

## Colossal Contracts: Living a Life of Integrity

Imagine being a professional baseball player. You have just agreed to a contract of four million dollars. A week later as you review your contract, you realize instead of receiving four million dollars a year, your contract states that you will obtain \$4.5 million. What would you do? Would you keep the extra 500,000 dollars or return it?

This very thing happened to Jeremy Affeldt, relief pitcher for the San Francisco Giants in 2010. The Giants had made a clerical mistake in his contract and had awarded Affeldt \$4.5 million a year instead of \$4 million. Noticing the gaffe, Affeldt discussed the issue with the Players Association, his manager, and even the Giants assistant general manager. They all agreed that he could legally keep the 12.5% pay raise. Even though lawfully it was his to keep, Jeremy Affeldt returned the extra \$500,000 to the Giants. When asked why he did this, he responded, "I won't sleep well at night knowing I took that money because every time I open my paycheck I'll know it's not right."

Why would Jeremy Affeldt do this? The answer is simple: integrity. Jeremy Affeldt returned the money because he had integrity. Integrity is holding unswervingly to what you believe to be true. Affeldt believed it was wrong to keep the money, and so even though legally he could keep it, he returned it. He didn't benefit or receive anything out of giving back the money; in fact, he lost a large bonus that he could have kept. But his clear conscience was more important to him than \$500,000. His integrity and moral convictions held fast in the face of an enticing proposition.

Integrity is dependent upon each individual. For example, Jeremy Affeldt knew that his integrity would be hurt if he kept the money. However, someone else might have thought that it would be perfectly alright to keep the money, and if they truly believed it and had a clear conscience after keeping the surplus, their integrity would not be marred. Therefore, integrity means different things for different people. However, integrity is always this: it is clinging to

one's moral standards, no matter what. When you have integrity, you will always do what you know is right, no matter who is watching; in addition, integrity is not about giving a show but rather receiving a satisfaction inside your heart because you have done the right thing.

Overall, integrity is holding unswervingly to one's moral convictions, no matter what. Jeremy Affeldt is a great example of someone with integrity because he did what he knew was right in his heart, even though he didn't receive any tangible gain. Integrity can mean different things for different people, but if you do what you know in your conscience is right, you know you possess integrity. As American author Zig Ziglar says, "With integrity, you have nothing to fear, since you have nothing to hide. With integrity, you will do the right thing, so you will have no guilt."