

Committee for Integrity Enhancement Essay Contest 1st Place

Middle School Division

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How Do My Beliefs and Actions Show My Commitment to Being a Person of Integrity

Most of us have heard the phrase, "Don't judge a book by its cover." This well known phrase reminds me that I should not allow my first impression to be my only impression. An experiment on first impressions by Princeton psychologists Janine Willis and Alexander Todorov revealed that all it takes is a tenth of a second to form an impression of a stranger from their face, and that longer exposures don't significantly alter those impressions. This research along with decades old charge of not, "Judging a book by its cover" can be applied to many areas of my life.

My belief in God and His Word helps shape my actions. Colossians 3:17 states, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." My actions whether I am in a public place such as a mall, movie theatre, or school, or alone in a private place such as a home should be an example of integrity.

Integrity can be exhibited without saying a word. There are times the only thing people will notice about me is how I act or react in a particular situation. My actions may affect what others think of me. Having integrity means taking the "high road" even when you don't feel like it.

One example of taking the high road in my life this school year came recently during a basketball game I was playing in for my school. While playing defense I accidentally ran into another player on the opposing team and she hit the floor hard. Really hard. I immediately told her I was sorry. My apology was not accepted. After the ball game my opponent still would not shake my hand or accept my words

of apology. I admit that in that moment after saying “sorry,” and having it rejected it took me awhile to put that behind me. I was concerned with what she and her team thought of me. “Don’t judge a book by its cover,” I thought. I didn’t mean to knock her down.

However, integrity means to have decency, sincerity, truthfulness, and honor. Was I decent in my actions after I ran into her? Was I sincere in my apology? Did I show honor to my team and coaches by congratulating them on their win? The answer is yes to all of those questions. I came to the conclusion that I cannot control what others thought of me based on what they saw during those few seconds of the basketball game but I can control my reaction to how I was treated. Integrity doesn’t mean you are always right but it means doing right even when you don’t want to.

My belief in God and the Bible, challenges me each day to live honorably. Philippians 4:8 reads, Finally, brethren, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any praise, think on these things. Integrity is a choice. In the future when given the choice I hope I will choose integrity.