

Jealousy



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 26

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Isaiah 14:12–14; James 3:16, 17; Exodus 20:17; Genesis 37; 1 Samuel 18; Matthew 12:14.

MEMORY VERSE: “Anger is mean. Great anger overpowers you. But who can face jealousy?” (Proverbs 27:4, NlrV).

JEALOUSY IS ONE OF THE MOST SELF-DESTRUCTIVE EMOTIONS.¹ It is the oldest kind of sin (Isaiah 14:14). It can hurt both our relationships with others (2 Corinthians 12:20) and our own health (Proverbs 14:30).

Jealousy is often personal. It targets a person who is seen as a rival (enemy). As a result, jealousy often leads to either mental (verbal abuse, cruel words, criticism) violence or physical violence. At some point, all of us have felt the negative feelings this emotion brings.

This lesson gives examples of people who let jealousy influence² their behavior: Satan, Joseph's brothers, King Saul, and the chief priests of New Testament times. The results were always terrible. It is interesting to note that all of these jealous persons enjoyed high positions and privileges to begin with. But all of them fell into the trap of hating others for what they were or what they had.

The Lord warns us to avoid this wrong path. He encourages us to love our neighbors to the point of being joyful for their gifts, talents, successes, and things as if they were our own.

1. emotions—strong feelings such as love, anger, joy, hate, or fear.

2. influence—to affect or change someone or something in an indirect but important way.

SUNDAY—FEBRUARY 27**AT THE ROOT (BEGINNING) OF EVIL (Isaiah 14:12–14)**

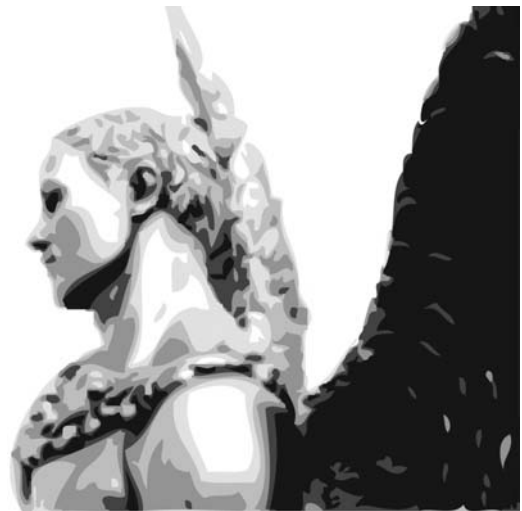
According to Isaiah 14:12–14, what caused Satan to be cast (thrown) out of heaven? What does it say about the freedom that Satan had to make a blasphemous³ boast, even in a perfect place (heaven)?

Lucifer, the most beautiful and powerful angel, was created by God. Lucifer was given the highest place in heaven outside of the Godhead.⁴ His honor, beauty, and mind were very great. But still sin grew within him (Ezekiel 28:12–15). The desire of Lucifer to put himself above God and his jealousy toward Christ greatly disturbed the peace and happiness of all created beings.

“ ‘I will make myself like the Most High [God]’ ” (Isaiah 14:14, NIV) was the thought that brought rebellion (war), violence, and much pain to all those who lived in heaven, and then to all of the human family. “Satan was jealous of Jesus. He wanted the Father and Jesus to ask him for advice on how man was to be created. Because he was not asked, Satan was filled with envy, jealousy, and hatred. Satan desired to receive the highest honors in heaven next to God.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, page 145.

As a comparison,⁵ we can study

Jesus. Sin began through jealousy and selfishness. But Jesus was willing to be humble and to die on the cross like a criminal. Jesus did so to save each person from eternal destruction caused by sin (2 Thessalonians 1:9). The humble sacrifice (death on the cross) of Jesus made Satan’s plan for self-glory look selfish and cruel.



Lucifer, the most beautiful and powerful angel, was created by God.

Read James 3:16, 17. What sharp comparisons are made here? What should this tell us about how damaging and evil jealousy is?

Our sinful natures are such that the first bad act makes the next one easier. The wrong path can lead to many sins. The wonderful news is that there is room for another choice. This one is “pure; then peace-loving, considerate [thoughtful], submissive [willing to surrender], full of mercy

3. blasphemous—showing great disrespect to God.

4. Godhead—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. These Three are One God.

5. comparison—the act of showing how two or more things are the same or different.

and good fruit, impartial [fair] and sincere [honest]" (verse 17, NIV). This choice is love.

Lucifer did not look at what he had. Instead, he chose to think about what Christ had. How often do we do the same thing? How much jealousy and envy do you hold for those who have "more" than you? How can you overcome this dangerous emotion?

MONDAY—FEBRUARY 28

JOSEPH'S BROTHERS (Genesis 37)

Jealousy and envy often come to those who are very close to us. This can lead to serious and destructive results. Indeed, a large part of angry or violent behavior (actions) and feelings today can be found within the family circle. Jealousy and rivalry⁶ between family members are often at the root.

What is the background to the story in Genesis 37? What led up to this criminal act? What part did jealousy play?

It is hard to believe that these brothers could have been so cruel. Did they not think about what their actions would do to their father? Their jealousy became so powerful that it destroyed not only their common sense but common fairness too.

This should be a powerful lesson to all of us about how dangerous this emotion is. No wonder there is an entire commandment dedicated to warning us against it (read Exodus 20:17).



Jealousy is so often at the root of angry or violent behavior in the family.

The brothers' actions brought pain upon themselves and their father. And what is more, they also feared for what Joseph would do to them after the death of their father, Jacob (Genesis 50:15).

But Joseph's attitude (feeling) was very noble. Joseph said, " 'Don't [do not] be afraid. Am I in the place of God?' " (Genesis 50:19, NIV). Joseph understood that his duty was to forgive his brothers and to trust in God's mercy and justice.

The life of Joseph has been compared⁷ to the life of Jesus Christ. Jealousy moved his brothers to sell him as a slave. Some priests and

6. rivalry—a state or situation in which people or groups are competing with one another.

7. compared—to show how two or more things are the same or different.

elders were jealous of Jesus, and that jealousy caused them to act against Him. Joseph was sold to the nonbelievers. And Jesus was sold to His enemies. Joseph was falsely accused and sent to prison because of his honesty. And Jesus was falsely accused and not accepted because of His righteousness (holy life). Joseph showed noble kindness toward his brothers. And Jesus, too, forgave His enemies. The evil actions against Joseph led to good. And the same thing happened with Jesus. In the end, the evil done against Him was turned to good.

What kind of pain and suffering has jealousy and envy brought to your life? What lessons have you learned from these experiences? How often have you felt jealousy over things that today seem so unimportant and meaningless? What lesson should you learn from that?

TUESDAY—MARCH 1

SAUL'S JEALOUSY OF DAVID: PART 1 (1 Samuel 18:1–5)

A classic case of how jealousy works can be seen in the story of Saul and David. Saul was king and ruler over the nation. He had everything going for him. But when jealousy entered, it seemed to change everything about him.

Or did the jealousy of Saul just make his weakness show up?

What was Saul's first attitude (feeling) toward David in 1 Samuel 18:1–5?

The actions of Saul show that he had a very positive attitude toward David. Saul gave David a high place in the army. Also, David was a good friend of Jonathan, the son of Saul. This shows that David had royal favor.

According to 1 Samuel 18:6–9, what changed Saul's attitude? Why is this attitude such a common human response (feeling)?

The rest of 1 Samuel 18 shows just how damaging Saul's jealousy of David became. It led Saul to all kinds of evil and trickery. But none of it worked, and the very things that Saul feared in David became more and more noticeable.

Jealousy causes many other negative emotions: low self-esteem, hatred, suspicion, fear, guilt, and anger. Saul was afraid of David, as this chapter mentions several times. Maybe Saul was afraid of losing his kingly position or of David becoming the real hero of Israel. But the main reason for Saul to fear was that "the Lord had left Saul and was with David" (1 Samuel 18:12, NIV).

Being left by God is reason enough to be afraid. But the fear of Saul was made worse because "the Lord was with David" (verse 12, NIV). Saul was unable to use the same reasoning that Gamaliel used hundreds of years later: "If their [Jesus' followers'] plans

and actions are only human, they will fail. But if their plans come from God, you won't [will not] be able to stop these men" (Acts 5:38, 39, NIV). When the Lord blesses people, there is no reason to be jealous of them or to try to destroy them. God will continue to bless them.

Saul's attitude was wrong. But why is it easy to understand? What is your first attitude toward someone who could be a threat to your position? Do you surrender everything to the Lord? Or do you start making plans against that person?

WEDNESDAY—MARCH 2

SAUL'S JEALOUSY OF DAVID: PART 2 (1 Samuel 19)

What path can you see Saul going down in 1 Samuel 19? What lessons can we learn from this?

At first, Saul tried to hide his plan to murder David. When that did not work, Saul came right out into the open with his evil plans. Saul probably never dreamed he would go that far. But once the floodgates are opened to sin, none of us realize how far down the wrong path sin can lead us.

Killing David became Saul's blind desire. These negative feelings began when women sang and danced to honor David. Soon these feelings became a desire to murder. In chapters 18 and 19 alone, we find eight

times that Saul (directly or indirectly) tried to murder David.



Once the floodgates are opened to sin, none realize how far down the wrong path sin can lead us.

The rest of the story is a sad one. As Saul's hatred and jealousy increased, he became more and more suspicious of David. Saul killed 85 priests of the Lord and many men, women, children, babies, and farm animals in the priestly town of Nob (1 Samuel 22:17–19), just because he felt they had sided with David. It is clear that Saul was being led by Satan.

When the Philistines⁸ invaded, Saul was full of terror. He asked the Lord what to do. But Saul had gone too far away from God. He had turned down the advice of God too many times. When he did not get an answer from God, Saul chose to ask for help from an evil spirit through a witch. This was a practice that Saul himself had outlawed. This is because the Bible clearly teaches that the dead do not have any consciousness (life) beyond the grave (Ecclesiastes 9:5). They

8. Philistines—people living in a neighboring country west of Israel.

cannot speak to us. When they die, they will sleep until Jesus raises the righteous (holy) saints from the dead at the Second Coming (1 Corinthians 15:51–53; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17). Saul even bowed down and lay with his face on the ground before the evil spirit, which pretended to be the spirit of Samuel returned from the dead (1 Samuel 28:14). This was the beginning of Saul's end, because on the following day Saul and his sons lost their lives to the Philistines (1 Samuel 31). It happened just as the evil spirit, pretending to be the spirit of Samuel, said it would.

By letting jealousy take root, Saul followed a path to complete apostasy (backsliding) and ruin. Worse, the sins of Saul brought suffering on his own family. Sin is bad enough when it hurts us. But damage and pain often spread to other people. In most cases, our wrong actions influence others negatively too.



Saul bowed down before the evil spirit that pretended to be Samuel.

Look at all the cases we have seen so far. In each example, jealousy and the results of that jealousy spread far and wide. This was not expected by the person who first gave in to the emotion. How important it is that we try to die to self by God's grace⁹ the moment this ugly emotion arises in our hearts.

THURSDAY—MARCH 3

JEALOUSY TOWARD JESUS (Matthew 27:18)

Read over the first 11 chapters of Matthew. Focus on the things Jesus did. Then read Matthew 12:14. What was it about Jesus and what He did that caused the leaders to act this way? What did their actions reveal about their hearts? As you think about your answer, think about how you might have acted if you were in their situation.

The chief priests and elders were well-educated and strict about following the law. But jealousy made them forget the truth of God's law, the truth of His love, and the real purpose of religion. Jesus brought a fresh view of religion, and the people of Israel (including religious leaders) heard the good news of salvation. But they did not thank Jesus for warning them about their self-destructive path. Instead, they tried to destroy Him.

People often let their own jealousy keep them from understanding what should be very clear. Notice what Jesus was doing—the miracles, the healings,

⁹ grace—God's free gift of mercy to us.

the casting out of demons. It is hard to imagine that anyone would question that Jesus was from God. The proof Jesus gave should have been more than enough to make them believe in Him as God (read Matthew 11:4, 5).

Perhaps the common people were more open to Jesus than many religious leaders were because they understood their own need. The religious leaders feared that Jesus would change the system and damage their position. The teachings of Jesus were different from theirs in many ways. And His message was so much more appealing that they had good reasons to fear His influence (power). Unfortunately, these leaders were more concerned with protecting their own power and influence than they were in knowing and following the truth.

The fact that jealousy was driving the religious leaders was not a secret. According to Matthew 27:18, even the Roman leader Pilate knew their reasons. That is how clear it had become. Sadly, the jealousy of these leaders was so powerful that they thought they were defending the faith against some stranger who was leading the people astray. If the leaders had surrendered humbly before the Lord, they would have avoided the terrible mistake that surely led them to eternal (lasting forever) ruin. We would do well to learn from their mistakes.

FRIDAY—MARCH 4

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “Satan was

once an honored angel in heaven, next to Christ. His face, like those of the other angels, was gentle and happy. Satan’s forehead was high and broad, showing that he was very smart. His form was perfect. His body was noble and majestic [kingly]. But when God said to His Son, ‘Let Us make man in Our image,’ Satan was jealous of Jesus. He wished to have part in the creation [making] of man. Because he was not included, Satan was filled with envy, jealousy, and hatred. He wanted to receive the highest honors in heaven next to God.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, page 145.

“One great defect [weakness] in the character¹⁰ of Saul was his love of approbation [praise]. This trait [quality] had a controlling influence over his actions and thoughts. Everything was marked by Saul’s desire for praise and self-glory. . . . It was the ambition of Saul to be first in the thoughts of men. When this song of praise for David was sung, Saul’s mind believed and decided that David would win the hearts of the people and reign in his place. So, Saul opened his heart to the spirit of jealousy, which poisoned his soul.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 650.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① How many things do you have to be thankful for? Why is it so important to remember those things, instead of your problems?

10. character—the way someone thinks, feels, and behaves; someone’s personality.

② Can jealousy ever be good? Can it ever be a reason for improving oneself? Defend your answer.

③ Think about some of the Bible characters¹¹ in this week's lesson who showed jealousy: the most superior (highest) angel in heaven (Lucifer), the king of Israel (Saul), the religious leaders in Israel. All of them were in important positions. They had so much. And still, they let jealousy come in and cause problems. What does that tell us about why jealousy is an internal (inside) problem, a problem of the heart, and not something that comes from outward conditions?

Why could someone have so much of what this world offers and still be very jealous?

④ Ellen G. White wrote in *Patriarchs and Prophets* (read quote in Friday's study) that the "one great defect [weakness]" in the character of Saul was his love of being praised. Just one "little" defect, and look what happened! What should this tell us about the danger of not trying to overcome all our character weaknesses before they overcome us? What Bible promises can you claim that can give you the hope and encouragement you need to overcome these weaknesses with Christ's love and power?

11. characters—people in a story.