Carol's Choice

Carol was not happy in school. She didn't have any friends. Most of the time she was ignored when the other girls got together in a group. It wasn't that the other girls were mean—they just didn't pay any attention to her. She also felt that if she could make better grades, her parents would be happier with her. One day her father came home and announced he had been transferred to another city. Carol became very upset. Even if she wasn't happy where she was, at least she was familiar with her surroundings. Moving to a new school, a new neighborhood, meeting new boys and girls would only add to her problems. It was not until she heard her mother say to her father, "I'm glad we're moving. We'll get a fresh start in a new place," that she realized that she, too, would have a "fresh start." From that day on, she began to look forward to the move.

The first few days in the new school were very exciting for Carol. Several of the girls asked her to eat lunch with them and she began walking home with two or three girls every afternoon. She found that she actually liked her schoolwork a little more. For the first time in her life, she was enjoying school and her grades were improving.

Most days when the girls walked home from school, they would stop at the supermarket and buy something to eat. It was several weeks later that Carol realized that some of the girls were taking things without paying for them. She was upset because she knew it was wrong and also thought they could get in a lot of trouble. When she asked the girls if they realized what could happen to them, one of the girls answered, "Oh, we won't get caught. We're not exactly stupid, you know. Besides, even if we were caught, they wouldn't do anything. Maybe give you a long lecture or call your parents."

One of the girls said, "My mother would only tell me that I can't watch television for a month." The other girls laughed at that. They all knew that such punishment would only last for two or three days at most.

A couple of days later, one of the girls suggested that Carol ought to take something. When Carol said, "No, I don't think so," the girls acted as if they were disappointed in her. Each of the next three days they made the same suggestion. When she refused on the fourth day, one of the girls asked, "What's the matter with you? Are you chicken, or do you think you're too good or something?"

No matter how much Carol said she wasn't afraid, that she didn't think she was too good, it was no use. She realized that they knew she was lying to them. She knew it was wrong and she was afraid! She couldn't help it—the thought of doing anything like that really scared her.

From that day on, the girls talked less and less to her. They acted as if they didn't want to be around her. Carol was very upset. She didn't know what to do. For the first time in her life, she felt that she had friends. She was also making better grades than she had ever made.

It seemed that all of that might change now. Carol had a very difficult decision to make. When we have a situation where we have to make such a choice, we are often deciding whether or not to live with the Key of Integrity. For Carol, one of her choices would be living with integrity and the other would be living without integrity. She had a difficult time deciding because she was thinking about the results of each of her choices.

In the end, Carol decided to choose integrity. And not long after that she found there were other girls in the group who felt the same as she did—and they soon followed her lead. Now Carol had won on all fronts—she'd chosen integrity and found a group of even better friends as a result of her positive choice.