

*Catholic Men's Ministries  
Of Indian River County Florida*

Presents: Divorced? Have A Talk With Dad



by Robert G. Borelli

Phone rings. Hello?

Hi Dad, It's Paulie, how are you and mom doing?

We're doing well. How about you and Stacy and the kids?

We're all Ok. Dad, are you going be around next Tuesday?

Sure, what time, because Mom volunteers at the hospital from 10 to 2.

I have to be in Boston for an early morning meeting, I can be in Bedford around 11.

That's great! I'm sure Mom can call in sick, after all, she doesn't get paid.

No, please, let her go to work. I want to talk to you about something and I rather it just be you and me.

Can you stay a couple of days? I'm sure Mom can make your favorite meal you know the meat and scallop potatoes. Is it still your favorite?

I can stay for dinner. Yep, still my favorite. I only get that treat when I come home. You know Stacey doesn't cook. But I can't stay over, I have an early flight Wednesday out of Manchester. I have to be in my office in Chicago for a client meeting at 2 that afternoon

I can call Tiss. I know she would love to see you. She's only 20 miles away and I'm sure she would be thrilled to see her older brother. She can bring the kids, we'll make it a family get together thing.

Not now Dad, I'll can catch Tiss and the kids next time I'm in. She doing OK?

She's fine. You know Tiss, she's always happy. She's more Mom than she is me. So, okay, whatever you want to talk about must be important, so it will be just you and me. Have a safe trip. See you Tuesday.

Tuesday 11 AM

Hi Paulie, nice car.

Hi Dad, yea it's a rental, a Mercedes just like the one I drive at home. Let me hug you.

Wow! I haven't had that kind of hug in a long time. Must be something important you want to tell me.

You're right. I guess I'll get right to it. Stacey and I are spitting up.

Divorced?

Not yet but I'm sure it will get to that.

God what happened? Paulie, you're a lawyer, you know divorce is serious stuff. What about your kids, how old are they now, 8 and 10? You've got to know it would be devastating for them.

Dad, I know and I'm really hurting on this one. Let me tell you the story. You know Stacey is a career woman, she's not like Mom and for that matter, Tiss. Stacey always worked even when she was pregnant with Trevor, she worked almost to the day she gave birth. Both Trevor and Barb were in daycare from about 3 months after they were born until they entered school. What could I say Dad, she is good at what she does and she's looked upon highly by her bosses.

But Paulie, you're a lawyer, a good one, you got to be making enough money to support your family?

I do, but for Stacey it's more about her career. What she could do on her own. Believe me Dad, we don't need the two incomes. You should see the taxes we have to pay now.

I just don't understand. So what is the problem that is making you guys split? You been married 15 years and as I remember, Stacey has been working the whole time, and you still stayed together?

Ok, here's the problem, Stacey was offered a promotion, a big promotion. Her company is branching out and they're opening a San Francisco office, a big office, and they offered Stacey the job to run it. They even promoted her to V.P. with a big raise and with a staff of 130 direct reports.

So she accepted it?

Hands down. She did ask my opinion. I told her that it would be a big problem since I am being considered for full partnership in my law firm and I can't just leave and go to San Francisco.

Her answer?

She said that she has worked for 17 years to get to this position and the opportunity was too good to turn down and that we are going to have to work something out. I really don't know what to do. We talked about having the kids stay with me in Chicago while they are in school and fly them to San Francisco to stay with her during summer break. Finances and all that other stuff will still need to be worked out. But I've been involved in enough divorce cases, with people that have separate careers and money, to know that the cleanest way to resolve an issue like ours is a consensual divorce with investments being sold and divided equally. Financial support

of the kids could be worked out with me paying while they are with me, and her paying while they are with her.

College expenses are already taken care of by Trusts we set up when they were born. So as it stands, looks like that's the way we are going to go. I don't even know how it got to this point. I thought when I got married it was going to be like yours and Mom's and Gramp's and Grandma's.

I never expected it to be what mine turned out to be. Don't get me wrong, Stacey is a good Mom and we never had relationship problems, it's just that her ideas on a good marriage were totally based on her upbringing, not mine. But in the beginning, when we were young and just out of school, she brought to the table a lot of fun and excitement. We traveled, went to great restaurants, we skied in Colorado and the Swiss Alps, belonged to the exclusive North Shores Country Club, we always had nice cars and beautiful homes. We were accepted by the Upper Shore crowd, and Stacey was at home in that environment, it's how she grew up. So we never felt that we didn't belong because our means and positions, put us on par with them. It was great in the beginning but for the last several years I have not been very happy. My life is nothing like the kind of life I had with you and Mom and Tiss, growing up in the little town of Bedford, New Hampshire. There was lots of love, laughter, family gatherings, and of course Church. I am not seeing any of that today. It's like happiness is always just another promotion or another pay raise, or another acceptance in another exclusive club. And somehow we are always in a competition, against others and even against each other. It's like my life is on a treadmill and I go around and around somehow never falling off but always just shy of complete satisfaction. So forgive me Lord but I look at Stacey moving away and probably out of our marriage, as a good thing for me.

Wow, sounds like you guys already worked this all out. Both emotionally and financially. What about Trevor and Barb how would that affect them?

Dad, they grew up with strangers being their caretakers more than their parents being their caretakers and actually they understand the situation and are OK with it. Just another indication of the difference between my life and say Tiss's life. I'm sure that little Matt and Sara would indeed be devastated if this were happening to Mathew and Tiss.

So when does this all begin?

Stacey leaves sometime next month, depending when her office is ready. Right now I'm just so confused. Do I continue the lifestyle that I find myself in even though I recognize I am not comfortable with it? What about Barb and Trevor, how do I become a better father to them? Hell sometimes I don't even know who they are. It's like they developed personalities of their own. Personalities more like Stacey's than like mine. Honestly Dad I need your help. I'm sure I'm going to be on my own now. Where do you think I should go from here? You are a psychologist. What advice would you give to a stranger in the same kind of situation.?

Hey, I'm a school psychologist, a part time one at that, not a practicing or clinical Psychologist. But more importantly in your case, I could only speak to you as your Dad. First of all you are not alone There is in today's society a confusion on masculinity and in some, a hunger amongst some men, to be the man their fathers and grandfathers were. However, clocks cannot be turned back.

Understand that from the vision of a woman like Stacey, those fathers and grandfathers would have been, that these men were too restrictive, too exclusive to their gender, not sensitive to woman needs, not willing to share child care, or domestic chores, or understand the need for a woman to be equal to a man. So Stacey, in reality, is more the norm than not, as far as, strict career women go.

Now having said all of that, on the other hand, you know, as I said, I am a part time school psychologist in Amherst and there is this woman that teaches there that is like a younger version of your mom. You know the type, the ones that were brought up believing in a Christian woman's Biblical identity. This woman, without any doubts has the pecking order of her roles in life.

She is first and foremost a mother, then a wife, and then a working woman. So if her need is to still work at a full time job, she will seek a position that does not toil her with the demands on being a career woman. She did graduate from college and has a Masters in Finance and still expects some rewards for all her struggles. But the rewards she is content with, at this time, need to come to her but not at the expense of her children. No job, however esteemed or financially rewarding would deter her from her main job of being the mother and caretaker of her young children. So, for now, she is content in the kind of job that allows her to be home when the children are home even though having a master's degree in finance, she could work for a big accountant firm and make a lot of money, she chose to be a school teacher.

Ok Dad, so you're talking about my sister Tiss. Why not just say Tiss is doing it this way and that's what Stacey should be doing?

Because what works for Tiss would never work for Stacey and unfortunately for you, rightfully so.

I'm lost, I don't get the point. How does what you just described using Tiss as an example, answer my question: Again, What advice would you give to a stranger in the same kind of situation?

Ok Paulie you said that you were hurting and you wanted to talk to me. So you write a script that reads "Divorced? Talk to Dad". And so you came. I listened to your explanation how you got to where you are. You described how exciting and fun it was in the beginning with Stacey and you really enjoyed all of it. The two big incomes, the skiing trips to the Swiss alps, being accepted in an exclusive country club, hob knobbing with the upper Chicago Shores folks, but for the last several years you had not been very happy. However, what you did not say, but I will say it for you; Stacey was perfectly happy with continuing with all of the above things. The reason she was happy doing all those things was because those kind of things were embedded in her roots. Meaning, that's what her parents did, that is what she witnessed, and that is what she sees as natural behavior. However, those things were not embedded in your roots and it took some time for you to recognize that. Putting my psychologist hat back on, it probably happened sometime shortly after you first became a parent.

Yes! looking back now, you are right, it was about the time Trevor was born and the responsibility of caring for another life, a little fragile one at that, started me questioning my life style. Dad you're the best. I wish I had this conversation with you before I got involved with Stacey.

Really now, would you have asked to talk about this back then? And even if we did, would you have accepted my opinion? I think not.

You are right. No, I would not have even broached this subject about married life at all with you or Mom. So, putting that aside, now that you know what my situation, any ideas where to go from here?

I do have an idea, call it drastic, but I'll leave that interpretation to you. As it appears, your marriage is over or going to be over for you and Stacey and you will be on your own. You

remember Elliot Johnson? You worked in his law office on your summer breaks from Columbia. Mom and I see him at Church on Sunday's and he always asks about you. Kiddingly he says "if Paulie ever wants to get out of that fast paced, rat race, big money law firm in Chicago and settle down in a small family office in the quiet little town of Bedford, New Hampshire, tell him to give me a call". My guess is he means it. Maybe as I said before, "clocks cannot be turned back" but perhaps they can be reset. I don't know what more to say to you except to say, maybe it's time to come home and that I love you.

I love you too, Dad. If I did come home, would you and Mom watch Trevor and Barb while I am at work?

Actually, and I can speak for Mom, , we would be thrilled to do that .

Hmm! Maybe I'll give Elliot a call. Yea, maybe I'll give Elliot a call. Oh, did I say I love you Dad?