

## **17 Things I Learned About the Legal System When My Husband Left**

1. Lawyers are very expensive.
2. Locating a good lawyer who knows what they are doing is very important.
3. Before meeting with a lawyer, collect important paperwork and facts. Write down questions for your lawyer to answer. Come prepared and save the lawyer's time by not talking off-topic because they usually charge by the hour.
4. Changing lawyers is as easy as calling up a different one, filling out more paperwork with them, and then they will take care of the change for you.
5. Every state varies to some degree as far as divorce law and precedents in the law already set.
6. The court system, judges, and lawyers, do not care who is at fault under No-Fault Divorce law and you are really not even supposed to bring it up.
7. When there are children involved, courts often require parents of divorce to meet with an assigned mediator to work out visitation schedules, and to make recommendations to the judge.
8. A mediator's opinion of your case can matter more than anyone else's because they are the neutral party assigned by the court and the judge will often listen closely to what they say or recommend.
9. There is usually a "calculator" in place for each state that can arbitrarily figure out child support payments based on each parents' incomes and the amount of time each one spends with the children.

10. One factor that is considered by judges is the past precedent that has been set for the children. In other words, what has been the normal lifestyle for them prior to the divorce of their parents. If possible, judges may rule for the continuation of the way that the home has already been set up (for example, stay-at-home or working parents, private or public school) in order to provide consistency for the children for this huge transition in their lives.
11. The court process can take a very long time because many steps are necessary, and many dates where everybody involved is available must be found on the calendar.
12. During the time that legal proceedings are taking place, it is often very difficult to take the kids legally out of state to visit family or friends unless many written permissions are given.
13. A divorce contract seems to be taken more seriously by the court system than a marriage contract which is, sad to say, relatively easy to render no longer binding.
14. When you reach a binding, legal agreement with the other parent, it is very important to be specific and give exact details so that any future court can measure if both parties have kept their contract or not.
15. Because either party can take the contract back to court at any time in the future, consider putting in a clause that states that the one who does so should pay half or all necessary legal expenses.
16. There are other options apart from going through the court process.
  - a) Choosing Christian arbitration/mediation through an organization like Peacemaker.net.

- b) Hiring one lawyer who specializes in mediating your situation outside of the court system and using their general counsel to make decisions and draw up paperwork to be signed.
- c) Settling out of court between you and your ex by coming up with an agreement and having a lawyer draw up the paperwork to be signed.

17. Don't forget **The God Factor**. Proverbs 21:1 (NKJV) says, "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, Like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes." Pray often.