

1 CHARACTER



Accountability

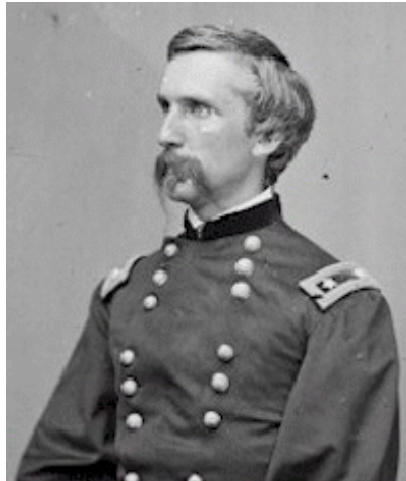
March 2006

Accountability: accepting responsibility and answering for one's choices.
"Good men prefer to be accountable."

—Michael Edwardes

Accountability—accepting responsibility and answering for one's choices

The first time I heard the name Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain was over twenty years ago during a summer visit to several Civil War monuments. At the age of twelve, however, much of the significance of the experience was unappreciated. Even so, I remember being impressed by the courage of the soldier with the "awesome handle-bar mustache."



Almost ten years later, I was reminded of Mr. Chamberlain with the 1993 release of the movie *Gettysburg*. As a student at BYU, however, the movie was mostly an excuse to be with a certain young woman, more than a solemn reminder of the price of freedom. Still, I was again awed by Chamberlain's conviction and resolve in the face of great adversity.

Then, about ten years later in 2002, I was again reminded of Joshua when I read *The Leadership Moment*, by Michael Useem. Fortunately, as I read the book, the immensity of his noble character (combined with my readiness to think more deeply about the weightier matters of life) assured that an indelible impression was made on me.

I admire Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, not only for his valor, but also for his compassionate regard for others, a quality not often associated with gritty war heroes. Obviously as a winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor, Chamberlain showed exceptional bravery and skill on the battlefield. His most renowned moment came in the summer of 1863 at the Battle of Gettysburg. Colonel Chamberlain received orders to defend and maintain the extreme left flank of the Union line at a small wooded hill know as Little Round Top.

He knew he and his 478 men must fulfill their responsibility and hold their ground at all costs. If Confederate artillery gained access to the high ground, they could decimate the rest of the Union line spread out beside them.

Confederate commanders also realized the strategic significance of Little Round Top and ordered wave after wave of attacks. After the fifth wave of Rebel soldiers had withdrawn, Chamberlain's defenses remained unbroken, but severely damaged. As the Rebel soldiers began to prepare for a sixth assault, the surviving soldiers of Chamberlain's regiment informed him that they had exhausted their ammunition. Chamberlain's bold solution to this desperate situation was to order a bayonet charge. The message was relayed along the ranks and a blue line of Union soldiers doggedly swept down the hill, completely catching the Rebel soldiers by surprise and sending them into a panicked retreat. Several days and 50,000 casualties later, the Union had won one of the most decisive engagements of the Civil War. It is widely believed that had Little Round Top fallen, Gettysburg could have turned into a rout, prompting the Union to sue for peace, forever altering the course of American history.

What many don't know is that it was Joshua's compassionate regard for others that probably ensured the successful defense of Little Round Top. Several weeks prior to Gettysburg, Chamberlain was given charge of 120 mutineers with orders to shoot any that wouldn't fulfill their duty. Chamberlain informed the mutineers of his orders, but instead of threatening and browbeating them, he kindly acknowledged their grievances, fed them, and appealed to their sense of responsibility to God, family, and country. After several days of dignified treatment, the mutineers acquiesced and rallied around the flag. It is almost certain that without the additional strength of these 120 mutineers, Little Round Top would have fallen.

Though it is a meager attempt, I hope these words honor Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain as a man of the highest moral character and that his noble example may inspire us to accept our responsibilities and perform them with dignity and respect.

Jason Theler, Principal
 Lindon Elementary

"Your life is the sum result of all the choices you make, both consciously and unconsciously. If you control the process of choosing, you can take control of all aspects of your life. You can find the freedom that comes from being in charge of yourself."

—Robert F. Bennett

"What kind of school would my school be if all of its students were just like me?"

"We must reject the idea that every time a law's broken, society is guilty rather than the lawbreaker. It is time to restore the American precept that each individual is accountable for his actions."

—Ronald Reagan

Book List

All By Myself

by Mercer Mayer

Strega Nona's Magic Lessons

by Tomie De Paola

Bedtime for Frances

by Russell Hoban

The Berenstain Bears Don't Pollute (anymore)

by Stan and Jan Berenstain

Muppet Kids in Piggy Gets the Jitters

by Louise Gikow



Family Activities

-Albert Einstein was born March 14, 1879 in Germany. Later he moved to America and received the Nobel peace prize. Said Elsa Einstein, "No, I don't understand my husband's theory of relativity, but I know my husband, and I know he can be trusted." **Why are accountability and trust important traits in public and private life?"**

-Talk about the consequences of actions when one is in a position of responsibility, such as in charge of a family meal or taking care of a family pet. (One end of a stick cannot be lifted up without lifting the other end.)

-Make cookies together. Have each child responsible for a certain ingredient. Talk about how leaving out only one ingredient changes the final product. Carrying out responsibilities insures a good product for all.

-Play a circle game such as Looby Lou. As members of the circle hold hands, note how the movements of one person also affect the person next to him. The way we fulfill our obligations also touches the lives of those around us, especially family members.

Kid's Corner

Recently, I talked to some neighborhood kids. Here's what they had to say about being dependable:

"Being dependable means someone can count on you."

"It means that others can trust that you will do what you say. "

"It means living up to your parents' expectations of you."

"It seems easier for some people, but most of us have to work on being dependable."

"It seems to take a lifetime to learn."

What are some ways kids show dependability?

"Caring for my pets each day."

"Practicing piano for reals before your mom gets home."

"Doing your homework."

"Coming home when you are supposed to."

"Facing a tardy for sleeping in without your mom making excuses for you."

"Getting to bed on time."

"Getting good grades."

"Getting chores done everyday."

"When you are partners at school for a project, one can't do all the work. You both have to do your fair share."

"Owning up to your mistakes."

"When I am dependable, it makes me feel great inside. I like myself more!"

--Kevin, Jacob, Matt and Laura

We, at Character Connection would like to focus on helping parents access character materials by using the web site located at www.lindoncharacterconnection.com. If you are interested in receiving a monthly reminder of the character traits and access to resource materials, please e-mail your address to arlainea@isquaredinc.com

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