

"How to Be Jealous Like a Christian" Psalm 115

Introduction

- One of the things I enjoy is reading the amusing "how to's" on my Google homepage. Maybe you've seen their step-by-step instructions for a myriad of oddball "how to" items? For instance, haven't you always wanted to know how to turn an old TV set into a fish tank? There are step-by-step instructions on how to do it. Some of my personal favorites include how to act insane, how to draw a caveman, how to stop swearing, how to hire and keep a housekeeper, how to grow a moustache, and how to climb a 12-foot wall.
- Recently, the how to item for the day was this: how to handle jealousy. Listen to Google's farcical advice. "Everyone feels jealous from time to time. Jealousy is easy to deal with, once you understand what it's teaching you."
 1. Understand the emotion. Jealousy is usually a combination of fear and anger; a fear of losing something, and anger because someone else has something that you want or wished that you had.
 2. Allow yourself to actually 'feel' the emotion in a healthy way. When you start feeling jealous, ask yourself: is it more fear based, or more anger based? Recognize which part of your body is being affected. If you feel a dropping or clutching sensation in your stomach, it's probably fear. If you feel a burning, tight sensation in your shoulders and jaw, then you're likely feeling anger.
 3. Identify what your jealousy is teaching you. Jealousy can alert you to what you want. If you're jealous of someone who has more money, ask yourself, how could you create more money in your life? If you're jealous of someone who is beautiful, ask yourself in what ways are you beautiful? When you begin taking action steps toward creating what you want, you won't feel jealous of others. Instead, you'll likely feel excited that you're on your way to having what you want.
- Unbelievable. If technology can't help you master jealousy then maybe it can help you do what a woman did this past September according to one news outlet. "Jealous ex used MySpace to plot hit [on boyfriend]."¹
- I want to take a second and define jealousy because earlier this week it was difficult for me to tease out the difference between envy and jealousy. What is jealousy? How is it different from envy? Envy is a desire mixed with resentment.² You want something and resent not having it. That's envy. Jealousy is envy for something specific—affection. If someone or something gets affection that should rightly go to you, that's jealousy. You're envious when someone gets married and you're still single. You're jealous when your husband comes home and spends more time working than with you. You're envious when you resent someone's new car or their nice clothes or their looks. You're jealous when your child would rather play video games than talk to you. You're envious when you're second string and riding the pine

¹ "Jealous ex used MySpace to plot hit" by Lucy Sherriff, www.theregister.com.

² John Piper, *Battling the Unbelief of Envy*.

and wished you could start. You're jealous when your best friend suddenly finds a new best friend.

- Listen to how [Dorothy Sayers](#) describes jealousy—this longing for affection. "In love, envy is cruel, jealous, and possessive. My friend and marriage partner must be wholly wrapped up in me and must find no interests outside me. That is my right. No person, no work, no hobby must rob me of any part of that right. If we cannot be happy together, we will be unhappy together, but there must be no escape into pleasures I cannot share. If my husband's work means more to him than I do, I will see him ruined rather than preoccupied; if my wife is so abandoned as to enjoy Beethoven or dancing or anything else that I do not appreciate, I will so nag and insult her that she will no longer be able to indulge those tastes with a mind at ease."³ Jealousy.
- 99% of us would agree that jealousy is wrong. Where is it prohibited in scripture? Romans 13:13, 2 Corinthians 12:20, Galatians 5:20. It is against God's will for you to give in to jealousy. But we also know that God is jealous. We talked about it last week. And so if God is holy, without sin, and longing for affection-jealous for his own glory because he owns us, is it appropriate for us to be jealous since we are to be imitators of God? And the answer is yes. There is a time and a place for godly jealousy. Obviously, it is this kind of jealousy I want to focus on this morning.

Transition

This morning, we continue our series through the Psalms called The Songs of Life. One of the chief purposes of the psalms is to teach us how to emote, how to feel emotion in a god-glorifying way. So far we've looked at how to gripe, doubt, take revenge, regret, worship, lust, be intolerant, and gossip like a Christian. And now this morning, how to be jealous like a Christian. Our text for the morning, Psalm 115, makes the case for jealousy as part of a well-balanced emotional repertoire that glorifies God. Here's what I think Psalm 115 teaches.

Proposition

- **The Christian life is to be characterized by tireless, enthusiastic devotion to the glory of God's name**

Transition

That's what it means to be jealous like a Christian. Someone who is jealous in a godly way shows tireless, enthusiastic devotion to God's glory. Okay, if you're thinking, "hold on a second. That doesn't sound like jealousy." Let me explain. In biblical language, the word *jealous* is the same as the word *zeal*. In other words, one word, two meanings, depending on the context. It's that way in both Hebrew and Greek. In essence, what Psalm 115 describes as an attitude is godly zeal.

Main Points

- Listen to how Psalm 115 begins. This psalm was written by one extremely jealous poet. *Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness. 2 Why do the nations say, "Where is their God?"* What's happening here? The surrounding nations take a look at Israel's God, the so called God of love and faithfulness, as

³ Dorothy Sayers, *Letters to a Diminished Church*, p. 99-100.

the verse says, and with scorn and mocking give the pot shot, "Where is Israel's God?"⁴ They dis God. This is the "yo mamma" crack from the street. Yo God is lame. And the psalmist is ticked. This psalm is a plea for God to defend his name which is under attack.⁵ The issue is not Israel's honor but God's honor. Does God's love and faithfulness have any meaning?⁶ The nations say no. The psalmist says yes. The nations call into question God's character and the psalmist is jealous for God. He's zealous to defend God. Not that God needs defending. He's is perfectly capable of defending himself. As someone once said, "You defend God like you defend a lion--you get out of his way."⁷

- The reason the psalmist is so ticked is because he knows God is a jealous God. And he mimics this attribute of God's character in the form of zeal. Again, what does it mean to say God is a jealous god? "God's jealousy means that God continually seeks to protect his own honor."⁸ It's important to remember that the description of Yahweh as jealous is always used in the context of a covenantal relationship between Yahweh and his people. "As Israel's sovereign, Yahweh had the right to demand His people's exclusive loyalty."⁹ Why they violated that exclusive relationship, God jealously protected his honor. That's why in the Bible idolatry is such a big deal. Exodus 34:14 *Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.* And it is not egotistical or selfish for God to demand this of himself. "It is not wrong for God to seek his own honor...he deserves it fully."¹⁰ *For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another.*¹¹ There is nothing greater than God. God deserves more of your affection than your car, than your hobby, than your spouse, than your job, than your health, than your team, than your PS3, than your boyfriend, otherwise you've fashioned an idol. Whenever you make something, anything other than God the supreme object of your affection you've made an idol. God alone is worthy of worship. *You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.*¹²
- The application for us from these first few verses beyond the trap of idolatry, which we all so easily fall into, is this. Do we have zeal? Godly jealousy? [A.W. Tozer](#) has said, "The stiff and wooden quality about our religious lives is a result of our lack of holy desire."¹³ We have no zeal. No jealousy. How do we feel when we hear God's name dishonored in conversation or on television or in print? Are we jealous like the psalmist? Does it faze us? When you hear Christ's name profaned as if it's just any other four letter word what's your reaction? Do you bristle inside? Is something within stirred up? Are you jealous for God's honor? When you see your friend or your child or your spouse prostituting their affection to the lowest bidder, their affection that is meant for God alone, does your heart burn within and break over what they're missing out on? This tireless, enthusiastic devotion to the glory of God is the same spirit that drove Jesus to clear the temple of the moneychangers, right? In

⁴ Davidson, p. 376.

⁵ Davidson, p. 376.

⁶ Davidson, p. 376.

⁷ Bill McNabb in the Wittenburg Door (June/July 1988). Christianity Today, Vol. 33, no. 15.

⁸ Grudem, p. 205.

⁹ ISBE, volume 2, p. 972.

¹⁰ Grudem, p. 205.

¹¹ Isaiah 48:11

¹² Revelation 4:11

¹³ Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, p. 17.

witnessing Jesus' actions the disciples remembered something. John 2:17 *His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."* Jesus is jealous in a godly way. Jealousy is supposed to be an ever-present part of the Christian life. It's what Romans 12:11 calls for. *Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.*

- This zeal. This godly jealousy is the reason the psalmist belittles the wood and metal idols of the nations in verses 3-8. "C'mon nations, think about what you're doing." Those idols. *They're made by the hands of men.* They aren't gods. Those hunks of wood and stone and gold and silver, they can't talk. They can't see. They can't smell. They're dead. Whereas, in verse 3, the contrast is God. In all his sovereign majesty God is enthroned in heaven ruling over everything. He's not dead. He is alive. He's not mute or blind, verse 5. He speaks. He's, he sees. And He acts. *He does whatever pleases him* while the idols of the world lay powerless.
- The reason the psalmist is jealous is because idolatry is futility. Isaiah, even better than the psalmist, captures the futility of giving your affections to stuff. As I read Isaiah 44, substitute your idol. *How foolish are those who manufacture idols to be their gods. These highly valued objects are really worthless. The blacksmith stands at his forge to make a sharp tool, pounding and shaping it with all his might. His work makes him hungry and thirsty, weak and faint. Then the wood-carver measures and marks out a block of wood, takes the tool, and carves the figure of a man. Now he has a wonderful idol that cannot even move from where it is placed! He cuts down cedars; he selects the cypress and the oak; he plants the cedar in the forest to be nourished by the rain. And after his care, he uses part of the wood to make a fire to warm himself and bake his bread. Then—yes, it's true—he takes the rest of it and makes himself a god for people to worship! He makes an idol and bows down and praises it! He burns part of the tree to roast his meat and to keep himself warm. Then he takes what's left and makes his god: a carved idol! He falls down in front of it, worshipping and praying to it. "Rescue me!" he says. "You are my god!" Such stupidity and ignorance! Their eyes are closed, and they cannot see. Their minds are shut, and they cannot think. The person who made the idol never stops to reflect, "Why it's just a block of wood! I burned half of it for heat and used it to bake my bread and roast my meat. How can the rest of it be a god? Should I bow down to worship a chunk of wood?" The poor, deluded fool feeds on ashes. He is trusting in something that can give him no help at all. Yet he cannot bring himself to ask, "is this thing, this idol that I am holding in my hand, a lie?"¹⁴*
- Idolatry is foolish. That's why the psalmist says to trust in God, verses 9-11. Three times, trust in the Lord. Trust, trust, trust. *O house of Israel. O house of Aaron. You who fear the Lord. Trust in the Lord.* Not in idols. Not in your boat. Not in your food. Not in your pension. Not in your alcohol. Not in your sex. Not in your TV. Not in your computer. Don't give your strongest affections and desires to those things. This Christmas season, the season of idolatry, don't be foolish. *Keep your heart on the right course.*¹⁵ In your hour of need, those things you wish for will never be able to help you. *O house of Israel, trust in the Lord.* God alone is your *help and your shield* as verses 9-11 repeats three times. He's the only one who can help you. Reserve your strongest affections and desires for God alone. Be

¹⁴ Isaiah 44:9-ff

¹⁵ Proverbs 23:19

zealous, be jealous for him. Do your shopping, but when you stand in line to make your purchase weep for the masses who shop for their gods while your God rules from heaven.