An Underrated Quality of Leadership

He was waiting at the top of the stairs. Every Sunday. For me. At least it seemed that way.

The setting was downtown Los Angeles—Church of the Open Door. The intersection of Sixth and Hope to be exact.

And the intersection of my life and my faith.

As a kid, I grew up in a church surrounded by people who marked my life in countless and undeniable ways. People who loved God and followed Him unreservedly. People who taught me. Invested in me. Loved me. And cared about me.

One of those people was Harry Nackos.

Every Sunday I would climb the north stairs to the first balcony of the historic COD auditorium. And every Sunday I would be greeted by Harry Nackos (who insisted that I call him Harry). He was one of the ushers. And greeting him weekly was one of the many highlights of my youthful church experience.

I loved his easy smile. I loved his handshake (which felt like a well-worn catcher's mitt). I loved his corny jokes that he told with a childlike gleam in his eye.

But most of all, I loved how he made me feel. Welcomed. Wanted. Seen. Needed.

When I got old enough, Harry deputized me. Oh, I don't think there was any official church vote, but he told me he needed help to hand out the bulletins to incoming worshipers. As far as I could tell, I was the man! Harry's man. There was no question in my young boy's heart that Harry cared about me.

You know it like I know it: There's nothing quite like realizing you are wanted. Needed. And cared about.

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One of the realities of life and leadership is that people are much more inclined to follow a leader who cares about them. In a book busting out with insights, author Steve Saccone in *Relational Intelligence* states "*when we love people well, we become the proof of God.*" How true.

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Looking back, who are the people in your world who were the "proof of God" to you? Who were the

mentors uploading the message that you were wanted, needed, and cared about?

As I thumb through the file cabinet of my life, here are some of the ways my mentors communicated that they cared about me:

- They believed in me.
- They gave me their full attention—their eyes and body language made a clear and convincing statement that they were completely present.
- They took time to know my "story"—the defining moments of my life.
- They trusted me with new challenges.
- They prayed for me.
- They introduced me to people who would widen my exposure to new thinking and new experiences.
- They helped me see my failures not as an endgame, but as a classroom for growth.
- They put their arm around me and told me that I was their colleague, not a hired hand.
- They knew my dreams. And they looked for ways to see them become reality.
- They created space for me—to learn, to lead, to experiment, to stretch.
- They cheered me on—they wanted my best.

From your life experiences, what would be on your list?

So here's two takeaways. First, who has been that mentor in your life who has come alongside you, believed in you, and cared about you? Make a call or drop a note to that person. Let them know what their investment has meant in your life.

And second, who sits right now in your circle of influence ready and waiting for you to tell them and show them that they are cared about? Take a step. Make a move.

…and become the hands and heart of Christ Himself in the life of one of His followers.

Chuck Olson
Founder | Lead With Your Life