

The Curiosity to Learn

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and the Courage to Relearn!

As we begin the 2023 New Year, it's helpful to learn about others who have made some challenging choices based on their integrity. Such examples can motivate us to try to make honorable decisions from our own integrity in the days ahead.

There was an unusual story in the news after the recent senatorial elections. It was about a senator who had been running for reelection. Before his first campaign, this senator said he did not believe in climate change. His electorate were mostly conservative, and they held the same belief. Prior to his first election, his teenage son had told the senator he would also vote for him but he asked his father to learn more about climate change after the election. The senator did well in his first campaign.

The senator respected his son and took his son's request to heart. After the election, the senator and his wife went on a cruise ship and traveled to the Antarctic. There they saw and learned about the glaciers that were melting. When he returned home, the senator also attended several scientific lectures on climate change. He realized how misinformed he had been, and he clearly understood the extent of the climate change that had occurred, and was occurring, with serious consequences for our planet.

In his campaign for reelection, the senator had been looking forward to continue to serve his voters and work hard to represent them. He spoke about his new position on climate change with his constituents. The majority of his electorate still denied climate change, and the senator was not reelected. When the senator was interviewed about his political loss, he said he was not surprised with the outcome. Like most other politicians, he aligned with the political, social, and economic viewpoints of the majority of voters in order to win an election. In a sense, most politicians want to mirror their voters' opinions. Although his opinions on other issues political, economic, and social had not changed, he said he could no longer support the belief that "climate change" was a hoax.

He said he accepted his loss in the election, and he would plan to find other ways to earn a living and participate in local politics. Some might argue that the senator had made a political blunder. He should have either kept quiet on climate change, or pretend to align with the predominant view of his constituency.

There are several interesting aspects to this story. One is the senator's willingness to follow his son's suggestion to become more informed about climate change. Surely many others had spoken to the senator in his first term of office



and challenged his beliefs about climate change, but none had the impact of his son's suggestion. There was something special between father and son that motivated the senator to learn more about climate change and relearn what he thought he already knew.

A second piece is about the senator's integrity to align with his "new" findings about climate change even though it contributed to his election loss and possible political future with his voters. It took courage for the senator to be willing to relearn what he thought he knew and to accept the political consequences when speaking his truth to others.

Who among us would be willing to examine a different point of view or seek scientific verification to either confirm or deny a current belief about an important issue? Could we bear to find out that we had been misinformed? Would we be willing to speak to share new information if it was contrary to a popular belief in our family, with friends, or the local community? Many of us would not want to be or feel rejected. Our "loyalty" to others seems to outweigh our "courage" to question what we believe, to be willing to relearn, and to change our beliefs if there are factual contradictions.

Let this story of the senator be an example to all of us. Undoubtedly, we will experience many conflicting opinions, beliefs, and misinformation in the new year. We can each bring more awareness and courage to the choices we are making. ■

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