

CHERISH BY GARY THOMAS

SERIES OVERVIEW

In this six-session video Bible study, bestselling author Gary Thomas draws on personal stories and teachings from the Bible to show how cherishing your spouse can have a powerful effect on your marriage. Learning to truly cherish each other turns marriage from an obligation into a delight. It lifts marriage above a commitment to a precious priority. Cherishing can breathe light, hope, and new life into a marriage—even one marred by neglect and disrespect.

WIN

To build authentic relationships and to help good (or even not-so-good) marriages take a step toward greatness

CONNECT

As people are arriving, we want you to take the time to laugh, talk, and get to know one another better. For the first 15–20 minutes each time you meet, allow group members to naturally connect before diving into the videos and discussion.

LEARN

“When we cherish someone, we naturally want to protect them, treat them with tenderness, nurture them and occasionally indulge them. If we cherish someone, we will hold them dear. That means we will purposely think about them, and when we do, it will bring us great pleasure. The thought of them will make us smile.” (Gary Thomas, *Cherish*, p. 18)

As your group meets over the next six weeks to watch the Cherish videos and discuss them, you will learn more about what it means to cherish your spouse and how to grow in your ability to do so.

The videos can be found at <https://app.rightnowmedia.org/en/content/details/402713>.

To create login credentials, go to <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Account/Invite/NorthPoint>.

STUDY OVERVIEW

Session 1: To Love and to Cherish (20 minutes)

Session 2: Your Honor (25 minutes)

Session 3: Cherishing Your Unique Spouse (21 minutes)

Session 4: This Is How Your Spouse Stumbles (22 minutes)

Session 5: Taking Your Marriage to the Next Level (23 minutes)

Session 6: Keep on Cherishing (24 minutes)

GRoUPS

PRAY

Throughout your time as a group, you'll intentionally pray together. Ask God to give you and the couples in your group open minds and hearts during the weeks ahead.



SESSION 1: TO LOVE AND TO CHERISH

CONNECT

Icebreaker: Are you familiar with any of Gary Thomas's work (*Cherish, Sacred Marriage, Sacred Pathways, Sacred Parenting*, etc.)? If so, what have you learned?

PRAY

It's important to begin your time together by praying. Prayer is centering and helps shift the focus from the social to the spiritual. We know that praying out loud can be intimidating, so we wrote a prayer you can read aloud if that is more comfortable for you.

Heavenly Father, you tell us that where two or more are gathered in your name, there you are. We are grateful for your loving presence here with us. Open our hearts and minds to one another and to you as we dive in to learn more about marriage. May our time together foster connection, belonging, and a deeper understanding of your love for us and for one another. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

LEARN

Watch the video entitled Session 1: To Love and to Cherish (20 minutes).

Answer the following questions as a group:

1. Gary compares marriage to ballet and says that "love is the athletics and cherish is the art." A great marriage reflects both. Choose one volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 (about love) and another to read Song of Songs 4:1–11 (demonstrating cherishing). Which style of relating (from these two passages) would you like to improve upon?
2. Do you feel like you do a good job of showing your spouse you like them?
3. Why do we sometimes have a natural tendency to point out our spouse's flaws rather than focusing on their best qualities?
4. What are some ways in which you could do a better job of "showcasing" your spouse?
5. Think of a time you've felt cherished by your spouse and share it with the group.

PRAY

It's a good idea to end your time together in prayer. Again, it reminds members that our relationships are both social and spiritual. Open-ended prayer requests have a tendency to lack focus and can cause group meetings to run over their allotted time. One way to avoid this is to ask for specific requests that reflect on the meeting topic.

SESSION 2: YOUR HONOR

CONNECT

Icebreaker: Where did you go and what did you do on your first date?

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Heavenly Father, you tell us that where two or more are gathered in your name, there you are. We are grateful for your loving presence here with us. Open our hearts and minds to one another and to you as we dive in to learn more about honoring one another in marriage. May our time together foster connection, belonging, and a deeper understanding of your love for us and for one another. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

LEARN

Watch the Session 2 video (25 minutes) and answer the following questions as a group:

1. Gary mentions the idea of hitting pitches or catching bids from our spouse. He says that 30 percent is, well, not very good, and 90 percent is mastery. What are some things you could do to get closer to that 90 percent level?
2. Romans 12:10 says "Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves." How can we apply this concept of "outdoing one another" to cherish?
3. Listening well shows that you honor your spouse. What gets in the way of choosing to listen with your eyes, rather than just your ears?
4. Gary says spouses often feel honored or dishonored by the way their spouse "relates to their desire for physical intimacy." What does this mean and why does it matter?
5. In the ice pop vs. Vaseline example, Gary talks about people offering things he didn't need or want. How can you be sure you are trying to cherish your spouse in the way they want to be cherished?
6. What did you feel was most significant to you in the story of Kurt and Laura (the woman who waited as a little girl for her father to come home)?

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SESSION 3: CHERISHING YOUR UNIQUE SPOUSE

CONNECT

Icebreaker: What adjective best describes your spouse on your wedding day?

PRAY

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Heavenly Father, you tell us that where two or more are gathered in your name, there you are. We are grateful for your loving presence here with us. Open our hearts and minds to one another and to you as we dive in to learn more about what makes us different and how to cherish those differences. May our time together foster connection, belonging, and a deeper understanding of your love for us and for one another. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

LEARN

Watch the video entitled Session 3: Cherishing Your Unique Spouse (21 minutes).

Answer the following questions as a group:

1. What is something unique about your spouse? How can you celebrate or cherish this uniqueness?
2. How can seeing your spouse as Adam or Eve (the only man or woman in the world) help your marriage?
3. How can comparison in marriage be dangerous? Why is it so prevalent in our society?
4. Do you ever find yourself placing expectations on your spouse to be someone they're not? How can you reset your parameters for contentment?
5. Treating our spouse like the only man or woman in the world means studying them. What are some ways in which your spouse has been a good student of your uniqueness?
6. What can you do to stay curious through the years?

PRAY

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SESSION 4: THIS IS HOW YOUR SPOUSE STUMBLES

CONNECT

Icebreaker: When did you realize you were in love with your spouse?

PRAY

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Heavenly Father, you tell us that where two or more are gathered in your name, there you are. We are grateful for your loving presence here with us. Open our hearts and minds to one another and to you as we dive in to learn more about our imperfections and how God loves us despite our shortcomings. Help us to learn how to better reflect God's grace to our spouses. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

LEARN

Watch the video entitled Session 4: This Is How Your Spouse Stumbles (22 minutes).

Answer the following questions as a group:

1. What is your reaction to hearing Gary say, "It's not compatibility that determines whether or not we have a great marriage, but how we handle each other's sin"?
2. Describe the difference between the "Physician" mindset in marriage and the "Prosecutor" mindset. Why is it hard to focus on helping our spouses heal?
3. Gary describes holiness as the ability to gracefully put up with others' messes. What were your thoughts about the example of the wife with the eating disorder and the husband with pornography issues?
4. How can you do a better job of giving your spouse the benefit of the doubt in hurtful situations? What do you think it means to avoid "fantasy conversations"?
5. When discussing a hurtful situation with your spouse, do you tend to lead with questions or accusations (or accusatory questions)? How might things work out better if you were able to be genuinely curious more often?

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SESSION 5: TAKING YOUR MARRIAGE TO THE NEXT LEVEL

CONNECT

Icebreaker: What are you thankful for in this season of your marriage?

PRAY

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Heavenly Father, you tell us that where two or more are gathered in your name, there you are. We are grateful for your loving presence here with us. Open our hearts and minds to one another and to you as we dive in to learn more about how to protect and delight in our spouses. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

LEARN

Watch the Session 5: Taking Your Marriage to the Next Level (23 minutes)

Answer the following questions as a group:

1. Gary told a story in which he chose to respond with grace to his wife Lisa's imperfection (her flawed sense of direction) after previously responding with sarcasm and silence. Do you have any stories you can share in which you changed your tone for the better and got a more pleasant response from your spouse?
2. What stood out to you in the story of Carlos and Rosa (the couple who was late for an appointment with Gary)? Describe a time in which your spouse "took a bullet" for you rather than "throwing you under the bus."
3. Do you prefer public or private praise? What are some things you can do to remind yourself to look for opportunities to praise your spouse?
4. What did you think about Gary's discussion regarding hugging? Do you think a 30-second (or longer) hug on a regular basis would make a difference for most couples?
5. Do you often hear people speak badly about their spouses? How do you think that affects their relationships?
6. Do you ever find yourself tolerating your spouse instead of delighting in them? What can you do to remind yourself of why you fell in love in the first place?

7. Are there things in your life that are taking too much of your time and energy and getting in the way of your ability to cherish your spouse in the way you should? How can you change your priorities in order to feed the cycle of cherishing?

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SESSION 6: KEEP ON CHERISHING

CONNECT

Icebreaker: Have you used any of the concepts we've learned so far? What have been the results?

PRAY

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Heavenly Father, you tell us that where two or more are gathered in your name, there you are. We are grateful for your loving presence here with us. Open our hearts and minds to one another and to you as we dive in to learn more about how to persevere in cherishing one another by tapping into your strength. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

LEARN

Watch the video entitled Session 6: Keep on Cherishing (24 minutes).

Answer the following questions as a group:

1. Do you believe God can supply the power for you to keep cherishing your spouse through the years? How can you better tap into that power?
2. What were your impressions of the story of Julie (the perfectionist) and her husband Jeff? Is there anything you'd like to change as a result of hearing about their marriage?
3. How does our ability to understand "how much we've been forgiven, what we've been saved from and at what cost" affect our ability to cherish?
4. Have you ever heard anyone talk about Jesus using the phrase, "It is finished," in the way Gary did in the video? What new significance does that phrase hold for you?
5. What does the term "gospel marriage" mean to you?
6. What is the difference between looking for ways to do good for your spouse and looking for ways to avoid doing bad? Is this a different standard? How can you stay motivated to find ways to do good works for your spouse?

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