



THE CORE OF INTEGRITY IS HONESTY

by: DR. EMIL B. FERDINEZ

In the heart of Manila, people in all walks of life work to earn for a living. Heavy traffic brings complexities to many pedestrians who are on the go. Even in a hot weather, street peddlers work tirelessly to make a living. Public utility vehicles are very eager to get passengers. Mang Kiko, a jeepney driver works extremely hard for his family. He has a son named Kenneth who is about to complete his Junior High School.

Mang Kiko is very proud of his son. Kenneth used to be on top of his class and a student leader. "Son, education is the only heritage that I could give to you so study hard. I want you to know that I will do everything just to support your education," Father said encouragingly.

"Father, I need the money for my project that has to be submitted tomorrow," Kenneth said to his father as if he didn't hear the words that his father uttered.

Father immediately gave the cash that he earned from a tremendous work throughout the day. Kenneth took it right away without any words of gratitude to his father. He packed up his things and went to school in a haste.

Kenneth, despite of all the hardwork that his father exerted just to finance his education, remained ungrateful. It seemed that he is ashamed of having a sad life of having a father, though supportive, who was not earning that much. He envied his classmates for

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they can afford the luxury of all the things that they want. He thought their parents have become so supportive in all their children's endeavours more than his father's effort of providing for his needs.

Monday morning, his father drove him to school. When Kenneth got off the jeepney, his father gave him a hug and said, "Son, here's your allowance for the week. Be thrifty enough in spending it...and...by the way, here are some sandwiches that I prepared early in the morning. Keep them in your bag and eat it during your break time," Mang Kiko and his son parted ways.

When Kenneth entered his school, he never noticed that few of his classmates saw him conversing with his father.

"Hey Kenneth! Is he your father?" one of his classmates asked without any intention. Kenneth became upset with what he heard from his classmate. His cheeks blushed and with a bit of tension he said, "Ahm... No, you might have been mistaken... he's not my dad," He denied Mang Kiko as his father. Kenneth felt the guilt with what he said. He still felt the embarrassment. "I rather hadn't said it...I know it's my fault," Kenneth said to himself.

One evening, when Mang Kiko was about to go home from work, he found a wallet on the passenger's seat of his jeepney. He took it and saw a big amount of money.

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At first, he was hesitant of returning the money to the owner. The money would be of great help to his family but suddenly, he realized that the owner of the wallet was also in need.

"I must return it at once." He told himself without any reluctance. He went immediately to a radio station which he thought would be the best way of returning the wallet. Mang Kiko felt the happiness in his heart after that great deed.

The next day, to Mang Kiko's surprise, he was invited for an interview on a radio program about his noble deed. The wallet's owner was grateful for his honesty. "Thank you Mang Kiko that despite your poverty, you remained honest. You did not expect something in return," The radio host acknowledged him.

Many people admired his integrity. The city mayor acknowledged him by rewarding him with a plaque of recognition for being a model of honesty.

Mang Kiko was very thankful to the people who have helped him. He thanked the Lord for all the blessings He has given to him. "He really gave to me more than what I've prayed for," He finally said in his message.

On the other hand, Kenneth was very sorry for his actions. He never realized how great his father is. "Sorry father. I have been ungrateful with all the things that you've done for me. Thank you for raising me so well. From now on, I will always be proud of you," He

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uttered with tears in his eyes and so much joy in his heart. "Thank you son, I want you to know how much I love you," Father replied.

Finally, after several years, Kenneth finished his education with honors. He was so thankful to his father for his never ending love for him.



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