

*God's Plan
for Us:
Know and
Live in
Truth*



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Teaching the Way of Love

because humanity passes by way of the family . . .

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PLEASE PRAY THAT

- Parents will live according to the Ten Commandments, especially within the home.
- Families will challenge themselves to live in truth.
- Parents will ask the Holy Spirit to help their family be honest in word and deed.
- Families will joyfully work to put God at the center of all they do.
- Families will cultivate a sense of awe and wonder for the truth of God.
- Parents will do more than they think they should in order to witness sacrificial love to their children.
- The media of our land will report what is true and limit fake news.
- No child (or parent) will ever find themselves beyond God's love and mercy.

The 8th Commandment; Do Not Bear False Witness

I can remember it like it happened yesterday and not 40 years ago. My 10-year-old brother was hiding under a table in the basement. He had his hands over his ears and his eyes were squeezed shut. I climbed under the table with him, placing my hand on his knee. He lifted his head in my direction as I said...

*Just tell me the truth. Did you cut down the neighbors newly planted pine trees?
NO! Jimmy did it.*

But, Dad's ax was laying by the tree.

Jimmy came into our garage and stole it. It wasn't me. He wants me to get into trouble.

Just come clean. Tell me the truth. You know, Mom and Dad will be angrier at you if you lie.

With a bit more prodding (and the assurance that the consequences coming to him would be doled out without anger) he admitted to breaking the 8th commandment – **Thou shalt not bear false witness against your neighbor.**



Why do kids lie to us? (For that matter, why do we lie?) Here are the common reasons people choose to be dishonest: they don't want to disappoint; they want to impress; they are afraid; they don't want to get into trouble; they think they are in danger; they don't think they are lying.

Each of these reasons has a different motivator (e.g. self-preservation or fitting in or willful deception). No matter the motivation, parents need to address the lie because overlooking it is permission to continue fibbing or broadcasting 'fake news'. With intention, parents need to confront the sin of dishonesty because God creates us to live in the truth.

Because humanity passes by way of the family...

Lying has deep and destructive consequences. First and foremost, lying corrupts our child's heart and soul. It is like a cancer that continues to spread. It destroys trust within relationships and this creates anxiety in your child as she continuously covers her tracks. And, lying eats away at a child's self-esteem. She knows that she is a fraud and can easily believe that she is unworthy of trust or respect. Finally, if she wants to continue being dishonest, she has to surround herself with gullible people who are easily duped. This limits her exposure to trustworthy individuals.

The counter measure to lying is the promotion of the virtue of honesty. Honesty is the ability to witness to the truth. An honest person sees reality for what it is and refuses to fake the facts. He respects the reputation of others, is slow to judge, never misleads, boasts or gossips. An honest person gains the trust and respect of others. That is why the proverb says honesty is the best policy. Let's take a look at several behaviors that extinguish dishonesty and encourage truthfulness.

Encouraging the Virtue of Honesty

Here are a number of ways that you can encourage honesty in your children.

Learn how to remain calm when dealing with difficult situations—especially lying. Make sure that your body looks relaxed (no pursed lips, elevated shoulders, stern gaze, set jaw) rather than tense or aggravated. Your actions have to convince your child that you can deal with any situation without losing your temper. This makes you more approachable.

Never call your child a liar. Calling your child a liar hampers his ability to change into a truth telling, trustworthy person. If a child sees himself as a liar, he is more likely to be ashamed and hide the truth from you.

Figure out what motivates your child to lie. Respond accordingly. It is easier to end lying when you know the reason why it happens. A child who lies to avoid disappointment needs assurance that you will love them unconditionally. A child who lies to gain bragging rights with friends (guess what I got away with) needs consistent parental dialogue about trustworthiness rather than lectures. A child who lies out of fear needs a double dose of security that you will never cause them harm. Finally a child who lies out of ignorance needs his parents to show him the difference between reality and fantasy.

Recognize and appreciate their honest words and actions. When your child is honest and tells the truth, show gratitude and joy.

Give consequences when they deceive. A child learns that lying is harmful when he has to live through a negative consequence. Make sure that it matches the infraction. Make sure that you will see that it is carried out. Make sure that you give it with charity not anger.

Make the connection that trust builds relationship while lying alienates. Youth that lie will find it more difficult to have and maintain friendships.

Stay alert. Lying is very common amongst children and adults. That's why you need to stay alert to your child's actions and words. Watch for signs of deception. If you see something, address it out of concern.

This challenge is just a small part of good Catholic parenting. Visit www.twl4parents.com for more strategies that will help you become the best parent you can be. And for the best systematic approach to parenting, consider purchasing the Teaching the Way of Love program, which can be found at the same website.

This article series is brought to you by Alice Heinzen and Jeff Arrowood, authors of the Teaching the Way of Love home study series for parents. Find out more at www.twl4parents.com/teaching-the-way-of-love.