

## **Theme: Who's ALMIGHTY?**

### **Topic: God's Jealousy**

### **Date:**

**Opening:** Start by playing a PowerPoint game, “Names of God”. It’s an unscramble game where the object is to unscramble letters of many of the names of God. Give them several minutes, then give a prize to whoever (or whatever group) gets the most right. As usual, if there are multiple words in the name, all the letters in the first word appear before any of the second word.) The names/answers are as follows:

1. odgsmotghih (God Most High)
2. trisenaglvverodg (Everlasting God)
3. voirsa (Savior)
4. trefhafothilgs (Father of Lights)
5. hehawy (Yahweh)
6. orldorucapee (Lord Our Peace)
7. eerderem (Redeemer)
8. tecninafosyda (Ancient of Days)
9. thresogiueon (Righteous One)
10. valeneyhafret (Heavenly Father)
11. hidels (Shield)
12. mythgieno (Mighty One)
13. dorlfoshots (Lord of Hosts)
14. htesrtifdnaslat (The First and Last)
15. reevilred (Deliverer)
16. lujseuo (Jealous)

Today we’ll tackle our last attribute of God’s character – His jealousy. What does it mean when God not only IS a jealous God, but CALLS Himself by that name?

**Small Groups:** Split up into small groups and answer these questions:

1. Share your name and answer this question: Let’s imagine you’re romantically interested in someone. Would you rather NOT KNOW how they felt in return and have your feelings die out over a period of 2-3 months, OR just have them come out and tell you they didn’t feel the same way you did?
2. How can you tell if someone is interested in you?
3. Now let’s go a step further: How can you tell if they truly love you?

Get some feedback on these questions.

Our focus today will be a trait of God some people have trouble accepting: that God is a jealous God. First, let’s go a step beyond simply saying God is jealous. In the midst of talking to the people about tearing down altars to idols, God instructs His people:

“But rather, you are to tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and cut down their Asherim – for you shall not worship any other god, for the Lord, WHOSE NAME IS JEALOUS, is a jealous God...” Exodus 34:13-14

HIS NAME IS “JEALOUS”. Think of nicknames we give to professional athletes. They are given those names based on traits they are famous for. For example, Michael Jordan was named “Air Jordan” because of his leaping ability and grace which made it look like he could float. Hank Aaron was called “Hammerin’ Hank” because of his power at the plate. Allen Iverson was called “The Answer” after it seemed he was the solution to many of the Philadelphia 76ers problems. Karl Malone was named “The Mailman” because he was so dependable and consistent, like the mailmen who come rain or shine. Names reveal character. So God chose “Jealous” as one of the names we would call Him by because God IS jealous.

It’s remarkable that God would want to be CALLED “jealous”. When someone says that WE are jealous, we typically would deny it. But God not only IS jealous, but wants to be CALLED jealous.

This may be one of the more troubling traits of God’s character. After all, WE are told NOT to be jealous. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 13, we are told “love is not jealous” (vs. 4). So HOW do we now say that GOD IS JEALOUS?

First, let’s remember that the Bible is a “revelation”, meaning it tells us things about God. We don’t simply “imagine” what it is like for God to be jealous; we are TOLD He is jealous. Then why are WE told not to be jealous? We can answer that by saying that very often in Scripture when it is talking about God, the writers had to use what are called *anthropomorphisms*. It’s a fancy word which simply means that the writers had to use HUMAN terms to describe a God who is far from human. For example, 2 Chronicles 16:9 says, “For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth.” But we also know that “God is spirit” (John 4:24). So God doesn’t really have actual EYES, but yet He sees. In human terms we talk of God’s hand or arm or finger, yet we aren’t REALLY talking about those body parts. With God it’s different; we just use those human terms to communicate in the best way we can those traits about God that are NOT human. So it is with “jealousy”. To say God is “jealous” is different in many ways from our jealousy; yet it is also in some ways similar.

So our real question, since this is a revelation of what He is like, is this:

## **WHAT DOES BEING “JEALOUS” TELL US ABOUT GOD?**

As we walk through these points, we’ll use as our “backdrop” the scene where God has the children of Israel at Mt. Sinai, about to give them the Ten Commandments. He has worked miraculously and powerfully to get them out of Egypt. As Jesus showed us, God has emotions, and this certainly must have been an emotional moment for Him. It’s in verse 5 of Exodus 20 that we find once again that God is a jealous God. Let’s see what that tells us:

### **1. God’s jealousy shows He has a claim on us.**

Ask them to think of any time they were jealous of another person. Remind them that jealousy is different from envy. If I wish I had someone's talent or something they have, I envy them. Jealousy is when I feel like they are moving in on something (or more specifically, someONE) that I feel like I have a "claim" on. That doesn't mean I think I "own" them, but that **we have something between us and someone else is treading on it**. You can probably tell a number of stories from your own life of times you were jealous. Here's the point: **I don't feel jealous when a person is getting real close to someone I don't even know**. I couldn't care less then. Jealousy arises only when I feel something special between myself and the other person. If I'm a guy and some other guy is getting real close to some random girl who is very distant from me, I might be "envious" of them, but that is not jealousy. Jealousy is when I think he's moving in on "my" girl.

Here's how that ties in to our relationship with God. The fact that He has jealousy means that He has special claims to our relationship. We can track that all the way back to the book of Exodus as God laid out His plan to Moses,

"Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God..." Exodus 6:7

And here in chapter 20 God echoed this thought again to them, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." (vs.1) In a very real sense, they owed Him. All along He has longed for us to be His people, to have that special relationship with Him. **His jealousy tells us He has a right to that relationship.**

## **2. God's jealousy shows He is protecting something very valuable.**

We usually talk about jealousy in only negative ways. But jealousy, particularly marital jealousy, can be a good thing. Imagine that a husband notices another man from his wife's work paying special attention to her. This guy is writing her "business" notes, he calls even after work hours, he asks her to "business" dinners, he offers her rides home, etc. The RIGHT thing for the husband to do is to act on this marital jealousy and step in.

God's jealousy is the same. **He is acting out of a protective desire to preserve this relationship which is so valuable to Him.** This is a GOOD THING. Not only does He have "claims" on us, but we are unbelievably valuable to Him. Again, it's nothing IN US that makes us valuable – it's His unexplainable love that drives His jealousy. That's a logical thing about jealousy – I won't feel jealous if someone starts spending some isolated special time with my pet fish, BECAUSE I JUST DON'T CARE. Jealousy is a drive to protect something unique and special and good.

## **3. God's jealousy reveals He cares deeply and passionately about us.**

As we just said, we only get jealous over things we care deeply about...and what we care PERSONALLY ABOUT. Hosea describes God's heart when He thinks about us:

"My heart is turned over within Me, all My compassions are kindled." Hosea 6:8

And Zechariah talks about how vulnerable God is concerning us:

“...for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye.” Zechariah 2:8

This “apple of His eye” refers to the pupil of the eye, possibly the most vulnerable of all body parts. God is mysteriously vulnerable due to His deep passion for us. You can have a youth “volunteer” to help you illustrate God’s crazy love for us. Have them hold their head very still, and keep their eyes open. Take an eraser from a pencil and bring it close to their eye. They’ll definitely get squeemish, being concerned that you’ll touch their eye. When God reveals we’re the “apple of His eye”, He lets us know that His love for us is such that He is vulnerable just like that over His feelings for us. **His love for us makes Him vulnerable!**

What both of these verses show is that God has this crazy love for us. It’s the kind of love that drives Him to passionate jealousy when we give our heart to someone or something else. All this drives us to our last point.

#### **4. God’s jealousy shows He wants our love EXCLUSIVELY.**

No where in Scripture can we find even the HINT that it’s OK for us to love God AND other things. In fact, Jesus went to a drastic extreme to describe how EXCLUSIVE God wants to be in our hearts:

“If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.”

Luke 14:26

THOSE ARE RADICAL WORDS from a passionately jealous God who wants NO COMPETITION. Fathers and mothers and children and wives are GOOD THINGS TO LOVE (even commanded in Scripture), but only under one condition: that they don’t come into competition with our love for God.

**God condones no other lovers.**

As you begin to wrap up, speak directly about other things that may be causing God jealousy in our lives. You may want to ask them to talk about things they think God would look on with jealousy as He sees the average teenage Christian in your area. What are things we spend a great deal of time with? What ignites our passions and our excitements? What do we sacrifice for? When given free time, what do we lean to? THOSE are the types of questions we have to answer IN RESPONSE to this Biblical picture of God being a jealous God. Encourage **reflection** and **repentance** and **confession** as you close.