

We bought a nearly 100-year-old house and re-modeled, re-wired, and upgraded while living in the house full-time. Rare was the interlude when a project of some sort wasn't "in-progress" somewhere in or under the house. In the course of a conversation, I made a comment one day at church about needing to go buy a nice (meaning strong suction and large canister) Shop-vac in relation to some specific project we had going at the house. Rather than go buy one, my friend Troy offered to let me borrow his Shop-vac and brought it by the house that same evening. Oh my! A good Shop-vac is invaluable for cleanup in a construction site!!

When the specific project that prompted my Shop-vac comment was finished, I told my friend Troy I would be returning his piece of equipment. He told me to keep it for a while because I would probably need it again. So I did just that. I kept Troy's Shop-vac and I kept using it on a semi-regular basis. Periodically I would ask my friend if he needed his equipment returned; Troy would ask if I was still using it (I was) and he would tell me to keep it until I thought I wouldn't need it anymore. Eventually I quit asking Troy if he needed me to return his Shop-vac (he always responded the same way!) and finally a day arrived that I didn't really need his Shop-vac anymore. So I put it out in my shop, intending to return it to Troy along with an expression of gratitude (maybe one of Gayle's chocolate pound cakes, his favorite!). I would see that Shop-vac sitting under my workbench and think to myself, "I need to get that thing back to Troy" but it never seemed to be a convenient time. It wasn't long before I wasn't even noticing the Shop-vac anymore. My intentions were great...I just never followed through.

Would you believe that Shop-vac sat in my shop for over two years and my friend never spoke a single word to me about when I might be returning it? So now I wasn't taking it back because I was severely embarrassed. What do you say when you return a borrowed item after TWO YEARS? Gayle couldn't make enough chocolate pound cakes to undo the awkwardness of such an encounter. I was so annoyed with myself for getting into this crazy predicament. I felt awkward around my friend even though he never mentioned the Shop-vac; I was convinced he thought about it every time he saw me! Guilt can seriously taint peace of mind.

I knew the remedy for my dilemma. I got up one Saturday morning and said to myself, "Self, even if you accomplish nothing else today, you are going to return Troy's Shop-vac and apologize for abusing his generosity." So it was that I found myself at Troy's house later that day, Shop-vac in tow. I gushed out some words of apology, made it clear I had no excuse to offer for having kept his Shop-vac captive for so long, and asked my friend to forgive me. You know how Troy responded? He smiled! Told me he couldn't even remember the last time he thought about that Shop-vac...and he was genuine in his sentiment. You see, he had purchased a new Shop-vac not long after loaning me the one sitting in the back of my truck because he suspected I might be using it for a long time. My friend also let me know how much he appreciated my desire to make things right in our friendship.

My guilt and embarrassment were way worse than encountering the grace of my friend (I'll let you apply the bigger truth). I want to be the same kind of partner in my friendships that Troy was to me. He just looked so much like Jesus in that moment. Cya in Sunday School & Worship, Pk.