

# Smooth Criminals - Part 4 - Jealousy - Clay Weed

1. Read, reflect, and discuss each of these passages individually.
  - Proverbs 4:23
  - James 3:14
  - Exodus 20:17
  - James 3:16
  - Proverbs 14:30
  - Proverbs 16:24
2. As you reflect on these passages as a whole, what stands out the most to you? Why?
3. As you reflect on the message, what one principle or insight stands out as being particularly
  - helpful?
  - insightful?
  - difficult to grasp?
  - challenging?
4. What do the passages and the message teach you about God? What do they teach you about yourself?
5. How could the next week be different if you incorporated these truths into your life?
6. If time allows, read and discuss this article on the 2nd page from [gotquestions.org](http://gotquestions.org) "What is the difference between envy and jealousy, biblically speaking?"

## Question: "What is the difference between envy and jealousy, biblically speaking?"

**Answer:** Both envy and jealousy are listed in the Bible as sins to avoid along with greed, slander, and anger (2 Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:20–21; Mark 7:21–23). Although similar, and although they are often experienced together, envy and jealousy are not exactly synonymous.

In some contexts, *envy* and *jealousy* are interchangeable terms, because both relate to covetousness. The same word translated “envious” in the NASB in Matthew 20:15 is translated “jealous” in the NLT. When we want something that belongs to someone else, we can be described as either “envious” or “jealous.” For example, saying “I envy my neighbor’s new fence” is the same as saying “I am jealous of my neighbor’s new fence.”

The difference between envy and jealousy is a fine one. Envy always has an outward focus: we desire some item, person, or attribute possessed by someone else, and we are discontent or resentful about not having it. Jealousy is often found in a more restricted context of the protection of one’s own items or relationships, especially romantic relationships (Proverbs 6:34). You can *envy* someone else for his girlfriend, but someone flirting with your own girlfriend makes you *jealous*, not envious. In fact, the word *jealous* can carry the meaning of “zealous vigilance” (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2015).

First Kings 21:1–16 relates the story of King Ahab and his coveting the property of his neighbor, Naboth. Whether we call Ahab’s sin envy or jealousy, the result was the same: Naboth was murdered, and Ahab was held to account (verses 17–19).

The tenth commandment addresses envy and jealousy by forbidding covetousness (Exodus 20:17). In contrast to the sin of envy or jealousy, 1 Timothy 6:6 says that “godliness with contentment is great gain.” Envy or jealousy is the enemy of contentment because we cannot live in grateful contentment when focused on what we don’t have.

The biblical difference between envy and jealousy is that, in certain circumstances, jealousy can be a positive thing. Envy is never presented as positive. The type of jealousy defined as “zealous vigilance” is the unhappy or angry feeling caused when what rightfully belongs to us is being threatened. This is the type of jealousy mentioned by the bride in Song of Solomon 8:6: “Love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame.” It is the type of jealousy Paul wrote of in 2 Corinthians 11:2: “I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.” Paul saw the Corinthian believers slipping in their devotion to Christ, and, as a loving husband would jealously guard his wife’s affections, so Paul jealously guarded the hearts of his spiritual children. The Bible also portrays God as having loving jealousy over His children (Psalm 78:58; Zechariah 8:2).

Envy and jealousy, when viewed as synonyms, are sins. Psalm 73:1–3 reminds us of the dangers of envying the wicked. Acts 7:9 identifies jealousy as the root cause of Jacob’s sons’ mistreatment of their brother Joseph. When we desire what God has not given us, our hearts harden toward Him. Envy or jealousy can blind us to reality and make us believe the lie, as Eve did, that God is holding out on us (Genesis 3). Envy unchecked can result in walking away from God in order to meet our desires in our own way. Jealousy unchecked can result in bitterness toward those God has called us to love (John 13:34; 1 Peter 1:22; Hebrews 12:15). Both envy and jealousy are dangerous to our well-being and to our fruitfulness for God’s kingdom (John 15:1–8).