

## Cross My Heart, Part 5

Today we're going to conclude our study of four specific factors that attack our spiritual heart. Each one of them causes an imbalance that makes us "sick." And each one of them creates this imbalance through a DEBT – DEBTOR relationship. Think about when somebody owes you money that they haven't paid – it causes an awkwardness in the relationship ("an elephant in the room") because there's a debt.

We are tempted to treat the symptoms that stem from an unhealthy spiritual heart while ignoring the deeper issues. But as is the case with the physical heart, eventually the root problem will become the real problem. Just as a heart attack has the potential to destroy your body, so spiritual heart disease has the potential to destroy you and your most valuable relationships.

Life can be hard on the heart, because the world is full of outside influences that have the power to disrupt its rhythm. Over time you develop habits that slowly erode your heart's sensitivity. The inevitable pain and disappointment of life cause you to set up walls around your heart. At the end of the day, your heart gets out of sync with the rhythm it was created to maintain. And if left alone, these "heart attackers" will linger for a lifetime and do incredible damage.

Jeremiah 17:9 (ESV) **The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?**

Matthew 15:18 **But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.**

Your MOUTH serves as a stethoscope to listen to your HEART.

Matthew 15:19 **For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:**

Heart issues make intimacy difficult to maintain because intimacy revolves around knowing and being known. SECRETS can damage the heart, because they make us build walls in our relationships. That's because we usually suspect in others what we are guilty of ourselves.

HOW ARE THINGS WITH YOUR HEART? Not your career, your family, your reputation, or your finances. Your heart. It's an awkward question.

Proverbs 4:23 (KJV) **Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.**

Proverbs 4:23 (NLT) **Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do.**

Over the last few weeks we've talked about ...

Code Blue: Code Red: Code Yellow:

GUILT "I owe you" ANGER "You owe me" GREED "I owe me"

CONFESSION FORGIVENESS GIVING

And today we want to talk about ... CODE GREEN: JEALOUSY

Jealousy?! Jealousy just happens in kids! That's not true, but adults have a sophisticated "filter" and just refuse to admit it. After all, if we admitted we were jealous, someone would say "grow up" or "get over it"!

Can you be brave enough to admit it to yourself? There are people you don't like just because they are "ahead" of you in some way. When you see them, you immediately think of all the things they have that you lack – looks, intelligence, skills, a nicer car, a better job, a bigger house, health, height, build, opportunities, friends – the list goes on and on.

In your mind you say, "It's not FAIR!" But what you really want is not "FAIR" – what you really want is "MORE." In fact, "fair" on a world scale would put most Canadians back several steps in the scheme of things!

But having "MORE" wouldn't resolve the problem anyway, because jealousy is a HEART issue, not a PEOPLE issue (or a "category of people" issue). Think about it! THEY are not your problem, because THEY can't fix your problem!

The only thing others could possibly do to make you feel better is to FAIL! That reversal would make you feel better for a moment, but it actually magnifies that you have a problem (there is an inequity). People that surface jealousy in you are just a reflection of YOUR problem.

You say, "That's petty and immature." Absolutely! You say, "I shouldn't FEEL that way." What does that indicate? A HEART PROBLEM!

ILLUSTRATION: GIVE OUT THREE "INEQUITABLE" GIFTS

(i.e. iPod, gift certificate, apple)

Your problem is not with any of THEM. Their problem is not with EACH OTHER. Your problem is with ME, because I didn't distribute these gifts FAIRLY. And I won't even try to make it fair! That's what

jealousy says ...

“If God hadn’t ... then I would have ...”

CODE GREEN: JEALOUSY SAYS “GOD OWES ME”

God has never claimed to be “FAIR.” In fact, fairness disappeared after man’s fall in the Garden of Eden. God just does what HE wants to!

Three times in Daniel chapter four, judgment is pronounced on King Nebuchadnezzar, precisely because he doesn’t “get it” ...

Daniel 4:32 (NIV) **You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes.**

Finally, after seven years of degradation, Nebuchadnezzar admits ...

Daniel 4:35 (NIV) **All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"**

Yes, God could have fixed all that for you. Yes, He could have remedied all the inequities in your life. If God hadn’t messed up, you would have been much better off! WHAT IN THE WORLD WAS GOD THINKING?!

Our jealousy MIGHT register to us as a sin (that we confess), but it seldom registers as a GRUDGE against God Himself. Yet that’s exactly what it is! When I’m jealous, I think “GOD OWES ME!”

But how could God owe me something? I owe Him everything! That’s exactly why my jealousy is so easily misdirected and so hard to root out. My problem is with my Creator (not with others), but my problem WILL surface in my relationships! As long as jealousy rages unchecked, no relationship that I have is safe!

Jealousy has been around for a LONG time! Cain and Abel. Esau and Jacob. Joseph and his brothers. And maybe YOU? Have you ever derived secret pleasure from watching a “rival” suffer a setback?!

James 4:1 (NIV) **What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you?**

There is ONE CAUSE of all relational conflicts – our DESIRES.

External conflicts are simply the result of our own internal conflicts that “spill over.” That’s why we say “we hurt most those we love most.” Why? Because they are in close proximity and get “spilled on.”

The common denominator in all my relational conflicts is ME! James 4:2 (NIV) You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet,

but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.

That’s the source of every conflict – “I am not getting my way!”

“COVET” means to “hotly pursue” and it is a word picture of someone constantly trying to meet a need that can’t ever seem to be met.

Think about this: An APPETITE by its very nature can never be fully and finally satisfied, it can only be temporarily quenched. Human beings have many “unquenchable thirsts” – stuff, money, recognition, success, progress, happiness, intimacy, sex, relationship, partnership, friendship, fun, accomplishment ... we never get “enough” of these things!

C.S. Lewis: “Appetites grow through indulgence – not neglect. Gluttons think just as much about food as starving people.” (In other words, the more you feed an appetite, the more it escalates in intensity.)

So what is conflict? It’s someone trying to satisfy THEIR desires in a way that conflicts with MY desires!

Until I can own up to my share of the problem, I will always blame someone else. BLAME is an admission that I can’t be happy without your cooperation. To blame is to acknowledge dependence – if you don’t act a certain way, I can’t be happy! But that ultimately means that I can’t be happy without controlling everyone in my life – and that’s impossible!

We’re trying to squeeze our happiness out of other people, and meanwhile they’re trying to squeeze their happiness out of us. Eventually, everyone suffocates!

So what do I do with my desires? Take them to God who created them in the first place! (“you have not because you do not ask God”)

James is NOT telling us to pray that God will change “someone else” so that we can get our way! He is just telling us to bring our deepest desires, hurts, feelings of unfairness and unmet needs to GOD.

1 Peter 5:7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

If it's important to YOU, it's important to GOD. Tell Him about it! "But I think God owes me." Tell Him that! "God, You owe me!" He already knows what you are thinking and feeling anyway!

James 4:3 (NIV) When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Be aware that God may (and probably will) still say "NO" to your request. Why? Well, why did you deny some of your children's requests? Because ultimately what they wanted wouldn't have been good for them. God is the source of all GOOD things, not all WISHED FOR things!

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Jealousy is dangerous because it shapes our attitudes toward other people, when they have done nothing except pull ahead of us in a race they are not even aware of. Jealousy eventually becomes resentment, and then it begins to affect our entire life in a destructive way.

WHO DO YOU SECRETLY RESENT? What category of people do you dislike in your heart of hearts? Can you see it? They are not the problem; they are just reflecting back what originated in your heart!

POUR OUT YOUR HEART TO GOD! Say it – "GOD, YOU OWE ME!" And then, reread the New Testament ... who owes who?

THERE IS ONLY ONE CURE FOR JEALOUSY – CELEBRATION!

You have to sincerely celebrate the blessings God has given to others!

Until you find a way to deal with jealousy, you can't follow the number one commandment of the Christian life – LOVE ONE ANOTHER. Because love is the opposite of jealousy.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (MES) Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut, Doesn't have a swelled head, Doesn't force itself on others, Isn't always "me first," Doesn't fly off the handle, Doesn't keep score of the sins of others, Doesn't revel when others grovel, Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, Puts up with anything, Trusts God always, Always looks for the best, Never looks back, But keeps going to the end.

HOW ARE THINGS WITH YOUR HEART?