

*Are you a loving or a jealous spouse? Helpful ways to handle spouse jealousy*

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## Introduction

Many people would agree that love is the glue that sustains relationships. Without love in action, relationships that have good beginnings will not last. Love brings a man and woman together and sustains their friendship for life. It is a station within the hearts of the couple where they refuel their emotions to continue the journey of life. Love is the energy that empowers a husband and wife to walk together through the long journey of life that is full of ups and downs.

I met Asayech<sup>1</sup> in the northern part of Ethiopia while I was facilitating a training on Divorce Mitigation Strategies. The training was offered to religious leaders, community elders, and government employees in the area. Asayech was delegated by her congregation to attend the training. The participants were divided into groups and held discussions on major causes of divorce in the area. Her group mentioned the absence of love between husband and wife as one of the causes of divorce. Asayech stated, "Love that leads to envy/jealousy is a cause for divorce." Others disagreed with her by saying, "Love is jealous." Hot argument began between her and the group members. Few of the group members supported her view.

I was standing beside the group and listening to their arguments. I was curious to know how it would end. For Asayech, love is a free gift to someone and does not depend on the partner's good behavior. She mentioned that love lets the loved one to be him/herself. Some of her group members did not agree with her. They said that love that does not want to protect the loved one for him/herself is not authentic. They cited God as an example. God loves, but he is also jealous. He does not let his people deviate from his way and worship other gods. At that point, Asayech could not move forward to argue with the group members.

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<sup>1</sup> Names of people in this lesson are fictional. They were created by the author for illustration.

While in hot discussions, the groups broke for tea/coffee. I remained behind to go for tea; Asayech took a cup of coffee quickly and returned to talk to me. She told me an unbelievable story from her personal experience. She was raised by a woman who was her distant relative. Asayech had helped her with household chores. When she reached the age of marriage, the woman negotiated with a man in the village to marry Asayech. The deal worked out and Asayech and the man married. The man was older than her and had promiscuous behavior.

One day, they went to another village to visit a friend. While they were returning, just when they reached near to their village, he walked too fast. She asked, "Why are you walking too fast? I can not catch up with you!" He responded, "I have an appointment with my lover," without shame of talking to his wife about his love affair. She was shocked with what she heard and said, "First let us go to our home and then you can go." He agreed and they went to their home. Asayech brought him clean clothes and asked him to dress neatly which he did, and then she said, "Now, you can go; but tell her that you have a lovely wife." He went to meet his lover.

Asayech treated her husband kindly while he was engaging in bad behavior that could hurt him and her. She did not speak to him to stop his behavior. She just became a nice wife to him. He thought she would take revenge against him by having affairs with other men. That was what other women had been doing in the community. However, she remained faithful to him. The village people saw the differences between the couple. Her faithfulness to him became a surprise to her husband. He became angry with his own behavior. He decided to stop his promiscuous behavior; but he repeatedly failed to terminate the behavior. His friend told him to believe in Jesus to overcome his bad behavior. He said, "If Jesus helps me, I will believe in him." His friend took him to the church and Asayech's husband accepted Jesus as his personal savior. He was given biblical teaching and began praying.

With God's grace and support from fellow believers, he overcame his bad behavior and that became a surprise for his friends

who knew him for many years. The village women came and congratulated Asayech for the change in her husband's behavior. She also came to know Jesus through her husband's testimony. Now, they are happily married and have four children.

I could not believe my ears. But it was a true story; a testimony of victory over the adversary. I came to get a sense of why Asayech said that love is unconditional and does not make someone jealous. However, some questions flashed into my mind. How could she dare to share her husband with other women? Did she hide/repress her jealousy or was she free of it? Was her reaction what psychiatrists call pathological tolerance?<sup>2</sup> What is the relationship between love and jealousy: do both co-exist?

From what I heard, I do not think she experienced pathological tolerance. Asayech's tolerance to the affairs of her husband with other women was used as a strategy not to lose him. She weighed between fighting with him and tolerating his bad actions. She chose the second one and though painful for a short time, it finally bore a good result for her. Her tolerance of her husband's bad behavior triggered a guilty conscience which helped her husband to examine his behavior critically. She became a good mirror for her husband to see himself.

She did not deny that she did not feel jealousy when her husband told her that he went to meet with other women in the village. She planned how to turn him away from the women once and for all. She was a positive deviant in the village. The other women in her village fight with their husbands or get involved in affairs with other men to take revenge against their husbands. However, Asayech did not act like them. Asayech handled jealousy in such a manner, how about you? Do you think her strategy is applicable in your situation? What other techniques may help you to handle jealousy?

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<sup>2</sup> Pathological tolerance is a term that refers to a situation where a spouse should be jealous but is not. It is described as a clinical syndrome. The idea was developed by psychiatrist Emil Pinta as quoted in Malakh-Pines, Ayala. *Romantic Jealousy: Causes, Symptoms, Cures*. 1998, P. 46

## What is jealousy?

Jealousy is the experience of most people in the marriage relationship. I do not exempt myself from the experience too. Though we have some kind of experience in jealousy, we need to define the concept so that we can have a common understanding about it. I think experiencing jealousy does not entail that we have a clear conceptual understanding of the term. Therefore, defining the concept is appropriate.

The root word for jealousy is zeal which means "to burn with an intense fire." Jealousy is then burning with intense emotion. Some explain jealousy as a hybrid of various emotions such as sadness, anger, fear, sorrow, and love."<sup>3</sup> Jealousy is a mix of different emotions that seem incompatible.

Jealousy is a learned behavior. Human beings have a biological fire that is to be ignited by the experience. Everyone can be jealous, but the magnitude depends on a person's temperament and experience. Jealousy shows the attitude of a person. It is a personal experience that indicates the attitude of a person about marriage, threats to marriage and proper ways of protecting a marriage from the threats. In other words, jealousy emerges from the perception of the person. Therefore, jealousy has emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components.

## Two forms of jealousy

There are two forms of jealousy: reasonable and unreasonable jealousy. Reasonable jealousy is based upon love. A person with reasonable jealousy loves someone. He/she does not want his/her loved one to turn away from him or her. When the lover tries to replace him or her with another

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<sup>3</sup> Hart, Sybil L. & Legerstee, Maria. *Handbook of Jealousy: Theory, Research, and Multidisciplinary Approaches*. John Wiley and sons. 2010. Pp.43-44

person, jealousy starts. Reasonable jealousy wants the lover to give his/her undivided heart to one person only.

According to the argument of Asayech's group members, spouse jealousy is legitimate because God is jealous. It is possible to state that God has a reasonable jealousy. In the Holy Scripture, God is depicted as a jealous God.<sup>4</sup> God wants to be the highest priority in the hearts of his people. He does not want other things to take the throne of our hearts. He wants people to follow his way with full devotion. His jealousy implies his desire for us to be loyal to him. When we turn to worship other gods, he becomes angry with us. Therefore, the jealousy of God is his desire for us to maintain a good relationship with him by following his commandments.

The second form of jealousy is unreasonable jealousy. It is a condition in which a spouse does not want the progress and development of his/her lover. It is a selfish kind of jealousy. He/she desires to get what others got for him/herself. If your spouse gets a scholarship and advances her education, what do you feel? If she gets a better paying job than you, do you feel angry? Do you feel bitter because of her success? If you feel like this when your spouse gets what you wish to get for yourself, you are experiencing unreasonable jealousy.

## Differences between jealousy & envy

These two forms of jealousy lead us to make a distinction between jealousy and envy. People often use the word jealousy and envy interchangeably. However, they carry different meanings. They are different in terms of what causes them and how people experience them.<sup>5</sup> Jealousy is a protective reaction of a person to a perceived threat to a valued relationship. The reaction involves thoughts,

feelings and actions. The objective of jealousy is to protect the relationship.

A husband becomes jealous when he perceives that there is a threat to the marriage, that is, adultery. The threat can be real or imagined. Jealousy is basically a response to threats to take away what one values. It is the desire to hold on to what one has. It is an attempt not to lose what one has already possessed. Jealousy is a reaction to the fear of losing.

Envy is different from jealousy. Envy is about something that you do not have. When you become envious, you wish for something desirable that you do not have. You experience envy when you lack something that another person has and you wish that the other should not have it. In envy, there is hostility; it is full of negative feelings toward another person for being better than you are. Therefore, envy is becoming discontent with your own possessions or attributes and being hostile toward others who have or appear to have advantages.

A person who experiences unreasonable jealousy cannot love his/her spouse. The person considers the spouse as a rival, not as a loving friend. The fruit of such kinds of jealousy is fighting and bitterness. When your spouse is performing or advancing better than you are in life and gets popularity, do you cheer for him/her or get frustrated and turn against him/her? Do you feel that your spouse is completing your weakness or competing with you? Unreasonable jealousy emerges when a person compares his/her weaknesses with the strengths of his/her spouse.

Stets and Turner said, "Love is about sex; jealousy is about adultery; envy is about justice and injustice."<sup>6</sup> In envy, what is so important is the question of fairness and justice.

<sup>4</sup> See (Deuteronomy 4:24)

<sup>5</sup> Salovey, Peter. *The Psychology of jealousy and envy*. 1991. Guilford Press. P. 3

<sup>6</sup> Stets, Jan E. & Turner, Jonathan H. *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions*. Springer. 2007. P. 411

Generally, jealousy occurs when you fear losing or have lost an important relationship with another person to a rival whereas envy occurs when you lack what another has. In jealousy, you experience fear of loss, anger and insecurity. When you are envious, you desire something or wish that the other did not have it; you perceive the superior qualities or possessions of another affecting your self-esteem negatively and experiencing a feeling of inferiority, and having a hostile attitude towards the envied person.

## Causes of jealousy

Everyone has a potential seed for developing jealousy. Jealousy is a universal phenomenon. If you are in a relationship, you may not escape jealousy. However, you may repress it to the extent that people are not aware of your internal feeling of jealousy. Experiencing jealousy is normal; but severe repression of jealousy may bring negative effects on your relationship. Therefore, jealousy is a normal and universal experience of people.<sup>7</sup> Then the most important point I would suggest is not to panic when you feel jealous. Instead try to identify from where it has come and discern how to handle it.

There are several factors that cause jealousy. The causes can be of internal or external factors. Though the flirting behaviors of a spouse can ignite jealousy, the majority of the causes are within the jealous person. Some of the major causes of spouse jealousy are stated below.

*Low self-esteem:-* When the attributes or behaviors of others threaten the individual's own self-definition, jealousy occurs. The loss of self-esteem triggers a jealous reaction. Since he/she lacks a sense of self-worth, he/she hardly believes that others can value and love him or her. When a person feels a sense of worthlessness, he/she suspects that someone else is more valued. A person's feeling of low self-worth

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<sup>7</sup> Malakh-Pines, Ayala. *Romantic Jealousy: Causes, Symptoms, Cures*. Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group. 1998. P. 45

and insecurity contributes to jealousy.<sup>8</sup> I would say jealousy is the weapon of a person who feels inferior to others to keep what he/she values.

*Mistrust:-* Mistrust triggers jealousy. A person who has experienced betrayal in a previous relationship may mistrust in subsequent relationships. The past experience teaches him or her to mistrust others. Therefore, one of the root causes of jealousy is the past experience of the person within a relationship. There is a high connection between past betrayal and current jealousy.<sup>9</sup>

*Lack of perceived alternatives:-* When a person feels that he or she does not have alternatives, he or she is vulnerable to jealousy. For him/her, losing the person may be remaining alone.

*Repressed impulse toward infidelity:-* Sometimes the person who experiences jealousy has an impulse to have sexual affairs with other people. The thought of this situation leads the person to feel guilt over the impulse. In order to get relief from the guilt over the impulse, he or she projects the infidelity on the faithful partner. This projection will give temporary relief for the person because he/she justifies that his/her partner is not much better than him/herself.<sup>10</sup>

The basic idea is if you desire to have sex with other people, you begin to say to your partner, "I know you have started emotional involvement with another person." You do not have any basic evidence to substantiate your point. You just project your own impulse on her/him. That is why it is called projected jealousy.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Espejo, Roman. *Frequently Asked Questions about Jealousy*. Rosen Publishing Group. 2007. P. 25

<sup>9</sup> Knox, David & Schacht, Caroline. *Choices in Relationships: An Introduction to Marriage and Family*. Cengage Learning. 2009. P. 66

<sup>10</sup> See Sigmund Freud's explanation about this issue in Malakh-Pines, Ayala. *Romantic jealousy: causes, symptoms, cures*. Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. 1998, P. 50

<sup>11</sup> Bloom, Harold. *Marcel Proust*. Chelsea House Publishers. 2004. P. 1

*Childhood abandonment:-* Childhood experiences of abandonment by caregivers may lead to unproductive jealousy between husband and wife. Unresolved issues from your childhood experiences can negatively affect how you interact with your spouse. You may transfer your experiences on to your spouse which may lead you to mistrust your spouse.

Doubts about parental love, perhaps based on accurate perceptions of hostility, ambivalence, and neglect, may mean that in later life the person cannot trust their [sic] partner's love and will anticipate rejection, deception, and betrayal.<sup>12</sup>

Most of the time, you may not realize the source of your dysfunctional interaction with your spouse until someone helps you uncover the past unresolved issues with your caregivers.

*Wild imagination:-* The human mind does not take rest. It has the capacity to imagine. You can imagine about your spouse while you are physically close to him/her or far away. Sometimes, your imagination of your spouse gets wild when you are far away from your spouse. You may think that your spouse is enjoying life with someone else. When this kind of imagination occurs frequently, you may convince yourself that he/she is having an affair with somebody. You may even imagine the identity of the rival. This wild imagination will lead to mistrust.<sup>13</sup>

You become jealous for no reason. As a result, what you think of your spouse and the way you used to interact with him or her will change. You begin to damage your relationship.

Habte and his wife were married about two years ago. He works for an organization that assists rural people in community development. He lives within the community and the place is far from his home town. His wife does not have a job. About a year ago, she

asked him for permission to go to college to get a degree. Habte refused. He believed that his salary was enough for the family. After his wife shared with him her desire to go to college for education, he began imagining that she might get involved with someone else. He lost normal sleep and appetite.

Habte convinced himself that she had started a relationship with her old boy friends who have been living where she is staying. He calls her by telephone at least three or four times a day. If she does not respond to the call after one or two rings, he becomes mad at her. As the level of his mistrust increased, he asked his cousin to stay with his wife. After some months, the wife complained about living with Habte's cousin. He said, "You are alone and she helps you. Please tolerate her." when he comes home once in three months, he interrogates his wife like an investigative police. His wife understood that he was jealous and so she went to his workplace to live with him. After she stayed there for two weeks, he insisted that she go back home. She refused; he did not agree with her. Finally, she came back home; his nagging has continued.

Such wild imaginations about the relationship of the spouse with a member of the opposite sex will damage the marriage relationship. Living apart for married couples is not advisable; it may lead to jealousy without information or evidence of any real incidence of affairs. Living apart may exacerbate the suspicion.

### Characteristics of a jealous spouse

A jealous spouse is identified by his/her thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in the relationship. Some of the common characteristics are

stated below.

*Hypocrite:-* A jealous spouse gives the impression that he or she is self-confident, but the reality is that he suffers from an

<sup>12</sup> Mollon, Phil. *Shame and Jealousy: The Hidden Turmoils*. 2002. P. 141

<sup>13</sup> Tessina, Tina. *The Commuter Marriage: Keep Your Relationship Close While You're Far Apart*. Adams Media. 2008, P. 35

inferiority complex. He or she thinks little of him/herself. He/she is not a person of integrity.

**Rigid:-** A jealous spouse thinks that his/her reasons are right and is not willing to accept the explanation of others. He/she is not flexible to take the others' view points and see his/her thoughts and behaviors from a different perspective.

**Over controlling:-** A jealous spouse wants to own his/her spouse as a property; has a thought of "You are exclusively mine." A jealous person considers his or her spouse as some thing, not as some one with a free will. As someone put it, the jealous person says, "You belong to me, so do as I command."<sup>14</sup>

**Blame others:-** A jealous spouse blames others as a cause for the disturbance of the relationship and as a result he/she does not take responsibility to change. He/she thinks others should change, not him/her.

**Constantly questioning:-** A jealous spouse does not trust his/her spouse and keeps questioning his/her spouse for suspected behaviors. The problem is not only interrogating his/her spouse with hard questions, but also spying on the spouse because he/she does not trust the response given for the questions. Spying on the spouse can happen by unexpected phone calls, checking the dialed and received calls, check his/her pockets or purse for any kind of note or sign.

### Who is more jealous?

Can you tell from your own experience who is the more jealous: a man or a woman? It is believed that men are the more jealous when women are suspected for or have

<sup>14</sup> Hauck, Paul. *Overcoming jealousy and possessiveness*. Westminster John Knox Press. 1981. P. 47.

performed infidelity. Women are less jealous when they know that their spouse is sexually involved with other women. One of the points stated to explain the reason is that a man wants to know that the children he supports are his own. He does not want to raise children who are not biologically his own.<sup>15</sup> For a woman that is not her worry; the children are hers whoever their fathers would be.

Basically there is a difference in terms of the act that leads to jealousy for a man and woman. A man becomes upset and jealous when his wife is involved in sexual infidelity even when it is a brief encounter. However, for a woman, the most upsetting is the emotional infidelity of her husband. When her husband emotionally is close to a woman, she becomes furious.

In my community people are harsh on women when they become involved sexually with other men- non-spouse. The norm is loose for the men. Women who commit adultery are punished; however, there is no similar regulation that punishes a husband who commits adultery. This is an obvious example of gender inequality - tolerance of sexual infidelity for men and condemnation to death for women for a similar offence.

Men and women differ in characteristics that evoke jealousy. Men are evoked when the suspect rival has a better social status, wealth, dominance and self-confidence than they have. For women, the physical attractiveness of the suspect rival to the opposite sex evokes jealousy. The degree of their reaction (jealousy) depends on the characteristics of their rivals.<sup>16</sup> From this understanding, it is possible to say that it is hardly possible to conclude that men are more jealousy than women or vice versa because they respond differently to different characteristics of a rival.

<sup>15</sup> Kalat, James W. *Biological Psychology*. Cengage Learning. 2008. P. 330

<sup>16</sup> Duncombe, Jean. *The state of affairs: explorations in infidelity and commitment*. Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group. 2010. P. 115

## Consequences of jealousy

Every thought or behavior has its own consequences. Jealousy as a behavior has consequences. Depending on conditions, jealousy may have positive and negative effects.

*Positive consequences:-* Some of the major positive effects of jealousy in married relationships include:

*Taken as an expression of deep love for a spouse:-* Jealousy is assumed to transfer the message, "I do love you and do not want to lose you." Jealousy is an expression of love for the partner. The implication is a person who does not love his/her partner does not become jealous when he/she wants to go with someone else.

*Demonstrates that the partner is cared for:-* Jealousy indicates that the person is caring for his/her partner. What he/she is doing with someone else would not have long lasting benefits. Telling the partner that the wrongness of what he/she is doing is a sign of caring for him/her.

*Helps to assess the commitment to one's partner:-* Jealousy may be an indicator for the existence of some problems in the relationship. It reminds both or one of the couple to examine their commitment to their relationship. Jealousy helps you to ask, "Am I committed to the marriage relationship?"

*Revives romantic relationship:-* Jealousy may ignite sexual passion to keep the partner from going somewhere else to get satisfaction.

*Negative Consequences:-* Jealousy has negative consequences. The following are the major negative effects of jealousy in the married relationship:

*May lead to break down of the relationship:-* Sometimes jealousy becomes overdose and restricts the freedom of another person. The lover wants to possess the other exclusively and does not allow free interaction with members of the opposite sex.

Dega was in his early thirties. He had a fiancé. Both of them were attending the same church. They were together for more than three years as fiancés. Their pastor and their families knew about their relationship and finally they announced their formal engagement to the church. Two weeks before the engagement day, his fiancé wrote a note to him. The note stated her decision to quit the relationship. He could not believe what he had read. He read again and again; the message was the same. He went directly to her home to talk to her about her decision.

Dega went to her home and asked why she wanted to stop the relationship at that moment. She told him that she could not live with him. She said, "I want to let you know that I love you sincerely, but I do not want to give up my freedom as a person. Since you love me too much, you want to possess me." He was shocked with what he heard. She explained to him how he treated her one by one. He admitted that he wanted to possess her and did not let her talk to boys in the neighborhood. Dega asked her to forgive him. She explained to him that he did not offend her. "We are just not compatible in terms of our personality. If you want to control me like this while I am your fiancé, how would you treat me when I become your wife?" she asked him boldly.

Dega's eyes filled with tears. He did not know what to do. He went away. After two days, they went to the church and announced that they ended their relationship. The pastor also could not believe the sincerity of their decision. He asked the reasons for the decision. They said, "We have learned that we cannot live together because our personalities are incompatible."

Love is good, but if it is controlling and one has to lose his/her freedom for being loved; he/she makes a decision to end the relationship like Dega's fiancé. If you do not trust your spouse and you need to prove he/she loves you regularly, you will eventually push him/her away.

*Motivates unfaithfulness:*- Mistrust breeds unfaithfulness. If you do not trust your spouse, you are sending a message to him/her to seek sexual affairs outside marriage. In my community, elders say, *dhirsi hamaan nitii isaatiif sanyoo hawwata*. It means, "A cruel husband invites another man to have sex with his wife." The message is when a husband says to his wife, "I suspect you have an intimate relationship with ....(mention the name of the person)," the woman asks the person her husband mentioned to have an affair with her. Since she is not trusted, she wants to do it. If you are jealous and nag your spouse, you are encouraging him or her to start another relationship that he/she has not intended.

*Leads to domestic violence:*- A jealous spouse does not treat his suspect partner with nice words and actions. Jealousy invites violence. In my community, if a husband is jealous, he beats his wife whenever he suspects the situation. Whenever she wants to talk to him, he does not respond to her with kind words. He insults or degrades her without any tangible evidence of her misbehavior. Any incidence in the home can trigger upsetting arguments that lead to verbal and physical abuse.

*Triggers anxiety:* - Anxious jealousy leads the person to ruminate about the infidelity of his/her partner and lives in stress. As mentioned in one of the stories in this lesson, Habte had suffered from sleeplessness, low appetite and a lack of concentration on his job. He felt abandoned in the remotest rural area. He felt betrayed by his wife. All the time he began imagining about the situation, he tormented himself.

*Ends with Lamentable decisions:*- When you are jealous, you cannot think clearly. Your mind is blurred with unrealistic assumptions; as a result, the decision you may make when you feel jealous is made with distorted thoughts. You assume the worst scenario in your relationship. Your mind tilts towards a negative view of life. You lose the proper ways of communicating with your spouse. You may decide to separate from your spouse, abuse your spouse, divorce or attack the alleged person for which you may suffer remorse later. Jealousy makes your thoughts irrational and leads to detrimental behaviors.

### How can a jealous spouse change?

If we say that jealousy is a learned behavior, it can be changed. It is what we learn and we can unlearn it. To make the change practical, we need to know its causes and how to change it.

There are some coping mechanisms that do not help persons to overcome jealousy. Eating too much, drinking alcohol, or taking drugs, are not helpful coping mechanisms for men and women who experience jealousy.

Positive steps that help persons to overcome jealousy and restore their healthy relationship include:

*Turn to your friends:*- Do not try to hide your problem from your trusted friends. If you continue denying that you do not have a problem and lie to them, you will not get appropriate support. Even without you telling them about your problem, if they say something about your jealous behavior, it is better to listen to them than to defend yourself. When the problem exists and they comment on your

jealousy, do not say, "I am not jealous." Rather it would be good if you say, "My dear friends, 'how would you advise me?'"

*Change your wrong equation:* - In reality you cannot force someone to love you. You can control what you can give to others. If you sow well, you can harvest good result. So focus on what you can give in a relationship rather than on what the other give you.

*Set a clear boundary with the opposite sex:* Set guiding principles with your spouse for your behaviors with the opposite sex. Unhealthy behaviors with persons of the opposite sex may ignite jealousy of a spouse and may increase temptations for unfaithfulness. These principles may vary according to the characteristics of the couple and their cultural context. Guiding principles like, not staying with a person of the opposite sex alone late in the office, not riding with a member of the opposite sex for long distances, or not accepting an invitation for supper with a person of the opposite sex without the attendance of a spouse, etc, may help to set specific boundaries to prevent temptation and avoid potential mistrust and jealousy.

*Ask your spouse for help:* The spouse of a jealous partner can assist him or her to reduce the jealousy by avoiding behaviors that the jealous spouse does not like. If he/she identifies behaviors of the partner that provokes jealousy, it is good to cooperate to avoid those behaviors in order to sustain the marriage relationship. Some of the things that you (non-jealous partner) may do or do not do to assist include:-

- Avoid body languages (leaning closely, hair-tossing or hugging) with members of the opposite sex
- Do not take personal calls at home from opposite sex colleagues
- Call your spouse when you plan to return home late or face transport problems

- Do not meet with opposite sex coworkers outside the office
- Ask priests/religious teachers to visit your home when your spouse is around
- Do not compare your husband/wife with others and share your judgment with him/her
- Do not behave with members of the opposite sex as you did when you were single

If you are doing the above and other similar things depending on the demand of your jealous spouse, at least you can help him or her to change.

*Do not compare yourself to others:* You are created uniquely. In reality, there is no one on the earth that is exactly the same as you. If you stop comparing yourself with others, you focus on your unique identity and become who you are.

*Trust your spouse:* You may suspect your spouse of infidelity. To confirm this suspicion, do not listen to gossip. If you listen to gossip, more than likely you will tend to convince yourself that your spouse is being unfaithful. Even when you have information, but no evidence for the unfaithfulness of your spouse, trust has a more positive effect than mistrust.

A few years ago, my pastor told me a story of how he managed to work with thieves. The story is not about marriage relationship, but I would think it explains how trusting someone is better than to mistrust.

The church got a plot of land for a college building from the government. Since there were many eucalyptus trees on the land, the church paid for it and wanted to keep it for future use of the trees for construction purposes. It was obvious that guards should be hired in order to protect the trees from thieves. The church wanted to recruit guards. The pastor was informed that the plot of land was surrounded by thieves of the trees. Then he made a decision to recruit

guards from among the thieves. He talked to some and selected two of them. He agreed to pay them a monthly salary. They agreed and they were faithful to protect the trees. People who heard the story were amazed by the action of the pastor. The pastor put his trust on the thieves and they did not let him down.

For me, the story tells me that trust breeds faithfulness. In all people there is a need to be trusted and when you trust them, you offer what they need and they aspire to do everything to maintain that high standard.

*Self-awareness:-* A person's self-awareness can help to identify his/her strengths and growth areas. If you are jealous, you can understand about yourself, your jealous behavior and its impact on your relationship with your spouse, through various ways. Some of the ways that can help you understand yourself is by reading books on self awareness. As mentioned above, discussing the issue with your trusted friends can help you see yourself clearly. Your friends can help you reflect on your behaviors. Once you are aware of your growth area, you can plan to work on it to improve.

*Get professional counseling:-* Professional therapy can help you to overcome jealousy. Counseling will help you become aware of the root causes of your jealous behavior and identify insight and techniques that enable you to solve the problem. Do not pretend that you do not have a problem of jealousy if you really have the problem. Denying the existence of the problem, its seriousness and the need to get help from others will exacerbate the problem rather than eliminate it.

The partner of the jealous spouse can help him or her to admit the problem of jealousy. One of the ways that he or she may help the jealous partner is to avoid any behavior that leads to loss of

face of the jealous spouse. Forcing or embarrassing the spouse for his or her jealous behavior will lead to defensiveness and hostility.<sup>17</sup>

Jaba has been married to his wife for about 10 years. They have two children. They met in the church and still attend one of the Pentecostal churches in their home town. His wife has an attractive figure and a sociable character. Jaba does not want her go to the market, church or visit friends and family alone. In such trips, he always accompanies her. He does not want male pastors and elders to visit his home when he is not at home. He has warned his wife not to talk to and laugh with other men in any setting.

His wife chose not to argue with her husband. She said, "You love and care for me. You desire for my healthy relationship with you and to grow in my spiritual life." She expressed her gratitude for his concern. Jaba was impressed by the positive perspective of his wife. At times, he disclosed that his views are not objective. She advised him to talk to a counselor about his views to get help. He did not say okay at first, but later he went to see a counselor. Every time, he meets with the counselor, he shares his reflection on the session with her. The sessions he had with the counselor and the sharing with his wife helped him get insight on his thoughts and behaviors. Now he is less possessive of his wife. His trust level increased and he now talks about the issue honestly with his wife.

Jaba's wife is wise; she handles her husband's jealousy in a constructive way. Even though she did not think she provoked him to become jealous, she refrained from behaviors that her husband did not like. Then she gently led him to seek counseling for his problem. Her humble and honest interaction with her husband helped him to get counseling and improve his trust for his wife.

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<sup>17</sup> Baker, Robert L. *Green Eyed Marriage*. Simon and Schuster. 1998. P.99

Generally, you are jealous when you emotionally react to your perception that your love relationship may be in jeopardy because of the involvement of another person. You may be jealous or envious of your spouse because of internal or external factors. If you become jealous, it tells you that you feel low self-esteem, blame others, and are rigid in your thoughts and controlling in your relationship. Jealousy does more harm than good to your marriage relationship. Therefore, try to assess yourself, seek the advice of your intimate friends and counseling from counselors as well as exercise spiritual discipline to overcome it.