

Speaking to the soul



Jealousy

Anger is cruel, and wrath is like a flood, but jealousy is even more dangerous. Proverbs 27:4

The Bible introduces us to lots of jealous people. Most famous among them are Joseph's brothers. They were so consumed with jealousy that they planned to kill him.

Throughout history, jealousy has destroyed many lives, and the writer of Proverbs was fully aware of its terrible power.

Jealousy starts slowly and quietly. It begins when we look at someone else and see they have something we don't. The more we reflect on it, the more we realise there is no reason why they should have more than we've got. It isn't fair. Unchecked, those thoughts flower into feelings of jealousy and rage. When I've chatted with people in prison, they have often traced their crime back to thoughts which started quietly and innocently enough but grew into violent actions.

We will all, from time to time, have little twinges of envy. The question is: how do we prevent those feelings developing into full-grown, destructive jealousy? The apostle Paul would answer that we need to allow the Holy Spirit to take charge. He specifically referred to jealousy as one of the features of a sinful nature. He came up with a long list of sins including sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarrelling, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness and wild parties (Galatians 5:19-21). It's quite a list, and the point is that they are all related. They are all the result of sin, and they are all destructive.

As we live our lives in step with the Holy Spirit, his fruit takes over. There is no space for jealousy when you look at people with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Christians certainly aren't perfect, but we worship a perfect God who, in the power of his Holy Spirit, is able to help us to avoid the terrible destructiveness of jealousy.

QUESTION

How do you handle feelings of envy?

PRAYER

Lord God, I thank you that you understand me so well. Help me to allow your Spirit to shape every part of my life. Amen

Photo - Flowers on CNI's doorstep

