

# The Gift Every Leader Needs to Give

It was the LAST thing I wanted to do. But my options were narrowing fast.

Being a nine-year-old had a boatload of upsides, but every so often things would head south. Long story short, it had been one of those “wait-in-your-room-until-your-father-gets-home” kind of days. Here’s the play-by-play.

I had been riding my bike with my neighborhood buds when I got a little out of control and did a “wheelie” with my Schwinn sting ray (with the banana seat!) right through a row of our neighbor’s newly-planted begonias.

For my part, no harm, no foul. But not so much for my neighbor who, upon discovery, immediately paid a visit to our home to serve notice to my mom.

When my dad got home, he quickly sized up the situation and pronounced the discipline which would include, much to my chagrin, an action plan: I was to go over to my neighbor and apologize. What?! THAT was big! You see, to this third-grader, Mrs. Vargas, who was in her 70s, was the stereotypical scary neighbor. She lived alone. She rarely came outdoors. She never spoke. We even avoided her house on Halloween!

And now I was going not only to talk to her but to APOLOGIZE to her!

What was true for me as a nine-year-old is true for me today. Owning my stuff is never easy. Never automatic. I’m pre-wired much differently. We all are.

All that to say, you have a 100% chance of hurting someone. Somewhere. Sometime. Somehow. Fact is, like me, you’ve already “been there/done that” more times than you care to count—from everyday peccadillos to big time offenses.

Truth be told, we all do “wheelies” in the middle of people’s lives—sometimes unintentionally, sometimes intentionally. It’s a given of life.

But what is not a given is how you will respond to the wrong you have done. Lewis Smedes, in his classic and much-celebrated book, *Forgive and Forget*, observes that “the act of forgiving, by itself, is a wonderfully simple act; but it always happens inside a storm of complex emotions. It is the hardest trick in the whole bag of personal relationships.” In short, forgiveness is the gift that every leader needs to give.

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Here’s the good news. The Author of life, the Creator of relationships, not surprisingly has thought this

one through and puts the cookies on the lower shelf in a single sentence that at once is simple in statement yet powerful in impact: “Forgive one another as quickly and thoroughly as God in Christ forgave you.” Forgiveness is a choice made only possible by the grace and mercy of Christ.

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Bottomline: Who am I—in view of God’s forgiveness—to do less?

So let’s get practical.

In the course of life and leadership, there are times when you are not sure if you have offended someone. When that’s the case you need to **check in** with that person, look them in the eyes, and simply ask, “Are you and I okay?”

And then there are times when you know you have hurt someone. When that’s the case, you need to **sit down** with that person and carve out intentional time and space to own your offence and to seek forgiveness.

Is there someone you need to **check in** with or perhaps more importantly, someone you need to **sit down** with?

And when it happens, be ready to be a pipeline of God’s grace and mercy and to embrace the take-your-breath-away beauty of reconciliation.

It’s why He came in the first place.

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