

I was stressed and
Angry, and didn't know why...
turns out I was
JEALOUS



Foreword:

My wife's jealousy is getting ridiculous. The other day she looked at my calendar and wanted to know who May was.

--Rodney Dangerfield

Jealousy comes primarily in two disagreeable flavors. One is the hurt and anger we feel when we've been betrayed, or the feelings we experience when we perceive a genuine threat. Infidelity, or flirtatious actions would fall in this category. Then our hurt and anger (within reasonable bounds) is an appropriate reaction because someone has been unfaithful and broken our trust. Even God feels this sort of jealousy (Joshua 24:19). (And yes, I consider flirting unfaithfulness-- but that deserves an article of its own.) The other bitter flavor is the imagined threat. It leaves a similar bad taste and generates a near identical, though perhaps less intense, emotional response as the first flavor; but is harder to recognize as jealousy. This other form of jealousy has other causes and remedies.

Jealousy can threaten even the most intense relationships. But it's hard to admit to others or to ourselves, when we're experiencing jealousy; even when we have legitimate reasons. To say we're jealous, makes us feel weak and vulnerable, and can also carry the added weight of guilt. A new job, someone starting school, caring for a baby, and even being active in a new church can awaken dark fears. And how do you tell the love of your life that you're feeling neglected? Especially when they've done no wrong, and are pursuing such noble goals. We often don't share what we're feeling. Embarrassment can be a reason why we're reluctant, but the truth is sometimes we don't ourselves understand the frustrations we feel. But be sure it will manifest itself in our actions and attitudes until it is dealt with in some fashion. There is no peace until the dragon jealousy is slain.

This booklet deals with the latter characteristic of jealousy, the imagined threat. Are you involved in something, anything, that is leaving someone in your life with less of you than they had before? Maybe they're the ones who are no longer as available as they were. You might have a problem. Indeed, take special care if jealousy was ever an issue before.

About Marcia

I was angry a lot. At the time I didn't know exactly why, though it felt like justifiable anger. You know, that rage you feel when you think someone is being unreasonable or maybe uncaring; but I was beginning to suspect maybe there was something deeper causing it. As it turns out, I was right. God in His mercy would in time show me what it was, and help me to change; but until that time my wife bore the brunt of my foul mood. To understand why, you need to know what was going on at this stage of our lives. Things had changed. We went from going to church an average of four times a week, to scarcely going at all. We investigated new places occasionally but hadn't found a place where I was comfortable, and wanted to attend regularly. I can't say that I was looking very diligently though. I was in no hurry really, and was growing quite content staying at home.

Marcia though had her own needs, and they weren't being met. Her spirit was always on the lookout for a place to plug-in and belong; So she listened with interest when her mom told her about a church starting in Corydon, Indiana. She made a point to visit, and she came home hopeful. She thought that maybe at last she had found a place to belong. She felt welcomed and needed when she was with them. It filled her hunger for belonging.

As for me I was sure I didn't want to go, I knew the parent church that was sponsoring them and assumed that this new congregation would just be a carbon copy. But we weren't involved anywhere, and I didn't feel right keeping her from something she so obviously desired. I told her to do what she wanted... but inside I wasn't happy and it made me edgy. It wasn't all out war but there were certainly frayed nerves as I struggled to repress and control my ill feelings. From time to time though, anger would surge to the surface like bubbles in a seething pot, and I would over react to some small annoyance. Marcia too had her own internal debates. She knew, though I was careful not to say so directly, I didn't want her going, and she was torn. She loved what she was doing, and didn't want to give it up.

I saw no future in her going someplace I didn't want to go. The problem was, how could I say don't go? So I didn't with words, but my actions spoke volumes. Things weren't good, so when she got with her new church friends you know what she did? She spoke good things about me.... imagine that. She was careful to build me up, and not tear me down. She praised my abilities, and spoke kind things about me, even though the situation had yet to be resolved. What a wise

wife!

During this tumultuous time she went away on a short retreat, and I began to pray more earnestly. I asked God why was I so mad? He began to open my eyes to how I was jealous and felt threatened. This new involvement of hers... well, it felt like losing her. That is what caused me to react the way I did. What I needed then was reassurance. I needed to know that she still loved me, and would always love me. But at least I was feeling more calm than before. Understanding of what I felt, and why, helped me begin to overcome my irrational behavior.

Still there was one other issue to resolve, and that was who was going to lead. I take this obligation in our family seriously, it's a teaching and charge of scripture, so we had a talk. It wasn't an easy discussion. She was defensive, and I was insistent. We wrestled with what would be the right thing to do... for us both. In the end she yielded, and told me she was willing to go where ever I chose; but because I had begun to make my peace with this new situation, I reconsidered.

More secure, at least in my mind, was her affection, and because she yielded, that issue was gone. I was thinking much more clearly now and began to consider my responsibilities. I knew I should be careful. Was I absolutely sure this wasn't what God wanted? I truly wanted to do the right thing. A husband and a father *should* do what is best for his wife and family by taking measure of their needs before his own. I wasn't *that* sure and decided that she ought to stay until I knew. I was willing, eventually, to give this new church a chance. Turns out *Old Capitol Community Church* was good for all of us.

The Source of My Fears.

Looking back now I can see that the source of my tension could be traced to my own outlook on things. My past experiences, and self-doubts grew these thorns of contention. My fears and doubts laid dormant for long seasons, only to spring forth when the climate was right, then the harvest that I reaped was pain and uncertainty. Marcia wasn't the source of my anger, the source was buried deep within my heart.

I met Marcia when I was still very young and became deeply infatuated with her, but it was a while before she felt the same about me. Even when we began dating, I was just another date for her, she had other dates and other interest. As for me, I made no demands. I was afraid that if I did so, she would just drop me. When I saw her, and would hear of these *other* dates, I would just suffer in silence. Eventually, I had to know where I stood with her, and I decided to go for broke. She would be my girl

exclusively or I would move on. I needed more commitment. Surprisingly, she chose me. After that, even after we married, I was sure that I loved her more than she loved me. In other words, I didn't think her commitment was the same as mine. Those feelings slept deep within my heart and would stir from time to time, filling my soul with pain. When you take those emotions, and blend them with my resistance to ever asking for what I wanted or needed; you have a recipe for sorrow. Pain is what I felt, but it hid behind a curtain of irritation. I was not aware of these fears and was unknowingly using anger as a shield against what I really felt. I needed her closer, but was pushing her away instead.

Understanding where my emotions originated took the blame off of my wife, and showed me the problem was within me. An old wound that I forgot I had, was aching. Old fears, like ghost, whispered of things long past, of fears that should no longer have dominion over my thoughts .

Dealing with Jealousy caused by Insecurity

- **Identify** the source of your jealousy. Could be there are some unresolved issues to be dealt with. Look closely at your past, often present difficulties have their origins there.
- **Lower** the tension level by being vulnerable. A confession of your fears, and where they began, will help the one you love understand your pain.
- **Find the power** to slay the dragon. When others love us, we can see the signs of their affection and can use that witness to diminish our fears. Talk it out and believe the witness of your life together.
- **Trust** the power of God. Emotions and desires may feel unchangeable and in charge but we can be delivered from their rule. The power of Christ in us trumps all!

My story could have ended differently. Without *understanding*, the rift between my wife and I could have continued to grow, and bitter would have been my harvest. Unresolved bitterness can put down deep roots and bear grievous fruits. And the effect of jealousy is like fire in the belly of those in its grip. The Bible warns us about jealousy and makes this observation . “**...Jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.**” Jealousy, can be one of the most destructive forces known. But while knowing what emotion was driving my behavior may have been enlightening, it was not the cure-- only the diagnosis. My feelings of foreboding may have been groundless, but *still I felt* threatened and needed my alarm level lowered.

Lowering the Threat Level---Somethings Gotta Give

When the Americans began encountering the civilians of Iraq there were (and still are-- I'm sorry to say) many tense moments. One in particular comes to my mind. A officer had entered a town, leading a group of his men. His ambition was to have a parley with the local religious leader. His desire, I suppose, was to ease the populaces fears. Unfortunately when the group of armed soldiers entered town their intentions seemed anything but peaceful to the Iraqis. The crowd was becoming agitated and the American officer knew that the situation was near critical. Then he did, what I consider, a very remarkable thing. He ordered his men to turn aside, take a knee, and point their weapons to the ground. He also ordered the soldiers to smile. This brave and wise act won the day. He lowered the crowds alarm and changed the mood of the encounter, successfully preventing the loss of life on both sides.

Likewise, even if you feel that you have done nothing wrong, be wise in a crisis an act to diffuse tensions. I have learned that often the hardest step in peace-making is the initial effort to broach an uncomfortable subject. Someone's gotta be first... someone's gotta be vulnerable. There are things that need to be said with honesty and love. Angry acts only escalate the tensions, but gentle explanations and questions further understanding. When two people learn to understand each other they open the door to intimacy and love. With effort we can change our defensive posture to one of cooperation.

Pain, anxiety, or fear are hard to own up to, but if these feelings rein in our

minds we should confess. Our confession gives our confessor reason and strength to overlook our irrational responses. Vulnerability invites tolerance and opens the door to assistance from the one we confide in.

Okay, now we can see the source of our feelings, and we have diagnosed the problem. But defining the illness is as I said is not the cure-- there must be change before all is well. For those of you that have tried and failed when you have attempted to cast aside jealousy, the next couple of chapters is for you.

The Witness of Love

Nothing can quiet our fear of what-might-be as well as our knowledge of what-has-been. What I mean is, when my fears of abandonment grew I had Marcia's witness of love to diminish my fears. She had stuck with me through good times and bad. Through countless small ways she had shown she loved me. Faithful is what she has always been. I knew this by her life of unwavering commitment to God and His ways. She was *not* a deceitful person. A rational man would have seen that he had no reason to fear. But the dragon jealousy had grown so large it hid these things from my view. When I, by prayer, understood I was moved by jealousy I was able to call on the witness of her love to bring the beast down to size. Inside I knew she loved me-- I just needed to believe that again. And if I needed more proof, her willingness to let go of something she wanted deeply, to be the wife she believed God wanted her to be was greatly reassuring. The cords that held us together were many and obvious.

Every choice that we make for the love of another bear witness to our love. A wise couple constantly confirm their love for each other in a myriad of ways. The constant affirmation of our love anchors us in the testing times by training us to trust the depth of these feelings. We can prepare for the storms by making our love for one another clear and sure.

Maybe your relationship is new and you don't have an extensive history to call on, there are things you still can do. The choices you make today, the ones you're making right now, can bear witness to your commitment and love. Sacrifice and service give solemn evidence of where our heart lies. Love is not selfish. And will give away even our most treasured possessions, and will relinquish our most fervent desires when the one we love has need. This kind of true love is easily recognized the moment we see it. It speaks loudly with the ring of truth few can doubt.

The witness of love is a resource we can cultivate and call on when jealousy comes, but when the dragon looms large we may still feel powerless. Fortunately not all our resources need come from within. God is waiting to help.

God as a Source of Power

The force of change can flow from many inward resources, but not every source we can draw on has enough strength to deliver us from self defeating thoughts or habits . When our traits are deeply ingrained, or false beliefs cloud our thinking, we may find our resistance to change nearly insurmountable. Being human we are bound by the limits of the power we are able to muster up and will at some time, in some circumstance, find ourselves helpless, held back by our frail humanity. Hence we have a need for more power, a power outside of ourselves. The Holy Spirit can be this source of strength. When the Spirit dwells within us we have access to His power , and His holiness. And we know the Spirit indwells those who call Jesus, Lord. With Him we now have the ability to win the battles that we would have lost before.

Have you ever heard the proverb, “Don't bring a knife to a gun fight.”? The old saw is easy to understand, because we see the obvious contrast in power. Sometimes we face huge problems and find we are too ill equipped to win. We're stuck, and though we know what we ought to do, we are too impotent to succeed.

The truth is we all struggle to change. The apostle Paul too, was well aware of his own battles and weaknesses. In his letter to the Romans he writes....

Romans 7:15-23 The Living Bible

15. I don't understand myself at all, for I really want to do what is right, but I can't. I do what I don't want to--what I hate.

16. I know perfectly well that what I am doing is wrong, and my bad conscience proves that I agree with these laws I am breaking.

17. But I can't help myself, because I'm no longer doing it. It is sin inside me that is stronger than I am that makes me do these evil things.

18. I know I am rotten through and through so far as my old sinful nature is concerned. No matter which way I turn I can't make myself do right. I want to but I can't.

19. When I want to do good, I don't; and when I try not to do wrong, I do it anyway.

20. Now if I am doing what I don't want to, it is plain where the trouble is: sin still has me in its evil grasp.

21. It seems to be a fact of life that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong.

22. I love to do God's will so far as my new nature is concerned;

23. but there is something else deep within me, in my lower nature, that is at war with my mind and wins the fight and makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. In my mind I want to be God's willing servant but instead I find myself still enslaved to sin. So you see how it is: my new life tells me to do right, but the old nature that is still inside me loves to sin. Oh, what a terrible predicament I'm in! ...

His sad observation was that he lacked the strength to change. With only his own resources he was doomed to a life of slavery! If we were to close the book after these lines, we could live out our lives in despair. A tragic tale without hope for anyone.

But Paul found hope. He goes on to say in the rest of verse 23,

...Who will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature? Thank God! It has been done by Jesus Christ our Lord. He has set me free. LVB

Despite our internal resistances we can do what is right by calling on His resources. For me, because I knew I was behaving badly, I sought help through prayer. The Bible promises wisdom to those who seek it from God-- in faith.

Jam 1:5-7

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

KJV

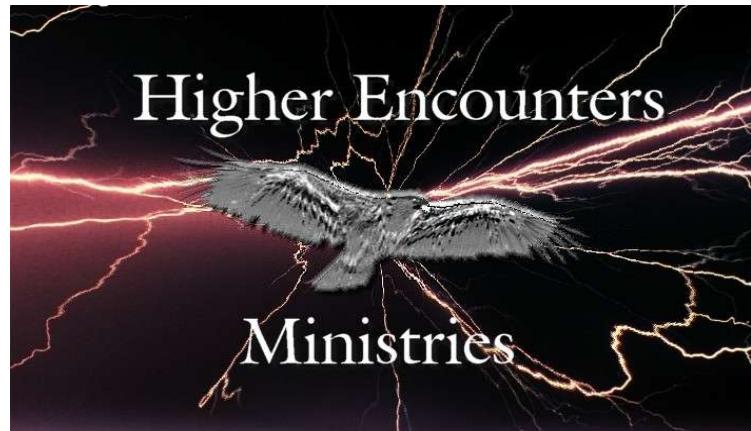
Don't make the mistake of leaving God out of your equation for change. Sure, sometimes you can call on your inward strengths and those will be enough.

But that is a weak strategy and will leave you more bruised than you need be.

You may remember the *Power Ranger* craze on T.V. Most episodes went something like this-- good guys and bad guys mix it up. Bad guy draws on his greatest power and grows to monstrous size prompting good guys to go giant also. Big bruising fight... good guys win. I say why not show up for the first fight as a giant? Step on the bad guy and be home in time for dinner. Why wait when you have problems and let them grow? Get God involved early and you can save yourself a lot of pain.

Isn't it great to know God is on our side. He wants us healed from our past hurts; and wont abandon us in our present struggles. And friend have no doubts, He has a glorious future in mind for His people.

higherencounters.org



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There's enough people lost in this world. So here's a map to find the way.

Higher Encounters Ministries is located on Highway 1638. You may take Dixie Highway (31W) to Muldraugh and at the light take highway 1638 west. We are the first drive past Otter Creek Park's main entrance on the right.

If coming from Brandenburg look for the Doll House craft shop. We are diagonally across the road from this business. The last drive on the left before Otter Creek Park's main entrance.

