Overcoming Jealousy in Your Marriage.

Are you a jealous spouse, or are you suffering from your mate’s jealous behavior? No matter on which side of this dilemma you find yourself this publication will greatly help you. First, I would like to address the jealous spouse and attempt to explain why you are jealous and how to deal with this problem. Second, I would like to encourage the spouse who must deal with the jealousy of their mate. There are always two sides to any issue and jealousy is no different. If you are reading this publication right now, I know you are probably thoroughly frustrated regarding this issue. There are solutions to this problem! But, first you must understand what causes jealousy, and what God’s Word declares is the answer to this problem.

Are you the jealous spouse?

1. Understanding jealousy. If you want to overcome your jealousy you must first understand this issue biblically. As you study Scripture on this topic you quickly realize that there is a good form of jealousy and an evil form of jealousy. How can I say this? Consider first that God is a jealous God (Ex. 34:14). The word jealousy used in this passage means to zealously pursue what is right and good. God does not want you to have any other god before Him and therefore He zealously pursues you. However, God in His love will never force, control, or manipulate a person to follow Him. He gives you the choice to even reject Him. Jesus noted this freedom of choice when He said to the Pharisees, “You are not willing to come to Me that you may have life” (John 5:40).

Men and women can also have a godly jealousy toward another individual. This truth was revealed when Paul said to the Corinthian church, “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Cor 11:2). Therefore, it is only natural that your spouse would want you to remain completely faithful to him or her. But, what is so grievous about human jealousy is that it usually crosses the line by attempting to force a person to love or be faithful. God will never do that in His jealousy. In fact, it is impossible to force anyone to love you or be faithful. Love and faithfulness must be chosen by a person’s own free will.

In contrast, evil jealousy is actually what the Bible calls a work of your flesh, or that which has its motivation in your sinful nature. Selfishness is what causes a person to pressure, force, and manipulate another. When Paul listed these works of your sinful nature in Galatians 5:20, he used the word “emulation” which actually means jealousy. Contentious rivalry and hatred will always result from selfish jealousy and will surely destroy the love within a marriage (Gal. 5:20). In addition, the words translated “indignation” in Acts 5:17 and “envy” in Acts 13:45 also are the same Greek words for jealousy.

As you can see, jealousy is not always wrong or evil; it is a question of motivation or your behavior. If you are displaying anger, contention, and envy toward your spouse or you are trying to manipulate your mate, then you definitely have the wrong kind of jealousy. Your jealousy does not have godly motivation which is tempered by love and freedom.

2. Why are you jealous? Identifying why you are jealous is the next step in getting free from this contentious behavior. There are many things you can become jealous over, but these are not why you are a jealous person. For example, you can become jealous over a person’s wealth, possessions, beauty, athletic ability, their relationship with others, educational achievement, or their success in life. In other words, you can become jealous over just about anything.

However, the above mentioned things are not the reason you are jealous. Identifying the cause of your jealous feelings is sometimes more difficult because it requires honest introspection. What are some of the basic causes of the jealous feelings that may dominate you? Jealousy can result from comparing yourself with others, failure to trust people, personal insecurity, competition with others, or the fear of your mate replacing you with another. Sometimes the source of your jealousy may be all of the above. The only way to get free from these causes of jealousy is by aggressively dealing with the issues in your life. You cannot expect that your jealous behavior will just miraculously disappear on its own just because you desire it to do so. You must apply the solutions found in God’s Word if you ever hope to find the freedom you desire. Where do you begin?

3. Stop comparing yourself. Comparing yourself with others is one of the most basic causes of jealousy. It is also a common sin of the flesh and therefore, must be put off. Paul identified comparison as one of the central issues that caused the Corinthian church to self-destruct. He warned them, “For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise” (2 Cor. 10:12). Just as the people in this church de-
stroayed the love and harmony of their fellowship, so you will destroy your relationship with anyone if you allow comparison to dominate your heart.

Why is comparison so destructive in your life? When you compare yourself with another person it will cause you to take one of two positions. You will either consider yourself superior or inferior to that person. Either attitude is sinful pride (Rom. 12:3). Pride will always cause strife and drive people apart (Prov. 28:25). This is why comparing yourself with others is so unwise.

The only solution to this problem of comparison is to stop looking at yourself as better or worse than others. The reality is that you are equal to others. Can you look someone in the face that you think is popular, successful, or more spiritual and believe that you are totally equal to them in the sight of God? Do you truly believe that God sees you as absolutely the same? If not, then you have a comparison problem that is contrary to the truth of God’s Word.

Scripture states that there is no difference between people in God’s eyes. Paul declared that all believers come to God and walk before Him on an equal basis. The Father gives His righteousness, “through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference” (Rom. 3:22). God sees us all under sin. Therefore, when anyone comes to faith in Christ they stand on an equal footing with all other sinners in the righteousness of God.

God gives to all a “like precious faith” through the grace of God (2 Peter 1:2). The English words like precious are actually one Greek word that refers to something that is similar to or of equal value. This word was used in Peter’s day of foreigners who had been granted the privileges of citizenship which made them equal to those who were born as citizens. Peter believed that those he wrote to were equal to himself because they had received this same precious faith from a God who saw them as no different than any others. What an encouraging and humble statement by the apostle! Now, will you allow God to conform your thinking to His?

4. Resolve the trust issues. Another fundamental reason for jealousy is not trusting people. Have you been hurt by someone close to you or in a previous relationship or marriage? If you have, then this issue must be resolved in your heart. Do you think that everyone who is close to you will possibly hurt you? If so, this is the problem.

The solution to trust issues is to believe that God is love and He puts His love in others that will not hurt you. Not everyone is unfaithful, untrustworthy, or consumed with themselves. But, if you think all people are like this then you will put up a barrier around you and you will not let anyone become close to you. You will attempt to control and manipulate people around you and this will drive them away. You must stop blaming your spouse for what someone else did to you. This is not fair! Stop it today and deal with your spouse on the basis of who they are today.

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Paul had to deal with all kinds of people who hurt him. He referred to Alexander the coppersmith who, “did me much harm” (2 Tim. 4:14). He also said that people had forsaken him (2 Tim. 4:16). But, Paul also found that there were scores of people that had the same heart as his. Read his commendation of all those who co-labored with him in Romans chapter 16. You should be able to find people like this too. As you find people you can trust; commit yourself to them, stop doubting their commitment to you, and you will grow through this issue. The person you are married to wants to be a person like this to you. How can you be sure? It is very simple; your spouse married you and committed his or her life to being with you. That should be plenty of reason to trust them. Why not start today?

5. Deal with your insecurity. To battle with insecurity is one of the great struggles within the human heart. People usually struggle in three different areas of security. These are spiritual security (your relationship with God), relational security (your relationship with people), and physical security (your relationship with your surroundings). Each of these issues are addressed in the Bible. A person can find a correct relationship with each so that they can find the security they long for. However, this security requires a person to listen to the voice of the Lord and obey His specific commands. God has clearly promised, “Whoever listens to me will dwell safely, and will be secure, without fear of evil” (Prov. 1:33). How does listening to the Lord help you conquer your insecurities? Growing in your relationship with God is central to the solution to any problem in your life. Let’s consider the ways to deal with your insecurity.

6. Grow in security with God. How does a person grow in their security with God? It all begins with you believing that He loves you and wants to do the best for you. Confidence in God’s love will always bring security to your heart. God has declared: “I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you” (Jer. 31:3). Do you believe that? If you don’t believe God loves you and wants the best for you then how can you trust Him for anything else? The greatest proof that God truly does love you is the fact that He sent His Son to communicate with mankind, to take our punishment for sin, and to die on the cross for us. The apostle John said, “We have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16).

If you have a relationship with a God who has loved you from eternity past, and who has sacrificed His most precious possession, His Son; how could you not be secure in Him and not believe He wants the best for you (Rom. 8:32)? If you want your relationship to change in this area, you must humbly ask for forgiveness for doubting His love. Begin to trust that you are secure in His love forever.

7. Grow in relational security. How can you grow in relational security with others? Just as you must believe in the love of God you must also trust that people truly love you too. Because of King Saul’s insecurity he did not believe David loved him and you can see the alienation that resulted in their relationship. But, did David really love Saul? It is clear from Scripture that David did sincerely care about Saul and wanted to serve his king in any way he could. Scripture states: “So David came to Saul and stood before him. And he loved him greatly, and he became his armorbearer” (1 Sam. 16:21). The only problem was that Saul did not believe that David loved him. Therefore, Saul persecuted
and abused David and put himself into competition with him. As a result, Saul ruined his relationship with David and literally drove him away. The sad thing is that I have watched countless husbands and wives do this same thing to one another because of insecurity.

To find security in your relationships you must do several things. First, make sure that you are not creating your own problem. Determine why it seems that people do not love you. Examine your behavior to determine if you are offensive to others by your attitude, speech, or actions. If you are behaving offensively, this is an issue that must be repented of in your life. Offensive or obnoxious behavior will always cause others to reject you. However, notice that the opposite result was experienced by David because he behaved wisely and the people accepted him. Samuel declared: “So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and behaved wisely. And Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul’s servants” (1 Sam. 18:5). Does your behavior cause people to accept or reject you?

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Second, determine what some of these offensive behaviors are that cause people to reject you. Do you force yourself upon others and become overbearing in your relationships? Are you controlling, clingy, obnoxious, or seek attention from others? Do you manipulate others to be your friend by giving gifts, dominate their time or your conversations with them? When someone rejects you, do you plead or beg for their love attempting to force them to stay in the relationship? Are you more concerned with people’s acceptance than you are with your own self-respect? Do you get resentful when a person or group that you consider as the “in crowd” does not include you? Do you turn and reject that person or group for slighting you? If any of these behaviors apply to you, then be assured, you are insecure. All these behaviors must be acknowledged as sinful and be repented of before God. Put off these sinful behaviors and put on godly ones (Col. 3:12-14). As your behavior changes you will begin to make real friends, and with each new friend you will be adding to your sense of relational security.

The third thing you should do in order to find security in your relationships is to become others-centered, by choosing to love and serve others before you expect them to serve you. True maturity is revealed when you become others-centered instead of being self-centered. Selfishness is the most obvious fruit of immaturity. Don’t you feel really good inside and very secure about yourself and your relationships when you are loving and serving others without any strings attached? This is what Paul taught should be the goal of our growth in Christ: “Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil. 2:2-4). Notice that coming to a place of one accord with others is the result of taking the focus off you and humbly seeking to serve others. Loving in this manner will always result in lasting relationships with others.

8. Grow in physical security. The greatest single cause of physical insecurity for a person is that people have hurt you in the past. Physical insecurity is simply the fear this will happen to you again. I have met people who have been physically and sexually abused as children who battle daily with the fears that someone may do this again to them or to their children. Others have been traumatized by a home invasion, or robbed at gunpoint, and worry constantly that life is unsafe. These experiences have destroyed this person’s sense of physical security and they do not know if they will ever feel safe again. If this is your struggle, you must address these fears God’s way instead of attempting to run away from trying circumstances or difficult relationships to feel safe. A safe place by itself cannot bring you the sense of security and safety that you are seeking. What should you do to conquer your fears and rest in physical security? Here are several ways to resolve your fears and insecurity.

First, you must understand how to conquer your fears by making a study of the Word of God on this subject. Use the topical index in your Bible and find out what God has promised to you concerning fear. You must understand how fear paralyzes you and the ways God has declared to conquer it. Physical insecurity and fear are directly related and only by conquering your fears will you be able to find physical security and a place of safety in your life.

Second, understand how to control your thought life. Please go to our website at www.covenantkeepers.org and look for my article on how to control your thoughts and feelings. You must understand how your fears work together with your thought life. Controlling your thoughts of fear will be essential to your sense of God’s security. Most of the physical insecurity you struggle with originates in your mind and there is where you must win the battle.

Third, believe that God is your defender and protector. If you live in fear of your physical surroundings, then be assured that you do not believe the Lord to be your defender and protector. When you trust in God’s ability to protect you, then you will be joyful and not fearful. David declared this truth: “Let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; let those also who love Your name be joyful in You” (Ps. 5:11). Fear and trust cannot abide together. One must yield to the other.

9. Give up your possessiveness. Possessiveness is at the root of your jealousy. You must understand that possessiveness is primarily a selfish desire to control your spouse. Selfishness is ruling and controlling you because Christ is not on the throne of your life. The only way you can reverse this situation, and give up your possessiveness, is to give up the throne of your life and make Christ preeminent. He must fully possess you and be given the preeminence over you so you can be set free from this jealousy. Paul said that Jesus “Is the head of the body, the church ... that in all things He may have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18). Is He truly your Lord and Master? If He is Lord over you then jealousy can not rule over you. Deny yourself and begin following Him fully in all areas of your life.
life (Matt. 16:24). Give Him this place as Lord in your life right now!

10. **Deal with your flesh.** If you want to stop being so jealous then you must put off your fleshly nature that rules inside of you. Remember I stated at the beginning of this publication that jealousy was a work of the flesh. Your comparison with others, your fears, and your insecurity are proof that you are controlled by your fleshly nature. What should you do? You need to do three things: (1) Realize that God has already conquered your old sinful fleshly nature by crucifying it on the cross of Christ. Regarding this truth Paul said: “Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin” (Rom. 6:6). (2) Then you must reckon (account by faith) that this action was taken by Jesus for you when He died on the cross. Paul encouraged the Roman Christians to “Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts” (Rom. 6:11-12). (3) Then Paul taught them to yield up their lives, surrender themselves to God, and allow the Spirit to reign inside them. He encouraged: “And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (Rom. 6:13).

This is how to gain control over yourself and the power of your fleshly nature that wants to dominate you and produce jealousy within. If you want a more extensive explanation of these truths go to our website www.calvaryag.org and click on Bible Studies/New Testament and read the studies on Romans chapters 6, 7, and 8. These studies will be extremely helpful to you.

11. **Ask forgiveness.** Now that you understand why you are a jealous person admit your jealousy and ask your mate to forgive you for your possessiveness, distrust, and insecurity. Why is this so important? The Bible declares that, “Wrath is cruel and anger a torrent, but who is able to stand before jealousy?” (Prov. 27:4). You need to ask forgiveness because you have treated your spouse in a cruel way. Not trusting them, interrogating and attempting to control their decisions, or exploding with anger is destructive to your relationship. Go today and confess your faults to your spouse (James 5:16).

By making this confession you are taking responsibility for your actions and not shifting the blame to your mate. In fact, if you have been shifting the blame for your jealousy to your mate this is all the more reason for confessing your fault.

12. **Find a counselor.** A good counselor would also be helpful in sorting through all these issues in your life. He or she can help you see how God’s Word applies to your situation and motivate you to further action. Remember, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise” (Prov. 12:15). Make the call today!

**Are you the victim of Jealousy?**

1. **Are you provoking your spouse?** You may think that this counsel is contradictory to my last point but it is not. Usually the primary reason for jealousy is within the jealous person, but in some cases you can be doing things that may provoke jealousy in your spouse. You must examine your own behavior and be sure that you do not have any provoking behavior that might stir up jealousy within your mate.

Did you realize that the Scripture teaches that you can provoke God to jealousy by your behavior? Scripture teaches: “Now Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they committed, more than all that their fathers had done” (1 Kings 14:22). If you can provoke Him to jealousy it is surely possible to provoke a human to jealousy.

Over what actions could you provoke your mate to jealousy? Flirting with someone of the opposite sex, meeting with a person of the opposite sex without your mate present, inappropriate touching or hugging someone that is not your spouse. You must avoid these or any behavior that even gives the appearance of evil whereby you may stumble your spouse (1 Thess. 5:22 KJV).

2. **Build trust.** Building trust again with your loved one is not easy to do. Solomon declared that “A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a castle” (Prov. 18:19). So, be assured that there will be hard work ahead for both of you to restore this relationship. The bars that separate you and your spouse must be removed if fellowship and trusting companionship are to be restored. It can be done if you will work at it.

I would encourage you to pursue open communication about your fears and hopes for a closer relationship with your spouse. Express your desire to be completely trustworthy and to be trusted. But, remember that only in an atmosphere of love can you ever hope to build trust (1 Cor. 13:4-7). Choose to love your spouse and be thankful for the good times you have had in the past and trust God that He will bring these times again. For a complete look at building trust in your relationship go to www.covenantkeepers.org and read the article entitled “Re-establishing Trust in Your Relationship.”

3. **Pray for your spouse.** Praying for your mate who struggles with jealousy is so important because he or she is battling greatly within their mind. Insecurity, comparison, and trust issues are not easy to deal with. Usually these issues have taken years to develop in a person’s thinking and are not going to be resolved overnight. Your prayers will be very effective and encouraging to them. Remember, “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16). Don’t give up, but persevere in prayer.

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If you would like more information about Pastor Steve’s book Married and How To Stay That Way and the accompanying study guide, or the Counseling Couples in Crisis Training Manual with accompanying video training DVDs, or his audio and video teachings, please call (805) 489-9088 or come visit us at our website www.covenantkeepers.org