

Parenting a Lying Child, Part 4 | how to train a liar to tell the truth

I. The Whole Family

- **Train the whole family to tell the truth all the time.** Families that mature *together* are the best places to find mature individuals. God wants us all impacting each other and sharpening each other as mature in Him.
- **Train the whole family to spot lies.** We need to bathe our families in God's Word, we need to talk often about the lies the world is trying to sell us. We need to contrast the lies of Satan with the truth of the Bible. If your family doesn't know the genuine article, they won't be able to spot the counterfeits.
- **Train the whole family to understand why they are tempted to lie.** The whole family also needs to understand that they desperately need God if they ever hope to glorify Him. But we mustn't try to use God like a genie. We actually have to love God and desire to worship Him.

II. The Liar

- **Teach the Liar.**
 - **The Gospel** — If your child isn't born again, lying makes all the sense in the world. But if they know God and His salvation, lying isn't just foolish, it's an attack on the God of truth. A born again believer is going to experience a lot of conviction when they see their lies for what they really are.
 - **The Nature of Truth and Lies** — One of the easiest ways to approach the Scriptures is the 3 Questions approach. As we engage with a passage or truth, we need to ask, "What does this teach me about God?" "What does this teach me about me?" and "What do those two truths mean for me today?" (John 14:6; Psalm 119:160; Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18; John 8:44; I John; Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 7:21-23; Psalm 101:7; Colossians 3:9-10)
 - **The Different Reasons People are Tempted to Lie** —
 - All lies grow out of self-deception. We're tempted to lie because we actually believe the lie or we actually believe that lying is good.
 - All sin eventually boils down to not trusting God. Instead we lean on our own understanding, trust our own way, and engage in self-worship.
 - In addition to that, some are further tempted to lie out of fear. This may be fear of consequence or of disappointing people.
 - Others are tempted to lie in order to control a person or situation. This applies to those who are fearful, but sometimes a person lies to control even when they're not afraid something is going to happen.
 - Others lie because of the exhilaration they experience.
 - And any reason we may have for lying can lead to habituation. Some may think that deliberate lying with conscious bad motivations is worse than off the cuff, habituated, unconscious lying. This is categorically untrue because we don't become habituated to something without a lot of practice.
 - **The Consequences of Lying** — Psalm 101:7; Proverbs 12:22, 19:5, 9; Matthew 12:36-37; Revelation 21:8
 - Be welcoming of the truth . . . no matter how unpleasant it is. It's natural for a child to think that a parent will be displeased with them if they admit to cheating on the test. And — guess what — it's appropriate to be displeased in Christ-honoring ways. But many parents respond sinfully, selfishly, and satanically. When we respond incorrectly to the truth, we dissuade our children from telling it to us.

- **Reprove the Liar.** Reproof is what happens when we confront someone in their sin. This is for the times we know our child is lying.
 - **Keep your kids accountable to the truth.** Hopefully you've investigated and done the hard work of discovering the truth to the best of your ability. Keeping your kids accountable to the truth is an absolute requirement of biblical parenting, so you're happy to do it.
 - **Confront them when they lie.** Whether they lied on purpose, accidentally, to themselves, or to someone else, it's never valuable, helpful, or loving to let the lie slide. At best the child continues in a self-delusion, at worst you're letting them get away with deliberately deceiving someone.
 - **Give them appropriate consequences for their lies.** When all we do is talk to our kids about their sin without giving them appropriate consequences, we're lying to them about the nature of the world.
 - **Guide them to reconciliation.**
 - They need to confess their sin. I John 1:9
 - They need to ask for forgiveness. Exodus 10:17; Genesis 50:18; Psalm 25:18; Matthew 6:12
 - **They need to desire to change.** If we believe something to be true, we will desire to submit to it, and then we will do what is right. Our kids don't just need to say they want to change, true repentance is the actual act of turning away from sin to righteousness.
- **Correct the Liar.** The Correction Stage is where we take what we know of the Bible and our child and formulate a plan to make it easy to do right and hard to do wrong. This is the counseling stage. This is where practical discipleship happens.
 - **Our child needs to seek the Lord for strength to change.** (James 3)
 - **We need to help our child develop a new response to temptation.** (Ephesians 4:21-25)
 - After we've identified the root of our children's behavior and understand the expectations God has for our lives, now we have to connect the dots. This is a more specific and precise version of the "What does this mean for me today?" question. Instead of simply saying that God wants me to tell the truth, we would be better off to identify the moment before the temptation usually occurs and develop a plan for every step along the way.
 - In fact, the beginning stages likely won't even have anything to do with lying. Generally speaking, they're going to start with temptations to fear, control, or desiring to do evil. Each of those boils down to self-deception in which we choose to reject God's truth and follow our own hearts.
 - It starts with knowing the truth and then consciously choosing not to do the Old Self stuff we used to do. This will require that we renew our minds by trusting God's Word, and then we need to put on the correct responses which look just like what Jesus would do if He were in our situation. (Pray, Study, Ask)
- **Train the Honest Child.**
 - This stage is a massive blessing and a curse. This is the stage every parent dreams about reaching, but it's also the stage where every parent is tempted to pull out of their child's intentional, premeditated, Ambassadorial discipleship because the child is "doing so well on their own." But no child of God ever reaches a place where they don't need the truth in love spoken into their lives. They will never plateau in their spiritual life, and they'll never develop a perpetual state of spiritual growth with no help from anyone else.
 - That means that we're staying in regular conversation with our kids — especially when they're doing well — and we're talking about Who God is, who we are, and what that means for us today.