**Research-Based, Child-Centered Parenting Plans:**

**The Interface between the Family and the Law**

Reed v. Reed

* Children – four year old Paul, twelve year old Alex and fifteen your old Howard
* Parents: Kimberly Reed and Patrick Reed, Married 20 years

Born at 32 weeks, Paul spent the first four weeks of his life in a Neonatal ICU. Mom stayed with Paul night and day while Dad took care of the boys at home. At this point, Mom was not working and had not worked since Howard was born 15 years ago except about 2 months as the front desk person at a local gym then found out she was pregnant with Paul and quite sick during the pregnancy forcing her to quit her position at the gym. Kimberly stayed at home with the three boys while Patrick has climbed the corporate ladder at Microsoft and now runs his own software company earning approximately 300k per year. Kimberly has taken the boys to all of their doctor and dentist appointments and has volunteered in their classrooms. The family also received a large inheritance from Kimberly’s side of the family, which Patrick worked for 10 years to obtain negotiating with Kimberly’s family.

Kimberly and Patrick met in college at Baylor University in Texas.

Patrick initiated the divorce only months after the inheritance was realized. Patrick describes the marriage as exhausting, he felt very trapped. Patrick described the situation as follows:

Kimberly has struggled with long-term mental illness (Add, anger, anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts) though to her credit she does see doctors and therapists in order to be as functional as possible. The household tended to walk on eggshells around her wondering if she was in a good or bad mood. Her anger was palpable at times including profanity and yelling at the children and myself. I have been lucky enough to have a career in which I have been able to play a major role in raising the children and also being a mediator when Kimberly’s own anger or propensity to get overwhelmed was playing a factor in her dealing with the children. Our children are all different and react differently to her parenting style but our oldest son, Holden, in particular clashes in very real ways with Kimberly that have manifested themselves in the form of intense anxiety and suicidal ideation.

Kimberly was blindsided by the divorce filing. She described the circumstances as follows:

In June, 2017, we saw a marital counselor for the first time at my insistence. In that session, Patrick told the counselor that he was thinking of leaving me. He said this like I wasn’t even in the room. He said the weekend I’d spent away in early March had been no stress at home, and I was the cause of the stress. After we left, I was devastated. I was wanting to work on our marriage not end it. We went a few more times and the issues were not being addressed. I found another counselor, Roger Hall and attempted to try one more time in July. I asked that we see him separately until we could come together as a couple to work. I wanted Patrick to own his responsibility for the emotional abuse he caused me. Patrick refused at first then change marital counselors. When I contacted Roger in September after Patrick served me with legal separation, Roger confirmed that I could no longer see him.

In April 2017, when our electricity was turned off due to Patrick’s lack of payment, I took over the bills. In August, I discovered the two credit cards in our names were charged to over $11,000. This was not necessary and extremely reckless. I started digging in all our finances to see what else I was missing. At this time, I consulted my pastor at church, a financial advisor and a family law attorney to see how I could protect the remaining assets in Fidelity. Half the 2.4M was gone. I was devastated. Due to all the instability through the years, I was counting on this for my children’s education and our financial future. In August 2017, Patrick found out I was looking into the money coming out of Fidelity and misunderstood my actions and froze the account by making it where both of us had to sign off on any financial movement within or out of the account.

When I asked Patrick to take his name off the Fidelity account in August, he said to me, “No. It’s my retirement. I worked ten years for that money.”

Patrick served me with legal separation papers on September 11th, and informed me he wasn’t coming home that night. I found on the September credit card statement that he rented a house September 9th. He informed me his house would not be ready for four days. The Saturday night before, I’d been in the ER with Paul again for croup. I was exhausted and Paul was still very sick, but Patrick left and did not ask me about him. I asked him why he served me, why he wanted a divorce, and he said, “You were going to do it, so I beat you to the punch.”

Paul is acting up often with Mom; hitting, kicking and saying “I hate you.” Paul is reporting that he hates having a babysitter and Mom goes to “work” too much. Alex is crying and blaming Paul for much of the problems in the home while Howard is spending untold hours playing video games and Dungeons and Dragons.