

Miriam's Envy & Selfish Ambition

MIRIAM & AARON'S BIG POWER GRAB

Numbers 12/ 1 Corinthians 10:6-10/ Exodus 15:20/ Exodus 4:14-16; 8:16 & 32:1-7

A DISEASE CALLED ENVY

James 3:14-18

- **The Prognosis:** *Physical, emotional & spiritual ruin*
Proverbs 14:30/ 1 Corinthians 13:4/ Galatians 5:21/ 1 Peter 2:1

- **The Cure:** *Three Rare Traits*
Romans 13:1-2 / Philippians 4:11-13 & 1 Timothy 6:6-8/ Matthew 11:29 & Philippians 2:3-9

1) *Submission* 2) *Contentment* 3) *Humility*

A CONVERSATION AT STARBUCKS

*How To Respond When Someone Else
Has What You Want*

- ❶ Life is *not fair* – Eternity is *better than fair*
- ❷ You can't *lead* if you can't *follow*
- ❸ Nothing is ever as *good* or *easy* as it looks
- ❹ A fool *spits in the wind* – a bigger fool *argues with God*
- ❺ The difference between contentment & envy is *focus*

Food for Thought

For the week of July 12, 2009
(Questions and Scriptures for further study)

1. Envy often arises when we become discontent with what we have. The book of Ecclesiastes records King Solomon's search for contentment in a world where he had everything at his fingertips. Take a look at what he learned by reading the following passages and then jotting down his insights about the pursuit of contentment.

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless. [2] "Laughter," I said, "is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?" [3] I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly--my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives.

[4] I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. [5] I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. [6] I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. [7] I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. [8] I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well--the delights of the heart of man. [9] I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me.

[10] I denied myself nothing my eyes desired;

I refused my heart no pleasure.

My heart took delight in all my work,
and this was the reward for all my labor.

[11] Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done
and what I had toiled to achieve,
everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind;
nothing was gained under the sun. [NIV]

Ecclesiastes 4:4-8

And I saw that all labor and all achievement spring from man's envy of his neighbor. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

[5] The fool folds his hands
and ruins himself.

[6] Better one handful with tranquillity
than two handfuls with toil
and chasing after the wind.

[7] Again I saw something meaningless under the sun:

[8] There was a man all alone;
he had neither son nor brother.

There was no end to his toil,
yet his eyes were not content with his wealth.

"For whom am I toiling," he asked,
"and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?"

This too is meaningless--
a miserable business! [NIV]

Ecclesiastes 5:10-16

Whoever loves money never has money enough;
whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income.
This too is meaningless.

[11] As goods increase,
so do those who consume them.

And what benefit are they to the owner
except to feast his eyes on them?
[12] The sleep of a laborer is sweet,
whether he eats little or much,
but the abundance of a rich man
permits him no sleep.
[13] I have seen a grievous evil under the sun:
wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner,
[14] or wealth lost through some misfortune,
so that when he has a son
there is nothing left for him.
[15] Naked a man comes from his mother's womb,
and as he comes, so he departs.
He takes nothing from his labor
that he can carry in his hand.
[16] This too is a grievous evil:
As a man comes, so he departs,
and what does he gain,
since he toils for the wind? [NIV]

What principle from these verses is most important for you to remember regarding contentment?

2. Envy and selfish ambition are something that the disciples wrestled with even after spending a lot of time with Jesus. In Mark 10:35-45, we read about two of the disciples seeking special favor from Jesus at the expense of the others.

Mark 10:35-45

Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

[36] "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

[37] They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

[38] "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

[39] "We can," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, [40] but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

[41] When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. [42] Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. [43] Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, [44] and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. [45] For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." [NIV]

How does Jesus' response to these two disciples help us deal with our own temptations toward self-promotion?

How does Jesus' response to the other 10 disciples help us deal with the times we are envious of others?

3. What do you tend to struggle with the most when it comes to being envious of the possessions or successes of others?

What are some ways (either healthy or unhealthy) that you've dealt with any temptations toward envy and a lack of contentment in the past?

In light of this weekend's sermon, what are some ways you can handle these when they come up in the future?