

Sermon: May 13 and 14, 2000
Rich Nathan
The Seven Deadly Sins for Today Series
1 Samuel 18:1-16

How to Overcome Envy in Your Life

I have been doing a series on the Seven Deadly Sins for today – which are pride, envy, anger, sloth, greed, gluttony and lust. These sins were put together in a list by monks who were part of the Eastern Church back 1500-1600 years ago. As they looked into their own hearts and saw their own frailties, they said all of the other sins in their lives came from these seven sins. These seven sins were like the trunk of a tree and all the rest of their sins were like branches. But of all the Seven Deadly Sins, the least admirable, the one that is almost always least pleasant, least desirable, is envy.

You don't ever see envy turned around into a quality that's fun or thrilling. Look at gluttony. Gluttony suggests a party. Man, did we eat. Gluttony is, in lots of people's minds, about celebrating, having fun, chowing down. People love talking with you about the food that they have eaten. My father, to this day, calls me almost every week to tell me what he has eaten or what he is going to eat – what he has cooked. Or he calls to ask me what Marlene is cooking. A typical conversation with my dad begins with him saying:

“Richie, we had about 12 people over to our house last night. I cooked lasagna. I mean people were crying when it was gone. Then, after it was gone, I took a turkey out of the oven...O, I mean, it was delicious.”

Most of the other sins are spun in the popular mind into fun. Certainly, lust is, right? A lot of our economy is rooted in the celebration of lust. That's what makes Hollywood go. That's what makes the music business go. Greed is turned into “The Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous.” Sloth is someone who really understands leisure and how to pick a great vacation spot where you can lounge around in the spa all day.

But envy – it is said of envy that this is the one sin that few people will really admit to. Envy has the ugliest face. The face of envy is nasty. It is mean-spirited. It is grim. It is never pleasant. It is never content.

The other sins will give you a momentary thrill. All of the other Seven Deadly Sins will give you a feeling of elation. I mean even pride you can get a feeling of satisfaction for a little while that you are superior to someone else. As you measure yourself by them, you can say, “Look at me, I am thinner than they are, or funnier, or wealthier, or more clever, or I have a better house than they do, or better kids or a better job.”

You can get a momentary lift from lust, gluttony or greed, but envy? Envy just eats you up. Envy never produces a thrill. With envy you are always tormented inside that someone is

getting ahead of you. Someone has more than you do. Someone has the position, the praise, the person or the power that you want.

Psychologists call envy the “Salieri Syndrome.” Some of you remember the movie *Amadeus*. In the movie *Amadeus*, we have this composer named Salieri who was the court composer and the conductor of the Italian Opera in Vienna before Mozart moved there. From the perspective of the public and the perspective of the court, Salieri had every reason to pity Mozart, who was rejected by and large by most of the public and rejected by the powers that be, the Emperor. But according to the movie *Amadeus*, Salieri wasn’t full of pride regarding his position, a position that Mozart never enjoyed. He didn’t pity Mozart. He didn’t look down on Mozart. Instead, the movie portrays a man eaten up by envy. At one point in the movie, Salieri finds himself alone in a room with a portfolio of Mozart’s compositions on his desk. He reaches out to take it and tears off the ribbon. He opens the case and his eyes fall on the opening bar of Mozart’s 29th Symphony in A Major. Here is what Salieri says:

“She said [that’s Mozart’s lover] that these were his original scores, first and only drafts of the music. Yet, they look like copies. They showed no corrections of any kind. It was puzzling. Then suddenly alarming what was evident was that Mozart was simply transcribing music completely finished in his head and finished as most music is never finished. Displace one note and there would be diminishment. Displace one phrase and the structure would fall. I was staring through the cage of those meticulous ink strokes at an absolute beauty. Now, I know my fate. For the first time I feel my emptiness. I realize that somewhere in this city stood a giggling child who could put on paper without actually sitting down his billiard cue casual notes which turned my most considered one into lifeless scratches.”

Eaten up by envy. We live in an age of envy. People who otherwise would be quite content with what they have and do are persuaded that they are missing out. Every magazine screams at you about what you are missing out on that others are enjoying that you should be enjoying. All of the discussions of sex in various popular magazines do not appeal so much to lust as to envy. You are missing out on something. You are a loser. Someone is getting ahead of you. If all you have ever experienced is such and such in sex, you poor thing.

Envy. We live in an age of envy. Listen to politicians who are appealing to your vote this election year and what you will hear over and over again. It is an appeal to envy. Why should anyone have more than you? Why should anyone ever have a higher place than you? Everyone is exactly equal. Why should they have what you don’t have? Why should they enjoy what you don’t get to enjoy?

So many of the so-called fairness proposals in politics are really just envy proposals. When you hear a politician say, “Well, this is just a matter of fairness” I would encourage you to see if the word “envy” works just as well as the word “fairness.” Most of the time when you hear people divide the world between the haves and the have nots, their basic appeal is to envy.

Now, historically Americans were trained to think: Well, you may have more than me now, but if I work hard, I could have, or my kids will have, or my grandchildren will have just as

much as you or more than you in the future. But the politics of envy says: No. They must have gotten theirs in some kind of unfair way. And the only way to even up the deck is to take what they have and give it to you. You won't get what they have through working hard or making use of the opportunities that present themselves. No, you have to take what they have.

Both sides of the political aisle make use of envy. The left appeals to middle class envy of the poor. Why should they get government handouts or welfare or breaks on their home loans? The politics of the left often shoots down very good proposals for tax relief in Congress because the rich will benefit more.

You say: Well, that's true, but the poor also benefit.

The answer is: Yes. But why should they get more? I would rather not get a \$1000 than let them get \$2000.

Envy. It underlines so much of the practice of politics these days. And it is so much a part of political demagoguery as people appeal to other's basest natures.

I read a joke by a Russian once as he was talking about business with an American friend. He said, "You know, we Russians are different than you Americans. If you see your neighbor has a cow, you say, 'I am going to get a cow and a bull and pretty soon I am going to have a herd of cows.' We Russians, when we have a neighbor with a cow, we organize a mob and go over to their house and kill that cow."

Envy. Why should you have more than me?

A man by the name of Henry Fairlie wrote an essay on the revenge of failure. He said our culture is so infiltrated by envy that we have come to a place that I have called "The Revenge of Failure." This is what envy has done to us. If we can't paint well, we destroy the rules of painting and pass ourselves off as painters. If we will not take the trouble to write poetry, we destroy the rules of poetry and pass ourselves off as poets. If we are not inclined to the rigors of academic discipline, we destroy the standards of academic discipline and pass ourselves off as brilliant. If we cannot or will not read, we say that linear thought is now irrelevant and we dispense with reading. If we can't make music, we simply make a noise and persuade others that it is music. If we can't do anything at all, we strum a guitar all day and call it self-expression. As long as no talent is required, no apprenticeship is required. Everyone can do it. We are all magically made equal and then envy has been appeased and failure gets its revenge.

So let me ask you some questions. Do you ever find yourself getting upset because someone who is near to you succeeds or advances ahead of you professionally or socially or spiritually? Do you find yourself belittling the accomplishments, talents or appearance of others suggesting that they got theirs in an unfair way? Do you ever take secret pleasure when a friend or acquaintance suffers a set back or a loss? Today we're going to consider the sin of envy in a talk I have titled How to Overcome Envy in your Life.

What do we mean by envy? The simplest definition was offered up by the Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas, who said, “Envy is simply sorrow at another’s good.”

Now, it is hard to admit that we could actually get upset because another person is happy or successful or praised, wealthy or thin. We are going to see that envy is really rooted in a sense, not only that someone has more than me, but as a result of them having more than me, my worth is somehow called into question. Envy is often rooted in deep feelings of low self-esteem. The fact that they have more doesn’t simply mean that they have more. But it means that I am somehow littler. I get less. The heart of envy is personal self-belittling. Your success diminishes me.

Now, envy is different than jealousy. In much of modern usage, envy and jealousy are used as synonyms. By they are not synonyms. They are two very different things. Jealousy is anger, resentment toward someone who threatens me in an area that is mine by right. It is not necessarily bad, it could be good. When someone threatens what is mine by right, my reaction to that, my anger can be legitimate. Do you know that even God is described at times in the Bible as being jealous? He owns us by right. He bought us at the price of the blood of his Son. And he is jealous and gets angry when we give our hearts to various kinds of idols. When we turn away from him. God is a jealous lover.

A husband or wife is rightfully jealous when their spouse’s affections turn toward someone else. When your spouse has a wandering eye and checks out all the women who are walking by. It is OK to be upset and say, “Hey, Buster, you are supposed to be devoted to me. Your affections are supposed to be devoted to me.”

In many ways jealousy is the negative edge of love. Because I love you, because we have a covenant with each other, God and us, us with our spouses, us with our fiancée, because we form a covenant, then I do get rightly angry when that covenant is threatened. Jealousy in the Bible, when it is not fueled by just crazy paranoia or hyper insecurity, is considered right and good.

But envy, envy according to the Bible is always wrong. It is always unhealthy. It is always sin. God is never envious. By envy we are talking about being upset that someone has something that I want, but I have no right to that thing. I have no claim to that thing. I am just upset that you have something and I don’t. I am upset because you are getting ahead of me. Because you are getting more acknowledgement than me. Because you are getting more lime light than me. In fact, your success diminishes me. That’s envy and that eats us up.

Today we are going to explore How To Overcome Envy In Your Life. Let’s pray.

Let’s look at the text 1 Samuel 18:1-16:

After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return to his father’s house. And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt. Whatever Saul sent him to do, David did it so successfully that Saul gave him a high rank in the army. This pleased all the people, and Saul’s officers as well. When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful

songs and with tambourines and lutes. As they danced, they sang: 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.' Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. 'They have credited David with tens of thousands,' he thought, 'but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?' And from that time, Saul kept a jealous eye on David. The next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully upon Saul. He was prophesying in his house, while David was playing the harp, as he usually did. Saul had a spear in his hand and he hurled it, saying to himself, 'I'll pin David to the wall.' But David eluded him twice. Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with David but had left Saul. So he sent David away from him and gave him command over a thousand men, and David led the troops in their campaigns. In everything he did he had great success, because the Lord was with him. When Saul saw how successful he was, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he led them in their campaigns.

Sometimes envy is pretty hard to diagnose in our own hearts. So what I want to do is to skip down to vv. 6ff and see what envy looks like in the life of King Saul. To give you a little background, the date when this incident took place is a little earlier than 1000 BC, maybe around 1020 BC. Saul was the first king of Israel. King David was his immediate successor. We read in v. 6:

When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes.

This is a fairly common and historically verified scene of the way celebrations of military victories would happen in the ancient world. In ancient celebrations of military victories, the troops would come home from battle and there would be these enormous parades led by women. You read about these in half a dozen places in the Old Testament and other ancient literature. The women would come out and lead a procession often accompanied by women dancers and singers. They would play the tambourine. "Saul, Saul, he's our man; if he can't do it, David can." Only it would happen with a little bit more inspiration. It says:

As they danced, they sang, 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands. Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him. 'They have credited David with tens of thousands,' he thought, 'but me with only thousands. What more can he get but the kingdom?' And from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

It should read "Saul kept an envious eye on David." And what you see in this account of Saul being greeted by these dancing singing women is one of the fundamental components of envy. That is the idea that somehow someone else's success in some way diminishes you. Saul was unable to rejoice in the praise that he was receiving or the fact that he was mentioned first or the fact that he was credited with victory over thousands. The only thing that he could hear, the only thing that he kept turning over and over and ruminating about inside was that David, this guy that he sees not as a teammate, a colleague, a fellow soldier in arms, but David, a person that he sees as a rival was credited with ten times the number of slain in battle than Saul was credited with.

I want you to note two things here. First of all, envy is almost always directed toward someone whose situation in life is nearly the same as ours – someone in the same business. Involved in the same trade; has similar giftings; occupies a similar position to us. If you look at the folks who you feel envy toward, they are almost never folks who are radically different

than you in a radically different situation in life. They are folks who are like you, only they are ahead of you.

What I mean is that singers don't typically struggle with envy over the success of a teacher, or an administrator, or a counselor. A singer on the worship team is going to struggle with envy toward other singers: Why does she get to sing and not me?

A person who runs a business is generally not going to be envious toward someone who is in an entirely different line of work. It is the success of someone who is in a very similar line of work. You run a cleaning store and their cleaning store is getting more customers. You run a restaurant and their restaurant is more crowded or has become the rage. You are a lawyer or physician, but their practice is busier than your practice. It's against your colleague in your office who gets the boss's attention that we feel envy.

Envy is almost always directed against someone who is really near to us, who is like in kind, but who is just ahead of us in our perception. So mothers will envy other mothers in their own little circle. And soccer players will envy not football players, but other soccer players. That's the first thing we see here. Saul envies a comrade in arms, a fellow soldier, not a homemaker, not the women who are better singers, a fellow soldier.

And the second thing that we see is that the essence of envy is the feeling that because someone is getting ahead of us, our own self worth is called into question. There is this weird idea that somehow in some odd way their happiness and success comes at our expense. Because they have more and they get more, I feel I am much less. The heart of envy is a self-belittling heart. When you are eaten up by envy, what you really are experiencing often is a profound sense of a lack of self esteem. Their success diminishes me.

One theologian put it this way: Merely to grieve that one does not have something that another has is not envy. Envy wishes the other person didn't have it so that I won't have to suffer my imaginary disadvantage.

Have you ever felt that? That gnawing sense of the inferiority? Because you feel demeaned because they are thinner than you or have more of the lime light than you? Or get more recognition than you? Or they get to be the leader, therefore you feel like you are nothing?

Well, when you begin to see that envy is rooted in these two things – this negative comparison and this diminished sense of self-acceptance, you can begin to discover something of a cure. I used to run. And I remember running around a track perfectly content until someone came up on my right or left and began running faster than me. And something happens when someone runs by you on a track. Before you saw them, it was OK, I am running a comfortable speed for me. But then you feel like you are running very slowly and you need to speed up. You have to at least keep pace with them. And you have a tendency to burn yourself out.

That is a picture of what happens when you get on the comparison track. You've entered the rat race. You want to get over envy regarding someone; the first thing you need to address is to stop comparing yourself to another person. When your thoughts go in that direction: O, he is more successful than me; Her kids are better behaved than mine; you just

practice thought control. I will not run on a track and try to keep pace with you. You can practice thought control. Most people think they can't help their feelings. You can help your feelings. You can deliberately monitor your thoughts and say I am going to stop comparing myself negatively or positively with another person.

And a second thing you can do is to start rejoicing in what God has given you. If envy is rooted in a diminished sense of self worth and a diminished sense of self esteem, well how about practicing self acceptance and thanking God for what you have rather than getting eaten up by what you do not have? It is OK to not be everything or to be good at everything. It is OK. No one is good at everything.

Years ago when I began to pastor I realized that my primary giftings were in the areas of leadership, teaching and evangelism. But try as I might I was not a very good counselor. I love encouraging people. I love feeling like it helps when I pray and listen to someone. But the long-term process that you go through in counseling someone, I realize that the way I am wired, I am way too impatient with other people's progress. And I get frustrated by their setbacks. And I always end up teaching as I am counseling. "Well, here are three things you need to think about." And I am not nearly the listener that I should be.

But I can rejoice in what I am. And I can rejoice in the fact that God gave me a teammate in Danny Meyer who is a superb counselor and a great empathetic listener, encourager and exhorter. A person who practices gratitude to God for what we are and lets that spill over into a sense of self acceptance, a person like that is going to be protected from most bouts of envy. And the fact is, God's kingdom is big enough for everyone. The fact that God gives your neighbor a gift does not mean he doesn't have anything leftover for you.

It says in v. 10: *The next day an evil spirit from God came forcefully upon Saul. He was prophesying in his house while David was playing the harp as he usually did.*

This prophecy was some type of demonic prophecy. Saul was out of control. But we have to see envy for the ugliness and devastation that it can bring into our lives. Envy can actually result in us coming under an evil spiritual power. It says in v. 10: *An evil spirit from God came forcefully upon King Saul.*

The Old Testament links up evil spirits with God in the way that the New Testament modifies – and I think the reason we read things like “an evil spirit from God” in the Old Testament is because the main threat to the faith of the Jews in the Old Testament was the threat of polytheism – the belief in many Gods. God reached into a world that worshipped hundreds of Gods and he selected out this small group of people, the Jews, and trained them in believing that there was only one God. That they didn't bow down like the nature worshippers do today and have always done in worship of the sun and the moon and the earth. Israel stood alone among the nations in discerning faith in one God above all. The Old Testament writers wanted to make sure that whenever they spoke of demons or of angels, no one would think that these demons or angels were rival gods. That maybe there was this good God and then an evil God. So to insure that everyone recognized that there was just one God over all, that the Lord was sovereign and king, everything in the Old Testament is ascribed to God. Accidents are ascribed to God. Every tragedy and disaster is ascribed to God. And demons are connected to God in a really close way.

Now, having established faith in the one God for 2000 years, the New Testament works out some of the subtleties of God's relationship to the world and it says, well God is sovereign over everything. God is lord over everything. But it is a bit more complicated than the Old Testament approach that God did it. There are other intermediate causes that have to be factored in – evil people and the consequences of living in a fallen world, spiritual oppositions through demons.

But demons are real. They are real spiritual forces of pure evil. And this is something the modern world denies. But how many times do you read in the paper after a particularly grizzly murder that the murderer will confess and say something like, “I don’t know. It just felt like something came over me and was compelling me to do this thing. I felt driven by something that came over me.”

How many times have you heard someone say, “We were just talking and it was like something came over him? I could see it in his eyes. There was this changed look. It was like, I don’t know, it scared me. All of a sudden there was all this rage. I got really frightened and I asked him what’s wrong. But he seemed to be in another world.”

The Bible says that what can come over someone is an evil spiritual power. That you can actually come under the influence of a demon. The Bible also teaches that that doesn’t happen just with you minding your own business and walking merrily down the path of life, taking a nice walk on a sunny day in the woods and a demon drops from a tree onto your head. The Bible says that there are these pathways, these entryways, to our spirits. There is the way we get opened up to coming under the power of the demonic. The Bible teaches that when we harbor unforgiveness for a long period of time, when we refuse to forgive someone for something they have done wrong; someone has injured you, someone has offended you, someone has hurt you and you refuse to release that to God, the Bible says that you are going to open yourself up to coming under the influence of coming under demonic powers. You will be tormented if you don’t forgive. A great reason to forgive is not just for the sake of the other person, it is for your own sake so that you don’t get eaten up alive and come under a demonic power.

Another demonic pathway to our spirits is uncontrolled anger. The Bible says in Ephesians 4:26-27, “In your anger do not sin and do not let the sun go down on your anger and do not give the devil a foothold.” That if you just let yourself rage you can open a door in your rage and your explosions and come under demonic influences. The Bible teaches that repeated sexual sin can bring someone under demonic bondage.

And here and in other texts we see that envy, uncontrolled envy, can actually be an opened door for demonic infiltration so that a person can be tormented, not just be their own feelings of inferiority that we saw just a moment ago. Not just tormented by feelings of depression or self deprecation. But these feelings could be energized and given a particularly destructive bent by evil spirits.

Some of you have known the torment of really bad envy. Just getting eaten up by a lack of inner peace and dominating obsessive thoughts about this other person. A desire to hurt this other person. A feeling of being out of control when you are around them. It is

important sometimes when you are dealing particularly with severe cases of envy to actually personally address demonic forces that may have infiltrated your life and say, “I confess my envy of such and such a person is sin and I renounce any demonic stronghold. If I in any way have opened a door to a demon, I rebuke that spirit now and bring myself fully under the control of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Here is the third thing, if you are trying to diagnose envy in your life. There is this destructive quality to envy. It says in v. 10, *Saul had a spear in his hand and he hurled it saying to himself, ‘I’ll pin David to the wall.’ But David eluded him twice.*

Saul sought because of his envy to destroy, to actually murder, David. Now, destroying your rival is the ultimate fruit of envy. We can’t bear the thought that our imagined tormentor continues to be successful, so we want to destroy them. That is what Cain did with his brother Abel, the first murder in world history. It sprang from envy. This brother of mine enjoys more favor from God than I do. The New Testament in Mark 15:10 tells us that it was out of envy that the chief priests handed Jesus over to Pontius Pilate so that Jesus would be crucified.

We may not physically murder someone. But we absolutely do out of our envy try to destroy other people. We verbally slash their reputations. Social scientists say that back stabbing, gossip, verbal attacks are directly correlated with the rise of envy. We want to deal with gossip or you want to deal with your out of control mouth, with your slander, gossip and slander are just branches of the tree. The trunk is envy. You want to stop gossiping, slandering and gain control over your mouth; you deal with your heart of envy.

But the popularity of gossip columns and the popularity of all these newspapers and TV shows, it is a sign that our culture is saturated with envy. That we as a society are fairly given over to envy. We can’t let someone get ahead of us for very long. We have to tear them down, to kick the pedestal out from under them. So if this celebrity or politician or the sports hero or movie star, if we can discover that they are just like us – or may be they are a little lower than us, then we will be satisfied. So we love reading juicy gossip about that person’s plastic surgery or that model’s anorexia, or the sports hero’s latest run in with the law. We want to destroy whatever is perceived to be above us.

Do you see that? Do you see in the gossip columns there is this mean spiritedness, this sarcastic rage at whatever excels above us. So we want to see that person fall. And envy always rejoices when the thin person starts to gain weight again. And the rich person loses his shirt in business. Or the girl that we are competing with in our circle gets dumped by their boyfriend. Envy wants to watch someone else fall and suffer. It is really ugly.

So, if you see that in you, that you have a tendency to chip away at someone in particular, at someone’s reputation or whatever you have with someone who is getting ahead of you, if you are really good at spotting other people’s faults and pointing them out, it is likely you are filled with envy and you need to start practicing rejoicing with those who rejoice. I am not going to be miserable when you succeed; I am going to learn to train myself to ask for grace so that I might actually thrill at your success. And that you might truly thrill at my success.

So, let me ask you some questions I asked you at the front end and we are going to finish by looking at the opposite of envy – with the relationship between Saul’s son Jonathan and David. But here are some questions:

Do you find yourself getting upset and actually depressed when someone who is near to you succeeds or advances ahead of you professionally, socially, or spiritually? Do you feel tempted ever to sabotage someone else when you feel inferior? Do you find yourself ever belittling the accomplishments, talents or appearance of others? Suggesting that they got theirs in some unfair way? Or, by the way, they also have these other faults... Do you ever take secret pleasure when a friend, even someone you are supposed to love and be committed to, suffers a setback or a failure? Does that actually make you feel better about yourself?

Now I want to show you, by way of contrast, very quickly the very opposite of the envious person. Look at vv. 1-4 with me.

After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return to his father’s house. And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.

Now, here is the ultimate cure for envy. True friendship. I have noticed over the years that I have been pastoring that so many Christians are incredibly involved in church, meetings, in small groups, but don’t have true friends. Church is viewed as the way the rest of life is viewed – as an area for competition. Lots of people don’t have friends because they are afraid. If I open up to another person my confidences can be shared. Pastors are told in seminaries that it is not good for you to have friends in the church because it will diminish your authority. Don’t let anyone see you. Don’t reveal weaknesses. Stand apart from others. Stand away from them. Don’t let them get ahead of you.

But the ultimate cure for envy is the practice of authentic community, real friendship. Look at what real friendship looks like. It says in v. 1, *Jonathan was one in spirit with David*. Literally, the Hebrew said Jonathan’s soul was chained to the soul of David. We are talking about two soul brothers; two people who are linked heart to heart; your inner person is linked with the inner person of another.

Do you have a friend like that? Not just your spouse, but do you have a friend that you are joined to heart to heart? They understand you and accept you. They pray for you and know your weaknesses. And you understand them and accept them and pray for them. You are not competitors. You are not rivals.

So many folks have functional friends. We just happen to be in the same group together. We work at the same job. It is convenient for us to relate for a season. Friendship is more than just a function. Friendship is a soul chained to another soul. And it is not based on externals. Some of my best friends are different externally from me. We have different interests, different temperaments, and different cultural backgrounds. It is what is going on inside here. It is our common love for the Lord. Our common pursuit of God's kingdom. A willingness to be vulnerable with each other – that’s our friendship.

And it says: Not *only was he one in spirit with David, but he loved him as he loved himself*. This relationship was forged in covenant. These two guys had a commitment to each other. And one of the commitments that they had to each other that you see in the rest of 1 Samuel is the commitment to speak well of each other.

Envy tears people down privately. Envy says I am going to destroy you. But authentic friendship, authentic community, says that even when I am away from you, I am going to watch your back and protect your reputation. Speak well of you. I have always believed that speaking well of other people and speaking well of the church is infinitely better than having a big advertising budget. In chapter 19 it says: *Jonathan spoke well of David*.

The last thing is that friends are people who are committed to each other. They speak well of each other. And they let the other advance ahead of them. It says: *Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and give it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt*. In other words, Jonathan, as David's friend, was willing to give up being prince and heir to the throne. In fact, Jonathan celebrated David's success.

It was the very opposite of envy. It was I will let you get ahead of me. In fact, I will help you to get ahead. I will promote you. I will speak well of you. And I will rejoice when I watch you succeed. They always say that the hardest instrument in an orchestra to play is second fiddle. And Jonathan was willing to play second fiddle, and he played second fiddle with joy.

Brothers and sisters, it is this kind of friendship, this heart to heart, committed, vulnerable, promoting of others, rejoicing in the advancement of the other kind of friendship that breaks the power of envy in our lives. We don't have to be envious. We can have something better than envy and competition. We can have friends. Let's pray.

Sermon: May 13 and 14, 2000
Rich Nathan
The Seven Deadly Sins for Today Series
1 Samuel 18:1-16

How to Overcome Envy in Your Life

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- III. Envy Diagnosed
 - A. Diminishing of Self (vv. 6-9)
 - B. Demonic Influence (v.10)
 - C. Destructive Feeling (v. 11)
- IV. Envy Defeated (1 Sam. 18:1-4)