# Prayer Service: Speaking the Truth

### Gather

Lord Jesus, may we be counted worthy of being witnesses to your truth. Help us to be truthful in speech and honest with others. Help us to avoid rash judgment and to learn the art of speaking well of others. Help us to stand up for ourselves and others when honesty and reputation are on the line. May we find a home in your truth and reflect that truth in all our dealings with others. Amen.

### Listen

“So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:25, 29, 31-32).

### Respond

Our Father, who art in heaven. . .

Response: May we witness to your truth.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done. . .

Response: May we witness to your truth.

on earth as it is in heaven. . .

Response: May we witness to your truth.

Give us this day our daily bread. . .

Response: May we witness to your truth.

and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. . .

Response: May we witness to your truth.

And lead us not into temptation. . .

Response: May we witness to your truth.

but deliver us from evil. . .

Response: May we witness to your truth.

Amen.

### Go Forth

May the words of my mouth

and the work of my hands

always be acceptable to you, Oh God,

so that all that I say,

and all that I do,

will bring honor to my life,

and glory to your great and holy name. Amen.

# Handout #1.

# Honesty and Ethics in America

## Round One

Each year since 1999 the Gallup Poll organization has asked Americans to rate the honesty and ethical standards of members of a variety of professions on a five-point scale that ranges from “very high” to “very low.” (**Note**: All five professions listed below scored above 50% with “very high” or “high” ratings. The #1 profession, nurses, is the highest-ranking profession by a wide margin.)

What profession do you think was among the top five for being rated as highly ethical in the most recent poll taken at the end of 2020? (Correct answers are listed below.)

1. Nurses
2. Medical Doctors
3. Grade School Teachers
4. Pharmacists
5. Police Officers

## Round Two

From that same December 2020 poll, which professions received the lowest ethical ratings?

1. Members of Congress
2. Car salespeople
3. Advertising Practitioners
4. Business Executives
5. Lawyers

## Round Three

The Eighth Commandment states: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” What are the top ten ways people violate the Eighth Commandment?

1. Lying to protect oneself
2. Twisting the truth to stay out of trouble
3. Exaggerating something to make oneself look good
4. Lying to protect other people
5. Lying to a parent or teacher about something significant
6. Lying on a resume or job application (in order to get a job)
7. Cheating on tests
8. Cheating on taxes
9. Cheating at a game
10. Plagiarizing (copying or using) someone else’s work for one’s own benefit (from the Internet or other sources)

## Round Four

There are many reasons people give for violating the Eighth Commandment which states: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

What are the top ten reasons people give for violating the Eighth Commandment—for cheating and lying in their lives?

1. Everyone’s doing it.
2. It’s easy (and you don’t have to work hard).
3. Cheating works—people do succeed, get ahead, and make more money.
4. No one gets caught cheating—cheaters don’t pay the price for cheating.
5. You have to lie and cheat in order to succeed and win in the world today.
6. Greed (to have more money, prestige, status, power).
7. Pressure of constant testing in school (standardized tests, SATs).
8. Anxiety about job prospects and financial security.
9. Parental pressure on children and teens to succeed (academically, athletically, SAT scores).
10. Bigger rewards for winning today and making lots of money (think of athletes and CEOs).

# Handout #2.

# Honesty or Dishonesty

## Side A: Short Term Consequences

**Too Much Change**

You are at the grocery store buying something and the cashier gives you $10 too much in change.

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| 1. You keep it. After all, it was her mistake and not yours. You go into the toy store next door and buy a new game or toy.  | 2. When the cashier gives you the $10 extra change, you tell her she has given you too much and give the $10 back to her. She says thanks, but as you walk out, you start thinking about the new game or toy you could have bought for $10.  |

**Taking a Test**

You were sitting in class taking a really hard test that you forgot to study for. The girl across the aisle seems to know all the answers, and her paper is so easy to see.

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| 1. You copy a few answers and end up getting an A- on the test. | 2. You’re mad at yourself for not studying harder and you’re really worried about your grade. Still, you keep your eyes on your paper and do your best. Unfortunately, your best that day is only a C on the test.  |

**Best Friends**

You become best friends with a classmate whom other students don’t really like because he or she is “different.” One day, some of the most popular kids in your grade come over to you and ask if you want to sit with them during lunch time.

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| --- | --- |
| 1. They only want you to sit with them because your best friend seems weird. You tell them that he or she is not your best friend and you will sit with them at lunch.  | 2. You have a really hard choice to make: the popular kids or your best friend. You think about how much fun you have together and how your best friend will feel if you sit with the popular kids. You say no and sit with your best friend at lunch. The popular kids start making fun of you at lunch.  |

**Broken Chair**

You’re playing at home with your friends and you damage one of the chairs in your family room. You know how upset your mother will be because you had friends at your home without asking permission.

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| 1. You try to hide where the chair is broken and don’t say anything about it so you don’t get in trouble. Several days later someone sits in the chair and it breaks again. When asked, you tell your mother you didn’t know anything about it.  | 2. When you mother comes home you explain that one of the chairs in the family room is broken. You take responsibility for breaking the chair. When your mother asks you how it broke, you tell her that you had several friends at the house. Your mother tells you that you will have to work around the house to pay for the damage and there will be no friends at the house unless she or your father is home. |

## Side B: Long Term Consequences

**Too Much Change**

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| 1. Every time you play with your new game or toy, you think about keeping the $10 that did not belong to you. You also wonder if the cashier at the store had to pay $10 to the store to make up for the money you kept.  | 2. You feel good and strong inside because you were honest and trustworthy. Even though you wanted the new game or toy, you know the money did not belong to you. Your parents admire what you did and your honesty. |

**Taking a Test**

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| --- | --- |
| 1. Your conscience bothers you. You know that you didn’t deserve the A-. You wonder if anyone saw you cheating. It’s a little hard for you to get to sleep that night. On the next test you’re unprepared again.  | 2. You resolve to study harder. On the next test you do better. You like yourself because you know you are honest and you earned your grade. Other people like you because they know you can be trusted.  |

**Best Friends**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. You know that your best friend will be hurt when he or she hears what you said. At lunch your best friend is sitting alone, while you sit with the popular kids. You feel bad seeing your best friend sitting alone and wonder if you have lost your best friend.  | 2. You feel good and strong inside because you were honest and trustworthy. Even though you wanted to be part of the popular kids, you chose your best friend over them. Your best friend admires what you did and other students like you because they know you can be trusted.  |

**Broken Chair**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1. You’re worried that your mother or father will find out that you and your friends broke the chair. You really can’t invite your friends over again because you are afraid that something else might get broken and then your parents will certainly figure out that it was you who was at fault.  | 2. Even though you disobeyed the rule about friends at the house, your parents tell you that they are proud that you told the truth and accepted the consequences. You know that it is easier to repay them for the chair than to worry about getting caught and losing their trust.  |

# Handout #3.

# A Message for Parents

## The Eighth Commandment

The eighth commandment states: “Do not bear false witness against your neighbor.” As with all the commandments, the eighth commandment has broader applications than the narrow meaning of the words. That is, it means much more than simply not speaking falsely about others. The commandment points out that only a life lived with honesty and integrity reflects our dignity as persons created by God and in his image. In short, it obliges us to live the truth in love.

The eighth commandment forbids lying, or purposely not telling the truth. Lying can take many forms. If a person lies in court when under oath, he or she commits perjury, or false witness. Gossip is talking about another person behind his or her back. Gossip may or may not be a lie, but all gossip can harm the good reputation of another person.

All lies are unjust and unloving. All require reparation, or repair. Reparation may be as simple as an apology, or it may take more work, such as trying to help a person get back the reputation you have hurt.

Living in the spirit of the eighth commandment is more than not lying. You must choose to be truthful in words and actions. When you are truthful, you are living as a follower of Jesus, who always told the truth.

People trusted what Jesus did and said. When you are truthful, people trust you. When you promise to tell the truth, you have a special duty. Let your “yes” mean “yes” and your “no” mean “no.” Telling the truth will set you free to follow Jesus and to live in love (*Call to Faith*, Parish 4, p. 164-65).

. . . the eighth commandment encourages us to develop personal qualities that identify us as persons of truth. Being reliable and trustworthy are two such qualities. Genuineness and honesty are also characteristics of a person of truth.

(From Joseph Stoutzenberger’s book *Morality*, St. Mary’s Press).

## A Person of Truth, Honesty and Integrity

* You can teach your children that a person of integrity tells the truth, for his word is his bond, and her bond is her honor. You teach your children to tell the truth when you tell the truth and are heedful of your own words. When you and your children tell the truth, you will never have to worry about being embarrassed by lies or about being caught in a lie.
* You can teach your children that a person of integrity is honest in every act, every deed, every dealing. You teach them when you show them – in word and in deed – that truth and honesty are to be practiced every moment of every day.
* You can teach your children what it means to be a person of integrity when you show them how dishonest dealings affect them and everyone around them. Once evil words have been spoken they cannot be retrieved. They feed on themselves and fester and become worse and worse the longer they are exposed. They take on lives of their own and leave damage and destruction in their path.
* You can teach your children what it means to be a person of integrity when you explain to them that slander and gossip, rumor, innuendo, cyber bullying, and character assassination are not victimless crimes. Words do not just dissipate into thin air. They come home to roost, to affront, and harass.
* You can teach your children what it means to be a person of integrity when you send the consistent message each day that there are no degrees of honesty. Either you are honest or you are not.
(From *Golden Rules* by Wayne Dosick)

## Honesty Under Pressure Award

Try this activity at home. This is a motivational way to get children to evaluate their honesty every week. On Sundays (or whatever day you most often get your whole family together for a meal) ask, “Who had a situation this past week where it was a challenge to be honest?” Have an “award” on hand to give the person who remembers the best example of being honest. A piece of construction paper or colored card with a neatly printed H.U.P. (Honesty Under Pressure) will do nicely as the award. Let the children (or adult) who wins put it a special spot in the house (refrigerator, bedroom door) during the week until it is awarded again the next week. After a couple of weeks of getting used to this activity, you will find the children are willing to think hard about their behavior of the past week in hopes of winning the award. And it is this kind of thinking and recognition that strongly reinforces honesty.

(*Teaching Your Children Values* by Linda and Richard Eyre)

# Handout #4

# Saints of Integrity

If your saint was here today, what would he or she tell us about living with honesty, truth, and integrity in today’s world?

Saint \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Saint \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# A Message for TodayHandout #5.

Saint \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Saint \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# A Heart of Honesty, Truth, and Integrity

What are the ways we can practice being reliable, trustworthy, genuine, and honest in our daily lives at home, school, and work?



# Handout #6

# An Ethics Quiz

Several years ago the Josephson Institute surveyed high school students across the country and issued a “Report Card on the Ethics of American Youth.” Please indicate whether you think the item below is True or False based on the findings from the research study.

T F 1. Almost 100% said “It’s important for me to be a person with good character.”

T F 2. Almost 100% said they believe that “honesty and trust are essential in personal relationships.”

T F 3. Almost 100% said “It’s important to me that people trust me.”

T F 4. Almost 85% said “It’s not worth it to lie or cheat because it hurts your character.”

T F 5. Almost 75% said, “When it comes to doing what is right, I am better than most people I know.”

T F 6. Over 90% say they are “satisfied with my own ethics and character.”

T F 7. Over 50% admit they lied to a parent two or more times within the past 12 months about something significant.

T F 8. Over 60% admit they lied to a teacher within the past 12 months about something significant.

T F 9. 60% said they cheated during a test at school within the past 12 months.

T F 10. Almost 20% said they stole something from a friend within the past 12 months.

T F 11. Almost 30% stole something from a storewithin the past 12 months.

T F 12. Over 40% believe that “A person has to lie or cheat sometimes in order to succeed.”

# Handout #7.

# Reflections on The Eighth Commandment

The eighth commandment states: “Do not bear false witness against your neighbor.” As with all the commandments, the eighth has broader applications than the narrow meaning of the words. That is, it means much more than simply not speaking falsely about others. The commandment points out that only a life lived with honesty and integrity reflects our dignity as persons created by God and in his image. In short, it obliges us to live the truth in love.

Truthfulness is the virtue by which we are true in what we do and truthful in what we say. We are truthful when we choose not to be hypocrites, liars, double-dealers, or frauds. By acting truthfully Jesus and the martyrs paid with their lives. Today our truthfulness can occasionally exact a heavy price from us, and yet we suffer an even worse fate if we don’t align ourselves with truth. Living a lie kills the spirit. Even laziness in the pursuit of truth wounds the soul.

By our very nature, we are inclined toward the truth. Our dignity as human beings requires us to seek the truth and, once we know it, to act in accordance with it. Even though people lie, it’s important to realize that truth telling is behavior proper to the human condition.

The eighth commandment identifies several behaviors that damage our character and integrity.

* Lying—deliberately saying false things by which we intend to deceive others.
* Slander—telling lies defaming someone’s character; false words or even attitudes that maliciously injure others.
* Revenge—words or actions that return injury to another whom we perceive as having harmed ourselves.
* Failing to live up to promises—behavior that shows that we are not worthy of another’s trust.
* Detraction—revealing personal, derogatory information without sufficient reason; injuring someone’s good name; dishonoring or making fun of another person.
* Rash judgment—judging another person unkindly; presuming the worst about someone without adequate information.
* Gossip—participating in the spread of injurious information about someone; passing on true or false negative information for no beneficial reason.

These behaviors are the opposite of the virtue of truth, by which a person shows that he or she is true and honest in words and actions. The virtue of truth helps people avoid being deceitful, hypocritical (saying one thing and doing another), or disguising their true intentions.

. . . the eighth commandment encourages us to develop personal qualities that identify us as persons of truth. Being reliable and trustworthy are two such qualities. Genuineness and honesty are also characteristics of a person of truth.

“The eighth commandment calls for the pursuit of truth. People in our world and even in our communities are hurting in ways that we are barely aware of. Respect for truth means bringing to light ways that people are hurting in our society and seeking ways to help the people of the world who are suffering from discrimination. Certain perspectives on people are deeply entrenched in the group consciousness of our society. Sometimes we overlook the truth because we don’t look behind stereotypes.

“On the deepest level, we’re all children of the same God. He has created us in his image and likeness and looks upon each of us as a person of dignity. We are called to respect this dignity by considering everyone as ‘another self.’

Discrimination exists when people suffer disadvantages simply because they are members of a particular group—for example, because they belong to a certain socioeconomic class, or to a particular race, gender or age. When it exists on a societal level, discrimination against members of these groups is called classism, racism, sexism, and ageism.

(From Joseph Stoutzenberger’s book *Morality*, St. Mary’s Press).

# Handout #8.

# Becoming a Person of Integrity

If we can choose to lie and cheat, then we can also choose to be honest. Think of it this way: every time you make a decision to be honest when you could have been dishonest, the *world* becomes a little bit more honest. Imagine what could happen if every person made that decision!

If you’ve fallen into the bad habit of not being truthful, that doesn’t mean you have to continue to lie and cheat. Being truthful is a *decision*; it’s recognizing, with God’s help and the strength that comes through prayer, that the long-term rewards and the rich friendships that come with being a person of integrity are much more valuable than anything you seem to gain in the short term from being dishonest.

Just like acts of dishonesty, honest acts build on one another; the more honest you are, the easier it is to be honest, and the more you’ll find yourself surrounded by honest people.

So the next time you feel pressured or tempted to lie or cheat, stop and think for a minute. Try to figure out why you want to be dishonest. Is it out of fear? Anger? A desire to have something that doesn’t belong to you? (That’s called “coveting” in the Bible.)

Next, think about all that will happen, both in the long and the short term, if you choose the honest response. It won’t take long for you to see that the reason you are an honest person is not because you’re a “nerd,” but because you’ve made the choice for a life of meaning and meaningful relationships.

(*What’s Wrong with Lying & Cheating?* by James Philipps)

## Remember. . .

* Tell the truth and nothing but the truth.
* Be sincere.
* Be forthright and candid.
* Stand up for your beliefs.
* Follow your conscience.
* Be honorable and upright.
* Live by your principles no matter what others say.
* Have the courage to do what is right even when it is hard or costly.
* Build and guard your reputation.
* Keep your promises.
* Honor your word and commitments.
* Be dependable.

# Prayer Service: Light for the World

## Listen

“You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled underfoot.

“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:13-16).

## Respond

Let us now pray with the wisdom from the Book of Proverbs 10:18-20; 12:17-20

Lying lips conceal hatred, and whoever utters slander is a fool.

Response: May we live with honesty and integrity.

When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but the prudent are restrained in speech.

Response: May we live with honesty and integrity.

The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the mind of the wicked is of little worth.

Response: May we live with honesty and integrity.

Whoever speaks the truth gives honest evidence, but a false witness speaks deceitfully.

Response: May we live with honesty and integrity.

Rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise lasts only a moment.

Response: May we live with honesty and integrity.

Deceit is in the mind of those who plan evil, but those who counsel peace have joy.

Response: May we live with honesty and integrity.

No harm happens to the righteous, but the wicked are filled with trouble.

Response: May we live with honesty and integrity.

Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight.

Response: May we live with honesty and integrity.

## Go Forth

May the words of my mouth and the work of my hands always be acceptable to you, Oh God,

so that all that I say, and all that I do, will bring honor to my life, and glory to your great and holy name. Amen.