

Honesty



Learning & Growing
STEPS
Learning & Growing



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Oh, what a tangled web you weave, when first
you practice to deceive.—Shakespeare

By Amber Darley and Agnes Lemaire

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The Trampoline

My family and I lived by the Congo River. Ours was a small fishing village, not nearly as populated or as advanced as the cities, but we were happy and we had each other. I had many friends who lived in the village, and I always loved to share stories with them and play games together. We had a lot in common, because all of our families made our livelihood by fishing.

We lived off the land, growing our crops, but we also traded the fish that we caught with the nearby villages, instead of using money. We'd trade our fish for animal skins, vegetables, grains, fruits, seeds, berries, and nuts. Some families grew food, other families herded cattle and traded meat and skins. We lived a very simple life, but usually had what we needed.

One day a group of tourists came to our town, and my father decided to take them on a tour of the river, showing them the wildlife, and even showing them how we fished with our nets and spears. My father found a certain joy in teaching and helping others. My father was very kind-hearted.

This soon became a regular tradition, and news slowly spread of our beautiful village by the river, the abundance of fish, the beautiful landscape and interesting wildlife. Tourists began coming to our village from time to time, and often my father or one of the other men would take them around to see the sights. We'd allow them to fish if they wanted to, and shared what food and goods we had with them.

In appreciation for our hospitality, they would tell us stories about their countries, what life was like, the different trades they were involved with, as well as the food and culture of their lands. My friends and I learned a lot from these visitors who came from time to time.

I'll never forget that day when my friends and I took one of my father's biggest and best fishing nets into the forest. We tied each of the corners to a tree and began jumping on the net. One of the tourists had told us about a thing called a trampoline, and likened it to a net that you could jump on. Being extremely curious, we decided to try it. So we took a net and crept out of the village with it while my father was away on a short trip. We were sure that nobody would find out about our naughty behavior.

My father had always told us to be careful with the nets, because a good strong net was needed in order to catch enough fish. It took time to make nets, and my father would have never approved of us playing with them. He would not have been happy to see us tie it to some trees and jump on it like a toy.

Then it happened. "Rip! Rip! Rip!" went the net. Slowly it started, and the hole got bigger and bigger. We quickly stopped jumping on the net, lest it rip any further. We all jumped to the ground and began untying the net. I told my friends that they could go home, that I would take care of the damage. I didn't want to get them in trouble for something that was my idea.

What am I going to do? I thought to myself. How am I ever going to tell father what happened? Maybe I shouldn't tell him. Perhaps I can bury it in the ground somewhere, and then he will never know what happened to it. He will think someone stole it. Then he won't be upset at me for breaking his favorite net. What will happen if I tell the truth? Surely it would be easier to cover it up.

As those thoughts ran through my head, I was reminded of a time a year earlier when I had been faced with a similar decision. It was my father's birthday and I had gotten up early one morning with my sister to catch some fish. Our plan was to prepare a surprise breakfast of fresh fish for my father on this special day.



Without asking, I borrowed my father's prized spear and caught a couple of fish, but when getting the last one, the spear slipped from my hands down the side of the boat and began to sink, while our boat was being pulled downstream by the strong current. My heart sank. I tried to get the spear back, but could not.

I was then faced with the decision of whether or not to tell my father what had happened. I knew that though I hadn't asked his permission to use the spear, it was an accident and he would probably understand. I decided to take my chances and tell the truth. My father forgave me that day. He said that in my heart I was trying to do a kind thing.

But this time, things were different. This time I wasn't trying to do the right thing or the kind thing. I was just trying to have fun, and I knew that father wouldn't approve but I did it anyway.

Now I'm in real trouble for ruining his most useful net. I don't know what to do. I wondered. Should I tell the truth?—Yes, I must. I must tell the truth, there is no other way. My father has always been good to me, so I must now confess my mistake and ask for his forgiveness.

After some time of thought and convincing myself that it was the best thing to do, with my head hung low, dragging the broken net behind me, I made my way back home. By this time my father had returned home from his trip and was waiting for me. He sensed the look of shame on my face as I approached; he took me in his arms and held me close.

"I disappointed you, Father. My friends and I were playing in the forest with your favorite net, trying to make what some of the travelers called a 'trampoline.' I know that you've told me before never to play with the nets, and I disobeyed you. The net broke. I deserve to be punished. I'm so sorry." I expected my father to answer with harsh words of rebuke, as I knew that's what I deserved.

"I am sad about this loss," he said, "but more importantly, I'm proud of you for being honest with me. I know it's hard to tell the truth and admit you disobeyed, made a mistake and were wrong. You could have tried to make up a story or just not tell me, and it's possible I would have never known what happened to my net, but you didn't. You chose to be honest with me, and for that I'm proud of you. I forgive you, my son. We will fix the net together, and in learning to fix the net you might learn how to make for yourself a... what did you call it? ...A trampoline that does not break so easily."

How happy I was that I had chosen to tell the truth, even though it was very difficult for me, and how I admired my father for his ability to forgive. I felt a freedom through being honest. I know that I would have felt like a bird in a cage if I had concealed the truth. I had read in the Bible, "The truth shall make you free," but on this day I realized its full meaning. Deceitfulness is binding and destroys trust, but the truth is liberating and draws us closer to one another.



- Why was it hard for the boy to tell the truth?
- Did he discover that it was better to be honest than to try to hide his mistake? How did being honest make him feel?
- Let's put ourselves in the father's place. How would you feel toward someone who was honest and confessed what they did wrong? How would you feel toward someone who tried to hide it and lie about it?
- Have you ever broken something and didn't want to tell someone about it? What did you finally end up doing? What happened? Were you forgiven if you were honest? What are some advantages of being honest, even if it hurts to tell the truth?

Emily's Sad Mistake

(This story is set in the 1950's, when watches were mostly wind-up models. They had to be wound up to work, and were not waterproof.)

Nothing complicates a problem more than trying to cover it up and pretend it isn't there. False stories and silence can make a mistake worse than it was to begin with, as Emily discovered.

There was one thing that Emily could never bring herself to do. She could not admit when she had done something wrong. Instead, she would make up a story to try to cover up her mistake.

Of course, it never worked. Mother always found out. No matter how much Emily lied, the truth came out.

Although Emily had told dozens of stories and had been found out just as many times, she still kept on telling them, with the same sad results. One day, however, something happened that changed everything.

It was Emily's birthday, and her mother and father got something special for her.—The dearest, prettiest little watch she had ever seen! She was too happy for words. Never had she dared to hope that she'd receive anything so beautiful.

Emily put the watch on her wrist and gazed at it by the hour. To think that it was a real watch that kept proper time, and not just a toy one like she had owned before.

Mother and Father told her to be very careful with such an expensive gift. She was to wind it slowly, and never over-wind it. She was to take it off her wrist before she washed the dishes. And of course she must take it off before she had a shower or a bath.

"If you take good care of that little watch," Father said, "it will serve you for a long, long time."

"Oh, I'll take care of it," said Emily, "I wouldn't let any harm come to it for the world! It is the most beautiful thing I ever owned."

One evening, about a month later, Emily was taking a bath. She had done her hair and washed herself all over when she suddenly noticed that her precious watch was still on her wrist. Emily panicked and leaped out of the tub. She removed the watch and held it to her ear. It had stopped!

"Oh!" she cried. "My lovely watch! I've ruined it. I've ruined it!"

Then came the dreadful thought, "What will Mother say? What will Father say?" She felt she could not face them. Kind and loving though they were, she thought she simply could not tell them the terrible truth about what she had done.

What could she do? If she did not wear the watch, they would wonder anyway. If she did wear it and they noticed it had stopped, they would ask her about it. She decided to make up a story about it so they would never know the truth.

A number of days passed. Emily kept her secret to herself. Then one morning at breakfast, Father asked her the time.

"I'm not sure," she said, blushing just a little. "I'm afraid my watch has stopped."

"Stopped?" said Father. "Did you forget to wind it last night?"

"Oh, no, no," said Emily. "I wound it all right, but, well... it just stopped."

"Let me see it," said Father.

Emily took it off her wrist and handed it to him.

"Strange," said Father, "it looks a little misty under the glass. I wonder what could have caused that?"

"I was wondering too," said Emily. "Perhaps I got it wet when I was out in the rain last night. But I didn't think the rain could get through the glass."

"I wouldn't think so," said Father. "I'll take another look at it when I get home this evening."

When Father had gone, Mother asked to see the watch. She, too, noticed the mistiness under the glass.

"Very strange," she said. "I can see little drops of water in there, too. Emily, are you sure you had the watch out in the rain?"

"Oh, yes, Mother, yes. It was raining quite hard."

"No. Not last night," said Mother, getting a little suspicious. "It didn't rain at all last night."

"Then it must have been the night before," said Emily, blushing deeper still.

"Are you quite sure the water in the watch is rainwater?" asked Mother.

"Oh, yes, er... yes, I think it must be," said Emily.

"Are you sure it's not bathwater?" inquired Mother.

"No, umm... yes, I mean no; I'm not quite sure," said Emily, now beginning to tremble inside.

"Tell me the truth, Emily. Did you get into the tub with this watch on your wrist?"

Emily saw that there was no use trying to deceive Mother any longer.

"Yes," she said, "I did."

"Then why did you tell me that you went out in the rain with it on?"

"Because I was afraid of what you and Father would say to me."

"When did you do this?"

"Last week, Monday night, I think."

"Why, that's too long ago! Oh, if only you had told me right away, instead of lying about it all this time!"

"Why?"

"Because if you had told me at once, I would have rushed the watch to the jeweler's. He would have dried it immediately, and no harm would have come to it. Now it must be all rusty inside and probably will never work again."

"Never work again!" sobbed poor Emily. "Oh, if only I had told you the truth at once! Why did I ever lie about it? Now I have lost my beautiful watch forever."

It was a hard, hard lesson that Emily learned that day. But I am glad to tell you that she did learn it. In the future, whenever she was tempted to cover up a mistake with a false story, Emily remembered what had happened to her precious watch. She decided always to tell the truth right away.



- Does it pay to tell a lie?
- How would things have turned out differently if Emily had told the truth and been honest?
- What would you have done if you were Emily?
- Talk about some things that would be difficult to tell the truth about, and why it would be best to tell the truth even though it's difficult.



All Those Feathers

There once was a woman who was very angry with her brother. And so she went everywhere telling lies and evil stories about him. She tried very hard to turn all of the people in the town against him with her terrible talk and gossip. But the more she talked, the sadder she became. At last, she was very, very, unhappy, and began to feel sorry for all the lies she had told.

Finally, in tears, the woman went to her brother to ask him to forgive her. "I have told so many lies about you," she said, "Please forgive me."

Her brother did not answer her for a long time. He seemed to be deep in thought and prayer. At last he said, "Yes, I will forgive you, but first you must do something for me."

"What do you want me to do?" she said, a little surprised.

"Come with me to the church. We will go up to the belfry* and I will show you," he said. "But first I need to get something from my room."

When her brother returned from his room he carried a big feather pillow under his arm. His sister could hardly hide her surprise and growing curiosity.

"Alright, let's go," he said very soberly.

The flustered woman could hardly keep from asking what the pillow was for, and why they were going up to the belfry. However, she kept silent. A little out of breath, they finally reached the church belfry.

The wind blew softly through the big open windows of the belfry. From the tower, they could see far out into the countryside that stretched out beyond the village.

Suddenly, without saying anything, her brother ripped open the pillow and dumped all of the feathers out of the window.

The wind and the little breezes caught the feathers and carried them everywhere: out onto the rooftops, into the streets, under cars, up into trees, out into the backyards where the children play, and even out to the big highway, and on and on farther still into the distance.

The brother and sister watched the feathers flutter away for some time. At last her brother turned to her and said, "Now, I want you to go and pick up all of those feathers for me."

"Pick up all those feathers?" she gasped. "But that is impossible!"

"Yes, I know," said her wise brother. "Those feathers are like all the lies you told about me. What you have started you cannot stop, even if you are sorry. You may be able to tell a few people that you lied about me, but the winds of gossip have carried your lies everywhere. You can blow out a match, but you cannot blow out the great forest fire that one match can start. 'Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!'" (James 3:5).



- Have you ever told a lie about someone and it got passed on to someone else and on and on until you couldn't stop it? Explain how this happens.
- Even though her brother forgave her, could she undo the damage she had done and heal the hurt she caused her brother?
- Has someone ever told lies about you? How did it make you feel?
- Instead of telling lies, what should she have done when she felt angry at her brother?
- In James 3 it talks about the power of the tongue and what big trouble it can cause. What are some of the word pictures that it talks about in this chapter (bit in horse's mouth, rudder, match, etc.)?
- Think of big troubles that can happen from not being honest or spreading false gossip about others. Do you think newspapers sometimes do this?

***belfry**: a bell tower, especially one attached to a building



Wolf! Wolf!

There once was a boy living in the country,
Tending sheep on his father's farm.
He led them out to a hillside pasture,
Making sure they were safe from harm.

Then one day he was feeling lonely,
Sitting with the sheep all by himself.
He had an idea to pretend there was danger,
To say there's a wolf and call for help.

"Wolf! Wolf!" he cried out to the villagers below.
"Wolf! Wolf!" but it really wasn't so.
"Wolf! Wolf!" he cried out, but it was only make-believe.
Just to get attention, he decided to deceive.

The men in town came quickly running
To help their neighbor in distress.
But when they arrived, the boy sat laughing,
"There is no wolf! It was all in jest!"

The men went home, very disappointed
That the boy had lied to them.
But a little while later upon the hillside,
The boy shouted out again and again:

"Wolf! Wolf!" he cried out to the villagers below.
"Wolf! Wolf!" but it really wasn't so.
"Wolf! Wolf!" he cried out, but it was only make-believe.
Just to get attention, he decided to deceive.

One, two, three times the men came running,
Only to find the shepherd boy was lying.
But then one day a real wolf came along.
The boy cried, "Wolf! Wolf!" but no one would come.

Because he'd lied so many times before,
The people thought he was lying once more.
Then all the sheep started bleating for help.
He couldn't fight the wolf all by himself.

So don't cry...
"Wolf! Wolf!" if it really isn't true.
Don't cry, "Wolf!," you may be sorry if you do.
The little shepherd boy regretted he'd deceived,
Because when he really needed help,
No one would believe.



- Why didn't the men from the village come when the boy really needed help? Why didn't they believe him?
- How does this story apply to you? If you're always lying, will people believe you when you tell the truth?
- Give some examples that may have happened to you or that could happen to others.

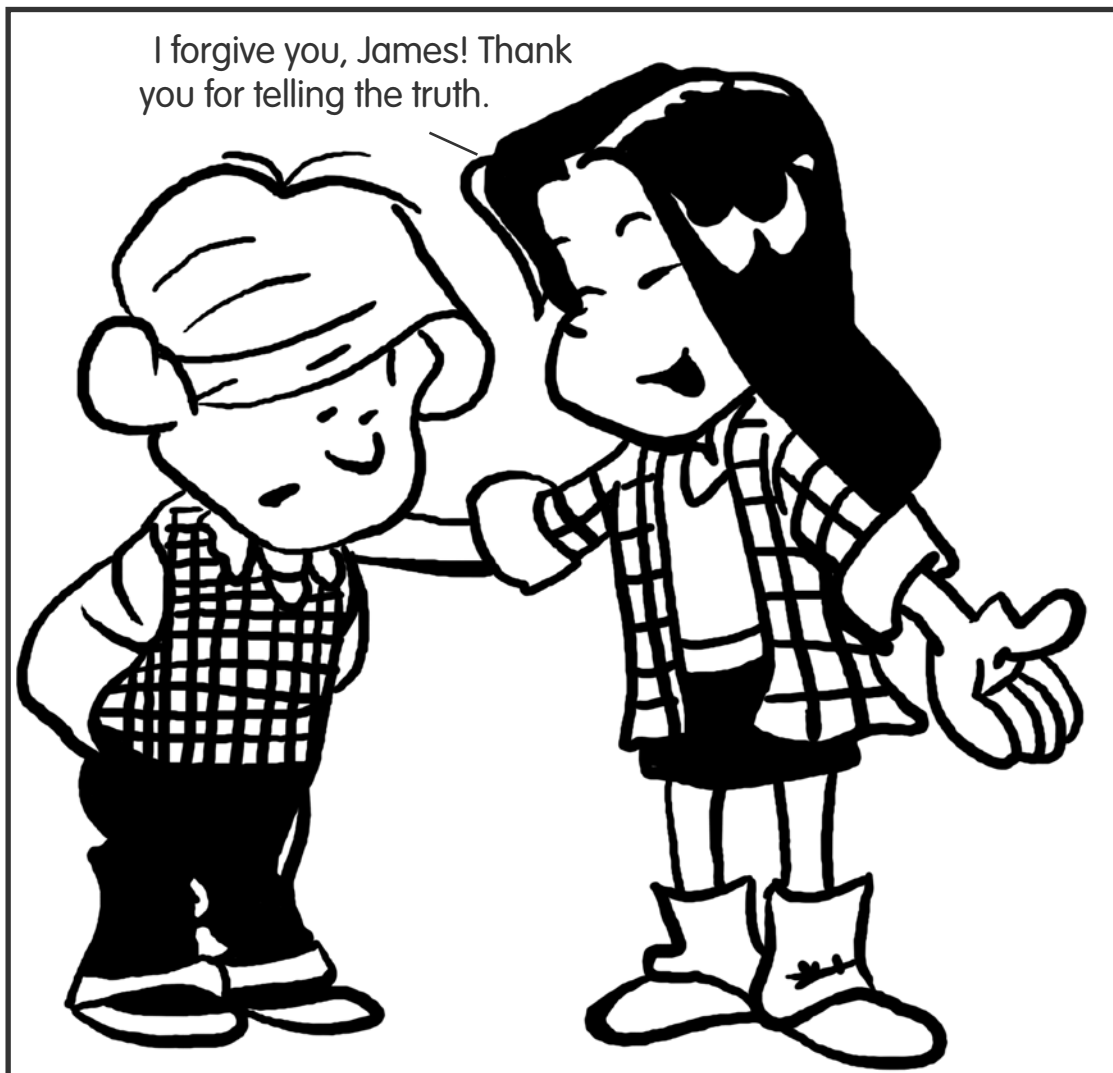


Prayer and Praise

Dear Jesus, thank You for teaching me how important it is to be honest. Please help me to keep my heart clean by always telling the truth, even though it's difficult.

Amen.

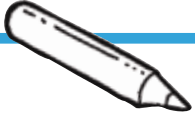
Memory Fun



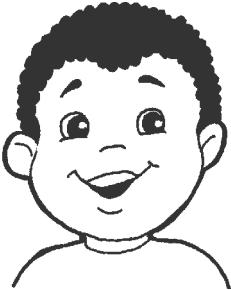
Putting away lying, let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor.

Ephesians 4:25

Maze to Truth

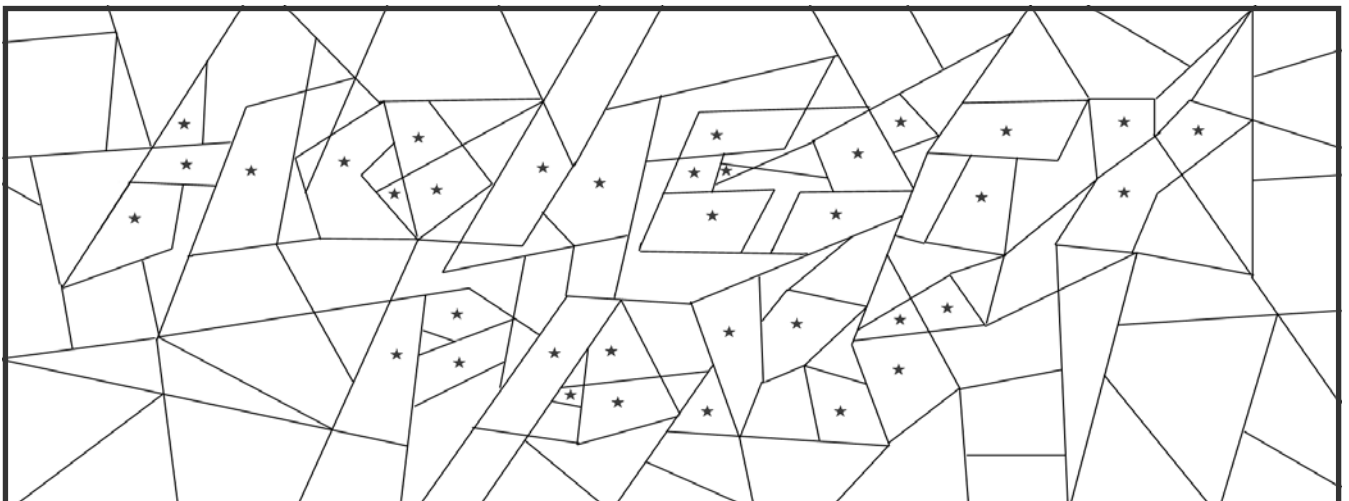


Follow the lines to find out which child is choosing the way of truth.



Hidden Message

Color in all the boxes that have stars to find the hidden message.

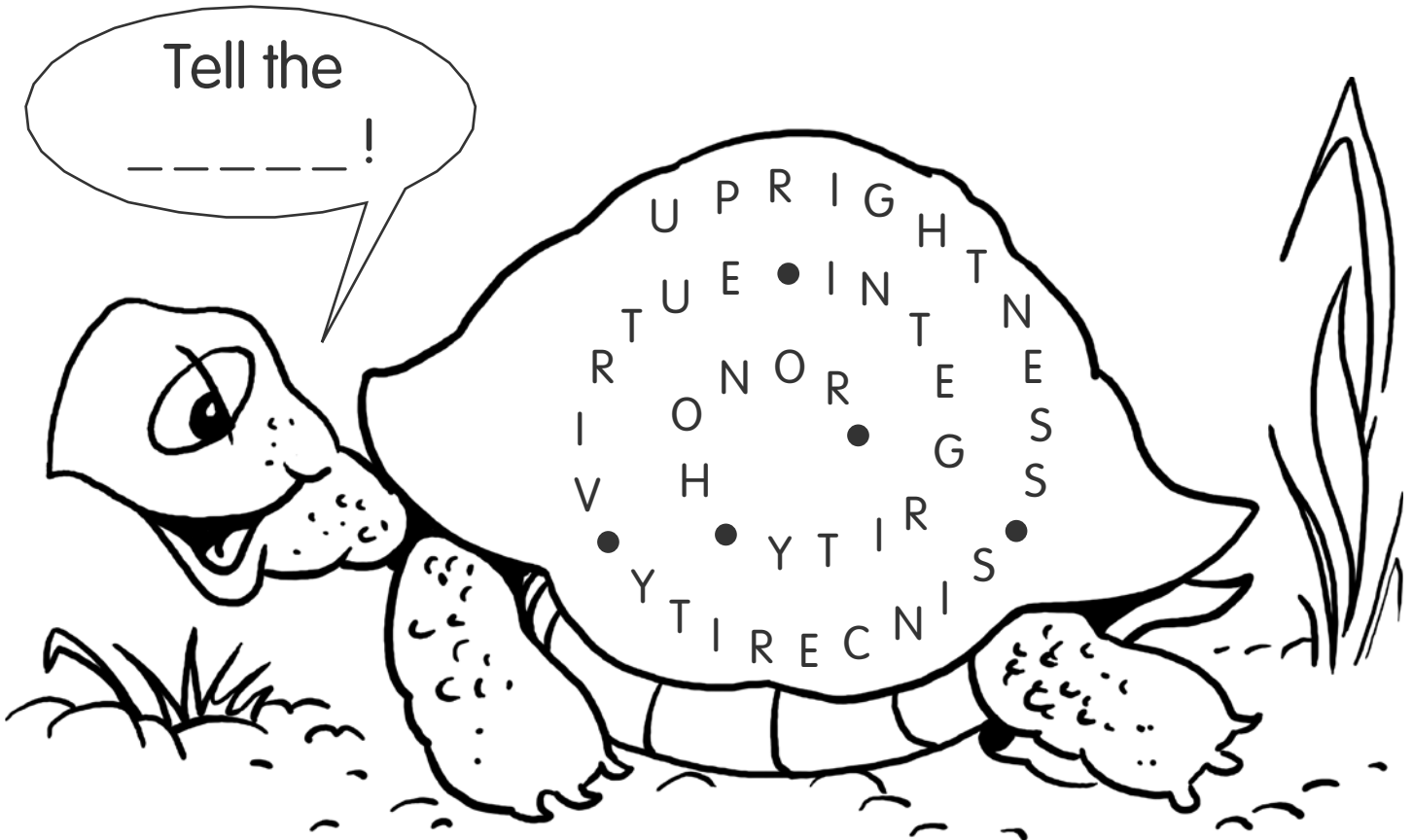


Pencil Page

Turtle Talk



Read the words relating to honesty on the turtle's shell. Write the letters in bold print in order on the blanks below, to find out what Trudge the Turtle wants to say to us.



Unscramble the Words



Unscramble the capitalized letters. Fill in the blanks with the unscrambled words from the matching numbers.

Honesty is an important _____.

_____ pays.

This is the _____ of a _____:

He is not believed even when he _____ the truth.

Remove from me the way of _____.

I have _____ the way of truth (Psalm 119:29,30).

Putting away lying, let _____ one of you speak truth

with his _____ (Ephesians 4:25).

1. HTIGN
2. SONETHY
3. UNITSHMENP
4. RIAL
5. SKAPES
6. GYLIN
7. SHOECN
8. HECA
9. GIBREHNO

Make and Do

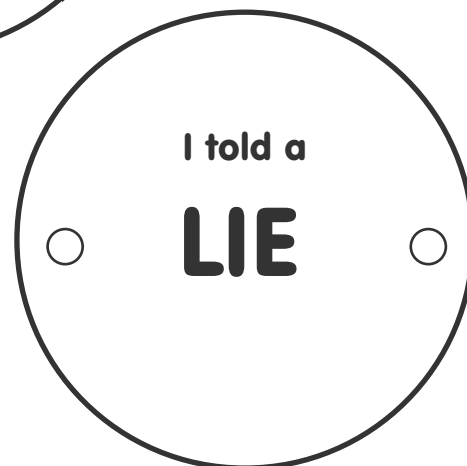
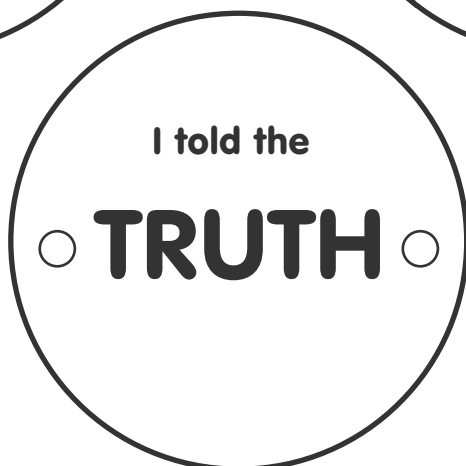
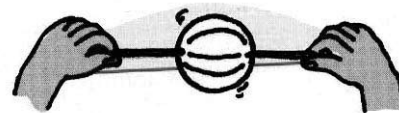
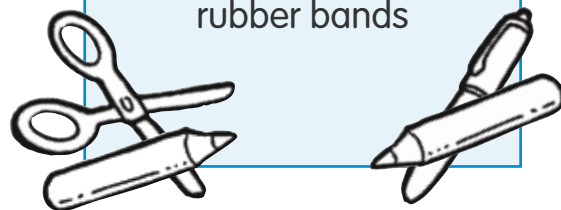
Spinning Message

How to:

- Color circles and mount on cardstock.
- Cut out circles.
- Glue circles back to back. Glue the HAPPY face to the TRUTH circle and the SAD face to the LIE circle.
- After the glue is dry, punch holes in the sides.
- Slip the end of one long rubber band (approximately 12cm or 5") through the hole on one side and pull the band through itself to hold it in place.
- Repeat with the second rubber band on the opposite side.
- Loop a rubber band over each index finger.
- Twist rubber bands by turning the circle over and over (about 20 times).
- Pull out with both index fingers and watch the circles flip over quickly. What do you see? A happy face for telling the truth and a sad face for telling a lie!

You will need:

color pencils or crayons
cardboard
scissors
glue
rubber bands



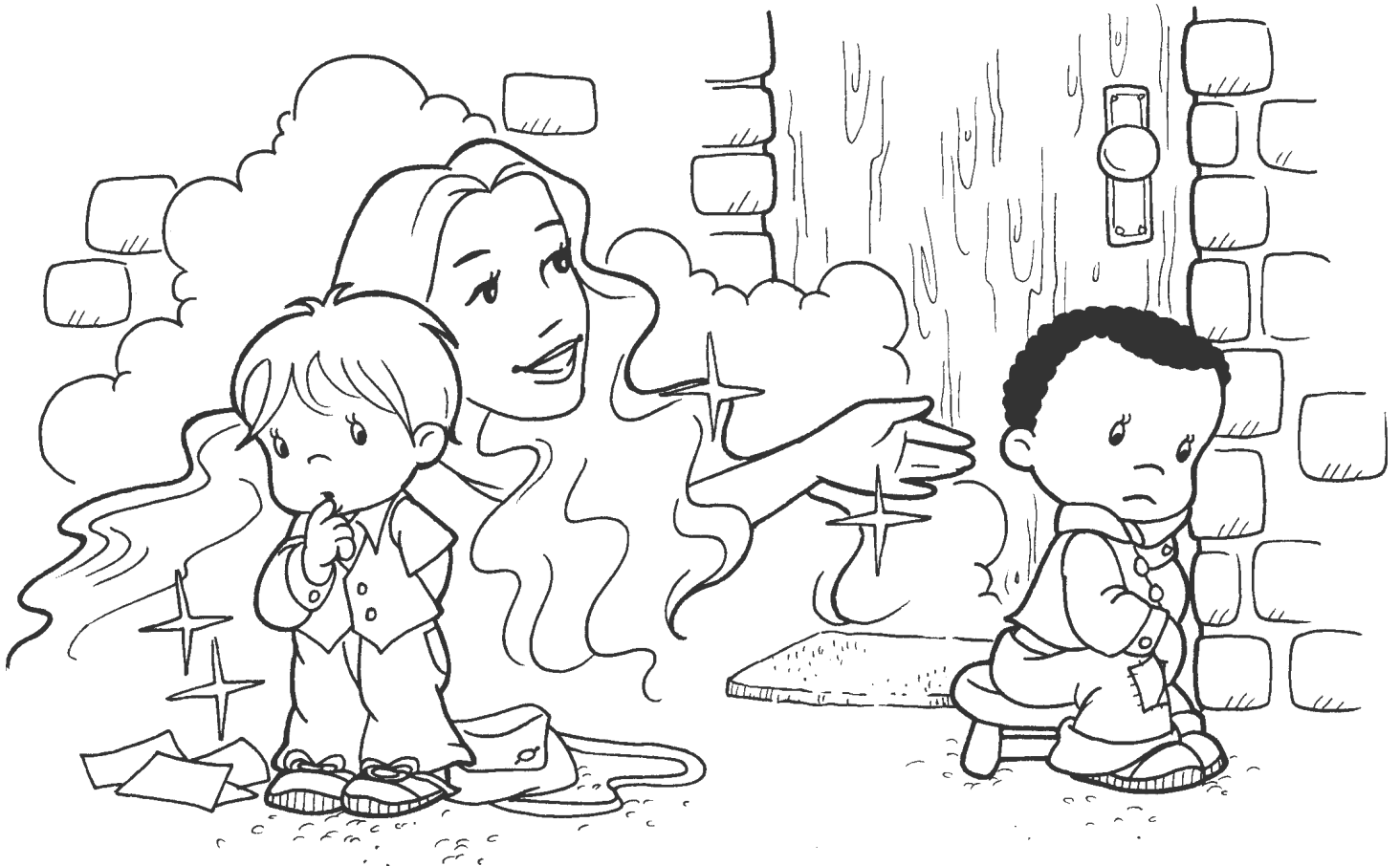
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From Jesus—with Love



Come, My children, let Me tell you something about honesty. Honesty cleans the heart and makes you into a person people love and trust. If you had a friend who always lied to you about things, would you trust him or her very much? I don't think so. And what if you were a person who lied a lot? Do you think your mother and father could trust you with important responsibilities? No, I don't think so.

Sometimes it's hard to tell the truth, but it's still the best thing to do. You have to trust that the other person will understand. If you do something wrong and lie about it, you start to feel sick inside, don't you? It doesn't feel too nice, does it? You start to feel sad and find it hard to smile or talk to the person you've lied to. So why not do the right thing and tell the truth, and keep your heart clean and free from lies and cover-ups. I can help you to do this if you'll just pray and ask Me. Every time you do something wrong or you feel like lying about something, just ask Me to help you to do the right thing and I will. I want to see you happy and I want to see your friends and the people you care about trust you and be happy with you too. So keep your heart clean and always try to tell the truth. I love you, and I know you can do it!



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