

Bride of Christ

The Mission of the Church Part 02
Selected Passages 5-25-2014

Summary: We are called the bride to highlight our role of submission, the importance of our purity (to make us beautiful to Christ), and faithfulness (no adulterous inclinations or interests or sympathies or tolerances). To remain faithful we must be vigilant and we must foster love for God. One thing that will do that is understanding His love for us, which is seen in His protective jealousy.

Introduction.....	1
The Beautifying of God’s People.....	1
Review	2
Wifely Duty #1 – Submission	2
Wifely Duty #2 - Purity.....	3
Delight in the Bride.....	3
Presentation.....	4
Beauty through Purity	4
The Seven Churches.....	4
Purified By Jesus.....	5
...Through His Body	5
Wifely Duty #3 – Faithfulness	5
Adulterous Interest.....	6
Different Jesus	8
Different Spirit	8
Different Gospel.....	8
Love and Vigilance.....	8
Conclusion: Treasure God’s Jealousy	9
Application Questions (James 1:25)	10

Introduction

The Beautifying of God’s People

I want you to imagine for a moment that you are a woman - a woman who is hideously ugly. You are so ugly and so repulsive – not only in your appearance but also in your character and personality – that you have no friends. No one cares about you – not even your family. Your life is a horror. To make matters worse you get into an accident and become a quadriplegic – paralyzed from the neck down. Now you are utterly helpless. You are not good at anything. You have no talents, no skills, and everything about you is repulsive to people. You can’t even bathe or take care of yourself, and so you become filthy and disgusting.

And one day you meet a man who is very rich and who is the kindest, most gentle, most generous, most attractive, most wonderful man who has ever lived. And this man befriends you and decides to love you and asks you to marry him. The twisted, perverse hideousness of your life has even affected your mind and heart, and so at first you aren’t even interested; so you decline. But he doesn’t give up on you. He works hard to woo you and win your heart, and keeps at it until he has paid the highest imaginable price. Finally you fall in love with him and agree to marry him.

As the wedding approaches you have no friends to help you get cleaned up and dressed and made up so the bridegroom gets you ready. He performs surgery on you and repairs the damage to your body. He puts all his resources into making you beautiful.

When the wedding day arrives and the moment comes when you come into the view of the people, every single person there *gasps*. They stand there stunned by your beauty as you walk in. Tears stream

down the face of the groom. They are tears of joy – a joy so profound and intense that it was worth absolutely any sacrifice to have that joy - even the sacrifice of being tortured and crucified. Every single person there, even the people who do not like you, agrees that you are the most beautiful woman ever born.

That story is not a fairy tale. It is a true story. That is the story of Christ and the Church. In the Old Testament it was the story of God and His people Israel. Here is God's way of telling the story. (At the beginning when He describes our disgusting hideousness, instead of picturing us as an ugly woman He pictures us like an aborted fetus with the placenta still attached).

Ezekiel 16:4 On the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to make you clean ...or wrapped in cloths. 5 No one looked on you with pity ... Rather, you were thrown out into the open field, for on the day you were born you were despised. 6 "'Then I passed by and saw you kicking about in your blood, and as you lay there in your blood I said to you, "Live!" 7 I made you grow like a plant of the field. You grew up and developed and became the most beautiful of jewels. Your breasts were formed and your hair grew ... 8 "'Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign LORD, and you became mine. 9 "'I bathed you with water ...10 I clothed you with an embroidered dress and put leather sandals on you. I dressed you in fine linen and covered you with costly garments. 11 I adorned you with jewelry: I put bracelets on your arms and a necklace around your neck, ... 13 You became very beautiful

Old Testament and New, God has always described His people as being like His wife. And way up near the top of God's list of things to do is to make His wife gorgeous – to make her a stunning beauty.

Review

This is sermon #3 in our study of the mission of the church.

- 1) What is the church?
- 2) What is the church supposed to do?
- 3) What method does God want us to use to do it?

And to answer that first question – What are we? – we are focusing on the most common descriptions we find in Scripture of the church – Body of Christ, Household of God, Temple of the Spirit, Holy Priesthood, and Bride of Christ. We have already looked at the first two – body and household. And today I want to focus on bride.

God could have used any analogy in the universe to describe what He wants His church to be, and more than a half dozen times He chooses this metaphor of a bride. What is that supposed to teach us about how we are to be? When we are trying to decide, *Should we get involved in politics? Should we do community service? Should we preach on street corners? Should we have small groups and Bible studies?* – how does the analogy of a bride help us answer practical questions about how we should use our resources and what our priorities should be? We know the body idea teaches us the concepts of how we all have different roles contributing toward one objective, and the importance of growing to maturity. We know the household idea teaches us that we are to behave as God's children and as siblings and servants and stewards of grace toward one another. But what does the idea of bride teach us? What are our wifely duties?

Wifely Duty #1 – Submission

The first one is in Ephesians 5.

Ephesians 5:24 Now as *the church submits to Christ*, so wives should submit to their husbands

The reason God designed marriage roles so that wives submit to husbands is to illustrate the relationship between the church and Christ. The submission of the church is such an obvious, essential fact that Paul does not even command it. He just assumes it. Does that mean every church obeys *perfectly*? No. But it does mean that every true church is made up of people whose goal in life is to submit to Jesus Christ.¹ People who refuse to bow the knee to Christ are not Christians – even if they have been baptized and serve on the deacon board and everything else. No matter how many crosses on the building and how steep the steeple is – no group of people is a church unless it is a group of people whose goal in life is to submit to Jesus Christ. There is no more fundamental definition of a Christian. And so as a whole, the Church is comprised of nothing but Christ obeyers.

And the same is true of the church as a group. A “church” that refuses to obey the Lord, or that knowingly continues in disobedience without repentance – that is not a real church. When a church wants to adjust the Bible so they can gain favor in the eyes of the culture – and they say, “Homosexuality is ok as long as you’re committed,” or, “Anyone who is sincere in his religion will go to heaven even if he’s never heard of Jesus” – that is not a church. A church can be wrong in their interpretations of difficult passages of Scripture and still be a true church, but when they start twisting the plain, essential things to accommodate the culture – that is where they stop functioning as a church.

Wifely Duty #2 - Purity

So that is one reason God uses this wife analogy. But that is not the only aspect of the analogy. If all God wanted to do was emphasize submission He could have just stuck with the child and slave metaphors. What else is being conveyed in this bride metaphor?

Delight in the Bride

Pleasure. The bride metaphor teaches us the superlative enjoyment Christ takes in His bride.

Isaiah 62:5 As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.

Christ is pictured as our bridegroom because bridegrooms are really, really happy about getting their bride. Now, does that strike you as hard to believe – that the Lord feels that way about you? For some reason there seems to be a resistance to the emphatic statements in the Bible about how much delight God takes in His people. When God looks at His people, and sees what the Spirit is doing in them, and sees their faith in His Son, He experiences emotions and feelings that can only be compared to those feelings a man feels when his breath is taken away by his wife’s beauty at the wedding – and the wedding night. I believe that is the primary reason why the church is called the bride of Christ.

Every bride wants to be beautiful. And every husband wants a beautiful bride. I have never once met a groom that said, “Oh, I just hope that everyone at the wedding thinks I’m handsome when I walk in.” Most men, if you asked, “Would you rather have everyone gasp in amazement when you walk in, or you lose your breath when your bride walks in because of her stunning beauty?” they would choose the latter. If they could only have one, they would much rather have a beautiful wife than be good-looking themselves. God designed males to be able to gain enormous amounts of pleasure just from looking at a beautiful woman. Grooms want to look at a beautiful bride and brides to want to be looked at as beautiful. God made us that way in order to make us understand something about Him. Christ desires a beautiful, stunning, gorgeous, glorious wife. And our great desire should be to be beautiful to Him and delightful in His eyes.

¹ If the church submitting to Christ were not a fundamental reality, this command would not make sense. If you are trying to make a strong point that someone should do something, you compare it to something that is certain, not to something that may or may not happen. For example, you might say, “Just as guard dogs bark at intruders, so fathers should protect their children.” But you would never say, “Just as birds are yellow, so fathers should protect their children.” You wouldn’t say that because birds aren’t always yellow, so it wouldn’t make your point. So when Paul says just as the church submits to Christ so wives should submit to their husbands, the implication is that submitting to Christ is fundamental to what a church is.

Hebrews 12 says that it was for the joy set before Him that Jesus endured the cross. He had His eye on the joy that was coming, and that joy made the cross more than worth it. And a big part of that joy He had His eye on was that moment when the bride will be presented to Him.

Presentation

Most of the language that refers to the church as a bride focuses on a future wedding day. Someday the Church will be presented to the Lord Jesus Christ like a bride being presented to the groom. That presentation is discussed numerous times in Scripture – more often than the rapture.² I don't know why the end-times enthusiasts don't ever have presentation day on their end times charts, or write books about the wedding like they do about the rapture, because it sounds to me in Scripture like presentation day might be Jesus' favorite part of the whole end times. And we should be excited about it too.

Beauty through Purity

Now, what is it about you that is so delightful to Him? We just saw it in Ephesians 5.

Ephesians 5:27 He did this to present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and blameless.

That is what makes us beautiful to Him. Every man has certain things that strike him as especially beautiful. And if a woman has those characteristics he could enjoy gazing at her all day long. Some men like blonds, some like brunettes - for Jesus, the characteristics that gives Him that kind of pleasure to gaze upon are righteousness and purity and holiness. That is so beautiful to Jesus that He dreamed of having a wife like that. And He wanted it so bad, according to Titus 2 He was willing to pay the ultimate price to get it.

Titus 2:14 Jesus Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Jesus wanted this so much He died on the cross to have it. That is how much Jesus wants a people who not only obey, but who do so eagerly. We are a people who are eager to do everything Christ has commanded because we love His laws. We love His way. We love Him, and so we love every word that comes out of His mouth. We trust that His way is best, and so when He leads us in that way we love it and are eager to follow. That is what Jesus cares about.

The Seven Churches

When you look at all of Christ's critiques of the seven churches in Revelation 2-3, it is telling how little is said about what they *accomplished*, and how much is said about their *righteousness and holiness*. Just read through it. Not a word about how many people they reached. Not a word about how many programs they had going. But lots and lots and lots of material about their holiness and purity. If you read through all the rebukes and all the praises, you will find it is all focused on eight things – separation from sin, love, commitment to the truth, humility, trust, spiritual progress, hard work, and perseverance.

That is not to suggest that ministries and reaching people and all that is unimportant. It is just that Jesus' way of evaluating those things was from the perspective not of outcomes, but of effort. The churches that were doing a lot of that were praised, not for their results, but for their hard work. To Ephesus He says, **I know your works, your labor ... You ... have endured many things because of My name, and have not grown weary (2:2-3)**. To Thyatira - **I know your works-- your ... service (2:19)**. Why is the focus on how hard they worked rather than on results? Because the thing that makes the church beautiful in His eyes is character – obedience – purity. He cares about our hearts.

²The presentation of the bride to the Bridegroom is spoken about in Eph.5, 2 Cor.1, 1 Col.1, 2 Cor.4, Rev.19 and Rev.21.

Purified By Jesus

So who does this work of purification? Jesus Himself. Just like the story I told you at the beginning – the Groom cleanses and purifies His own bride and makes her beautiful.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as also Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her,²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her in the washing of water by the word.²⁷ He did this to present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and blameless.

...Through His Body

So making the bride beautiful is the work of Christ But what did we learn in week one about how the work of Christ gets accomplished? He does it the same way you do your work – through His body, which means if the work of Christ is to make His church holy, then that is our task – to make ourselves holy.

2 Corinthians 7:1 ... let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness in fear of God.

1 Peter 1:22 ... you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth ...³

What is the mission of the church? What is our task in this world? God is saying to us, “I want you to gather together, marshal your resources, and ... do something about your hair. One of the main purposes of your gathering and functioning together as a church is for you to get some lipstick on, and get your dress fitted, and get in shape, maybe some eye shadow, and become beautiful.” And how is that done? Righteousness.

Revelation 21:2 I also saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. ... 7 Let us be glad, rejoice, and give Him glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has prepared herself. 8 She was permitted to wear fine linen, bright and pure. For the fine linen represents the righteous acts of the saints.

It says **she prepared herself** by carrying out righteous acts, but those righteous acts are seen as a gift that was graciously given to her. They are our responsibility, but ultimately they come from God. In fact, if we read a little further in Revelation 21 we find out that the source of the beauty is none other than the very glory of God.

9 ... "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."¹⁰ He then ...showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,¹¹ arrayed with God's glory. Her radiance was like a very precious stone, like a jasper stone, bright as crystal.

When we do righteous acts we reflect the Lord's glory like jewels reflect glorious light.

So this is what we need to strive for. If someone tries to tell you that the main work of Christ is out there in the world, and the work of making the saints more holy and righteous is secondary – just let your Bible flop open anywhere in the New Testament and read whatever passage it opens up to. Do that 50 times, and out of those 50 times there is a very strong probability that all 50 of them will be passages designed to bring the saints to greater holiness and purity. That is the work of Christ – washing His bride with the water of the Word to make the church holy and blameless.

Wifely Duty #3 – Faithfulness

So why are we called His bride? Because we are to submit to Him and we are to be a delight to Him through pursuing holiness and purity. What else? There is one particular aspect of purity that stands out in

³ See also 1 Jn.3:3, James 4:8, and Ez.18:31.

the passages that call us Christ's wife, namely, faithfulness. When we are unfaithful to Him – when we show interest in some other philosophy or belief besides what the Bible teaches, or when we seek joy and fulfillment from some other source besides God, the Bible calls that spiritual adultery against Him.

Marriage is a unique kind of relationship. It is the only relationship that requires exclusive love. You can have love for multiple children, multiple friends, multiple family members, multiple pets, but not multiple spouses. It is the only kind of love that is exclusive – it can only have one object and all others are excluded. Why is that? God made it that way to teach us about the relationship between Jesus and the Church. Love for God is exclusive. Just as a wife is to love her husband alone, so we are to love Christ alone, and when we start to show interest in this world or other philosophies, that feels to Jesus the same way it feels to you if you see your spouse sleeping with someone besides you.

When the New Testament was written, they had a very different approach to engagement or betrothal than we do. As soon as the couple got engaged (betrothed) they were legally married. But they did not move in together or consummate the marriage physically until months later when the wedding celebration took place. And during that period it was the father's job to guard the purity of the bride so that on the wedding day he could say to the groom, "I am presenting you with a pure virgin." That is the custom behind the language of 2 Corinthians 11. The Corinthian church was tolerating false teachers – which is like committing adultery against Christ. So Paul, who is in the role of a father of that bride, is alarmed.

2 Corinthians 11:2 I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. 3 But I fear that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your minds may be corrupted from a complete and pure devotion to Christ.

God requires complete and pure devotion

Anything short of a complete and pure devotion to Christ is adultery. Does that mean perfect devotion? No. But it does mean the kind of complete, whole-life kind of commitment that you make when you put a ring on someone's finger and say, "I do." And that is exactly what the Corinthians had. Look at verse 3 – he does not say that they had lost that yet. What he says is that he feared that they might. He was warning them because there was a real possibility that on their current course their minds would become corrupted and they would fall from their complete and pure devotion to Christ.

Adulterous Interest

The interesting thing about that is he does not rebuke them for accepting a false gospel – just for listening to one and giving those people a hearing. That is where unfaithfulness to God starts. Adultery does not begin with marrying another man. It begins with being enticed in some subtle way and having the desires of the heart drift toward that enticement. The starting place of adultery is fostering desires for another man or being interested in him. And it is the same with spiritual adultery. Long before a person actually starts believing a false doctrine, the unfaithfulness starts when that person just starts giving it a sympathetic hearing.

Take a very, very close look inside your heart. Which way does it lean? The issue is not only what you believe, it is also what you *want* to believe. Your bias. Most of what we believe about good and evil we believe because we are biased in the direction of that belief – which is fine. Bias is not a bad thing. You can be biased toward goodness and truth or you can be biased toward falsehood and evil. When someone makes a truth claim it lands on your heart in a certain way. You hear it and either your heart says, "Ooh – I like that. I hope it's true!" or it says, "Oh man, I don't like that. I sure hope it's not true." And one way to get an idea of which way your heart leans is by watching how much evidence it takes to convince you of certain things. When you have a bias toward wanting to believe something it takes very little evidence to convince you. When you have a bias against believing that thing it takes a huge amount of evidence to convince you (and if the bias is strong enough, no amount of evidence can convince you).

There are people who hear the gospel and they realize that if it is true, that means they are going to have to give up some things that are precious to them. And so their heart begins to hope it doesn't prove true. So they actually develop a bias against the truth. And then they come across some professor or some book or some TV program that claims to disprove Christianity, and even though the arguments are very weak, the person is totally convinced.

Then they meet someone who offers evidence that Christianity is true, and this evidence is ten times as substantial and compelling, and it is not enough for them. ("Yeah, but what about this and what about that...") And they point out all the problems they can think of with Christianity. But none of the much larger problems with non-Christianity bother them in the least.

And even as Christians we are constantly in danger of slipping into sinful biases in favor of error. Very often it comes out of a desire to be accepted and respected by the world. Some of the world's doctrines are so precious to them that they will mock anyone who does not buy into them. For example...evolutionism (the world created itself), universalism (all religions lead to heaven), naturalism (the laws of physics are the only factor in determining what happens), subjectivism (good and evil are determined and measured by my opinion only and not by God or any other absolute standard that stands above me), etc. And if you do not buy in to all those dogmas and doctrines that they hold so dear, they will mock you as being superstitious and they will not take you seriously.

Beyond that, if you hold to the doctrines of Scripture they will be offended. They hate the truth about hell, God's justice, God's mercy, God's sovereignty. And they really hate Jesus' claims of deity and exclusivity. And the more clearly you proclaim those doctrines the more offended they will get.

And so out of a desire to be accepted and respected by the world, many Christians develop a bias in their heart toward wanting to believe some of the world's doctrines, and a bias toward not wanting to believe certain aspects of the gospel. And so they give the world a sympathetic hearing- more sympathetic than the hearing they give God on those subjects.

And that is a very bad thing to do – not just because it leads toward error (eventually you will reject the truth and embrace error), but also because that bias and inclination itself is adulterous. The truth of Scripture comes right out of God's very heart. So when you prefer the doctrines of the world to what the Bible says, when your heart hears the world's ideas and says, "*I like that – I hope it's true,*" (or "I like that, I wish it were true"), - when you prefer the world's ideas to the very thoughts of God's own heart, that is just a like a woman who sees another man and prefers him to her own husband. It is adultery against God.

If your husband thinks long hair is beautiful, and some guy at work thinks short hair is beautiful so you cut your hair short – that is a bad sign. If we find ourselves caring more about what the world thinks is beautiful and respectable than what God thinks is beautiful, we are sliding into adultery.

If you have sexual desires and you think someone at work is the key to fulfillment rather than your husband, that is adulterous. And if you are depressed or sad or unfulfilled in life and you think the solution is for people to treat you better or more money or a better job or better health – rather than the presence of God, that is adulterous. And James 4 teaches that if you have that kind of attitude you will be full of anger all the time.

Spiritual adultery is a problem for individuals and it is a problem for whole churches. More than one of the churches in Revelation is rebuked not for believing false teaching, but for tolerating it. It just creates too much turmoil in the church to deal with false teachers. Or it seems too judgmental. People will say you are micromanaging or being too narrow or legalistic or whatever other religious-sounding criticism they can think of. And so many church leaders just do not have the backbone to deal with that. Or they are just too lazy. Overseeing all the teaching and guarding against error and evaluating teachers is a very, very difficult task that requires a lot of time and energy. And very often pastors just decide they are too busy to deal with that. Especially if the teacher is a woman. Thyatira was rebuked for tolerating a female false teacher. That is very common because in most churches any training and evaluation of teachers, if they offer at all, is all designed for male teachers. And the women are just left to do whatever they want. And so the church leaders fail to protect the women in the church from the greatest danger out there – false teaching.

Three Boyfriends

According to verse 4 the Corinthians were falling into infidelity in three areas. If your wife has a boyfriend, that is bad. If she has three other boyfriends, that is really bad. That is what the Corinthians had.

4 For if a person comes and preaches another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you had not received, or a different gospel, which you had not accepted, you put up with it splendidly!

Different Jesus

The first one was a different Jesus. False religion always wants to adjust our perception of Jesus away from what is portrayed in the Bible. The world is forever trying to invent a Jesus who did not claim to be God, who does not make many demands of His followers, who did not talk so much about hell, and who does not require 100% commitment if you want to be one of His followers. And when the people start to find some of those ideas intriguing, that is a sign that the bride's heart is drifting from faithfulness to Christ.

Different Spirit

Secondly, a different spirit. It is through the Holy Spirit that you have personal, relational interaction with God. Millions of people want that. But they come up with ways of having personal interaction with God that do not match what is in Scripture. That is a false holy spirit. They try to have a relationship with God that bypasses Jesus Christ – or bypasses the truth of Scripture, so that it is a matter of mystical experiences that are based on gut feelings rather than on the objective, propositional truths of God's Word. There is a movement known as the "contemplative prayer" movement (also called the "spiritual formation" movement or the "higher life" movement). Whatever you call it – any movement that downplays knowledge of God's Word in favor of gut feelings is a movement toward a bogus holy spirit.

Different Gospel

Then their third boyfriend was a different gospel. Instead of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, people want to come up with other ways to salvation – like salvation through baptism. Or salvation through sacraments (like in the Roman Catholic Church). Or earning your way to heaven through good works. Or salvation through inviting Jesus into your heart or praying the sinner's prayer.

There are a lot of false gospels. In fact, you can preach a false gospel without ever saying anything false. This happens in thousands of churches. Everything the preacher says is true, but he leaves out some essential parts (like repentance). We need to give people the whole thing.

Acts 20:21 I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus... ²⁶ I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. ²⁷ For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.

If you leave out some of the less popular parts you can draw a huge crowd in your church, but a lot of that crowd will end up in hell and their blood will be on that preacher's head. The Corinthians were not buying in to any of that, but they were allowing it in their church, which was adultery against God.

Love and Vigilance

How can we make sure that never happens at Agape? We can't. If there were something that could be done to guarantee that a church will never go astray, Paul would have done it during the three years he was training up leaders in Ephesus. But instead, the day he left he told them, "Be ready, because sooner or later some wolves will arise from your own number" (Acts 20:30). Paul had been around long enough to

know that no matter how well you train the leaders, this will happen. There is nothing we can do to guarantee it won't happen here. But there are some things we can do to make it less likely.

First, we need to remain vigilant. That is what Paul told the Ephesian elders to do. Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock. We need to be alert and vigilant and on our guard.

The other thing we can do to avoid committing adultery against Christ is to keep increasing our love for Him. You are familiar with our slogan – expressing, spreading, and deepening delight in Christ. We want to constantly work on deepening our love for Him. That is the best protection against adultery – work on the marriage.

Psalm 73:27 ... You destroy all who commit adultery against You. ²⁸ But as for me, the nearness of God is my good

The opposite of one who commits adultery against Him is one who considers His nearness to be his good. We are always looking to something as our good. And if it is anything besides His nearness, we are adulteresses. But if we treasure nearness to Him above all, that will keep us faithful.

Conclusion: Treasure God's Jealousy

Let me close by pointing out something that will help you with that. One of the keys to loving God more is gaining a greater understanding and appreciation of His love for you. Do you remember how that 2 Corinthians 11 passage started?

2 Corinthians 11:2 I am jealous for you with the jealousy of God.

We all know there are wrong kinds of jealousy. But the right kind is a wonderful encouragement, because it is evidence that you are loved. You don't get jealous if some woman you don't love goes off with another man. But the more you love your wife, the more jealous you are if she goes off with another man. If there is a young woman who is desired by no one, whose affections no one wants, as she becomes aware of how unwanted she is she will despair with feelings of worthlessness. If there is a man she deeply loves and desires, and that man hears a rumor that she is in love with someone else, and when that man hears that rumor he doesn't care in the least, that will break her heart. But if when that man hears that rumor he weeps, that will thrill her heart because it shows that he loves her. It should thrill our hearts when we hear the news that God is jealous for our love.

When we go after some other philosophies, how jealous is God for our love?

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

God's love for us is so strong that Jealousy is His middle name.

The good kind of jealousy is when you feel pain, anger, loss, and sorrow when you lose the affections of someone whose love rightfully belongs to you. If someone else is becoming the object of your spouse's romantic or sexual love, or if someone besides you is your spouse's best friend, you should be jealous. And if you are not it means you don't love your spouse properly. A non-jealous husband, who is indifferent about his wife's affections, is a man who just simply does not love his wife. If he does not desire her exclusive love and cares nothing about her unique affection, he does not love her. If her faithful romantic affection means nothing to him it is because he does not desire that affection, which means he does not love her. If he does not care whether he is desired by her, it is because he does not desire her.

And a wife in a marriage like that is to be pitied. It is a terrible thing for a woman to be married to a man who is indifferent about her love. If she falls in love with another man and her husband doesn't care, it is because her love is worth nothing to him. When a man deeply loves a woman he will do anything to win her heart because her heart means the world to him.

Do you realize that God's jealousy is the only thing that gives your love for Him any value? If your faithful love for God meant nothing to God, then your faithful love for God would be utterly worthless, which means you would be utterly worthless because if the best thing about you is worthless, then you

really are worthless. The only thing that gives my existence any meaning or value at all is the fact that my love means something to God. What an amazing gift of grace that I have something that God wants!

Beyond that, it is God's jealousy that is behind His work of preservation. God built jealousy into marital love to protect the sacred marriage relationship. Jealousy stands like a guard against any third party that would break in and destroy the holy, precious, beautiful exclusivity of marital love. And that is how I know God is at work protecting my heart from unfaithfulness. My sinful heart is so prone to wander from God, and so prone to drift off toward some earthly thing, that if God were not constantly working in my heart to preserve my love for Him, I would fall away from Him and apostatize completely every day.

If you want to feel loved by God, feel His jealousy. When you sin He brings consequences. Why? Because He is jealous. When you seek Him He rewards you with His presence. When you fall into self-deception He uncovers that with conviction from the Holy Spirit. When others try to deceive you He protects you by opening your eyes and alerting you with His Word. When you begin to falter He sends godly men and women to strengthen you or rebuke you or encourage you or give you whatever you need.

Benediction: Jude 24 To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy- 25 to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

Application Questions (James 1:25)

- 1) Given your gifts, abilities, and desires, what do you think God wants you to do over the next 12 months or so to make Agape Bible Church more beautiful to Christ?
- 2) Has there ever been a time in your life when you remember being enticed by or attracted to wrong doctrines? If so, describe that time to the group as a warning.
- 3) Do the statements about Christ's extreme delight in His bride apply to you?