

Why is God Jealous?

[James 4:4-5](#)

James, Day 18

You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"?

- James 4:4-5, ESV

Oprah Winfrey very famously gave up on her childhood Christianity when she thought about the idea that God is a jealous God. She reasoned that any God who was jealous of her couldn't be worth worshipping, and she gave up her profession of faith in Him. Since then, she has been her own god, and her most recent religious crusade is to encourage women to be proud of their abortions.

What Oprah missed, that we all need to see, is that God never says He is jealous **of** us (as if that were possible!), but He is jealous **for** us. Imagine that: The God of the Universe, who framed the worlds with His word, is jealous for us. James tells us why.

James tells us that Scripture says, "*He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us*" Rather than being a quote of a specific Scripture verse, James 4:5 is a summary of the teaching of the Bible on the theme of God's jealousy. James is telling us what Scripture teaches, rather than giving us the exact words of a particular verse.

Understanding that worldliness is idolatry and that idolatry is spiritual adultery is key to grasping this truth of the nature of God's jealous longing for His people. In the beginning, God created people in His image and breathed His very breath of life into us, making us living spirits, or living souls. This set us apart from all other creation. All other creatures were spoken into existence by God, but people were made by the hands of God (Adam from the ground and Eve from a rib of Adam) and then breathed to life by the breath of God. This makes us uniquely, preciously His.

For believers, our spirits have been resurrected from the spiritual death we inherited from Adam. So, not only were we created by God in His image, but our spirits have been raised from the dead to breathe spiritual life again. How? By His Spirit working in us - that is, by His breath blowing upon us. (In both Hebrew and Greek, the words for breath and spirit are the same.)

And what did it cost God to be able to resurrect us from the dead and give us eternal spiritual life, so that our spirits will never die again? It cost Him the life of His one and only precious Son. God loves us so much, He was willing to pay an unspeakably high price for our redemption, to buy us back to Himself.

So, we are doubly His, by unique creation and by costly redemption. And so He yearns jealously over the spirit He Himself has made to dwell within us. He is jealous for us, as a loving father and a devoted husband. It is a compelling and powerful love, and we are unfaithful to that love whenever we love the world. If we understand how much God loves us and how jealous He is for us, how could we casually embrace the spiritual adultery of worldliness?