

Is God Petty, Jealous, Easily Provoked?

Is God a Moral Monster—part 2

April 15, 2018

1. Talk to some university professors and they will tell you that God is like a teenage, immature jerk: easily angered, flies off the handle, and petty. Is God's justice arbitrary? Is His wrath unfair? These questions will encompass this week's devotionals.

DAY 1: Good jealousy, bad jealousy

2. To talk about jealousy requires us to acknowledge that there are **two** different kinds of jealousy.

3. There is a "good" jealousy and a "bad" jealousy.

4. Let's look at bad jealousy.

James 3:16 (RSV) For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

5. What does James say will be some of the bad effects of bad jealousy?

6. Bad jealousy is provoked because of wounded self-centeredness, insecurity, or fear of losing someone to another for one's own well-being.

7. Can you think of an example of bad jealousy, either from your life or another's? Have you been the "bad-jealous-type"? Have you been the victim of someone else's jealousy?

8. Good jealousy is fiercely committed to someone else's good, even if you have to pay a price for it.

9. Paul loved the people in the church at Corinth, seen in how he was looking out for their best interests.

2 Corinthians 11:1 I hope you will put up with a little of my foolishness; but you are already doing that.

² I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.

³ But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

10. What strikes you Paul's example of good jealousy?

11. What strikes you about this concept of jealousy, either the good kind or the bad kind?

DAY 2: How God sees relationship with His people: a marriage!

1. People will not understand God's dealings with people if they misunderstand:

- a. The heart of God,
- b. The character of God,
- c. What God is trying to give to people, and
- d. Do in people.

2. In the secular world God is viewed as a "force," "principle," detached, judgmental, uncaring, or a "woosie." None of those things are accurate.

3. Let's take an easy example to better understand God. If you are married and someone is rude to your wife in a public setting, you are going to do something about that. It is a loving thing to protect her heart, her reputation, and her character. Or, if you see that your spouse or teenager is on a crash course of self-destruction, you also are going to do something to protect them from themselves.

4. In the same way, this is how God looks at us, through the lens of a spouse, and through the lens of a loving father.

5. This means that He has set Himself up for anguish, pain, and heartbreak as He relates to us! He opens the door to experiencing sorrow over us. It is rather staggering to consider the amount of rejection He experiences from people *every day!*

Romans 10:21 But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."

6. Do you sense the pathos of God in this verse? The longing in His heart for His people to respond to Him for their benefit? What strikes you about this verse?

Ezekiel 6:9 Then in the nations where they have been carried captive, those who escape will remember me--how I have been grieved by their adulterous hearts, which have turned away from me, and by their eyes, which have lusted after their idols. They will loathe themselves for the evil they have done and for all their detestable practices.

7. In spite of repeated warnings of coming judgment by superior armed forces, the people continue to disobey God and ignore the prophets.

a. In this verse, what is it God hopes the people will realize about Him?

b. What does He hope the people will finally realize and admit about themselves?

DAY 3: The covenant-making God!

1. After God delivers the Hebrew people out of the shackles of Egyptian slavery, and delivers them out of the hands of the Egyptian army, God makes a covenant with His people.

2. A covenant is a solemn agreement. The covenant binds two parties together.

3. The same word and idea is at the heart of the marriage ceremony. Two people join into a covenant, binding themselves together publicly before God, each other, their families and friends. Vows are spoken. These are not just some perfunctory, feel-good words.

4. After God offered to covenant Himself to them, here was their response:

Exodus 24:7 "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient."

5. What strikes you about their response?

6. A short while later, while Moses is on the mountain getting the law of God, the people turn in their gold to make the golden calf, announcing...

Exodus 32:1 When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him."

² *Aaron answered them, "Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons and your daughters are wearing, and bring them to me."*

³ *So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron.*

⁴ *He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."*

7. What strikes you about this response?

8. To put this into a smaller perspective, this is like going on your honeymoon with your new groom or bride, and on the third day of your honeymoon, coming back to your hotel room to find your new spouse in bed with someone else.

Ezekiel 16:15 "But you trusted in your beauty and used your fame to become a prostitute. You lavished your favors on anyone who passed by and your beauty became his."

Ezekiel 16:25 "At the head of every street you built your lofty shrines and degraded your beauty, offering your body with increasing promiscuity to anyone who passed by."

9. God is not accusing them of sexual prostitution. It is an analogy that illustrates that anything they turned to that exceeded their devotion to Him was the same as prostitution.

10. What strikes you about God from today's verses?

DAY 4: "Tough love"

1. There are times when someone is on such a self-destructive course that something MUST be done for the sake of the person and the people around him.
2. Though suffering is never fun, it is a far better course than to allow self-destructive behavior to continue on unchecked.
3. What is true for "other people" is also true for us.
4. In the book of Amos, we get a clear picture of the lengths God will go in His use of tough love in order to jolt a people out of their destructive and self-destructive behavior.

5. The book of Amos describes just how willful, blind and rebellious His people are. They repeatedly pursue other gods in attempts to make life work. God speaks to His people but they blow Him off. They minimize what the prophets says. They ridicule the prophets or tell them to quit being so negative. When the people refuse to listen to God, and bring distress on their lives, God brings judgment, in the hopes of getting their attention.

Amos 4:1 Hear this word, you cows of Bashan on Mount Samaria, you women who oppress the poor and crush the needy and say to your husbands, "Bring us some drinks!"² The Sovereign LORD has sworn by his holiness: "The time will surely come when you will be taken away with hooks, the last of you with fishhooks.³ You will each go straight out through breaks in the wall, and you will be cast out toward Harmon," declares the LORD.⁴ "Go to Bethel and sin; go to Gilgal and sin yet more. Bring your sacrifices every morning, your tithes every three years.⁵ Burn leavened bread as a thank offering and brag about your freewill offerings-- boast about them, you Israelites, for this is what you love to do," declares the Sovereign LORD.

6. God's declaration to bring their sacrifices and tithes, thank and freewill offerings sounds like God wants a religious solution. The opposite is the case. He is saying, "You always revert to some 'religious' solution instead of repentance. A religious deed is NO SUBSTITUTE for repentance!

*Amos 4:6 I gave you empty stomachs in every city and lack of bread in every town, **yet you have not returned to me,** declares the LORD.*

*⁷"I also withheld rain from you when the harvest was still three months away. I sent rain on one town, but withheld it from another. One field had rain; another had none and dried up.⁸ People staggered from town to town for water but did not get enough to drink **yet you have not returned to me,** declares the LORD.*

*⁹"Many times I struck your gardens and vineyards, I struck them with blight and mildew. Locusts devoured your fig and olive trees, **yet you have not returned to me,** declares the LORD.*

*¹⁰"I sent plagues among you as I did to Egypt. I killed your young men with the sword, along with your captured horses. I filled your nostrils with the stench of your camps, **yet you have not returned to me,** declares the LORD.*

¹¹"I overthrew some of you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. You were like a burning stick snatched from the fire, yet you have not returned to me," declares the LORD.¹² "Therefore this is what I will do to you, Israel, and because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel."

7. God is reluctant to bring judgment but the people leave Him no choice. They will just continue to spiral into further distance from God, trouble, drama, and misery. Go back and underline every action God took.

8. The passage underscores just how stubbornly committed we are to "our way" even when it creates misery for ourselves and others.

9. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: God's jealousy means He is deeply committed to protecting us and providing for us.

1. Because our human propensity is, as C. S. Lewis says, "curved in on ourselves" we will "naturally" turn away from depending on Him in order to have life our way.
2. Nobody learns to trust God, to depend on Him without "trial and error," or more specifically trials (sic) and errorS (sic)!
3. Notice what God tells the people to expect:

Deuteronomy 8:1 Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land that the LORD promised on oath to your forefathers.

² *Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to **humble you** and to **test you in order to know what was in your heart**, whether or not you would keep his commands.*

³ *He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*

4. When we go through periods of testing or trials, you often hear someone say, "I don't know why I'm going through this time of testing."

5. While we may not know *exactly* why we are going through a time of testing or trials, what does God say we should look for during times of testing? Jot down every answer you find in Deuteronomy 8:1-3:

Hebrews 12:7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?

⁸ *If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.*

⁹ *Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live!*

¹⁰ *Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.*

¹¹ *No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*

¹² *Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.*

¹³ *"Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.*

6. Here are portrayed the two sides of God's discipline in our lives. Under each heading below jot down what you notice about God's discipline:

From God's point of view/ His purposes:

From our point of view:

7. Week's summary: God has a good jealousy for us so that He can provide all we need and can protect us from the sinful nature inside us.