

# Three Marriage Rules to Break

I recently ran into someone I knew in college at the mall in my home town. He was THE DUDE on campus. He married the campus beauty and received an assistantship at a prestigious law school in the northeast which allowed him to return home and begin a successful law office.

Amazingly, he remembered me. (I wasn't THE dude. I was a lower case "dude.") We decided to grab some coffee and catch up for a minute or two. He told me about his practice, his amazing house and two kids.

And I couldn't help but notice the gaping hole in his story. What about his wife— that amazing wife he married shortly after we graduated?

I didn't remember her name. Seems like it started with a "J." Do I ask or do I leave town with this question bothering me for days? I thought, *"What will it hurt to ask this guy about his wife?"* So with as much ease and casual grace as I could muster I asked, "So how's um ... Jane doing?"

"Jill?"

"Right! Jill."

John took a deep breath. "It ended after our second child was a toddler. She wanted way too much from me. I felt smothered and my personality just wasn't connecting with hers. Jill was impossible. She got upset when she didn't know where all my money was going. She constantly questioned my schedule. If I was a few hours late or had to stay at the office overnight without telling her, she'd freak. And she became very paranoid when I struck up friendships with the opposite sex. I felt like she assumed she married an *Amish* guy who signed an agreement *not* to have a life.

This was an uncomfortable situation for me. I hate people who judge others as much as anybody but I had huge alarms going off in my head.

How could someone so smart, be so far adrift in the oceans of relationships and marriage?

The three objections that he mentioned in his terse explanation created the perfect storm which led to a bankruptcy, joint custody, and many complicated, awkward conversations – like the one we were having.

You see, John had some rules about his life and his marriage. These marriage rules must be broken if your marriage is going to be everything you, your spouse and God desires it to be.

By all means, let your freak flag fly and break these idiotic rules our culture values.

## **Your money is your money.**

Many couples I counsel fail to recognize that marriage as a financial partnership. God wants you and your spouse to work together and He's quite interested in the way you handle money in your marriage.

It's a tool God uses to teach us about sacrifice, unconditional love, communication, cooperation, trust and stewardship.

We learn these virtues in the classroom of finances.

The idea of separating the money that comes into the home is a dubious proposal. Leave a legacy of growth and sacrifice by working together as a family to achieve financial decisions and goals.

# Your time is your time.

Every person needs time to be alone. It's essential for prayer, reflection and restoration of mind and body. But to assume that **your** time is **your** time is to miss the entire message of a covenant marriage.

I know. You're busy. But you're married, too! Your time is no longer *just* your time. We have to learn balance. If you don't have balance in your schedule, find it!

If you are making decisions alone regarding your time, your marriage can become toxic fast.

The issue of time and money can present the greatest threats to your marriage. Remember: the greatest barometers of your love for your spouse and your love of God are **money and time**.

In fact, Jesus felt so strongly about these two life values that He spent more time on them than He did on anything else.

# Your friends are your friends.

*(In other words, there should be no problem at all with husbands having a close female friend or two and the same for wives about a male friend.)*

This is a rule that often leads to sticky, complicated messes. John held on to this rule with white knuckles until his marriage imploded.

He fell for a client with whom He spent lots of time. What began as an innocent working relationship grew into emotional cheating.

One may begin a relationship as functional allies. It may begin with an innocent compliment, then giving way to subtle flirtations, discussing marriage trouble, gift giving, sharing meals and traveling in the same cars.

And once that train leaves the station it's difficult to stop.

Don't trust your heart enough to do these things. Run away from these opportunities! Nothing good happens when you go there.

## And the story continues...

So that's the story of a friend of mine who didn't break these insidious rules and broke his marriage in the process. In fact, he married the client.

Happily married today? No.

Believe it or not, she had the same issues with John's rules as wife #1. They split in less than a year after their marriage began.

It's the story of so many divorces: couples who were madly in love but refused to break some rules to save their marriage.

And if you want some rules that are truly liberating and provide the greatest chance to have a marriage that sizzles, try these:

- Love relentlessly.
- Never let anything stand between you and the love of your life.
- Celebrate the little things.
- Say important, loving words to your spouse today because you are never promised tomorrow.
- Control your work; spend the night with your spouse (not the other way around).
- Constantly invest in your relationship. The payoff is huge.
- Learn to forgive, forgive and forgive. It truly is divine!
- Admit your hurts and faults.
- Listen with your ears, your eyes and your touch.

- Open up. Speak the last 2% that you've kept to yourself.
- And last but not least – never, ever give up on your spouse.