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PRINCIPALS AND PRINCIPLES

Assembly 105 –July 28th 2003

English is a difficult language, isn't it? For example, there are several words that are pronounced in the same way but the spelling and meaning are different. Now, I am going to hold up two words that are both said in the same way and we are going to think about the meanings. 'PRINCIPAL'. This means what? Who is the Principal of this school? Me! So you are quite clear about the meaning of this word. If you have a *Principal,* it means that you belong to an organization that calls one of its leaders by that name. Now, here is the second word – 'PRINCIPLE'. Note the spelling. What does that mean? If you are a person with *principles,* what is it that you have?

Let us find out what it means to have principles by thinking of what it means NOT to have principles. The usual example is a DONKEY. You know what a donkey is? He is very stubborn. If you want him to do anything, you have to bribe him – with a *(visual aid produced)* CARROT. "Please move over here – I will give you a nice carrot if you do!" If you want him NOT to do something, you have to have a *(visual aid produced)* STICK. "Don't you eat my vegetables! I will beat you!" The donkey lives between the carrot and the stick.

Some people are like that. If you want them to do something, you have to *bribe* them. If you want them NOT to do something, you have to *threaten* them. Actually, we are all a bit like that when we are little children. Parents and big brothers and sisters have to be very clever in their uses of bribes and threats! But now you are growing up and it is time you all thought about NOT being donkeys but, instead, being people with *principles* – that is, people who decide that, if something is right, they will do it,

whether there are bribes and threats or not. They will get out of bed in time, get to school on time, bring the right books, work hard, respond to what people do who are trying to help them, and try and behave in a nice and friendly way because they know that that is the right thing to do. They will NOT be unpleasant or go too far in their behaviour, not because someone is standing there with a big stick saying, "If you do that, I will hit you!" They will not do those things because they know they are wrong. They are people who have standards or principles. They are not donkeys. They are working hard at the business of being human beings – and good human beings as well.

The world needs people like that. An awful lot of people try to make other people do what they want by bribery and threats. It can work – but it turns people into donkeys. The world needs more people who are people who know what is right and wrong and have made their choice to do what is right.

Some of you have decided that you are going to do your best in school. Your teachers are working hard to help you. When they give you work, you do it – and give it in on time. But some of you have decided that, if we want work out of you, we will have to become donkey-masters – and, I have to say, it is very hard work, standing over you all the time, with carrots and sticks, trying to get you to work. As you move from one side of the Assembly to the other, from being little *(Year 2 on the right)* in the school to being big *(Year 11 on the right)* you are moving towards your O levels and, I hope, all of you come to the point in which you are actively enjoying your studies and wanting to do well and are prepared to participate in your education. What a good day that is! You move from being a donkey that needs the carrot and the stick, to being a person of principle.

God bless you.