

Cherish

The one word that changes everything
for your marriage

#cherishchallenge



Note to Readers

Thank you so much for deciding to take the Cherish Challenge. I have often said that my book *Sacred Marriage* was about how God can use the difficulties inherent in every marriage for a good purpose while *Cherish* is about how God can give us hearts to delight in each other so we can enjoy a marriage where we sometimes feel guilty because we have it so good.

Most of us don't want marriages where we grit our teeth and tolerate each other just because God's Word says we don't "qualify" for divorce. If you're taking this challenge, I assume this applies to you. We want to be cherished, and we want to be married to someone we cherish. And I'm suggesting it's possible to get to that point if we want to, even if we've stopped cherishing each other.

In this study, let's focus on the oft-forgotten second word in the marriage vows – what it means to cherish.

While you are more than welcome to go through this study guide without it, I recommend reading *Cherish* alongside it. The chapters will provide you with further insight and application for the illustrations I use and questions I ask throughout the study.

You can purchase your copy [here](#).

Week 1: Raising the Bar for Your Marriage

Reading Material:

- Chapter 1 of *Cherish*, “To Love and To Cherish”
- Chapter 2 of *Cherish*, “The Only Man/Woman in the World”

Discussion Questions:

- Read 1 Corinthians 13 and Song of Songs 1-5. What struck you most about the contrast between love and cherish in these books of the Bible?
- Listen to my podcast episode on *Family Life Today*, [What Does it Mean to Cherish?](#)
- How does love help us understand cherish, and how does cherish help us understand love?
- Fashion a prayer you can begin using, asking God to make your spouse the very definition of beauty. Discuss why this is a spiritually healthy thing to do and how it will help you cherish your spouse more.
- What can you do in the coming weeks to assure your spouse that he is your Adam or that she is your Eve, the only man or woman in the world?

From the Blog: [Raising the Bar for Our Marriages](#)

Week 2: Showcase Your Spouse

Reading Material:

- Chapter 3 of *Cherish*, “Marriage as Ballet”

Discussion Questions:

- After reading, ask your spouse how you can help set them up to succeed in the coming week (or month). Use the “ballet is woman” analogy to figure out how to showcase your spouse.
- Ask each other if there is another couple (or small group) you want to invite to do this Cherish Challenge with you. Sometimes, talking about it as couples instead of just as a couple helps foster new ideas. People can sign-up for this challenge at any time—there’s no deadline.
- Listen to my podcast episode on *Family Life Today*, [To Love and to Cherish](#)
- Sometimes our spouses may not even realize they have a “best side.” What strengths or gifts might your spouse be unaware of that you can cultivate and bring out of him or her?
- Cherishing each other doesn’t call us to deny reality, but rather to accept and perhaps even improve reality. Describe what cherishing each other, at its highest ideal, would look like in your marriage. Be specific and personal.

From the Blog: [Love Like You Mean It](#)

Week 3: Mental Battles that Keep You from Cherishing

Reading Material:

- Chapter 4 of *Cherish*, “Your Honor”

Discussion Questions:

- After reading Chapter 4 of *Cherish* share with each other what in your marriage makes you feel most honored and then most dishonored.
- Spend some time by yourself in prayer, asking God to reveal your own mental battles that keep you from cherishing. Have you been winning or losing these battles? How can the mental reminder of the word “cherish” keep you focused?
- What would you have to do differently if you committed to outdoing your spouse in showing honor over the next seven days?
- When is the last time your spouse received some really good news? How would you grade your engagement and response (on a scale from A to F)?

From the Blog: [*A Lifelong Journey Toward a Christian Marriage*](#)

Week 4: Comfort in “Noticing” Other People

Reading Material:

- Chapter 5 of *Cherish*, “When Cherishing Goes to War”

Discussion Questions:

- After reading, root out any markers of “contempt” in your relationship. Ask your spouse if there is anything, you’re doing that even smells like contempt.
- Talk about the comfort you have, as a couple, in “noticing” other people. If your spouse feels insecure because of your past misbehavior, hear him/her out. Remember, the important thing isn’t “maintaining your rights,” it’s making your spouse feel cherished. You may not be able to stop “noticing” but you can change the way you notice, and if you want your spouse to feel cherished, that needs to be taken into account.
- Is there another person whose approval you are prone to put above your marriage? Your kids? Parents? A friend? Ask your spouse if they can think of someone who tempts you to do this, and humbly consider their thoughts.
- Think about John Gottman’s insight; “Being mean is the death knell of relationships.”
- Listen to my podcast episode on *Family Life Today*, [*Cherish as Protection*](#)
- Describe a moment in your marriage when you felt like one of you threw the other under the bus. Now describe a moment when one of you took the hit. Talk about how that one moment in time impacted the relationship going forward.
- Think about an area in which your spouse needs to grow. How can you encourage him or her about how far they’ve traveled instead of fixating on how far they still have to go?

From the Blog: [*Beauty is a Blessing*](#)

Week 5: Indulge Your Spouse

Reading Material:

- Chapter 6 of *Cherish*, “A Bride Made Beautiful”

Discussion Questions:

- Read Ezekiel 16. How does considering God’s love for Jerusalem challenge you to become a more cherishing spouse?
- What hurts from your spouse’s past can you gently “cherish away” by being faithful in some little thing?
- Without consulting your spouse, write a description of how beat-up and exhausted you think they must have felt when they met you. Show the list to your spouse and ask if you are correct. Ask them to add to it. Knowing this, how do you want to treat them in the coming days?
- Can you identify any character weaknesses in your spouse that you believe could be at least lessened if they felt more intensely cherished by you? Describe how.

From the Blog: [*Cherishing Lisa Awake*](#)

Week 6: Think About What You Think About

Reading Material:

- Chapter 7 of *Cherish*, “I Almost Quit”
- Chapter 8 of *Cherish*, “Cherishing Words”

Discussion Questions:

- Watch my sermon on [Philippians 4:8](#)
- Begin making your short list. Use the words of Philippians 4:8, giving two examples for each trait to begin your list:
 - **True** (are you *sure* your spouse is trying to irritate you?)
 - **Honorable** (what makes you proud to be married to your spouse?)
 - **Right** (in alignment with God)
 - **Pure** (morally upright, often used for sexual purity)
 - **Lovely** (things that are beautiful to behold)
 - **Admirable** (qualities you’d like your kids to emulate)
 - **Excellent** (where does your spouse excel?)
 - **Worthy of Praise** (how would others praise your spouse?)
- Ask your spouse, “On a spectrum of thinking about you along the lines of Philippians 4:8 (10), and thinking about you with contempt (1), what number would you place me at?”
- On a future date night or morning together, read Romans 3:21-26; on another night, read all of Romans 5. Then consider using Romans 8:1-4 and Ephesians 1:3-14. Try to intentionally use Scripture to fuel your conversations.
- Think of three specific things you cherish about your spouse. Tell them what they are! If you’re in a group setting, let others hear you speak of how excellent and wonderful your spouse truly is.

From the Blog: [Think About What You Think About](#)

Week 7: Your Unique Spouse

Reading Material:

- Chapter 9 of *Cherish*, “Cherish Your Unique Spouse”

Discussion Questions:

- If you haven’t yet, take Les Parrott’s Better Love Relationship Assessment. This survey will help you understand yourself, your spouse, and your couple dynamics in a clearer, more scientific way. You can take it here:
<https://www.betterlove.com/?aid=vpbm7rovla4>
- Spend a date night describing each other. Yes, you’ve heard it all before, but go over your histories, your personalities, what makes each of you, *you*.
- Choose a favorite picture to post in a place where you’ll see it every day: on your desk, where you get dressed, etc. If you already have such a picture, be intentional about looking at it each day for the next week, thinking about your spouse and what he/she means to you.
- Ask your spouse to tell you one thing about them that you don’t yet know – something that makes them feel special, affirmed, cherished. Then ask them if there’s something you do that makes them feel less than special, affirmed, or cherished.
- Given all you know and have learned, write out a prescription for how best to cherish your particular spouse.

From the Blog: [*Help! I’m Infatuated with Someone Other Than My Spouse*](#)

Week 8: Patience with Your Spouse's Sins.

Reading Material:

- Chapter 10 of *Cherish*, "This is How Your Spouse Stumbles"

Discussion Questions:

- Ask yourself, "Which response do I most naturally gravitate toward when it comes to conflict: fight, flight, freeze, or fallen?"
- Write out three of your spouse's character strengths. Next, consider a character weakness he/she may still struggle with. Thank God for the strengths—the evidences of His grace in your spouse's life—and then prayerfully consider whether you've shown more grace than truth, or more truth than grace with the one weakness.
- Spend a date night talking about how you want to hear words of "truth" from each other. Would you rather be on a walk? Alone at home? Do you think your spouse is too critical already? Discuss the "mechanics" of how, in a spiritually healthy way, the two of you can embrace both grace and truth.
- What are some of the benefits of your spouse's presence that will help you endure some of the inevitable irritations of living with them?

From the Blog: [*Grace and Truth: The Key to Cherishing and Imperfect Spouse*](#)

Week 9: A Cherishing Mindset

Reading Material:

- Chapter 11 of *Cherish*, “The Art of Cherishing Your Spouse”

Discussion Questions:

- Watch my two-part *Focus on the Family* broadcast, [Cherish Your Spouse](#)
- Out of the 8 Acts of Cherishing mentioned in Chapter 11, choose at least two to put into action. On your own, write down which practice(s) you want to put into play.
 - Using your mind to change your heart
 - Sacrificing for your spouse
 - Hugging liberally
 - Needing your spouse
 - Recognizing your spouse’s royalty
 - Making your spouse’s dreams come true
 - Watching and delighting
 - Conserving your energy
- Do you feel protected by your spouse? Do you feel your spouse protects you? Talk about it.
- What lifelong bucket-list items does your spouse have? Which one of them could you begin planning to make come true?
- What keeps you from conserving your mental energy, so you have something left over to cherish your spouse? What can you do to cut back on it so you can start a new life of mentally choosing to cherish your spouse?

From the Blog: [To Cherish and To Protect](#)

Week 10: Easier to Cherish

Reading Material:

- Chapter 12 of *Cherish*, “Easier to Cherish”

Discussion Questions:

- Be honest: List three things that make it most difficult for your spouse to cherish you. Are you addressing these issues or just asking your spouse to put up with them?
- Think of the last time your spouse corrected you. Laying aside the question of whether they did it in the right way, were you open to receiving it or did you become defensive?
- Are you making it difficult for your spouse to cherish you by feeling as if you’re unworthy of being cherished? How can a better understanding of the gospel help you grow in this area?
- Go back to the list of three needs your spouse has right now. What can you do in the coming weeks to address these needs?

From the Blog: [*Avoiding Marital Eruptions*](#)

Week 11: The Motivation and Biblical Power to Keep on Cherishing

Reading Material:

- Chapter 13 of *Cherish*, “Biblical Power to Keep on Cherishing”

Discussion Questions:

- Did you feel accepted as a child? Is so (of if not), how did it impact the way you look at God? How has it impacted the way you treat your spouse?
- How do you feel most loved by God? What can you do in your devotional times to remember and receive his grace, affirmation, and comfort and to cultivate his presence and voice?
- When you review the fruit of the gospel, where are you strongest, and where are you weakest?
 - Being zealous for good works
 - Never speaking evil of each other
 - Avoiding quarreling
 - Showing gentleness with each other
 - Showing each other every courtesy
- List two or three good works you can do for your spouse in the coming weeks.

From the Blog: [*How to Keep Cherishing Your Spouse*](#)

Epilogue

“My dove, my perfect one, is the only one.” Song of Songs 6:9 (ESV)

Cherish is built and sustained by a lifetime of choices reinforced over decades, so that someone becomes increasingly important to us because they always have been, and they always will be.

If it pleases God, may this book and this study multiply such stories until his church is filled with husbands who deeply cherish their wives who eagerly and generously cherish their husbands until the very end.



The image shows the front cover of the book 'Cherish' by Gary Thomas. The cover is white with a red circular background behind it. The text on the cover includes the author's name 'GARY THOMAS' and 'BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF SACRED MARRIAGE' at the top, the title 'Cherish' in a large, elegant script font in the center, and the subtitle 'THE ONE WORD THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING FOR YOUR MARRIAGE' at the bottom. There are decorative flourishes above and below the text.

THANK YOU!

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