

Integrity Matters Broadcast – By Jim Bracher

Values and Relationships

Question:

In your weekly newspaper column, you offer responses to integrity questions. Where do you get your answers? How do you know what is ethical? On what basis do you select the values that support your position? How do your columns reflect your philosophy? I read that you were a clergyman; does that mean you have a Christian bias?

Response:

My answers and responses come out of the clarity and confidence that emerge from the single most important human relationship possible: a marriage partner. One way to describe how this connection to values and insight works for me is to talk about a movie that means a great deal to my wife, Jane, and me: *A Beautiful Mind*.

In 2002, former television child-star, Ron Howard, directed the Academy Award-winning film *A Beautiful Mind*. Actor Russell Crowe portrays the mathematical and economic genius, the professor from Princeton University, a recipient of the 1994 Nobel Prize, Dr. John Nash. The story of his life was the basis for the film. In addition to Russell Crowe, who played John Nash, Jennifer Connelly played his loyal and dedicated wife, Alicia. Whatever else the movie presented, the power of unconditional love was the cradle for the messages offered.

Dr. Nash received the shared Economics Nobel Prize in 1994 for his mathematical discoveries and contributions to "the pioneering analysis of equilibrium in the theory of non-cooperative games", which has impacted 20th Century business and economic activity. Most important of all, John Nash remembered when he won the Nobel Prize after decades of struggling with schizophrenia, the most serious and debilitating of the mental illnesses, that it was his wife's understanding and support that provided him with a context, connection and clarity.

Dr. Nash described himself as a person of circumstances who has been fortunate enough to tell his story through a newspaper article, book and movie. What he also provided via this movie to the current generation was insight related to the power of relationships for healing, and how unconditional love can inspire self-renewal.

What makes this story so moving centers in the words he shared, at least in the film version of his life, upon receiving the Nobel Prize at the awards ceremony in Sweden, December 1994.

Dr. Nash, as portrayed by Russell Crowe, summarized his values, insights and his efforts to build and then rebuild his life with and through the integrity-centered behaviors of his wife, Alicia, uttering these 101 words:

I have always believed in numbers, in the equations and logics that lead to reason. And, after a lifetime of such pursuits, I ask: what truly is logic? Who decides reason?

My quest has taken me through the physical, the metaphysical, the delusional and back. And I have made the most important discovery of my career; the most important discovery of my life.

It is only in the mysterious equations of love that any logic or reason can be found.

I am only here tonight because of you. [Referring obviously to his wife, Alicia]

You are the reason I am. You are all my reasons.

Thank You.

These 101 words, when recast through my own experience, help me to form the basis for increasing the knowledge and awareness essential for restoring trust in society, rebuilding faith in institutions and guiding integrity-centered leadership.

Perhaps you will be challenged to utilize this same process for enhancing ways your thoughts and actions can provide for you the answers and direction required in these complex times. Here is my response to how my life and work have unfolded. My words run parallel to what Dr. Nash said when acknowledging the Nobel Prize. His response served as a template:

I have always believed in the potential of the individual, in the capacity of human beings to achieve and contribute. During decades of encouraging integrity-centered actions, for people to be the best they can be, I ask, what is integrity? Who decides which values support appropriate behaviors?

My quest has taken me through theology, teaching, pastoral care, preaching, leadership counseling and now writing. And, I have made the most important discovery of my career, the most important discovery of my life.

It is only in the mysterious equations of interpersonal connection, mutual respect and unconditional love that an integrity-centered life is possible. Restoring trust and confidence in the leadership of any society, regionally or globally, rests upon legitimate interpersonal relationships.

The credit given to me regarding my constructive impact upon the lives of others was made possible because of the unconditional love provided to me by my wife, Jane, who is my best friend, role model and mentor. Her integrity is the source for any trust-restoring leadership counsel that I am able to provide. Indeed, I am fortunate.

The basis of integrity-centered leadership is connection, context and value-clarity. Strong marriages exude this connectedness. Family units understand it and live it. Parents who look with pride, with feelings of accomplishment, upon their child-rearing efforts understand how these multiple dimensions of relationship secure the present and prepare the next generation for the future.

Yes, this movie has a message. Powerful as its story is about a brilliant professor, it is even more about the wife. Perhaps *A Beautiful Mind* might be re-titled *A Magnificent Marriage of Partnership, Perseverance and Unconditional Love*. Truly, the husband becomes more and is better because of the right wife. Hopefully the wife says the same thing. Yet, who among us is not better because of the best of those whom we call friend and ally?

Perhaps the most powerful summary of important relationships can be presented in the following words about friendship. This poem stands as a centering point for our marriage in that it is a reminder that we are better because of the love and acceptance of friends (marriage partners):

Friendship

I love you not only for what you are, but
for what I am when I am with you. I love you
not only for what you have made of yourself,

but for what you are making of me. I love you
for the part of me that you bring out.

I love you for putting your hand into my
heaped-up heart, and passing over all the
foolish and frivolous and weak things which
you cannot help dimly seeing there, and for
drawing out into the light all the beautiful,
radiant belongings, that no one else had looked
quite far enough to find.

I love you for ignoring the possibilities of
the fool and weakling in me, and for laying
firm hold on the possibilities of good in me. I
love you for closing your eyes to the discords
in me, and for adding to the music in me by
worshipful listening.

I love you because you are helping me to
make of the lumber of my life not a tavern but
a Temple, and of the words of my every day
not a reproach but a song.

I love you because you have done more
than any creed could have done to make me
good, and more than any fate could have done
to make me happy. You have done it just by
being yourself. Perhaps that is what being a
friend means after all.

Author unknown –

Friendship depends upon substantive connections, and is built upon integrity and holds together relationships while guiding the proper execution of responsibilities. From friendship come confidence, courage and commitment. Upon these three characteristics, one can build a life of meaning and impact.

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