



SEVEN • Jealousy

What Do I Need to Know?

In this series of studies, the purpose of the first few questions is simply to break the ice and get conversation started. Therefore, focus more on creating good discussion and a comfortable group dynamic than the actual answers.

A good definition for jealousy is: a rightful desire for exclusivity within a relationship. With this as a foundational definition, some of the trickier questions about jealousy are easier to answer. Jealousy, is clearly sin when we are jealous or envious over things that don't belong to us. However, to have a jealous eye on that which belongs to us, when someone or something threatens to steal or destroy it, is not necessarily sin. Thus, God is not sinning when He is jealous over His children, when they set their hearts to worshipping false gods and idols. God has a rightful desire for exclusivity in His relationship with us.

While the basis for relational jealousy may not be sin, it can easily turn to sin, when we are jealous without cause (suspicious, paranoid), when we are obsessively jealous (over-controlling), when we are jealous over things we should not be jealous (like our loved ones having other relationships), and, more obviously, when we are jealous over someone or something that does not belong to us (envy).

Ownership: The Basis for Jealousy

Genesis 2:24 says, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." The Christian view of marriage is that two people become one person through the covenant of marriage. This means that the husband belongs to his wife, and the wife belongs to her husband. This Christian perspective has two important ramifications. The first is that jealousy is a right response when marital fidelity is in any way in jeopardy. Second, because in the marriage covenant you belong to each other, premarital sex is a violation of that covenant. Someone took something, that didn't ultimately belong to them, but to another. Thus, jealousy over past immoral relationships is also a justifiable cause for jealous feelings.

Dealing with Your Jealousy

In one sense, the study helps in dealing with jealousy by giving some biblical input on what's godly jealousy, and what is not. Diagnosing our jealousy is important. But after diagnosis, comes dealing with the issue. In this study, there is little time to consider the various ways to process rightful or wrongful jealousy in a healthy way. If there is one thing to underscore, it is truth and communication: to be honest with others, and God about what we are feeling. Jealousy can

What's the Big Idea?

This is the second study in the Seven Deadly Sins series, and focuses on the sin of jealousy. The study will examine the nature of jealousy, and some of its effects, as well as God's jealousy for His people.



lead to some very isolated and unhealthy thinking, and it's important to expose it to the light of truth, through open communication with God and others. This is not something to keep to yourself.

Dealing with God's Jealousy

In the Book of Hosea, the prophet Hosea is commanded by God to marry a prostitute named Gomer: a graphic visual metaphor symbolizing Israel's spiritual adultery. As Gomer was running after "lovers" who would give gifts to her, so Israel was running after the false gods of the surrounding nations.

Hosea 1:1-8

Hosea and Gomer marry and have three children. The children represent the fruit of Israel's adultery. The first was called "Jezreel," after the name of the city where Jehu slaughtered the "house of Ahab." The second was given the name "Lo-Ruhamah," meaning "not loved." The third child is named "Lo-Ammi" meaning "not my people."

Hosea 2:5-10

Though Israel's path will be blocked, she will still try to "chase after her lovers" but her pursuit of them will be futile. Israel, frustrated in chasing false gods, will finally recognize the supremacy of her own God, as she realizes that she was better off when following Him than when pursuing strange gods. Here the reason for Israel's unfaithfulness is made clear: The people did not recognize God as the source of their benefits – grain, wine, oil (the staple food products), and silver and gold (the precious metals used in trade). In Hebrew, "expose her lewdness" is literally "uncover her shame." The word for "shame" means "withered state." Israel would be withered because God would withhold His bounty. God also would uncover this condition by revealing it before the neighboring nations.

Hosea 3:1-3

After dealing with the relationship between Israel and God, the narrative returns to the relationship between Hosea and Gomer. Gomer had left Hosea following the birth of their third child. God tells his servant to take back his unfaithful wife. The opening words read, literally, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress." The price Hosea paid for Gomer was fifteen shekels in money and "a homer and a lethek of barley." He was to live with her "many days" pointing to an indefinite period of time. Hosea wanted Gomer to know that this time he intended their relationship to last indefinitely, provided she resolved to live no longer as a prostitute.

What if There's a Problem?

That God is jealous and that jealousy is not always wrong, will be a tricky concept to convey. The answers to the potential confusion are in "What Do I Need to Know?"

What Are the Answers?

1. Jealousy, in its sinful form, is basically envy and a desire for ownership of something or someone. In its godly manifestation, envy is a rightful desire for exclusivity within a relationship. (Make sure you have the group read through all of the Web quotes and Bible passages that are on the study. Their content is essential to the flow of the study.)
2. Allow the group to share.
3. A desire for ownership or control.
4. See question #1. Jealousy, is usually a sinful desire for ownership or control, but it can also be expressed in a godly way.
5. Let the group discuss their thoughts. From a biblical perspective, the answer is “yes.” Genesis 2:24 says that the two become “one flesh.”
6. If your partner is truly your possession, then jealousy is not a sinful response to a potential threat to the relationship.
7. This is not a question to be dogmatic about. In the marriage covenant, the couple does ultimately belong to each other, so in premarital sex, someone has taken something that didn't belong to them. Thus, jealousy over past immoral relationships seems justifiable.
8. This question is simply aimed at generating discussion. From a biblical perspective the answer is “no” unless it's warranted by a potential threat to the relationship.
9. Allow open discussion.
10. If there is one thing to underscore, it is truth and communication: be honest with others, and God about our feelings.
11. Open discussion, the answer is not that “black and white.” Having a friend give an objective perspective may be the most helpful way to tell. Only actions that are really a potential threat to the relationship should be met with jealousy.
12. To mirror Israel's spiritual adultery in their relationship with God.
13. Through His pursuit and commitment to His relationship with Israel, despite what they had done.
14. They had failed to see God as their provider, and had turned for help and deliverance to other nations and their gods.
15. Go around the group and have people share.
16. Share. This is a good place for you (or a mature Christian in the group) to share your testimony.

What's Our Response?

God had Hosea carry out this metaphor, so that Israel would emotionally feel the full impact of their wandering from God. The purpose of Hosea in this study is similar. Having discussed the powerful feelings of jealousy, the study – through recounting the story of Hosea – attempts to emotionally demonstrate God's jealousy for His people, and those who have wandered from Him. They have probably never considered how their wandering has grieved God. The study then asks people to consider where they are at in their relationship with God.

As an application point, the study suggests that they read over the beginning chapters in the gospel of John and see if they can recognize themselves in any of Jesus' encounters. If, however, someone is indicating a sense of deep conviction, you might want to meet with them afterward and share the booklet *The Four spiritual Laws* with them, or give them a copy and ask them to read it over that evening.