

Honesty

Chapter 31

Honesty Is a Principle of Salvation

- What would society be like if everyone were perfectly honest?

The 13th article of faith says, “We believe in being honest.” The Book of Mormon tells us about a group of people who were “distinguished for their zeal towards God, and also towards men; for they were perfectly honest and upright in all things; and they were firm in the faith of Christ, even unto the end” (Alma 27:27). Because of their honesty, these people were noted by their fellowmen and by God. It is important to learn what honesty is, how we are tempted to be dishonest, and how we can overcome this temptation.

Complete honesty is necessary for our salvation. President Brigham Young said, “If we accept salvation on the terms it is offered to us, we have got to be honest in every thought, in our reflections, in our meditations, in our private circles, in our deals, in our declarations, and in every act of our lives” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* [1997], 293).

God is honest and just in all things (see Alma 7:20). We too must be honest in all things to become like Him. The brother of Jared testified, “Yea, Lord, I know that thou . . . art a God of truth, and canst not lie” (Ether 3:12). In contrast, the devil is a liar. In fact, he is the father of lies (see 2 Nephi 9:9). “Those who choose to cheat and lie and deceive and misrepresent become his slaves” (Mark E. Petersen, in Conference Report, Oct. 1971, 65; or *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, 73).

Honest people love truth and justice. They are honest in their words and actions. They do not lie, steal, or cheat.



To Lie Is Dishonest

Lying is intentionally deceiving others. Bearing false witness is one form of lying. The Lord gave this commandment to the children of Israel: “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour” (Exodus 20:16). Jesus also taught this when He was on earth (see Matthew 19:18). There are many other forms of lying. When we speak untruths, we are guilty of lying. We can also intentionally deceive others by a gesture or a look, by silence, or by telling only part of the truth. Whenever we lead people in any way to believe something that is not true, we are not being honest.

The Lord is not pleased with such dishonesty, and we will have to account for our lies. Satan would have us believe it is all right to lie. He says, “Yea, lie a little; . . . there is no harm in this” (2 Nephi 28:8). Satan encourages us to justify our lies to ourselves. Honest people will recognize Satan’s temptations and will speak the whole truth, even if it seems to be to their disadvantage.

To Steal Is Dishonest

Jesus taught, “Thou shalt not steal” (Matthew 19:18). Stealing is taking something that does not belong to us. When we take what belongs to someone else or to a store or to the community without permission, we are stealing. Taking merchandise or supplies from an employer is stealing. Copying music, movies, pictures, or written text without the permission of the copyright owners is dishonest and is a form of theft. Accepting more change or goods than one should is dishonest. Taking more than our share of anything is stealing.

To Cheat Is Dishonest

We cheat when we give less than we owe, or when we get something we do not deserve. Some employees cheat their employers by not working their full time; yet they accept full pay. Some employers

For teachers: This chapter contains three sections that describe forms of dishonesty: lying, stealing, and cheating. You might consider dividing class members or family members into three groups. Assign each group one of these three sections. Ask the individuals in each group to silently read their assigned section and consider the forms of dishonesty described in that section. Then discuss the sections as a class or as a family. Ask how we can be honest in each of the situations described.

are not fair to their employees; they pay them less than they should. Satan says, “Take the advantage of one because of his words, dig a pit for thy neighbor” (2 Nephi 28:8). Taking unfair advantage is a form of dishonesty. Providing inferior service or merchandise is cheating.

We Must Not Excuse Our Dishonesty

- What happens to us spiritually when we excuse our dishonesty?

People use many excuses for being dishonest. People lie to protect themselves and to have others think well of them. Some excuse themselves for stealing, thinking they deserve what they took, intend to return it, or need it more than the owner. Some cheat to get better grades in school or because “everyone else does it” or to get even.

These excuses and many more are given as reasons for dishonesty. To the Lord, there are no acceptable reasons. When we excuse ourselves, we cheat ourselves and the Spirit of God ceases to be with us. We become more and more unrighteous.

We Can Be Completely Honest

- What does it mean to be completely honest?

To become completely honest, we must look carefully at our lives. If there are ways in which we are being even the least bit dishonest, we should repent of them immediately.

When we are completely honest, we cannot be corrupted. We are true to every trust, duty, agreement, or covenant, even if it costs us money, friends, or our lives. Then we can face the Lord, ourselves, and others without shame. President Joseph F. Smith counseled, “Let every man’s life be so that his character will bear the closest inspection, and that it may be seen as an open book, so that he will have nothing to shrink from or be ashamed of” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 252).

- In what ways does our honesty or dishonesty affect how we feel about ourselves?

Additional Scriptures

- D&C 50:17 (speak only by the spirit of truth)
- D&C 76:103–6 (destination of liars)
- D&C 42:27 (commandment not to speak evil of neighbors)
- Exodus 20:15–16 (commandments not to steal and not to bear false witness)
- D&C 42:20, 84–85; 59:6 (forbidden to steal)
- D&C 3:2 (God is honest)
- D&C 10:25–28 (Satan deceives)