



A Conscious Choice to Maintain Credibility

by Dr. Arlene Kaiser

Our connection with the parents of our students is vital and usually very positive. However there are times when the totally unexpected can occur. I share this story in the event a fellow educator may learn from my lesson.

As soon as I arrived at school on a cold November morning, the principal called me into his office. As he shut the door I knew something was up. “We have a serious problem,” he stated. “Two teens just accused Mr. Warren, (not his real name) the English teacher, of improper conduct.” “This can’t be,” I thought. “He is a highly regarded teacher.” The school district, police, and other official personnel were immediately contacted.

Upon hearing the details and the identities of the accusers my knee jerk reaction was to convict them of fabricating a terrible lie. I knew these girls. Their behavior had warranted detentions, Saturday school and classroom suspensions. As vice principal I had communicated regularly with their parents and the girls had no credibility as far as I was concerned.

That thought lasted for a split second until I reflected on James 1:5 NLT *If you need wisdom—if you want to know what God wants you to do—ask him, and he will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking.*

That evening I wrote in my personal journal about the struggle I had in supporting the girls; yet, I was determined and mandated by God to see that they were protected from some of the angry students and colleagues of the accused teacher. The girls had a right to continue their education in a safe environment. That conscious choice resulted in a change of my behavior. Unaware of my struggle, the parents of the girls expressed gratitude for my support and help during months that followed and so I was stunned by what was to occur.

The investigation continued throughout the summer. Unexpectedly and tragically the teacher died. What followed was every teacher and administrations’ nightmare. The parents initiated a lawsuit of \$2.5 million against the school district, principal and me. I was accused of not supporting or protecting the girls in their education quest. Throughout that ordeal I was confident in my innocence as I remembered the conscious choice I had made to support the girls in getting their education in a safe environment. Fortunately, the lawsuit was eventually dismissed and there was no further litigation. I will forever be grateful for the grace of God that nudged me to make a conscious choice that would maintain my credibility.

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