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by Sheth LaRue, Kairos Editor

A year ago I moved onto campus and somehow managed to make it to nearly every event – ice cream socials, meet-and-greets, tours, luncheons, dinners, guest-speaker lectures, chapel services – if it was on campus and I wasn't in class, I was there. Partially for the opportunity to break free of my introversion, and, to be honest, partially for the chance of free food, I made my way to everything that was happening.

During one of these adventures in mingling I wound up talking with an upper-classman about why I was at seminary – not so much about my call, but about what I left behind to be here. I told him about my life immediately prior to coming to Austin: working 60-70 hours a week at the post office, going weeks without a day off, having only 8 hours between shifts, and being chastised by both management and customers for known and unknown reasons. All of this was taking a toll on my body and soul, and about a year before resigning I had developed a pain in my chest – it wasn't heart-attack pain, but stress-pain - like someone was constantly pushing on my chest. While I was chasing money and the distant promise of a promotion from management, I had put my self and well-being on the back burner and I kept telling myself that if I just worked one more day – one more hour – that promotion would come.

The wise sage I was speaking with looked at me intently as I told him all of this, then said, "Never forget that pain. Don't forget the stress and trouble and difficulties you went through. School is going to be difficult, too, so keep that as a reminder of what brought you here." I held on to those words and the pain I felt from working in the post office during my first year at seminary.

That pain I felt quickly receded as I struggled with learning how to decipher Hebrew and Greek, spending many moments crying. I spent countless night-time hours wandering the UT campus wrestling with theological concepts and their impact on my personal

life and beliefs. I have become more acquainted with dictionaries of theological and biblical terms than I ever imagined I'd need to be. I've come to regard McKim, Gonzalez, Coogan, Johnson, and Migliore as popular authors. I've argued with friends about what makes a 'good' worship service and what my hands should be doing as I recite a prayer. Despite all of these emotional struggles, despite the sleepless nights and the shifting of my beliefs, I wouldn't want it any other way.

Every tear shed, every word typed, every disagreement and reconciliation, every single argument with a book has been worth it. It's worth it, not simply because I'm not working at the post office, but because I'm learning who I am, who others are, and how passionately our Creator loves every single one of us. It's all been worth it so far because I know how desperately the world needs to hear this news and I know that I have been called to share this good news with the world. I'm called to love, care, hold, cry, build, renew, and uplift others.

I'll offer up my friend's reminder to you, as well: don't forget what drew you to seminary. Whether it was a desire to serve God, the hope for a better world, a longing to guide people in renewing themselves, or because you were burned out in your former life – whatever brought you here – hold on to that and continually remind yourself of it.

Seminary is like nothing we've ever encountered – be open to it's work in changing who you are as a person and foster those changes by giving yourself latitude to embrace the change. May God give us all a recollection of who we were before we stepped foot on these grounds, and may we embrace the changes that we go through as we grow and form into the people our Creator has made us to be.

much love. sheth.