
1 Corinthians 13:4c *Love does not Envy!*

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: What is love not? It is not envious nor is it jealous! When God tells us that love does not envy, He means we need to be happy for who and what we are. We are not to be comparing ourselves with others, nor are we to be jealous, spiteful, or possessive of others, because God is the One in control, and He has a unique plan for you and me. When we hear that a friend receives a promotion before we do, or gets something we wanted, we are to be happy for him/her. If we have a sibling who excels, we should be happy with him/her. If our neighbor has a brand-new car, we should be happy for him/her, and be thankful for the old wreck that we may drive. When our spouse is doing better than we are, we are to be happy for him/her. In other words, we are to be happy for someone else who has something we do not have, even if we do not like it. We must not become possessive, or control freaks, especially where it concerns others and our relationships with them. Being possessive and attempting to control others will cause the destruction of a church very quickly. We will soon lose our contentment, and run ourselves off into that maze of despair, dejection, and desolation. At the very least, this will compromise the church's effectiveness. Love is letting go of our desires and will for a greater love we cannot receive on our own—grace.

Authentic Love does not desire that which it does not have!

Contexts and Background:

This passage begins the contrasts of love. There are 14 descriptions for love, half in the positive of how we are to be and the other half in the negative of how we are not to be. Paul is showing the Corinthians the reason for their problems and the solution they needed, as they were bringing one another into lawsuits rather than into positive relationships and reconciliation.

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Love is/Charity.* Real love is helpful so it does not become jealous or resort to putting others down to make self look good. Real Love helps! Being a loving person comes down to our willingness to either live a life that is Holy Spirit-driven or one that is sin-driven, of pride and will; either it will take us over or He will—it is up to us. If real Love cares more for others than for self, then what does envy do (Mark 12:28-31; John 3:16, Matt. 22:34-40; John 3:16; 13:1, 34-35; 14:1; 15:9; Rom. 1:31; 5:10; 12:10; 1 Cor. 13; Eph. 2:4-7; Phil. 2:2; Col. 1:1-6; 3:12-14; 1 Thess. 1:3; 2:8; 3:6; 12; 4:9-10; 5:8; 13; 2 Tim. 3:3; Heb. 10:24; 1 John 4:7-12)?
- Understanding His grace will help empower us to be honest with wisdom, seeking His precepts and not those that are false. The grace we receive, if it has taken root within us, will display humbleness; as we are exalted in Christ, we have no need to have inflated egos. Our significance is in Him, thus we are upgraded in Him beyond any human hopes or dreams (Deut 4:6; 1 Kings 3:9; Psalm 119:97-98; Matt. 6:33; Rom. 12:3; 1 Tim. 1:18-20).
- *Envy/not jealous/love never is envious/charity envieth not/not emulous of others.* Meaning if we really love, we will not desire or take what belongs to others. Envy produces the desire to have what others have, their gifts or positions or possessions, and to seek to manipulate or put them down. Envy is misplaced zeal; it is mourning for what we do not have and conniving to get it, even rationalizing and boasting about it. It is also the temptation to compare ourselves with others or to put others down because we fear we can't have what they have, or it will cause us too much work to obtain. This poisons the Holy Spirit's work in us, as it leads to the creation of sin and hostility as well as distrust. Thus, real love will not be self-seeking or create strife or cause disharmony and

prejudice toward others. Envy gains the person nothing of real or eternal value; it only pushes the person down further. It also causes us to be resentful of those who have more and thus become angry or bitter or seek to destroy them to make ourselves look better. Paul elsewhere called an envious person an idolater. He said to put to death *covetousness*, which is idolatry (Num. 25:11-13; Duet. 5:21; Psalm 106:30-31; Luke 6:31; Col. 3:5; Eph. 5:5).

- *Jealousy* also refers to covetousness, which is being envious and/or distrusting toward others because we are being self-centered instead of focused upon Christ. We become hostile toward others, intolerant, inciting rivalry, and unfaithfulness. We are also tempted to compare ourselves with others and often, that leads to our putting others down. Thus, jealousy and envy are also synonyms as well as aspects of the same problem. They create our bad thoughts that lead us to our action and the desire to take what is not ours from others (the 10th commandment!). Be aware that jealousy comes from un-forgiveness and will incite our anger. Expect it, and have a plan to handle it (Prov. 3:31; 6:32 -35; 23:17; 27:4).
- An aspect of *kindness* is admiration; to be kind and be meek—strength and power under control—in how we are with our words and actions. This is the opposite of envy. This will cause us to focus on what we want so we ignore what others need. It is superficial, conceited, and abusive. Envy is the opposite of being kind, because it comes from our lack of trust and reliance on our Lord (Prov. 14:30; 27:4; 1 Cor. 12:15-16; Phil. 4:12-13; James 3: 13-18).
- An aspect of *Patience* is that it helps us to help others and even to allow God the room and time to work through us to others around us. Envy and jealousy become the opposite of being patient; they stop the help and positive relational action of love! Being in Christ means we take on His character so our character is focused on Him; then we become contagious and uplifting, kind and patient. Keeping a tab on our envy will make sure we are being good and kind by first giving ourselves to our Lord.

Devotional Thoughts and Applications:

This passage continues to speak to us about the importance of love that comes from our growth in Christ and spawns our spiritual maturity as we are living in the certainty of God's Promise. We are called to take hold of the hope offered by our Lord with faith and patience so we will inherit that which has been promised! Envy neutralizes God's work in us because envy and jealousy are fueled by our selfish ambitions that create our anger and bitterness. Envy may be the drive of the advertising industry, and it may motivate us to get what we want and be the adoring motivator for many people in the world, but for the Christian, it is to be repugnant! It is a rotten fruit that lacks God and His Truth as well as wisdom; it seeks power and prestige for self and forsakes our Lord and His call. Envy and jealousy will cause broken relationships and dysfunctional homes and churches. These ideas produce evil such as adultery, thievery, slander, conflict, harm to others, and murder that leads to chaos and the destruction in the Church and world (Prov. 11:18; Rom. 12:9; 1Cor. 2:6-15; Gal. 5).

What have envy and jealousy done in your life and the lives of those around you? In the Epistle of James, we are warned not to lust after what we do not have. Why? The reason is because what we lust after is also what controls us; and thus, what is wrong becomes our passion and quest. Therefore, Jesus is not Lord in our life; rather, what is petty and meaningless is! When we are jealous of others, we are either hoarding what we have or coveting what they have. And then we think we have to defend our position. So we engage in our disputes and fights like wild animals rather than Kingdom followers. We tear at one another in our hurts or our conquest of the misguided goals we have. Envy causes us to ignore God and forsake His call, truth, wisdom, and fruit. When we do ask of Him, our motives are skewed and our passions misdirected, as we seek personal pleasures and self, not Christ and His mission for us. What does envy do for us? It causes us to cheat on Him with the mistress of our bad planning and evil desires. We become opposed to real love and Christ who

created and loves us and is holding our perfect plan. Envy causes us to forsake what is good for what is futility. God wants us to be His friends, not His enemies, but the choice is ours to determine, and the path is ours to undertake (Prov. 10:24; 13:23; Phil. 4:12; James 4: 1-6).

Think back to what the Lord has done for you, so you don't forget His grace, His provisions, and His answered prayers and blessings. We are not to be overcome with the struggles of the moment so we cannot see how He has brought us through them in the past. We are to refresh our memory in Him. We can respond by bringing out the best in our friends and family, always treating them with kindness, the opposite of being envious. God gives to each of us all of His love. It is a love that gives without expectations or a response from the other, so it must be how and who we are.

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Read these two passages again in different translations (1 Corinthians 13:1-8; 1 John 4: 7-12)

1. Discuss your thoughts on this aspect of love.
2. Give a positive example.
3. Give a negative example.
4. How is this type of love working in you?
5. Why is this love not working in you?
6. What blocks this love from being exhibited in you?
7. What would it take to get this love working in you?
8. What are you willing to do about it?

Additional Questions:

1. When you hear that a friend receives a promotion before you do, or gets something you want, how do you feel and what do you do?
2. What is jealousy? Have you struggled with jealousy? How so? What causes it? How can you know when your emotions are out of control with envy?
3. Why does real love not covet? Why do we need to be happy for others? Love is letting go of our desires and will for a greater love. How so, and why?
4. Are you happy for who you are, what you are, and what you have been given such as Spiritual gifts, positions, or possessions? If not, why? What can you do in God's parameters of love and character?
5. What happens when you compare yourself with others? How does this cause you to be jealous, spiteful, or possessive of others?
6. How would believing in and allowing God to be in control help you combat jealousy and envy? Why would you be jealous knowing that Christ has a great and unique plan for you?
7. How does or how can being possessive or spiteful, or attempting to control others, cause the destruction of a relationship? How will it destroy a church very quickly?
8. What can you do to stop comparing yourselves with others or becoming possessive or a control freak in your relationship with others?
9. How can you better feel happy for someone else who has something you do not have, even if you do not like them?
10. If you know that jealousy comes from your un-forgiveness and will incite your anger, what can you do to anticipate it, and have a plan to handle it?