

## For Richer, For Poorer

Posted At : January 28, 2014 12:20 PM | Posted By : Paula

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Money, money, money! It is the one major issue married people fight about. It can be the one hurdle two people who truly love each other can not overcome.

It is very interesting that of the people I interviewed for this blog, those who have been married the longest found that money was not as important as younger married couples did.

Today, couples who marry assume financial stability will come with marriage. They will be able to afford whatever they feel they need, as individuals rather than thinking as a couple. Couples who married 30 or 40 years ago accepted the financial struggles they had from day one of their marriage and worked together to overcome them.



Let's take a look at the issue of money and how it's importance has evolved throughout history; making it one of the major obstacles couples face.

### History:

One hundred years ago, marriage had very little to do with two people falling in love, but more to do with parents wanting to *"marry off"* their daughters to *"the highest bidder."* Young women in those days were considered a burden on their families once they reached a certain age. It was up to their Father's to find them a suitable husband, meaning a wealthy husband who could take over the support of their daughters.

In the 1930's and 40's, during World War 2, when husbands were serving in the military, their wives and children often went to live with relatives as it was thought a wife and mother could not live by herself in a home of her own, pay the bills and care for her children without family help and guidance.

Even during the 1970's and 1980's when I was growing up, I was told that *"good girls"* lived with their parents until they met their *"prince"* and then our only job was to keep a nice home and raise babies while our husbands provided everything **THEY** felt we needed.

Bottom line, women first had to obey and do as their parents said; then as adults, we traded in our parents for husbands who took over the "parenting role" and dictated every thing we did. We were never in control of our own lives and what we wanted or desired was at the mercy of our husbands who controlled the **MONEY!**

It was inconceivable that a woman could ever take care of herself, maybe make her own way in the world, be independent before getting married and having a family.

Fast forward to 2014 and see how things have changed.

### **Yours, Mine, Ours:**

Much has changed since the days when a man was the "King of His Castle" and primary breadwinner for the family. When a wife had to ask permission to go out to lunch with friends, buy a new outfit or go to the hair salon.

Many women today are marrying later in life. At the time of their marriage, they are college graduates, have successful careers, homes of their own and an independent nature not seen in the past when the "weak, little woman" needed a strong, successful man to take care of her.

Many women today choose not to take their husband's name and also choose not have joint bank accounts with their spouses.

What used to be "ours" after the marriage has turned into "mine" and "yours." In today's economy, with the costs of homes, cars, children and food skyrocketing, most married couples need two incomes to even come close to having what their parents had with one.

This can cause stress in a marriage. Many people in marriages where both partners work feel that the money they earn individually need not necessarily be shared with their spouse or go to household expenses. Some continue to maintain separate bank accounts in order to have control over the money they work to earn.

Many married couples today seem more like room mates than two people who want to build a life TOGETHER. Each paying their half of the rent, utilities, even splitting a restaurant tab when going out for dinner together. Some take separate vacations or split the cost of a shared vacation because each person in the marriage is an individual instead of part of a couple.

When researching this blog, I learned that money management is a personal choice and one the couple usually decides together, whether they choose to keep their individual earnings separate or combine them in joint accounts.

When this very important decision is made as a couple, my readers report they are happy with the results and their choice makes their marriage stronger.

### **Where Does All The Money Go?:**

Many times in a marriage one person takes over the responsibility of the dreaded monthly budget. This can leave the other partner out of the loop.

One reader, who is in charge of paying all the household bills and budgeting the money commented she wishes her husband would take more of an interest in where their income goes. He truly has no knowledge of what the monthly bills are.

Many women also report that their husbands handle all the finances and they worry if something were to happen to him, they would have no knowledge of what is needed to maintain the household. I had a relative who, after her husband died, did not even know where he kept the checkbook let alone how to deal with the household finances.

I believe when it comes to finances, both adults in the home should be aware of the monthly expenses, regardless of who physically pays the bills. Both should know the amount of income required to maintain the home and should have joint access to all bank accounts that are used to pay those bills.

### Family Comes Calling and Begging:

We marry the man or woman of our dreams, love them and want to live a long life with them. Just the two of us. Problem is it is never *"just the two of us."* We become part of our spouse's extended family as our spouse becomes part of ours. Extended family actually can define a marriage depending on the way **"family issues"** are handled by married couples.

Couples who become financially successful often have family members coming to them for money. Parents feel the most successful child should take them into their home if they become ill or can no longer afford to live on their own.

One reader shared a very sad story of family betrayal that should send a message to all of us:

Her husband's parents, being faced with losing their home, came to their son and asked to be "loaned" \$50,000 with the promise the money would be paid back or he and his wife would be able to move into the home they saved from foreclosure.

Unfortunately, the parents took their son's money and never paid one dime of it back. Kept their home and are now living large while their son and his wife live in poverty. They gave up their life savings to take care of husband's parents and those parents kicked their son and daughter in law to the curb.

The beauty of this story is that this wife, who has had so much stolen from her by her husband's family remains committed to her marriage and loves her husband.. They are working through this difficult time together however it has caused a rift in the couple and the husband's family that will never heal.

When my mother died, an evil, sick family member went to everyone at her funeral and told them my mother left me over one million dollars and that I was rich!

While this was not true, it did not stop some from coming to me shortly after the funeral to make subtle hints that I may want to invest in a business they wanted to start or ask when I was buying my dream mansion.

Perception is one thing, reality another. It continues to amaze me that some in our families consider us wealthy when nothing could be further from the truth.

To protect our marriage and our financial security, we have rules as a couple that I strongly suggest all couples think about implementing:

Never do business with family unless legal papers are drawn up and it is made clear that it is a BUSINESS transaction, not a gift! Let it be known that family will be treated as any customer and failure to pay will result in the same collection procedure as any other customer who refuses to pay for services provided.

Never **"loan money"** to family. Treat any money a family member asks for as a **"gift"**

that will most likely never be paid back. Never ***"loan"*** more than you can afford to lose.

Being married means accepting our spouses family as part of our lives, it does not mean we are financially responsible for our spouse's family or should allow our success be taken advantage of by any family members on either side of the marriage.

### **Conclusion:**

Money is important to many successful marriages, while it means nothing to others that are equally successful.

In my research, I have found that money matters more to those who had it and lost it, those who have it and are trying to protect it, and those who believe having it will make them happy.

Married couples who were not born into money, brought no money into their marriage, worked together from nothing to achieve what they have today; seem to be the happiest.

Money can buy material things, can give people standing in the community. Money can buy the fancy houses and toys to impress friends and family, but at the end of the evening, it is still just two people who took marriage vows and go to bed together. When their eyes are closed, they will not see all the fancy stuff in their mansion or the 4 cars in the garage. They won't taste the shrimp and lobster they served at the dinner party.

All they will have is the person sleeping next to them, the person they will wake up next to tomorrow and all the tomorrows to come.

Money can not make your heart skip a beat when your husband walks in the door, it can not make you smile when your wife falls asleep on the sofa and does that little snore thing you used to hate and have now come to love.

***Money comes and money goes. True love lasts! For richer, for poorer!***