

## **A Loving Marriage; a Choice, not a Feeling** by Chris Garner

Throughout history marriage has been about choice, not feelings. It is interesting that even today; the majority of marriages occurring in the world are “arranged” marriages. Parents choose their child’s future mate and the children learn to love their spouse. Western culture has made *feelings of love* the determining factor of marriage and while there certainly isn’t a problem with marrying someone because one *feels* love, those feelings or lack of feelings should not drive the decision to remain in a marriage or leave. In Genesis, Chapter 4, God asked Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." Doing what is right in one’s marriage is to fulfill his or her vows, even when the feelings are not there.

People marry promising to remain with their spouses through the good times and bad for as long as they both live. Yet, they too easily break those vows, made before God and man, for any and every reason. One writer commented; “We didn’t learn to break promises and (marriage) vows from big bad bullies at school – we learned from watching our parents deny every word they once said to each other.” Another woman commented that she wished her cancer ridden husband would just die; she wasn’t getting any younger and would need to find another husband. Is this what we have come to as a society, that we dump husbands or wives simply because they have not lived up to our expectations of how life should be? Today, feelings and expedience tend to rule relationships rather than Godly commitment.

Scripture teaches that we are to know the truth, believe the truth, act on (or obey) the truth and that the feelings will follow. Counseling couples, we have found that often, couples need to work through issues and learn skills so they can get to the point of beginning to do things to express love to each other. Then their relationship begins changing dramatically. Problems such as abuse, addictions or adultery require additional or specialized counseling, but most couples do not face these types of problems, they face the challenges of everyday life. So, what can you do to enhance feelings of love between you and your spouse? Could it be a matter of changing your attitude, dying to self or accepting your spouse as he or she is? Pastor Jamie Rasmussen recently said, “When you don’t feel like keeping your vows, allow them to keep you.” Invest in your relationship because it is the right thing to do, not because you feel like it.