

The Harmony Project
Sayville Alumni Association

The Courage to Change Your Mind
Why Curiosity is a Measure of Character

Before retirement, I spent a significant amount of time in senior team meetings and board meetings. Often, a person on the senior team was assigned the role of **'designated challenger.'** The role of a designated challenger was to frequently ask **"why."** The primary reason for this role was to rigorously stress-test assumptions and demand evidence. This was done in an effort to prevent corporate group think and to perhaps identify blind spots.



I wonder — as we walk on our journey — do we challenge our own assumptions? ***Are we humble enough to recognize that our knowledge may be incomplete?***

Are we willing to acknowledge blind spots when evidence and reason suggest we have them?

Monthly, I attend both Republican and Democratic forums that are held in my community. When the politicians open it up for questions, I usually ask the same one — “Can you provide us with a time that you changed your mind on an issue, and what led you to do so?”

Sadly, the question generally goes unanswered. Elected officials seem to believe that it's a sign of weakness to admit one's uncertainty - that it's 'flip flopping' on an issue if one changes their mind. In doing so, they may miss an opportunity to demonstrate wisdom, for wisdom is not the absence of uncertainty but the willingness to learn.

Wisdom is not knowing all the answers. Wisdom begins with recognizing that we do not.

Curiosity is the bridge between ignorance and understanding.

Perhaps curiosity is not merely a tool for learning, but a measure of character itself.

Voltaire captured the idea well: ***"We are often better judged by the quality of our questions than by the certainty of our answers."*** Curiosity, it seems, reveals more about character than certainty ever could."

Please reflect on the following questions:

1. When was the last time you changed your mind about something important, and what persuaded you to do so?

2. What assumption in your life has gone unchallenged for too long?

3. Are you more interested in being right, or in getting it right?

The answers may reveal more about your character than any opinion you hold.

Stay Golden,

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