

A Message for Parents

The Eighth Commandment

“The Eighth Commandment states: ‘Do not bear false witness against your neighbor.’ As with all of the commandments, the Eighth Commandment has broader applications than the narrow meaning of the words. That is, it means much more than simply not speaking falsely about others. The commandment points out that only a life lived with honesty and integrity reflects our dignity as persons created by God and in his image. In short, it obliges us to live the truth in love” (*Morality* p. 241).

“The Eighth Commandment forbids lying, or purposely not telling the truth. Lying can take many forms. If a person lies in court when under oath, he or she commits perjury, or false witness. Gossip is talking about another person behind his or her back. Gossip may or may not be a lie, but all gossip can harm the good reputation of another person.

All lies are unjust and unloving. All require **reparation**, or repair. Reparation may be as simple as an apology, or it may take more work, such as trying to help a person get back the reputation you have hurt.

Living in the spirit of the Eighth Commandment is more than not lying. You must choose to be truthful in words and actions. When you are truthful, you are living as a follower of Jesus, who always told the truth.

People trusted what Jesus did and said. When you are truthful, people trust you. When you promise to tell the truth, you have a special duty. Let your ‘yes’ mean ‘yes’ and your ‘no’ mean ‘no’. Telling the truth will set you free to follow Jesus and to live in love” (*Call to Faith*, Parish 4, p. 164–65).

“... the Eighth Commandment urges us to develop personal qualities that identify us as persons of truth. Being reliable and trustworthy are two such qualities. Genuineness and honesty are also characteristics of a person of truth” (*Morality* p. 248).

A Person of Truth, Honesty and Integrity

- You can teach your children that a person of integrity tells the truth, for his word is his bond, and her bond is her honor. You teach your children to tell the truth when you tell the truth and are heedful of your own words. When you and your children tell the truth, you will never have to worry about being embarrassed by lies or about being caught in a lie.
- You can teach your children that a person of integrity is honest in every act, every deed, every dealing. You teach them when you show them—in word and in deed—that truth and honesty are to be practiced every moment of every day.

A Message for Parents (continued)

- You can teach your children what it means to be a person of integrity when you show them how dishonest dealings affect them and everyone around them. Once evil words have been spoken they cannot be retrieved. They feed on themselves and fester and become worse and worse the longer they are exposed. They take on lives of their own and leave damage and destruction in their path.
- You can teach your children what it means to be a person of integrity when you explain to them that slander and gossip, rumor, innuendo, and character assassination are not victimless crimes. Words do not just dissipate into thin air. They come home to roost, to affront, and harass.
- You can teach your children what it means to be a person of integrity when you make send the consistent message each day that there are no degrees of honesty. Either you are honest or you are not.

(Summarized from Chapter 2 in *Golden Rules* by Wayne Dosick, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995.)

Honesty Under Pressure Award

Try this activity at home. This is a motivational way to get children to evaluate their personal honesty every week. On Sundays (or whatever day you most often get your whole family together for a meal) ask, "Who had a situation this past week where it was a challenge to be honest?" Have an "award" on hand to give the person who remembers the best incident of being honest. A piece of construction paper or colored card with a neatly printed H.U.P. (Honesty Under Pressure) will do nicely as the award. Let the child (or adult) who wins put it on his door (refrigerator, bedroom door) during the week until it is awarded again the next week. After a couple of weeks of "getting used to", you will find that children are willing to think hard about their behavior of the past week in hopes of winning the award. And it is this kind of thinking and recognition that strongly reinforces honesty.

(From: *Teaching Your Children Values* by Linda and Richard Eyre, New York: Fireside Books, 1993, p. 48)