

Committee for Integrity Enhancement

2015 Essay Contest

Division 3 Winner

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TAMIN

Segments of today's society are exhibiting poor integrity by not showing respect to authority. Our nation's integrity is a reflection of its citizens' personal moral ethics. Individual integrity at home, at work, and in the community is built over time exploring personal belief and value systems and taking deliberate steps to respond with behavior consistent with a firm, virtuous foundation built on Biblical Truth. Proverbs 2:20-21 says, "So you walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous. For the upright will inhabit the land, and those with integrity will remain in it." Having a strong personal integrity in each of these areas helps build individual and national levels of integrity that will allow America to be respected and admired by other countries. As an individual and a citizen of the United States, I feel it is important that my response to authority reflect strong, moral character.

When I have a bad attitude towards my parents, this could be disrespecting them and their authority. This contempt does not help build a relationship built on honor and esteem. Ephesians 6:1 states, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right." In Hebrew, the word "tamim" is defined as integrity. Jewish Talmudic sages write that mothers and fathers re partners with God in the "...creation of each human being; therefore, to honor one's parents is to honor God." Showing disrespect towards my parents is not having "tamim" towards them and God. One way I can have "tamim" is when I make a promise to my parents, I keep it. Keeping my word, even if it takes a lot of time and effort, shows my parents I am honest and trustworthy.

Consistently obeying my curfew is an example of this. This success in obeying parental authority shows excellent personal integrity. As a result, my parents increase their level of trust in my maturity level and ability to choose to do the right thing. This helps them want to allow me more freedom and privileges. I want to learn to drive and own a car. This is a huge responsibility that requires large amount of trust from my parents. By establishing a pattern of responding with integrity to parental authority, it is easier for them to trust me with that responsibility.

As a cadet in the Civil Air Patrol (CAP), I am also entrusted with responsibilities. CAP requires cadets take online education courses as part of the process for promotions to higher rank and responsibility. These courses have quizzes or tests at the end I must pass with a minimum core. Most of these quizzes and tests are open book. My squadron commander teaches me it is a poor response to authority and a lack of personal integrity to only look through the material to find the answers to the

questions to pass the quiz or test as a quick way to promotion. Responding without integrity results in quick promotion in rank, but might mean I don't really have the knowledge and experience I need during an Emergency services Mission. Being poorly trained means I can risk my life, and the lives of others, on a mission. Responding with integrity is to thoroughly read and understand the material before taking the quiz or test and passing it actually having gained the knowledge and experience it was teaching. This honest as a cadet means that as a Ground Team Member, when I am needed on the field, I truly do have the information and tools I need to help plan and execute a mission involving a missing person or disaster relief. Learning how to respond with integrity to authority from my parents and the Civil Air Patrol helps me know how to respond on a larger scale to authority outside my home and work as a cadet.

On August 9, 2014, in Ferguson Missouri, Police Officer Darren Wilson shot and killed unarmed eighteen year old Michael Brown. This sparked a huge uproar of anger and emotions from citizens all over the country. Some people responded wrongly to the event and the results of the subsequent investigation into charges of police brutality and racism. Rioters in Ferguson looted, destroyed property, and injured innocent people based on their own feelings and conclusions of what happened. This was a poor response to authority with disastrous consequences to their community. Instead of rioting, I believe they should have waited for the findings of authorities after examining eye-witness accounts, ballistic reports and autopsies. There are nonviolent means of protest to express discontent with those charged with enforcing our laws. These should be the appropriate responses to questioning what we think are the abusive actions of those in authority over us.

American citizens, including myself, need to take Francis Bacon's wisdom to heart in our responses to people exercising control over us. Bacon wrote that it's "...not what we profess but what we practice that gives us integrity." Other countries can only look to the United States for sound leadership when American citizens first begin to practice personal integrity in how we react towards authority. This will take time and effort on each person's part. It will mean we need to search our individual moral principles and choose to live lives purposed towards not just talking about responding with integrity, but living it in our homes, where we work, and as members of our communities.