



# Spring Cleaning Your Relationships

## Serving Leaders in Life

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For more from Dr. Dance, check out his blog: <https://markdance.net/theblog/>

**Pastors:** During this season of being sheltered in place, some of us have had time to do some of those “to do” list items like working in our lawns or cleaning our closets. Perhaps, we might consider some spring cleaning in other areas of our lives.

*When was the last time you said, “I’m sorry?” Has it been too long?*

*One of the best ways to keep your relationships refreshed is to prioritize the habit of good confessions.*

Try these fresh perspectives for spring cleaning in your relationships.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD CONFESSION

Hurts are inevitable. Even the most loving individuals will eventually hurt one another. Likewise, being perfect all the time is impossible. It’s not a matter of if we’re going to blow it; it’s just a matter of when. Therefore, make sure you know how to heal the hurts when they occur.

#### 1. A good confession is specific.

Hurts don’t come in generalities, so our confessions must be specific. Can you sense the difference between these two statements?

*“Honey, if I’ve ever done anything to offend you, would you forgive me?”*

*“Sweetheart, God has shown me that I’ve been extremely critical of you. For instance, last night I criticized you about the hotel arrangements you made for our vacation. I should have been grateful that you took the initiative to plan such a nice trip.”*





A good confession should mention the specific wrong (I was insensitive, critical, unsupportive, etc.) and even include examples.

Allow God to convict you of specific areas of needed confession. Meditate on Philippians 2–3; 1 Corinthians 12; Proverbs 15:1; Ephesians 4:31–32; Colossians 3:12; and James 1.

## 2. A good confession uses the statement, “I was wrong,” instead of, “I am sorry.”

The words, “I am sorry,” imply little, if any, personal responsibility. It can have several subtle meanings, which can actually negate any sense of being wrong.

- “I’m sorry my words hurt you.”  
– Seems to imply: *but it wouldn’t have offended you if you weren’t so sensitive.*
- “I’m sorry you feel neglected.”  
– Might imply: *after all, you are overly dependent.*
- “I’m sorry you were upset at the party.”  
– Might convey: *but no one else seemed to be.*

In contrast, “I was wrong,” acknowledges personal responsibility and ownership of what was said or done.

## 3. A good confession omits phrases that would dilute its impact.

Often, after we confess, we are tempted to:

- Minimize the offense.  
*“Yeah, I got mad, but that’s not the big issue here.”*
- Rationalize or justify.  
*“The reason I got mad was...”*
- Blame others.  
*“I wouldn’t have become angry if you hadn’t...”*
- Offer a trite confession.  
*“Ok, I’m sorry.”*
- Ignore the offense.  
*“Let’s talk about something else.”*
- Confess to avoid further conflict or embarrassment.  
*“Our family is going on vacation; let’s get this behind us.”*

Relationally strong families avoid any attempt to rationalize, justify, or blame. These only dilute our confession.

Even though what we’re tempted to say may be true, it is inappropriate and counter-productive to discuss these issues at the same time we are confessing. Other topics should be discussed after the hurt has been healed through confession and forgiveness.





#### 4. A good confession asks, "Will you forgive me?"

After we have genuinely and properly confessed and have exhibited a degree of godly sorrow, ask the person offended, "Will you forgive me?"

At times, it may also be significant to inquire, "I want to make sure I fully understand your hurt, so feel free to share how my offense affected you." It is now his/her decision whether or not to forgive you; you have done your part.

To bring a new sense of freedom to your relationship, begin incorporating these four characteristics into your confessions.

#### EXPERIENCING GOD'S WORD

Experience James 5:16 this week, "*Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed.*"

Reflect on your most important relationships: your spouse, children, friends, and family members. Ask the Lord to examine your heart and then share a good confession with the people He brings to your mind. Let His Word bring fresh cleaning to your relationships!

Here's what your confession might sound like:

- I was wrong when...
- I know you must have felt...
- Will you forgive me?
- I have asked God to change me by...



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