

HAVE A HEART TO CHERISH



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Cherish. This is my word for 2021.

Many people make New Year's resolutions—things they want to change or add to their lives that will begin at the start of a new year. The problem is statistics show that 80% of these resolutions fail by the second week in February. We are there.

Did you make a New Year's Resolution? Are you still on track in succeeding with your new ways? If so, well done! If not, you are certainly not alone.

I didn't want to fall into the 80% so I wondered what could be a different way to grow in 2021? What if I had a word instead—a word that I want my whole year to be about—a word that would change me and change my relationships for the better—a word that might make a difference in the lives of others? I began praying about this in December and before I even turned the corner into the New Year, "cherish" was the word that was upon my heart.

Good ol' Webster's defines cherish for us: Cherish (verb) 1a) to hold dear; feel or show affection for 1b) to keep or cultivate with care and affection (nurture). 2) to entertain or harbor in the mind deeply and resolutely. Synonyms: adore, love, worship.

Wow! What a word!

In order to "cherish" well, I began researching. Sometimes I wonder what we all did before Google was a thing. This wealth of information at our fingertips is mind-boggling at times with articles upon articles, websites upon websites that all promise to have the answers to our questions, information for our inquiries, or definitive ways to accomplish things. I have also found that Google isn't always right and oftentimes tells us what we want to hear—not necessarily what we need to hear. It sometimes takes our good intentions like wanting to learn things about cherishing others and turns it so that we feel unsatisfied or unhappy because others aren't cherishing us like they should.

This is why we must be careful in what we happen upon and how we are discerning what we read on the internet. Our intentions must be inward focused in searches keeping at the top of our minds: I can only change me so ... "how can I grow?", "what can I do differently?", "where are my faults in not cherishing well?"

Besides combing the internet, I opened my Bible—for it is there that I find real truth. It is there that God uses His word to impart wisdom and show me what I am really searching for. It is there that I have found His definition of cherish—cherish as an action and feeling with love, tenderness, gentleness, lovingkindness, honor, and holding dear—all pulled together to fully define this amazing word.

It is in the Bible I learn what to cherish as well as what not to cherish. It is also where I get to see the goodness of how God cherishes me. When I experience His love and cherishing to the full, I am more able to cherish others well.

Have you been cherished by someone? Is there anyone who taught you what cherishing looks like? Have you used that example to cherish others well? Or has all of this been lacking for you?

Many years ago, God brought a woman into my life that has taught me to cherish through her loving example—my mother-in-law, Snooks. She serves people selflessly; she has a heart that cherishes others in a way that would make you weep if you've never experienced this kind of goodness before. I never fully put my finger on the perfect word to describe this amazing woman until now—she is the epitome of cherish.

Besides being a constant example of cherish to me, Snooks introduced me to the One who would change my life—my Lord and Savior—Jesus Christ. I found that through Him—His love, power, grace, mercy and understanding, I could heal from my past, forgive instead of blame, hold my tongue rather than release negativity, be



Jeana her mother-in-law and cherishing mentor, Snooks.

more compassionate with others, and communicate better with love. And in learning His ways, I have been able to change my future in how I serve and cherish others. I believe in many ways I have been successful in doing so, but I also know that things happen in life that impact us on our journey and we need continual reminders to do things better, things like cherishing.

So here I am, a student with a desire to earn a degree in cherishing in 2021. Perhaps you would like to join me in learning more about cherish, in learning how to cherish others well, in practicing cherish, and even in teaching others through your example?

The book that first caught my eye in December, in the early stages of starting to equip myself for my degree, is aptly named: Cherish, by Gary Thomas. I ordered the book and couldn't wait to get started, for why not start this cherishing journey with the person I am closest with, my husband?

Often the word cherish conjures up thoughts of wedding vows—"... to love and to cherish; from this day forward until death do us part." The problem is, many of us don't practice cherishing on a regular, on-going basis. Certainly we might in the days, weeks, and months after we say "I do", but does it continue in the years ahead as challenges arise, trouble come, as life happens? With the divorce rates being so high, I would venture to say that cherish as an action is lacking in many marriages. Life gets busy, priorities sometimes get skewed, our expectations can get twisted and just like Google was trying to tell me how much I deserve to be cherished, we tell ourselves that too. But what if we did a new thing? What if we tried cherishing in our marriages—not giving our spouse the book and telling them the try the things within. But reading this incredible, eye-opening book filled with wisdom and practical advice ourselves? I wonder, if we start with us, might we reap a bountiful harvest of goodness in our marriages by cherishing first?

After reading Cherish, I have seen how so many of the principals in the book can also roll over into other relationships in our lives—actually into the entire sphere of people who cross our paths on a daily basis. And if we pair Cherish with a couple other books I have read in the past: The 5 Love Languages by Gary Chapman and The Seven Desires of the Heart by Mark and Debbie Laaser, we can have an amazing understanding of what others need and desire to give us many ways to cherish well.

Even this early in the game, it has become clear that the heart of cherish is in our words. The words we speak to and of others and the way in which we speak them (non-verbals) have the ability to build-up or tear-down. There is not one person who is immune to the pain of hurtful words. Conversely, there is not one person who doesn't feel amazing when good words are spoken of or to them. And if we go even further, we can see that speaking life-giving words feels good to the person saying them too.

No matter your religious views, I think we

can all agree with these statements:

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. —Proverbs 15:1

Gentle words bring life and health, a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit. —Proverbs 15:4

Kind words are like honey—sweet to the soul and healthy for the body. —Proverbs 16:24

Telling lies about others is as harmful as hitting them with an ax, wounding them with a sword, or shooting them with a sharp arrow." —Proverbs 25:18

Words satisfy the soul as food satisfies the stomach; the right words on a person's lips brings satisfaction. —Proverbs 18:20

The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. —Proverbs 12:18

So, I wonder, what are words that come from your mouth? What are the words that come from your keyboard? What are the words that you have in your heart about others? Have you considered all of the people within your sphere that you have the power to build-up or tear-down? Can you imagine what our world would be like if words were more carefully considered before they were released?

Just like Google has the ability to lead us astray in my searches, it also has the power to lead us astray in the reviews it displays. I bring this up at such a time as this in order to shed some light on what is happening. More than any other year of the past, we have learned what a blessing it is to have the small businesses we do in our communities. But do we cherish them? Do we cherish the people who do their very best day after day running them? Do we do all we can to build them up to keep them going and encouraged?

Everyone has endured much in the last year—every single person. I am not negating the incredible stress and pressure everyone has been under. And also as a business owner, knowing many other business owners, I cherish them more than ever before. I am in awe of their creativeness, perseverance, and goodness when the pressure from everyone—the government, customers, employees and general public put a heavier weight on all of their shoulders this past year.

This is why my heart has recently been so shattered in things I have read in reviews for our business and others in our community and even across our nation. I have struggled with whether or not I should broach this topic out of fear of what you might read about my business with some of the recent reviews, but I know truth and I cannot control others. However, I can certainly use this to help us learn more about cherish.

Bad reviews hurt people—business owners, employees, the families of all, and their reputations. When people sit behind their keyboards, typing out words (whether true or not), giving their opinions (without all of the details), coming up with aliases (to leave more bad reviews), etc., what is their motive? To hurt the business or people who work there? To prove they are right and feel important? What people

do not take the time to do is consider how their words might negatively impact a whole lot of people.

Imagine, if you will, that people had the ability to rate and review you or people you love with public written words (whether true or not), giving opinions (without sharing the back-story), having their family and friends add falsehoods to support their views, all while shaming you if you ever try defending yourself? How would it make you feel?

Over the last ten years we have experienced people leaving reviews who were not customers, who were competitors, who created multiple accounts with aliases, who left out pertinent information, and even one who did not like our son in school so he left a negative rating. We have had dishonest reviews that we could prove—and when we do defend ourselves, we are accused of doing so wrongly because "the customer is always right"—no matter what. We've had reviews from spouses of customers that were upset that their spouse did not consult with them before authorizing repairs. We've had reviews that came from customer's who admitted that they were "just having a bad day".

I know other businesses that have experienced the same or even worse. And I wonder again—what is the motive? Typically, when there is something legitimately wrong, the customer wants it to be made right. And when they offer grace (and maybe even some cherish), they seek to make this happen by talking to the business and coming to a good resolution.

In our business, our purpose is to care for people and fix cars—and our amazing team does everything possible to do this well. Other business owners are of the same mindset in doing all they can to take care of customers—for without them, we would not be in business. Can you see how everyone might win if we all put on some cherish?

Going forward, let us not always believe what we read on Google. Let us get in God's word to feel His cherishing of us and learn about it on a deeper level so that we can better cherish others. Let us build people up! Let us do unto others as we would want done to us. Let us have a spirit of cherishing. Let us leave good reviews that encourage small businesses in our community rather than leaving bad ones that hurt them. Let us offer some grace when things go wrong and consider how we aren't always perfect and would surely love some grace when we falter. Let us give others the benefit of the doubt and communicate like adults so that we can come to a conclusion everyone is happy with. Let us have an open mind and consider that the business may have experienced some problem behind the scenes that we are not privy to.

Friends, no matter if we have been cherished ourselves in the past or had examples of how to do it well, we can do a new thing and be the ones to learn about cherish, learn how to cherish others well, practice cherishing of everyone in our sphere, and teach others by our new example. And maybe, just maybe, we will reap what we sow with a bountiful good harvest from our efforts in cherishing. What do you say? Will you seek to earn your degree with me in 2021?

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