



Session 6 Honesty is Foundation to Relationships

And my honesty will testify for me in the future, whenever you check on the wages you have paid me. Any goat in my possession that is not speckled or spotted, or any lamb that is not dark-colored, will be considered stolen.

—Genesis 30:33

Honesty



PARENTING STRATEGY #12

Teach Children About the Truth

Motivating Emotion:

The Value of Integrity

- You receive the benefit of the doubt
- You receive the privilege of privacy
- You are trusted and believed to be trustworthy
- You have an internal freedom and peace

PARENTING STRATEGY #13

Maintain High Accountability

- The road back
- Dishonesty always occurs under pressure
- Children who are dishonest are often weak in the problem solving department or are lazy or both. So sometimes the solution to dishonesty involves other strategies such as giving children more work to do



ASSIGNMENT

Explore with your child the idea that dishonesty always occurs under pressure. What are some examples and what does one do about it?

THEOLOGICAL TRUTH

Trust is foundational to relationships. Not only human relationships require trust, but trust is the basis for a relationship with God as well. Honesty with others requires that a person be honest with self.

PARENTING TIPS FOR WORKING ON HONESTY

When a child decides to build a positive reputation of honesty, it takes time and lots of doing what's right. Children must then learn to communicate more, report questionable behaviors or mistakes before others report them, and be open to parents checking up to see that nothing dishonest is actually happening. Children must be patient and faithful, avoiding the appearance of dishonesty at all costs.

Parents also have a tough job learning how to trust again. Especially when parents have been hurt multiple times they have a hard time ever trusting a child again. Although trust is hard when you've been hurt, it's important for parents to take the risk of trusting in small ways in order to allow themselves to rebuild the trusting relationship. Earning back the benefit of the doubt and rebuilding trust is a hard road that both parents and children must walk together.

PRAY AND USE THE SCRIPTURES

Remember that God is at work in your child's heart and loves to make the conscience more sensitive. Demonstrating your spirituality in family life can provide more opportunity for God to connect with your child's conscience. Reading the Bible and talking about it helps point out convictions and develops a standard for the conscience to rely on. Prayer not only recognizes that God is there and actively involved in our lives but listening to God is a key element of conscience development. Parents model what children need to learn.

LOOK FOR WAYS TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIP

Honesty is foundational to relationships. That's why it hurts parents so much when their children lie or cheat. It's harder to lie against someone you value and trust. Look for many opportunities to strengthen the relational bonds between you and your child. Develop common interests. Find ways to enjoy your child's uniqueness. Do things together. It's surprising sometimes how many teachable moments come in the midst of hanging out or discussing life. Relationship isn't just valuable for the conversations it provides. Strong relationship encourages honesty because it's harder to hurt someone you're close to.

CONFESSION

Admitting that you've done the wrong thing is the first step toward making things right. Confession is one of the key steps in the repentance process. It's often hard to say "I lied" because children like to talk themselves into believing the lie or justifying it. Just saying the words, "I lied," can help children make some significant heart changes.

BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

The greatest loss experienced with dishonesty is that the child loses the benefit of the doubt. It's a gift generally given to children until they prove to be untrustworthy. After a child lies or is found to be sneaky then parents question most other behaviors. The spiral continues when a questionable action is perceived to be dishonest and the child then feels hurt because he was not doing the wrong thing in that instance. But that's the consequence of losing the benefit of the doubt. People will suppose you're doing the wrong thing instead of thinking you're doing what's right. The benefit of the doubt is a privilege, that when lost, is hard to get back.

HIGH ACCOUNTABILITY

When children have a problem being sneaky or dishonest then they need closer supervision. A young child may need to play in the same room as you and actually move with you from room to room as you move around the house. An older child needs someone to call the friend's house to make sure he arrived, talk to the teachers to make sure the homework was turned in, and check a job to see if it was done completely. Accountability gives a child less opportunity to get away with something and helps them feel like people are watching.

PRIVACY IS A PRIVILEGE

One of the ingredients that make lying, stealing, cheating, and sneaking work is the belief that no one is watching. Sometimes a child needs a regular check of a backpack or a door taken off the bedroom to recognize that privacy is one of the privileges that comes with honesty. The Internet and text messaging are important areas to monitor.

REMOVE SECRECY TO DEAL WITH LYING

Children who lie or are sneaky live a secret life. One of the deterrents for dishonesty is exposing the secrecy. Unfortunately the embarrassment of dishonesty is a challenge for parents and they often want to deal with the problem secretly to protect their own pride. It's usually best for parents to be willing to sacrifice their pride and force a child to take back the stolen item to the store, go with the child back to the school to apologize for the cheating, or admit to the police that the child lied. When kids experience the painful consequences of seeing what they thought was a secret now revealed, they are less likely to take that path again.

JUST STOP

Proverbs 30:32 gives some helpful advice to parents whose children are in the habit of lying. It says, "If you have played the fool and exalted yourself, or if you have planned evil, clap your hand over your mouth!" Sometimes parents try to reason with a child who is lying, further cementing the lying pattern with more lies or a bigger story. It's often best to say to a child who is obviously started on a dishonest path, "Stop. Don't talk about that anymore. Think about how it really happened." Giving a child a directive to stop and then encouraging a new beginning point can sometimes deal with the problem more quickly. After all, children who lie need to learn how to stop themselves internally, not just think of more ways to embellish their story or defend a lie.

MISSIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

Lying often creates an atmosphere of hopelessness in children and their parents. It's important to help children rebuild hope by being honest, telling the truth, and doing what's right. One of the ways you might encourage hope is to send your child on missions of responsibility. "I'm going over to the neighbors for a bit. I'll be back in a few minutes. Let's see if you can do the right thing while I'm gone." Or, "Here's the money from our garage sale. You count it and organize it for me in a way that demonstrates honesty and integrity." Affirming children for being honest under pressure, or doing what's right when they could have chosen wrong, goes a long way to rebuild trust. Look for ways to catch them doing what's right, not just what's wrong.