

This is Lieutenant Roger McCort of The Salvation Army in Eureka with today's community comment.

James Krames wrote about a young football player at a southern Christian College. On the night of their homecoming game, they were down just a few points going into the last play. James tells how the quarterback shot this young man a pass flying just a little low into the end zone. Diving to catch it, he hit the ground in such a way that the referees could only see him come up with the ball in his arms, and they signaled the touchdown to give the home team victory!

But the boy didn't celebrate with his teammates – instead he went to the head ref and quietly said something to him which caused the whistle to be blown again and the touchdown taken away. Instead of catching the ball, it had hit the ground and the player landed on it. It looked like he had it, but it was actually a trap, which isn't a legal catch. So his team ended up losing the game because their player showed integrity.

Integrity is a word we don't hear much these days. I've heard it defined as being the same person whether you are surrounded by witnesses or alone in the dark. It's about being honest rather than trying to get away with what you can, cutting corners, or making up stories to cover for your own poor behavior. If this doesn't seem like an idea which you've heard much about lately, it's because you haven't.

While not completely dead, the idea of doing the right thing as best you know how and remaining faithful to that ideal in all circumstances is one that our culture seems to have largely abandoned. In a highly-charged political season we ignore the huge integrity issues surrounding many candidates, including lies repeated to their own followers, because we find something distasteful about their opponents. That's not unlike saying you've decided to lick the inside of the sewer because eating food from a dumpster is so unappetizing.

Sadly there is something about public figures that makes us think they don't need integrity, or perhaps they only need it in the area they are celebrated for. As I record this, police in Brazil are untangling a series of lies told to them by members of the U.S. Swim team, whose story of being robbed at gunpoint seems to have fallen apart after surveillance video of the incident showed them busy vandalizing a gas station instead of being threatened at it. While USA Swimming has rules prohibiting dishonesty or misconduct, both of which clearly happened

even before the swimmers filed their fraudulent police reports, one of the Rio organizers has already been quoted as saying that they should just be let off. In his opinion, a member of this group is one of the best swimmers of all time, so it was just fun. He apparently isn't bothered by their lack of integrity outside of the pool.

This happens all the time. Why? Because when we continue to permit bad behavior among the famous, the rich, or the athletic we tell everyone else that their behavior doesn't matter either. When we turn a blind eye to any integrity failure and allow someone to escape some or all of the consequences of their choices, we essentially say that we have found their behavior to be acceptable.

Like the football player who had the ref rescind his touchdown, we should expect everyone to live honorably, with integrity. When someone fails to do so – as we all may – we need to face the consequences, starting with an apology for our dishonesty; moving on to telling the truth without any conditions, blaming of others, or twisting of words to try to make our lies seem less dishonest; then facing the full consequences of our actions.

Now that's the kind of community I think we'd all rather have, isn't it?

This has been Lt. Roger McCort for KINS Community Comment.