

Deflect Satan's Schemes to Destroy Your Marriage With These 4 Principles

"I think I may have destroyed my marriage."

That's what the 20-something newlywed told us when we ran into her at a special event at a large church in our area. We had met her 18 months before at our Marriage Prep workshop. Now, just a year into her marriage, she feared that things were damaged beyond repair.

What was the problem? It was her relationship with a male co-worker. They had become friends, then more personal. They had come to depend on one another for emotional support. She shared regularly about how her husband was a disappointment. He was a shoulder to cry on. While not a sexual affair, it had certainly become an emotional one.

Once her husband saw the texts and read the emails, he was devastated. Why would she connect so closely with a man at work? The young husband moved out and was on the verge of initiating divorce. The hurt from the unfaithfulness was just too great.

From Co-workers to Friends to Secret Lovers

While this couple was able to get things back on track, many relationships that start in the workplace end up destroying the marriage. The bonds that can be made with those you work closely make for powerfully intoxicating stuff. Just remember what happened to Brad Pitt, Jennifer Aniston and Angelina Jolie. If you are not on guard, it's just too easy to get emotionally (and romantically) connected to someone who isn't

your spouse. This is especially true when things are tense at home and your co-worker seems so nice and empathetic.

I would like to recommend four rules to follow if you want to keep your marriage guarded in the workplace. I have named the four rules after the four guys I learned them from.

4 Rules for Guarding Your Marriage at Work

The Billy Rule

For more than 50 years, Billy Graham spent most of his life as a traveling preacher. In spite of his schedule, all signs indicate that he maintained a healthy marriage with his wife, Ruth. One thing he consistently did to safeguard his moral integrity (and to avoid any possible temptation) was to never be alone with a woman. Never. He didn't share a meal, get in a car, or spend any time alone with a member of the opposite sex. This extreme boundary kept him above reproach and his marriage intact.

Married people in the workplace today could learn a lot from America's pastor. While others might think you are weird or a bit extreme, you need to personally believe that your marriage is worth it. And that you will do whatever it takes to protect it. Avoid one-on-one time whenever it is practically possible.

The Bart Rule

My friend Bart wanted to live by the Billy rule, but he and his spouse both worked in jobs that required them to regularly meet with members of the opposite sex. So it was literally impossible. Their solution: They first committed to keeping their marriage very fresh. Then, they made sure that the chit-chat portions of their sales calls were focused mainly on how awesome their spouse was. This made it clear to whomever they

were with: “I’m happily married, so don’t even think about it.”

If your job requires you to travel with or work closely with the other gender, you would be wise to follow The Bart Rule. Make sure the people around you clearly know how awesome your spouse is. And how religiously devoted you are to him or her.

The Bryant Rule

I got this one from my longtime pastor, Bryant Wright. His rule requires a bit more personal introspection than the first two. Bryant gives this advice: “If you are ever interacting with a member of the opposite sex (talking, laughing, touching) in a way that, if your spouse were watching, you would be even the least bit uncomfortable, then you have already crossed a line.” This is great advice.

Watch how you spend time with people you work with. Imagine that your spouse is seeing all that you are doing and saying. Would he or she be completely comfortable with it? If not, then you may need to make some changes to your behavior. You might even need to put some physical space between yourself and the other person, just to guard your heart from an emotional connection that doesn’t need to be there.

The Barrett Rule

This rule has sort of evolved in my marriage with Jen over the years. As I have corresponded with women via text message for work, I have had to learn the importance of keeping things businesslike. Why? Because studies show that texting is the starting place of most 21st-century affairs. We have seen this happen time and time again to young couples whose texting interaction outside the marriage quickly moves from casual to intimate. While I like to be witty and funny on texts, I don’t need to do that with women I am not married to. I never want to give someone the wrong idea.

You can easily connect the Bryant Rule to the Barrett Rule. If you find yourself about to text something that you don't want your spouse to see, then you have probably already crossed a line. Even if you know your motives are pure, you don't always know how the other person will take it. So be careful.

These four rules aren't a complete list, but they are a good place to start. And while they certainly apply to the workplace, they can also apply to how you interact with the opposite sex at church, at school and in your neighborhood. Marriage is worth protecting. Do whatever it takes to guard it against other relationships that might undermine it.

Q. What are some other good guidelines to safeguard and affair-proof your marriage? Tell us on Facebook! {eoa}

Adapted from , a ministry founded by Barrett and Jenifer Johnson. After serving in the local church for 25 years, Barrett and Jenifer launched INFO for Families as a ministry designed to encourage people through speaking, personal coaching and resource development. Barrett served for 15 years in youth ministry before serving for eight years as the Family Minister at Johnson Ferry Baptist Church in Atlanta, one of the largest churches in the South. He has degrees from Texas A&M University and Southwestern Seminary, but he and Jenifer have received their best education through the no-holds-barred nature of everyday family life.