

Interview with Tom Massey **Author of *Ten Commitments for Men***

Reader Views welcomes Tom Massey PhD, author of the new book *Ten Commitments for Men*. Tom is being interviewed by Juanita Watson, Assistant Editor of Reader Views.

Juanita: Thanks for talking with us today Tom. We are excited to hear about your latest book, *Ten Commitments for Men*. Would you start by giving readers an overview of what they can expect from your new book?

Tom: Thank you for having me, Juanita. Readers can expect to learn ten simple, yet powerful principles for raising their standard of living. They will gain practical insights for developing a balanced, purpose-driven life based on what they value and what they really want.

Juanita: What inspired you to write this particular book?

Tom: First, my publisher Robert Reed challenged me to write a secular book for men. There are many religious-based books, but few secular books that are directed specifically for enhancing men's lives. Even though the *Ten Commitments for Men* has a spiritual essence, it applies to men of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Second, my heart goes out to men, especially young men, of the world. Thoreau once said that, "Most men live in quiet desperation." I see something worse happening in our society – many men live in quiet *resignation* that their lives are not going to get any better and they don't know what to do about it. Unfortunately, manhood doesn't come with an owner's manual, so most men just make it up as they go. This book provides a roadmap, if you will, to navigate the journey.

Juanita: What makes this book specially designed for men?

Tom: Do you want to know a secret? This book applies to women, as well. In fact, some of the most positive feedback I have received is from women who have read the book – many have bought it for their spouses. I think that the particular appeal to men is the fact that it was written by a man who has experienced the same challenges in growing through manhood they have. There is kinship that the reader feels. One of my readers asked me recently if I have read Dr. James Dobson's book about "Bringing Up Boys." He said that the *Ten Commitments* has a very similar message and that all fathers should read this book for a guideline on how to raise their boys.

Juanita: Would you give us an idea of the *Ten Commitments*, and how they are outlined in your book?

Tom: The *Ten Commitments* are:

- *Know and be yourself*
- *Be a promise-keeper*
- *Get excited about something*
- *Build quality relationships*
- *Take care of your health*
- *Be mentally tough*
- *Live in the present*
- *Become a life-long learner*
- *Have fun*
- *Be a difference-maker*

Readers will learn to use the power of their word to create personal credibility and significance. They will explore their passions to develop the courage to take risks and build quality relationships through making others feel important. There are practical guidelines for improving health and self-discipline in establishing habits that improve quality of life, as well as letting go of regrets and becoming fully engaged in the present to learn and grow to new levels of personal performance. The reader will learn to enhance productivity and creativity through engaging in fun and laughter. And finally, to become a difference-maker who leaves the world a better place.

Juanita: How do you guide the reader through the understanding process, and applying the *Ten Commitments* to their lives?

Tom: Juanita, I am first and foremost a teacher and I use storytelling to convey the message. Each chapter of the book contains stories and illustrations used to introduce the life-changing principles that can be used broaden the reader's perspective and increase knowledge. A set of questions are provided at the end of each chapter to give the reader some practical guidelines and actions to transform learning into action.

Juanita: Would you give us an example of one of your stories, and how you tie it in with the principle, and then the Q&A?

Tom: The following is an excerpt from the chapter on *Becoming a Life-Long Learner*:

One of the reasons that learning is so important is that it prepares you to deal positively and productively with change. When it comes to change, you have two choices: *you can choose to be a victim of change or you can choose to be an agent of change.*

Some sports enthusiasts think that Wayne Gretsky is the greatest hockey player to have ever played the game. In fact, they have dubbed him "the Great Gretsky." When people refer to you as the "great" anything, it indicates you are pretty good. Right? Yet if you notice, Gretsky is not any bigger, stronger, or faster than the other players on the ice. Someone once asked him what the secret to his success was. He replied, "I think many players skate to where the puck is, but I always skate to where it is going to be."

Continuous learning will enable you to skate to where the puck is going to be in your life. As Einstein said, you are not going to be able to solve today's problems at the same level of thinking that got you here. You must keep taking your mental game to a new level.

Questions & Actions:

What are you doing to skate to where the puck will be in your life? Commit to learn something new and make improvements each day. Set aside at least ten minutes a day to read a book. Read all kinds of books, fiction as well as non-fiction. If you read ten minutes a day, you will complete on the average of one book per month – twelve books a year worth of new information. If you are absolutely too busy to read, buy books on tape and listen to them in your car on the way back and forth to work. If you don't have time to become a bookworm,
become a tapeworm!

Juanita: Do you find most men are willing to go through the self-reflective process necessary to make positive changes in their lives?

Tom: Most men? Unfortunately not. Remember – we men don't like to ask for directions. For years the majority of my coaching clients were women, but that is changing. I find that more and more men are willing to admit that they need some guidance. But we still have a ways to go. That's why I opened the book with the challenging quote to men: "Why do what most men can or will do, when you can do what most men can't or won't." The men who grasp this notion of self-reflection and are willing to put in the effort to do the work will rise to levels of success and significance beyond their wildest dreams.

Juanita: How do you suggest your book be read? Does each chapter build on the last, or can it be picked up and read at any point?

Tom: I suggest that you simply read the book straight through first to become mentally connected to the flow of ideas. Then go back through it slowly, mentally chewing on a new chapter each week, every two weeks, every month, or in whatever time frame you choose. The most important thing is to work through the *Questions and Actions* section at the end of each chapter. Knowledge is best learned through action. Each chapter is stand-alone in that it is not connected to the others. However, I believe that one needs to develop all ten areas to lead a balanced, fulfilled life.

Juanita: What are the personal qualities that the *Ten Commitments* will bring out in men?

Tom: A monumental moment in life arrives when you discover the truth that things may happen around you, and things may happen to you, but the most important are the things that happen *in* you. When the man is together, his world comes together.

These *Ten Commitments* will help men put their life together, similar to arranging all the pieces in a puzzle. As I stated earlier, the readers will develop a balanced, purpose-driven life based on what they value most and what they really want. Through practicing these commitments they will harness the power of their word to create personal credibility and significance. They will be inspired to explore their passions and take needed risks to accomplish their dreams. They will build harmonious relationships and enhance their quality of life by improving their health. They will let go of regrets and become fully engaged in the present moment to create and grow to new levels of personal performance. And most importantly, leave the world a little better than they found it.

Juanita: Which of the *Ten Commitments* do you find men struggle with the most?

Tom: Probably the first one – *Commit to Knowing and Being Yourself*. I believe that most men never take the time to answer, with specificity, the questions - “Who are you?” and “What do you really want in life?” Few develop a personal vision with specific, measurable goals to reach it. Further more, over ninety-percent of the people, both men and women, which I have spoken to have never explicitly defined their core values. If you don’t know where you’re going, you might end up someplace else. And most men are ending up someplace else.

Juanita: I understand that you use many of your own true-life examples to enhance the understanding of your teachings. Would you comment on this?

Tom: My entire life has been a research laboratory with a subject of one. Through my own adversities and struggles have come the greatest understanding and personal growth. Ben Franklin said, “If it hurts, it instructs.” As I said earlier, I am a storyteller and what better story to tell than my own. I am the expert of my own experience, as you are yours. I share my experiences and the lessons I learned from them which often give my readers solace that they are not the only ones to go through the struggles they’re going through and the hope that something good can come from them.

Juanita: Tom, would you tell us about your career path and how you’ve developed the insights you share in your book?

Tom: My career path has been quite diverse. I spent the early part of my career in the technology field - computer systems and information management. I am grateful for the experience and the livelihood that work provided, but my heart was in teaching and my greatest adulthood passion is health and fitness – both individual and organizational health and fitness. If you were to ask my family and friends they would probably tell you that I am fanatic in those areas. This passion led me into training and coaching athletes first, then ultimately organizational leaders, to optimize performance. Personal leadership was a natural transition for me. My bedtime reading for many years now has been anything that pertains to health, leadership, and human and organizational behavior. I continually read and reread books on those topics, including the five books I have written, as well as study the experiences of the great minds throughout history. I live it and breathe it. My appetite is insatiable for it.

Juanita: Tom, what is your particular mission, or what is the underlying message of the work that you do?

Tom: My mission is to teach and encourage others to become the best for the world. Not the best in the world, but the best for the world. Nobody has what you have to give the world. Don’t compare yourself to others. Simply be the best you can be. Focus on what you can do each day to continuously improve in mind, body, and spirit to be your best.

Juanita: Who has influenced you in becoming a better man?

Tom: I have had many outstanding mentors throughout the years. Some were personal acquaintances and some were men whose lives I studied like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela. However it may seem a little strange, but I believe that my son and grandsons have had the greatest influence on me becoming a better man. Their presence in my life inspires me to “walk my talk” and to leave a legacy as a man of honor and integrity. One who exudes peace and love for humankind.

Juanita: : How can readers find out more about you and your endeavors?

Tom: They can go to my website: www.tommasseyinc.com and are welcome to call my office 405-292-6753 anytime.

Juanita: Tom, “Ten Commitments for Men” sounds like a very inspirational and thought provoking book. We appreciate that you joined us today, and encourage everyone, men and women, to discover the wisdom of the Ten Commitments. Do you have any last thoughts for your readers?

Tom: Nothing is written in your life unless *you* write it. Decide now to make this your best year ever. Read this book and start applying these ten commitments to your life. They have worked for others and they will work for you!