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Lesson 14

The Value of Truth

TEACHER PREPARATION

KEY CONCEPTS

Honesty and integrity are important traits in developing good moral character.

Children need to be taught the value of honesty from trusted adults.

Children need to realize being dishonest brings problems, frustration and can damage relationships.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. recognize honesty is the best way to give value to relationships.
2. realize telling lies can harm both the person who tells the lie and the person being lied to.
3. value the character traits of honesty and integrity.

KEY TERMS

Honest: being sincere, truthful

Integrity: the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Honesty and integrity are the backbone of good moral character. Teaching your students to be honest no matter the consequences is important. At the beginning of the year, you should talk about how much you value and expect honesty in all of your students. You will be an important role model for your students. Children will be carefully listening to what you say and how you say it; then, watching what you do and how you do it.

Focus on the strength and value of honesty and how being honest can build a person's reputation. Remind your students trust is a result of honesty because when people keep their promises, they build trust in their relationships.

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Emphasize lying will devalue a person’s reputation. Be careful when situations arise when your students have not been honest. If they share with you about a time they were dishonest, you need to listen first. It is important for us to correct and respond to dishonesty with firmness, but without overreacting. If we are too harsh in discussing the situation with our students, they may choose to be dishonest about their actions the next time to avoid being shamed. It takes courage to tell the truth at any age.

MATERIALS/PERPARATION

1. In **Exploring the Lesson**, you will need 10 clean empty small soda-sized cans, tape, a ball, and strips of paper to tape onto the cans. (Prepare some of the paper strips with sentences about honesty on them and leave some blank. **Some ideas for sentences might be: I found some money on the ground and took it to a trusted adult. I asked permission to go to the bathroom and went straight there instead of hanging out in the hall. I asked my mother if I could have a cookie rather than just taking one.**
2. In **Discovering the Lesson**, you will need some ice cream (or cake or some kind of sweet food), salt, water, two spoons, a bottle of water, paper towels, and chocolate syrup or something similar. You will need a total of four bowls – three will be empty and one you need to prepare the night before by pouring a layer of salt into the bowl, adding a little water, and letting it dry. Repeat. You want a hard layer of salt in the bottom of the bowl.
3. In **Applying the Lesson** for the **younger elementary students**, you will need a clear glass, some raisins or buttons and a dark fizzy soda. For the **older elementary students**, you will need a deck of cards for each small group. If you have access to store-bought decks of playing cards, you can use those or you can make your own.
4. Prepare the six statements listed in **Going Deeper** before you begin this section.

LESSON

BEGINNING THE LESSON

[Say to the students:] **Dugan, Trish and Hector have been learning about some qualities they need to develop in their lives. The Librarian calls them *DreamMakers* because she says if they develop those character traits in their lives, they will be able to become the kind of adults who can fulfill**

their dreams. The children just learned a big lesson about trust in the library. Let's listen in and see what kind of adventure they are going on today.

READINESS (5 minutes)

[Read to the students:] **Chapter 14 – In the Librarian's Absence**

"You will have to make your own way back to the Map of Wonders," said the Librarian. "I have a standing appointment, so I will see you later."

"There's someone else in the library?" said Hector in surprise.

"Oh, yes. A very important 'Someone,'" smiled the Librarian.

"Who is it?" asked Dugan, turning to join the conversation.

"Perhaps you will get to meet him sometime," said the Librarian with a knowing smile as she left the room.

"Do you think the Librarian will be gone for long?" asked Trish.

"I don't know," responded Dugan, between bites of his hamburger.

Trish pulled out her list of dream makers. "I think we should tackle honesty next," she announced.

"Frankly, I am a little tired of your list," said Hector.

"I thought you found my list helpful," said Trish.

"I never said that!" said Hector.

"You implied it!" said Trish.

"I just don't want a piece of paper telling me what to do!" shouted Hector.

"I just wrote down what the Librarian said," responded Trish.

"Well, she's not here now, is she?" said Hector.

"Maybe we ought to go back and revisit humility!" said Trish.

"Or maybe we ought to add not being so bossy or judgmental to your little list," yelled Hector.

"Hector told me he thought your list was stupid!" added Dugan.

"I did not!" said Hector.

"You implied it," laughed Dugan.

"Don't twist my words," threatened Hector. "You don't have that firm of a grip on the truth yourself!"

"What does that mean?" challenged Dugan.

"It means you aren't always truthful," added Trish.

"Great! Now, it's two against one! That's not fair!" complained Dugan. "When have I ever lied?"

"Let's see," thought Trish. "How about when you told Hector you

'always' wanted a gold coin?"

"I wasn't lying!" defended Dugan.

"Really?" added Hector. "'Always?' I doubt you even gave it a thought until you saw my coin," he continued. "You just said it to manipulate me into giving it to you!"

"Everyone says things like that!" yelled Dugan. "That's not lying!"

"What is it then?" challenged Hector.

"Well ... I don't know. But it doesn't fall under the definition of lying," insisted Dugan. "You're just trying to change the subject so Trish won't be so upset about her stupid list!"

"I'm not upset!" yelled Trish.

"Now, who's lying?" said Dugan as he stuck his chin out.

They missed the Librarian more than they thought. Her abrupt absence left no one in charge; like when the teacher leaves the classroom and chaos erupts because there are no restraints. Maybe they were just tired or maybe they had let down their guard after their stunning success in getting the book of trust.

In any event, Trish nursed her hurt after being made to feel silly about keeping a list. Dugan took off on his own, plotting to trap or trick Hector into lying so he could humiliate him. And Hector was angry. He didn't know why but it felt good to be angry, at least for a while.

A piece of driftwood washed up on the edge of the Map of Wonders, but none of them noticed it. Carved on its surface were these words –

Carrying around a hurt only makes things worse.

EXPLORE (15 minutes)

[Say to the students:] **Dugan, Trish and Hector are learning how easily we can begin to doubt each other. Honesty is such an important quality in your life. If you are honest, others will respect you more. They will learn you are trustworthy as we learned in Lesson 13. They will know you keep your promises and you mean what you say.**

Think of some ways you can be honest. I am going to pass out some sentences of students being honest. [Invite students to read their sentences out loud. For younger students, you can read them as you hand them out.] Can you think of some more sentences to represent honesty? [Assign someone to write the new sentences on pieces of paper. For

younger students, you can write their new ideas on paper strips and then give them out. Choose a few students to tape the sentences on the empty cans.] We are going to build a tower out of our cans. This tower



represents your reputation. You have built your reputation by telling the truth and being honest in your words and actions. [Have some students build the tower of cans in front of the class.]

Unfortunately, something is about to happen. This ball represents a time when you were dishonest. What happens when I roll the ball toward the cans? [Let your students observe and share what happens.]

Sadly, all the cans fell down. What do you think this represents? [Allow time for answers.] All of the work you have done to build your reputation as an honest person can quickly be destroyed if you do something dishonest. Then, you will need to go back and work to rebuild your reputation. Honesty is a choice. Choose wisely!

DISCOVER (10 minutes)

[Place your bowl with dried salt in it, ice cream, two empty bowls, two spoons, a salt shaker, a bowl of water and something like chocolate syrup on your desk. If you do not have access to ice cream, you could use cake or any kind of sweet food.]

[Say to the students:] Who loves ice cream? I am going to choose two friends who like ice cream to come up front with me today to do an experiment. [Put some ice cream into two bowls. Direct the next few questions to your two volunteers.] Go ahead and have one bite of the ice cream. Is it good? I am so glad. You are making a good choice by eating and enjoying that ice cream, but, you know, sometimes we make bad choices. How about if I put salt on the ice cream ... would that be a good choice? [You will hear a lot of "no" answers!] It looks like I have made a bad choice. [Pour some salt on top of the ice cream. Ask your two volunteers:] Would you like to have another bite of the ice cream now? [They will most likely say "no."] Well, how about if we cover it up with some chocolate syrup. Look, you can't even see the salt now. What do you think? Will that help take care of the problem? Take a bite and see. [Hopefully, they will take a bite. It should taste awful because they will still

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be able to taste the salt. Thank your volunteers and direct your next thoughts to the class.] This is what happens sometimes in our lives. We make a mistake (the salt) and instead of admitting we made a mistake, we try to cover it up with a lie (the syrup). But it doesn't work and makes the situation worse.

I need two more volunteers to come to the front of the room. Let's go back to our earlier thought. You have made a mistake [pour salt into an empty bowl], but you realized you need to be honest and tell the truth, and not lie. I am going to ask one of my helpers to take this paper towel and wipe the salt out of the bowl. [Give him or her time to wipe the salt out of the bowl.] Look how easily it came out. That represents when you make a mistake or even tell a lie, but quickly correct your mistake and tell the truth, you are taking the right steps to making things right.

Last night, I poured some salt and water into this bowl. It has dried and I want my other helper to try and wipe the salt out of this bowl. [Give him or her time to try to wipe the salt out of the bowl with a dry paper towel.] It won't come out, will it? It has hardened too much for you to be able to change it. Sometimes we may have told a lie a long time ago and we think everyone has forgotten about it. We may have told even more lies to cover up for the first lie. Even if everyone else has forgotten about it, you haven't. You have a place inside your heart where you know you have not told the truth and it is bothering you. It takes a lot of courage to go back to someone and tell them you lied. But it will bring healing and happiness when you do. I want my helper to pour water into this bowl. That represents you going back and telling the truth. Look what happens – the salt melts into the water and comes right out. [Give him or her time to wipe the salt out of the bowl.] This experiment is a good example of how important it is to be truthful, and not lie.

APPLY

For Younger Elementary Students (10 minutes)

[Put a clear glass in front of the class. Invite a student to come and put several buttons or raisins in the glass. Tell your students these represent lies they may have told. Have the student pour dark-colored soda into the glass. At first, you will not see the buttons/raisins. Explain this experiment is an example of how, at first, no one may know you have told a lie. Then have the

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students watch as the buttons/raisins come to the surface of the glass. Explain that is how it is with lies. Eventually, someone will find out so it is better to be honest, to tell the truth.]

I am going to read you some lies. I want you to think about how the person might find out it is a lie and what the person who lied should do.

- 1. I told my teacher I couldn't do my homework last night because my mom was sick and I had to help her. She wasn't really sick. I just didn't want to do my homework.**
- 2. John wanted me to go home with him, but I told him I had to go straight home to help my mom. But after school, I went to the park and played with another friend.**

For Older Elementary Students (20 minutes)

[Divide the students into groups. Then, say to the students:] **I am going to give you a deck of playing cards. Give each member of your group four cards. Put the rest of the cards face down in the middle of the group. We are going to play "Go Fish." The object of the game is to get four cards of the same number or person (like four 4's or four kings). You will look at the cards in your hand and ask someone to your right if they have one of the numbers/persons in your hand. For example, you may have these cards – 3, a king, 5, 10. So you can ask for any of these. If the person on the right does not have the number/person you asked for, they will say 'Go fish.'** Then, you will choose the top card off of the deck in the middle of the group. If the top card happens to be the one you were asking for, you can keep going and ask for another number. If it is not the one you were asking for, your turn is finished. The person on the right now takes his or her turn to play. The game keeps going until someone gets four cards of the same number and puts them on the table. He or she is the winner.

The first time we play, I want everyone to NOT tell the truth. If someone asks you for a 4 and you have a 4, pretend like you don't have it and tell them to "Go fish.' Okay, start your game. *[It won't take long before everyone is frustrated because no one can win since everyone is lying about what numbers they have in their hand. Stop the games and discuss what is*

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happening. They should quickly come to the conclusion that since no one was being honest, it was frustrating and made people angry.]

Now, I want you to play the game the correct way. *[Give them time to finish their game.]* **What did you learn about the importance of honesty? This was only a game – can you tell me how it taught you a lesson about the importance of honesty in real life situations?**

SHARE (2 minutes)

[Say to the students:] **Tell your family about one of the experiments we did to learn about how important it is to tell the truth. Maybe you could even do the ice cream experiment at home.**

ENDING THE LESSON

[Say to the students:] **There is an old saying, “Honesty is the best policy.” What do you think it means?** *[You should hear answers like it is always best to tell the truth.]* **We have learned through this lesson honesty is a valued quality to have as a part of our character. My hope is you will always be honest with others and with yourself.**

GOING DEEPER (optional)

[Write the following six statements on separate slips of paper, omitting the sources in parentheses:]

1. Look out for yourself. No one else will. (popular saying)
2. Those who have sorrow are happy, because they will be comforted (*Matthew 5:4, New Life Version*).
3. To the victor goes the spoils (i.e., rewards). (W. L. Marcy 1786-1857, U.S. statesman)
4. He who serves you as a servant is the greatest among you (*Matthew 23:11, International Children’s Bible*).
5. Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun. (Chairman Mao Zedong, November, 1938)

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6. Everyone who makes himself humble will be made great (*Luke 18:14c, International Children’s Bible*).

Jesus said to the people who believed in him, “You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (*John 8:31-32, New Living Translation*).

[Ask for six volunteers. Hand each volunteer one of the six statements, and instruct them not to show it to anyone. Have the six stand together in an open space in the room. Invite other students to surround them linking arms, so the six volunteers are “in jail.” Then, ask the one with the first quote to read it loudly. If any students have trouble reading, help them with the quote.]

[Ask the class:] **How many of you think this was a saying Jesus made in the Bible? Please raise your hands. How many of you think Jesus did not say it? The second group is right; Jesus did not say it. It’s just a popular saying. I’m sorry, this saying will not get anyone out of jail. It will not set you free. *[Keep the first student in the circle — in jail.]***

[Continue through each of the six quotes. When a saying is from the Bible (said by Jesus), tell the student:] **This is a teaching of Jesus. The truth of it has set you free. You can leave the “jail” and return to your seat.**

[When the game is over, have all the students return to their seats.]

[Say to the students:] **Jesus promised if we know his teachings, and follow them, we will be set free. What kinds of things might his teachings set us free from? *[Let several students answer. Then, continue:]* Jesus didn’t promise if we follow him, we’d never go to jail. In fact, both in the Bible, and in more recent history, some of his followers, including the biblical writer, Paul, were put in jail because they followed Jesus. But if we follow the truth of Jesus, it can keep us from, or set us free from, the kinds of dream breakers we are studying in this class.**

PARENT-TEACHER CONNECTION

We are sure you, like most parents, value honesty in your family relationships. As your child's teacher, I hope to assist you in developing honesty in your child. In this lesson, we focused on the strength and value of honesty and how being honest can build a person's reputation. Remind your child trust is a result of honesty because when people keep their promises, they build trust in their relationships.

You may also choose to talk about how lying and not being honest will devalue your child's reputation. You may remember a time when your child was dishonest and be tempted to focus on it. At this point, after a lesson on honesty in school, it is better to focus on the positive values of always being honest. When you suspect dishonesty, it is important to first listen. Parents and teachers need to correct and respond to dishonesty with firmness, but without overreacting. If we are too harsh in discussing the situation with our children, they may choose to be dishonest about their actions the next time to avoid being shamed. It takes courage to tell the truth at any age.

Questions you might ask your child:

1. What were Dugan, Trish and Hector arguing about at the beginning of today's story? (They were finding how easy it is to begin doubting each other.)
2. How do you feel when you suspect someone isn't telling you the truth?
3. Can you tell me about one of the experiments you did in class to learn about how important it is to tell the truth? Maybe you can try the ice cream experiment with me.

Parents, share about a time when you had to choose to be truthful, but it was difficult to do so. What would have been the consequences if you had not been truthful?

