

## Home Group Leader Discussion Guide

### Names of God Series—Jealous

Here's a fun mental exercise: Suppose a friend of yours came to you and said that they have been reading the Bible and they had a question for you. They notice that Scripture says that God is love (I John 4:8); and love is not jealous (I Corinthians 13:4); and God is a jealous God (Exodus 34:14). So, what gives? How can all those be true. It doesn't seem to compute. How would you respond to your friend? (Admittedly, my idea of "fun" might be different than yours 😊)

The key is context and hermeneutics ("hermeneutics" is just a fancy term that means how we, or what method we use to, interpret Scripture.) We do not approach literature such as the Bible the same way we approach a mathematical equation. Approaching the Bible as an equation will naturally lead to seeming contradictions. But, again, literature and history (which is what Scripture is) isn't meant to be handled that way.

Contextually speaking, within the context of a covenant relationship, jealousy is absolutely appropriate. Covenant relationships are meant to be nurtured and protected at all costs. Any infringement/encroachment upon a covenant relationship from outside, or straying from a covenant relationship (think marriage), ought to produce jealousy...otherwise it would signal that the relationship doesn't mean that much. Within a covenant relationship, love is, in fact, jealous. This is what makes a covenant relationship so distinct, special, and unique.

Holy jealousy is different than petty jealousy. Holy (covenantal) jealousy comes from love as expressed in deep commitment/devotion. Such commitment naturally leads to protectiveness of the relationship, and a willingness to do whatever is needed to maintain the relationship. A good (and tough) picture of this is in the story of Hosea and Gomer. If you're unfamiliar, God asked the prophet Hosea to marry a prostitute named Gomer, with the understanding that she would be unfaithful to him. Yet, God wanted Hosea to marry her and continue to pursue her and forgive her even after her unfaithfulness. The reason for this was to illustrate/demonstrate the type of love God has for His people, and the type of experience God deals with in His people.

Love is wanting what is best for the other person/party. A covenant arrangement is a formal way of declaring one's intention to be committed to the best interest of the other. That relationship is to be guarded...even jealously. Petty jealousy, on the other hand, is simply self-serving, and self-centered. It's treating the other person/party as an object for one's own purposes. God is NOT that.

We regularly say that the Christian faith is about a relationship, not about "religion". The fact that God is a jealous God backs that up...jealousy is something that is experienced within the context of a relationship. We can even look at the "rules" we find in Scripture as a way of defining the relationship, clearly communicating expectations, for the purpose of maintaining and fostering that relationship. And just as God is jealous for us, we ought to be jealous for Him.

- Q. Describe a time when you experienced jealousy.**
- Q. What are some of the connotations that come to mind when you hear the word “jealous/jealousy”?**
- Q. As was mentioned in the sermon, “zealous” is an appropriate synonym for the word jealous in terms of translating the Hebrew word “Qanna”. Describe something that you are zealous or passionate about/for. How does that manifest/express itself?**
- Q. What would you think, how would you feel, if God asked you to do what He asked Hosea to do? In reality, the more fitting question is what do you think, how do you feel, about God knowing that we are, in fact, the Gomer in this relationship?**
- Q. What do you think/feel about the idea that God is jealous for you? More fittingly (and perhaps more challenging) what do WE think/feel about God being jealous for US? (Contextually, everywhere in Scripture where it mentions God being jealous is in connection to the community of His people. It is a good habit for us to get into to try to think more communally and less individualistically when it comes to matters of faith and practice.) How does God’s relentless love toward us impact us communally?**
- Q. What does it look like (or how) do you/we receive God’s love in a practical way?**
- Q. What does it look like (or how) we you/we return God’s love in a practical way?**
- Q. How have you experienced God’s protective love in your life?**
- Q. What might it look like to be jealous for God?**