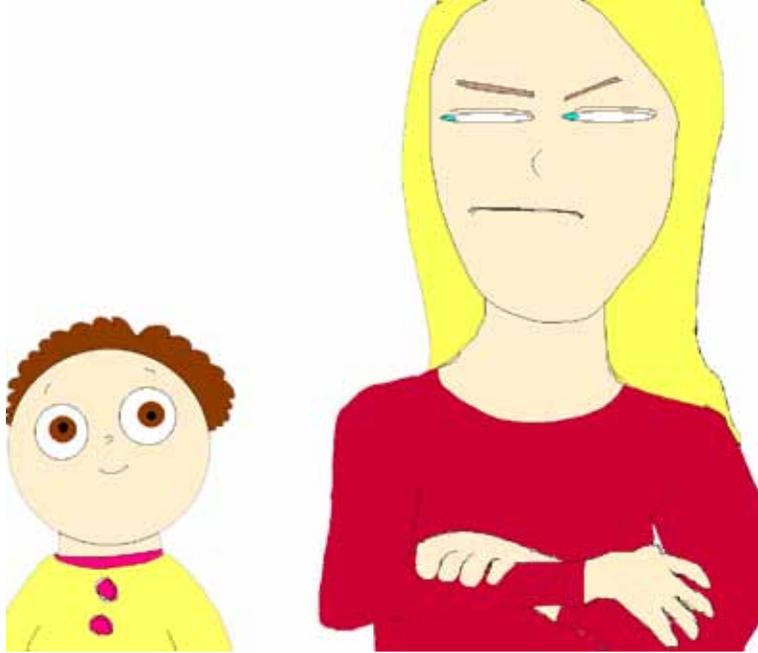


## God. Whoes Very Name is Jealous



by Heather Aquistapace

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Have you ever looked up “jealousy” in Google Images? Most pictures show someone glaring at someone else who has something the first person wants. They look mad, bitter, and a few even look dangerous. Did you know Scriptures say that God is a jealous God? Yet how can God be jealous if jealousy is bad?

First, let’s define jealousy. According to *Webster’s New International Dictionary*, jealousy is an “unpleasant worry, suspicion, or resentment, arising from fear or mistrust of another, leading to wrath”. It seems this side of jealousy is all that media and society talk about; the fiery drive that sends people into a frenzy of vengeance and destruction.

The Scriptures speak clearly about jealousy and its harm to us. Jealousy is “like cancer in the bones” (Proverbs 14:30). It propels people to sin – “These patriarchs were jealous of their brother Joseph, and they sold him to be a slave in Egypt” (Acts 7:9). It is risky – “Anger is cruel, and wrath is like a flood, but jealousy is even more dangerous” (Proverbs 27:4). If you are “full of bitter jealousy” you will be “held captive by sin” (Acts 8:23). God does not like this jealousy. He even goes so far to say that it is “earthly, unspiritual, and demonic” (James 3:15b), “for wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind” (James 3:16).

But how can our perfect God be jealous if it is “earthly, unspiritual, and demonic” (James 3:15b)?

I was a bit confused myself when I read James 3:15b, but that got me thinking. If God never sins, and jealousy is a sin, there must be two types of jealousy. As I continued looking through the Scriptures, I discovered a Godly jealousy and a sinful jealousy. The sinful jealousy is when someone passionately fights to gain or take back something or someone based solely on self-gain. We can label this the demonic side of jealousy, the side that has no morals and surfaces based on rage, vengeance, and or selfish ambition.

The other side of jealousy, the Godly type, is similar but with a few exceptions that make all the difference. Godly jealousy is when someone passionately fights to gain or take back something or someone based solely on the intent to save them and or keep them safe. God carries out His jealousy with a self-controlled, clearly driven mind. If you keep reading Webster’s definition, it also says that jealousy is “being uneasily alert in care, devoted, earnestly concerned or attentive, and suspiciously watchful”. Therefore jealousy may reflect a passion towards someone or something that drives one to act to better the situation.

Whenever the Bible speaks of God’s jealousy, it almost always is because people “stirred up His jealousy by worshiping foreign gods” (Deuteronomy 32:16). “They angered God by building shrines to other gods; they made Him jealous with their idols” (Psalm 78:58). “They have roused My jealousy by worshiping things that are not God” (Deuteronomy 32:21a). An idol is something,

other than God, that takes first place in our hearts. Idols come in many forms. It can be anything, from our own selves, to a TV show, to food.

Why would God be jealous of you? He often refers to the church as "His bride"; therefore, His wife in whom He "delights" (Isaiah 62:4). God, like any adoring, Godly husband, "is jealous with His relationship with you" (Exodus 34:14). Remember the full definition of jealousy in relation to the verse above: a strong urge to protectively care and closely watch over your relationship with Him.

Because of this jealousy God has for you, He will vigorously fight for you to defend your salvation and, when you are lost, He will relentlessly search until you are found. "I will end the captivity of my people; I will have mercy on all Israel, for I jealously guard my holy reputation" (Ezekiel 39:25)! "Then the Lord will pity His people and jealously guard the honor of His land" (Joel 2:18). God will protect us. Yet we must not forget the first definition of jealousy; the suspicion, or resentment, arising from fear or mistrust of another, leading to wrath.

That wrath, when we willingly commit adultery against the Lord by following the ways of darkness, can be directed at us. "For the Lord your God, who lives among you, is a jealous God. His anger will flare up against you, and He will wipe you from the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 6:15). "Then Joshua warned the people, "You are not able to serve the Lord, for He is a holy and jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. If you abandon the Lord and serve other gods, He will turn against you and destroy you, even though He has been so good to you"" (Joshua 24:19-20).

Is God contradicting Himself? No, never. When we willingly sin, a result always follows. God loves you dearly, but He is a just God and will not "excuse the guilty" (Exodus 34:7b). His wisdom "shows no favoritism" (James 3:17b); therefore, He judged all accordingly to what they have done. All His discipline is rightfully gained for "those who love their children care enough to discipline them" (Proverbs 13:24), and we are all God's children. He remains the Master of the Universe, the Lord of Everything, and will not tolerate mere humans shaming His name. "What? Do we dare to rouse the Lord's jealousy? Do you think we are stronger than He is" (1 Corinthians 10:22)?

He rightfully and lovingly inflicts punishment as we deserve, but He never acts out of anger. He is angry, but He does not ever let it control Him. "The Lord is slow to get angry, but His power is great, and He never lets the guilty go unpunished" (Nahum 1:3). He punishes because He is the Righteous Judge, a loving parent, who cares for us. This does not mean you need to cower before Him, trembling in terror all the time because He may destroy you. He only destroys those whose hearts are cold as stone and who have firmly decided to never turn to God. The decision you're your life rests in your hands.

Decide to follow God, to be jealous in your walk with Him. Passionately plunge headlong into battle to defend and preserve your bond with the God of Jealousy. Choose today to guard your kinship with God and do not stray from His side, by giving into the sinful, demonic side of

jealousy that only brings disaster.

### **Thoughts to consider:**

*God is jealous of you. He will fight violently for you and constantly watch over you with a protective eye. It is a sign of endearing adoration and the fatherly / husbandly passion God has for you. When the most powerful force in the entire universe remains jealous of you, what is there to worry about? Cling to God. Be jealous of your intimacy with Him as He is with you, for He adores you so much His "very name is Jealous" (Exodus 34:14).*

