

July 31, 2026



NEWSLETTER



MIDDLETOWN SDA CHURCH

ORIGINS OF SIN: ENVY



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ORIGINS OF SIN: ENVY



By: Reneé Russell

"A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones." (Proverbs 14:30)

Welcome back to the Middletown SDA Church Newsletter. In the last issue and first installment of The Origins of Sin Series, we discussed the dangers of covetousness, how it led to Satan's fall, and how we can safeguard against this very sin. In this issue, we will look at the progression of covetousness and how it leads us to **envy**. We pray that through this message, you will be spiritually uplifted to walk with Christ in the newness of life and follow on the straight and narrow path that leads to Christ.

I have often wondered about covetousness and envy. Is there a marked difference between the two, or can they be used interchangeably? Let us take a closer look.

As we learned in the previous issue, covetousness is defined as "the inordinate, eager, or excessive desire to possess wealth, material goods, or —most specifically—something that belongs to someone else." Envy, on the other hand, is a resentful and dissatisfied longing for another person's possessions, status, or blessings. Like covetousness, it begins with a desire for something that is not ours. However, there is a significant difference. Covetousness focuses on obtaining what another possesses, while envy goes a step further by producing resentment, bitterness, and often hatred toward the person who possesses it.

Take, for instance, a seed planted in a garden. This simple illustration helps us understand the relationship between covetousness and envy. Covetousness is the seed. It begins quietly in the heart as an unchecked desire for something that is not ours. Envy is the fruit. When that desire is nourished, it grows into jealousy, bitterness, and resentment toward the person who has what we want. If the seed is never removed, it will eventually bear fruit in actions that dishonor God.

James 4:1, 5 asks, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?... Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?" The word lusteth in this passage comes from the Greek word *epithymeo*, meaning to desire or covet.

What is James teaching us in this verse?

When our desires are not surrendered to God, they wage war within our hearts. Unchecked desires eventually give birth to envy, and envy often results in conflict, division, and even violence. What begins as an inward longing can quickly manifest itself in outward acts of sin. Where do we see this illustrated in Scripture?

Consider the story of Cain and Abel.

After sin entered the world, God instituted the sacrificial system to point humanity forward to Jesus Christ, the true Lamb of God who would one day die for the sins of the world. Because of this, God required that each sacrifice consist of an innocent lamb. Abel, a keeper of sheep, brought the sacrifice God had commanded, and the Lord accepted his offering. Cain, however, a tiller of the ground, brought the very best of his produce, but not what God required. Although his offering may have appeared sincere, obedience—not personal preference—was what God desired.

When Cain's offering was rejected, he became angry. Inspiration tells us, "When Cain saw that his offering was rejected, he was angry with the Lord and with Abel; he was angry that God did not accept man's substitute in place of the sacrifice divinely ordained, and angry with his brother for choosing to obey God instead of joining in rebellion against Him." (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 73)

Rather than humbling himself and acknowledging his sin, **Cain allowed envy and jealousy to consume his heart until they produced murder**. Like Lucifer before him, Cain was not abandoned without hope. God graciously warned him and gave him an opportunity to repent. Sadly, he chose rebellion instead. We are told, "Cain lived only to harden his heart, to encourage rebellion against the divine authority, and to become the head of a line of bold, abandoned sinners." (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 78)

How fitting, then, are these words:

"Envy is one of the most satanic traits that can exist in the human heart. It was envy that first caused discord in heaven, and its indulgence has wrought untold evil among men. PP 385.1 'Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.'" (James 3:16)

Envy did not stop with Lucifer or Cain. It was also the very sin that led the religious leaders to condemn Jesus Christ. Mark 15:10 tells us, "For he knew that the chief priests had delivered Him for envy." They chose to release a known criminal while demanding the crucifixion of the spotless Lamb of God.

Why?

Because they could not bear the influence, authority, and popularity of Jesus, they resented Him rather than rejoicing that the Messiah had come. Their envy blinded them to the truth, hardened their hearts, and ultimately led them to reject the very One they had long professed to await.

Throughout Scripture, envy has proven to be one of Satan's most effective weapons. It transformed Lucifer from the covering cherub into the adversary of God, led Cain to murder his own brother, and moved the religious leaders to crucify the very Messiah they claimed to await. Envy not only destroys relationships with others, but it also destroys our relationship with God. Left unchecked, it blinds us to His blessings, breeds discontentment, and hardens the heart against His will.

The progression is clear throughout Scripture: covetousness plants the seed, envy bears the fruit, and unchecked envy often produces destruction. The good news is that Christ offers us victory over envy. As we surrender our hearts to Him, He replaces jealousy with love, resentment with gratitude, and selfish ambition with a desire to glorify God. Rather than comparing ourselves with others, let us rejoice in the blessings God has given them, while trusting that His plans and provisions for our own lives are always best. Envy, like covetousness, has no place in heaven with Christ. Let us surrender our hearts to God, and allow Him to purify our hearts and minds.

Join us in our next issue as we continue our series on the origins of sin and explore another subtle but destructive trait that Satan uses to draw hearts away from God.

UPCOMING EVENTS

MIDDLETOWN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
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Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...
Matthew 28:19

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In a world filled with uncertainty, God has not left us without answers. Join us for a life-changing Evangelistic Series as we explore the timeless truths of the Bible and discover God's plan for your life. Each evening, you'll gain a deeper understanding of Bible prophecy, salvation through Jesus Christ, the hope of His soon return, and practical principles for living with peace and purpose today.

"God's Word is plain. Its teachings cannot be mistaken. Shall we obey it, just as He has given it to us, or shall we seek to find how far we can digress and yet be saved? Would that all connected with our institutions would receive and follow the divine light, and thus be enabled to transmit light to those who walk in darkness." —Evangelism, p. 271.

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." — Matthew 11:28

Everyone is welcome! Come with an open heart and leave with renewed hope in Jesus Christ. We look forward to worshipping with you and studying God's Word together.

July 2026



RELIGIOUS LIBERTY



MIDDLETOWN SDA CHURCH

**Civil Discourse in a
Divided Culture:
Wisdom for Today's Crisis**
-Claudia Douglas

MESSAGE FROM RELIGIOUS LIBERTY LEADER

When we engage in civil discourse, our goal should not be to "win" an argument or humiliate an opponent. Our goal is always to win a soul. Every interaction we have—whether face-to-face in our neighborhood or typed out on a computer screen—is a direct reflection of the character of God, Ambassadors of Another Kingdom.

– Read more on the next page.



THUS SAITH THE LORD...

Keep thy heart with all diligence," is the counsel of the wise man; "for out of it are the issues of life." As a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he." The heart must be renewed by divine grace, or it will be in vain to seek for purity of life. He who attempts to build up a noble, virtuous character independent of the grace of Christ is building his house upon the shifting sand. In the fierce storms of temptation it will surely be overthrown. David's prayer should be the petition of every soul: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." And having become partakers of the heavenly gift, we are to go on unto perfection, being "kept by the power of God, through faith."

My Life Today Page 85

MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTS

Wednesday

Children's Bible Study: 6:00 PM

Prayer Meeting- 7:00 PM



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RELIGIOUS LIBERTY



By: Claudia Douglas

Civil Discourse in a Divided Culture: Wisdom for Today's Crisis

Mid-summer in the Hudson Valley is usually a time for relaxation and community gatherings. Yet, breaking through the warm and peaceful tranquility is the polarization of rhetoric in the public square, which is often fueled by anger, hostility, and a win-at-all-costs political fervor. For members of our SDA church family, this raises a critical question: How do we stand firmly for truth and religious freedom without absorbing the toxic division of the culture around us?

A recent feature in Liberty Magazine looked back in time for answers, exploring what a 16th-century theologian can teach a divided modern America about civil discourse [libertymagazine.org]. The conclusion was clear: when the world becomes a chaotic battleground of opinions, the follower of Christ must operate from a frame of reference rooted entirely in the Word of God.

Scripture explicitly warns us to guard our minds against these worldly patterns, reminding us, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2). Secondary to this supreme biblical authority, this delicate balance is beautifully laid out in the historical, inspired counsel of Ellen G. White. In her extensive writings on how God's remnant people should conduct themselves during times of intense social and political strife, she reinforces scriptural principles by reminding us that the Bible is our sole rule of faith, urging believers to stand entirely aloof from partisan political conflicts (White, 1915, 1946).

The Source of Our Influence

When society fractures, the human temptation is to pick up the weapons of worldly debate—harsh rhetoric, condemnation, and political maneuvering. However, Scripture commands a different approach, declaring, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:3-4).

Inspiration reminds us that our true power never lies in matching the world's volume or aggression. In *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen White points back to this divine model of influence: "The kingdom of God comes not with outward show. The gospel of the grace of God, with its spirit of self-abnegation, can never be in harmony with the spirit of the world. The two principles are antithetical... But today in the religious world there are multitudes who, as they think, are working for the establishment of the kingdom of Christ as an earthly dominion... They seek to sustain religion by the state power... But Christ's victories are won by a different manifestation of power" (p. 509).

If we want to defend religious liberty and share the Three Angels' Messages in Middletown, we cannot do it by adopting the world's hostile methods. We are called to be ambassadors of peace, relying on the quiet, convicting power of the Holy Spirit rather than the loud, coercive arguments of political parties.

Speaking Truth with a Christlike Spirit

Defending our faith or advocating for liberty of conscience does not mean we remain silent. We are called to be vigilant watchmen. But the manner in which we speak matters just as much as the truth we proclaim.

the truth we proclaim. As the Apostle Paul instructed, we must **"avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all" (2 Timothy 2:23-24).**

Ellen White provided sharp, practical counsel for church members regarding how they talk about controversial or political matters:

"We are not to be politically minded... God's people are to be separate from the world, and not to be contaminated by its spirit. We are to show a Christlike spirit of forbearance, kindness, and love" (Manuscript Releases, Vol. 2, p. 176).

Furthermore, in *Gospel Workers*, she cautions against the type of sharp, divisive speech that closes doors to the hearts of our neighbors, echoing the biblical command to "let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6):

When we engage in civil discourse, our goal should not be to "win" an argument or humiliate an opponent. Our goal is always to win a soul. Every interaction we have—whether face-to-face in our neighborhood or typed out on a computer screen—is a direct reflection of the character of God, Ambassadors of Another Kingdom.

As we move forward through this year, let us remember Christ's definitive words to Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36).

Our primary citizenship lies elsewhere, for "our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). The chaos and division we see on the news are prophetic indicators of the times we live in, but they are also an open invitation for the church to shine as a beacon of stability and grace. Let us resolve to speak up for religious freedom, to stand firmly for biblical truth, and to protect the liberties of all people. But let us do so with the gentleness of the dove and the conviction of Christ. By refusing to absorb

the anger of our culture, and instead offering the healing peace of the gospel, the Middletown church can truly be a "candle in the darkness" for our community.

References

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Children's Corner: Dangers of Envy

Envy looks at what others have.
Contentment is happy with what God has given us.

"A heart at peace
gives life to the body,
but envy rots
the bones."

Proverbs 14:30

★ Match the dangers with the pictures describing envy. ★



"He has a new car.
Why can't I have one?"



"She has so many likes and
followers. I wish I were
that popular."



"He always gets the best
grades. I wish I were
that smart."



"She has the nicest clothes
and bags. I wish I had
them too."



"He has the newest
everything. I wish I had
all that."



"They live in such a
big, beautiful house.
I wish I lived there."



"Did you see what she got?
That's so unfair!"



"He got the new shoes I
wanted. I hate that
he has them."



"Everyone else is having
fun. Why am I not as
happy as they are?"



"That's mine! I want it!
I'll do anything to
get it."

DANGERS OF ENVY – CHOICES

A. Comparing ourselves
"I compare my life to others
instead of being thankful."



B. Pride
"I think I'm better (or should be better)
than others."



C. Wanting what isn't ours
(coveting)
"I want something that belongs
to someone else."



D. Unhappiness and discontent
"I am not satisfied with what I have."



E. Gossip and hurtful words
"I talk about others instead of
encouraging them."



F. Bitterness and resentment
"I let jealousy make me angry
and upset inside."



G. Stealing or wanting what
isn't ours
"I want to take or get something
that doesn't belong to me."



H. Seeking approval from others
"I want everyone to like me
and notice me."



I. Anger and fighting
"Jealousy makes me lose my temper
and treat others badly."



J. Negative influence on our hearts
"Envy leads me away from God's
love and peace."



THINK & REFLECT

1. Which picture do you think is the
hardest one to avoid? Why?

2. How can being thankful help us
fight envy?

3. What did Jesus teach us about loving
our neighbor instead of comparing
ourselves?



When we focus on what God has given us and trust Him, our hearts can be content and at peace.



July 2026

DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHT



On July 21, the Children and Youth Department participated in a community car wash outreach. This event was a wonderful blessing to everyone involved and to the members of our community who came out to support the initiative. Beyond washing vehicles, it provided an opportunity to serve others, build relationships, and reflect Christ's love in a practical way.

May this outreach remind us of the greater cleansing that Jesus desires to perform in each of our lives. Just as water washes away dirt, Christ alone can wash away the stain of sin and make us clean. Through His sacrifice, we are invited to walk in newness of life, transformed by His grace. Let us continue to encourage and nurture our children and youth, pointing them to **"the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)**, so that they, too, may experience the cleansing power of His precious blood and faithfully follow Him.

Thank you for reading!

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