

General Session: Doug Fields

“Ministry Envy”

We have become great at talking about other people’s ministries. We’re not great at admitting envy and pride. We go through life thinking it’s not there even though it’s looming around our life.

How do you keep envy from sticking in your soul and derailing your ministry? Envy forces you to create enemies with people who shouldn’t be enemies (i.e. “emotional rivals”). We envy so naturally that many people don’t connect their criticism with envy. We learn to disguise it.

Envy shrinks your heart and gives you less ability to love.

When we’re against other ministries and other people, the message of what we’re *for* gets lost.

Who have you made to be your emotional rival? Not the big celebrities, the people who are in your line of sight (co-worker, pastor, someone in the community, etc.).

Genesis 37:3 – Not only did the dad love Joseph the most, but he told everybody! A breeding ground for envy. Joseph’s brothers had hard evidence that he was the favorite.

→ There may be very legitimate reasons for your envy. “How do I keep those legitimate feelings I have from being destructive to my soul?”

Genesis 37:4 – the brothers are angry at Joseph even though they should’ve been angry at their father. “They couldn’t say a kind word to him.” Envy distracts you from the real issues. You choke on your own envy.

Genesis 37:5-8. When you’re envious, every little thing that that person does, bothers you. That person can do no right even when it’s pure and innocent.

Genesis 37:18 – When you’re envious, you don’t even need a clear picture or the whole story. You don’t even want the motive. Just the person’s names triggers something inside. Maybe not killing a person, but killing a reputations, killing a ministry or taking actions to wound them in some way. That’s what envy does, but as Christians we hide it so well.

Genesis 37:19 – When you are envious, you dehumanize that person. You reduce them to something cynical.

Genesis 37:23, 28 – The brothers didn’t kill him, but they definitely sought to harm him and in all of it, they destroyed the robe. Envy says, “If I can’t have it, I don’t want you to have it either.”

Genesis 37:34-35 – Here’s why envy never wins: they got their rival out of the way, but the father’s heart was even more focused more on his missing son than ever before. Envy always backfires. Envy is always associated closely with evil. If envy is lingering in your life, God will

not bless you or your ministry. Hold up the mirror and look in your heart: what is it that you really want that you're not getting? What is it that you feel someone else is getting more than you? When you're envious, it's all about you.

As Christians, we disguise our criticism or hide it in "concern."

1. Admit your envy
2. Confess it to God. Apologize to Him. Envy says, "God, you didn't do it right, you're cheating me out of something." At the heart of envy is the lie that God owes you something. I already get what I don't deserve.
3. Celebrate others. Learn to develop the habit to celebrate people who are different from you. Celebrate people who have a different style, personality, ministry philosophy, whatever. You can't envy when you continually celebrate them. You don't wait to celebrate until you feel like it, you celebrate until you feel like it. When you celebrate others, you're really protecting your heart.

The truth is, God has already given us more than we deserve: forgiveness, the Holy Spirit, his power, eternal life and something else to come (Rev 3). He gives it to us not because He owes it to us, but because He loves us.

Because of that, we don't have to spend our lives wishing we had what someone else has.