

A Father's Confession, A Daughter's Anguish

One afternoon, I was surfing the television when I stumbled onto a talk-show. On one side of the host sat a man; on the other, a younger woman. We were told that the man was her father and that he had something important to tell her. To my astonishment, he revealed to her – and a nationwide audience – that he molested her when she was a little girl. She was too young at the time to remember his actions but he maintained his guilt. He also assured her that he never made any inappropriate advances toward her child – which was his grandchild.

The daughter sat there for a moment in silent disbelief before the host intervened. Despite bringing the young woman onto his show, where she was humiliated before a nation, he claimed he was there to help her come to terms with this revelation. As the host began to intervene, my foremost question was this: who benefitted from this shocking confession?

After decades of silence, the perpetrator decided to reveal his incestuous acts to his victim. Why now? Had his conscience finally gotten the best of him? Did he feel the need for her forgiveness? Did he believe an admission of guilt was necessary for God's absolution.

What of the daughter? What did she gain from this astonishing disclosure? This unsolicited knowledge would irrevocably alter her life and her perspective of him. What of his claim that although he molested her, he never violated her child? The assertion was questionable, considering that his previous silence already damaged his credibility and integrity.

The daughter would now spend the remainder of her life remembering her father's despicable actions, and not the good times she shared with him. Her treasured memories were shattered; an innocent father-daughter bond was eviscerated. Her father was now a sexual predator, and someone who had violated her. And the entire nation knew about it.

If the father's conscience compelled him to finally admit to these acts, then he should have done so with the stipulation that he was planning to surrender himself to the police. That precondition was never mentioned.

Since a prison sentence was never discussed, I must assume that the motive for his confession was selfish. Ignoring the despicable

possibility that his only goal was to appear on television, the only apparent purpose was to clear his conscience. Consequently, he victimized his daughter for a second time. While clearing his own tormented conscience, he thoughtlessly transferred that torment to her. Without considering the consequences to his own daughter's life, he abused her again in front of millions of people. His alarming admission deprived her of an innocent, normal childhood.

In addition, the fact that he would not even be punished for this terrible crime meant that he abused her a third time. His message was: "You don't remember this but I molested you as a child. I waited to tell you this until we were in front of millions of people. And I won't be serving any time in prison for it either."

If the father was not willing to surrender to the authorities, then he should have remained silent. He should have allowed his daughter to remember him as the father she loved before his shocking revelation. It is true that his silence would prevent her from discovering what a contemptible monster he was. But the alternative? She learned not only what he did to her but she will also carry a horrific burden the rest of her life – wondering if a grandfather violated his own grandchild.

It is true that the daughter's childhood memories would be incomplete without this knowledge. But each of us possesses secrets that are not, and never will be, shared with anyone. Spouses, siblings, and best friends do not reveal every innermost thought or questionable action to each other – though few would compare with this man's contemptible behavior.

It would have been better for the father to let his unforgivable actions fester in his own conscience, and carry the secret to his grave, instead of transferring them to his victim. His silence would no doubt torment him for the remainder of his life. But considering the terrible things that he did to his daughter, that would be a small price to pay.

Previous article: Where is God? Free Will and Divine Intervention
(entire essay: parts 1 – 4)

Next article: Consumer Confidence