

LOVER SPOUSE



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Introduction

Every once in a while, you hear or read something, and it changes the whole way you think or feel about something. That is the goal of the book *Lover-Spouse*—to totally shift the way you think, feel, and behave in your marriage.

Now don't worry, I'm not sitting on a rock somewhere here in Colorado philosophizing on how to have great marriage. Like you, I've read marriage book after marriage book that are well written but don't really seem to add much to my daily life with my spouse. *Lover-Spouse* is a book that can shift everything in your marriage on a daily basis. I'm sharing with you the crème de la crème of ideas and paradigm thinking that has been helping Christian marriages for decades.

I'm not just an author, I'm actually a Christian psychologist who, every week for more than thirty years, has been resuscitating marriages. Every week couples fly in to my office in Colorado Springs and do intensive counseling for five days.

I've been in the ICU, if you will, of Christian marriages for decades. Every Monday in my office I hear the horror stories of a marriage about to die. I hear about infidelity at every level, porn, lying, withholding love and sex for years, and falling out of love. That's my typical Monday. However, more often that's not my Friday. By Friday, the couple likes or love each other and has a concrete plan to rebuild their marriage.

I've seen Christians fight for their marriages with new tools and new ideas. The lover-spouse idea has totally transformed lives again and again. I've seen marriages reinvigorated and reconnected as couples move into making their goal to be a lover-spouse. This paradigm shift changed how they thought, felt, and behaved in their marriage. No longer were they playing by the rules of keeping score or measuring themselves by their spouse's effort. Instead, they were free to be the best lover-spouse they could be in the marriage.

I want to be the first to welcome you to the exciting and fun world of being a lover-spouse.



The Paradigm Process

The wedding day is one of the most beautiful, emotional, expensive, orchestrated days of our life. Family members from both sides fly in, drive in, wear their best clothes, and happily navigate the rigors of the day's events.

They congregate at a set time, watch the groomsmen, and groom stand at the front. The classic tune "Here Comes the Bride" plays and then the most beautiful bride comes walking down the aisle. The pastor monologues for a while as we all wait for the pronouncement of, "I now pronounce you man and wife. You may now kiss the bride."

At that magical moment the two become one and we refer to them thereafter as husband and wife. We wait around for them as they take hundreds of pic-

tures. We eat a great meal. We hang out with family and generally have a great time at the wedding.

The couple starts their new life as husband and wife. Usually they travel to a honeymoon to start their new life. Some of you are old enough to remember a radio personality named Paul Harvey and at this moment he would say, "And now the rest of the story."

The rest of this chapter is all about the paradigm-based thoughts and behaviors both the husband and wife have created for themselves as individuals as they move toward the wedding day. As we unravel the creation of these paradigms, I think you'll be able to see why so many couples have struggled, even as Christians, with marriage.

I know it's puzzling to us as Christians who love Jesus, love our spouse, are dedicated to His word, and desire to walk in His spirit, yet divorce is a common theme in our community. We need to dive into the paradigm process to expose the seeds of problematic thinking and believing that can cause a couple to have a challenging marriage.

I want to give you a little context on who I am and what I've been doing professionally for more than

thirty years. I'm a Christian counselor, psychologist, author, and speaker. For more than thirty years I've been counseling couples full time. I see Christian couples from every denomination, color, culture, life stage, and socioeconomic situation. For decades, couples have flown in to do intensives with me and my team at Heart to Heart Counseling Center located in Colorado Springs.

I evaluate the couples on multiple levels including their strengths, weaknesses, and spiritual, social, emotional, sexual, and environmental factors. Then I take time to evaluate the husband and wife separately going over their family of origin, sexual histories, etc. By the end of Monday, I have a pretty clear picture of the marriage and the individual issues that may be contributing to the marital strife, whether that be addictions, intimacy anorexia, sexual abuse or even personality disorders.

The rest of the week we address the marital and intimacy issues, provide the couple with tools to rebuild a successful marriage and create a long-term plan for the couple to live happily ever after—if they work the plan.