

# Honesty and Integrity

## (The Eighth Commandment)

### Session Focus

This session on living the moral life explores the Eighth Commandment: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” and its implications for our lives as Catholics. The Eighth Commandment calls us to be honest and genuine with all people in every act, deed, and dealing. Being honest means being sincere, open, trustworthy, and truthful. It means telling the truth no matter how difficult it may be to do so. This session explores the many dimensions of living the Eighth Commandment—in our life, in our family, in our relationships with others, and in our dealings at work or school and with the institutions of society.

### Learning Objectives

This session on Honesty and Integrity guides learners of all ages to...

- Comprehend the foundational Catholic teaching on the Eighth Commandment and its implications for applying this moral teaching to daily life today
- Value and appreciate the significance of Catholic teaching on honesty and integrity in all aspects of life: personal, familial, and social
- Live the Eighth Commandment by becoming people of honesty and integrity in every act, deed, and dealing

### Session Overview

**Part 1. (10 minutes)    Gathering & Opening Prayer Service**

**Part 2. (30 minutes)    All Ages Learning: Honesty and Ethics in America**

**Part 3. (90 minutes)    In Depth Learning Experience: Living the Eighth Commandment**

- Option 1. Whole Group Format: All participants remain in the same room.
- Option 2. Age Groups Format : Participants go to separate rooms for parallel learning: families with children, adolescents, adults.

**Part 4. (10 minutes)    Sharing Learning Experiences**

**Part 5. (10 minutes)    Closing Prayer Service**

# Design Options for In-Depth Learning

## Option 1. Whole Group Format

This format guides the entire assembly through each of the learning experiences. You might choose this format if you have:

- a large physical space with good acoustics/sound system and furniture to comfortably accommodate the learners
- a competent large group facilitator/master of ceremonies able to provide clear directions and to manage the dynamics and energy of a large group
- a group of leaders who feel comfortable moving through the assembly offering assistance, or a large enough team of table leaders to have one leader work with each table group
- a learning topic that lends itself to everyone learning the same thing at the same time, but in different ways, in the same space

### **Facilitation Tips for this Format:**

Guide small groups through each of the activities at the same time.

- Organize people into table groups based on age groupings: families with children (grades 1-5), middle school adolescents, high school adolescents, young adults, and adults.
- The lead facilitator guides the entire group through each of the learning experiences. All presentations and activity instructions are given to the whole group.
- The age-appropriate learning activities within each learning experience are conducted in table groups.
- Where needed, small group leaders facilitate the work of the table groups.

## Option 2. Age Group Format

This format provides for three separate parallel learning programs. Though age groups are separated, each one is focusing on the same topic. You might choose this format if you have:

- an adequate number of meeting spaces for the various groups to gather
- an adequate number of competent facilitators to work with each group
- a topic that is best explored through age-specific learning

### **Facilitation Tips for This Format**

- Organize participants into three or more parallel learning groups: families with children (grades 1-5), adolescents (grades 6-12), and adults.
- If there are a large number of adolescents, divide them into two groups: middle school and high school.

Organize separate groups for young adults, adults, and older adults. Or you can give the adults their own choice for forming small groups.

- Direct the adolescents and adults into small groups. Give them all the handouts and learning materials needed for the learning experiences
- Guide the families with children into table groups of two or more families. Give each table all the handouts and learning materials necessary for the learning experiences.

- A facilitator must guide all the of the families through each learning experience, while small group leaders move from table to table assisting.

## Materials Needed

### **Gathering and Prayer**

- Name tags
- Community building activities
- Opening Prayer Service
- Bible

### **All Ages Opening Learning Experience**

- Handout #1
- Newsprint, easels, marking pens, masking tape, LCD Projector and Computer

### **In-Depth Learning Experience**

- For family learning plan: Handouts #2-#5, newsprint, markers, crayons, pens/pencils, writing paper
- For the adolescent learning plan: Handouts #6-#9, newsprint, markers, masking tape, file cards for each person
- For the adult learning plan: newsprint, markers, masking tape, file cards for each person

### **Closing**

- Closing Prayer Service

# Session Plan

## Part 1. Gathering and Opening Prayer (10 minutes)

### Preparation

Prepare a newsprint sheet or handout that lists the order of the activities or create a PowerPoint presentation that guides people through the session.

### Registration and Hospitality

- Welcome people and ask them to sign in for the program.
- Provide name tags or invite people to make their own.
- Distribute the handouts participants will need for the session. (You can also distribute handouts for the In-Depth Learning program at the beginning of the activity.)
- Invite people to share a meal; depending on time of day, the program may end with a meal instead.

Welcome the participants to the program and introduce the theme of the session, using the words below or your own words.

This session on moral living explores the Eighth Commandment: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” and its implications for our lives as Catholics. The Eighth Commandment calls us to be honest and genuine with all people in every word, deed, and dealing. Being honest means being sincere, open, trustworthy, and truthful. It means telling the truth no matter how difficult it may be. This session explores the many dimensions of living the Eighth Commandment—in our life, in our family, in our relationships with others, and in our dealings at work or school and with the institutions of society.

## 1. Group Formation

Organize all participants into intergenerational small groups of approximately eight people for the All Ages Learning Experience. Ask all members of the same family to sit together in these intergenerational groups. Each group should have as many of the following categories as possible: family (parents, children, teens), young adults, adults without children, and older adults. If members of the same family are intergenerational—children, teens, parents, and grandparents—keep them together in one group.

For the In Depth Learning Experience (Part 3), organize the participants into three types of table groups or break-out sessions: family clusters of two or more families, groups of adolescents, and groups of adults.

## 2. Opening Prayer Service: Speaking the Truth

### Preparation

Surround the meeting room with the Ten Commandments banners and life-affirming posters and photos.

Set up a prayer table with a white tablecloth, Bible, ten candles, and two “tablets” representing the Ten Commandments. Light the candles before the prayer service.

### **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.  
(Joseph Stoutzenberger)

### **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.

## Part 2. All Ages Learning Experience: Honesty and Ethics in America (25 minutes)

The focus of the All Ages Learning Experience is to help the participants surface their knowledge and experience of saints and to expose them to a variety of saints in a creative format.

The activity is modeled on the game show *Family Feud*. If you have not watched *Family Feud* or forgotten how the game is played, check out your local TV listings for the show or go to the TV Guide web site for listings. It is a regular feature on one of your cable channels. (For more information about adapting the game to your setting, see *Ready-to-Go Game Shows...that teach serious stuff* by Michael Theisen.)

### Preparation

Review the game rules below for details about preparation and materials. To play the game you will need the following players:

- One host who: is familiar with *Family Feud*, can keep the game moving, and can add some humor and fun to the game.
- Two teams of mixed ages with four contestants each for the first and second rounds.
- Two teams of mixed ages with four contestants each for the third and fourth rounds.
- One person who keeps score and posts the correct answers on the game board or wall.

### Materials Needed

- Handout #1

Set up the game show area with two stations of each team and a podium for the host. Arrange the two tables opposite each other but facing the audience. Place the host's podium in the middle of the set.

Develop a game board or wall large enough to post each survey finding, or use a multimedia projector.

Post a large sheet of newsprint on the wall or on an easel to keep the score for each team. Write or print out the name of each survey item on one sheet of paper, large enough so that everyone can read it (e.g., an 11x17 sheet of paper). Items should be written exactly as they appear on Handout #1.

Give the game host a copy of the survey results on Handout #1.

Each correct answer receives an inverted score from 1 through 10, as follows.

Survey Answer Rank:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Points	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

The host welcomes everyone to the show, gets the first two teams settled in their positions, and introduces the players on each team.

The host invites one person from each team forward to compete over a toss-up question (see Handout #1). The host reads the survey question for Round 1. The first of the two players to raise his or her arm and yell "BEEP" answers with a word or phrase that he or she thinks is one of the survey responses. (Have the two players practice raising their hand and saying "BEEP" loudly!)

If the player's answer matches one of the responses in the list given for that question, the scorekeeper reveals the item and the number of its priority ranking. If it is not the top answer, the opposing player has the opportunity to guess a higher-ranked response.

The team of the player that guesses the highest-ranked response has the option to pass or play. If the team passes, the members of the opposing team try to guess all the correct responses to the toss-up question. If the team plays, its members try to guess the responses themselves.

The host then invites another person on the playing team to guess another response. No one is allowed to assist the person who is guessing. If someone does try to assist, the team receives a strike (an X marked on the answer board). If the response the second person gives is on the list, the scorekeeper posts it in the correct space on the answer board. If the response is not one of the listed survey responses, the scorekeeper records a strike on the answer board. Play then goes to a third person on the team.

The guessing process is repeated until the team gets three strikes or correctly guesses all ten responses. If the team guesses all ten responses, it receives the maximum total of points, and the round is over.

If the playing team gets three strikes before guessing all the responses, the opposing team has the option of stealing the points earned so far. The opposing team now gets their turn to answer the remaining items. The rules are the same as for the first team. If they complete all nine items before getting three strikes, they win all the points. If they strike out, the other team gets one more guess at another correct response. Team members from the first team may confer with one another to determine the best guess. If their answer is on the list, they receive the points for all the correct answers from both teams' efforts. If their answer is not on the list, both teams keep the points they have earned.

If all nine items have not been revealed, the host invites the audience to guess the remaining correct answers. After a few minutes of audience responses, the host reveals or reviews all nine items in order.

Proceed to Round 2 in similar fashion. Each team sends a new person forward to play the toss-up question and the second round proceeds just like the first.

Once the second round has been completed, a new set of two teams comes forward to play Round 3 and Round 4. The host introduces the players on each team. Each team sends a new person forward to play the toss-up question and the third round proceeds just like the first. After completing Round 3, move on to the Round 4, the final round.

(The directions are adapted from *Ready-to-Go Game Shows...that teach serious stuff* by Michael Theisen, Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press 2002.)

### **Round One**

After reviewing the game, start by having the game show host share the following with the participants.

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 scored above 50% with "very high" or "high" ratings. The #1 group, 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? (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? (Answers are listed below. #1 received the lowest rating.)

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.” There are many ways people violate the Eighth Commandment. What are the top ten ways people violate the Eighth Commandment?

1. Lying to protect oneself
2. Twisting the truth so you won’t get in trouble
3. Exaggerating something to make yourself 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 your own benefit (from the Internet or other sources)

### Round Four

There are many reasons people give for violating the Eighth Commandment 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 (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).

## Part 3. In Depth Learning Experience: Living the Eighth Commandment Today (75-80 minutes)

### Families with Children Learning Experience: Being Honest

#### Preparation

Prepare Handout #2 by copying Side A on one side of the paper and Side B on the other side of the paper. This handout describes four “situations,” and the short-term and long-term consequences of both an honest and a dishonest response to the “situation.” Write additional “situations” that reflect the experiences in your setting. When writing the situations, let the short-term consequence of a dishonest act be good, the long-term consequence bad. Develop “situations” on honesty with parents, with siblings, with friends, with institutions, and so on. Copy it so that on one side of each of the paper is Side A describing two alternative courses of action—one honest and one dishonest—along with the short-term consequences of each action and Side B with the long-term consequences revealed.

Prepare saints profiles for Activity 3. Lives of Integrity—The Saints by developing one-page descriptions of saints for families to read and discuss. Be sure to select saints whose profiles describe how they stood for honesty, truthfulness, and integrity. Be sure to include people who were recently made saints. Here is an example a saint’s profile. It is the story of Mother Théodore Guérin, who lived and worked in rural Indiana in the mid-1800’s and became a saint in 2006. In a *New York Times* article on November 1, 2006, “Saints That Weren’t,” James Martin wrote this story about Mother Guerin.

Mother Guérin founded the Sisters of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods and started several schools and a college in the region.

You would think that this would have won her favor from the local bishop. You would be wrong.

At the time, the idea of an independent woman deciding where and when to open schools offended Célestine de la Hailandière, the Catholic bishop of Vincennes, Ind. In 1844, when Mother Guérin was away from her convent raising money, the bishop ordered her congregation to elect a new superior, in a bid to eject her from the very order of nuns that she had founded.

The independent-minded sisters simply re-elected Mother Guérin. Infuriated, Bishop Hailandière told the future saint that she was forbidden to set foot in her own convent, since he, the bishop, considered himself its sole proprietor.

Three years later, Bishop Hailandière demanded that Mother Guérin resign. When she refused, the bishop told her congregation that she was no longer superior, that she was ordered to leave Indiana, and that she was forbidden from communicating with her sisters. Her sisters replied that they were not willing to obey a dictator. The situation worsened until, just a few weeks later, Bishop Hailandière was suddenly replaced by the Vatican. From then on, the Sisters of Providence flourished. Today its 465 members work in 10 states, the District of Columbia, China and Taiwan.

**Consult the separate handout: Saints Profiles for examples of saints. Consult other sources for saints profiles.**

Write the rules for the Honesty/Dishonesty game on newsprint or project them on a PowerPoint slide.

### **Materials Needed**

- Handouts #2-5 (Note: Handout #3 is given to the parents for their personal information.)
- Writing paper, pens/pencils, crayons and marking pens for each family

## **1. Honesty or Dishonesty**

Pass out Handout #2. In your own words or using the words below, explain the following:

On Side A you will read about a “situation” with two possible choices. For each “situation,” read (or have the children read) Side A only, and then allow the children to decide which choice they would make. Ask the children to share the reasons why they would choose that course of action and why they would not choose the other.

On Side B you will see the potential consequences of each choice. Read (or have the children read) Side B and discuss the long-term consequences of each choice.

Have the children and/or parents identify other situations that present choices about being honest or dishonest or situations when they are tempted to be dishonest. For example:

- Lying to protect oneself
- Twisting the truth so you won’t get in trouble
- Exaggerating something to make yourself look good
- Lying to protect other people
- Lying to a parent or teacher about something significant
- Cheating at a game
- Plagiarizing (copying or using) someone else’s work for your own benefit (from a person or from a book or the internet)

Conclude by explaining that sometimes the short-term consequence of a dishonest act can make life easier for you, while the short-term consequence of being honest can be hard on you. Then point out that the long-term consequence of a dishonest act is always bad, while the long-term consequences of being honest are positive for you and others.

Ask the families to conclude this activity by discussing the following questions:

- What could a person do if he or she made the dishonest choice and felt bad about it afterward?
- What are some of the ways you can repair the damage to another person when you have not told the truth?

## 2. The Eighth Commandment

Pass out Handout #3. Present a brief understanding of the eighth commandment to the group, using your own words or the text below. Invite parents to follow along by referring to the text in Handout #3.

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

. . . 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.

Point out to parents the tips for teaching truth, honesty, and integrity to children, and the home activity called “Honesty Under Pressure Award” listed at the bottom of Handout #3. Encourage them to try the activity in coming weeks.

## 3. Lives of Integrity—The Saints

Have each family member identify one person whom he or she admires for their truthfulness, honesty, and integrity. This can be a person who is living or dead, from the family, parish, or community, or from national or international news and events.

Ask each person to share the person they selected by stating one or two things about this person that makes him or her someone of truthfulness, honesty, and integrity. Conduct this as a table group discussion among multiple families. Begin with the youngest at the table and then move to the older children and parents. Young children may want to draw a picture of the person they selected.

Next, give every family at least two saints profiles. If there are more than two children in the family, give the family enough for each child. Also provide writing paper for them to record their reflections on the saints.

Ask the children to read their saint profile or have their parents read it to them. After reading the story of the saint, the family should work together to identify several ways that their saint led a life of honesty, truthfulness, and integrity.

After the discussion of each saint, create a message from that saint to all of us today. Using Handout #4, write the message in one of the bubbles. Complete the question:

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

When each family has completed their work, tell them to share the results of Handout #4 with the table group.

## 4. The Heart of the Eighth Commandment

Introduce the final activity by reminding the families that while the eighth commandment tells us what not to do, its message also encourages us to develop personal qualities of integrity, such as being reliable, trustworthy, genuine, and honest.

Ask families to consider specific ways they can practice being reliable, trustworthy, genuine, and honest in your daily lives at home, school, and work. Using Handout #5, ask them to write the ways they intend to develop a heart of honesty, truth, and integrity, i.e. live the eighth commandment, in word and deed.

Ask families to take the completed handout home and display it in a place for all to see.

## Adolescent Learning Experience: Practicing Honesty and Truthfulness

### Materials Needed

- Handouts #6, #7, and #8
- Newsprint, markers, masking tape for each table group
- Instrumental music
- File cards, one per participant

### 1. An Ethics Quiz

Distribute copies of Handout #6 to all of the young people. Ask them to take several minutes to complete the true-false "Ethics Quiz," based on the results of a national survey of high school youth. (All of the answers are true!)

After the group has completed the true-false quiz, ask the young people's responses for each question, tell that the answer is true, and then whether they think the answers would be true or false today.

Discuss the results of the quiz with the group using questions such as,

- If the quiz was given this year, do you think the results would be different? In what ways?
- Were you surprised by the high levels of lying and cheating among high school students? Does this reflect your experience in your school?
- Did you notice the gap between what people said about honesty, truth, and integrity, and how they actually practiced honesty and truth? Why do you think there is a gap?
- Why is it so hard to be an honest and ethical person today?

## 2. A World without Truth, Honesty, and Integrity

In your own words, or using the words below, communicate the following:

The Eighth Commandment calls us to be honest and genuine with all people in every word, deed, and dealing. Being honest is being sincere, open, trustworthy, and truthful; telling the truth no matter what, even when it is very difficult.

**But** what would the world be like without truth, honesty, and integrity? Describe a world in which no one can trust anyone else, honesty is not a value, and people and institutions say and do whatever serves their own self-interests.

What would it mean if our relationships lacked truth, honesty, and integrity? Think of the implications for the following:

- relationships with family
- relationships with friends
- relationships at school: classmates, teachers, principal
- relationships in our society, such as medical care, buying or selling goods and services, sports, news reporting, government officials
- relationships in our world: relationships between nations

On a large newsprint sheet draw four concentric circles. Engage the table group in identifying characteristics or implications of what a world without truth, honesty, and trust would be like. Move outward from the inner circle using the questions below. Write key words or phrases in each circle.

Inner Circle: What would it be like if family relationships lacked truth, honesty, and trust? What would it be like if your relationships with your friends lacked truth, honesty, and trust?

2<sup>nd</sup> Circle: What would it be like if your relationships with teachers lacked truth, honesty, and trust?

3<sup>rd</sup> Circle: What would it be like if you could not count on truth and honesty in your dealings with our society, e.g., a doctor or nurse, with the referees at an athletic competition, with the salespeople at a store, with news reporters, with government officials?

4<sup>th</sup> Circle: What would it be like if nations could not be truthful and trusting of other nations?

Review the results and involve the young people in a discussion using the following questions:

- How does this portrait of our world resemble the world as we know it?
- What are the consequences for you as a result of the lack of truth, honesty, and trust in our world today?
- Why do you think that honesty is such an underemphasized value?
- What do you think Jesus would say about the lack of trust and honesty in our world today?

### 3. Practicing Honesty and Truthfulness

In your own words, or using the words below, review the content of the Eighth Commandment with the group by using the following reflections (from Joseph Stoutzenberger's book *Morality*, St. Mary's Press).. Invite participants to follow along by viewing Handout #8.

"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.

Now invite the young people to envision a world where people actually practiced the eighth commandment—truth, honesty, and trust. Discuss the following question and make a list of these qualities on a sheet of newsprint for all to see.

- What qualities and behaviors do we need to create a world of truth, honesty, and trust—in our relationships, in our country, and in our world?

#### 4. Apply the Eighth Commandment to Daily Life

Introduce this final activity by reminding the teens that the eighth commandment tells us what not to do, but also encourages us to develop personal qualities of integrity, such as being reliable, trustworthy, genuine, and honest.

To help the adolescents apply the eighth commandment to daily life, the group will develop real life scripts of everyday situations in which there is a choice between honesty and dishonesty. Begin by asking each table group to develop a list of potential decision-situations that they face in daily life by posing the following question:

- What are some of the situations you face in your life where you need to make a choice to be honest and truthful or to be dishonest and perhaps protect yourself?

Select several decision-situations and assign them to groups of three or four teens. It will be their job to develop a script for each situation which presents two outcomes: one choosing dishonesty, the other choosing truth and honesty. They should develop these as drama or role plays that can be acted out. Give the group the following instructions:

1. Ask the team to clearly define the situation.
2. Describe the choice for honesty, truth, and integrity. What are the consequences—short-term and long-term?
3. Describe the choice for dishonesty. What are the consequences—short-term and long-term?
4. Have the teens assume the roles they will play.
5. Have the characters act out the situation.
6. Stop the action before the role-play is exhausted.
7. Discuss and evaluate how it went, naming central turning points and outcomes in the role-play.

Ask the young people to share the role play scripts with their table group or with the whole group, and/or invite several groups of young people to act out their role play for the whole group. (Note: You can also ask some groups to act out their decision-situation for the whole assembly in Part 4. Sharing Learning Experiences at the end of the intergenerational session.)

Conduct table discussions using the following information.

- Discuss the consequences of dishonesty. Make the point that the choice for dishonesty often seems to solve a short-term problem or create a short-term benefit, but can easily lead to long-term consequences, such as less confidence in yourself over the long run, a reputation as a dishonest person, or being seen as untrustworthy. Review the stories to see how this is true.
- Discuss the consequences of honesty and truth.
- Why is it difficult to be a person of honesty, truth, and integrity? What tempts us to be dishonest? What role does peer pressure and society's pressure have on you?

Review the social implications of the Eighth Commandment with the group by using the following reflections (from Joseph Stoutzenberger's book *Morality*, St. Mary's Press). These are also contained on Handout #7.

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 that 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.

Discrimination is perpetuated by *stereotypes* and *prejudice*. If you look up these words in the dictionary you will find these definitions.

A *stereotype* is an oversimplified conception – an oversimplified standardized image or idea held one by one person or group of another.

*Prejudice* is:

- “an opinion formed beforehand – a preformed opinion, usually an unfavorable one, based on insufficient knowledge, irrational feelings, or inaccurate stereotypes;
- “the holding of ill-formed opinions – the holding of opinions that are formed beforehand on the basis of insufficient knowledge;
- “irrational dislike of somebody – an unfounded hatred, fear, or mistrust of a person or group, especially one of a particular religion, ethnicity, nationality, or social status”

Discrimination is another form of dishonesty and a violation of the eighth commandment. We are called to be truthful in all our relationships and in our perceptions of other people.

Ask the group to share their own experiences of discrimination.

- Can you identify a situation in which you experienced discrimination (e.g., at school, athletic events, social events, church)?
- Tell us how you felt, why you thought it was wrong, and how you would have liked to be treated.

Move from the personal experience to the societal level. Engage the young people in analyzing how society discriminates against people. On a sheet of newsprint ask the table groups to identify people or groups who have been discriminated against and the consequences of that discrimination.

Have each table group draw several columns on their newsprint as follows:

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
People discriminated against	Stereotyped image of this group of people	Consequences of discrimination	The truth about this group of people

Then give the following instructions:

**Column 1.** Think of four or five groups of people in our world who experience, or have experienced in the past, discrimination because of their race or ethnic heritage, their country of origin (e.g., immigrants), their lack of economic wealth (the poor), their gender (women), their physical and/or mental ability (people with disabilities), their age (elderly), or their medical condition/illness (e.g., HIV/AIDS).

**Column 2.** Identify the stereotypes about this group of people.

**Column 3.** Think of the consequences of discrimination for this group of people.

**Column 4.** Uncover the truth about this group of people—their real situation, their real lives, their real needs.

Discuss at table groups what you have discovered through this activity about the dishonesty and lack of truthfulness that results from prejudice and stereotypes, and what leads to discrimination. Discuss how teens can confront prejudice and discrimination. Here are several examples:

- Be willing to confront prejudice in ourselves when it comes up in our school or workplace.
- Evaluate TV programs and news coverage of events.
- Stand with victims of prejudice.
- Never use derogatory words about other people.

Conclude the session by reviewing Handout #8: Becoming a Person of Integrity and then give the teens time for personal reflection. Play some instrumental music.

Give each person a file card. Ask the participants to reflect on their learning from the session and make a personal pledge to live the eighth commandment. Tell them to make a pledge to themselves and write their resolutions on the file card. They can make this a regular part of their prayer and reflection each day. Use the following question to focus their reflection time.

- What do I need to do to live the eighth commandment more faithfully and consistently in my life—at home, at school and work, in the community, and as a citizen?

## Adult Learning Experience: Living Honesty in All Aspects of Our Lives

### Preparation

This session plan is designed with small group discussions and activities, and a large group presentation, and a panel presentation. You will need the following leaders for this session:

- A facilitator who guides the participants through the activities and discussions in the session plan and moderates the panel presentations.
- A presenter who provides the reflections on the Eighth Commandment.
- A panel of four or five people (parish staff, parishioners, community leaders) who discuss how they apply the eighth commandment in their work settings. Find panel members who can share from these perspectives: (1) business world, (2) church/religious organization, (3) community organization that works for justice or provides service to those in need, (4) media, and (5) education or government or other community institution. Ask each person to prepare a three-to-five-minute presentation/witness that describes how they seek to apply the eighth commandment in their work setting. Give each panelist a copy of the session and the presentation so they can see the flow and content of the session.

Write these instructions on newsprint or a PowerPoint presentation.

How do you see honesty under attack in our society:

- In the business world. . . ?
- In government (at all levels). . . ?
- In the media. . . ?
- In churches. . . ?
- In education (at all levels). . . ?
- In other institutions in our society. . . ?

### Materials Needed

- Writing paper and pens or pencils for each person
- File card for each person
- Three newsprint sheets and marking pens for each table group
- Masking tape
- Instrumental music

## 1. Honesty Under Attack

In your own words or using the words below, introduce the session by saying the following:

The Eighth Commandment calls us to be honest and genuine with all people in every act, deed, and dealing. Being honest is being sincere, open, trustworthy, and truthful—telling the truth no matter what, even when it is very difficult. This session explores the many dimensions of living the Eighth

Commandment—in our lives, in our families and relationships with other people, and in our dealings at work or school and with the institutions of society.

We all have a sense that honesty is under attack in our society. Examples of bad behavior include:

- Major corporations having to restate their earnings after overstating them to increase their stock value, often to the tune of billions of dollars.
- Corporate corruption at major U.S. companies.
- Athletes alleged to have used performance-enhancing drugs.
- Many Americans believing that they can get away with tax evasion. Tax cheats cost the U.S. treasury as much as \$500 billion a year.
- Millions of Americans routinely engaging in insurance fraud, cable-TV theft, and software piracy.

What’s so amazing about this situation is that so many of these same people see themselves as decent, law-abiding citizens. Americans are cheating more and they are feeling less guilty about it. They think there is more to gain than lose in cheating. Zuckerman writes, “Money, quite simply, has become more important to many people than reputation and personal integrity.”

At table groups ask the adults to identify real examples of honesty under attack and to name consequences of the dishonesty for people, institutions, and the society. Refer them to the newsprint or PowerPoint with the different categories to help them focus their discussion.

How do you see honesty under attack in our society:

- In the business world. . . ?
- In government (at all levels). . . ?
- In the media. . . ?
- In churches. . . ?
- In education (at all levels). . . ?
- In other institutions in our society. . . ?

When participants have listed at least 10 examples, give each group a sheet of newsprint. Have them divide the newsprint into two columns: column one for examples of honesty under attack and column two for consequences of the dishonesty. Invite each group to choose a recorder who will number each example so it corresponds with a consequence.

Examples of Honesty Under Attack

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Consequences of the Dishonesty

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Post the newsprint on the walls and take a few minutes to highlight the similarities among the newsprint sheets, as well as the unique items. Make a point to identify the consequences of dishonesty in our society.

At table groups ask the adults to identify how they personally experience honesty under attack in their daily lives. Ask them:

- What pressures or temptations do you feel to be dishonest, to not tell the truth, to not be genuine?

Ask each person to share at least one example from his or her daily life, and then name the impact (consequences) of the pressure or temptation on them, their family, and even the community, the place they work, and so on.

Once again have the recorder write the responses on a second sheet of newsprint. Have them divide the newsprint into two columns: column one for examples from daily life and column two for consequences. The recorder should number each example so it corresponds with a consequence.

Examples from Daily Life	Consequences
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

When the group has listed at least 10 examples, ask them to reflect on the impact of these examples on their own lives, their families, and our society.

Post the newsprint on the walls and take a few minutes to highlight the similarities among the newsprint sheets, as well as the unique items. Make a point to identify the consequences of dishonesty in our society.

At table groups ask the adults to identify why they think honesty is under attack in our society. Ask them to identify five or six of the major forces in our society that are contributing to a “culture of dishonesty and cheating.”

After several minutes of discussion ask for reports from the groups and make a list on newsprint or a PowerPoint slide.

Conclude this part of the session by asking the groups to discuss the following questions:

- What do you think Jesus would say about the lack of honesty and truthfulness in our world today?

## 2. The Eighth Commandment

In your own words or using the words below (from Joseph Stoutzenberger’s book *Morality*, St. Mary’s Press), review the content of 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 to not 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.

There are several ways people violate the eighth commandment. Among them are:

- 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
- not living 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.

Scandal also violates the eighth commandment. Scandal “points to an affront against truth and integrity by people who are entrusted with a responsibility to uphold these virtues. Scandal refers to (a) wrongdoing by people who hold some kind of trust and (b) misusing that trust in such a way that it harms and disturbs people.

These behaviors are opposite 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 also has important social implications.

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.

Invite the participants to ask questions or offer reflections on the presentation.

### 3. Practicing Honesty and Truthfulness

Introduce the panel. Tell the participants that panelists will give a brief presentation/witness that describes how they seek to apply the eighth commandment in their work setting.

After the final panelist has presented, invite questions and/or reflections from the participants for the panelists. Keep this moving and focused.

Ask table groups review their original analysis of the examples of dishonesty in our society and in daily life (newsprint sheets posted). Direct groups to develop a list of qualities and behaviors people need to live the eighth commandment in their daily lives (family and friends, community, work), and the practices we need to adopt as a society so that honesty and truth are an essential part of our life. Have the groups use the following unfinished sentences to structure their discussion and report. Ask them to list about 10 items for each sentence.

1. Qualities and behaviors to live the eighth commandment in our daily lives. . .  
(with family and friends, at work, in our relationships in the community)
2. Practices we need to adopt as a society. . .  
(business world, government, media, churches, other institutions in our society)

Ask the table group recorder to write the ideas on a sheet of newsprint to record the wisdom of the group.

Tell the groups to review their responses on newsprint and discuss the following questions.

- What will it take for us to create a society where the eighth commandment is the rule for our lives, not the exception?
- What will you need to do to make this happen?

Ask each group to post the newsprint on the walls and take a few minutes to highlight the similarities among the newsprint sheets, as well as the unique items.

Conclude the session with a time for personal reflection. Play some instrumental music during the reflection time. Give each person a file card. Ask the participants to reflect on their learning from the session and make a personal pledge to live the eighth commandment. Tell them to make a pledge to

themselves and write their resolutions on the file card. They can make this a regular part of their prayer and reflection each day. Use the following question to focus their reflection time.

- What do I need to do to live the eighth commandment more faithfully and consistently in my life—at home, at work, in the community, and as a citizen?

## Part 4. Sharing Learning Reflections (15 minutes)

### Materials Needed

- Several index cards for each table group to write their prayer petitions

The whole group sharing experience provides an opportunity for each age group to share something they have learned with the entire group. Ask the participants to rejoin their intergenerational groups from the All Ages Learning Experience.

Present the following information using the words below or your own words:

Think of everything we have done in this session to explore the Church’s teachings on the Eighth Commandment and its application to life today. Please share your reflections on the following questions.

- What is the most important lesson you have learned?
- Why do you think the message of the Eighth Commandment is important for us as Catholics and for our world today?

## Part 5. Closing Prayer Service: Light for the World (5-10 minutes)

### Preparation

- Collect the prayer cards from each table group.
- Select several people to share the prayer petitions at the closing prayer.

### Gather

Sing a song about being people of integrity.

### Listen

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew:

“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.