

10 Politically Incorrect Reasons We're Still Married

Emily and I celebrated our anniversary a week early this year. We just returned from an all-inclusive resort in Cancun. We've been married for 22 years. We started dating about six years before that. We were friends for about three years before that. In other words, we've been together a long time.

I'm learning time really doesn't matter. I've had friends who have been together for longer than us and found themselves in a marriage mess. Fortunately, we have a God that forgives and reconciles and promises hope. Since that's not our story, though, I'm not the best person to write that article.

What I *can* write about is the intentionality Emily and I have embraced to be friends for over 30 years and married for as long as we have. Some of this advice is pretty unpopular in today's world. Some of it is politically incorrect in secular circles or taboo in Christian circles. Honestly, I don't care. I've seen too many marriages blow up to hold back. With that in mind, here are 10 politically incorrect reasons Emily and I are still married:

1. We put our spouse's needs ahead of our own needs. From what we've learned, our basic needs are different from each other. The book *His Needs, Her Needs* is a great book to begin this conversation.

2. We've made our physical appearance a priority. Neither one of us would admit to being "10s" by any stretch of the imagination, but we want to look sexy for each other. We work at it. That includes eating right, exercise, clothes, hair, etc. For example, Emily and I have made a pact—she decides what my hair looks like, and I decide what her hair looks like. Again, we prioritize the needs of our spouse.

3. We've embraced traditional roles. I work outside the home, and Emily works inside the home. Does that mean we're against couples who try to juggle two jobs outside the home? Absolutely not. For Emily, though, she gains significance through being a great wife, mother and home manager. That's a full-time job. Since she owns that role, it relieves quite a bit of stress that we know other couples have to navigate.

4. We prioritize our marriage over our careers. To do this, we have a tight budget. We spend less than we make. We avoid debt. We do this so we can live on one income. We do this so we can invest in time away, like our recent trip to Cancun. We say no to overcommitment in our careers so we can enjoy regular time together.

5. We prioritize our marriage over our children. We have four beautiful kids, but they will eventually grow up and leave. My relationship and friendship with Emily is more important. Ironically, when we put our marriage relationship first, our kids feel loved and more secure. This is one of the reasons we are strict about limiting the activities our kids engage outside of school.

6. We didn't have sex before marriage. We didn't live together. We dated for six years before we got married. I can assure you, we wanted to have sex before marriage. Again, God forgives. I know all couples can't begin here, but we did. And I'm convinced learning that discipline to restrain ourselves before marriage has freed us up to thoroughly enjoy ourselves after marriage.

7. We've had lots of sex after marriage. God created us to have sexual desire. Christian couples, in particular, need to get over their inhibitions, talk about sex and continue to discover. Again, the principle of putting your spouse's needs ahead of your needs holds true here as well. If you want to help your spouse avoid temptations outside of marriage, your sex life needs to stay spicy.

8. We enjoy wine together. (My unchurched friends won't understand why this is politically incorrect. Trust me. It is with church people.) In other words, we don't let religious people define how we live our lives, including our marriage. We let God's Word direct our lives. Because of that, who we are publicly is who we are privately. We don't have to pretend to be someone we're not. We can be ourselves with each other and with everyone we do life with. There's a lot of freedom in that.

9. We never meet alone or publicly with a member of the opposite sex. I don't have meals alone with another woman. I won't travel alone (even in a car) with another woman. I won't meet a woman alone in an office without windows or without an open door. (My consulting clients can verify this.) This protects both of us from the temptations we all face. These protections help us avoid mistakes that would reduce the freedoms we have in our marriage. We're not willing to sacrifice that for a momentary inconvenience.

10. We're committed to a covenant where divorce is not an option. For Emily and me, that means we need to work at loving each other. We don't wait for love to happen—we work at it. We need to discipline our lives to avoid mistakes that could end our marriage. We prioritize our faith, because that creates order for the rest of our lives, including our marriage. Since we both agreed to fulfill this covenant 'til death do us part, we have confidence that, even when marriage is difficult, we will persevere.

I know. Some of this sounds really shallow. Some of this sounds impractical. Some of this sounds inappropriate. I hope it challenges your thinking and generates some healthy conversation with your spouse.

Let's choose integrity. Let's choose to stay married.

Tony Morgan is the chief strategic officer and founder of . He's a consultant, leadership coach and writer who helps churches get unstuck and have a bigger impact. For 14 years, Tony served on the senior leadership teams at West Ridge Church (Dallas, Ga.), NewSpring Church (Anderson, S.C.) and Granger Community Church (Granger, Ind.). With Tim Stevens, Tony has co-authored Simply Strategic Stuff, Simply Strategic Volunteers and Simply Strategic Growth—each of which offers valuable, practical solutions for different aspects of church ministry. His book Killing Cockroaches (B&H Publishing) challenges leaders to focus on the priorities in life and ministry.

For the original article, visit .