hopelessness that I can't get it, so then what's the point?

**Shanda:** And within this topic of jealousy, that leads us to contentment and discontentment, we see the outworking of potential resentment, where we begin to resent another person, which hinders us from loving them and honoring them and acknowledging God's grace in their life may be different than ours.
Like Brittany hit on earlier, the desire that is running beneath—whatever that resentment, jealousy, comparison that's bubbling up—the desire may be a good one. It may be a good desire that, for whatever reason that we don't understand, God has delayed or, in His providence, His answer is “no.” That He chooses to disperse His blessings differently. And we have to manage the emotions that come out of watching stories play out in other people’s lives that look different than ours, and evoke and provoke some of that honest story in us that says, “I wish I had blank.”

And so being able to say that desire in and of itself may not be bad. But how do I not make that a demand that then hooks my heart back into idolatry and self-focus that would lead me away from God and that other person and set me on a trajectory where I am about my kingdom and my glory, and I end up, then, isolated in that desire that begins to consume and rule and overwhelm me?

And it takes my heart to places that are going to lead me to a lot of discouragement, a lot of frustration. And then in my heart, I could be just acting out of a lot of criticism toward others. That is going to lead me to self-pity and an evaluation of my life that holds God in contempt. And I feel entitled to something that I don't want to accept that He has chosen to withhold.

**Brittany:** The two things that are running through my head [are] whether I'm self-aggrandizing and I'm making more of myself, or self-effacing, and I'm making less of myself. Going back to that humble confidence of receiving what the Lord has given to me, and also looking and seeing what He's given to others—that they would both lead me to worship. That's not what I usually do.

**Lindsay:** Yeah. I agree. That can be so difficult to do. And as I'm hearing all of you unpack jealousy and talk about all the ways it leads us to ruin, why do you think that we constantly then go back to it?

**Shanda:** We see in Psalm 37, the passage says, “Delight yourself in the Lord, and He'll give you the desires of your heart.”

But we also see in Psalm 84 that no good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly. And so we are left in this process of asking the Lord for help to desire rightly,
because He is a good giver of the gifts that we have. And this passage that says no good thing will He withhold, [so] to believe that God is good even when my desires are unmet.

And when He says, He will give us the desires of our heart, it doesn't mean that if I want it, I will always get it. Because sometimes what I want is not good for me in God's economy of grace that I may not understand.

And so I think it's being able to submit to the providence of God and His glory, and then bring those longings to Him, because I think we can get caught up in jealousy when we prevent or hesitate from bringing the honest cry of our soul that says, “God, I want this.” And it's hard for me that I don't have it, but that can be a connection to the heart of God, because I think He's very merciful and very kind. He will help me adjust my desires for His glory above my own.

But I get to potentially, like Andrew said, grieve over the thing that I want that I don't have rather than, like in James 4, ask for the wrong thing, that these desires wage war within us to the point that we murder each other in our hearts, which is the outworking of jealousy, where pride comes back to the scene and says, “My will be done. My kingdom come. I want what makes me feel good at all costs.”

And so coming back to that place of, what does it look like to be satisfied in God? To believe that He is enough, and no good thing does He withhold. He's given us all that we need for life and godliness, while also being able to bring those honest cries of our soul to Him and connect with Him to reorient us when jealousy bubbles up.

**Brittany:** I think jealousy is uncomfortable. I don't think we actually want to feel it. We don't enjoy that feeling. I don't enjoy that feeling. I imagine most people don't, either. But we still get stuck. There's something sticky there that's drawing us into this cycle.

And I think part of that is, I look at something else—someone else's life, someone else's story—and I see a disparity. I see something that's not the same about my life, my experience, their life, and their experience. And I want to make sense of it. But I don't know how to make sense of it. And when I can't make sense of it, a lot of things, different things, ugly things, uncomfortable things, bubble up inside of me that I don't know what to do with. And so then outpours this elevated sense of self and entitlement that I
deserve that, or this diminished self, something's wrong with me. I think a lot of that comes from a need to try to reconcile the disparity I see. That's where I think we get stuck. And those desires of our heart that war then manifest outside of me in my relationships.

Andrew: Jealousy, in terms of its persistence in our lives—I think it's predominantly just because it has this eternal reservoir to draw from. Again, we have the felt sense of Eden within us, that we were built to live in a world that was predictable and fair and right and good. And so there's something within us that consistently recognizes that. It's why we get so triggered when things feel unfair or inequitable. We have a strong reaction to that.

There's something in us that rages that that's not the way it's supposed to be. And from a biblical perspective, we say, “Yeah, that wasn't the way it was supposed to be. It's not what we were built for at the beginning.” And it's when we get to the end of this thing, we're not going to live in that unfairness, injustice, and inequity reality in our emotional experience.

And so that's why I think jealousy is so hard to shake. It's a space for us to try and, at a lower level, take the eternal feeling of, this isn't right, and find something I can see and attach onto that and say, “Well, if that piece was just corrected, then it would feel a little bit closer to right. If I was just as healthy or had the family that person had or had the resources that person had.”

All those types of things make it feel more congruent to the way things should be. And so I think that's why it's nearly impossible for us to get rid of it [jealousy]. It's the cry of our heart going, Lord, things are still not set in place the way that they should be.

I think if we can see it through that lens, we can actually receive it as, oh, my jealousy is choosing a lower bar thing that's really an eternal problem. The lower bar is physical stuff in the here and now that feel broken. I need to pull it up in the spiritual and recognize I'm trying to fix a spiritual reality. I feel my disconnect from the reality of God, from the things He has done, the things He's declared to be true over me, and I'm placing it in material things as though those things, if they were put in place and put in order, could bring me the peace I'm looking for. And they can't. And so I think that's why we can't really get
away from it. That felt experience is going to be there. But if we see it through a biblical lens, we have a space to go, oh, that's why. That's why it's so hard to shake.

And now we start the process in Christian maturity of, *Lord, how do I learn to be content in a world that feels chaotic and a life that feels unfair? Where do I find contentment in that You are here, that You're present, You're at work? How do I let my heart receive that peace that surpasses understanding?*

How do we do it? We don't set our eyes on earthly things. We don't set our eyes on our neighbor and compare [ourselves] to them. We set our eyes on our neighbor to love them. We set our eyes on God, that we might be shaped by Him, so that we find our contentment there and not in the things of this world.

**Lindsay:** What you say makes me think of Paul in Philippians 4, where he talks about being content in all circumstances and how that was something he had to learn based on the life that the Lord had given him, in difficult physical and otherwise circumstances he'd been placed in.

And when I think about our culture, there are so many opportunities each day to compare ourselves or to look for those things that you're talking about, Andrew, that we think might bring us happiness, that we think might bring us status, respect, fulfillment, whatever that word is.

Whether it be the things we see curated on Instagram—social media being such a part of our lives—whether it be living in a city that seems to be booming and thriving like Austin, though we know many aren't and there are many problems there. Whether it's the next fix I'm going to have for my house or the next beautiful piece of art I'm going to buy—whatever those things are that we're searching for. They're everywhere. We're surrounded by them.

So how do we take what Paul said and learn to be content in our circumstances, whatever they may be, while also just understanding that challenge to not be jealous for what others have is going to be something we face daily?
Andrew: The example that Paul gives us in Philippians 4 is remarkable. And I love that, Lindsay, you queued up on “learned.” I love that Paul put that in there.

‘Cause it's not like a, just immediate snap [of] your fingers, manifest experience of, oh, God just gave me the gift of contentment, or it just happens. No, I've had to learn. And the process of learning was, “I know what it's like to have abundance. And I know what it's like to have nearly nothing. In each of the circumstances I've learned the secret of contentment. The secret of contentment is Christ, His provision, His presence.”

He's not going to leave or forsake me. In both my want and my abundance, He is more valuable. He is more wonderful. He is our peace. And so I think we have to go through the highs and lows. Again, I don't think we need to be afraid of when we peek at jealousy in our heart. I think it's an invitation for us to recognize, oh, there's an area of contentment I'm struggling [with] here.

I feel jealous of this individual. And it's an invitation to, again, we've used this word a lot, be curious. Okay. So what are you trying to attach onto here that you believe will actually satisfy you, would satisfy you more than what Christ has provided? Start to evaluate from that perspective of, okay, I'm feeling jealous here. Jealousy is telling me something deep about my heart. God's revealing something here if I'll receive it. I don't have to be ashamed of it. I can start to learn from and grow through it. But it's going through the ups and downs, the hardship. Again, Paul's life is a remarkable example. all the things he went through—being stoned nearly to death and shipwrecked multiple times. And even after he got out of the shipwreck, being bit by a viper for the fun of it. But that was the process, and in all those things, he found that Christ was enough.

In other words, I don't think we learn to let go of finding contentment in this world without facing the stripping away, the pain, the difficulty in the suffering, which teaches us the things of this world don't hold a hope for us. All of it's fragile in terms of being able to satisfy our soul. At the end of the day, all that's left is the rock that is immovable, and that's Christ and what He has done.

By His grace He's promised not to leave us. And so we can learn contentment, but that's the process I'd say, unfortunately. The process is we walk through the difficulties.
Shanda: And in this experience of jealousy, when we find ourselves walking through it, I think it can take the shape of our fantasies, what we think we want or need, or our fears, something that we might actually already have, but [it] feels threatened, and we feel jealous to protect the thing, maybe a little too much. And so it's revealing our hearts in all of these things. And I like this reality that we get to live in, where our hearts echo eternity, and we were made for perfection. And so much, like, jealousy, when it bubbles up to say, “I'm not so surprised by that,” in the same way, when perfectionism might make itself known, it's, like, we were made for that. We don't have to pretend like there's not a longing for it.

We just have to learn to live in the uncertainty of it. Or where we're not driven by the dream that we think, [if] fulfilled, would satisfy us, or the greatest fear that whatever our heart is hooked to, the threat is overtaking us that we lose sight of how to trust the Lord in the midst of either what feels like the lack or the potential uncertainty of being able to hold on to it.

Because when we hold on to it, we miss being able to worship the Giver. And we get too overwhelmed by the gift that we can't even enjoy it sometimes. And so there's a lot of complexity at play, which we've talked about. But coming back to, what does it mean to satisfy my heart with what God has offered me and believe that His love is not determined by what I think I need? I think as humans, we're tempted to believe, if God loved me, then blank. God is good when I feel like life is good. We have to challenge that belief and say, no, God is good because He is God, and His character and His nature is good.

And C.S. Lewis, in his book, The Weight of Glory, would say that we try to borrow glory from someone else rather than accept and receive and be satisfied by the glory that God has designed and detailed specifically for His purposes in each one of us. And there are discrepancies in that, which does create the opportunity for us to work at and learn this beautiful gift of contentment, whether it's in plenty or in want.

Brittany: What's that G.K. Chesterton quote...
Lindsay: “The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting, it has been found difficult and left untried.”

Brittany: I think the reason why that quote was coming to mind was, because that passage reminds us that in each of those circumstances, whether in plenty or in want, the answer is still the same. And so it’s not a new concept that we’re trying to apply, the idea that Christ is sufficient for me and that my status and my security has not shifted, though the things around me shift.

And so what's difficult is when we have to do what Paul describes. This is where we have to learn to apply this truth that I know to a new circumstance throughout the course of my life. As Eugene Peterson says, it's a long obedience in the same direction. Even if I don't eradicate all the jealousy—I can't in this life—the echo of eternity is going to be there until you arrive at eternity's shore.

Then it's this constant slow process of applying the truth that I know to the life that I live and letting that rule my heart, [which allows] me then to offer dignity to myself and dignity to others that we might learn to love one another in that, rather than attack one another in our own understanding of the lack that we see or the longings that we have.

Lindsay: It seems to me, based on what you're saying, that it's an amazing opportunity to testify to Christ when, instead of being frustrated with what I don't have or being jealous over what my friend or neighbor has, I learn that contentment that Paul talks about, and then I find joy that other people have different gifts that God has given them.

And instead of striving for those, I find contentment with what God has given me and learn to be satisfied with that daily bread. It just seems so counter-cultural in a culture that is, more is better, higher is better. That we could find contentment in saying, “More isn't always better. What's better is whatever God has given me.” And then celebrating joyfully what God has given other people around us. It just seems like that Christian community apologetic has such [an] opportunity [with] where we're at today.

Shanda: Yeah, I think it's so encouraging to know that we don't have to compete for glory. I think this brings up two ideas in my mind. One is stewardship, where we would steward what God has given us well and find great delight and joy and meaning in living with what He has determined is good and sufficient for us. And that we would agree with Him in our contentment and pour out our hearts to Him where those desires still exist, but do that as a means to bring that to the Lord rather than feel like we've got to take that from someone else.

Along with stewardship, I think it does bring us to the understanding that God Himself has defined what is beautiful. That we would see beauty in and ultimately glory in the image of God [in] other people, and see His story playing out in others as beautiful. That allows us to worship God, rather than feel like we have to fight for attaining that beauty. We can just enjoy His distribution of His beauty and His generosity, His resources, and let that lead us to worship Him and then recognize the beauty in our own lives, even in the most simple of ways that all of us have been given. For sure the gift of salvation is what we get to rejoice in, for those of us who have put our faith in Christ Jesus, but also to not forget the gratitude that sees the beauty in the smallest of things, that I think gives us permission to move toward satisfaction and contentment.

And all of that is only possible when we see God as who He is, and He is enough. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not lack. I shall not want. That is a beautiful verse, but it is often contrary to how I'm living. And being able to move back to the good Shepherd that is providing and offering Himself even in the midst of some of the good things that I want that, that I may not have.

Andrew: I appreciate the point you brought up there, Lindsay, with the cultural apologetic piece. Because I think a culture will be confounded by a community of believers who don't have to have more, who don't have to get more, who don't have to acquire status or finances or other means to prop up their value, but find contentment in just living this life. That there's a certain peace that pervades in good times and bad times, a loving kindness that pervades in really hard times and easy times that will lead a culture to look at it and go, okay, what do you have? Because I'm trying to get there. Like I'm trying to get to that place where I can be stable in all circumstances, but I just find myself tossed everywhere by the realities of this world.
And so I think something for us to keep in mind, as we seek to live this out, that there's a beautiful representation and ambassadorship of Christ. And when we're able to live in that contentment and say, no, the things of this world—they're great. They serve a purpose. We can glorify God through them, but they don't rob me of peace. They can't really touch that core peace that surpasses understanding. And so I can live out of a different contentment in that.

I think on the other side of that coin, it's worth considering, in jealousy, or at least recognizing, more often than not, jealousy carries with it a freight that we need to address. Which is usually, there's an accusation in there toward God. That if we dig into it deep enough, there's a weightiness in our jealousy that is saying, “God, I think You've done this wrong. I think You have not been fair. I think You're withholding from me the thing that I need most to be okay.”

And so from a Christian perspective, part of the invitation, as well, of understanding our jealousy is recognizing, hey, what is my heart actually saying about the Lord? And again, not to be afraid of it.

I think the psalmists model this beautifully when they're like, “Lord, if there’s any grievous way in me, show me. I can come to You and ask, ‘God, if I'm offending You in any way, and I can't see it, would You be gracious enough to show me?'” And so in the same way, we see jealousy erupt in our heart, and we can ask that question, Okay, heart, what are you saying about God right now?

I think we can start to piece together, oh, my heart is really believing, God, You don't care about me. Because if You did, You would provide this thing. If You did, You'd give me this recognition and fame. And then that gives us [an] opportunity for repentance. It gives us the opportunity to move toward the Lord and say, “Okay, Lord, I see that now. Thank You for letting me see it and not letting me live in that type of potential resentment and bitterness that would draw me away from trusting You. And now teach me what it looks like to trust You. That even without these things, You have, 2 Peter 1:3, given me all things that I need for life and godliness. I don't have to be afraid.
“You're not going to leave me as an orphan. You're a good Father who does provide. Teach me what it looks like to live in that kind of confidence, even when I don't have some of these things that I think would be helpful.”

Shanda: One of my favorite verses that has ministered to me when my heart is invited into the struggle of discontentment is Psalm 16. We look at the truth that the Lord is my portion and my cup, and the boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. In his presence, there's fullness of joy. And to say I don't always feel that way. My felt experience is not always a feeling of fullness.

Sometimes I feel lack. I feel emptied of what my hopes were or where I even have good desires that are just unfulfilled. And so believing that the boundary lines have fallen in pleasant places, that God is good and His design for each and every one of us is not out of punishment. It's not a withholding that is meant to harm. That there is some wise, good, provisional intention behind it that I want my heart [to] rest in, and be able to praise Him and know that there is a beautiful inheritance, because I am brought into the fellowship that I'm offered through Christ to be in communion with God.

And that's where I think the body of Christ can encourage one another. It's why we need it daily, because we need to be reminded. And I need to renew my mind and come back to this reality that my heart is glad, and I can rejoice today for who God is and the gift of salvation. That ultimately my worst day will never come. And orienting back to an eternal perspective will help me see, rightly, the gift of finding joy in what God has given and in stewarding it well.

Brittany: I think jealousy distracts us into being “out here.” My problem is with this other person and what's going on with them and how I'm interacting with them. And what Shanda and Andrew both illustrated and walked through for us is what the Scripture says in James—it causes fights and quarrels among you, what's coming from your heart. And how do we actually get to engaging where we need to be engaging? It's not with my brother or sister. They've not wronged me in some way by having something that I want. My heart is doing something and trying to understand it and have that conversation [about it] with the Lord.
Again, lifting my eyes off of my circumstance and onto the eternal. Lord, what’re You trying to show me in this moment? And draw me into further and deeper relationship with You through this circumstance or situation, through my lack or perceived lack here.

Andrew: I think jealousy, along with what Brittany's hitting on there, can distract us from the responsibility of what's been actually entrusted to us. We can spend so much time in the jealousy of what other people have, other gifts that people have, that we'll neglect actually utilizing our own.

So we lose track of the reality that the Holy Spirit has apportioned gifts to each of us, that they'd be used for the encouragement and building up of the body of Christ. We lose track of the reality that Scripture talks about, each person's given talents—you know, 1, 5, 10, or whatever else—we're entrusted to different stewardship with the giftings.

We see stories throughout the Scripture where Jesus to some people is, like, Hey, come follow me. And then the demoniac in Mark 5, he literally comes to Jesus and says, “Hey, I want to follow You.” And Jesus is like, “No, you're supposed to go back home. You're supposed to go back home and share about what I've done.”

And so there's these specific personal callings and stewardships that God has given to each of us. And that's the wrestle that we get to settle into, this Ephesians 2:10 reality. That we're Christ's workmanship created for good works that He set before us that we should walk in them, to live as His handcrafted child of God, to do specific works that He set before me. And jealousy will distract me from all of that. Jealousy will, in many ways, lead me to minimize the uniqueness that Christ has given me and instead to focus on everything outside of me, which will leave me ineffective in ministry.

Jealousy can really hinder us in just loving our neighbors and growing in faith. Like, [if] we need from them what they have, then it's really hard for us to actually have affection and want to serve. But it can also keep us from the stewardship of what God said, “Hey, I've entrusted this to you. Don't bury it in the ground. But instead put it to good use, that you might see fruit.”

Shanda: And I think one of the stumbling blocks that we all in our current culture might have to navigate is social media, right? We're seeing that our private lives can take the
snapshot and be placed on a public platform where it's just a highlight reel of these glorious moments. And it's not an accurate representation of what's truly behind the scenes. And we can be tempted toward jealousy or envy in that comparison trap that then creates this cycle within, that can give way to resentment and even bitterness and this pity and an inordinate focus on what I don't have.

And then, here we find ourselves just miserable. And it's a misery of our own making. Maybe we do some practical wisdom of pulling back on social media when it's bringing about this cycle of comparison and jealousy. But then also it's just the spiritual muscle tone of sanctification. Where we have to practice and put into action, renewing our minds and turning our eyes toward things above and not rehearsing these worldly comforts and enticing possessions that we might think would satisfy us. When in reality, it really won't. We only have to look at Hollywood or a multitude of people who have an abundance of earthly possessions, and it does not fix the cry of the soul. It does not fix that meaning and purpose that we were meant to live for the glory of God and worship Him. And so we get to be sanctified in this way, and not be surprised by it when it comes up, but also not take it lightly and just casually think that the effects aren't harmful and dangerous to our soul. Because ultimately it's going to hinder us, especially bitterness and resentment. It's going to hinder us from loving God and loving others.

**Andrew:** What we give our attention to deeply shapes what we desire. And so if we're looking at the highlight reels of everybody else's life, we're sitting in an environment that is going to cultivate jealousy under the false premise that everybody else's life is glorious, which we know it's not. There's lots of brokenness across the board.

On the other hand, I think it's just worth noting on another practical level, for those of y'all who use social media, to consider, have we thought through what we're posting? Is the way we're presenting ourselves leading people to see and glory in and reflect in the wonders of Christ? Or are we accidentally contributing to the jealousy, to the temptation toward jealousy of other people? Because if the only thing we present on social media is “everything is perfect, and everything is great, and your life should be like mine,” which is false. That's not life this side of heaven. So I think there's a good sober piece of this for us to consider.
For those of us who do engage with social media, is what we're doing helping or hurting in this? Even if it seems innocuous to us, have we actually considered our neighborhood is now on the worldwide web to some degree? Are we loving our worldwide web neighbors in the way that we're posting and presenting our lives?

**Lindsay:** I think it's such a powerful word of encouragement to want to use everything we communicate about ourselves and the way we show up in the world, be it online or in person, to want others to flourish, to want to show Christ, [to] want to reflect truth.

So what are some things we can do in our in-person daily life to also foster that kind of interaction that points to truth, doesn't represent things as other than they are, points to the Lord. What are some ways we can do that?

**Andrew:** I think all of it begins with our satisfaction in Christ. We, like the apostle Paul, need to learn what it looks like to be content in all circumstances. Because when we have that deep reservoir of contentment in Christ and we're not grasping for other things to fill up our pieces of identity that feel lacking or feel out of place, but instead we feel confident that we're in Christ's hands. He holds us; He holds our identity. He will provide.

Then that frees us up to go love. It frees us up to see our neighbor not as a threat, which I think ultimately sabotages community. If we see our neighbor as a threat, because they have more than we do, we're not going to be patient, kind, and loving to them. We're not going to desire to serve them. We're going to desire to kind of defame them so that we can feel better about ourselves. And so our contentment in Christ as a foundation enables us then to see our neighbors and not regard them according to the flesh, but love them as children of God. To seek out where they need help or encouragement or support or praise for where they're faithfully walking with the Lord.

But I believe at its core, it's got to start within our own heart. We've got to work on resolving our contentment in Christ, and I know that can sound like a solo project. Resolving contentment in our own heart is with other people, doing Hebrews 3 and Hebrews 10 of gathering with us and encouraging us and exhorting us as we learn to be content in Christ. That then frees us up to love others in a more healthy way.
Shanda: And I think along with that, it is staking our confidence in God's Word to enlighten the eyes of our heart and strengthen us in our inner being. That we would not [be] satisfied with counterfeit hopes, that the lesser loves and the false gods of this world, that are tempting all of us all the time. But to not be surprised by the temptation, but to not give into it. and redirect our hope, like Andrew is saying, into the better. Give our affections to the better hope that won't disappoint in Christ Jesus.

And know that in the midst of all of these experiences that we're going to encounter, that [they] reveal my heart that is prone to wander, and reveal my comparative analysis that is tempted to believe that God is withholding something. That I can come in the grace and mercy of Christ and be honest about that. And then be oriented back to Him, restored to Him, and live in the freedom that Christ has set us free for, that He has lavished His grace, Ephesians says, on us. Rejoicing in our salvation and coming back, over and over and again, to the beauty of what the gospel is, will give us a right orientation in the world so that we aren't deceived to believe that if only I had blank, then I would be ultimately satisfied. It's just an elusive mirage that is hooking our hearts and taking us somewhere that, we would say, it's writing a check that can't be cashed.

It can't ultimately fulfill. It's not meant to satisfy. So the more that we, in our own worship of God and in community, can remind each other that those realities can't give us what we think they might, then maybe we could practice contenting our hearts in Christ.

Brittany: Scripture reminds us that there's power in what we say. And so in the context of community—we have the opportunity to literally speak life into someone else, to see the areas of gifting that God has given to somebody, in ways that they might not see themselves, or even in those ways that their weakness is blessing us and be able to share that, to encourage one another daily as we talked about earlier. That exhortation that we need to be reminded of, our security and identity in Christ, and even cultivate a spirit of gratitude within our community., And even on behalf of someone else, to help them cultivate a spirit of gratitude. And so I think creating an environment where we get to speak life into each other and encourage.

And then also as we vulnerably share the desires that are tempting us toward jealousy. You get to encourage that process of the longing for something that might be good and acknowledging that with somebody, that desire you have. It's not a bad desire. That
makes sense that you're sorrowful over it. And to get to encourage them in the waiting process of what it's like to be in a world where we don't get everything we want when we want it. And still cultivating trust that the Lord is good. And we want to do that with gentleness and slowness and wisdom from the Holy Spirit on when to speak, which words, and how to deliver those. But there's a really sweet opportunity we have to get to be ministers of reconciliation within our own communities that can then ripple out.

**Lindsay:** There's so much to unpack there that I think is really helpful. And I want to end today talking about God. We've talked about the importance of pointing ourselves and others to God. We've talked about His character being reliable and trustworthy, and so we can believe the promises of Scripture and the things that He said about us and to us and for us. But one thing we haven't unpacked yet is—Scripture says God is jealous. He's jealous over His people.

And I think it would be helpful to understand God's jealousy just a little bit more. Is His jealousy the same as our jealousy? Or is there a different way to look at how God is jealous?

**Andrew:** There are elements for sure that we will share in jealousy with God on the good jealous days. So again, jealousy is, there's something that I feel like I don't have that I should have or that would benefit me. There are cases in which that's good and right. We [can] think about [a] marriage relationship. A spouse who feels like their husband or wife is giving all of their attention and time to another person outside of the marriage—there would be a right jealousy in that moment that would say, "I'm jealous for my spouse to return home and have their right relationship and marriage with me."

And so there are versions of jealousy, for us as humans, that are actually reflective of God's jealousy. And so that would be the picture of God's jealousy. When God is jealous over His people, He's saying, "I know your right relationship to me. I know what you were designed for, but you're giving that to someone else."

And it's not a God who's needy, like, if I don't have this, I'm going to explode. It's a God who is angry and sad that His people are going in a direction that will not satisfy them, that will not honor Him, will not be for their good.
And so His jealousy is a perfectly attuned, right jealousy to what's happening. “My people have given their affection to something less than what they were designed for.” And so His [jealousy] is always perfect. Always appropriately attuned. Ours is usually messy, sometimes righteous, but for the most part, just messy and not righteous.

**Shanda:** I think we're on a journey to learn to love what God loves, learn to see how God sees, learn to pay attention to His values and line our hearts up with His. I get to see God loving His people, wanting what's good for them. Might we be jealous for one another in that way! That we want what's good according to God and His wisdom and His truth, what He's prioritized. Wanting that for each other is a reflective good and right expression of jealousy, that we would get more of Jesus each day, and jealous that we would want for our brothers and sisters to behold His glory and orient their lives around Him for their good, to live in the freedom that we've been invited into in Christ Jesus.

**Lindsay:** There's so much in what you all have said over our time together that can clarify for us the places that we might not even realize we're not trusting God. But once we get that clarity, and we see those things we're striving for, [they] can actually push us closer to God, can actually help us long for Him more and desire Him more and want everyone around us to flourish in what He's called them to. And that's been one of the biggest encouragements for me today.

Thank you so much for being with us and sharing your wisdom, Brittany, Andrew, Shanda.

Listeners, thank you so much for joining us. As always, we really want you to process what you've learned in community. And so if you go to our episode webpage, we've made a group guide for you that includes Scripture and reflection questions [so] that you can start processing this with other people.

And finally, we provide an opportunity for you to continue your worship of the Lord through liturgy, a time to sit and meditate and reflect on what you've learned. We'd love for you to end this time [by] tuning your heart and your eyes to the Lord. Our next episode will be about anxiety, and we'd love for you to join us again.

**Alex:** *A Liturgy Against Jealousy*
O generous God,  
You have blessed me beyond measure in Your Son.  
Even so, far too often  
A flood of jealousy  
Drowns out Your patient voice.  

My heart fixates on everything I lack,  
Yet others have.  
I have slowly lost sight of You, and the rich, technicolor life  
Found only in You.  

O gracious God,  
Deliver me from the unbelief that leads to jealousy.  
May Your patient voice,  
Ever-present and ever-true,  
Remind me that, though cheap imitations abound, my heart truly longs for You.