

Big C, little c, what begins with c?

So begins the Letter C in the Dr Seuss ABC Book and in current news the next sentence might be, **“Corrupt, cornered, conspirators C, C, C” as corruption overwhelms both side of politics.**

Australians can be cynical people, especially when it comes to politics, and suspect that their politicians, at all levels of government, are small c corrupt. Whether it is the rezoning of land for developers at the local government level, the relationship between political donations and favourable treatment in the state government or the links between unions and an Australian government involving favours and bribes, corruption has been exposed and all Australians are confronted by the wide spread nature of these activities **and with the realisation that it’s bigger than they thought.**

Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It hurts everyone who depends on the integrity of people in a position of authority. Therefore, corruption is widespread in the community and not confined to our politicians. Business, government employees and everyday workers can be lured into corruption or suffer from its consequences. Favouritism, inducements and lies can be everyday aspects of transactions and relationships and some would argue advertising thrives on them. It exists in all societies, but is more recognisable in some. For those who thought Australia was relatively free of corruption the recent events of the ICAC in NSW should have them very concerned. It is a corrupt view of Australian mateship that results in an abuse of political power in favours and bribery.

In many countries, corruption is undoubtedly worse, but such events should not stop Australians from being vigilant against corruption in their own country. Those who have travelled overseas would be able to name a number of countries where to get anything done from buying a rail ticket to using a public toilet they have had to pay a bribe. It is this endemic corruption that stifles economic growth, increases inflation and leads to a nation-wide distrust of others undermining the very nature of a civil society. But corruption can be far more subtle than bribery. Favouritism in employment, nepotism in promotion and the falsification of information, expenses and allowances are just as unproductive.

These concerns are well represented in this extract from Christianity Today February 2014.

Top Christian leaders in the Philippines are sounding the alarm that a "deeply entrenched" culture of corruption is undermining the nation and its recovery from the Haiyan super-typhoon that killed more than 6,200 people on November 8.

"We join the sustained clamor of the people to end the deeply entrenched culture of graft, corruption, and patronage in our political system," said the presidents of four leading colleges and universities in a February 12 statement.

Corruption and the extensive system of political patronage has been an enormous social ill in the Philippines for decades. But post-disaster, the influx of more than \$300 million in international aid and the lack of results on the ground have triggered a public uproar.

The Philippines is just one example. In India, corruption is all pervasive and anticorruption campaigns have affected the 2014 elections helping to deliver victory to the opposition over a government that was perceived to be so corrupt that even its most staunch

supporters turned on it at the ballot box. The new prime minister poses a threat to minority groups, including Christians, and how he deals with corruption, the perception of corruption and his own perceived agenda for a religious (Hindu) state will be watched with interest. But corruption has been the one issue that the incumbent government could not shake off.

If corruption is an abuse of entrusted power for personal gain then the fundamental question is: Who can you trust?

Because corruption is a betrayal of trust, whether it is by government, business, family or in personal relationships, Christians and churches are not immune. We all let each other **down, betray trust and link into the corruption of God's creation that came from the events of Eden.** In this world, sin prevails.

However, for Christians, forgiveness is at hand and with the Holy Spirit the capacity to focus on what is good and pleasing to God. So Christians need to work on being authentic people who can be trusted because God can be trusted. By being trustworthy, they can reflect the nature of God and fulfil their roles as salt and light. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 2 Peter 1:4 But just as quickly comes a warning: If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and are overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. 2 Peter 2:20

So the question to be asked and discussed is: Are you influencing the world or is the world influencing you? As Christians, are we able to be the people we say we are or are we being sucked into the values of the world and the corruption that it represents. To assist you, here are a couple of moral dilemmas for your consideration.

1. Getting the best person for the position
As school principal you have to select an interview panel for the position of Deputy Principal. On your staff is a young, highly motivated and excellent Executive Teacher who has applied, along with other experienced deputy principals and executive teachers from other schools, and you would really like your teacher to fill the position. You are aware that the current deputy principal and P&C president don't like this teacher so you draw up a selection panel including a teacher from the school who is friendly with the Executive Teacher and a parent who is enthusiastic about that teacher. Are any of these actions corrupt or just a good way to get the best person for the position?
2. Meeting the costs
You have been accepted for a professional learning course lasting a week at a hotel venue on the South Coast. The costs are met by the organisers but you have to put in a travel claim. You agree to attend with a friend who asks you to put in a car travel claim so that you can pay him some funds for sharing a car with you. He outlines all the travel he has done for work without being compensated and sees this as a fair opportunity to recoup some funds. What should you do?
3. Using the grant
Your school has been awarded a multicultural education grant to conduct a series of multicultural events including a multicultural day and involvement with community groups. The grant is generous, and you decide that not all the grant is needed to do the minimum that you applied for. The school has a pressing need

to improve the safety of its main entrance and so you decide to use part of this grant to fulfil this pressing need. Is there any problem with this decision?

Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom. (Song of songs, 2:15) It is not usually the Big C but the little c that starts a person on the pathway of corruption. Small c corruption breeds contempt for what is right, increased risk taking follows and disaster and eventual ruin awaits those who take this path.

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