

ABCs of Wisdom – Integrity

Wisdom knows the right way. Integrity lives it all day, every day. Integrity means you say yes to truth internally then live life saying yes even when it is difficult.

Integrity is unwavering honesty that lives in the heart of the individual. Most of us have experienced situations when someone either didn't want to acknowledge truth or felt it was inconvenient. Integrity might not be so rare if it did not cost us anything. It isn't cheap. Maintaining integrity can cost us dearly.

I have found myself in work situations when leadership surprised me with their lack of integrity. I've watched the Nixon Watergate trials while pregnant with my first child, and was intrigued by testimonies of men of integrity - and not. Integrity is as important today as it ever was. It never loses its value. It never goes out of style.

Why is integrity so important? Without it we live in an unstable world. Who do we trust? Who is telling the truth? How do we make important decisions if we cannot determine the integrity of our leaders? A person with integrity acts and speaks consistently with his inner values even during times of conflict or opposition and sometimes real danger.

Gandhi is a perfect example of integrity. He held his ground peacefully while the British violently abused his people. He remained true to his values, even to his death.

Another example of a person of integrity is Nelson Mandela. "For Mandela, the moral integrity of a leader was crucial. And this was why he was so respected even by his opponents." - Independent.com.

After twenty-seven years in prison Mandela walked out a free man, forgave those who mistreated him, and went on to become the first black President of South Africa. He always practiced what he preached. In 1993 he received the Nobel Peace Prize.

Numerous examples of people with integrity are Nobel Peace Prize recipients. Most of them exhibited the inner commitment to personal values in spite of intense opposition. Maybe we

would have a less contentious world if we made these our heroes instead of rock stars and athletes.

A few Nobel Peace Prize winners and the years they won the prize:

1986 - Elie Wiesel was a political activist and Holocaust survivor. The Norwegian Nobel Committee called him a “messenger to mankind.” He was committed to peace, atonement and human dignity for all repressed people.

1992 - Rigoberta Menchú, a human rights activist from Guatemala, who dedicated her life to publicizing the rights of Guatemala’s indigenous peoples during and after the Guatemalan Civil War.

1997 - Jody Williams, an American political activist, known for her work in banning landmines, her defense of human rights, and her efforts to promote new understandings of security in today’s world.

2003 - Shirin Ebadi was the first Iranian to receive the prize. She founded the Defenders of Human Rights Center in Iran. The then president of Iran criticized it as political. In 2004, she was listed by *Forbes* magazine as one the “100 most powerful women in the world.”

2011- Leymah Gbowee, a Liberian peace activist, best known for bringing Christian and Muslim women together and leading a women’s nonviolent peace movement helping bring an end to the second Liberian Civil War in 2003.

2014 - Malala Yousafzai, is a Pakistani activist for female education, and the youngest Nobel Prize laureate ever. She refused to stop advocating for girls’ education even after being seriously injured in an assassination attempt in retaliation for her activism.

People with integrity do not waver. They are steady and trustworthy. They are wise.

“Wisdom is knowing the right path to take. Integrity is taking it.”
- M.H. McKee