

“MY LOVE FOR YOU IS JEALOUS”

“I want you to experience intimacy with Me like you have never known before, but I need to be your first love. I want to captivate your heart, and possess all of your mind, soul, and strength (Matthew 22:37). I want you to be as deeply and passionately committed to Me as I am to you. In this life, many things will seek to come between us; they will compete with Me for your affections and attempt to draw your heart away from Mine. But be assured that nothing can separate you from My love (Romans 8:39), and that I will do whatever it takes to preserve and to protect our relationship. I need *you* to guard your heart with all diligence (Proverbs 4:23).”

A marriage begins with promises fidelity and life-long devotion. Of the many emotions you may feel, desire for your spouse’s exclusive affection and loyalty is natural and necessary. Jealousy occurs when the relationship is threatened by allowing *anything* into the relationship that occupies your time and attention and contends for your affection, ultimately drawing you away from your partner, taking their place. As Christ’s bride, it is no different in your relationship with Him.

Charles Surgeon once said, “A jealous God will not be content with a divided heart; He must be loved first and best.” Do the words “first and best” describe your love relationship with Jesus? _____

In your life, what poses the greatest threat to intimacy with God? _____

Threatened

After the celebration subsided, “*Jesus went into Jerusalem and into the temple. So, when He had looked around at all things, as the hour was already late, He went out into Bethany with the twelve*” (Mark 11:11).

Read the account in Matthew 21:12-17. Undoubtedly, Christ left the mount mindful of the last time He physically cleansed the temple (John 2:13-22).

According to Christ’s words, what was the purpose of the Court of the Gentiles? (Matthew 21:13)

What was preventing this from occurring? Why did this anger Christ? _____

What action did He take to restore its purpose?¹ _____

Do you think His reaction was justified? Explain. _____

¹ Do you believe the disciples considered this a necessary step in the establishment of Christ’s earthly kingdom?

Has the Lord ever vehemently removed something from your life that stood between you? Did you acknowledge its harm, or did you downplay the threat? What occurred? _____

Christ was stirred to take drastic action against whoever and whatever stood in the way of man's relationship with the Father. It is His desire for your wholehearted devotion that incites Him to protect the love relationship when it is threatened and to avenge it when it is broken.

In a human relationship, what leads to feelings of jealousy? _____

Jealousy is described as healthy or unhealthy depending on its motivation. Differentiate between the two types. _____

Sinful jealousy longs to possess and control; it is often suspicious because of ignorance or mistrust; it is a product of anxiety, fear, and bitterness; deep insecurity in a person's soul. The Pharisees demonstrated this type of jealousy in John 11:45-48, 12:19.

In contrast, healthy jealousy is a reflection of commitment to the person you love when it perceives a genuine threat. It is an overwhelming desire for one's devotion and exclusivity. J.I. Packer has described it as the "zeal to preserve something supremely precious."² It is God's love for you and His desire for your well-being that causes Him to take action against anything that might hinder your love and devotion to Him. God's jealousy is displayed in His fight for an exclusive relationship with His people that promises to bring unending joy, delight, peace, and happiness.

Seduced

Luke 10:27a says, "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind.*" Why do you think this is God's greatest command? _____

Now read Psalm 106:34-39 and describe how the Israelites' hearts were so easily seduced away from God. How does this play out today? _____

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary states that to seduce is "to persuade to disobedience or disloyalty; to lead astray by persuasion or false promises." What does an adulterous lover promise to one who is in a committed relationship? _____

What does the world promise those who partake in its systems, methods, and ways? _____

² Packer, J. I., *Knowing God*, pg. 153

Do you believe there is something or someone other than God that can satisfy your soul? Explain.

Turn now to 1 John 2:15-17. What are we instructed *not* to love? How do these things pose a threat to intimacy with God? _____

To “*love the world*” is to love its systems and ways of doing things. This includes “the world’s progress, technology, government, and organization”³, its ideals and agenda. How can loving these things create disunity in your relationship with God? _____

What might the giving of your time, attention, and money to the world rather than to the things of God, express about your affections? _____

Per Matthew 16:24-28, what does God say will occur if you seek fulfillment from the world? (Consider Psalm 106:15.) _____

To “*love the things in the world*” is to love the material things the world provides. Read Luke 18:18-23. What did the young man love “first and best”? _____

How can you know whether your assets take precedence over your relationship with God? _____

What was the relational consequence to the rich young ruler because he was unwilling to part with his possessions? _____

Now read Matthew 13:7, 22. What can the “*cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches*” do to the Word of God in your life, and thus, your relationship? _____

What further warnings are given in 1 Timothy 6:6-10?⁴ _____

What posed a threat to the Israelite’s relationship with God in Deuteronomy 8, verses 7-20? Why?

Why was constant reading, recalling, meditating, and teaching God’s Word (Deuteronomy 6:4-16) imperative to the Israelites’ relationship with Him? To yours? _____

³ Guzik, David. Blue Letter Bible. 1 John 2:15.

⁴ Also consider Matthew 6:19-21 and 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

Additionally, consider how seeking fulfillment in earthly relationships can take precedence over your relationship with God. (See Matthew 10:32-39.) _____

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16) are the motivators behind the world's system and the attainment of its provisions. It is what enticed Eve away from God, severing their relationship (Genesis 3). It is what lures our heart away from the Lord.

The lust of the flesh is associated with physical gratification in its many forms. The lust of the eyes conveys the idea of observing beauty and desiring more than one possesses (covetousness). The pride of life is the desire for living in superiority over others, impressing them by outward appearances.⁵

Record Galatians 1:10. _____

Exodus 34:14 states that God will tolerate no rivals. A rival is something or someone that is competing for the position only God should have in your life. In the above questions and statements, identify and circle anything that may be competing for your affections.

Matthew 6:24-26 says, *“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [money, possessions, fame, status, or whatever is valued more than the Lord]”* (AMP).

Jealous

Although Christ cleared the temple, it is likely that the merchants returned with their goods the following day. What would have to occur to bring real and lasting change? _____

According to Judges 2:11-23, what was God willing to do to turn His people's hearts back to Him? _____

The Father's love for His people is often demonstrated in ways that seem drastic, harsh or brash. Does it bring you comfort or distress knowing that God will take drastic measures to protect His love relationship with you? Explain. _____

God will fight for your exclusivity. If it has been lost or threatened, what is *your* role in restoring intimacy with Him? _____

In closing, Hosea 2:14-20 says, *“But then I will win her back once again. I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her there. I will return her vineyards to her and transform the Valley of Trouble into a gateway of hope. She will give herself to me there, as she did long ago when she was young, when I freed her from her captivity in Egypt. When*

⁵ Observed in Matthew 23:1-7, Luke 18:9-14, John 12:42-43, etc.

that day comes,” says the Lord, “you will call me ‘my husband’ instead of ‘my master.’ O Israel, I will wipe the many names of Baal from your lips, and you will never mention them again. On that day I will make a covenant with all the wild animals and the birds of the sky and the animals that scurry along the ground so they will not harm you. I will remove all weapons of war from the land, all swords and bows, so you can live unafraid in peace and safety. I will make you my wife forever, showing you righteousness and justice, unfailing love and compassion. I will be faithful to you and make you mine, and you will finally know me as the Lord” (NLT).

BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US: “MY LOVE FOR YOU IS JEALOUS”

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