



Family Values

Virtue Realities

Integrity

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Recently Lutheran Community Services Northwest competed with other social service agencies for a contract involving school-based services. It was an intense process, which turned former collaborators into competitors. It pitted one agency against another. We worked long and hard to put together a good proposal. Imagine our disappointment when we were not selected. We were not one of the chosen few. We lost our bid and had the regrettable task of closing down a program.

What eased some of the pain was the knowledge that we had acted with integrity throughout the process. We had upheld our values, maintained a sense of dignity and honored our past relationships with other providers. We acted in a manner that was consistent with who we are as an organization. As a result, even in defeat we could be winners. Integrity makes that possible.

To have integrity means to act with honesty and sincerity. It also includes the concept of completeness and wholeness. When we honor our values and when our actions reflect our beliefs, we are integrated and more complete. We have a sense of wholeness. Our head, our heart and our soul are compatible and in sync. It is at this point that the whole is actually greater than the sum of its parts.

Jesus saw completeness as a core part of His mission. This perspective is a major emphasis in the Gospel of John. Early in his public ministry, Jesus says to his disciples who encouraged him to eat, *“My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work.”* (John 4:34) Again he states: *“The works that the Father has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me.”* (John 5:36). On more than one occasion he reminds his hearers that He and the Father are one and that *“whoever sees me, sees him who sent me.”* (John 12:43)

Jesus' desire is to include His followers in this special relationship. He petitions His Father: *“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in you, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”* (John 17:20,21) In honoring this request, the Father revisits His original intention for humankind to reflect *“the image of God.”* (Gen. 2:27)

To help accomplish this reality, Jesus promises to send an Advocate, the Spirit of truth. *“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak of his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.”* (John 16:13) As Jesus earlier pointed out, *“God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth.”* (John 4:24) The Spirit completes the circle. Integrity restored. Mission accomplished.

The following are ways to practice integrity:

1. **Pray for the Spirit of Truth.** Daily ask for God's help in completing the circle.
2. **Be consistent.** Know your values and let your behavior reflect your beliefs. Do not compromise.
3. **Pursue wholeness.** Even in a crisis or a time of loss pay attention to opportunities for completeness and spiritual awakening.
4. **Reward honesty and sincerity.** Respect people who live their values. Resonate with them.
5. **Stay centered.** Maintain a good balance in your life between your physical, mental and spiritual needs. Appreciate how they are interrelated.

Affirmation: I like myself totally!

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