

“Virtues to Live by”

HONESTY

Before You Begin – An overview for teachers

“May my goodness and honesty preserve me,
because I trust in you.” (Psalm 25:21)

Psalm 15

LORD, who may enter your Temple?
Who may worship on Zion, your sacred hill?
Those who obey God in everything
and always do what is right,
whose words are true and sincere,
and who do not slander others.
They do no wrong to their friends
nor spread rumours about their neighbours.
They despise those whom God rejects,
but honour those who obey the LORD.
They always do what they promise,
no matter how much it may cost.
They make loans without charging interest
and cannot be bribed to testify against the innocent.
Whoever does these things will always be secure.

Definition

HONESTY – is telling the truth. It is speaking the truth without exaggerating or omitting things, but also with kindness and tact. It is having the courage to admit the truth even when it is hard to do. When you are honest you can be trusted. When you are trustworthy you can be relied upon to do something and to keep the promises you have made. You have integrity when you are honest to others and to yourself; you do not try to be like someone you are not, you are your true self. When you are honest your actions match your words: you practise what you preach.

Virtue to Live By

I tell the truth.

I am reliable and trustworthy.

My actions match my words.

I am honest with myself and others even when it is difficult.

Biblical sources

"An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips." (Proverbs 24:26)

"Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices." (Colossians 3:9)

"Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all members of one body." (Ephesians 4:25)

"Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out." (Proverbs 10:9)

Other sources

"Let your conduct be marked by truthfulness in word, deed and thought." (*Taittiriya Upanishad* 1.11.1, Hinduism)

"To be really honest means ... stating things fairly, not humouring your argument – doing justice to your enemies ... making confession whether you can afford it or not; refusing unmerited praise; looking painful truths in the face." (Aubrey De Vere, *Recollections*)

"To love truth for truth's sake is the principal part of human perfection in this world." (John Locke)

Why Practise Honesty?

When we are honest we build trust in ourselves, in the ways we work and the communities we live and work in. When we are honest we promote openness and trustworthiness in our dealings with each other. Honesty allows us to rely on others so that we can all work together to build strong communities and live well together. When you are honest with yourself you have the self-belief not pretend something doesn't matter when it does and not to exaggerate to look good in the eyes of others.

How do we Practise Honesty?

You tell the truth, kindly and with tact even when it is difficult. You know yourself well enough not to promise too little or too much, but make promises that you can keep. In your dealings with others you state things fairly, you do not lie or cheat to seek your own advantage. You can admit when you have made a mistake and are honest enough to realise that you need to change.

Key Words: honesty, honest, trust, trustworthiness, promise, reliable, action, community, courage, integrity.

Signs of living the virtue of honesty:

I tell the truth.

I can be trusted.

I am honest about my words and actions

I make promises I can keep.

My actions match my words.

I am true to myself and follow what I know to be right

Reflection Questions:

Think of a time you had to speak truth to someone else. How did it feel? Was it difficult? Were you kind and tactful?

Think of a time when you had to face the truth about yourself. How did you react? How did you move on from it?

Am I honest with others, or do I exaggerate or omit things that are hard to talk about or admit?

Do I allow myself to get drawn into rumour, gossip or details without seeking the bigger picture?

Do I make promises that I keep?

Do I criticise in others what I find myself doing as well?