"I know it ended well for you," Heather purred as she turned and wrapped her arms around his neck. Steve claimed a long, sweet kiss from her. Nalani giggled, snuggled up to Luke and claimed a kiss of her own.

"Please people," Greg groaned and buried his face on his knees again. "Can you take it somewhere else? In private maybe?"

"Jealousy rears its ugly head," Heather giggled.

"I'm not jealous," Greg growled. "I'm envious."

"Aren't they synonymous?" Steve asked in surprise. "I'm an English major and I'm pretty sure that any thesaurus will tell you they're synonyms."

"Well, Christians shouldn't use them like they are," Greg grumbled.

"Why not?" Nalani asked.

"Because our God is a jealous God, not an envious God."

"I don't get it," Luke frowned.

"Did you know that a very famous TV personality claims she gave up on Christianity because she read that God is a jealous God?" Greg leaned back against the couch and looked at his companions with the gently challenging raised eyebrows they all knew so well. More than one person in that room felt a deep sigh of relief, even if they didn't show it. Greg was still Greg and he still had his zeal for the Lord.

"I have to admit," Steve tilted his head slightly and raised an eyebrow. "That's caused me some heartache too. I thought jealousy was bad. You know the whole 1 Corinthians 13 thing with 'love is not jealous.' How does that fit with 'God is love' in 1 John and 'God is a jealous God' in the Ten Commandments?"

"When it comes to 'jealousy' and 'envy,'" Greg shifted a bit to sit up straighter, "the English language is really inadequate to translate from Hebrew. In Hebrew, there's a word that's only used for God's perfect desire to allow no one to intrude on his relationships. The best we can do is translate that as jealous which even in English can mean being protective of what belongs to you. If you ask me, that makes being jealous a positive thing. If I ever get the chance to get engaged to and marry Beth, you better believe I'm going to protect our relationship. I'm going to be jealous. But envy is always negative. It's wanting what someone else has, something that doesn't belong to you. While you can technically use either envy or jealousy to define the feelings of resentment that I feel when I watch you guys getting all lovey, I'd prefer to use envy and save jealousy for the positive, protective feeling that makes me Christ-like."

"So whenever the bible talks about God being jealous, it's saying he's being protective of what's his?" Luke asked thoughtfully.

"It makes sense, doesn't it?" Greg dropped his knees so he was sitting cross-legged. He leaned forward slightly and raised his hands palms up, eagerly imploring them to understand. "In the Ten Commandments that Steve referred to, God is saying don't worship other gods right? Why? Because he has the right to demand that we have a relationship with him only. When he says in Exodus 34 that his name is 'Jealous,' he's saying that he has the right to demand absolutely restricted worship of him and him only. Later, when God speaks through the prophets and tells the people why he's angry, he says it's because they didn't worship him exclusively. They gave someone else the worship that belonged to him." Greg looked around the room with an almost angry glare. "You guys gotta understand that! Don't even try to tell me that you wouldn't be livid with anger if you caught your spouse with someone else.

That's what God was feeling all those times he said he was jealous. I know I'd want to destroy anyone I caught with Beth!"

They all looked at Greg in stunned silence for a moment.

"Our God is a jealous God," Heather said quietly, slowly nodding her head. "I get it. I really do. You're right Greg. In fact, it makes the whole Old Testament a lot easier to understand when I look at it from the perspective of a wife."

"It also makes the Incarnation a little easier to understand," Luke said thoughtfully. "If God felt that intensely about his relationship with his people, of course he's going to go to great lengths to get them back."