



LIVING WITH INTEGRITY

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Living a life that is honest, upright and truthful is living with integrity. It can often be difficult to live a life imbued with integrity. A lot of worldly temptations abound, so much so that living with integrity seems to be more the exception than the rule. We are challenged, therefore, to keep to our honest values and live an exemplary life despite every lure to the dark side.

There's always a new form of corruption in a particular corner of society.

We experience corruption when we obtain particular permits or licenses, all in the name of having our papers expedited or immediately acted upon. We need to put allowance for SOPs and other such euphemisms for grease money. We need to treat this or that individual to a night out just so we can have our requests granted. We need to bribe certain people with gifts such as food, clothes and stuff in order to receive favorable decisions, etc.

Integrity is not as sacred as it used to be. People have "invented" innovative ways of getting what they want. We use our names to influence people to do things we want and not necessarily to do things that are right and just. A pretty prominent name gets sure seats for a show or a position way ahead of the others. It doesn't matter whether that particular person has a crooked life or has an unsavory reputation himself: it is his name that precedes him.

My late father used to say, "Once you lose your honor, you lose everything." He wasn't one to pay grease money just to have document processing speeded up. He'd patiently wait for the proper time. Sadly, he was a man who didn't know many officials in his time. His only connections to government offices were through his former students who, out of respect for their old teacher, would immediately process whatever papers he needed. He also approached former neighbors and old friends when the need arose. But I never saw him lay down money to entice fixers and gofers. My mom's practically the same. When she goes to market, she is able to get outrageous discounts from her former students that have become vendors.

Sometimes, I wish I could go to this or that official on the merits of my parents' "connections". But by and large, I am really glad my parents were just simple folk who valued their integrity and good name above all. In the end, it's not who you know anymore, although the opposite is completely true in the here and now. But eventually, it's how you have decided to live your life that matters. People will remember you not for the amount of money you have given out to have your way, but by the number of lives you've touched with your honesty, good works, and genuine kindness.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What comprises integrity, in your opinion?
2. Why should teachers epitomize living with integrity?
3. How can young people be taught about integrity? Be as specific as needed.
4. Is it useful to have "connections"? Be able to justify your answer.
5. What other career/s need/s integrity as a primary qualification?