

The North Fulton Marriage Newsletter

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Paying for Waffles

My daughter loves waffles, so much so that I have nicknamed her “syrup head.” Most mornings when I am leaving for work, she is enjoying a waffle or two along with some syrup. Actually, it’s more like she is enjoying her syrup along with some waffle! A few weeks back, as I was walking out the door, my wife said to her, “Tell daddy goodbye, he is off to pay for your waffles.” It is a pretty simple explanation of why I have to leave. Got to pay for the waffles. But, I strive to be more than just the provider of waffles. What good are waffles if I am never there to watch her eat them? I love my job, I love being a counselor and building a business, but I make every effort to not let my work life interfere with my family life. Working hard to become self-employed has allowed me flexibility in my schedule. This morning I did not leave the house till 10 A.M. because I knew I would be home late tonight, probably around 7:15. An extra hour in the morning with my daughter watching Sesame Street isn’t a bad thing. God only provides me with a finite number of mornings and evenings with her and my wife, I want to appreciate and enjoy each day that I have with them.

In my counseling practice I have seen it over and over again. A mother or father that becomes so obsessed with their career life that they neglect their family life to the point that either their marriage is failing or their children are acting out. Please do not let that happen to you! Take steps now to create boundaries between your work life and your family life. Ask yourself the question “Why do I work?” Do you work to spend time with your family, or do you work to avoid spending time with your family? You can bet plenty of folks use work as an excuse to avoid problems and conflicts at home. Please understand that I am not being judgmental. No one is perfect. But remember, your relationship with your children is the very first relationship they will have. All of their other relationships in life will, for better or worse, be patterned after their relationship with you. I think this is of special importance for fathers of daughters. When my daughter was born I was given a book entitled “Love You, Daddy Boy.” The book is a collection of letters written by daughters about their fathers. It is a wonderful and insightful read. Not all the stories are positive, but even the sad stories provide lessons for us fathers of daughters. When I am older, what will my daughter write about me? At the very least I hope that she will write that I was always around and that I spent a lot of time interacting in her world, not just mine.

Unfortunately, sometimes the sole “provider” in a marriage will use their provider role as a means of economic and/or emotional control. Some folks think that since they earn all the money, the money is theirs and they should be able to control how it is used and in some extreme cases, control the people that use it. This is so dangerous. I will quickly confront anyone with that attitude and point out that the money earned, regardless of who earns it, belongs to the family not just the provider. This kind of attitude, over the long term, can lead to an unhealthy power balance in the relationship and create feelings of resentment and possibly fear. Marriage, at its very core, is a partnership; please treat it as such! Furthermore, I challenge you to continually reevaluate your work life and family life balance. You may be paying for the waffles, but are you really enjoying them?

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