A Person of Integrity

By Chaplain Allen Vaughan

After the recent earthquakes here in Japan, as well as in the northwestern United States, there have been several buildings, bridges, and other structures that had to be tested for structural integrity before they were allowed to be used again.

What I've discovered is that many structures in Japan, especially high-rise buildings, were built according to very strict codes that allow them to withstand high amounts of stress caused by major earthquakes.

On the other hand, many buildings in the United States have not been constructed to withstand even the stress of much smaller magnitude earthquakes. When a building is said to have structural integrity it means that there are no cracks, no missing parts, or no weak points in the entirety of the structure that would cause it to become unstable or collapse under normal or allowable levels of stress.

When a person is said to have integrity, what does that mean? It might mean that a person behaves in a consistent and morally upright manner, no matter the circumstances or stress to which he or she is subjected.

Another sign of integrity is honesty—whole and complete honesty. A person of integrity is not only honest with others, but is also honest with self and with God, truthfully acknowledging both strengths and weaknesses. If you remember your math lessons from elementary or middle school, you may recall studying integers, which are whole numbers.

The word "integrity" is related to the word "integer" which means whole, entire, or undivided. Therefore, a person of integrity may also be described as whole, entire, or undivided. More simply put, for someone to have integrity, he or she must be the same on the inside as they are on the outside. In other words, that person is whole. Now, then, building may look good on the outside, and it may look perfectly strong and safe enough, at first glance, according to outward appearances. But, the integrity of a structure may be compromised if there are internal problems, damage, or weaknesses that cannot be seen from the outside. Only on closer inspection of the innermost parts of the building, can a determination be made about the true integrity of the structure.

Likewise, any person may have all the outward appearances of healthiness, success, and honesty, but on the inside may be hurting, struggling, or even deceitful. How can you tell if a person has integrity? Well, eventually, who they are in the inside will show up on the outside. The true person will eventually come out under stress.

According to the Christian faith, Jesus teaches this about integrity: "You cannot pick grapes from a thorn bush, or figs from thistles. Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit."

It is very important to point out here, that a person of integrity does not have to be perfect, nor is he or she without fault and never makes mistakes. A person of integrity, however, admits freely to those mistakes, is open and honest about his or her weaknesses, and always strives to live a life of transparency. What you see is what you get. An example of this kind of integrity in a person is found in King David, whose life is portrayed in the Hebrew Scriptures. David was described as a "man after God's own heart." And yet, at the height of his power and might as a king, he was guilty of committing adultery and then murder to cover up the act of adultery. What allowed King David to maintain his integrity, even after committing such terrible and selfish acts, was this:

(1) He listened. He listened to the one man in his entire kingdom who had the guts to confront the king and tell him honestly how wrong David had been and hold him accountable for his actions.

(2) David confessed. He immediately dropped all attempts to cover up or continue his deception, and David came clean.

(3) David's heart was broken. He wasn't simply sorry that he had been caught, David was sincerely heartbroken over the hurt and damaged that he had caused in his life, and also in the lives of others.

(4) David repented. He made a conscious decision to live a life of accountability and intentional obedience to God. Not only did he determine to turn his own life around, but David also renewed his commitment to instruct others so that no one else would make the same mistakes he did. And finally,

(5) David had faith. He acknowledged and believed that only God is able to give him a pure heart and renew a right spirit in him. In other words, only God could set David on the right path again.

You and I, like King David, can live a life of integrity. We may not always be perfect, but we can be whole and undivided. We can live our lives in such a manner that what people see of us on the outside is also what is true of us on the inside. May God bless you with the gift of integrity.

Shoplifting from NEX hurts everyone

From NEXCOM Public Affiars

The Navy Exchange Service Command's (NEXCOM) Loss Prevention/Safety Department takes preventing theft in all its NEXs seriously.

During 2010, NEX Loss Prevention and Safety associates investigated and resolved 1,847 shoplifting cases with a total dollar amount of $883,551.

According to a joint study recently released by the National Retail Federation and the University of Florida, theft continues to be a big problem for American retailers and it cost them a staggering $10.94 billion during the past year.

"The key to preventing theft in our locations begins with providing our customers PREMIER customer service and promoting our loss prevention awareness programs to our associates," said Tom Ruane, NEXCOM's Loss Prevention/Safety Program Manager. "Customers and associates play an important role and should report any suspicion of theft activity to NEX management, loss prevention/safety personnel or through the anonymous Alertline program."

Shoplifting losses vary by store type, but can account for about one-third of the total inventory shrink.

Shrink is the retail industry term for the difference between the recorded book inventory and the actual physical inventory counted at the end of the year.

Shrink is generally attributed to shoplifting, employee theft, administrative errors or vendor fraud.

If shoplifting is suspected, NEX Loss Prevention and Safety associates turn all incidents over to base police and, or local law enforcement.

In addition to possible disciplinary action and criminal prosecution, the Federal Claims Collection Act allows NEXCOM to enact a flat administrative cost or Civil Recovery of $200 for each incident of theft.

While the NEX continues to be proactive in apprehending shoplifters, NEX Loss Prevention and Safety associates work hard at preventing theft before it happens.

NEXs worldwide use electronic article surveillance (EAS) systems for electronic and high value merchandise as well as extensive closed circuit surveillance systems (CCTV) to try and deter as well as catch shoplifters.

The CCTV systems, coupled with digital video recorders, give the NEX the ability to see everything within the store and identify incidents of theft.

NEXCOM's vigilance has been paying off.

Over the past eight years, NEXCOM has seen its inventory shrink below one percent to sales compared to the national average of approximately 1.50 percent to sales.

"When someone steals from the NEX shrink occurs and our profits decline," said Ruane. "Seventy percent of NEX profits are given to Navy Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) to support quality of life programs. In 2010, that contribution totaled over $48 million. If our profits decline, so do our contributions to MWR."