

Podcast 256 God is Jealous

Each of these attributes is taken from a study that I've compiled for my new forthcoming book, **Come into His Presence**. So far I have assembled over 40 studies, each focusing on one aspect of God's character.

Scott: Welcome to the Building Faith Families podcast with Steve Demme! I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today! Good morning, Steve. How are you today?

Steve: I am well! I am still enjoying the last vestiges of summer. How about you?

Scott: I'm enjoying the first vestiges of fall.

Steve: No, no, no, no, no. Fall does not start until a week from today. In fact, the autumnal equinox takes place on September 22. So I'm holding on to summer. On the home front, I'm getting into a nice rhythm teaching my granddaughters math in the morning. This year has been very different for me being home and not on the road.

Today, we're going to discuss an attribute of God that probably wouldn't be on the top 20 of people's list of attributes of God they would wish to study. However I felt God put it on my heart, and so we're going to run with it. "God is Jealous."

Let's pray. Father, give us insight into this attribute that You possess. Help us to understand it, which then leads to help us understanding You and how You are wired and how You are made. Align our thinking with Yours, and help me to present it accurately and clearly, and by Your Spirit talk to us today, each one of us, right where we are. In Jesus' name, Amen.

All of God's attributes are connected, and there will always be overlap when describing His character. When I think of God being jealous, it doesn't come across as being a positive attribute. Then I have to work to remember to embrace all the other aspects of His character that we've been talking about. For example, God is compassionate, God is loving, kind, and good. God is also holy, righteous, fair, and just. When you put them all together, I believe jealousy is consistent with those. I find that I have to work a little bit harder to bring this attribute into focus.

Knowing that when Scripture talks about God being jealous, then it must be a good jealousy and a kind jealousy and a compassionate, holy, just, and fair jealousy. I'm working even as I'm speaking to help me to embrace it in that context, because normally, I think of jealousy as not a positive attribute, and yet the more I have meditated on it in this study, the more I have embraced it as a part of God that's consistent with the description of God way back in the Ten Commandments when God is introducing Himself to the people of Israel.

He says, "I am the LORD your God, Who rescued you from the land of Egypt, a place of your slavery. You must not have any other God but Me. You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods." (Exodus 20:2-5. At the end of Exodus, He says, "You must worship no other gods, for the LORD, Whose very name is jealous, is a God who is jealous about His relationship with you."

The first thing I think of the word when I hear the word jealous, is a jealous husband. There are specific passages in the Old Testament that if a husband is feeling jealous, that there's a test that they could do. It's kind of interesting.

I looked up the definition of jealous in the Webster's 1888 dictionary, and I found a couple expressions: "Anxiously careful and concerned for." Another translation says: "That passion of peculiar uneasiness which arises from the fear that a rival may rob us of the affection of one whom we love." As I examined different dictionaries, I saw this word on several occasions, "suspicious" as when someone is suspicious of a rival stealing your wife's affections. The thesaurus adds the words "protective," "apprehensive."

When we read in Exodus 34 that He's jealous about His relationship with you, that sheds a more light. God loves us and His desire for life to go well with us. He created us to be in communion with Him, in fellowship with Him, and ultimately, we are going to marry Him in the book of Revelation. As we understand these aspects of God we recognize that He ought to be jealous, when He sees us going astray, and embracing foreign gods. When God sees our affection turned away from Him for something else, He is rightfully jealous.

We have only one true lover that is the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. If we begin being drawn away to love the world, love the flesh, love the devil, or our own little idols - anything that replaces God, God knows that this is not what we were designed for, and it won't go well with us. When we are moving away from Him He misses us in the process. If He wasn't jealous, we should be surprised, because God loves use to pieces.

Scott: So I've heard this defined as a compare and contrast between jealousy and envy, and I think it helps a lot to think of it in these terms, where envy is always sin because envy is wanting something that doesn't belong to you, that isn't rightfully yours. So if I want my neighbor's wife, that's wrong because his wife doesn't belong to me. But jealousy is being denied something that is rightfully yours. For instance, if my neighbor takes my wife, then I am right to be jealous because she belongs to me, not to him. And it's the same with God. When we worship a foreign god, He is jealous because we're giving away what is rightfully His.

Steve: I like it. Amen.

Scott: Jealousy is being denied what is rightfully yours, so you're angry, and envy is wanting something that is not rightfully yours.

Steve: There are a couple instances in Scripture where this concept of jealousy shows up. Probably most of us know Balaam as the man who had a talking donkey. Very sad that in our present culture, all we know is that a donkey talks and there's a guy named Balaam. But there's a lot to that man named Balaam, because he did have influence and power, and it looks like he had influence not only with people but with God Himself.

Balaam was the one that was called upon by Balak when he knew that all his natural resources, his armies, etc. were not going to be able to hold back this nation of Israel coming out of Egypt coming through His land, and so he appealed to Balaam, and he offered him money, wealth, riches, influence, etc., We know the story that God told him not to go with him, but he did anyway, and when he was up there offering his, you know, praying and offering his prophecies, God turned those prophecies from negative utterances to positive utterances, and it's a wonderful story.

As you piece together other parts of Scripture, Balaam gave counsel to Moab, and he said, "You know how you can get these guys? You need to send your women out there and let your women turn their hearts." Okay, so that's the background, because what I'm going to read is a longer passage, but it's in Numbers 25. "While Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to whore with the daughters of Moab. These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor."

And it's another part of Scripture that we see that it was Balaam's advice. "And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel. And the LORD said to Moses, "Take all the chiefs of the people and hang them in the sun before the LORD, that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel.'" This was a dark hour for Israel, having to take chiefs of their own people and follow this advice and hang them. And while the people of Israel were mourning over this, one of the big cheeses in Israel "brought a Midianite woman to his family, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the whole congregation of the people of Israel, while they were weeping in the entrance of the tent of meeting." I'm reading this verbatim now. "When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose and left the congregation and took a spear in his hand and went after the man" and killed he and the woman. And later it says that both the man and the woman were people of influence in their tribes. "

The LORD said to Moses, 'Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the people of Israel, in that he was

jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy. Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him my covenant of peace, and it shall be to him and to his descendants after him the covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God and made atonement for the people of Israel.'"

It's an uncomfortable passage to read, but it's recorded in Scripture, and it gives us insight into just what you were saying. These people were God's people. They belonged to Him, and now they were being turned aside by this man's counsel, and they were binding themselves, they were marrying, they were joining themselves to Baal instead of to the LORD their God, and God couldn't take it. He says, "My anger and My wrath against the people that have led my people astray," and Phineas jumped up, and I love that expression where it says, "He was jealous with My jealousy."

I'm going to jump now to 2 Corinthians 11. People that know God, they feel what God feels. There was a man of God many years ago that said, "Break my heart with the things that break Your heart," and I've often prayed, "Help me to love what You love. Help me to hate what You hate." I haven't often done it, but that's the idea. The more we know God, the more we're going to feel what God feels, and Paul has the same spirit and He knows God. He saw these people being led astray by false teachers, and he writes the letter of 2 Corinthians to the church, and says. "I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God Himself. I promised you as a pure bride to one husband - Christ. But I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent." Paul basically says "I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God Himself."

That's powerful stuff. And it reiterates what we've just mentioned a minute ago - God has asked us to marry Him. We are betrothed to Him, and Paul uses this same language - a pure bride to one husband. We are to be the bride of Christ. It's fitting and right that our bridegroom is jealous and upset, and because He has these thoughts, and Paul is so connected to God by His Spirit, that he has the same feelings that God has.

I do want to go back and read a longer passage that's found in the book of Ezekiel, because you and I know that if you read through the Old Testament, much of what the prophets say is directed to hard hearted and stiff-necked rebels. Nevertheless God continues to woo His people. God continues to provide for them. He sends water in the desert, He delivers them from Egypt, He gives them miraculous victories to get into the land of Israel, He gives them land that is flowing with milk and honey, yet they continue to adopt the ways of the world around them, and they forget God over and over.

With that background consider this passage. "Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth are of the land of the Canaanites; your

father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. And as for your birth, on the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things to you out of compassion for you, but you were cast out on the open field, for you were abhorred, on the day that you were born. And when I passed by you and saw you wallowing in your blood, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' I made you flourish like a plant of the field. And you grew up and became tall and arrived at full adornment. Your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown; yet you were naked and bare. When I passed by you again and saw you, behold, you were at the age for love, and I spread the corner of My garment over you and covered your nakedness; I made My vow to you and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Lord GOD, and you became Mine. Then I bathed you with water and washed off your blood from you and anointed you with oil. I clothed you also with embroidered cloth and shod you with fine leather. I wrapped you in fine linen and covered you with silk. And I adorned you with ornaments and put bracelets on your wrists and a chain on your neck. And I put a ring on your nose and earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown on your head. Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen and silk and embroidered cloth. You ate fine flour and honey and oil. You grew exceedingly beautiful and advanced to royalty. And your renown went forth among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through the splendor that I had bestowed on you, declares the Lord GOD. But you trusted in your beauty and played the whore because of your renown and lavished your whorings on any passerby; your beauty became his." (Ezekiel 16:3-15)

This is hard to read. But what a picture of God loving us, caring for us, making us who we are, and then we looked on all these things and thought, "Ah, these are mine. I trusted in this. This is my stuff." And then we became - I don't like to say it, but Scripture says it - we became whores. God is justly, righteously, and lovingly jealous. At the end of Ezekiel 39. "The nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt so treacherously with Me that I hid my face from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword. I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions, and hid My face from them."

God is just in doing that. But then He says, and there's always this "nevertheless" or a capital "however." "Therefore thus says the LORD GOD: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel, and I will be jealous for My holy name." Phew! May God help us to see God in this way, because everything we have is from Him. We belong to Him, we are

following Him, He created us for fellowship, He called us to Himself. This is our Dad.

“Take care, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which He made with you, and make a carved image, the form of anything that the LORD your God has forbidden you. For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.” (Deuteronomy 4:23–24)

He is not to be trifled with. Joshua 24 says, “The LORD our God is the one Who rescued us and our ancestors from slavery in the land of Egypt. He performed mighty miracles before our very eyes. As we traveled through the wilderness among our enemies, He preserved us. It was the LORD Who drove out the Amorites and the other nations living here in the land. So we, too, will serve the LORD, for He alone is our God.’ 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.’”

I’m sorry to keep saying this, but it takes my breath away to see how good God has always been to us, and yet how the propensity of the human heart is to reject Him and turn away from Him. I am so thankful that God is Who He is, and I’m thankful for His Word that gives us full access to His character and His nature. I hope that even as I read these words, that the fear of God will enter me, a good, holy reverence. He is not to be trifled with. He is God. But at the same time, I don’t want to just look at the harshness. I want to see the love and the affection and the care that He has for us, because He is the one who has designed us, and He knows us, and He knows that we will never be fully satisfied and happy until we are united with Him in marriage at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb which is still ahead of us, and there’s a lot of work to be done before that day, and He’s going to set righteousness in the earth. He’s going to correct things that need to be corrected, He’s going to punish evil, He’s going to sit on His throne, and He’s going to rejoice as His bride makes herself ready and joins herself to His son. Amen.

Scott: Amen. When you see the Bible and you look at God and the number of times that He forgives Israel, that He forgives us for our wayward ways, to put it gently, you know, like that, it’s marvelous. It’s almost unbelievable.

Steve: Amen. In Exodus 34, “You must worship no other God, for the LORD, Whose very name is jealous.” It’s been an exercise in taking the time to let that word kind of ruminate and then search the Scriptures and find out where they appear, and it’s like I said at the very beginning – it’s not one of the names that I would have chosen to explore and examine. But I’ve found by the Spirit that we’re not painting a full picture of God if we’re only saying, “Oh, He’s kind, and He’s gracious, and He’s compassionate,” all the ones we like. We need to make

sure that we understand that God is holy and God is righteous and God is just. We have to paint the full picture of God if possible.

Scott: Well, it's helpful to be reminded of that in these times, because we flirt around with other lovers all the time. We may not actually go worship another god, but we'll flirt around a little bit with things that take our affection away from God, and there's coming a time when he's not going to accept that anymore. It's always a good idea to be reminded of His jealousy.

Steve: Absolutely. Yeah. I've been convicted of this myself. I was reading through Ephesians 6, and it talked about coveting, and coveting is not just wanting stuff. It's idolatry. Idolatry is looking to something to supply what only God can supply. When we look to other things, which are really idos, we will have our affections and interest turned from God to things.

We have to be careful to be fully His, and God has to reveal the idols which we've set up in our own heart to replace Him. I don't think of idols as a little stone statue in my house that I give drink offerings to. I think of idols as anything that replaces God in my heart. It could be insurance. Happy to have it, but if I look to that instead of looking to God to provide for my needs... you know, there's lots of things like that.

Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for Your strong Word, these strong words that are inspired and chosen by the Spirit of God to be recorded in Your Word. Keep us from the sin of worshipping the Baals and the idols in our life. Deliver us from coveting and envying things that do not belong to us and only take away from our affection for You. Help us to love You fully and wholly with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Help us to embrace You as our husband. Help us to look to You first in everything. In Jesus' name, Amen.