

Marriage: A Life-long Commitment

by Chris Garner

Commitment is foundational to a strong marriage, yet too often commitment is seen as a by-product of one's satisfaction in his or her marriage. Miller & Perlman in their book, *Intimate Relationships* reflect the culture's view and defined commitment represented as an equation:

$$\begin{array}{|c|} \hline \text{Satisfaction} \\ \hline \text{Level} \\ \hline \end{array} + \begin{array}{|c|} \hline \text{Investment} \\ \hline \text{in the} \\ \hline \text{Relationship} \\ \hline \end{array} - \begin{array}{|c|} \hline \text{Available} \\ \hline \text{Alternatives} \\ \hline \end{array} = \begin{array}{|c|} \hline \text{Commitment} \\ \hline \end{array}$$

A person's commitment to the relationship is based on his or her level of satisfaction and the amount of investment in the relationship (time, children, etc.), less the alternatives available to him or her. The reality of this view happens every day; people are committed to their marriage relationships only if satisfaction level and their investment are better than the alternatives.

Contrary to the culture's view of commitment, Biblical commitment is the basis for the marriage relationship. A couple committed to each other invests in their relationship which raises satisfaction level. This can also be seen in an equation:

If satisfaction in the relationship is low, one or both need to make an investment into the relationship. This may be emotional; meeting needs or actively listening and communicating openly and positively, or it may be something tangible; spending time together or doing something for one's spouse. The

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"investment" will vary from couple to couple, but the important thing is to remember that marriage must be viewed as a life-long commitment. Satisfaction level will fluctuate over time and it can be raised with a purposeful, ongoing investment into the relationship.