



Malvern Mashal 145



Why Love is spelt RISK [Click here to listen](#)

Advice for budding tightrope walkers / The fault line of Envy

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John was on Patmos because he had refused to be a hidden Christian. As John Wimber reminds us, Love is always spelt R-I-S-K. Again and again we may need to set out 'by night', not knowing what will happen or where our efforts will lead, but trusting that the Lord knows how to lead His children and to turn night into day. Rule number one for budding tightrope walkers is, 'Don't look down. Look ahead. Fix your eye on something further ahead and you will get across.' I love that verse in Hebrews 12 – 'Looking away unto Jesus': that is, fixing our eyes on Him, and turning from things that could distract or obsess us.

Many things combine to try to make us look down and to give up. One of the routes by which the pressure often builds up is along fault lines of misunderstanding and envy. Look closer and you will see at the heart of almost every relationship split a root of envy at work. It poisons everything, and makes it so much harder for us to proceed – but we can't afford to hold back – let alone take any of its characteristics on board.

And when envious 'comparisonitis' strikes have you noticed that these damaging feelings do so particularly in relation to those skills or areas that are closest to your own heart. These emotions are so toxic that if we could see them for what they really are, we would flee them as quickly as we would run from poisonous snakes. Ask the Lord to set us free from every trace of the green-eyed monster's vampire bites, so that we can bless others as they go about their daily work and ministry.

Here's a helpful reminder to bear in mind: it's almost impossible to resent someone you are praying for! So who would the Lord have us pray for in such ways?

An outstanding example of humility

Many times over the years I have shared the example of F. B. Meyer, who was one of the most popular conference speakers of his time. The time came, however, when his followers flocked to listen to a new young preacher: Campbell Morgan.

Now any minister feels the loss of being superseded, but instead of succumbing to disappointment and even resentment, Meyer resolved to spend as much of his spare time as he could praying for the success of the other man's ministry. I can think of no better way to overcome the power of envy, or to respond to the changing roles and situations that Patmos times bring with them.

It's worth pointing out that leaders in particular, are inclined to experience this pernicious power.

Lord, set me and set the body of Christ free from envy.

Show us the roots,

show us the manifestations.

Show us the sheer self-indulgence of it – and the destruction that it causes.

Help us to treat it like poison and to live in the opposite spirit of generosity of spirit.

The 'acid test' of relationships

Another thing that happens during Patmos times is that you find out who your real friends are, as opposed to those who are only interested in you because of what you appear to offer them!

Being in the Spirit is all about being able to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. Some people actually take a perverse pleasure in you being weak, so that they can, as it were, feel one up on you, and minister to you – but their idea of service amounts to exercising a measure of control over you. It feeds their need to be needed, and it means that they usually can't rejoice when you are doing well and rejoicing because your success and joy is a challenge to them.

Other people only feel comfortable if you are strong and on top form. They feed off your strength, but really, they are only interested in drawing on it for themselves: they really do not want to know if you are in trouble because that would mean that they had to give more of themselves, and they have neither the heart, the desire nor, maybe, even the emotional resources to do that.

In much the same way that we may never really know how deep a relationship is until we've had a clash of wills, and have seen how we both handle this, so one of the tests of true friendship is how we relate to each other when the other is feeling low and vulnerable. The real test – and it is a good one – is: *can* we rejoice when they rejoice *and* weep when they are weeping?

It's a great joy when we discover during these Patmos times that someone cares much more for us than we had realized.

May we likewise be proactive in coming alongside the people the Lord directs us to show how much we care for them. Don't hold back from getting involved with people who are going through the mill, thinking you have got nothing to offer: as we saw before, it's usually our presence that they need, rather than our ability to provide solutions.

Anything we can do to put heart and courage back into people is worth its weight in gold.

Give the matter some thought now. Is there anyone the Lord would have you go out and encourage today?

Don't hold back from reaching out to them. Stir yourselves into action and follow them up. Reassure them that they are not where they are by accident – the Lord may actually have a very special purpose in them being seemingly sidelined and set aside.