

## **“Enemies of the Heart: Breaking Free from the Four Emotions That Control You”**

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When your public performance becomes too far removed from who you are in your heart, you’ve been set up for trouble treating the symptoms masks the real culprit. Worse, it delays treatment of the problem, thus leaving the problem to worsen. Spiritual heart disease has the potential to destroy you and squeeze the life out of your most valuable relationships. We tend to reach for remedies to address our symptoms without ever really dealing with the root problem. If you deal with the source, you’ve dealt with the problem.

That embarrassing outburst wasn’t an exception to what’s in your heart. Indeed, it was a reflection of what’s really swirling around down there. *“When our embarrassment level is exceeded by our desperation level, we are a candidate for God’s grace.”* - Peter Lord

Here they are:

- ***Guilt***
- ***Anger***
- ***Greed***
- ***Jealousy***

Unbalanced power in a dysfunctional relationship is a recipe for disaster.

### **1. Guilt: I Owe You**

Guilt says, “I owe you.” Guilt is the result of having done something we perceived as wrong.

So the message from a heart laden with guilt is, “I owe!”

How many couples have we seen that have pursued their careers to gain financial reward and created an I Owe You situation at home. Permissiveness and materialism become the currency of debt payment. Once again it’s the child who loses out.

### **2. Anger: You Owe Me**

We get angry when we don’t get what we want.

Show me an angry person and I’ll show you a hurt person. And I guarantee you that person is hurt because something has been taken. Somebody owes them something. (If nothing else, an apology.)

The root of anger is the perception that something has been taken. Something is owed you. And now a debt-to-debtor relationship has been established.

“What did I do to deserve that?” The answer? You didn’t let them have their way. That’s all it takes.

What's ridiculous is to continue to allow the people who have hurt you the most to influence your current and future relationships. That's not just silly. That's ... sick. How long are you going to allow the people who have hurt you to control your life?

While it's true that you can't undo what's been done, it's equally true that you don't have to let the past control your future. Remember, your story explains your behavior; it doesn't excuse it. That's what happens when a person quits using his story to justify his anger and instead allows God to do heart surgery.

### **3. Greed: I Owe Me**

Greed isn't a financial issue; it's a heart issue.

For the greedy person, stuff equals life. Their stuff is an extension of who they are. I'd placed greater value on a possession than on a person. That's the nature of greed. Fear is the driving force behind greed. So greedy people shoulder the burden to acquire and maintain everything they need to provide the sense of security they desire.

### **4. Jealousy: God Owes Me**

Your problem isn't with the person who has what you don't; it's with your Creator. He owes you. It takes a habit to break a habit. We like to laugh off our bad habits as "personality traits." But that doesn't change the truth: They're habits—destructive habits that need to be broken. We pray for change while we make excuses for the very things that need to change.

We weren't confessing as a step toward changing. Confession was all about guilt relief. My routine had nothing to do with change. I just wanted to feel better. How is it that we've allowed confession to become a tool that facilitates our sin rather than ending it?

The English definition of confession is to admit to or acknowledge something. But in the Scriptures, confession is associated with change. In the Scriptures, confession is clearly connected with restitution, repentance, and restoration. It wasn't enough to be sorry. God was interested in change. And having to go public with your sin and make restitution certainly motivated people to change. Confession wasn't simply a means to feeling better about their sin; it was a public step toward abandoning sin.

Over and over the Bible speaks of confession, not in terms of conscience relief, but in terms of life change. The grace that was showered on us at salvation did not provide us with an escape hatch from our responsibility to others.

The angry person approaches life, love, and relationships looking to be paid back. Anger says, "You owe me," and it's often indiscriminate about who's going to be made to pay. Whereas guilty people need to get in the habit of confessing, angry people need to develop the habit of forgiving. Victims don't want to be proactive about changing—they want to be proactive about making sure that the person who hurt them pays. And so we spend our energy telling our sad stories rather than taking responsibility for our behavior. Simply put, forgiveness is the decision to cancel a debt. When I extend forgiveness to my adversary, there's a sense in which I'm set free from his sin as well.

If you're a Christian, you aren't expected to treat others the way you've been treated by others; you've been called to treat people the way you've been treated by your Father in heaven. You don't forgive because the other person deserves it; you forgive because you've been forgiven.

Forgiveness is a gift we decide to give in spite of how we feel. General forgiveness doesn't heal specific hurts. It's important that you pinpoint what was taken from you.

Of the four monstrous forces we'll discuss, I believe this one—unresolved anger from intentional and unintentional hurt—is the most devastating. Yet in some ways it's the easiest to overcome.

You simply make up your mind to cancel the debt. You decide and declare, “You don’t owe me, you don’t owe me, you don’t owe me anymore. From one forgiven soul to another: You don’t owe me.”

Greedy people have a supersized sense of ownership.

Keep in mind; greed is always looking for something “good” to hide behind.

A greedy person is the man or woman who saves carefully but gives sparingly.

Peace is a fruit of the Spirit, not the by-product of accumulated wealth.

Regardless of how much money a person makes, if he leaves himself no margin, there’ll be no peace of mind.

*Guilt is conquered with confession. Anger is conquered with forgiveness. Greed is conquered with generosity. Jealousy is conquered with celebration.*

Do you know what blame is? It’s an admission that I can’t be happy without your cooperation. To blame is to acknowledge dependence:

If you don’t act a certain way, I can’t be satisfied or content.

Once you’ve confessed to him that your root problem is that you’re not getting your way, and once you’ve thoroughly and completely dumped your desires and anxiety on him, you’ll find it much easier to deal with the people in your life. Regardless of whether they ever give you the recognition, love, or credit you deserve, you’ll find peace—because you’re no longer looking to these people to meet a need that only God can meet.

The question is, are you going to continue anyway to try to fulfill your desire by wringing it out of the people around you? Or will you take it to and leave it with your Father in heaven? These are our only options. One leads to peace, the other to endless frustration.

At the heart of **jealousy** is the lie that God owes us.

When discussing **guilt**, we said the antidote was to exercise confession.

The habit that overcomes **anger** is forgiveness.

**Greed** is overcome by generous giving.

The habit that will enable you to strengthen your heart against **jealousy** is celebration.

The longer you’ve been living with guilt, hanging on to anger, clinging to your stuff, or comparing yourself to others, the harder it will be to exercise the four virtues of: Confession, forgiveness, generosity and celebration.

To guard your heart against jealousy, you’ve got to celebrate the success, size, and stuff of those you’ve tended to envy.

It’s much easier to behave your way into a new way of thinking than to think your way into a new way of behaving. There’s something powerful and liberating about celebrating the success of other people. Lust isn’t a problem you solve; it’s an appetite you manage. Unresolved anger serves as an avenue through which Satan can access any part of your life.

- **Confess**
- **Forgive**
- **Give**
- **Celebrate.**

These are the habits that will change everything.