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## Integrity

I am now at the point in my life where I am noticing my actions reflect not just on me, but on my community as well. I am proud to say that I play football at East Grand Rapids High School. Just the other day as I was walking back onto the field after halftime, something peculiar happened to me; a little boy whom I did not know was wishing me good luck by giving me a *high five*. And at that very moment I realized I much of an impact I really make on my community. Without integrity my actions are nothing more than good. But I do not want to be just good; with integrity I can be great.

One's own meaning behind the word integrity is different to every person, like the way a musical piece can affect each individual differently. To some integrity means sheer honesty, to others it can mean a strong foundation of one's moral beliefs, but to me I think of integrity as being unchanging moral character.

When I think of a person three things come to my mind: kindness, loyalty, and integrity. The last word in my opinion is the most important because it embodies the first two. If you don't show a great amount of kindness, you cannot possibly have a good moral compass to point you in the right direction, and if you are not loyal to the ones you love, you cannot always be honest. Thus, if you have good integrity you are likely to be kind and honest to the ones you love, as well as have a good moral compass, so you will be loyal to the ones that care about you the most.

I know first-hand what integrity looks like. When I was an acolyte at President Gerald R. Ford's funeral, President Jimmy Carter was giving a speech about the late president and offered nothing but praise. President Carter spoke of how he and President Ford were great friends, despite political differences. Together, they were able to achieve great things for the nation, even when "politicians" told them not to. Doing the right thing, despite short term gains is real integrity. This moment will stick with me for the rest of my life. Not only because President Carter sang only praise but because he did it in a powerful, and moving manner. I knew at that very moment, that this was what integrity looked like.

Integrity is something that you can't be born with or give to someone. It is something you can give someone the chance to earn. It is something that can't be earned by cutting corners or skipping steps. It takes going the extra mile. To some people, integrity seems to come easier because of the way they were raised, but some have trouble earning it. Once it is shattered though, it is nearly impossible to get back. Integrity is a journey of a thousand miles to earn, keep, and maintain.

A great man once said integrity is the key to success, and I agree with him without dispute. People appreciate men with integrity. If no one in the world today had integrity, nothing could get done nothing would work and our whole existence would soon die out because no one would have the decency to accept what they have done. We have all heard that words don't

determine what kind of person you are, it is your actions that make up your character. With integrity, our actions are beneficial and support others in society.

Integrity is a complicated term that means something different to every person, but to me it means unchanging moral character, never letting go of your beliefs, and sticking up for what is right. All of these terms are truly one in the same and help me make decide who I am every day. But today, I do not want to be just good, I want to be great.