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Can You Be Wicked?

By Steven L. Anderson, Ph.D., MBA

My wife is wicked. At least that’s what a fellow theatre patron at Shakespeare in the Park told her. Allow me to explain the situation. We were lying on a blanket at a recent Shakespeare in the Park presentation at Schiller Park. The woman who was sitting next to us was smoking cigarettes all evening. It was quite irritating to my wife, but she decided not to say anything to the woman.

That all changed when the evening began to cool down. We were well supplied with blankets and the other woman’s child became chilled. At that point, she asked my wife if she could borrow one of our extra blankets to keep her child warm.

My wife decided to use this opportunity to let the woman know how she felt. There fore, when asked if she would loan the woman our blanket, my wife replied, “Sure, but I would appreciate it if you would stop smoking. The woman seemed shocked by the request, but took the blanket anyway. Thirty seconds later, however, the blanket cam flying back in my wife’s lap. “My daughter has decided she doesn’t want your blanket after all,” she said. My wife was surprised but said nothing.

Evidently, the woman was quite incensed by my wife’s behavior. She approached her in a hostile manner and said, “My daughter had a horrible experience tonight. She froze because you are such a wicked person.” Wow.

What was interesting is that my wife, Char, wasn’t very concerned about being disparaged by the other woman. I was quite impressed by this. As I watched her hold her ground, I thought to myself, “That’s what it takes to get to the top.” You have to have the guts to step on a few toes to get what we want in life. It’s impossible that everyone around us will share our perceptions of reality. Sometimes we have to be assertive to accomplish our goals.

So often in life we believe that the greatest good is being liked by those around us. “Go along and get a long”, we think. But as our concern for what others think grows, our dreams and aspirations slowly fade away. Like the leaves that flutter helplessly to the ground when the autumn chill fills the air, we are incapable of hanging on to our dreams when we seek the approval of others.

What is interesting is that Char is one of the kindest, most decent people I have ever met. But she knows who she is. She has confidence in her self. She is a winner. Paul Newman once said, “If you don’t have enemies, you don’t have character.” Believe me, my wife is not wicked, but boy does she have character!