

Genesis 37: The Raging Fire of Jealousy

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Jealousy seems to develop in much the same way as a fire.

1. The 1st stage of a fire is _____.

What things sparked the fires of jealousy in Joseph's brothers?

2. The second stage of a fire is _____.

What things greatly enlarged the fires of jealousy in Joseph's brothers?

3. The 3rd stage of a fire is _____, which is when nearby combustible material spontaneously ignites due to high temperatures.

What action(s) did the brothers take when their jealousy reached this stage?

What embers of jealousy might be smoldering within my heart?

1. S _____

2. S _____

3. S _____

4. S _____

5. S _____

6. S _____

How may I extinguish the embers and flames of jealousy?

For later, personal reflection: *Are there times when jealousy is ok? And how would I know?*

Legitimate jealousy: when someone guards & defends that which rightly belongs to him/her exclusively.

- God is rightly jealous for our exclusive worship & devotion, which only He deserves.
- A spouse is rightly jealous for the exclusive fidelity of his/her spouse.

Sinful jealousy: “I want what you have, and furthermore, I don’t want you to have it.”

(John MacArthur)

- Most of the NT discussion on jealousy has to do with this type of jealousy.
- With a few exceptions pertaining to God’s glory, most of the OT references to human jealousy seem to be of the sinful, self-seeking kind of jealousy.

How does a person slip into sinful jealousy?

1. We may incorrectly assume that something rightly belongs to us and not to another. Then, when that something is not delivered to us but to someone else, we become wrongfully jealous of that person for having what we think rightly belongs only to us. King Saul incorrectly thought the kingship was his and his only. This type of jealousy is sinful because it is thoroughly self-absorbed (self-seeking, self-exalting, self-preserving, etc.). James warns about “bitter jealousy and selfish ambition” (3:14). Check your jealousy for signs of the self-life. Better yet, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal aspects of the self-life that are driving your jealousy.
2. Something may in fact rightly belong only to us (e.g., our spouse’s marital fidelity), and when it is not so reserved, we rightly become jealous... but then we wrongly take matters into our own hands to get back what is rightly ours. We may sinfully act on this jealousy either (a) very privately and only in our hearts by resenting someone, wishing evil upon them, becoming embittered, etc. Or, (b) we may sinfully act on this jealousy outwardly—with words (e.g., slandering, discrediting), by mistreatment, by seeking someone’s harm or downfall, by seeking vengeance, etc.

Moses is a good example of not becoming sinfully jealous when someone usurped that which rightly belonged to him. He did not take matters into his own hands; he let the Lord take care of the injustice (cf. Aaron & Miriam—Num 12:2, ff.; Korah/Dathan/Abiram—Num 16:24). See also his response re Eldad & Medad—Num 11:29. If in your jealousy you find yourself trying to take matters into your own hands to correct an injustice related to how you’ve been treated, this should alert you that you have moved into a sinful jealousy.

3. Sinful human jealousy regularly seems to evoke and lead to other sinful attitudes and actions. Joseph’s brothers were so jealous of him that they couldn’t even speak a kind word to him. But soon it became hatred, then murderous hatred. Saul was jealous of David, and before long he sought to kill him. The religious leaders were envious of Jesus and the apostles; soon they were trying to put them to death (Mt 27:18; Acts 5:17-33). If your jealousy includes hate, this should alert you that your jealousy is sinful.