

A number of years ago I can remember an incident with myself and a good friend. For context, this friend and I met through worship ministry. The parachurch organization that I was a part of was connected with a few other partner churches and one day asked for a guest worship leader to serve alongside us for a retreat that we were hosting. That is how I met my friend Jae. In one season, years into the friendship, I felt as though I was losing connection with Jae. When normally we would text and call on a regular basis, the interactions became fewer with time. And when I was able to get a hold of him, or if he did respond to a text, I would be met with short texts or one word answers. Something was clearly wrong. Once I felt the initial sting, the feeling grew more and more. It was not until months into the situation that I felt strongly enough to do something about it. I pause here to acknowledge Rick Warren and his video on conflict resolution for this lesson. The following is almost exactly the blueprint that is laid out in that video.

Going back to my friend Jae, and as previously stated, we were months into the situation in which I felt the distance between us growing more by the day, which was marked by a coldness in each and every interaction, few as they were. And as some might have done if they were in my situation, I asked mutual friends about Jae, if they had heard anything or if he had confided in them about anything regarding our friendship. In the end, I knew that this would not suffice, so I reached out to him again stating very clearly that I wanted to meet up and talk if he was willing. As Rick Warren states in his video, I made the first move. I knew that asking friends and acquaintances would not do, but that I needed to go directly to the person in order to make things right, whatever it took. Thankfully, my friend agreed.

One Sunday we were finally able to make plans to sit down together at a nearby cafe. The next two steps are out of order from what Warren shares in the video for a specific reason. In the

talk, Warren highlights the need for confession as an act of humility and as a way of opening up the lines of communication. In this situation however, I was a bit confused as to what my role or offense was in the first place. So, with all sincerity I asked my friend Jae to share what was on his heart and why and how the growing distance between us had gotten there in the first place. Mercifully, Jae had spoken in a measured and reasonable tone, yet firm and honest to why and how I had offended him. The crux of the situation was that I had said a joke about him in jest, that ultimately got back his ears. What I thought was a throwaway comment, was ultimately received as a backhanded criticism that betrayed what he knew our friendship to be. Simply put, I hurt him with my words which was made worse by the fact that he heard it through someone else. I had to listen to his hurt and perspective as Warren puts it.

Once I knew what my offense was, I was able to respond to it. I was able to confess what my fault was. This again, though out of order from what Warren may have shared, still hits the heart of the matter. I needed to humble myself before my friend and come clean to what I did without excuse and genuinely apologize for my wrongdoing. Once I did this, I felt like real progress was being made. I was able to win back all the ground that had once been lost to heartache and misunderstanding. It is also right to admit that Jae was not the only one with grievances. But because we started where we did, we were able to eventually move on to that part of the conversation without feeling as if anyone was being overlooked or looked down on. In the end, both of us were able to work through the issue, win back the ground that was lost and rebuild our friendship again. I am thankful to say that Jae and I are still good friends. And while the winds of change may have caused the both of us to be less present in each other's lives, we are still able to come together with the same affection, due in no small part to what was done on that day.