

## Solving the Mystery of Integrity

Integrity is mysterious. It is an abstract noun, not a physical object seen with the eyes, nor a tangible item held in the hands. No mass. No shape. No life. Despite all this, integrity is a real, undeniable force which unfolds in the silence of our minds. Gently and quietly, it prods us to do what is right — to uphold truth. In Webster's dictionary, integrity is described using three, concise words: sincerity, honesty, and uprightness. Following this definition, one comes face-to-face with a question; a mystery imploring to be answered. How can an individual demonstrate integrity in a world where many believe that the end often justifies the means?

For the past five years, my father has worked for a small company in Grand Haven, Michigan. Bearing the large responsibility of providing for five children, he has followed standards of determination, duty, and diligence. If, for instance, there was a winter storm, my dad would plow through the blinding snow in his tiny car, endeavoring upon these daring crusades just so that he would not miss work. Five days a week, nine hours a day, my industrious parent labored devoutly. One day, his boss contacted him about undertaking a new, profitable business. Most likely, this venture, which would consist primarily of the two, would prosper. Joyously, my parents awaited lessened financial burdens.

As when dark, foreboding clouds sneakily lurk into blue skies, Dad's excitement and anticipation slowly transformed into uneasiness as the weeks passed. A small, still voice called Integrity whispered to his mind. My father knew that his manager did not share similar moral convictions, and did not treat others wisely. For him, the end justified the means. Dad refused to compromise his virtues. Consequently, my resolved father gathered up his courage, shoved his fear away, and called his boss, who silently listened to the candid speech. Yes, my dad would have loved to accept a better-paying job, but the simple fact remained: he could not depart from integrity. He could not give up uprightness for money.

To answer the question of how one can demonstrate integrity today, I believe that opportunities

are everywhere. At home, at school, and at work, we continuously confront dilemmas. Either we respond to these issues by mustering the strength to stand up for truth, or we bow down under pressure, silenced by lies. Every single person has a podium and an attentive audience. We each have a voice. Do not take it for granted. Like my father, and like so many others before him, we should use our words to pursue honesty, to uphold the good. Our integrity is like a candle flame. Our lives and our chances at furthering truth burns, flickers, and eventually fades away. As Martin Luther King Jr. famously declared, "The time is always right to do what is right." Integrity only requires that you give heed to the still, small voice, and take a courageous stand. Integrity is not so mysterious as it first seemed.