

April 5, 2022

This is Michael George with an essay on envy. I hope you enjoy it, and that it benefits you.

References are given for both LDS and Restoration Edition scriptures. If you're not familiar with the Restoration Edition scriptures, I highly recommend them to you. You can browse for free at: scriptures.info.

And now, here is:

Envy

I love to discover root causes. Scripture is of great value in the discovery and discernment of root causes. Scripture study is a prayer unto God that you'd like some help with His mysteries. Root causes are often a part of His mysteries. In that effort, and to lead us to our path for discussion, what, would you say, is one of the very first tales of woe in recorded history?

This is going to get us to, arguably, the root of all evil. (This is eons before money so don't be so quick to answer. Although lucre certainly plays a significant role in later history, as we'll see.) Our effort reveals the first instance of recorded treasonous rebellion and the resulting shower of evil that ensued, and continues even now.

In our premortal life, we watched an advanced spirit of light, who held a position of prominence, become impatient with his progress. He watched as Father's creations obeyed Him. Willingly. Always by persuasion and longsuffering and, most of all, by faith. Now there's a mystery!

"And the Gods watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed."
(LDS Abr 4:18; RE Abr 7:5)

Lucifer wanted that. He lusted to be obeyed by any means necessary. His methodology was rejected and he rebelled:

“...an angel of God who was in authority in the presence of God, who rebelled against the Only Begotten Son whom the Father loved and who was in the bosom of the Father, was thrust down from the presence of God and the Son, and was called Perdition, for the heavens wept over him...” (LDS D&C 76:25-26; RE T&C 69:6)

Let's pause for a moment. Why the weeping? Weren't they getting rid of a mutinous rebel? Why not celebration?

Why the Heavens Wept

Do we celebrate Judas' suicide? Do we rejoice at Cain's ousting? Misfortune, whether self-inflicted or not, is not cause for festivity. Have any of Father's children fallen further than Lucifer? As an appropriate answer to this question, the heavens wept.

On a more personal note: My attention to our Adversary's direction caused more utter misery in my young life than I care to describe. I have heard the rattle of his chains and his diabolical laughter at my misery.

Those days are long behind me with cleansing repentance and gratitude persuading our Lord's Spirit to stay close. I join the heavens and weep for the fallen. There, but for the Grace of God, is a phrase I never take for granted. So, appropriately, the Heavens wept for Lucifer.

"...he was Lucifer, a son of the morning...he is fallen...we beheld Satan, that old serpent, even the devil, who rebelled against God, and sought to take the kingdom of our God and his Christ—Wherefore, he maketh war with the saints of God, and encompasseth them round about.” (LDS D&C 76:27-29; RE T&C 69:6)

“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning...For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. (LDS Isa 14:12:14; RE Isa. 6:6)

LDS members have been taught that we all attended a critical Heavenly Council in our premortal existence.

“In the beginning, the head of the Gods called a council of the Gods; and they came together and concocted a plan to create the world and people it.” TPJS, pg 349

“All Thrones and Dominions, Principalities and Powers shall be revealed...in the days of the dispensation of the fullness of times, according to that which was ordained in the midst of the council of the Eternal God of all other Gods, before this world was...” (LDS D&C 121:29-32; RE T&C 138:21)

Even though an immense amount of knowledge was in the air, as we’ll one day see, mortal salvation was the primary topic of debate. Lucifer offered to lose no one at the cost of agency; the Father offered His plan with agency, and risk.

What we weren’t taught was some interesting detail. Lucifer, “who rebelled against God, and sought to take the kingdom of our God and his Christ” was not just a guy with a plan. He was guilty of treason and mutiny. His desire was to usurp Heavenly Father’s kingdom. He saw what Father had, and wanted it without the necessary effort and resulting character, perfections and attributes.

From his lofty vantage point, Lucifer saw Father’s creations obey him because of Father’s honor. They could trust Him and know that He would never lie to them. Father administers His love, justice, and mercy, throughout His kingdom with absolute equity and exquisite perfection. This is known throughout Father’s creation and is the reason for willing obedience. You cannot counterfeit honor.

Lucifer was impatient and lusted after a shortcut to being obeyed. He did not understand honor. Father explained what happened later when He told Moses:

"...for he rebelled against me, saying, give me thine honor, which is my power; and also a third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their agency..." (LDS D&C 29:36; RE T&C 9:11)

And Father let them go. When God promises agency, it is unconditional. Tragically sad as circumstances can be, at times, our agency is that important. Lucifer made his case the best he could:

"Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor."
(LDS Moses 4:1; RE Gen 2:15)

Lucifer didn't understand that honor must be earned. Like the oil in the virgin's lamps, honor is not transferable, or conferrable. Lucifer suffered envy for what Father had earned by His successful climb up Jacob's ladder. And so, we find envy at the root of all the evil we suffer at the hands of Satanic forces. Envy is the angry fire behind it all. Envy is a root cause.

Part 2: Envy is Complicated

Even though envy is a root cause, can you completely separate envy from pride, greed, wrath, lust, gluttony, and sloth--the Seven Deadlies? Perhaps not. However, envy appears to be the sin pushing the prideful, greedy, wrathful, lusting, gluttonous, and slothful, over the edge.

Envy appears to be the catalyst of much emotional upheaval and unrighteous behavior. That's no wonder considering the crowd surrounding envy as noted in the final verse of 3rd Nephi.

Envy precedes, and is the root of, jealousy. Envy is a process of comparing. You are one side of that comparison. Comparisons with Father's children, with help from the dark side, can easily slide into the miserable abyss of envy and lust for the honors of men and the material goods they have accumulated.

Paul warns:

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number*, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves; but they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." (2 Cor 10:12 LDS; 2 Cor 1:34 RE)

*(Strong's #1469; i.e., Don't sit at the cool kid's table.)

For any who seek righteousness, our Lord has the answer to, perhaps, the most critical question ever asked:

"...why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men..." (LDS D&C 121:34-35; RE T&C 139:5)

Honor is power. Power has two opposing faces. Father's power is based on integrity, persuasion, patience, and faith. Power based on coercion, is the other face. Whether by force of arms or organizational policies, power by coercion is not honorable, and attracts neither heaven's attention or its authority. Oh, I understand the value of a mortal Priesthood fraternity. But what about the fraternity of angels? What about the Powers of Heaven?

The Lord, through Joseph, continues to teach:

"...that they do not learn this one lesson — that the rights of the Priesthood are inseparably connected with the Powers of Heaven and that the Powers of Heaven cannot be controlled nor handled, only upon the principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, it is true, but when we undertake to cover our sins or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control, or dominion, or compulsion, upon the souls of the children of men in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the Heavens withdraw themselves, the spirit of the Lord is grieved, and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man." (LDS D&C 121:35-37; RE T&C 139:5)

As an extreme example, George Hinkle didn't understand any of this when he made his deal with Colonel Lucas to bring in Joseph Smith, for arrest and prosecution, on the pretense of a negotiating pow-wow. The ruse used on Joseph was for his assistance in bringing peace between the Mormons and the locals in Missouri.

Hinkle has been called the Mormon Benedict Arnold in a 2010 Deseret News story and elsewhere. Baptized in 1832, he served on the Far West high council but never amounted to much. His betrayal of Joseph Smith's trust condemned Joseph and his comrades, to Liberty Jail for the cold months of 1838. Actually, it was more like a medieval dungeon.

George Hinkle wanted what Joseph had. He thought, maybe, he could get some of it, without Joseph in the way. It is doubtful that there was room in George Hinkle's heart for much of anything but envy. How sad envy can lead us to such extremes.

A favorite movie, ("People Will Talk," 1951), more poetically teaches the point. (Spoiler alert, although nothing I reveal will ruin the story's entertainment factor. Highly recommended.)

A short, envious, stiff-collared, hard hearted, bureaucratic, university professor attempts to discredit a creative, compassionate, fair-minded, and financially more successful colleague.

The attempt failed, embarrassingly. The following was said to the envious failure:

"Professor Elwell, you're a little man. It's not that you're short. You're...little, in the mind and in the heart. Tonight, you tried to make a man little whose boots you couldn't touch if you stood on tiptoe on top of the highest mountain in the world. And as it turned out...you're even littler than you were before."

Such are my feelings about George Hinkle, Sampson Avard, and all the rest who bore false witness against and slandered Joseph Smith in the early days, those who were successful in their conspiracy to murder him, and those who continue to deny historical and scriptural facts and order the lighthouse* to change course 10 degrees. Enough said.

*(Reference to the "lighthouse" story in Steven R. Covey's book 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.)

Part 3: Beware of Envy's Path

The pathway leading to envy will likely consist of admiration, aspiration, and/or ambition. Any one will do. Multiples of them can escalate to a nearly psychotic, self-righteous state of calm, self-assured, but false security, and an insidious undercurrent of vainglorious pretention. We might call it the Chosen People Complex often supported by institutional emotional conditioning.

It's as if we've broken through all that was restricting the limits of human knowledge and experience, and reached godhood on earth, all by ourselves. You'll forgive my look of haughty derision and repetition of the comedian Steve Martin's catchphrase: "Well, excu-u-use me!"

I was stunned at the raw truth contained in the following quote about the effects of knowledge and its acquisition, "Epistemic humility doesn't mean that you don't aim high. It means you don't pretend you reached it."
(<http://www.spirithome.com/humility.html>)

We are, indeed, like five-year-olds in a physics lab thinking we can constructively contribute to God's great plan. But I ramble...

Unbridled ambition looks for shortcuts rather than patiently doing the work. There is no shortcut or cheat to the top of the ladder of competence. Anxiously desiring what another has, with no intention of earning it, is envy. Envy wants something for nothing, or very little. Envy-fueled ambition robs dignity and honor and leads straight into tests of integrity. Envy says, "You have to cut corners to be successful like _____." (Fill in your object of envy.)

Admiration and aspiration are more ambiguous. What you find will be what you expect to find. Both a positive and negative case can be made for either concept. However, admiration tends to the positive where it is the opposite for aspiration. Hence, the Lord's warning relative to the honors of men.

Envy is selfish while sincere admiration is, essentially, gratitude. And gratitude cools the fires of envy. Humility leads us to gratitude for the effort and sacrifice of others, resulting in beautiful art, invention, and all worthy endeavors.

Envy just wants to be a star, a show-off. Much of our most successful entertainment is based on envy. We cannot leave it alone. The current string of star-making TV shows like The Voice and American Idol attest to our appetite for envy. That collective appetite supports billions in revenue for both the entertainment and advertising industries. Envy is big business.

Ambition tends to the negative as a result of moral weakness. In reality, ambition is neutral until we determine character, virtue, and self-mastery.

Ambition at its core is simply "an earnest desire for some type of achievement or distinction...and the willingness to strive for its attainment..." (Dictionary.com)

An earnest desire for some achievement is laudable as long as the achievement is laudable and the sacrifices for attainment are worthy. The honors of men and the things of this world are not laudable achievements in, and of, themselves. Hence the difficulty with ambition, and the Lord's warning about "vain ambition." It tends toward the visible, and is jealousy inducing.

After a concert, it is common to hear a remark like: "I would give anything to play like that." No, actually, you wouldn't. The thousands of hours of practice required to play, as did the concert musician, are beyond your willingness to sacrifice. If not, you would be a musician, and not envious of a musician.

A more honorable after-concert comment might be more like: "I admire the effort and sacrifice required to produce such beauty. Truly beautiful music is made in no other way and those who have worked to make it, deserve admiration.

A comment about a wealthy individual might be, "I would give anything to have that kind of wealth." Again, no, you wouldn't. If you knew the sacrifices of integrity, honor, family, relationships, health, or similar fundamentals traded for wealth, you would reject the proposition outright. Envy, however, wants the reward without the sacrifice.

Envy of position can cause a lifetime of miserable chasing after, well, certainly something fabulous! Here's are some particularly cogent thoughts about fame, I've paraphrased from the source:

"Neil Maxwell talked about it, he said yeah, it's out there, but you just don't inhale. The perfect characterization is the curse of "celebritydom."

"We turn them into celebrities; we want to turn them into Brittany Spears, because that's the ultimate end of celebritydom. It is hollow, it is stale, it is flat and it is unprofitable--there is nothing to it. Why do you think Brittany Spears is the mess she is? Because fame and fortune are nothing.

“And I suspect those who enjoy the envy of position, who ultimately managed to weasel or brown-nose their way to where they thought it would be great, arrive at that point and look around and say, ‘well this is just like where I was, nothing has changed’ because the change has to be a change internal to the person and not a mere change in geography or topography—going from the third floor to the tenth floor, doesn’t change you. You’re still that same hollow, miserable, envious chap.” (Transcript from the Zion Symposium, Denver C. Snuffer Jr., February 23, 2008; spelling and paraphrasing mine.)

Admiration, aspiration, and ambition are always available to us, and can also be used in a variety of positive ways. Admire with gratitude, aspire to goodness and charity, and let righteous ambition lead you to God. Envy is the "Evil Twin" of each of these attributes. A ready guard is always necessary. Question your own motives. Drive envy away by your lack of attention. Don't inhale.

Part 4: Envy Hiding

Then there is a kind of envy which is more difficult to see and diagnose. You have a talent. Someone you know, and greatly respect, has a similar talent only more so. Their natural ability in this area may be significantly greater than yours. In addition, they have worked more diligently to develop their talent than have you. By their natural, God-given gift, and exhaustive effort to develop it, they have achieved far more productivity. They have also achieved far more attention.

Although your talents are similar, your experience falls significantly behind in both production and recognition. You compare the results and conclude that by some fault other than your own, you have been cheated. This is, perhaps, the most destructive form of envy. It is suffered by many today, as mainstream media regularly testifies. This is the form of envy from which Lucifer suffered.

Envy is insidious. It can sit just under the radar of awareness where it drives emotion to a place of nagging misery. You may experience emotions of disappointment or even despair when the object of your envy ignores you. Or, your greatest efforts fail to lift you to that unreachable place. Envy may deceive you into considering the object of your envy as a mentor when your true objective is not learning and growth, but the honors of men, by association.

Blindness to envy enables and hides its insidious nature. Outwardly, you feel justified while cunning envy cankers your soul and bleeds honor.

Envy slides effortlessly into self-loathing. The resulting lack of self-esteem inhibits productive behavior and camouflages effective solutions. Feeling sorry for one's plight is like using gasoline to put out a fire. In anxious despair, it becomes easy to be convinced by the "friendly" scorpion to jump on his back to cross the river to safety. Oh, yeah, that will work.

Envy-stimulated unreachable comparisons leave you miserable and feeling like you were denied something you deserved. The resulting spiritual blindness obscures faith in Christ.

Envy is the fuel powering an entire inventory of evil influences. Pay attention to their tantalizing melodies, or not. It's up to you. In a case of weakness, an "agonizing reappraisal"* with the objective of identifying and removing our objects of envy, would be a good idea. This may not be so easy if we rely on our envy to justify poor performance.

*(Lyric from Sea Level, That's Your Secret, 1977)

Envy eradication requires courage and an increase of faith in our Savior's ability, and willingness, to help. Agonizing reappraisal may require gut-wrenching realizations, sudden paradigm shifts, and other unpleasant, but purifying, spiritual emetics.

Evil does not relinquish control without a battle. You must be willing to courageously fight for your eternal salvation, and joy in this life. Face the Lord in repentance. Then face the conflict with honor. Do not let evil shoot you in the back because you ran away from the fight.

Part 5: Envy, Emotions, and Evil Paths

From our premortal life where Lucifer envied Heavenly Father's honor, and hence His power, envy has played a pivotal role in history. Today, envy is a central component of the emotional conditioning techniques used by

corporations, governments and their associated political organizations, academia, and religions. Envy has been a big deal in the profession of persuasion, for a long time.

Having been rejected of the Lord, Cain envied Able's position as the righteous one who would receive the birthright and the Holy Order and displace him and sit at the head of the genealogical line producing the Savior. How many times has envy been at the heart of murder or great loss? Was there envy in the heart of Lot's wife as she disobeyed and looked back at the great city she was leaving? How could Jared, son of the righteous King Omer, in the Book of Mormon, have conspired with his daughter to murder his father for the kingdom, if it wasn't for envy?

The people in Samuel's day were envious of other nations which were ruled by kings. They thought a king would fight their battles and make life easy, making all their decisions for them. "...we desire a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles." (LDS 1 Sam 8: 19-20; RE 1 Sam 4:4)

This was their response, even after Samuel had rehearsed all the terrible things a king might inflict upon them. Envy is powerful. Samuel gave them a preemptive "I told you so" beforehand. Even so, they refused to listen.

"And you shall cry out in that day because of your king whom you shall have chosen you, and the Lord will not hear you in that day." (LDS 1 Sam 8: 18; RE 1 Sam 4:3)

The tale of the prodigal son, (LDS Luke 15:11-32; RE Luke 9:13-15) finds a young man making a disastrously stupid decision based on his envy of the world outside his own. Finding himself, he was humbled and begged his father to take him back, only as a servant. Of course, the father threw a party and welcomed home his son.

Upon hearing of his younger brother's arrival home, and the celebration going on, the faithful elder brother became envious from which anger ensued. "...he was angry, and would not go in..."* Envy convinces that the grass is always

greener somewhere else, and, that another's joy rightfully belongs to you. This double-edged sword cuts both ways.

*(LDS Luke 15:28; RE Luke 9:15)

Poor Isaac was in for it from the beginning. As a child, Ishmael persecuted little Isaac: "Sarah watched the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom Hagar had borne unto Abraham, mocking, and she was troubled." (LDS Gen 21:9; RE Gen 82) The rest is history with the sons of Ishmael locked in a seemingly-forever envy of the younger brother.

Treachery and envy don't care much about genealogical lines, though. "...and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs. And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him..." (LDS Acts 7:8-9; RE Acts 4:3)

We could continue this romp down Envy Lane but I think this horse is about dead. And so, too early, were Joseph and Hyrum. Envy had three Smith casualties, if you count Samuel. And we should.

Suffice it to say, without envy, the world would be a very different place. Perhaps more like the Zion we seek. There is no higher honor than to be worthy of an invitation there. And thus, we have discovered the goal of our most immediate mortal career path.

"and I will bring you to Zion..." (LDS Jer 3:14; RE Jer 2:3)

We chain and bind Satan and make him a non-issue, by recognizing and ignoring his temptations. To understand our role in this face-off is a primary task of mortality. The Lord cannot accomplish this for us. Nor can He learn algebra for us.

"Wherefore, beware lest ye are deceived; and that ye may not be deceived seek ye earnestly the best gifts, always remembering for what they are given;" (D&C 46:8)

"And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things." (D&C 88:67)

Imagine, (I love that word), an entire society of people living in this way; striving for these things. In such an environment, we will realize more fluid organizations, with adaptability and effectiveness. At the same time, it will be messy and inconvenient for those who cannot leave behind the trappings of hearts set upon the things of this world, and aspirations to the honors of men. Such will not find it satisfying.

"Those who are comfortable with the way things are in this world will not be at ease in the spirit world." (TheNorthStarChronicle.com)

What we are attempting to create is a spiritual environment in mortality; a daunting task, to be sure. Daunting because we are swimming upstream in a world of aspirations and pressure. Zion is God's to create but He needs some folks who actually want to be there and are willing to sacrifice for that cause. It's up to us to practice, practice, practice. Just like the eager, young musician. Practicing Christlike behavior and opening our hearts to His law*, grooms us to be like Him. Those who are like Him will see Him as He is**. This is His will, and our path.

*(Jer 31:33 LDS; Jer 12:9 RE)

** (Moroni 7:48 LDS; Moroni 7:9 RE)

Part 6: Equality Overtakes Envy

During any given day, we may experience instances of envy-inducing media and personal situations. The envy of things or the honors of men are the most common baits, of course. Becoming immune to either temptation defeats billions of dollars in ad revenue. Just think of the effect you're having right there! That's success! But wait! There's more...!

The most important thing to consider and understand, is all over the scriptures. There's no doubt or wiggle-room on this one. We are all equal before God. Access to God is given freely to anyone who desires it. There is no line. You don't

need a ticket; you just get on board. (Homage to Curtis Mayfield's blues tune, People Get Ready.)

Here are two relevant examples, one from Peter, through Cornelius, and one from God.

Cornelius was a Gentile who had not converted to Judaism, but was a righteous man. Even so, Jews were forbidden his association. An angel advised Cornelius to contact Peter for a visit, which he did. After a vision from God, Peter told Cornelius:

"God has showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean...Truly I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that fears him and works righteousness is accepted with him." (LDS Acts 10:28, 34-35; RE Acts 6:6,7)

This was huge for Peter! A magnificent paradigm shift. And he was obedient and changed a deeply held belief because the Lord explained it to him. Peter was open and sensitive to the Lord's will. Are we? Or do we run on autopilot most of the time?

Then, our Lord confirms:

"And for your salvation, I give unto you a commandment...all flesh is mine, and I am no respecter to persons..." (LDS D&C 38:16; RE T&C 22:6)

Exactly why, is it critical that God is no respecter of persons?

Joseph Smith answers:

"But it is also necessary that men should have an idea that he is no respecter of persons, for with the idea of all the other excellencies in his character and this one wanting, men could not exercise faith in him; because if he were a respecter of persons, they could not tell what their privileges were, nor how far they were authorized to exercise faith in him, or whether they were authorized to do it at all; but all must be confusion. But no sooner are the minds of men made acquainted with the truth on this point — that he is no respecter of persons —

than they see that they have authority by faith to lay hold on eternal life, the richest boon of Heaven, because God is no respecter of persons and that every man in every nation has an equal privilege." (LoF 3:23)

This is fundamental and Babylon-shaking doctrine. It lays us flat, staring into the abyss of our pedestal-making judgments. It topples our rock-star leadership to the rubble of unrighteous dominion.

It raises those who thought they had no chance. It provides no advantage or hindrance to anyone, regardless of organizational affiliation. Our Lord is an intimately personal God. All are equally invited to approach Him with the confidence and expectation of an audience, and answers. You'll soon observe sudden bursts of knowledge, and confirming emotion, as revelation. You recognize that they came from a source seemingly outside you and yet inside, too. As you express gratitude for the increase of knowledge, you'll get more. This is how we attain to the Glory of God, and His Grace.

He waits for us to resonate in the frequencies of Heaven to pay us a visit, in whatever form. Envy causes spiritual dissonance which interferes with those frequencies. Communication becomes clearer with your alignment to Heaven. Tune in, turn on, and become one with the most welcoming and forgiving Being you could ever imagine.

Be One, and Be Unique

While we are one, with each other, and with God, and all having equal privilege before Him, we remain unique in our individual capabilities and spiritual gifts. How boring would be mortality, if we were all the same.

(Just a short note before Paul reminds us of fundamental doctrine. The Hebrew language has no neutral term for gender. A group of men and women is referred to as masculine. Hence, both men and women are recipients of spiritual gifts.)

"But the manifestation of the spirit is given to every man to profit all; for to one is given by the spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit, to another faith by the same spirit, to another the gifts of healing by the same spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to

another discerning of spirits, to another kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But all these work that one and the selfsame spirit, dividing to every man separately as he desires." (LDS 1Cor 12:7-11; RE 1Cor 1:48)

Each gift is a reminder of the Lord's interaction with us, and His trust. We are, male and female, uniquely blessed and challenged with increasing our ability to identify, develop, and use our gifts. As we bless others, the Lord takes note and we grow closer to Him, and we become more like Him.

Recognizing the gifts of others, when we have neglected our own, can lead to envy. This is not helpful. To envy another's spiritual gift is an affront to the judgements of God. Really? We would call into question the Lord's will for us and others? When we use our own unique gifts to bless others, whatever our level of expertise or capability, we join the Lord in His saving work.

We can see then, because of our equality before God, envy of mortal position is empty and irrelevant. Our Lord provides a path for each of us back to the Father, by his Atonement. Where we are on our unique path, is irrelevant to anyone else's position on their path.

Neal Maxwell warns: "It is not wise for us to compare crosses." (Neal A. Maxwell, BYU Devotional, Taking Up the Cross, Jan 4, 1976.)

Direction on our path is far more important than position. In spite of that truth, comparing path positions, and paychecks, has become all too common in Babylon.

The engine of envy is pride with lubrication provided by money. Paul warns Timothy about those who reject the Gospel of Christ and, instead, embrace a secular, strife-filled culture, where money is the ultimate reward. See if this sounds tragically familiar:

"...he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof comes envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness...For the love of money is the root of all evil..." (LDS 1 Tim 6:4-5, 10; RE 1Tim 1:16)

Part 7: A Civilization That's Just an Idea, So Far

Zion does not yet exist in our mortal world. Nor does the New Jerusalem which God will establish as a prelude to Zion. Why do these places, or better put, environments, not yet exist here? Some say we've done everything we can do. After all, we have a trillion-dollar institution to show for our efforts. Why, then, does the Lord tarry? Patience, they say. We've already established Zion, now we're just waiting for the Guy to show up.

This is the creed of the foolish and self-assured virgins who lack latter-day oil in their lamps. They think their outward, things-of-this-world organization-building, is somehow linked with salvation. Their inner vessel is filled with false Nauvoo pride, maintained by restricting both Gospel and historical accuracy. This is another tragic example of the results of envy. Such are envious of the Alfred P. Sloan types and their General-Motors-style corporate hierarchy. And yet, they also envy the people of Enoch and Melchizedec. Only Mormons could create such a dichotomy.

God, alone, can create the Zion of the dispensation of the fulness of times. No man can accomplish that task. It is solely His. (Pun intended.) The many mortal battles left to fight are among the wicked. Our battle is with whatever is keeping us from our integrity, virtue, and honor, like envy. Beware of men in white robes bringing Zion to you. They want your envy as their reward for the counterfeit they deliver.

Envy leads to strife.

We have enough strife in this world. Love God, and one another, are the commands, and to be one. Allow the Lord to calm your fears and doubts, learn patience and faith, and refuse to envy. Let it melt, and drain away.

Practice holiness, meekness, and lowliness of heart:

“...wherefore, he must needs have charity. And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the

truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." (Moroni 7:44-45 LDS; Moroni 7:9 RE)

To paraphrase Neal Maxwell: Can we endure being unsung?

Seek, with others, the Heavenly Gift. Teach yourself that envy is misery disguised. Approach God with an open heart and ask for help if you find yourself stuck in the mire of envy. Let it melt.

The handle on the door separating you from our Savior, is on your side. You, only, have the power to open the door where He waits, for you. Open that door and you will find Him there, with a reassuring and forgiving hug. Confidence before the Lord is better than envy.

Leave it in the dust behind you and move on to better things like becoming a Zion-worthy individual. Envy has no purchase for those with God's law written in their hearts. Jesus Christ will have all know him. What could be better than that?

"...and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion..." (LDS Jer 3:14; RE Jer 2:3)

"...this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: after those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord — for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more." (LDS Jer 31:33-34; RE Jer 12:9)

I have said this many times: I am not obedient because I fear God's punishment. I am obedient because I want Him to be proud of me. In that effort, as I purge my sins including envy, with diligent effort and His grace, I look forward to His remembering my sins no more. Now there's a worthy goal, don't you think?