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Integrity

BY SUSAN E. MURRAY

In her groundbreaking turn-of-the-century book, *Education*, Ellen White called for men (and women) of integrity. “The greatest want of the world is the want for men, men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for right though the heavens fall.”¹

So what does integrity look like today? Brené Brown, researcher, author and public speaker, defines integrity as 1) choosing courage over comfort; 2) choosing right over fun, fast or easy; and 3) practicing our values, not just professing our values.²



Brené’s research identified integrity as a strong building block of trust. She was surprised to find that trust is built in the small moments, rather than the larger, more compelling experiences in people’s lives. Thus, integrity also is built in the small moments.

So, how do we choose courage over comfort? It’s disconcerting how political correctness and pluralism has distorted our thinking. I was taught that those who ran our country were to be respected, from the president to the local policeman. I’ve seen and heard the talk regarding the presidential candidates, and observed some of their own behavior on TV. Sadly, it was recently shared with me that several young adults who desire to be policeman are being strongly discouraged by their families. It seems that political correctness has put up an artificial barrier that determines for many what is right or wrong. I was surprised a few months ago when several people wanted to tell me “Merry Christmas,” but they were uneasy saying that and acquiesced to “Happy Holidays.” While perhaps not a moral issue, it illustrated to me one way society is deeming what’s right and wrong.

How do we choose right over fun, fast or easy? It’s when we choose to pay the posted admission prices rather than save a few dollars because our child is “small for

his age,” when we maintain the speed limit when there is no other traffic, when we pay the postage due rather than sending something “media rate,” and when we keep what we purchased, rather than return “slightly used” merchandise as new. Our children are well aware of these behaviors, and they are

influenced by our choices.

How do we practice our values, not just profess them? We must acknowledge the origin of our personal values and practice them on a daily, small moment basis. Do we set our moral compass by “thus saith the Lord” or by the influence of others?

Youth are looking to the adults in their lives to help them know and understand who they are and how they should be. Ellen White had no doubt about that when she wrote, “The youth need to be impressed with the truth that their endowments are not their own. Strength, time, intellect, are but lent treasures.”³

May we see our children and youth as the treasures they are and live our own lives with integrity and purpose, paying attention to the small moments.

Susan E. Murray is professor emerita of behavioral sciences at Andrews University, certified family life educator, and licensed marriage and family therapist.

1) White, E.G. *Education*, p. 57

2) Brown, Brené. *The Anatomy of Trust* video presentation, www.supersoul.tv

3) White, E.G. *Education*, p. 57