

Is honesty is the best policy?

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December 5, 2014



What's the opposite of being short-changed? Instead of receiving less change than you are due after paying for something in cash, is there a name for the phenomenon whereby the amount of change you receive is greater than the amount you are due? Irrespective of the nomenclature of such an event, have you ever experienced this? I think most of us know what it's like to be short-changed, but do you remember ever being *long*-changed? If so, how did you react? In the event of being short-changed, I would expect a rather immediate demand for the correct change to be delivered, but would there be an immediate impulse to return the change if too much had been given?



I recently went to IKEA – that bastion of flat-packed Swedish furniture – in order to buy, amongst other things, some Dinera mugs for the Bromley community. (The grey-blue ones, just in case you were wondering.) A request for 60 mugs had been made, so with this figure on my shopping list I dutifully collected 60 of these inverse conical frustums with handles attached and piled them in my trolley. The mugs can only be stacked comfortably on top of each other two at a time, so I had 30 pairs of mugs arranged in the trolley. At £2 per mug, I had calculated that the total cost of the mugs would be £120. These numbers, however, became jumbled up in the cloud of my thoughts at the checkout.

Reluctant to put all of the mugs onto the conveyor belt at the checkout, I decided it would suffice to place a lone mug for the cashier to deal with, leaving the remaining mugs in the trolley, and simply inform the cashier of the total number of mugs I wanted to purchase. The thought had crossed my mind that I could in all probability report whatever number I wanted and the cashier would probably trust me. Sure enough, the cashier didn't bother to count the mugs when I reported, 'There are 30 mugs.'

Oops. Did I just say there were 30?



Yes. But at this junction in time, I hadn't noticed my error. Somehow in my mind I had taken the number 60 as the total price rather than the number of mugs and decided that half of 60 was 30. With all the items scanned and the amount due paid, I departed from the warehouse oblivious to the fact I had just fleeced IKEA. In fact, the error was only brought to my attention a few weeks later when seeking reimbursement for the purchase. My father-in-law, who is the bookkeeper of the Bromley community, saw that the amount on the receipt I had given to him was reflected only half of the £120 he had already given to me in good faith. Assuming the other mugs were purchased separately, he asked me where the other receipt for the remaining mugs was. Slightly confused, it dawned on me what had occurred.



Genuine remorse suddenly gripped me. IKEA is a brand to which I feel quite loyal. I'm part of their family – I've got the Family Card to prove it! I had repaid IKEA for all those free coffees and discounted items by denying them what they were due. I felt compelled to return to IKEA in order to admit my mistake and pay the outstanding balance.

So, earlier this week when I was shopping at IKEA again, my wife and I tried explaining to the cashier at the checkout what had happened on my previous visit. Upon our completion of the story, the cashier blurted out quite unhesitatingly:

'What? That's in the past. Who remembers that? I didn't hear that. Forget about it. Keep the change. Merry Christmas!'

And so, by the grace of this generous IKEA employee, my honesty was rewarded with a generous gift. (I'd like to think that IKEA is the kind of organisation that, rather than punishing them for lost profit, would value such employees who serve the customer with a generosity of spirit!) Of course, I would have been quite content to hand over the outstanding balance, and in fact would have felt quite liberated in so doing. Nevertheless, my debt had been written off and I could walk out with a free conscience.

I don't know whether or not the management at this particular branch of IKEA promote the kind of family culture you might expect when considering the family card they invite their customers to acquire, but this act was certainly the kind of culture-of-heart act you'd expect in a family. True Father asks in his 10th

Peace Message, 'Is there anything that cannot be resolved within the family?' When the members of a family, he continues, 'set an example of living for the sake of one another, how could they do anything unforgivable?' Mistakes happen. Accidents happen. But in a family that lives for the sake of each other, being honest about these mistakes & accidents is crucial for maintaining relational cohesion. True Father foretells that the 'world governed by the heavenly way and heavenly laws is a natural world, an unobstructed world of truth and pure reason. It is a world at the "high noon" of absolute values, where there are no dark shadows.'



This morning, my son wanted to surprise my wife and me by preparing the picture of True Parents to which we bow when we start the morning as a family. Unfortunately, he dropped the framed picture and cracked the covering pane of glass. He immediately came to report this accident, and while my wife and I were both understandably upset that the frame had been damaged, we were grateful for his honesty. Besides, it's easy to replace a broken picture frame; it isn't as easy to replace a broken relationship.

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