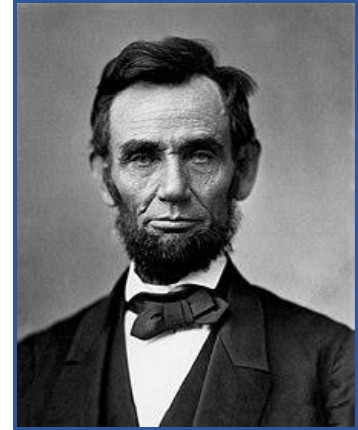


The Example of Lincoln

(Thursday's Perspective was: Honesty – Building Block of Character. Today's posting is a follow-up to that piece.)

Honest Abe. That perhaps was the first characterization you heard in school of Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States, which says something about the value of honesty in our minds.

In political studies, surveys have been conducted in order to construct historical rankings of the success of individuals who have served in that office. Ranking systems are usually based on surveys of academic historians and political scientists or popular opinion. The rankings focus on presidential achievements, leadership qualities, failures and faults.



Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt and George Washington are most often the three highest rated presidents among historians. The remaining places in the top 10 are usually rounded out by Theodore Roosevelt, Thomas Jefferson, Harry S. Truman, Woodrow Wilson, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Andrew Jackson and John F. Kennedy. Honesty is a compelling attribute in how our leaders are viewed.

Lincoln's wife, Mary Ann Todd Lincoln, once wrote that "Mr. Lincoln ... is almost monomaniac on the subject of honesty."

The future president was first called Honest Abe when he was working as a young clerk in New Salem, Illinois. According to one popular story, whenever he realized he had shortchanged a customer by a few pennies, he would close the shop and deliver the correct change – regardless of how far he had to walk.

Gordon Leidner, in *Great American History*, wrote: "People recognized his integrity and were soon asking him to act as a judge or mediator in various contests, fights and arguments. According to Robert Rutledge of New Salem, 'Lincoln's judgment was final in all that region of country. People relied implicitly upon his honesty, integrity and impartiality.'"

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The Rev. Albert Hale of Springfield's First Presbyterian Church said, "Abraham Lincoln has been here all the time, consulting and consulted by all classes, all parties, and on all subjects of political interest, with men of every degree of corruption, and yet I have never heard even an enemy accuse him of intentional dishonesty or corruption."

Lincoln's commitment to honesty continues to inspire us, even to 2018.

Here are a couple of modern-day demonstrations of honesty that highlight the meaning of integrity:



A pastor preached a sermon on honesty one Sunday. On Monday morning, he took the bus to get to his office. He paid the fare, and the bus driver gave him back too much change. During the rest of the journey, the pastor was rationalizing how God had provided him with some extra money he needed for the week. But he just could not live with himself if he kept it, and before he got off the bus he said to the driver, "You have made a mistake; you've given me too much change." And he proceeded to give him back the extra money.

The driver smiled and said, "There was no mistake. I was at your church yesterday and heard you preach on honesty. So I decided to put you to a test this morning." (From Illustrations for Biblical Preaching by Michael P. Green)



In his book Integrity, Ted Engstrom told the story of Coach Cleveland Stroud and the Bulldogs of Rockdale County High School in Conyers, Georgia. It was their championship season: 21 wins and only 5 losses on the way to the Georgia boys' basketball tournament. Theirs was a dramatic, come-from-behind victory in the state finals.



But now the new glass trophy case outside the high-school gymnasium is bare. The trophy it was built to display is not there. The Georgia High School Association deprived Rockdale High the championship after school officials said that a player who was scholastically ineligible had played 45 seconds in the first of the school's five post-season games.

"We didn't know he was ineligible at the time; we didn't know it until a few weeks ago," Coach Stroud said.

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“Some people have said we should have just kept quiet about it, that it was just 45 seconds, and the player wasn’t an impact player. But you’ve got to do what’s honest and right and what the rules say. I told my team that people forget the scores of basketball games; they don’t forget what you’re made of.”



Honesty matters, whether it’s in politics, religion, sports, business – or Life Care and Century Park.

For we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord’s sight but also in the sight of man
(2 Corinthians 8:21 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter