

Truthfulness

Your Words and
Actions are Full
of Truth

“Truth is the secret of eloquence and of virtue, the basis of moral authority; it is the highest summit of art and life.”

--Henri Frederic Amiel



February Character Connection Theme: Truthfulness

Definition

Webster's Dictionary defines truthfulness as **habitually** telling the truth. When we are truthful, we are honest with trust. Truthfulness also builds bonds of love and justice.

G. Jeffrey MacDonald writes in a July 17, 2004 Deseret Morning News article entitled, *Winking at the truth: Americans embrace lying as a way to get ahead*, "In the high-pressure, high-stakes environment of 21st-century America, lying has for many apparently become a way of life, even among those whose faith demands truth-telling. People may know it's wrong to lie in theory, researchers say, but in practice they feel the success they want will be out of reach if they admit their flaws and sins along the way. . . Though enticements and pressures to lie may be stronger than in the past, another factor has cultural observers equally concerned: Individuals, it seems, are getting weaker when faced with temptation. Or put another way, many seem to know right from wrong, but material success has become more important to them than the task of sculpting moral character. . . ."

"Great progress could occur if Americans could reclaim the definitions of success as laid out in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, according to American University Islamic studies chairman Akbar Ahmed. The trouble is, he says, too many profess to abide by an ancient faith but in actuality their passion is for social status and material gain.

" 'Those assumptions of life as a quest for moral improvement cannot exist with a philosophy that you need to get to the top of the totem pole at all costs,' Ahmed says. 'You cannot have both.' "

Jay Evensen, in a Sunday May 30, 2004 Deseret Morning News article, *Integrity measured best in the little things*, writes, ". . . Dishonesty, in the long run, generally doesn't pay. That's a fairly obvious one. People can get away with things for awhile — perhaps even their entire lives — but eventually the truth comes out. Reputations are like granite monuments. They go on living long after the people they are attached to have died, and they can be vandalized and sullied by corrosive facts. . . Integrity is measured in thimbles, not in gallon jugs. It's easy to be honest in the big things. . . Thimbles are small, but, . . . they can pack a wallop if filled with the wrong stuff."

Quotes

"If it is not right do not do it; if it is not true do not say it."

--Marcus Aurelius³

"If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything." – Mark Twain

"Truth is a deep kindness that teaches us to be content in our everyday life and share with the people the same happiness." --Kahlil Gibran⁴

"Truth is generally the best vindication against slander." –Abraham Lincoln, *letter to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, July 18, 1864*⁵

Activities

**Play the game Say It and Do It as a class. Have students stand up and face you. Explain that you will point both of your arms in one direction and they are to copy you by pointing both of their arms in the

¹ <http://deseretnews.com/dn/view/1%2C1249%2C595077567%2C00.html>, accessed October 20, 2004

² <http://deseretnews.com/dn/view/0,1249,595066210,00.html>, accessed October 20, 2004

³ <http://www.webpages.ainet.com/gosner/quotationsarch/quotations1/topics/truth.htm>

⁴ jaegerk@hp-125.cae.wisc.edu (Kurt Jaeger)

⁵ "Quotations by Subject," <http://www.quotationspage.com/subjects/truth/>, accessed January 3, 2005

same direction. They are to call out the direction that they are pointing. Do this for awhile calling out one of four directions (up, down, left, or right). Stop and explain that you are changing the rules.

This time you want them to move their arms the same direction that you do but say the opposite direction. For example, you move your arms down. They would move their arms down, but they would say “up.”

For the third round, they are to say the direction that your arms move, but they are to move their arms in the opposite direction. For example, you put your arms up, they say “up” but move their arms down. After playing ask the students the following questions: *Was it hard to move your hands and call out the same direction that I was doing? How hard was it to say the opposite direction and move your hands in the correct direction? How hard was it for you to say one thing but to be thinking another? How does this game apply to being truthful? Can we act differently from what we really believe?*⁶



Stories

A Wallet Returned

When Cincinnati Reds pitcher, Danny Graves, lost his wallet on a West coast trip with his team, he thought he would never see it again. The wallet contained Danny’s credit cards, identification and about \$1,400 in cash. The airline and bus company had been alerted, but they had no information. Imagine Danny’s surprise when the wallet was returned a few days later to the address listed on his drivers license. The man who returned it had found it on the bus while cleaning it, had exchanged the cash for traveler’s checks so it wouldn’t be stolen in the mail. He said to Danny, “I borrowed \$26 to overnight it to you” and asked only for an autograph for his father.⁷



Dancing with Both Hands Free

A tale from Sri Ramakrish

Once a long time ago in a far away country, there was a woman who went to visit her friend, a weaver. During the visit the woman noticed a beautiful skein of yarn that her friend was using. So entranced with its beauty and quality, that when her friend left the room, the woman took the skein and hid it under her arm. When the friend entered the room, she noticed the missing skein, surmised what had happened and devised a plan.

“Let us dance,” she said. “You are here to visit me and we must celebrate.” With that she began to dance and whirl about the room. The visitor hesitated a little then began to slowly move.

“Oh, friend, let us not be timid, but rejoice and raise our arms with gladness that we are together,” the weaver said spinning and dancing with freedom and bliss. The visitor hesitated, then gingerly raised one arm as she slowly danced.

“Oh, this is a joyous occasion, let us raise both arms in joy,” said the weaver.

“But, this is all I know of dancing,” faltered the visitor.⁸

What are the benefits of living honestly so that one can “dance with both arms free?”



The Honest Woodcutter

There once was a woodcutter who lived with his wife and two children in a forest. The family was not rich but they were happy. The woodcutter was the best around, and he worked hard. One day the woodcutter was going to the river to get a drink and accidentally tripped over a rock. When he fell, the woodcutter’s worn out ax slipped out of his hands and landed in the middle of the river. The woodcutter was very sad and wondered how he was going to earn a living for his family without his ax. Suddenly the river began to make a noise. The

⁶ Jackson, Tom. Activities That Teach. Pgs.. 253-255.

⁷ “Reds reliever had lost wallet on bus,” <http://sports.espn.go.com/mlb/news/story?id=1804228>, accessed October 20, 2004

⁸ http://www.healingstory.org/treasure/dance/dance_with_both_hands_free.html, accessed October 20, 2004

water started rising and then it grew arms and a head and started to talk to him. He told him he was the fairy of the river and he could help him. The fairy held out an ax made of pure silver and asked the woodcutter if it was his. The woodcutter thought of all the things he could buy for his family if he would sell this ax but he knew he could not take it because it was not his. The fairy then brought up a pure gold ax from the river and asked if this was his. Again the woodcutter told him it was not his. Finally the fairy brought up an ax that was worn and very different from the other two axes. The woodcutter told the fairy this was his ax. The water fairy said “your ax is not worth very much but your honesty is. The silver and gold axes belong to me. I want you to take them as a gift for telling the truth.” The woodcutter was very excited to have all three axes. He sold the silver and gold one and with the money was able to buy things that his family needed.⁹

Writing or Discussion Topics

**Why did the dictionary use the word habitual to define truthful? *Discuss the idea that habits of a truthful heart begin early in life.*

**Have students discuss the possibility of being “half truthful.” *What is wrong with one small lie?*

**As a young clerk, Abraham Lincoln once accidentally charged a woman a few cents too much money. After she left he realized his error, closed the store for the night and walked between 2-3 miles to get to her house to return the money. In another instance Abe discovered a four-ounce weight on the scale that he had used the night before in a transaction. This meant that he had shorted his customer by four ounces. He shut up the store, weighed out the balance, and carried it to the customer. We learn from these stories that Abraham Lincoln’s nickname, “honest Abe” was well deserved.¹⁰ *Have students write a paper entitled “Do we always receive a reward for being truthful?”*

**The story is told of a monk who wished to teach his students a valuable lesson. He asked his students to go out and steal to fund the monastery, only cautioning them that they must go someplace where no one would know what they were doing. All the students but one agreed to do this. That one declared that there was no place he could go and be dishonest without at least one person knowing: himself. The monk greatly rewarded him, for he had learned the lesson of honesty well. *Discuss the phrase “Honesty is the best policy.” Why is it important to be honest even when no one else is around? When someone is honest, do things always work out for the best?*

Role Plays

** Jon notices a wallet in his school parking lot which belongs to one of the teachers in his school. It has \$60.00 cash in it. Before he turns it in to the office he wants to take \$20.00 for his reward in turning it in. *What should he do? What kind of rewards do we get for being truthful?*

** Bryan accidentally dropped his brother Scott’s soccer trophy and it broke. His mom told Scott it was probably the baby that broke it. *The baby won’t get in trouble so Bryan is tempted to not say anything. What should he do?*

**Susan noticed that Carrie didn’t answer a question right on the science test and she leaned over and told Carrie the right answer. *Do you think it would be right for Carrie to write down the correct answer since she didn’t ask Susan for it? What are some of her other options?*

Book List

A Big Fat Enormous Lie by Marjorie Sharmat

The Pumpkin Man from Piney Creek by Darleen Bailey Beard

The Empty Pot by Demi

March: Respect

April: Courage

May: Generosity

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⁹Treasury of Virtues. “The Honest Woodcutter.” Pgs. 63-82.

¹⁰Submitted by PGHS character representative from [The Book of Virtues](#).

Truthfulness Word Scramble

"The greatest homage we can pay to truth, is to use it."

—James Russell Lowell¹

1. RTDSHWAOAGITRRF _ _ _ _ _
Implies directness of manner and expression
2. VTREYI _ _ _ _ _
The condition or quality of being real, accurate, or correct
3. RNFAK _ _ _ _ _
Implies forthrightness of expression, sometimes to the point of bluntness
4. IMRITIEVDEILUS _ _ _ _ _
The quality of having the appearance of truth or reality, often applied to effective artistic representation
5. IGRNTTIEY _ _ _ _ _
Moral soundness, especially as it is revealed in dealings that test steadfastness to truth, purpose, responsibility, or trust
6. RTUTH _ _ _ _ _
Conformity to knowledge, fact, actuality, or logic
7. NYEHOTS _ _ _ _ _
The capacity or condition of being honest; integrity; trustworthiness; implies truthfulness, fairness in dealing, and absence of fraud, deceit, and dissembling.
8. DACRON _ _ _ _ _
Frankness of expression, sincerity; straightforwardness, stresses sincerity and honesty in the sense of refusing to evade issues or to distort one's true thought
9. CIYEATVR _ _ _ _ _
Habitual adherence to truth
10. RTYPIOB _ _ _ _ _
Proven trust

probity
truth
veracity
verity
verisimilitude
candor
frank
straightforward
honesty
integrity



*"How many legs does a dog have if you call the tail a leg? Four.
Calling a tail a leg doesn't make it a leg."
— Abraham Lincoln¹*

¹¹ <http://www.webpages.ainet.com/gosner/quotationsarch/quotations1/topics/truth.htm>