



# guidelines for living

*a 5 minute message*

November 21, 2017

## TEACHING YOUR KIDS TO BE HONEST

**But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God--having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. 2 Timothy 3:1-5.**

Children lie for the same reasons that adult lie: to avoid punishment, to win respect or to appear better than they are, because they don't trust someone with the truth, or because they feel threatened with power. Without realizing it, many parents teach their children to lie and actually encourage them in the practice at the very time they dislike what they see and punish their child because of it.

Do you want to teach the importance of honesty to your child?

**GUIDELINE #1:** Model honesty yourself. Children who lie often have parents who lie, and very quickly youngsters learn from their example. They overhear mother saying, "No, John isn't at home" when Dad is parked in front of the TV set and doesn't want to be disturbed. They pick up on phony excuses which you make, or hear you lying to the traffic officer who pulled you over, or understand what the high level conference is about at the kitchen table as you sweat over your tax returns.

**GUIDELINE #2:** To teach honesty to your child, be honest with him yourself. Kids are confronted with a problem. If you aren't honest with them, don't expect them to respond with honesty. Example: You are losing your job which means that you can't take the family on vacation, but you sugar coat the whole situation thinking that you are sparing your child the anguish of knowing you are without work. A child picks up on your stress, your insecurity; and the uncertainty of not knowing what is wrong does far more damage than telling the truth and being explicit. Example: Your child's grandmother has been felled by a stroke and is hospitalized. Telling your child that everything is all right when he has seen the pain and the anguish will cause confusion and alarm. Better to establish open communication and take difficulty as an opportunity to point out that we can trust God in difficult situations and make it a spiritual object lesson.



# guidelines for living

*a 5 minute message*

**GUIDELINE #3:** Don't give your child an opportunity to lie; rather, make it easy for him to tell the truth. Example: You have laid down certain geographic boundaries and you expect your children to stay within them, but you know for a fact that your child didn't stay within them. Don't say, "Did you go beyond the corner at the end of the block?" Rather say, "Why did you go into the next block?" It gives your child a reason to explain his behavior rather than to deny what he did. Another thought. When parents are overly restrictive, they set the stage for dishonesty. Far better is open and free communication so your child has the freedom to say, "I don't think that you are being fair in what you are doing!" and that can be done without malice or anger. Open communication evaluates the situation and allows a child to express himself without talking back in a disrespectful manner.

**GUIDELINE #4:** To teach honesty, stress the fact that what others may do is different from what you observe in your family. Very early in life children begin to understand what truth is. Child psychologists say that by age four most children can sift fantasy from truth. When they have playmates who make it a practice to lie, you must teach your children that honesty is a fundamental matter of trust and love in your family, and help them to understand that when trust is lost, it effects your relationship. If the behavior of other kids begins to rub off, put those kids off limits. Learning that you still love and accept a child when he has gone beyond the limits of acceptable behavior helps your child to be honest with you, regardless of the consequences.

Honesty is the best policy--it's the only way to build relationships that endure.

Resource reading: 2 Timothy 3:1-9