

God Requires Honesty

STEP 1 ▶ Life Need (5–10 minutes)

- Read a feature in *The Rock*.
- *Optional*: Discuss honesty.
 - ☐ *The Rock* ☐ Pencils or pens, paper
 - ☐ Whiteboard or poster board and marker
 - ☐ *Optional*: *The Rock*, pencils or pens

STEP 2 ▶ Bible Learning (15–20 minutes)

- Explore a teaching aid.
- Complete a Bible study.
- *Optional*: Complete a word search.
 - ☐ Bible ☐ *The Rock*
 - ☐ Pencils or pens
 - ☐ Whiteboard or poster board and marker
 - ☐ “The Big Ten” booklet from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*
 - ☐ *Optional*: *The Rock*, pencils or pens

STEP 3 ▶ Bible Application (5–10 minutes)

- Make students aware of relationships affected by lying.
- *Optional*: Students anonymously write about relationships.
 - ☐ Bible ☐ Paper ☐ Pencils or pens
 - ☐ *Optional*: Paper, pencils or pens

STEP 4 ▶ Life Response (about 5 minutes)

- Students pray to change damaged relationships.
- *Optional*: students write about the relationship they want to work on.
- *Optional*: play a short unit review game.
 - ☐ Bible ☐ Paper ☐ Pencils or pens
 - ☐ *Optional*: “Wise Words” stickers from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*

Memory Verse

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

—Ephesians 4:25

Bible Basis:

The commandment regarding honesty (Exod. 20:16); the origin of falsehood (John 8:44); Peter denies knowing Christ (Matt. 26:31–35, 56b; Luke 22:54–62).

Bible Truth:

Lying is an affront to God and destroys trust between people.

Lesson Aim:

That your students understand the importance of honesty in their relationship with God and others.

Understanding the Bible

Derek Kidner comments on the seriousness of the ninth commandment—“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor” (Exod. 20:16): “The [immediate] context is the law court. The trial of Naboth (1 Kings 21:13–14) and that of Christ (Matt. 26:59–61) demonstrate how much can hang on this commandment” (*The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*). David Hubbard noted how in court cases without modern devices like DNA evidence, virtually everything depended upon witnesses telling the truth.

The commandment from God against lying grows out of the character of God. God the Father is “the only true [that is, real] God” (John 17:3). Since God is the ultimate reality, He “does not lie” (Titus 1:2). God the Son is the “truth” (John 14:17) who guides His own “into all the truth” (John 16:13).

Contrastingly, the devil is the father (the source, originator) of lies (John 8:44). In Genesis 3:1–5, Satan (compare Rev. 12:9) not only misrepresented the situation to Eve, but he also accused God of being the liar.

Even when we do not intend to sin, in this case lie, it still affects our relationship with God and requires repentance. In Matthew 26:31–35 Jesus told the disciples

—continued on next page

☐ indicates items you will need to prepare before class

Understanding the Bible —cont'd

they would desert him and one of them would deny him. The disciples agreed they would not disown Christ. Then in verse 56b we find out that Jesus was right: “Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.” In Luke 22:54-62 Jesus’ words prove true again. Peter may not have intended to lie but his actions still required repentance.

Tips

classroom

How do you get middle-school students to admit that they’ve lied and to explain the lie in detail? Very carefully! That’s why you want to be flexible as you teach the biblical principles brought out in this lesson. Here are a few ways you can do it.

- Instead of asking students to talk about lies they’ve told, allow them to draw symbols of their lies. Make sure they understand that they’re admitting the truth to themselves and to God.
- You can also ask tough questions in the third person: “Do you know anyone who . . . ?” “How do you think that person felt when . . . ?”
- The first Life Response optional activity—write out your pact with God (no one else will see it)—will let students off the hook with the class but not with God.

PRESESSION ACTIVITY



What Did You Say?

• **Objective:** To help your students interact as they play a game about honesty.

To impress upon your students how even small lies can cause problems, play a form of the game “telephone.” Use a simple sentence that has words that can easily be changed around. One example is “The big black dog ran after the small brown rabbit.”

Have your middle-school students sit in a circle. Whisper the sentence you’ve chosen to the first student. He in turn will change just one word of the sentence and then whisper his version to the next person. The sentence will continue in this way around the circle until it reaches the last person—with one word being changed each time.

The last person will repeat what he heard. Read what you originally told the first person and compare the two versions.

Understanding Your Students

Few young people lie for the sake of lying. The usual reason for a lie is selfishness: “If I lie, I’ll get what I want.” Youth may also lie out of laziness. It’s easier to lie than to take some action.

Finding that the consequences of a lie discovered can be harsher than for the original offense, children learn exaggeration and lies of silence.

Youngsters may even learn to lie from a parent or guardian. The phone rings, and Mama says, “If that’s Mrs. Watkins, tell her I’m not here.” Look at the lesson Junior just learned.

Fear also produces lying. The unwillingness to face the consequences of our behavior has made liars out of many of us.

One of the most damaging forms of lying is habit. Some youth are so comfortable telling lies that they may not even be aware of what they’re saying. The danger here is that such behavior so blurs the line between truth and falsehood that a student may have difficulty distinguishing between the two.

As long as these young students believe that lying can be to their advantage in day-to-day living, they are likely to continue. Our job is to help them see that the truth will set them free. Our goal for them is that they put lying behind them in favor of the sufficiency of God.



STEP 1

Life Need
5–10 minutes

Lesson Aim:

That your students understand the importance of honesty in their relationship with God and others.

Objective: That your students begin to examine their views on honesty by reviewing a cartoon feature in *The Rock*.

Materials:

- ☐ *The Rock*
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Pencils or pens
- ☐ Whiteboard or poster board and marker

Open class with a prayer like this: Dear Lord, please help us today to take a good look at honesty. Help us to be honest as we do it! Thank You for being here with us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Distribute paper, pencils or pens, and copies of *The Rock* to your students. Now, read together the cartoon feature, "The Truth and the Whole Truth." You might want students to take turns reading one cartoon panel aloud. As they go through the examples, ask:



- ▶ **How honest do you think this relationship is?** *Students will likely give answers such as "Not very!"*
- ▶ **In what ways do you think honesty is important in a relationship?** *You might expect responses like "You have to be honest to be a good friend," or "It will ruin a friendship if you're not honest."*
- ▶ **Do you think it is important to be completely honest? Why or why not?** *You may hear everything from "Of course," to "There's no way you can tell people everything!"*
- ▶ **If the whole truth is the whole truth, and a lie is a lie, what do you think a half-truth is?** *(A half-truth is a mingling of the truth with a lie, with the deliberate intent to deceive. In other words, it's a lie.)*
- ▶ **Have you ever been lied to like this and found out about it? How did it feel?** *Whether it's a half-truth or an outright lie, one is not worse than the other. A lie is a lie; it hurts to be deceived.*

Now turn to the last set of cartoons on page 6 in *The Rock* so that we can add our own punch lines. The only difference is, we want these to be the "whole truth." Any ideas? List ideas on the board.

Relationships don't work well if the people aren't willing to be honest. Dishonesty can destroy a relationship. It can also do other kinds of damage. That's one reason why God created a commandment against lying. Let's take a look.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Materials:

- ☐ *The Rock*
- ☐ Pencils or pens

Have your students rewrite "whole truth" punch lines on the first four cartoons.



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STEP 2

Bible Learning
15–20 minutes

Bible Basis:

The commandment regarding honesty (Exod. 20:16); the origin of falsehood (John 8:44); Peter denies knowing Christ (Matt. 26:31-35, 56b; Luke 22:54-62).

Objective: That your students learn that dishonesty hurts relationships.

Materials:

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ *The Rock*
- ☐ Pencils or pens
- ☐ “The Big Ten” booklet from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*

Have students turn to the Bible study in *The Rock*.

■ **From THE ROCK—The Truth about Lies**

Lying is a serious thing. It’s so serious that God has taken drastic measures to teach His people the importance of being truthful.

- ▶ Read Exodus 20:16. This is where God set down a standard for honesty. Why do you think honesty is so important? (*Because God says it is; because God doesn’t lie and He doesn’t want us to lie either.*)

Have your students turn in their Bibles to the Exodus passage. Or they can read it in *The Rock*. Appoint one student to read the verse.

- ▶ What is a witness? What does it mean to “give false testimony”? (*A witness is someone who tells what he knows, for example, in a courtroom trial. To give false testimony is to lie.*)

All of the Ten Commandments are guidelines for our relationships. Have you ever thought of them in that way?

Some people look at them as just a bunch of rules that are impossible to keep. But God saw from the beginning that we needed help with our relationships. For example, the first four commandments show us how to keep our relationship with God strong. Look at verse 15 in Exodus 20. How many friends do you think you’ll have if you steal from them? And look at verse 13. You certainly won’t have many friends if you kill them all!

Hand out “The Big Ten” pamphlets from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids* for the final time. Students may take them home today. Read the comment on the ninth commandment together. It is printed for you here.

■ **From MIDDLE SCHOOL CREATIVE TEACHING AIDS—The Big Ten**

- ▶ 9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. Relationships are built on trust. How many liars do you trust? (*Students will probably say that they don’t trust any liars. But they might tolerate them for a while until the relationship becomes unbearable.*)

Now get back to the Bible study in *The Rock*.

- ▶ Read John 8:44. Who is the source of lies? Why? (*The devil—the father of lies. There is no truth in him.*)
- ▶ According to this verse, when you lie, what does that say about you? (*It shows that you are disobeying God and going along with Satan.*)



TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Exodus 20:16

"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."

John 8:44

"You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

Matthew 26:31-35, 56b

³¹Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' ³²But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." ³³Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."

³⁴"Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." ³⁵But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same. . . .

^{56b}Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Luke 22:54-62

⁵⁴Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. ⁵⁵And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. ⁵⁶A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him."

⁵⁷But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said.

⁵⁸A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them."

"Man, I am not!" Peter replied.

⁵⁹About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean."

⁶⁰Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." ⁶²And he went outside and wept bitterly.

- ▶ What can be said about liars? What kind of characteristics do they have? (*Liars are hard to trust, two-faced, deceitful, etc.*)
- ▶ Can you think of an example in the Bible when Satan lied? (*In the Garden of Eden when he appeared to Eve as a serpent.*)
- ▶ Satan has been telling lies from the beginning of human history. What do you think it means in John 8:44 when it says that Satan's lies are his "native language"? (*It could mean that Satan lies as easily as we speak in our own language.*)
- ▶ What does this verse say the devil was "from the beginning"? (*A murderer.*)
- ▶ How can lying kill our relationships? (*By destroying trust, making you afraid, etc.*)
- ▶ Have you ever seen this happen? When? *Encourage students to tell stories that allow people involved to retain their dignity. They might consider not using names in their story.*

Have three students take turns reading next.

Now Read Matthew 26:31-35, 56b, and Luke 22:54-62.

- ▶ Did Peter intend to deny Christ? (*No.*)
- ▶ Why did Peter lie? (*There are many reasons Peter may have lied. Accept any reasonable response. He was probably scared. He may have doubted what he thought he knew about Christ.*)
- ▶ When Peter realized what he had done, what was his response? (*He wept bitterly. Repentance.*)

We've taken a pretty close look at honesty and what happens when we lie. It goes a lot deeper than just getting out of trouble for not doing your homework. Now let's explore what it means for middle schoolers to always be honest.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Materials:

- ☐ The Rock
- ☐ Pencils or pens

If you have time, have students complete the "Bits & Pieces" section of *The Rock*. The hidden message reads: "Speak the truth in love. Ephesians four fifteen."



STEP 3

Bible Application

(5–10 minutes)

Objective: That your students understand the importance of honesty in their relationships.

Materials:

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Pencils or pens

- ▶ **Have you ever told a lie or a “half-truth” thinking that it really wasn’t hurting anyone? What does the situation with Peter and the disciples tell us about whom we’re affecting, about whom our lie is hurting?** *Answers will vary, but make sure students understand that lies hurt God.*
- ▶ **Do you think God is hurt even if it’s not a very big lie that we tell? Why or why not?** *(All sin is sin to God. God is grieved by our sin, even if it’s a “little lie.”)*
- ▶ **What is it about our lies that hurts God?** *Answers may cover a wide range of ideas, from the fact that we think we can fool God to the fact that our lying makes us “look” more like the devil than God at that point. Also, lies violate a relationship.*
- ▶ **How does lying affect our relationship with God? with others?** *Answers can include ideas such as “It ruins trust.”*
- ▶ **Can you think of any times you have lied to someone in the past year? the past month?** *Draw a symbol of that lie on a separate piece of paper. Invite volunteers to explain their symbols, but don’t pressure students to answer. An example of a symbol for lying to a friend could be the mathematical “equal” sign with a line slashed through it.*
- ▶ **How was the relationship affected by your lie?** *Even if students don’t reveal their lies, they can describe the effects.*
- ▶ **If lying and dishonesty kill a relationship, even little by little, can you think of anything that might give life to our relationships?** *(Being honest, building trust, asking forgiveness for doing wrong.)*

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Materials:

- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Pencils or pens

Have everyone in the class write on a piece of paper one situation in which he or she lied. Have each student briefly explain the situation on paper, telling what the lie was and what effect it had. Students should not put their names on the paper or give any names of the people involved in the situation. Take only a couple of minutes to do this.

Then fold all the papers, put them into a box, and mix them up. Have one student pull one from the box, read it aloud, and suggest how the situation might have been handled better without lying.

STEP 4

Life Response
(5–10 minutes)

Bible Truth:

Lying is an affront to God and destroys trust between people.

TIP

At the end of class, you will distribute stickers based on the Ten Commandments. Make sure you separate them before class.

Objective: That each of your students choose to make right a relationship that has been broken by a lie.

Materials:

- ☐ Bible
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Pencils or pens
- ☐ “Wise Words” stickers from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*

Can you think right now of a relationship you have that has been broken by a lie? Let’s take a moment and ask God to bring just one person to each of our minds. Allow a moment of silence. Now think of the situation in which the lie was told. You don’t need to answer out loud, but come up with at least one way you could bring life back to that relationship. Think of the things we talked about that can renew a relationship, such as being honest or asking forgiveness. Students should be able to come up with solutions like: I could admit I lied; I could apologize; I could tell my parents or guardian that I need to talk about some lies I’ve told.

I’d like to challenge you to talk with God. Tell Him that sometime this week, you will try to revive the relationship with the person He brought to mind. If you truly were not able to think of a relationship you have that’s been affected by a lie you told, that’s great. Take this time to pray for the people around you. Pray that they will follow through this week.

Now distribute the “Wise Words” stickers from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*.

Tell students they can stick them on a notebook or journal to remind them of what they’ve been learning. There are two identical stickers for each commandment. You can give each student more than one if you want.

Close class in prayer.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Materials:

- ☐ Paper, pencils or pens
- ☐ “Wise Words” stickers from *Middle School Creative Teaching Aids*
- ☐ Envelopes and stamps

1. Have students write out details concerning making things right with someone they’ve lied to (see *Life Response*), slip them inside mailing envelopes you have provided, seal them, and self-address them. Explain that you will collect all the envelopes and mail them a month later as a reminder.
2. If you have time, play a short unit review game. Before distributing the “Wise Words” stickers, cut them apart, shuffle them, display them one at a time, and ask students to explain which commandment the sticker refers to, and a way to keep that commandment. The number of the commandment and the first few words of the stickers are here:

1—God Rules!

2—:) an abbreviation for prayer

3—Unwise to Idolize . . .

4—Give Hugs Not Insults . . .

5—Want Trust? Tell the Truth . . . 10—Be Faithful

6—Stealing Only Allowed in Baseball

7—If Time is Money Spend it on God . . .

8—Honor your Parents; They’ve got you covered.

9—Covet? Shove It! Crave Your Savior.

