

Don't Let Jealousy Trick You Into Its Terrible Trap

When we feel jealous of another, we have to ask the heart why we crave what we don't have. Do we feel as though we are not privileged enough? Did we miss out on the good things of God? Even when it feels like winter in our hearts and spring and summer for everyone else, our winter is still valuable. In winter, everything is hushed. There aren't the distractions of blooming opportunities and wild adventures. It's simply us and the cold. Us and silence.

It can teach us something. We can lean in. We can throw our hands up in jealousy, frustrated by what's not ours, or we can find contentment buried deep in the goodness of Jesus. I've found that it's in winter that we see Him most clearly. Jealousy tempts us away from our intimacy and connection with the giver of winter. The same giver who leads us into spring and summer.

Jealousy robs us of unity with Christ because we are too busy wishing for a life that isn't ours to live.

The truth is:

- It doesn't matter if you have been dumped, discarded or divorced.
- It doesn't matter if you cannot have kids or choose not to have kids.
- It doesn't matter if you stink at house cleaning and you feel inadequate as a homemaker.
- It doesn't matter if you cannot cook.
- It doesn't matter if you do not make much money or if you make a lot of money.
- It doesn't matter if you feel too fat or too skinny.
- It doesn't matter if you feel like a failure in your

work.

- You aren't broken.
- You aren't damaged goods.
- You aren't beyond repair.
- You are loved.
- You are enough.
- You are created in the image of God: beautiful and strong, fierce and tender.

Who you are matters. Who you are is enough. May you stand tall, shoulders back, lift your voice and claim your inheritance. One of truth, rescue and redemption. One of power, dignity and worth. May you seek Him and find Him, the Healer of your hurts, the One who calls you enough. May He be your strength when you're weak and your fire when you're lost in the dark.

This is not self-help, this is life in Christ. Romans 8:1a reminds us, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." No condemnation. Not from your own feelings, not from those around you, not from the culture we live in. None. What matters is your choice to abide in Christ, finding your true identity, casting off all condemnation and shame and walking in the fullness He has set for you. What the world and your own soul needs is for you to be most fully alive in Jesus. Not waiting for the scraps from another woman's table.

I have friends who long to be married. I have friends who are desperate to have a child. I have friends who would give anything to see their grown children return to Christ. I have friends who feel like God has passed them by. They grow jealous of others because they feel forsaken. Forgotten. It's the root of our jealousy that needs attention. Do we believe Jesus can meet our needs? The emotional ones? The relational ones? The financial ones? Do we believe God is enough? Is His love enough to hold us? To make our story something beautiful?

1 Corinthians 13:4 (NIV) says, "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud." The goodness of Jesus makes room for a love that is patient and kind in nature. Not mired in jealousy. It's our jealousy that gets us into trouble. It's jealousy that drains the hope right out of our struggle.

Every woman in her right mind would choose a trouble-free life over a trouble-filled life. Hands down. She would be crazy not to. Unfortunately, that isn't the tale of our lives. Our days provide ample opportunity to envy after someone else's life, especially in the impossible moments of our own.

Contentment can be the fire hose that sprays the flames of jealousy. Contentment says I know I'm not perfect. I know I don't have the desires of my heart at this point in the story. Contentment says I can accept my story, the highs and lows. Contentment says I'm seen by God and He knows my needs. Contentment reminds us no one has it easy. Suffering binds us all together.

Contentment makes room for us to be in sync with the Father. To take each day with Him, offer Him our frustrations, our hopes, our dreams and carry on in the life He's provided for us. We see the priceless moments, the incomparable wealth and the sacred communion that happens in the midst of our stories. He's working out a masterpiece within us. Jealousy leaves us hungering after a counterfeit version of the real thing. The counterfeit, a sordid god, is one that robs us of joy rather than lavishing joy on us.

We trick ourselves into believing jealousy will get us one step closer to what we really want, but in reality, it will lead us further away. It isolates us, with our covetous thoughts quick to make assumptions about others and ourselves.

When we seek contentment in Christ we must give up what comes easiest. Envy. First Chronicles 16:11 tells us, "Look to the

Lord and his strength; seek his face always.” In honesty, we get to the heart of the matter, offering our sin, which so easily entangles, to a holy God who will meet our needs. Who will hear our prayers? Who has not forgotten us? Who is a giver of good gifts? Who gives us strength to overcome? When we receive and walk in the gracious love of the Father we may rejoice in all seasons. His Holy Spirit gives us understanding as we seek Him. We accept the breath He gave us. He gives grace to celebrate our own lives and the lives of other women. Not bridled by jealousy, but vulnerable and honest. {eoa}

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