

## TWO GUYS AND AN ETHICS TEST

A segment in the movie *Courageous* provided me with a striking visual image about a man's ethics. At a point in the movie a young father is told that he is being considered for a job promotion. In the lead up to this scene it is obvious that his family's financial stability hangs in the balance with this job. The boss says before he will be given the new job, he has to first tell him if he will go along on a situation in the factory. The situation the boss describes has an element of dishonesty and the father is caught off guard. He is told that he must provide the answer by the next morning.

The look on the father's face when he realizes the situation illustrates the difficulty the choice presents —on one hand he very much needs the job. On the other hand going along with the situation described would violate his integrity.

The story unfolds and the father renders his decision in the morning—says he is grateful for the job, but he cannot do what was asked because it would be dishonest. He ends up getting the promotion and is told that he gave the right answer because the boss was looking for someone he could trust. Wouldn't it be nice if all our "tests" worked out so well!

Then I thought about another guy and how he was put to a test...in my home state of Illinois this March the local media was rife with reports on former governor Rob Blagojevich as he prepared to report to federal prison to begin serving a 14 year sentence for corruption.

During his initial campaign there was an impressive amount of talk about ethics and reform. Things seemed to go in another direction once in office. He was removed from office in January of 2009. Maybe because that guy in the movie and his family were still on my mind during all this, but I started to notice that almost every media report during the days before he reported to prison seemed to focus on his family. His two young girls particularly captured the attention and sympathy of the media. After all, now they would begin 14 years without the daily presence of someone who despite his flaws, appeared to be a loving father.

What makes the difference in how two people make a critical decision? How much do we factor in the impact of our decisions on others? We all hope we will pass the character tests that come our way— seems to be a bit more difficult to guarantee. We can never really know until our moment arrives.

When my kids were toddlers they would regularly ask me to play a game of blocks with them after we finished dinner. Each time we started I began with a question, "What is the most important thing to remember before you start building something with these blocks?" I would ask. "You need a good base!" They would shout as they quickly went about stacking the blocks.

Maybe it is as simple as paying attention to our base. When things get a little dicey and we are faced with a difficult choice—it might help to keep those wooden blocks in mind. Start with a strong base and maintain it in little and big ways. Might be one more thing to think about... Would you feel good about your friends and family knowing about your decision? Would your actions live up to the faith others have in you, or would they bitterly disappoint the ones who matter most?