

AFFECTIVE - MORAL DEVELOPMENT

4.2 TRUSTWORTHINESS

WHAT IS IT?

- * keeping one's word, acting honestly.
- * following through with simple commitments.
- * being truthful in words and actions.

WHEN DOES JESUS EXPRESS IT?

Jesus expresses it when He says, "Do not take a false oath; rather, make good to the Lord all your pledges" (Mt 5:33), says, "say 'Yes' when you mean 'Yes....'" (Mt 5:37); cures the Centurion's boy because he trusted (Mt 8:13), entrusts the keys of Heaven to the Disciples (Mt 16:19), gives His solemn word that those who followed Him shall have a place in Heaven (Mt 19:28-29), says "If you can trust a man in little things, you can also trust him in greater". (Lk 16:10), speaks truthfully to the woman at the well (Jn 4:13-14), promises to send us another advocate-the Holy Spirit-and does so (Jn 14:15-17), says that truth comes from God's spirit (Jn 16:13).

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- * it is a universally accepted moral value.
- * it is a building block of character formation.
- * it forms a strong foundation for good and lasting relationships.
- * when one is trustworthy, one is dependable.
- * in giving one's word, one can be counted on in life.
- * it gives a deep sense of self-satisfaction that one is known as dependable.
- * it makes one welcome and acceptable in all circles of life.
- * one needs to be trustworthy in order to lay hold of one's destiny in Christ (1 Tim 1:12).

HOW WOULD SOME EXHIBIT IT?

- * telling the truth.
- * doing what one says one will do.
- * following through on a promise to another.
- * acting in honest and truthful ways.

AUTHOR'S NOTES:

Preschool-age children are not ready to act honestly or in trustworthy ways for several reasons: First, they may not fully understand the notion of "telling the truth" or making a promise. Secondly, the truth for young children is whatever they say it is. Often their imaginations contribute more than reality to what they think about things. Finally, young children are too egocentric to be expected to keep their word or do what they say they will do. Prior to age seven or eight, most children believe the truth is whatever they say it is. They also typically believe they can change their minds about anything at any time. However, it is important that parents begin to support and challenge trustworthiness in their child as the occasion rises.

WHAT YOU AS A PARENT DO TO SUPPORT IT?

1. Praise your child whenever your child tells the truth. Tell your child that God is happy when we tell the truth.
2. Expect your child to tell you the truth when you ask your child a question. Be in control of your emotions when questioning your child about his or her behavior. Avoid accusing your child of wrongdoing; rather seek the facts of what happened. Model honest living. Always tell the truth, even if you think it is an insignificant matter.
3. Insist on having your child return items that belong to another back to the owner. Do not weaken in your expectations.
4. Give your child jobs and responsibilities that are age-appropriate. Teach your child what is expected in meeting the job requirements.
5. Be willing to assist your child in completing a task and help your child carry the task through to its completion. If your child stops short of completing the task, the process of practicing “trustworthiness” will be hindered.
6. Praise your child by describing what your child did to exhibit trustworthiness.
7. Teach your child to be trustworthy with small matters (“His master said to him, ‘Well done! You are an industrious and reliable servant. Since you were dependable in a small matter I will put you in charge of larger affairs’” Mt 25:21).
8. Read and discuss stories about trustworthiness
9. Dramatize or role play stories about trustworthiness.
10. Create story problems and dilemmas around the topics so that your child can begin to form ideas about solutions.
11. Make your child a promise and then keep it. Point out to your child that you can be trusted to keep your word. Tell your child that God always keeps His word.
12. Point out to your child whenever you keep your word. Point out whenever God keeps His word. Tell your child that this is what it means to be trustworthy.
13. Ask your child to make you a promise. Encourage and help your child to keep the promise. Promises can involve making the bed, cleaning the room, picking-up toys, tasting a new food, etc.
14. Avoid modeling even “little lies” such as when the phone rings and you are inclined to say, “Tell them I am not home”. This sends mixed messages and models dishonesty to your child.
15. Find a Bible verse with a specific promise. Pray with your child asking God to keep this promise. Thank God with your child when He does this. A suggestion is to pray Psalm 4:8 with your child at bedtime. When your child awakens, thank God together for a good sleep.
16. Teach your child Pr 12:22, “Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those that are truthful are his delight”. Tell your child God hates lying and He loves when we speak the truth.
17. Talk about what it means to omit the truth in a conversation or to dodging or skirting an issue, or to simply avoid telling the truth by making excuses or giving long explanations for a behavior. Read the passage from Matthew’s when Jesus instructs us to “Let what you say be simply ‘Yes or No’” Mt 5:37.
18. God is the source of all truth. His Word is truth, His Law is truth. (Lk 1:50; Jn 1:14; 8:12). Read about truth in the catechism of the Catholic Church #2467-2468.
19. Read and discuss what the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches about offenses against the truth (#2475-2487). These offenses include: bearing false witness (perjury); rash judgment; exposing another’s faults to others; making harmful remarks about another’s reputation; misinterpreting another’s thoughts, words, or actions, ruining the reputation or honor of another, flattering another for selfish or malicious reasons; approving of another’s sinful behavior; slander; gossip; boasting; and outright lying.