



## Introduction

Many schools follow a programme of key values throughout the school year. These values can be an important framework for helping to define and validate the work of the school 'beyond the curriculum'. Each value can be used as the theme for collective worship, the focus for classroom reflection and the subject matter for main hall or quiet corner displays.

The Bible has so much to offer in this area of positive personal, relational and community values and its timeless wisdom can help all schools pass on to the next generation the qualities of life that are most valuable and which, as Christians, we believe are not only God-given but also can be God-energised in our lives.

## Preparation

What follows is a series of ideas linked to the value of '**Honesty**'.

It includes: key themes to explore, a key Bible verse to use, key concepts to unpack, ideas for displays and reflective corners, as well as Bible story links with further connections to material on the Barnabas websites.

## Development

### 1. Key themes to explore

Being honest with yourself - facing up to a new year; new year's resolutions; turning over a new 'honesty leaf'; being true to yourself; saying 'no' to lying and cheating; owning up to mistakes.

Being honest with friends and family - honesty in friendships and at home; in the class and in the school community; being fair and open with each other; agreeing always to tell the truth.

Being honest with outsiders - becoming a trustworthy person; sticking to the truth; being straightforward in speech; standing by your principles.

Working for a more honest world - who can we believe?; beware exaggeration; 'legal, decent and honest' advertising; plain speaking and being open about the facts; the danger of misusing statistics to mislead people.

### 2. Key Bible verses

The ninth commandment: 'Do not tell lies about others' (Exodus 20:16, CEV).

A verse to discuss from Proverbs 16:8: 'It is better to be honest and poor than dishonest and rich.'

### 3. Key concepts to unpack

It takes courage to be honest.

It's much easier to exaggerate, pretend and put on a false front in order to be liked and respected.

However, if we build our lives on a lie, the truth often comes out in the end and then the fall-out can be terrible.

People respect those whom they can trust, those who are honest.

Honesty suggests that nothing is being hidden, which means what you see is what you get.

An honest friend will tell the truth and this builds up the friendship.

Children are introduced to honesty when:

- they have to own up to something they have done or said but which they were keeping from others
- they put some money in an 'honesty box'
- they hear the phrase 'honesty is the best policy'
- they come across straight, honest talking from others about their behaviour and character
- they come across the concept of cheating for the first time, for example someone in class who tries to obtain better marks or special favour by pretending they have or haven't done something

#### 4. **Display and reflective corner ideas:**

Pictures of the 'legal, decent and honest' checklist for adverts; a pair of scales; WordArt (produced in Microsoft Word) of other synonyms for honesty, such as truth, lack of bias, plain speaking, refusal to exaggerate, and so on.

A recurring motif could be Post-it 'mouths', which might 'speak' the truth or lie, with speech bubbles coming out of them. Ask: 'How honest are your words? Have you told a lie?'

Another motif that could be used to decorate the display is 'honesty seeds' - 'honesty' can spread like the seeds inside these petals.

A Bible verse to include could be: 'If you can control your tongue, you are grown-up' (James 3:2, paraphrased). Some other images from around this Bible passage include a rudder and a horse's bit, used as similes of the tongue - small things that can affect the course of something much bigger. Likewise honesty in speech can have a big influence.

Include a copy of the storybook about 'crying wolf'; also a copy of the rhyme 'liar, liar... pants on fire'.

Use the headline 'fact or fiction?'; a copy of the oath taken in court ('I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth'); pictures of pure gold or refined silver as symbols of pure



honesty. Make up a pretend family tree of 'lies', suggesting that one lie will produce many more.

You could also include a copy of Hilaire Belloc's poem about Matilda who lied.

*Key questions to have on the display:*

Why do I sometimes tell a lie? Why do I sometimes exaggerate the truth? Am I always honest with myself? Do I make an honest friend? Who do I trust always to be honest with me?

### 5. Bible story links

- Jacob lies to his father in order to gain the blessing of the firstborn - see Genesis 27:1-45.
- Elisha's servant Gehazi lies to gain money for himself - see 2 Kings 5:15-27.
- Ananias and Sapphira aren't honest about their giving to the church funds - see Acts 5:1-4.
- Joseph's brothers lie about his death - see Genesis 37:17-33 (the relevant song about this from the musical could be used to tell this story).
- Jesus teaches his followers to be honest in their speech and to keep their promises - see Matthew 5:33-37.
- Jesus warns people that dishonesty will always be found out - see Luke 12: 1-3.
- The story of Zacchaeus - see Luke 19:1-10.
- The story of Naboth's vineyard - see 1 Kings 21.