

Reframing Emotions

Reframing Jealousy: A Guide for Going Deeper

Note for Users:

Reframing Jealousy: A Guide for Going Deeper is the seventh week in an 11-week guide that accompanies the podcast *More to It: Reframing Emotions*.¹ Each session is designed to help you and your community know, love, and praise God for His wonderful design for our emotions, even the ones we view as “negative.” The guide features an episode summary, definitions of relevant terms, Scripture reading, discussion questions, activities, prayers, and reflection prompts.

Each section in a session (for example, prayer and discussion) features a timestamp, but the timestamp is simply a suggestion for the amount of time to spend. At times, you and your community may want to linger with the discussion questions. Or maybe you need to spend more time engaging with a concept through a small group activity. You should prioritize what produces the most flourishing in your community, even if it means bending or breaking the time “rules.”

In the podcast, one of our counselors suggests emotions—even the negative ones—are echoes of Eden. If we listen to those echoes and follow them to their source, we might just end up back in the garden, not hiding from God, but experiencing the forevermore joy found in His presence. As you use this guide with your community, we pray that a spirit of unity, curiosity, and humility will be present, creating a space in which you can be vulnerable, drawing near to God and one another.

The Austin Stone Institute, The Austin Stone Counseling Center

¹ Subscribe to the podcast here: <https://pod.link/1626545281>.

Session 7: Jealousy

Episode Main Point

Jealousy arises from a sense of wrongness, a discontentment with the way things are and a desire to see those things change. As such, it indicates what our hearts love and what our hearts believe—about God, ourselves, and other people.

Episode Summary

Human jealousy is a byproduct of living in an imperfect world. Jealousy tells us we were meant for a different world, one governed by what is good and right, beautiful and just. As such, jealousy is another echo of Eden.

If jealousy led us to only greater awareness and knowledge of ourselves, we would be more holy and content. But we're not. Jealousy most often occurs when someone has something we desire. The desire in and of itself may not be bad—God created us to desire—but it can result in jealousy.

Left unchecked, jealousy spawns feelings of resentment, anger, shame, and bitterness. It ruins us, leading us to question God and His goodness or to defame our friends and neighbors. It whispers, "If I had this one thing, I would be happy. I would be content." But one thing turns into many, none of them able to satisfy our hungry hearts and souls.

The counselors suggest our lack of satisfaction lies in trying to remedy a spiritual reality with physical goods. Jealousy encourages us to view the "problem" as out there—with our circumstances or other people. The true problem, however, resides within our hearts. As long as we try to remedy our jealousy with counterfeit solutions, we will neglect the work to which our beautiful Savior calls us: repentance and faithful stewardship. We will miss out on how God has beautifully designed us for His glory, and we will miss out on celebrating and cultivating God's beautiful design in others.

In the episode the counselors also examine God's jealousy and how our jealousy can, at few and infrequent times, reflect His. When we long for a person to know Jesus more deeply, we can say we feel jealous for them to know Christ. Such jealousy hints at the kind of jealousy God feels. It comes from knowing His people are choosing what is inferior to loving and obeying Him. His sorrow and anger produces jealousy, because He knows we will not be satisfied until our hearts rest in Him.²

² To quote Augustine: "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee."

Definitions

- **Jealousy:** Jealousy is the felt experience that someone else has something to which we're entitled. It often manifests in feelings of resentment, anger, sadness, shame, or despair. Jealousy is a recognition that all is not right or fair or good in this world, a recognition that can lead to pursuing either self-glory or God's glory.

Scripture

Psalm 37; Psalm 84; James 4:1–10; Philippians 4:4–14; Psalm 23; Psalm 139; 2 Peter 1:3–11; Psalm 16; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:1–16; Mark 5:1–20; Ephesians 2:1–10; Colossians 3:1–17; 2 Corinthians 5:16–21; Hebrews 3:13–14; Hebrews 10:19–25

Pray (5 min)

Before beginning the study, pray aloud, using either your own words or the words provided.

Heavenly Father, jealousy so often surprises us. Why are we jealous? What provoked it? Father, help us to be curious—not judgmental—about our jealousy. You say You are jealous for us, so jealousy must not be all bad. When is it good? How might our flawed feelings of jealousy be echoes of Eden? We want to be patient, God. Help us to listen to what You have to say and to respond in ways that honor You. May even our jealousy draw us closer to You and Your people. Amen.

Read (5–10 min)

Either read the following Bible verses aloud or invite a volunteer to read.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

¹¹ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every



circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:4–9, 11–13)

Discuss (15–20 min)

Answer the following questions.

- Make a list of the commands found in Philippians 4:4–9, 11–13. What stands out to you about those commands? What effects do those commands have?
- Mark every time Paul uses the word “learn” or “learned.” Why do you think Paul repeats the word? What might he be suggesting through the repetition?
- In the podcast episode, the counselors say jealousy distracts us. When have you experienced a distraction brought on by jealousy?
- Shanda Anderson says desire in and of itself may not be bad. Was that surprising to you? Why or why not? If desire isn’t inherently bad, what would it look like to honor God with your desires? How could you prevent desire from corrupting into “a demand that hooks the heart into an idolatry and self-focus that leads away from God and other people” (Shanda Anderson)?

Engage (10 min)

In smaller groups of 2 and 3, respond to the following questions.

- Andrew Dealy says, “What we give our attention to deeply shapes what we desire.” Think about your day-to-day life. What captures your attention? How has that shaped what you desire? What changes might you need to make to nurture desires that honor God and dignify His image bearers?
- Paul’s letter was to a group of people, the Philippians. What would it look like to practice the passage we read earlier (Philippians 4:4–9, 11–13) in your community? How could following the passage’s instructions lead to greater contentment and joy in God and with one another?

Pray (5 min)

Either read the following liturgy, a worshipful prayer, aloud or invite a volunteer to read.

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.

Reflect

Complete the following reflection on your own.

This week, confess your desires to God. Write them down in a journal or talk about them with God while doing an activity you enjoy, such as listening to music, baking, or going outdoors. Then read Psalm 16. How is Jesus our sure and certain hope? What would it look like to believe Jesus is the good gift your heart desires?



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