



Looking Inwards (15 mins) Caring For Each Other

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins) Concern For Others

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?

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Songs For The Workplace 3/6 HG136 A Song For Tempting Tuesdays

Psalm 37:1-11

Home Group Study Notes

12 February 2017 - Revd Paul A. Carr



**PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!**

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.



Welcome (10 mins) Ice Breaker

If there was one thing you could do to remove envy from the workplace, what would you do?



Looking Upwards (10 mins) Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



Songs For The Workplace 3/6
HG136 **A Song For Tempting Tuesdays**

Psalm 37:1-11

Home Group Sermon Notes

12 February 2017 - Revd Paul A. Carr

Introduction We began our series on *Songs for the Workplace* thinking about a Christian perspective of work and how we were created by God to work to His glory. When Pauline spoke about *Miserable Mondays* we thought about the importance of starting everyday with prayer - hope you've been using the Work Prayer bookmark we gave out! Today we're thinking about *Tempting Tuesdays*. We're often tempted to compromise our Christian values in the workplace, aren't we? Perhaps, as David suggests in vs7&12, to scheme a little; or to take advantage of others (vs14); to be economical with the truth or to turn a blind eye to something or other; or perhaps offered a bribe of some sort to allow things certain to happen. I lost count of the times that happened to me when I was in the Building Trade, but I always declined - integrity has always been important to me. Even if we don't compromise, we see other people who do these things getting on as a result and we may get angry that they get away with it or worry about the consequences to us (vs8).

The Bible often divides people into two groups: righteous or wicked. Sheep or Goats and we see this in this Psalm. Among other things, Psalm 37 recognizes the frustrating reality that the wicked often prosper and the righteous often suffer. This always seems unfair. The righteous try to live God's way, the wicked reject God and live their own way. The righteous seek to know God and to live according to his plans and purposes, the wicked, however, reject God and his ways. They reject God's ways because they want to do things their own way. Of course, righteous people are not perfect. Righteous people are simply people who want to know God. Likewise, wicked people are people who don't want to know God. The wicked often do succeed in the short-term (vs1, 7, 35), but in the long-term God will judge them (vs2, 9, 10, 13, 15, 17, 20, 22, 32-33, 34, 36, 38). But we should trust and delight in the Lord and this Psalm tells us how to do that. But first ...

1. A Definition of Envy Envy was brought into the list of the 'Seven Deadly Sins' by Pope Gregory 1. It's said that of all them all, envy is the only one that has no pleasure in it whatsoever - I wouldn't know about that! But I do think that being envious can't be much fun and must be the most miserable of the 'Seven Deadly Sins'. One of the barriers to being content in the workplace can be envy towards our colleagues or our boss. But what is a definition of envy? A few things stood out when I looked into a deeper meaning of envy:

4: Look at Psalm 37:1-7 - how are we to relate to the Lord?

What does this mean for you in your (work) situation?

5: How can trusting and delighting in the Lord help you cope with the rigours of work/life day-by-day?

6: In vs27-40 David outlines three areas of righteous living: *actions* (27); *speech* (30); *thinking* (31). How might this Psalm enable you to be more Christ-like in 'thought, word and deed'?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1: What temptations do you face at work? If you are not working, what temptations do you face day-by-day?

2: How have you seen people getting on in life by doing wrong? How does this make you feel?

3: Psalm 37 talks about the wicked being judged because of their actions. When have you seen this happen in your own experience?

1) Envy has an element of desire in it. Somebody has experienced an advantage or benefit in life, and you want that to happen to you. That doesn't necessarily make you envious, however, because that kind of desire is okay when you're drawn to imitate godly people. 2) The other element, and the one that makes envy bad, is that the desire is tinged with resentment that it's going well for the other person and not for you. 3) Envy is a kind of jealousy that is directed toward another person when they are getting accolades that you think should be coming to you.

Although we sometimes use the words *jealousy* and *envy* interchangeably, there is a difference. Jealousy can be used in a good sense. Its root is *zelos*, the same word where we also get *zeal*, or *zealous*. God is jealous over love that should be coming to him. While jealousy can be positive, envy, on the other hand, always has a bad meaning. Some may suggest that covet (10C) and envy are similar, but covet focuses on *things* and envy on *people*. Envy should have a government health warning with this verse from Proverbs 14:30: *A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.*

2. A Warning Against Envy There's nothing wrong with wanting recognition for our achievements. But at times that craving can become a competitive spirit that has to outdo everyone else. Opportunities for envy abound in the competitive workplace where power and status rule. What about that situation when a colleague gets promotion when it's evident that you have the better skill set to do that job? Why does it go well for that person when it doesn't go so well for you? After all, you are doing the same job, but they earn more. Why does the boss favour them and not you? Why are they so popular when their work rate is so poor! Of course you'd be envious of that person knowing you would do a better job! Dare I say I've thought those same thoughts too!

Like many other emotions, envy is a symptom of other, underlying issues such as: being overly concerned with personal rights; taking another person's success personally; desiring selfish gain; yearning for status and achievement and, perhaps, an inability to share (The story of Cain and Able is a great example of what can happen because of envy as does the envy between Joseph and his brothers, King Saul and David and the elder son in the Story of The Prodigal Son, to name but a few). Envy is a universal threat to our joy and well being in life generally, but especially in the workplace, and even impacts on our pastoral concern for other people.

It's not biblical to be envious and it's against the will of God for you to give into envy (Proverbs 23:17, Galatians 5:26, 1 Peter 2:1). Acknowledging your envy means looking honestly at yourself. Galatians 5:19-21 tells us that envy is a product of our sinful human nature. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you whether your ulterior motives are for selfish gain or to achieve status in other people's eyes. Name envy for what it is, a deadly sin that destroys you inside and out! What can we do to avoid this most deadliest of all sins?

3. How To Fight Envy When you wake up in the morning and notice a feeling of envy inside towards somebody at work, a family member, a neighbour and you think: "This shouldn't be there." What can you do about it? There are several philosophical self-help strategies you can use. But Psalm 37 is also a great place to start. Psalm 37 tells us why and how we can find our rest in God and be confident because we know God is for us.

Psalm 37 tells us that he's working in a way that, even if it looks like something's going better for someone else, things are going to go great for us. Psalm 37 is also good spiritual medicine for just about any problem you may have. Pauline spoke on *Miserable Mondays* that we should start the day in prayer and these are just a few thoughts about how you can start the day to avoid being in the grip of envy.

a) Don't Worry: *Do not fret (worry) because of evil men, or be envious of those who do wrong. For like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away (1&2). This is repeated in vs9: "For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land." And in vs10: "A little while and the wicked will be no more."* So the first reason you shouldn't let envy get the upper hand when you're feeling it towards someone is the thought, "Wait a minute. God has said in his word that this person is going to fade like a flower - very quickly. They'll be gone and then whose will their prosperity be?" (1 John 2:15).

b) Trust: *Trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture (3).* In other words, this is the reward that comes from trusting God. Trust the Lord and do good and you will dwell God's promised land.

c) Delight: *Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart (4).* Now that's an amazing promise, because envy usually arises from not having the desire of your heart. What do you delight in? What is your greatest source of pleasure? Envy starts with desire. We all want things we don't have: money, a nice figure, a better home, or more holidays - that's what we work for in the first place isn't it? We long for a happy marriage, successful children, a secure, pleasurable job. There's nothing wrong with these desires as long as we are realistic, recognizing that they do not confer value on our lives. However, if and when these things become essential to us, we will look with the green eyes of envy at everyone who has what we want. We'll keep working harder and more desperately to reach our goals without ever being content. Eventually, we will be under the full-time control of envy, a brutal taskmaster. It's worth remembering what John D. Rockefeller said when he was asked how much money is enough. "Just one more dollar," was his sage reply.

If knowing God is not our highest joy and delight, then we do not know God very well. And if we do not know God very well, it is only because we have not invested enough time in developing our relationship with Him. We are delight in the Lord instead of having the same worldly ambitions as other people. When we delight in the Lord our desires change and we begin to see what we want and what God wants are different things. We become more aware of God's hand on our lives and his plan for our lives. His heart for the world becomes our heart for the world and then we find ourselves in that place of contentment not envy. What a tremendous God we serve who wants to give each and every one of us what we desire the most.

d) Commit: *Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will do this. He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun (5&6).*

Psalm 37:3-6 have been life verses for me pretty much ever since I became a Christian. They have sustained me through some very difficult times in my life and ministry and I've often written them on cards or letters to many other people over the years too. There are times when decisions I've made have been rather unpopular and these verses have kept me strong. Many times I've been vindicated for the decision I made or the stance I took. And that's exactly what is promised here.

e) Peace: *For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land (and) the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace (9-11).* The word translated 'peace' here is that famed Hebrew word *shalom*. It describes an overwhelming, all-encompassing sense of wellbeing: happiness, friendliness, rest, safety and welfare all rolled into one. It speaks of being full rather than furious. Those who are at peace are favourable and fruitful. Where in the New Testament is there a better promise with almost the exact same words of verse 11? Jesus quotes from this Psalm in Matthew 5:5 in the 'Sermon on the Mount' but changes land to speak of the earth. Christians will not always "succeed" in the workplace by worldly definitions of success. We don't just get the Promised Land, we inherit the earth!!

Conclusion We've only looked at vs1-11 but the rest of this Psalm is offers some thoughts on righteous living: 1) Finding our contentment knowing that the Lord will judge (12-15). As Christians, we can be assured that if the Lord doesn't settle the account in this life, there is a coming judgment when everything will be made right (Rev. 6:10-11). We can leave vengeance to God, being content in Him (Rom. 12:19-21). 2) Being content that the Lord will provide for your needs (16-26, 35-36, 38) not your greed's. Sometimes the Lord has to take away our things to reveal to us how much we take pleasure in this world and how little we take pleasure in Him. We need to learn that we can be content with what we have as long as we have the Lord (1 Tim. 6:8). 3) When we're wronged, the temptation is always to retaliate. But our focus should be on pleasing the Lord in spite of how others wrong us. In vs27-40 David outlines three areas of righteous living: Righteous *actions* (27); righteous *speech* (30); and, righteous *thinking* (31). Those three areas of 'Thought, Word and Deed' that we often refer to in our confession.

David didn't write this Psalm from an ivory tower. It comes out of the crucible of his life and it recognizes the fierce conflict which exists between the wicked and the righteous. Each one of us will, if you haven't done so already, face difficult times that try our faith. But whatever the trial, we can learn to be content in the Lord if/when we are feeling envious. If envy starts to rise up in your heart read Psalm 37:1 "don't be envious" and think/pray through some of the points I've made this morning. And at the end of each verse stop and pray: *Lord open my eyes to see the wonder of this promise. And grant me by your Spirit the ability to rest in it, believe it, walk by it, live in it and act on it today, please. Amen.*

*Trust in the Lord and do good: dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.
Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will do this.*

Psalm 37:33-35a