

## **LIVING THE PRINCIPLES: COURAGE, RESOURCEFULNESS, MAINTAINING PERSONAL INTEGRITY**

As part of my Christian vocation I became a volunteer some years ago in a London HIV/AIDS Charity, and ended up as Chair of the Trustees for two years. The annual budget was around £400K, and the Charity employed 12 staff. The journey started off well; there was a strong Chief Executive when I took over, and a very competent Finance Manager. However, this soon changed; the CE fell ill – he was HIV positive and felt he could not continue – so we had to recruit a replacement. At the same time funds were beginning to dry up faster than new grants were coming in; we had depended on at least one of three major applications being successful and none had been. Consequently the Charity became a high risk venture for a new CE, and our chosen candidate turned us down. We appointed the second choice and, to my great concern, the new CE appeared completely unable to draw in any of the new funding we so desperately needed.

The final straw came when, on a regular visit to assist with business planning, I was called into a room where this CE had gathered about 18 people (staff and volunteers). The CE explained that he had called everyone together so that they could express their concerns about my poor performance as Chairman. So for one and a half hours I had to endure personal onslaughts from all those present. The purpose was presumably to force me to resign, which, though they could not have realised it, would have meant the Charity closing down in practice because it was fast becoming bankrupt. However, I felt I should not resign but retrieve the situation and subsequently took various steps to achieve this. We had to make 6 members of staff redundant, appoint a General Manager from the existing staff, and gradually bring things back on an even keel.

The only way I could survive the onslaught referred to above was to identify directly with Christ, whose living presence I became very conscious of in that room. It felt to me that I was being crucified, and it was very distressing. I could have walked out, I could have resigned, I could have been fatally embittered with the Charity through this experience. However, I felt that God was calling for me to sort things out and not to run away. To me this required drawing on the principles of Courage (20), Resourcefulness (23), and Maintaining Personal Integrity (30). Without these God-inspired qualities being exercised the venture would undoubtedly have folded. In retrospect I have been thankful for this salutary learning experience, and have moved forward into other Charity fields. The failed CE, however, turned out to have had a bogus CV with false credentials; before he left the Charity he actually stole money, and ended up with a spell in prison.

A Senior Charity Trustee