

WORD

¹And God spoke all these words: ²"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ³"You shall have no other gods before me. . . . ⁵You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments." EXODUS 20:1-3,5,6

WHAT

The Ten Commandments is the core of God’s message for His people when He brought them out of slavery from Egypt. To many, it is simply a set of rules, but more than that, it sets apart the people that God calls His own. The first commandment reveals an attribute of God—a jealous God, likening His love to a relationship of a husband to his wife. What does the jealous God demand of us? How can we apply this knowledge in daily life?

1 The jealousy of God means that He must be our first priority.

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.
2 CORINTHIANS 11:2

God is rightfully jealous for us not only because He created us but also because He bought us with His precious blood (Revelation 5:9; Hebrews 9:22). God’s jealousy is not about His needs or ego but is an expression of wanting a sincere and pure devotion. This jealousy is known by its pull to bring us back to God’s purposes and plans for our lives (2 Corinthians 11:2,3). What has God done in and for you that makes Him deserving to be your first priority?

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2 The jealousy of God means He demands holiness.

⁴"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God . . ." EXODUS 20:4,5

In Moses’ time when people worshiped all kinds of gods in many forms, God demanded for His people to be unlike their pagan neighbors, forbidding the worship of any idol. An idol is anything that takes the place of God; anything that becomes a source of security, meaning, and value. This jealousy of God means that He demands holiness, loyalty, and exclusive worship from His people. Ultimately, God’s goal for us is Christ-likeness (Romans 8:29). When do we know that someone or something has become an idol in our lives?

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3 The jealousy of God means He desires a loving relationship with His people.

¹⁰This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. . . . ¹⁹We love because He first loved us. 1 JOHN 4:10,19

Understanding that His jealous love is His commitment to seeing and making us become all that we were destined to be, we are compelled to respond in like manner. We then get to read the commands of God not simply as a set of rules, but as real romantic letter of covenant language. For Him to say, "I am your God" is to say "I am giving myself to you." What is the greatest expression of God’s love for us? Through Whom did He show it?

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