

FULLY ALIVE | Envy Small Group Guide

Key idea: Envy is not just wanting what others have, it is a rejection of who God says we are. At its root, envy says "God, you got this wrong." The antidote is resting so deeply in the Father's love that others' gain no longer registers as our loss.

Passages

- Genesis 4:1-12 – Cain and Abel
- 1 Samuel 18:6-16 – Saul and David
- Luke 15:25-32 – the elder brother's resentment

Discussion

1. What envy feels like

Joseph Epstein describes envy as: seeing something, wanting it, feeling it should rightfully be yours and then having to emphasise the other person's unworthiness to make sense of the injustice. Does that ring true? Where have you felt something like that, even fleetingly?

2. Transitory vs vicious envy

The sermon distinguished between the fleeting envy that's hard to avoid, and the toxic kind we nurse into resentment. Cain and Saul are examples of the second: envy that hardened into rage. What's the difference between noticing envy and feeding it? What does "nursing" envy actually look like in daily life?

3. Envy as a clue (Elizabeth Oldfield)

"We feel envy towards those who surpass us in things that feel central to our identity. Envy is a clue to who we wish we were, indicating dissatisfaction with who we actually are." What does what you envy reveal about where you are looking for worth? What does it tell you about what you believe God has withheld from you?

4. The elder brother (Luke 15:25-32)

The elder son's resentment is not ultimately aimed at his brother but at his father: "You got this wrong." He is unable to enter the joy of the party. In what situations do you find yourself outside the party, unable to rejoice? What would it take to step inside?

5. Salieri and the God who chose wrongly

In Amadeus, Salieri's envy of Mozart is really a quarrel with God: "Why would you pour such a gift into someone so unworthy?" His envy becomes hatred of God. Have you ever felt like God distributed gifts or opportunities unfairly? What did that do to your relationship with God?

Reflection Question

Envy is a clue to who you wish you were. Can you name what stirs it in you and what that reveals about where you are looking for worth outside God's love?

A Concrete Step This Week

Can you name the person who stirs quiet envy in you? This week, do one deliberately uncompetitive thing toward them:

- Pray for their flourishing
- Say something true and generous about them, even if just to yourself
- Send the message you've been holding back

Close in Prayer

Father, you come out to meet us even when we are standing outside in resentment. Help us to hear your voice: "My child, all I have is yours." Free us from the lie that another's blessing is our loss. Amen.