

# Homeless Man Lives With Integrity and Inspires Others Towards Acts of Goodness

*This lesson can be presented over 1-2 sessions. Instructors should feel free to use whichever discussion questions and activities you think best for your class or group. We advise giving students the sheet with the definitions of the virtues before the discussion questions.*

## Lesson Goals

Help students:

- see that living with integrity in doing the right thing, even when there is a strong incentive not to, is hard but worth it.
- appreciate that we can all be generous, regardless of our position on life, and to be inspired to live generously.
- see that solidarity can be established among people from very different backgrounds: children and older people, those living in poverty and those who have the means to give.
- become more aware of how making good choices often leads to goodness in ways that are expected and unexpected

## Primary Virtues / Character Traits

**Integrity:** making decisions in life according to a higher moral or ethical code, especially when there is pressure not to; being true to oneself.

**Honesty:** truthfulness; free from deceit or fraud; being honest requires courage to overcome fear such as not doing well on a test or being looked down on by our peers.

**Generosity:** giving freely of our own possessions, time and/or talent.

**Gratitude:** being thankful; appreciating the kindness and all good things that other people, organizations and our communities have given to us.

## Secondary Virtues / Character Traits

**Empathy:** trying to understand another person's situation, entering into the feeling or spirit of others and imagining yourself in another person's situation.

**Solidarity:** unity from a shared common purpose and / or interest; active loyalty within a group; mutual support within a group; being present with others

**Duty:** - something that one is expected or required to do according to one's own standards, moral or legal obligation, especially as it relates to one's status as a citizen and / or member of various communities.

## Leader Introduction

Today's story features good deeds from two very different people. The first a homeless man, Sean Currey, who finds and returns a wallet to an older woman who had lost it after using it at a coffee shop. The second, the older woman's 12 year old granddaughter. Let's watch to see how their stories come together through acts of integrity, caring and generosity.

## Lesson Video

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKfvv7QMz6U&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oKfvv7QMz6U&feature=emb_logo)

## Leader Summary:

Sean and Mckayla's story shows us how doing what is right often requires a sacrifice, but in doing what is right we can also set in motion goodness that will benefit others and ourselves in unexpected ways.

## Discussion Question Options *(discussion prompts / answers are in parentheses or bullet points)*

Before beginning our discussion, let's read over the virtues and their definitions - included within the online lesson as a separate document.

1. Why do you think Sean's homeless friend suggested that he keep the wallet and use the credit cards inside instead of returning them?  
(Sean is in a desperate situation as he doesn't have money for basic necessities like food, clothing and housing)
2. Let's take a close look at the virtue of integrity, "making decisions in life according to a higher moral or ethical code, especially when there is pressure not to. It's also defined as being true to oneself." How did Sean's actions show his integrity?  
(He chose to do the right thing and return the wallet even though there was a strong temptation to steal the credit cards to purchase things he desperately needed.)
3. When asked why he returned the wallet, Sean said, "I did it because I got a heart. The way I was brought up, I'm an honest person at heart." What does Sean's statement "I did it because I got a heart" tell us about the kind of person he is? (Sean is a caring person, putting the needs of others before himself)
4. Sean focuses a lot on honesty, saying "I'm an honest person at heart". If Sean would have used stolen credit cards to buy things he would have been dishonest in committing a fraud by using someone else's money as his own. Let's look closely at the definitions of honesty and integrity. How do honesty and integrity work together in Sean's situation?  
(When there was intense pressure to not be honest and to steal the wallet, Sean's integrity in being committed to doing what is right helped him to remain true to his own moral code and to be honest.)

5. Let's share some stories about a time when your integrity was challenged and it was hard to do the right thing, or there was a lot of pressure to be dishonest and to deceive others. (Also a journal writing option)  
(Encourage a discussion of situations among our friends, family, school and sports. If needed, ask students to share with each story the effects of their decision on themselves and on others, whether they would now change what they had previously decided to do, and any similarities or key themes that their story shares with that of Sean and McKayla.)
6. The grandmother in the story, Evelyn Topper, calls Sean's good deed of returning the wallet a "mitzvah," which in Jewish culture means a good deed done out of a positive sense of duty. What does duty mean to you, and in our community today and what are some examples of positive things we can do, or already are doing in living up to our duty?  
(encourage students to share examples from our family life, as a friend, as a student, as a member of sports teams, clubs and our larger community)
7. McKayla is only 12 years old but she managed to raise hundreds of dollars to donate to Sean by asking others to help him as her birthday gift. Why do you think she chose to act so generously?  
(She wanted to thank Sean for the kindness he lived out in helping her grandmother. She also has empathy for Sean and the needs he has as a homeless person.)

McKayla chose to be generous by raising and donating money. How else can we be generous?

(through the giving of time and talent to others in need, and to a cause we want to promote)

8. Sean, Evelyn, and McKayla have come together in solidarity despite their different backgrounds, lifestyles and ages. Look at the virtues for today's lesson. Which virtues and actions united them?  
(generosity with Sean taking the time and effort to return the wallet and McKayla raising money to help Sean; integrity with Sean returning the wallet even though he needed money and McKayla choosing to give away her birthday money even though she may have wanted something for herself)

How does this story of solidarity speak to us in terms of coming into union with others who are different from us? Let's talk about how we can do this within our own community today?

9. McKayla said about raising money for Sean that "I don't want people to think that just because you got knocked down, doesn't mean you can't come back up again." Do you agree with this statement?
10. Have you heard the phrase, "What goes around comes around?" What does that phrase mean? How is it relevant to this story?  
(When Sean acted with integrity and returned the wallet, his good deed was repaid with more goodness.)

Do you think that phrase is true? Let's share some stories of when this has happened to us or someone we know.

Do you think our good deeds will always be repaid? If you think not, should we still choose to do good in every situation?

### Journal Writing Options

1. Write about a time when your integrity was challenged and it was hard to do the right thing, or there was a lot of pressure to be dishonest and to deceive others. (Some examples are whether to go along with a friend who was making a bad choice, cheating on a test you were struggling with, keeping a promise you didn't want to keep, not sharing someone's secret) Write about whether you handled the situation with or without integrity. Would you now change the decision you made and why?
2. Write about a time you made a generous donation like McKayla did, and it doesn't have to be money as the giving of time and talent are just as important. What motivated you to help another person, group or cause? How did it make you feel to help?

### Extended Activity:

Organize students into groups of 3-4. Have each team brainstorm situations that they have personally been in, or have made up, where choosing to do the right thing is difficult. Each team will perform a short skit on the situation they chose, modeling how they could handle that situation with integrity. Each team should also present at the end a summary of the different virtues their skit reflected such as integrity, honesty, generosity, empathy and caring.

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