



Don't just love—cherish also!

2.5 million weddings take place each year in the United States. Over 2 million couples each year stand before witnesses and with love in their eyes, nervousness in their stomach, a shaky, or confident voice make an enthusiastic promise to “love and to cherish... till death do us part.” When the wedding is over and the marriage starts, many couples will read marriage books, go on couples retreats and give time to learning more about what it means to love one another. Rarely, if ever is their talk about what it means “to cherish one another.”

To cherish something means to protect it, respect it, notice it, honor it, show gratitude for it, and hold it dear. When we cherish something, we put energy into showcasing it and protecting it. The same is true of marriage. When we cherish our spouses, as opposed to just loving our spouses, we strengthen, enrich, and deepen our relationships.

One of the easiest ways to learn the difference between loving and cherishing is to compare the chapter on love (1 Corinthians 13) with the book devoted to cherishing, Song of Solomon. Consider these comparisons:

- ❖ Love is about being gracious and unselfish. “Love is patient and kind” (1 Corinthians 13:4). Cherish is about being enthusiastic and absorbed. “How much better is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your oils than any spice” (Song of Solomon 4:10).
- ❖ Love tends to be quiet and understated. “Love does not envy or boast” (1 Corinthians 13:4). Cherish boasts boldly and loudly. “My beloved is radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand” (Song of Solomon 5:10).
- ❖ Love thinks about others with selflessness. “[Love] is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way” (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). Cherish thinks about its beloved with praise. “Your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely” (Song of Solomon 2:14).
- ❖ Love doesn't want the worst for someone. “[Love] does not rejoice at wrongdoing” (1 Corinthians 13:6). Cherish celebrates the best in someone. “Behold, you are beautiful, my love; behold, you are beautiful” (Song of Solomon 1:15).
- ❖ Love puts up with a lot. “[Love] hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Corinthians 13:7). Cherish enjoys a lot. “His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable” (Song of Solomon 5:16).
- ❖ Love and cherish complement each other. Without the foundation of love, cherishing won't last. It'll be a sentimental ideal that is lost in the real world. Without cherishing, love feels like a duty more than a delight. I want my wife to think my greatest delight is sharing life with her.

Men, our wives want more than simply to be loved. They want to hear, “... you have stolen my heart with one glance of your eyes” (Song of Solomon 4:9). And wives, your husbands want more than to be tolerated. They want to hear, “Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men” (Song of Solomon 2:3).

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