

Allow God to Close the Gaps in Your Life

All of us have those moments we wish we could relive or those seasons we wish we could redo.

Every man feels within himself a wish factor. We “wish” we would’ve learned the things we know now years ago when we “really” needed this wisdom. We “wish” we hadn’t made some of the mistakes we made in our past. We “wish” we could be doing “then” the things we’re finally getting around to “now.” There’s a wish factor in every man.

I don’t know a man who doesn’t feel, at least on a minor scale, a sense of a gap of time he wishes he could experience all over again.

Those gaps look different for all of us. Some of us missed out on jumping on a career opportunity or a career risk that, in hindsight, would’ve propelled us exactly where God was wanting us to go.

Some of us made some huge mistakes, whether intentionally or lackadaisically, that now, with a few more years of maturation, we look back on and feel shame or sometimes even guilt, wishing we could get that back. Many men regret not listening to another wise person’s advice when we had the choice, or we regret having followed an example that proved troublesome in our lives. Gaps are everywhere!

I recently met with one of the brothers I’m currently discipling. He’s 28, and he’s a great guy. I enjoyed being in a position to speak into the growth I’ve seen him experience in the past year, and I’m so proud of him.

Yet as a 28-year-old, he couldn’t help but reflect on the fact that he had the chances to do at age 23 what he’s just now

getting around to. He didn't follow some of the wisdom he'd been given, and I just sensed a little remorse on his part.

So then I gave him my story.

I told him that seven years ago, at 28, I "ventured" into buying some property. I had lofty visions of owning a bunch of real estate, renting it out and building up a nest egg for the next generation. My aspirations were noble. I had a ton of money and nowhere to invest it ... at least so I thought.

With these properties, it wasn't about making a lot of money. But I figured it'd be something my family would have for years. Maybe it would even pay for my future children's education.

Problem is, I didn't do my research. I trusted people instead of reading through contracts. I assumed things would work out and had to suffer the consequences of those properties never turning an investment.

As my grandmother said during that season, "I guess you had to buy your lesson." I told this young brother that the mistakes of having to start over as a man financially (I lost my shirt and maybe my shoes too), being technically "at risk" to provide for a family, and wrestling with the guilt of having made so colossal an error rode me to no end. There were some prayer sessions over this drenched in tears. Bad days.

This had been going on for years. Guilt. Shame. Regret. The gaps ... would I ever close them? I couldn't handle it anymore. So I met with a man who was discipling me—an older, wiser guy. And in tears, I shared with him my great shame. He gave me some advice I'd like to leave with you.

He said, "Ricky, it sounds like you need to forgive yourself. We all make mistakes. You made yours. Now move on from it." And then he said what I didn't think was possible. He looked at me and said, "This is fixable. It'll take

time. But it's fixable."

He then began to tell me what all that looks like and simply licensed me to believe that my mistakes didn't signal the end of the world.

But then I came up with more excuses to feel miserable. I questioned how I was going to be able to provide well.

I mean, I technically can't buy a house for a while, even with a decent salary and savings, because of the mistakes of my past. And what was I, as a single man, going to be able to offer a God-fearing woman?

Then he looked at me and said, "Well, the woman who falls in love with you is not going fall in love with you for those reasons anyways. Plus, I wouldn't even share that with a woman unless you're pretty darn sure you're going to get on one knee."

What encouraging words. I barely believed him when he was saying them, yet I was hanging on to every word. Incidentally, when I shared the same story with who was to be my future bride a year or so later, I can't tell you the serendipity I enjoyed when she looked at me after 30 minutes of me "dumping" on her and simply responded, "That's okay, babe." And that was the end of the conversation. Relief. But that's another story for another time.

Essentially, what that wise man said to me that day was, "God's bigger than your gap."

In a passage in the book of Joel, the prophet forecasts the Lord's coming and His restoration of His people. It's a scene full of evidence of God's gracious sovereignty, in that God acknowledges that it's us who's made the mistakes through our sin.

We caused it. We created the gaps. Yet He's graciously pursued

us amidst our sin. And ultimately, as Joel 2:24-27 exclaims, it's God who'll eventually reconcile all things and all people to Himself.

The language here is picturesque. Israel sinned. Israel's sin caused consequences. People are hungry. Armies have destroyed them. Everything is decimated. But ultimately God will fix it. He'll come through. He'll restore and replenish. Translation: *He'll close the gaps.*

I love the last few words of the passage: "We'll never be put to shame again." Even though it's a shame we ourselves caused, God will take it away. That's called gracious sovereignty.

You who struggle with the remorse of the gaps you've caused in your life, listen. You may be 40, battling guilt that you could've been where you are now at 30. You may have a degree you're just now getting around to because you wasted your 20s.

You may be just now getting around to desiring the courtship of a godly woman instead of the knuckleheads you're used to. You may just now be thinking it's time to start leading your wife and kids devotionally and consistently. You may just now be truly getting involved in your church or stretching yourself to make disciples. You may be just now starting to figure out who you are vocationally and what you're good at and want to do 40 hours every week.

Hear the words of Scripture: God will restore. He'll redeem the time you think you lost. He'll use all of the so-called "wasted time" and redeem it to His glory. But you have to step up and trust Him to do so.

For what it's worth, I just saw God do that in the heart of a 28-year-old.

Don't let the gaps slow you down. Don't let shame and remorse define you. You're a son of the great King. And He knows how to close the gaps. Trust Him to do just that in your life.

“The threshing floors shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you. You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you ... And my people shall never again be put to shame.” (Joel 2:24-27, ESV)

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