GREEN WITH ENVY

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STUFF YOU WILL NEED
- pencils
- paper
- slips of paper
- various translations of the Bible
- two baskets
- objects representing things that make us envious (see “Sharing in Prayer”)

CHECKING IN

*Before you meet together, take a few minutes to be still and to pray. Open the session with the exercise below, then talk together about the questions that follow.*

Write on slips of paper phrases such as these: “Life is a bowl of cherries.” “Too bad!” “What a rush!” “I wish I could do that.” Invite people to add other phrases that express similar attitudes. Put these slips of paper in a basket. Then write on other slips of paper words that describe emotions: depressed, excited, nervous, sad, envious, cheerful. Put these slips of paper in another basket.

Ask each person in turn to draw one slip of paper from each basket and to speak aloud the phrase while expressing the emotion he or she has selected, even if the two do not seem to go together. Ask the rest of the group to guess the emotion that is being expressed. Then discuss these questions:
- *When was the last time you felt envious of someone?*
- *Is envy a good emotion? Why or why not?*
- *Do you tell other people if you are envious of who they are or of what they have? Why or why not?*

EXPLORING THE WORD

*Ask people to form small groups. Give each group a different translation of the Bible. Invite each group to read Genesis 4:1–16.*
The story of Cain and Abel is driven by Cain’s feelings of hurt and jealousy—emotions we can all understand. But in this drama, we can also sense God’s hurt and anger. God curses Cain, sending him out to wander the earth; but God also vows to protect Cain. God’s love is persistent. Accountability and consequences do not mean a lack of forgiveness or love.

Ask each group to discuss these questions:

What did each person in the story feel? List the emotions of Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel.

How did Cain’s emotions affect his actions?

Read verse 7 again. What was God’s advice to Cain? If Cain had followed this advice, how might the story have ended?

How did God feel? How did God’s emotions affect God’s actions?

Invite each group to create a skit depicting a modern-day situation that conveys the emotions, consequences, and resolution of the story of Cain and Abel. Bring the groups together to present and to explain their skits.

**SHARING IN PRAYER**

Envy is a powerful emotion that tempts us to compromise our values or to put our desires ahead of our relationships.

Invite the group to gather around the altar in the sanctuary or around a table in your meeting room. Place on the altar or table objects that symbolize the things that stir up envy in us—for example, a matchbox car, a big letter A on a report card, a trophy or a medal, a friendship bracelet, a mirror, a photo of a teen couple or of a happy family, a pair of jeans. (Before the session, think about your group members and gather some things that represent their personal struggles.)

Invite people to consider the objects on the altar/table and to write a prayer confessing their envy and asking God to help them make decisions that honor God and their relationships.

Conclude by inviting the group to pray together The Lord’s Prayer.

**TAKING IT FURTHER**

Identify people that you envy. This week, turn the emotion around; tell them how fortunate they are because of their character, abilities, or relationships. How do you feel when turning envy into compliments?

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