

When you are envious, go into God's presence!

Remember, we have a desire to live a successful life which is a life lived for the Lord which has a positive impact on my family, friends, and ones I come in contact with for the Lord.

Successful life is a life where others see a difference in my life.

Successful life is a life where others see a hope in my life, even during the most strenuous days.

A successful life is not an easy life. Easiness has nothing to do with being successful. Cruising through life with no difficulties does not mean one has been successful at living.

Living a successful life will be filled with difficult choices.

Living a successful life will be filled with heartache and pain.

Living a successful life will be filled with suffering.

Living a successful life is following obedience to Jesus, even when the decision is difficult.

Living a successful life is facing and confessing the sin in your life.

Lesson #10 - To live a successful life, I must express my gratefulness for all things.

Lesson #9 - To live a successful life, I must build my life according to Jesus' teachings.

Lesson #8 - To live a successful life, I must forgive others.

Lesson #7 - To live a successful life, I must face the sin in my life.

Lesson #6 - To live a successful life, I must understand the powerful effect my words can have on others.

Lesson #5 - To live a successful life, I must know where to focus my life.

Lesson #4 - To live a successful life, I must have spiritual discernment!

Today's lesson"

Lesson #3 - To live a successful life, I must not be envious of the wicked.

Mark 15:9–14 ESV “15:9 And he answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?”

15:10 For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.

15:11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead.

15:12 And Pilate again said to them, “Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?”

15:13 And they cried out again, “Crucify him.”

15:14 And Pilate said to them, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him.”

When Christ stood before Pilate, Pilate asked the Jews if they wanted Jesus to be released because he realized because of envy, the chief priests had brought the accusations against Jesus. Out of envy, he sent an innocent man to be crucified.

Envy is a dangerous emotion because it destroys so much.

Envy destroys unity. Envy destroys fellowship. Envy destroys one's blessings. Envy destroys thanksgiving. Envy destroys the heart. Envy is sin.

“Envy is wanting what another person has and feeling badly that I don't have it. Envy is disliking God's goodness to someone else and dismissing God's goodness to me. Envy is desire plus resentment. Envy is anticomunity. Paul said that we are to “rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.” Envy causes me to mourn when others rejoice and rejoice when others mourn.

Envy is dangerous because it is opposed to other people. Sins like greed and lust are simply about the gratification of *my* desires. Envy not only seeks self-gratification, but it seeks to diminish the one I envy. ...

Envy is primarily a sin of the eye. It makes my brother's piece of cake look bigger and better than mine. A child may have a hundred toys, but envy makes the one toy that a sibling asks to play with the most desirable of all. When it comes to envy, the eyes have it.”¹

Proverbs 14:30 ESV “A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot.”

1 Corinthians 13:4 ESV “¶ Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant”

Galatians 5:26 ESV “Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”

1 Peter 2:1 ESV “¶ So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.”

Paul, Peter, and others warn the church against envy.

Matthew 6:30–33 ESV “6:30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

6:31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’

6:32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus emphasizes that our heavenly Father knows what we need and supplies our needs. He knows we need clothing and food. He knows and supplies our needs.

So Christ instructs us to seek God first and the rest of these things will follow.

The problem arises when we become envious of what someone else has where we dwell on what is missing in our lives. Envy creeps in our hearts which destroys the unity of the fellowship.

The early church shows us today how the church should operate in relation to one another. They fellowshiped together. They gave of their resources to provide for the needs of others. They were not envious of what someone else had, but freely gave to help one another.

Acts 2:42–47 ESV “2:42 ¶ And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

2:43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

2:44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common.

2:45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

2:46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,

2:47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

One of the most dangerous envies is when as Christians we become envious of the things of the world. Dangerous when we become envious of the prosperity and supposedly freedoms of the wicked.

There is a tremendous pull the world has on its inhabitants.

1 John 2:15–17 ESV “2:15 ¶ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

2:16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

2:17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

The world appeals to the flesh, eyes, and egos. If we are not careful, the world causes us to be envious of what it is doing or possessing.

What happens when I become envious of the world and it's wickedness?

Psalm 73 gives insight into the heart of Asaph. He is open with his struggles with the prosperity and life of the wicked. His psalm reveals the answer to gaining victory over envy and returning to a life of thanksgiving to the Lord.

God is good to those who live for Him.

Psalm 73:0–28 ESV “73:0 ¶ A Psalm of Asaph.

73:1 ¶ Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.

God is good to those who have a pure heart before Him. The sixth beatitude from the Lord is “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.”

Matthew 5:8 ESV “¶ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

The word ‘pure’ means to be clean, pure, and clear. It means the impurities have been removed from the ore, leaving only the pure metal behind. Pure in heart means the motives, intents, desires, agenda, and so forth of the heart is to be right before the Lord.

Blessed is the person who has a heart’s desire to live faithfully and holy before the Lord. God is good to them. He blesses them.

The psalmist is saying that God has been good to him.

He is giving his testimony of his life that he has striven to live a life of holiness and purity before the Lord.

When I meditate on the life of the sinful, envy can infiltrate my heart and causes me to stumble.

73:2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped.

73:3 For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

Even though God has been so good to me, I became envious when I looked at the pride, arrogance, and prosperity of the wicked. Wicked those who lived contrary to the Word of God.

Being envious caused me to stumble and almost fall because I took my eyes off the blessings of the Lord on my life and began looking at the life of the wicked.

Envious because they have no troubles in life.

Envious because they have everything they want.

Envious because they do not suffer the everyday struggles I go through.

Envious because they say anything they want to say without any issues.

Envious because they have great riches and continue to get richer and richer.
Envious because they have life made.

73:4 ¶ For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek.

When the wicked die, it seems as if they have no more pain in death than the righteous. As if their sinful life goes unpunished.

73:5 They are not in trouble as others are; they are not stricken like the rest of mankind.

In the wicked's life, they do not suffer the common troubles and pains of the average person. They go through life with very little trouble at all. Almost as if they are exempt from the everyday troubles which plaques mankind.

73:6 Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment.

The wicked dress in pride and arrogance. They have the air about them that they are better than everyone else. They lift up their noses to the rest of the world and treat others with hostility, cruelty, and injustice because they know they can get away with it.

73:7 Their eyes swell out through fatness; their hearts overflow with follies.

The wicked are not plagued with the day to day toiling of the average person and they have more than their hearts desire.

73:8 They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression.

The wicked speak harshly about religion and mock others. They do not care what they say if it hurts others. Their words are filled with mocking, slander and cruelty.

73:9 They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth.

The wicked blaspheme against the Lord and set themselves up as the authority. They set themselves above everyone else as if they are the authority.

73:10 Therefore his people turn back to them, and find no fault in them.

73:11 And they say, "How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?"

The ones who are living for the Lord look at everything the wicked are doing and it brings perplexity to their hearts. They wonder if the Lord is seeing what the wicked are doing. Is the Lord going to judge these wicked for their sins? Is He going to bring them down?

73:12 Behold, these are the wicked; always at ease, they increase in riches.

These are the wicked. They have an easy life filled with all they desire and this brings great pain to my heart because it looks as if they are getting away with their sinfulness because there are no troubles in their lives.

“This is also to be understood as the language of the good man perplexed and embarrassed by the fact that the wicked are prosperous and happy. The meaning is, “Lo, these are wicked men—men of undoubted depravity; they are men who live regardless of God; and yet they are peaceful, tranquil, happy, prospered.” This was one of the facts which so much embarrassed the psalmist. If there had been any doubt about the *character* of those men, the case would have been different. But there was none. They were men whose character for wickedness was well known, and yet they were permitted to live in peace and prosperity, *as if* they were the favourites of heaven. The literal meaning of the words rendered “who prosper in the world” is, “tranquil [or secure] for the age;” that is, for ever, or constantly. They know no changes; they see no reverses; they are the same through life. They are always tranquil, calm, happy, successful.”

When I meditate on the prosperity of the wicked, envy caused me to question my life choices.

73:13 All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence.

73:14 For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning.

73:15 If I had said, “I will speak thus,” I would have betrayed the generation of your children.

Questioned why I am living a holy life which is filled with difficulties and troubles when the wicked are living in luxury. When it looks as if the wicked are receiving the greatest blessings, then why am I striving to live holy?

Envy caused doubt to arise in his heart. Envy caused him to question living right before the Lord.

Envy caused his heart to be heavy.

His envy was heavy upon him and he did not want to tell anyone because it would wear heavy on the heart of God’s people.

“The idea is, that he *ought* not to say or do anything which would tend to lessen their confidence in God, or which would suggest to their minds grounds of distrust in God, or which would disturb their peace and hope. This was alike an act of justice and benevolence on his part. Whatever might be his own troubles and doubts, he had no *right* to fill their minds with doubts and distrust of God; and he felt that, as it was desirable that the minds of others should not be harassed as his own had been, it could not be *kind* to suggest such thoughts.”

73:16 ¶ But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task,

What happens to this envy when I come into God's presence?

When I go into God's house, I understand eternal truths.

73:17 until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end.

73:18 ¶ Truly you set them in slippery places; you make them fall to ruin.

73:19 How they are destroyed in a moment, swept away utterly by terrors!

When he went into the presence of God, he realized the eternity which awaited those who rebelled against the Lord. Those whose lives are filled with riches, wickedness, sinfulness, boasting, and so forth as he mentioned will face an eternal destiny of damnation.

In a moment, their eternity will begin. From a life of ease to an eternity of suffering in hell's fires they will quickly go.

Here lies the problem: when you look at the wicked in this life, you think they have life made and will escape everything. But, when you look at the wicked's life regarding the Word of God you realize they are standing on the edge of an eternity filled with terrors.

See, envy takes God out of the picture. Envy is looking at this from a human perspective, not from God's perspective.

In God's presence, I come to my senses.

73:20 Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms.

73:21 When my soul was embittered, when I was pricked in heart,

73:22 I was brutish and ignorant; I was like a beast toward you.

He writes how he was convicted of his envious spirit because he was stupid, stubborn, and ignorant of the blessings of God on his life. He had taken his eyes off the Lord and meditated on the wicked. When he started meditating on the Lord, he realized how foolish his thoughts were.

"Thus my heart was grieved. Literally, and more expressively, was soured. The meaning is, that his heart was grieved, pained, dissatisfied. His mind was embittered, and he was rendered unhappy, by the views which he cherished about God, as doubting the wisdom and justice of his dealings with men—and about men, as being envious at their prosperity.

And I was pricked in my reins. The reins are often in the Scriptures represented as the seat of the thoughts or affections. See Notes on Ps. 7:9. The word rendered *pricked* means to sharpen, as a sword; and then, to pierce and penetrate as a sword does. The idea is, that these thoughts, so distressing and painful, seemed to be like a sharp sword penetrating to the seat of life.

22. *So foolish was I, and ignorant.* Such low and imperfect views did I take of the subject. The margin is, *I knew not*. So the Hebrew: "And I am brutish, and know not;" that is, I did not understand the case; I had no correct views in regard to it.

I was as a beast before thee. Marg., as in Heb., *with thee*. That is, in thy very presence; or, I was guilty of such foolishness in the very presence of my Maker. If it had been when I was alone, or when no

one saw me, the folly would not have been so aggravated, and so much to be regretted, but it was when the very eye of God was upon me. Comp. Isa. 1:7; Jer. 7:30; 18:10; Ps. 51:4. When he says that he was as a beast, he means that he was stupid and senseless; he had no proper understanding of the case; he did not take any just views of it.⁴⁷

In God's presence, I see His blessings on my life.

73:23 ¶ Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand.

73:24 You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory.

73:25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

73:26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

73:27 ¶ For behold, those who are far from you shall perish; you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.

73:28 But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.”

When I come into the presence of the Lord, then I realize the great blessings on my life the wicked do not have. Wicked do not realize what they have is but for a fleeting moment then judgment comes. The blessings I have in the Lord are eternal.

1. Hold my right hand - the Lord has not left me. He is there with me every day of my life. He watches over me. Great blessing of knowing God will never leave or forsake me.

Hebrews 13:5 ESV “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.””

2. Guide me with your counsel - Not only will God never leave me, He will guide me through my life. By the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, He will guide my steps.

Proverbs 3:5–6 ESV “3:5 ¶ Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

3:6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”

3. Receive me to glory - when my life is over, the Lord will receive me into heaven. I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. What awaits me after this life is the blessings of God's presence throughout eternity.

1 Corinthians 2:9 ESV “But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—”

4. **You are my all - heart's desire** - the Lord is the blessing in my life. It is the Lord who satisfies my heart's desire, not the things of this world.

Psalm 42:1 ESV “¶ As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.”

5. **Give me strength of my heart** - God provides the strength of my life when I am faced with the difficulties. God lifts me up and enables me to bear the pressures of this world. He is my strength.

Psalm 18:1–2 ESV “18:1 ¶ I love you, O Lord, my strength.

18:2 The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”

6. **You are my refuge** - the Lord sets my feet on the solid ground. He is a refuge, the place I can rest in.

“The source of my happiness. Not wealth, then; not honour; not earthly friends; not fame,—will be my reliance and the ground of my hope; but that which I shall regard as most valuable—my supreme joy and rejoicing—will be the fact that God is my friend and portion. With all the doubts which I have had in regard to the rectitude of his government, I am sure that when I come to die, I shall cling to him as my hope, my joy, my all. My last refuge—my sufficient refuge—is God. When men come to die, they *have no other* refuge but God. Nothing that they can accumulate of this world's goods will meet their wants then, for God only can give strength and comfort on the bed of death. Of each and all, however vigorous they may now be, it will be true that “flesh and heart” *will “fail,”* of each and all it is true that when this shall occur, none but God can be the portion and the strength of the soul.”

Things to Consider:

Psalm 73:28 But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all your works.”

When we look at the prosperity of the wicked, it can fill our hearts with envy because it looks as if they have life made. But, looks are so deceiving.

The wicked boast great things against Christ and Christians. They think they are untouchable.

But, there is coming a day when they will stand before Christ and give an account of their life. They will fall on their knees before Him because they will know He is the Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

The wicked will bow before Him out of fear of the coming judgment.

**Philippians 2:9–11 ESV “2:9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,
2:10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
2:11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”**

Those who know Jesus as Saviour will bow before Him out of love for the One who gave His life for them on Calvary’s cross. Will bow before Him because He is their Saviour.

Therefore, I will proclaim His goodness and mercy. I will tell others how God has blessed me!

Psalms 73:1 ESV “¶ Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart.”

¹Ortberg, John, *Love Beyond Reason*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids - <https://thepastorsworkshop.com/sermon-illustrations-on-envy/>

²Barnes, A. (1870–1872). [*Notes on the Old Testament: Psalms*](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 256–257). London: Blackie & Son.

³Barnes, A. (1870–1872). [*Notes on the Old Testament: Psalms*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 258). London: Blackie & Son.

⁴Barnes, A. (1870–1872). [*Notes on the Old Testament: Psalms*](#) (Vol. 2, pp. 260–261). London: Blackie & Son.

⁵Barnes, A. (1870–1872). [*Notes on the Old Testament: Psalms*](#) (Vol. 2, p. 262). London: Blackie & Son.