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# Introduction

**H**OW CAN YOU HAVE better love now? Let's start by understanding the condition of marriage today.

To do that, imagine yourself having a conversation with my father forty years ago.

You ask him, "Do you lie, cheat, or steal?"

He says, "No."

You ask, "Why not?"

He says, "Because you are not supposed to."

You say, "Why not?"

He says, "Because it is wrong."

You decide to push it a little bit. "Says who?"

He starts to get a little irritated and says, "God."

You challenge him, saying, "Explain who God is."

At that point my father probably would have looked at you funny. He may not have been able to give you an analytical treatise on theology proper. But he would have had an instinctive idea through the culture he was raised in about an infinite, personal God. He grew up knowing about a God who created man. This God gave man his dignity. This God gave man a conscience, so he would know right from wrong. My dad knew that this instinctive

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## BETTER LOVE NOW!

knowledge of God was amplified and clarified by the giving of his law and the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Dad would have looked at you funny because he would have wondered why in the world you didn't know this too.

My father, his father, and his father before him would have had innate ideas about God, the order of creation, right and wrong, institutions, authority, leading, and following. Your father and his father and his father probably did too.

But we live in a different day than our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents lived in. Something happened in about the mid-1900s—we punted the Judeo-Christian worldview. So people no longer default to seeing the world through a biblical perspective on truth and reality.

Now our worldview has become “a-theistic.” Man is the standard of all right and wrong. Because man in himself is not absolute, he cannot serve as a consistent standard. And so morality has become an arbitrary thing.

What are the consequences? Those institutions that stand or fall upon the knowledge of a creator God who is infinite and personal are stumbling. Government, business, schools, households—all derive their stability from a recognition of authority, leadership, accountability, respect, and reverence. And all of them are suffering greatly. Our modern worldview has created a breakdown in all the institutions that depend on the existence of moral absolutes and submission to them.

You may be saying, “Thanks for the history lesson, Tommy, but what does this have to do with me?” Believe it or not, these changes have a lot to do with why you are reading this book: the institution that has suffered the most is marriage, and that includes yours.

## *Introduction*

Look around your workplace and your neighborhood, and you will see the devastation left from the failure of marriages. There is an incredible hunger for information and teaching about marriage. You can't turn on the TV without seeing some talk show or news magazine special about marriage. The best-seller list always seems to have at least one book on relationships firmly entrenched near the top.

In my ministry I have taught and written several times on romance and marriage from the Song of Solomon. Every time I teach this material, my audience doubles. I taught it at my church in the early 1990s, and we almost doubled. I taught it for singles at the Metro Bible Study in Dallas, and we went from 1,200 to 2,000 in a few weeks. I taught it again at Metro a few years later, and we went from 2,000 to 4,000.

I think I'm pretty good on Romans, but my audience doesn't double when I teach on that book. What's the difference? People know there is something wrong with our culture's understanding of marriage.

Without a foundation of belief in God, we are cut loose from the mother ship. When an astronaut goes on a space walk, he makes sure he is securely tethered to the ship. If that tether is somehow cut, the astronaut could get sucked right out into space.

If man is not tethered to God and his revelation of himself in the Bible, then man's not sure who he is, who you are, what government is, what morality is, what marriage is, what being a husband means, what being a wife means, and on and on. Without God, people get sucked out into space. The machine of the cosmos just eats you up when you think you are nothing more than just another insignificant, accidental part of it.

## *BETTER LOVE NOW!*

This worldview has infiltrated the church with terrible results. Marriage is no longer an apologetic for the faith. When I first started in the ministry, you could point to the lack of divorce among Christians as a reason that someone should trust Christ. Not anymore. Divorce is just as prevalent inside the church as outside.

I wrote this book to bring folks back to a biblical worldview concerning marriage. But you need to know that this is not Tommy Nelson's best ideas about marriage. A book like that wouldn't be worth the paper it was printed on. Everybody's got an opinion on marriage today—go to any bookstore, and you will find hundreds of books on the topic. It doesn't really matter what people think; it matters what God says.

That's why we are going to look carefully at what the Bible says about marriage. Build your marriage on God's revelation and it will never fail.

This book is also unique because we will come at this biblical teaching from an interesting angle. We are going to take a look at six major areas of your marriage, consider what the Bible says, then look at the expectations and assumptions that a husband and wife bring into marriage for each area. We all have dreams and hopes and fears that color our perspective and experiences. If your mate is not holding up their end of the bargain, you are going to be disappointed. And if you aren't doing your part, then you are going to have a frustrated spouse.

This book will help you get to the place in your marriage where you've always wanted to be. It will help you find better love now. Marriage can be a lifelong honeymoon—when you follow the guidebook and live by the principles of God's Word.

## *Introduction*

Finally, I wrote this book because I know bad marriages—we've had a lot of good ones in our church, but we've also had our share of bad ones. And I've been right in the trenches with more husbands and wives than I could count. Frankly, I'd rather you read this book and let God fix you now, than see you in my office five years from now with a box of Kleenex. God has something more for you than a mediocre marriage. My prayer is that he would use this book to get you to the place where your marriage reflects the glory, harmony, and love within the three persons of God himself. That's what he's made you for, and that's what will satisfy your soul.