

INTEGRITY

Definition

Excellent moral character; honesty

Story

There was once an Emperor from China who had no children and needed to choose a successor.

Thousands of children from across the kingdom came to the palace and were surprised when the Emperor exclaimed that he was going to choose one of them. He gave them all a seed. They were to go home to their villages, plant the seed in a pot, and tend it for a year. When they returned in a year, the Emperor would judge their efforts and choose his successor.

There was a boy named Ling who received his seed and returned to his village. His mother helped him to choose a pot and put some soil into it. Ling watered his pot every day. After a few months, everyone's seeds really came to life. But poor old Ling still had nothing growing in his pot, leading the other children to make fun of him.

A year passed and it was time to return to the palace to show what had grown and decide on the new heir. Ling was worried as his pot still showed no signs of life. His mother looked him in the eye and explained that whatever the consequences were, he had to return and show the Emperor his empty pot.

Ling and the other children entered the palace gates. The Emperor came out and started to make his way through the crowd, looking at the many impressive trees, shrubs and flowers that were on display. The boys all puffed their chests out and tried to look as regal as possible, hoping that they would be chosen as the heir to the empire.

Then the Emperor came to Ling. He looked at the pot then he looked at Ling. "What happened here?" he asked.

"I watered the pot every day, but nothing ever grew," Ling muttered nervously.

The Emperor spoke out, "Clearly, some of you desperately want to be Emperor and would do anything to make that happen, but there is one boy that I would like to point out as he has come to me with nothing. Ling, come here please. A year ago, I gave you all a seed. I told you to go away, plant the seed, and

return with your plant. The seeds that I gave you all were boiled until they were no longer viable and wouldn't grow, but I see before me thousands of plants and only one barren pot. Integrity and courage are more important values for leadership than proud displays, so Ling here will be my heir."

Quotes

"Integrity, the choice between what's convenient and what's right."
Tony Dungy

"Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching." *C.S. Lewis*

Interaction

1. Are you honoring your parents, teachers, coaches and other leaders by making right and responsible choices?
2. What people and situations tempt you to compromise and how can you avoid them?
3. Do your life choices set an example of integrity?

Main Idea

Right is right and wrong is wrong. However, this seems to go against the grain of the culture in which you and I live. We live in an entitled society that wants you to believe you can have what you want, when you want it, and how you want it. The problem is that when you make it all about you, there is no true compass for what is right. Everything becomes relevant as long as it gets you satisfaction.

You are more than a temporary feeling. You ought to be a person of great character; a person that does the right things in the right way, even when no one is watching. You should be more concerned with your character than your reputation because character is who you really are, while your reputation is merely who others think you are. Do not take shortcuts. There are great rewards in doing what is true, honest, and of good report.

Take Away

Live in such a way that if someone spoke badly of you, no one would believe it.