

Dear Ronnie, Linda, & Rachel.

I have greatly offended you; and, as the Bible says to do, I would like to apologize and ask your forgiveness. I realize that you must be still angry with me; and I don't ask you to forgive me because I have done anything to earn your forgiveness. I ask you to forgive me because I am coming to you seeking Christian forgiveness. I have not done anything to merit that from you, I understand, so please accept my apologies and forgive me solely because it is what the Lord asks of us. I am sincerely sorry for having hurt you all; I mean this with all of my heart. I know that you are still upset with me and that we still have a hearing coming up soon; but, either way, I ask for your forgiveness.

I have met Rachel and talked several times; and I know that you are upset with me for that. In the times that we have talked, I pray that I have been a blessing to Rachel at the times that she needed that; and I think that most of the things that I have ever given an opinion about were probably in line with the same kind of things that you would have said yourselves. Even still,

I realize that you are disappointed with me, and I am terribly sorry.

Since Sarah left with my little boy, TR, I confess that my whole world has been turned upside down because I miss him so much. I miss him so much that it is a hurt that never seems to leave; and though I do not excuse myself because of it for anything that I do or have done, it is true that my emotions have been completely wrenched out of my heart since he has been gone. I know that since that time, I have made a number of bad personal decisions in different areas of life and that my coping with the pain have totally skewed my decision-making ability. Again, I do not offer this as an attempt to excuse anything but only to acknowledge that I know that I am not making good decisions in many ways right now, or at least I havent been. And I am sorry. I have already looked into seeing a Christian counselor, because I want to both make things right in my life Biblically and get help for the emotional ache of missing TR.

When I asked Rachel to meet me after church that Wednesday night, it was for the purpose of telling her that I wasnt coming back to our church but that I didnt want her to think that it was her fault that I wasnt coming back after that upcoming weekend. I felt that I needed to make a break and find a new but good church

for myself and also that it would help my relationships with your family because it would hopefully relieve much of the stress between us. I was trying to avoid getting Rachel looked ill upon by not telling her about it right there at church and meeting her somewhere else, but all I did was bring difficulty upon us both. I knew that Mike pulled in behind me, and even pulled over to see if he wanted me for something; but when he kept going, I went ahead, met Rachel, explained why I was leaving, and we left. The entire meeting took maybe five minutes total, and I suspect closer to three minutes. Again, I am not trying to justify the decision; I should have found some other way to tell Rachel. I just know that as close friends as we were, and with the situation at church the way it's been since Sarah left, I couldn't stand the thoughts of maybe never seeing ya'll again and Rachel carrying around the burden of thinking from now on that it had been her fault that I left our church and never came back.

I know that you are upset that I asked her to meet me for any reason, and I understand that; but I sincerely thought that you would be happy that I was changing churches because it

would make you feel better about things. I did initially refuse to acknowledge that Rachel and I had even met at all, and I am sorry for that. Because of the way that the world thinks nowadays, I was afraid that someone would think that I had molested her or hurt her physically. I am sure, too, that Rachel was only trying to keep anyone from thinking that, too, by not acknowledging it at first. She has expressed gratitude in the past for helping her through different struggles in her own life, and I am convinced that she just wanted to do the same for me. Since Sarah took TR and left, Rachel, as well as Katie and Andrew, has gone out of her way to be a blessing to me; and I could never thank them enough for what it has meant during this most difficult time. I am sure that she was just wanting to be a friend in return, plus I had asked her not to let anyone else know that I was leaving our church until I had spoken to the preacher to let him know first.

I will try to tell you all of the things about this situation that I have also told Rachel. I am very sorry and very saddened that things are the way that they are between us now after we have been so close friends before. Bro. Ronnie, I still love you as a Christian friend; and Miss Linda, I still love you as a Christian friend; and Rachel, as well.

Though I have totally disappointed you, my love for your family - each of you - is sincere; I genuinely have cared about you all and want the best for each of you. I am sorry that I have caused you heartache. I promise to be still faithful in caring about each of you, and I ask your forgiveness from each of you. I know that it may not be your desire now, and maybe not ever again; but if you would allow it some day down the road, I would like to once again have your forgiveness and have our friendship restored to any degree that you would allow in time. If someday you would allow that, I am committed to being together with you as a Christian friend and to even finding a way to be together to do that after all of this is over with and after time has passed, if you will forgive me. If, however, you don't wish to ever see me again, I just pray that you will let me know that you forgive me; and I will understand the best. I am sorry.

I won't see you again after the hearing unless you want me to. I hope that you will one day restore our friendship, though, even if we don't see each other much. As Rachel grows older, I pray that she will still consider me a friend, too, after we have been such good friends.

I will understand if you do not allow her to contact me; but if you allow her to do so in time, it will be okay as long as she has your permission. I realize that that would probably only happen if she had something very serious that she wanted to talk about; and I realize, too, that you might not want her to call me even then. I will understand either way; and if you just don't want any contact with me because you don't wish to be friends yourself ever again, it is ok for her to occasionally call me from a pay phone or somewhere else, but only if you allow her to do so. Either way, I know that would be much down the road in time. I just want to let you know that I have already taken what steps were possible to leave your family for now; and I just pray that you will forgive me and, in time, extend that Christian forgiveness to me. I do not deserve it, but I ask you for it out of grace.

Finally, I know it is a very poor attempt to express my sorrow and my apologies to your family, but in addition to this letter, I also went before church today and left an advertisement for eskimo dogs on the window of the auto shop beside the church - hung up in a place where I've seen other things hung up before. These are dogs that I had told Rachel that I wanted to begin breeding maybe.

They are small dogs and very intelligent. I know what Rachel had said before that she would like to have one of them one day if you let her; so, when I have my first letter, if you would accept a puppy, please accept it as a desire to express my deep apologies for any heartache that I have caused you at any time. Please go by and see the advertisement; and if you would not feel comfortable accepting a gift from me, I will understand. I just have nothing else that I feel that I can give you to express my sincere apology, other than the fact that I have changed churches now to help the situation. I know, Bro. Rommie, that on one occasion in the past, you said that you wanted us to be able to get past all this and still be friends. I realize, too, that that was before I met Rachel to tell her I was leaving; but it is my dream, too, that one day you will forgive me and want to restore our friendship.

On the advertisement for the dogs, I even included a statement at the bottom that your "dream," or hope, is mine too - that friendship might continue.

I know that you may never desire to reinstate our friendship again, but please still forgive me. I am very sorry.

Please pray for me, too, as I will for you all.

Yours,
Ray