

5 Powerful Ways to Love and Cherish Your Spouse

"You're on autopilot, and I'm feeling distant and dismissed." Kimm said it; I owned it.

It wasn't the first time. Sadly, the strength of my intentionality tows the weakness of disregard behind it. Kimm often bears the consequences. Husband or wife, or maybe fiancé, if you can identify with me, use Valentine's Day to consider five ways we can grow in loving and cherishing each other.

1. Think the best. It's impossible to sinfully judge and genuinely love and cherish. When we cherish, we ascribe the most charitable motivations to our significant other. Remember, "Love is patient, love is kind" (1 Cor. 13:4a, NIV), which is the most biblical way to say, "True love thinks the best."

2. Encourage. I'm a glass-half-empty kind of guy, so I know this can be hard. But we need to open our eyes. Each day, our spouse/intended is doing something worthy of commendation. Working, parenting, loving, paying, enduring, hurting, praying, forgiving. Can we see it? Will we celebrate it? Cherishing means encouraging.

3. Forgive quickly. "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. 6:12, MEV). God makes this pretty simple: Do you forgive your spouse in the way you want to be forgiven by God? Sometimes, I don't. Sometimes, I want to receive it freely and dispense it more sparingly. Can you relate? Next time you find yourself nurturing resentment toward him or her, remember, "forgiv[e] one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you" (Eph. 4:32b).

4. Don't compare. Loving and cherishing begins in our hearts.

Do we secretly compare our husband or wife to other people? You know what I mean: *I wish my spouse were more like ...* Then we fill in the blank. But God is wise enough to marry you to the person most suited to conform you to His image (Rom. 8:29). Make her your standard for beauty; make him the object of your respect. A spouse who cherishes doesn't search for neighborhood comps.

5. Pray together. I'm really working on this one. It seems like it should be easy. But life gets crazy, I get moving and prayer gets pushed aside. But I know we feel closer when we are praying. We undress our hearts before God. We parade our fears, weaknesses, sins and hopes before Him and bear them—together. And in some inexplicable way, two souls are intertwined; two voices become one; and two hearts say "amen," both feeling cherished. {eoa}

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