



Jealousy

HIS NAME IS
JEALOUS

Claire Livingstone

IT'S NOT EASY
BEING GREEN

Jen Beechey

A JEALOUS
PAIN IN THE
NECK

Jeni Mitchell

CAN WOMEN
REALLY
HAVE IT ALL?

Jacqueline Thai



Woman (Hebrew *ishah*). Woman, with man, was made in the image of God. 'Male and female he created them' (Genesis 1:27).

welcome...

Jealousy is, as our writers in this issue point out, not something that we are very comfortable talking about. I think the word "we", here, refers to Christians, women, and humanity in general. It's an uncomfortable yet sometimes overpowering emotion to feel; often a shameful feeling to admit to. Yet 'bad' jealousy is one of the most common of human failings, and a lack of recognition of that before God and our Christian family can potentially be harmful – we are, after all, only kidding ourselves. The writers in this issue explore what jealousy actually is, according to the Bible; what 'bad' jealousy looks like and how to get around it. Jeni Mitchell's article points out that some human jealousy can actually be good, connecting in with Claire Livingstone's feature on the fact that God himself feels jealousy.

It is the hope of the ishah editorial team that this issue will help you to think about jealousy and its part in your life. Are you struggling with 'bad' jealousy? Or are you not feeling jealous enough about God's exclusive claim on his people?

Remember, the ishah team loves getting feedback, so feel free to write to us or send an email. As well, please consider donating to the work of ishah, as we are completely donor-supported.

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our aims

1. To value the Bible as God's inspired Word to us and the ultimate authority on matters of faith and practice, through thinking hard about how the Bible applies to our everyday lives.
2. To encourage women to grow in godliness and maturity in Christ.
3. To equip Christian women to be creative, confident and effective in communicating the gospel.
4. To give women in a variety of roles and situations the forum to think about contemporary issues from a framework of Biblical theology and to articulate their thinking in a manner that stimulates themselves and others to live lives that are more faithful to God's Word.

ISSUES TO COME...

ISSUE 19:
The Bible in
Everyday Life

ISSUE 20:
Cherishing
Children

His Name is Jealous

BY CLAIRE LIVINGSTONE

“Do not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.” Exodus 34:14

Jealousy. Not a quality we often hear associated with God - let alone consider a name of God! So how are we to understand this emotion, or state of being, if it can be attributed to our Holy Lord?

Cartoons often portray jealousy as someone's face becoming green and steam beginning to come from their ears: the green-eyed monster! That may not be a completely inaccurate depiction of the meaning of the word. In both the Greek and Hebrew languages “jealousy” has its root meaning in “heat” or “to become dark red”. The word is used to describe a passionate, single-mindedness of emotion. Perhaps those faces should become red instead of green!

In Scripture “jealousy” is used to describe both right and wrong passion. It is either condemned or regarded as godly, depending upon the object of the jealousy. As Christ's followers we are called to grow a godly character, so it is vital we understand the character of the God we serve. If God is given to jealousy are we, too, called to be jealous? If so, what does that jealousy look like? How is it to impact on our lives, both as individuals and corporately as his people? Is there an ungodly jealousy we are to avoid? We need to open our Bibles to learn.

“I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another or my praise to idols.” (Isaiah 42:8)

“The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” (Deuteronomy 6:4,5)

The second commandment, “You shall have no other gods before me” (Deuteronomy 5:7), explains the divine name, “Jealousy”. There is only one God, only one Lord. He alone deserves the absolute allegiance of his people. He alone is to be glorified and praised.

God's jealousy is provoked by idolatry (Deuteronomy 32:16, 21; Psalm 78:58; 1 Corinthians 10:1ff) and disobedience (Deuteronomy 4:24; 1 Kings 14:22). Idolatry is the ultimate expression of unfaithfulness to God; disobedience implies a heedlessness of commitment. Both idolatry and disobedience are a rejection of God's sovereign rule. Both are attacks on God's exclusive rights to our undivided devotion, our absolute love, trust and obedience.

The Bible is rich in images that describe the covenant relationship of God and his people. The two main images are that of marriage and of kingship.

Marriage is a profound relationship where a man and woman are

bound to each other as though one, demanding exclusive love and devotion (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6). Israel is married to God but is unfaithful to her husband (see Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Hosea). This spiritual adultery is what leads to God's jealousy. That holy jealousy leads to both a desire for revenge and a strong urge to win back his wife (Ezekiel 16; Hosea 2).

God is also King and his people are his subjects. God, as king, rules over his people: providing for and protecting them. He demands loyal service, trust and obedience from his people. Yet Israel, again, is unfaithful to her King (1 Samuel 8; Jeremiah 2:17-19), provoking his holy jealousy.

Yet what of human jealousy? If we, as God's people, are called to be holy just as God is holy (Leviticus 19:2) is jealousy part of that holiness?

Scripture speaks of two types of human jealousy. The jealousy that's turned inwards towards ourselves is condemned. This jealousy results in envy or hatred of others (Genesis 30:1; 37:3; 2 Corinthians 12:20; James 3:14-16), which is the antithesis of the love and fellowship God wants his people to display (1 Corinthians 12:4ff). This jealousy is an act of our sinful nature (Galatians 5:13-26). This unholy jealousy is self-seeking, self-serving and demonstrates a lack of trust in God.

Yet, there is a jealousy that's regarded as a “godly jealousy” (2 Corinthians 11:2). This jealousy results in a zealotness and passion for God's glory and his people (1 Kings 19:10, 14; Psalm 69:9). This springs from exclusive devotion to God and a desire to see him and his name honoured and glorified through his people (Ephesians 3:20-21).

How do we cultivate godly jealousy? What does it look like in our daily lives?

The answer lies in the first commandment – to love the Lord our God with our whole selves. If idolatry and rebellion are the disease then the Gospel is the cure! In Christ, God initiates a relationship with us. He offers us forgiveness and his Spirit helps us live a new life under God's kingship. The appropriate response is to surrender to him.

It saddens me that there are many people who claim to know Christ, yet seem content to settle for mediocrity in their faith, in how they express their allegiance to him. It's like they've been given new clothes to wear to match the new life they've been given – but they keep wearing their old clothes, placing the new ones in the cupboard for later! If we understand God's sovereignty, that he alone is God and the rightful, loving ruler of this world, then we'll also understand he demands nothing less than our complete devotion – just as he did from the Israelites.

If the response to Christ is one of faith and repentance it must mean an active response that involves the whole of life, not merely confession or an intellectual assent to truth. If we claim to serve or worship God, an exclusive relationship is implied and total commitment and obedience must result. The letter of James is one long challenge to anyone who claims to have faith, yet their lives fail to be transformed.

If I am jealous *for* God's glory and people then I will be passionate about my relationship with him, living humbly according to his will. Each day I will come to God in repentance and reliance upon his grace. Christ will permeate my entire life. It is in him I will find my identity, worth and purpose in life.

If I am jealous *for* God's glory and people I will seek to use the gifts he gives me for the purpose of building up his church. I will seek to work for unity and harmony within the church. I will, by the help of his Spirit, seek to demonstrate God's love in my relationships.

If I am jealous *for* God's glory and people I will grieve when I see or hear his name dishonoured – through the behaviour of his people, through the media, through my own actions, or inaction. I will grieve over those who are lost in the world, who are still in rebellion against the true God. I will pray for God's grace and mercy.

Within God's church, do we take seriously the call to complete allegiance and devotion, or do we presume upon God's mercy and forgiveness? Do we keep our new life in the cupboard,

bringing it out only on special occasions or when others are watching? If we are jealous *for* God's glory and people we will challenge one another, in love, to be all we can be in Christ – to "live up to the calling we have received". We won't tolerate gossip and slander in our church. We won't argue over things that are of secondary importance. We won't be self-seeking in decisions that are made, whether about music or buildings or anything else. Instead we will earnestly desire that we would reflect God's character not just as individuals, but also corporately – so that his name is glorified and those who are lost would be drawn to him through his church.

God has demonstrated his love through Christ. He alone is God and worthy to be worshipped. May all his people be able to join with the Psalmist in saying, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And being with you, I desire nothing on earth" (Psalm 73:25).

■ *Claire ministers with her husband, Andrew, at a church in Melbourne. Relying on God's help, she seeks to witness for him in her workplace at Myer and as a parent to her teenage sons. thelivos@bigpond.com*

Can Women Really Have It All?

BY JACQUELINE THAI

Wonder Woman: The myth of 'having it all'

by Virginia Haussegger (Allen&Unwin, 2005)

It all began with an opinion piece published in *The Age* a few years ago, in which one angry woman's venting over her disillusionment at the myth of women 'having it all' unleashed a national debate. In *Wonder Woman*, Haussegger delves deeper into the so-called myth. From infertility to motherhood, careers to relationships, Haussegger attempts to represent the sentiments and condition of most Australian women today who have been trying to juggle everything but have ended up failing. Drawing from personal experience, interviews with other women, and extensive social research, what she has discovered, since first vocalising her frustration, is that she is not alone. In the wake of feminism, numerous women have been left wondering what went wrong. Earnest and at times angst-driven, this broad and engaging examination of 'wonder women' reveals the double-edged sword of women's attempts to 'have it all'.

Interestingly, much of the book points to the frustration and discontent of women from all stages and situations in life, be they full-time mothers lamenting their lost careers, or infertile career women devastated that they have left childbirth till too late. Haussegger attributes this to the 'raw deal' offered to women under the guise of so-called 'choice'. After all, men need not worry about plummeting careers since they aren't required to take time out to have children. But in contesting the lack of choice for women, there seems to be an unwillingness to claim responsibility for choices actually made – such as delaying childbearing to pursue a career first. Instead, Haussegger seems to

blame feminism, patriarchal values, government or society for the absence of support and enlightenment; rather than attributing the issue to selfishness or ignorance. Though reluctant to prescribe a 'model' for living, Haussegger concludes by calling on women to collectively demand a 'better deal' from the workplace, government and society to facilitate women's ability to 'have it all'. However, it is troubling that Haussegger doesn't question whether or not 'having it all' is really the root of contentment.

As Christian women, how should we approach this issue? Whose myth is it, really? Knowing our self-worth and identity are found first in Christ, and not in the briefcase, partner, or bouncing baby, places the discussion in a whole different context. Our fulfilment does not come from 'having it all' in the worldly sense, as we already do have it all in Jesus, who came to give life to the full (John 10:10). Yet how many of us are still chasing this myth? Whilst *Wonder Woman* comes from a secular worldview, I believe this book gives valuable insight to an issue that still resonates with many Christian women. Given the gamut of choices we now have, it's helpful to discuss these issues to ensure expectations are realistic, whilst keeping in mind what really matters to God. Overall, I recommend this book as a useful tool for understanding women in contemporary Australian society, and for provoking further thought and self-reflection on what it really means to 'have it all'.

■ *Jackie Thai has recently graduated from the University of Melbourne and is currently working in the corporate sector. She attends St. Jude's, Carlton. jacqueline.thai@gmail.com*



It's not easy being green



BY JEN BEECHEY

In practice, jealousy takes many shapes. Boiled down, “bad” jealousy comes from a focus on self. Overcoming jealousy can come when we focus on God instead.

Part 1: Why is jealousy bad?

There are a couple of reasons why jealousy is bad. Firstly, jealousy can be destructive. People who act on their jealousy have been known to kill their own brother (Cain, Genesis 4), have people kicked out of home (Sarah, Genesis 16), sell people into slavery (Joseph’s brothers, Genesis 37), or just make the object of their jealousy miserable (Leah, Genesis 29,30; Peninnah, 1 Samuel 1).

We may not resort to killing anyone, but making someone’s life miserable is very plausible. Can you think of a time when you have felt you were valued less than someone else, when you have been jealous of the attention they received, or their status, popularity, abilities, or togetherness? Have you then been a little inclined to laugh at their difficulties rather than giving them a hand, or secretly celebrate when things go wrong for them, or even just do nothing when you have the opportunity to be Jesus for them?

Secondly, letting our jealousy guide or control us is not going to lead to good. In fact, while we are spending our energy focusing on our jealousy and on ourselves we will miss the point.

Part 2: What do you do about it?

Just as acting on our jealousy will help us miss the point, so to overcome it we should stick to the point. The writer of Ecclesiastes is clear about what he thinks ‘the point’ is:

“fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

This does sound a little simplistic. It is easy to say, but much harder to apply.

Do you remember the story of the prodigal son? A boy leaves home, rejecting his father and goes to another country. He wastes his inheritance, and it’s not until he is friendless, humiliated and completely poverty stricken that he decides to go home. His dad has been looking out for him every day since he left and runs out to meet him as he comes home. He throws a party, and it’s all good until big brother comes home.

And big brother is jealous. He wants to know what is going on and why his stinking brother gets a party. His father reminds older brother that he loves him, and that everything he has will

one day go to this son. The father tells him what you, the reader, are very aware of: this story is not about him.

And so we arrive at my point. To overcome jealousy, remember this:

1) God loves you. Like the father assured his older son in the story, you are extremely valuable. You are so valuable to God that he made you and bought you back from sin and death. You cannot get any more valuable, important, worthwhile or loved than you already are. You don’t need to be jealous of anyone else who is valuable, important, or worthwhile, and you certainly don’t need to add to your value by reducing theirs.

2) It’s not about you. The older brother was a small character in a bigger story. Like Ecclesiastes says, you are here to do what God wants, and what he wants is for you to love the people he puts near you. What stories are playing out in the lives of the people around you? The relationships you have are also for the benefit of others – it’s not always about you.

Jealousy, if not ultimately based in fear, is closely tied to it. As we focus on ourselves and what we have to lose, we become afraid, which then turns us further inward.

Check out this Leunig poem (from *Short Notes from the Long History of Happiness*) and see what you think:

There are only two feelings. Love and fear.

There are only two languages. Love and fear.

There are only two activities. Love and fear.

There are only two motives, two procedures,

two frameworks, two results. Love and fear.

Love and fear.

God’s taking care of you, so you don’t need fear. To overcome jealousy, choose love. Not in a theoretical sense, but day by day, jealous moment by jealous moment.

Choose love.

■ *Jenny Beechey is married to Mike, works for TEAR, and has been known to be jealous of people with tidy houses.*

A Jealous Pain in the Neck

BY JENI MITCHELL

I'm really a bit of a pain to be married to, I'm sure! Ask my long-suffering husband. I'm always wanting to spend time with him, asking him to go for a walk or have another outing with me (I like the outdoors and he likes a good book). I often just want him to listen to me while he's 100% focused on his own task. I must admit, with our third child starting at a missionary boarding school this year I thought maybe I'd now have too much of a good thing. I'd have him all to myself at home. How positive is this jealousy for his time and

fuel to love and listen to. But I realized I wasn't building lasting bridges in my marriage. I was sad and disappointed that my husband and I shared so little of those deeper feelings I shared with others.

When we made our marriage vows we promised to forsake all others, just as God asked his covenant people to 'have no other gods but me'. God says 'I will be their God and they will be my people'. He is a jealous God who sought a binding relationship with his people. Was I forsaking my marriage for a quick fix? Did I have a godly jealousy for a deeper relationship

operate in our marriage. Last year we worked as dorm parents to 28 teenage boys who attended a school with a conservative Christian ethos on women's roles. The guys were always watching how we operated – we didn't often fit the stereotype! I confess I'm not always proud of who I am and how we operate as a couple but we are usually honest about our failures and share our dilemmas. Whilst God wants us to reflect him well to others, it's what's in our hearts that's most important – not what others think. Do I forsake all others and jealously seek after my marriage as God does for his people? I don't mean to put my husband before the Lord, but to truly want the best for him and for us each day. Do I pray for him before I pray for others, do I share my thoughts and desires with him or does he hear them as I speak to others on the phone or read them in our prayer points?

I may be a pain in the neck to live with and I don't always get my priorities right but I'm convinced that God has given me a jealousy that seeks the best for my marriage. I make choices to pray with my husband when I could be praying with lots of others. I try to let him in on the deeper thoughts that I sometimes find easier to share with a girl-friend.

We model marriage to many people and are conscious that if we don't delight in our commitment to each other we leave a hollow model for others to follow. So, aware of my motives, I will continue to pursue my husband's time and energy. I will continue to be jealous for our relationship because I think this is a reflection of God's love for his people. God never gave up on his part of the covenant promise. He pursues his people jealously to the end, calling them to maintain and delight in their relationship with him.

■ *Jeni and her husband have been church planters in Melbourne and have spent the last four years working in the former Soviet Union for CMS and briefly in Germany. When they married, Jeni said they were a great team as long as they didn't work together! They are thankful for God's work in them!*

*my husband and I
shared so little of those
deeper feelings
I shared with others*

attention? How is jealousy in marriage a reflection of God's desire for relationship with us? Does this kind of jealousy build up our marriages and provide a helpful model for others?

After about five years of marriage I realized much of my emotional energy was being directed outside my marriage. It was all 'godly' stuff: I had a female prayer partner and a co-worker who I spent much time and energy with. They were lots of fun and we had little emotional baggage to address within our relationships. One friend was a similar personality type and the relationship required less energy than my marriage. It was fun! I also had three kids who took most of my emotional

with my husband? The New Testament also gives us a picture of marriage and commitment – that husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the church and wives submit to their husbands as to the Lord. It's a costly commitment for both people. I recently realized I had little trouble submitting to others as a sister in Christ but resented submitting to my husband. What personal cost do I allow, and with how much godly jealousy do I pursue my marriage above other temporal relationships?

We work in a post-Soviet secular culture where marriage is poorly rated and many people have few models of commitment. People are always watching how we

Two

BY CATHY ALTMANN

*The Saturday before
my breast is removed
it's hot
plastic door-flaps
smack
in the icecream shop*

I watch women enter

*two breasts
two breasts*

*two small breasts
in a pink T-shirt
(mine are larger!)*

*two full breasts
in a black singlet top
the skin
freckled at the cleavage
darker
under the arms*

*the breasts
breathe with the women
while metal
wounds the icecream
leaves hollows
behind each scoop*

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write of reply

ishah welcomes reader responses to topics dealt with in previous issues. These should be no more than 200 words long and can be emailed to ishahmag@hotmail.com or posted to *ishah*, c/-56 Collier Cres, Brunswick West, Vic, 3056.

Starting Point is a regular column that aims to encourage readers to engage with a contemporary issue in the media.

The Power of Forgiveness

Recently the former NSW state opposition leader, John Brogden, said something horrible about the wife of Bob Carr, then the NSW state premier. It became public, and Carr said he would "never forgive" Brogden.

Brogden was also being accused of sexual harassment, and the pressure of a series of (mostly unsubstantiated) articles drove him to a desperate measure: he attempted to take his own life. Immediately, Carr said he unconditionally forgave him for the slander against his wife.

What will it take for us to decide to forgive someone? Will it take public humiliation of the offender? Or evidence of the offender's suffering? What does it take for God to forgive us? What suffering does he put us through?

In fact, God offers us forgiveness as a free gift. All we have to do is receive it. And then he suggests we pass it on. Instead of desiring our suffering, he covers our offence by the suffering of his own Son.

Imagine that! Someone offends you, and instead of demanding their apology or public humiliation - you humiliate yourself, then offer to forgive them! Now that's worthy of a headline. That's the sort of forgiveness that transforms.

The power of forgiveness to transform was seen in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa. The mandate of the commission was to bear witness to, record, and in some cases grant amnesty to the perpetrators of crimes relating to human rights violations, reparation and rehabilitation. The crimes committed during the period of Apartheid that came before the TRC were horrific. The opportunity to tell the truth, and apply for amnesty, was liberating. It enabled a deeply divided society to move forward. The same model is also being used in East Timor. That's the power of forgiveness.

Who do you need to forgive?

■ *Kara Martin is a mother of two; director of a boutique Bible college; lecturer on the spirituality of friendship and a history of Christian spirituality; her past lives include TV journalism and management consultant. You can contact her at kara.martin.socs@rmc.nsw.edu.au*

