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Ministry and shepherding people is unique in the fact that most people do not always see you as a person who can be hurt, but rather as a superhero who can do all things without receiving deep wounds. Over the past few years of doing ministry, I have faced moments with both high school students as well as parents which have led to walking through moments of deep forgiveness and pain. Although these have had significant impacts in my walk through the beginning of my ministry career, I think the most significant wounds have come from those who are in close proximity.

Today, I want to write about forgiveness I had to walk through recently that has had a significant impact on my life currently and potential to impact my future. In 2020, I was in a serious dating relationship that was headed toward engagement. After 9 months of dating and saving up for an engagement ring, my girlfriend cut off the relationship stating God had told her we needed to break up while also pointing to some immaturity on both sides of the relationship. This devastated me and led to a sense of deep sadness and anger as I had to process the information given. For weeks, I allowed myself to wallow in my sadness and anger. I would constantly create narratives to help me cope, but would often leave me numb and apathetic. It would also cause me to believe lies about my identity and take on these insane fears that I am too much for those around me, especially when it came to romantic relationships.

As I surrounded myself with community and began talking to mentors, I began to realize the unhealthy patterns I was creating by continuing to harbor this anger, fear, and sadness. It was not until I noticed that this anger was quickly becoming bitterness and leading to depression as well as leading me to sin in other ways that I realized I needed something much deeper than just talking to friends. I began attending counseling sessions to work through the relationship as well as the breakup. Throughout those sessions, I was able to find healing and

forgiveness, but it was surface level. I would see my ex after some time would go by and would feel myself getting angry again.

Eventually, counseling ended and I was in a much better place. Being around my ex was no longer something that would drag me into a place of anger or pain, but I had grown apathetic toward her. I would attempt to avoid her as much as possible. This past year, I began to work towards deeper places of forgiveness and healing as we began to have shorter conversations. Although we were not having deep conversations, we were beginning to build a slow friendship. Little by little, my guard was being let go as I realized that healing was coming through the building of a friendship again with someone who had hurt me. Although this was happening, there was a deep-seated fear that was underlying each conversation for me. What if I got hurt again? See, the elephant in the room had never been addressed. We never talked about our previous relationship or our break up.

This changed after two years of being broken up when I received a note from her stating that she would like to sit and talk. After two years of never spending more than five minutes talking together, we sat down for a three-hour-long conversation and talked about our relationship, our break up, and the pain and bitterness I felt throughout the past three years. There were tears shed, and apologies given, but what was most unexpected was a request on her end for a second chance at pursuing a relationship with one another.

Over the past five months, we have had to confront the pain of the past and walk through forgiveness with one another. This has lead to deep conversations about the past, praying for healing with mentors and friends while learning what it looks like to confront insecurities and fears which have been impacted by one another. It is not easy, but we are in it to see how the Lord will continue to use this process to heal one another, and how He can use it to bring healing to those around us.