

## Statement from Justin



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I could list a million reasons as to why I exercised poor judgment, but ultimately, they're irrelevant, because the responsibility to maintain moral propriety fell on me. Although I'm married now, at the time, I didn't have a girlfriend, and I had a bit of a traumatic relationship past. This most prominently included losing a relationship with a high school girlfriend I deeply cared about because of my own actions, spending many heartbroken, emotionally unhealthy years missing her, and likely sustaining some impaired emotional development because of that—which definitely was a major contributing factor. In a way, I think I was subconsciously trying to “redeem” that high school-related trauma. Honestly, it should have been my responsibility not to enter a hyper-charged social situation like that being in such a vulnerable state. The issue, however, is that I wasn't fully aware of that at the time, and that isn't an excuse, it just, I think, helps to understand why it occurred. Anyhow, I harbor no resentment toward anyone who has been associated with the case in any way. I sincerely apologize to everyone, especially to the Lord, for failing to uphold respectful moral decorum. It was nobody's fault but my own.

As far as applying what I learned to help society, something that would be helpful is more social/relationship interaction awareness and/or training in high schools—especially for young staff members (and I have developed an outline for a training video for this and pitched it to school districts). The courts operate as though high schools are innocent, “Little House on the Prairie” style establishments of learning, but they sadly are not in this day and age. I, and other staff and

students, were aware of other young staff-student situations, as well as staff member affairs, sadly. The culture inside high schools nowadays is a percentage of students that are way too mature (many of whom already seek out, talk to, are friends with, and date older people) and a percentage of staff that maybe are a bit casual with boundaries—but none of it is readily apparent to anyone because that’s just how the culture is there. It’s a very “fun” and casual environment. For instance, I’m already very personable and relationship-oriented (extroverted), so, that coupled with having been young and merely a substitute (younger, inexperienced subs basically take attendance, hang out, and build relationships), it was truly a recipe for disaster. A lot of people in high schools nowadays have each other’s numbers and are friends on social media—and I mean students and students, staff and students, and staff and staff. That sort of dynamic is commonplace, and it’s more insidious than school districts realize.

Aside from that, however, I really did enjoy subbing. I was considering a career in education at the time, and my personality and life experiences really made me relatable to the outcasts and behaviorally-challenged students. I have a long history of working with little children at my church (many of their parents, as well as other volunteers I worked with, voiced their support, and even wrote letters on my behalf when everything happened), working with at-risk, inner-city teen boys at Youth for Christ, as well as coaching and helping with basketball clinics for high school boys. Thus, I really did enjoy the job, I excelled in it, was commended by the administration, and really could have had a promising future had I not exercised poor judgment in those instances. It just goes to show you that an entire body of good work can be brought down in an instant by even just one bad decision.

I knew “Girl 1” and “Girl 2” at different times, we were friends, and I genuinely cared about both. I wasn’t attracted to them because they were seventeen almost eighteen, I was attracted to them because we were (are) in the same generation years-wise, they were mature and sophisticated, and we just clicked with one another personality-wise. Ironically, I could have “legally” dated either one if we had just waited a few months. I was not at school to “prey on girls,” I was there to make a difference in people’s lives and ended up making some poor choices. I sincerely wish I could go back and make better decisions, but everything happens for a reason, and I believe God has a plan for each of our lives. I’m grateful for my wife, I’m grateful to be starting a family with her, and yes, I did learn some tough lessons through this—many of which I’ll pass

on to my children—but I am thankful that God taught these lessons to me as I'll be better off in the long run because of them.

May the Lord bless you and keep you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin D. Beaton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "D".

Justin D. Beaton