

Commandment 8: Saul Lies to Samuel

“You shall not bear false witness”

Exodus 20:16; 1 Samuel 15:10-31

Goal: This lesson teaches the eighth commandment through the story of King Saul, who lied to the Lord’s prophet, Samuel. The Lord commanded Saul to destroy the Amalekites, however he disobeyed by saving the king and the best animals. Instead of telling the truth, he lied to Samuel.

Process: Choose activities for the 4 parts of the lesson from the chart below. For multi-aged groups, teach the lesson to the entire group and select activities that suit your students. Online Extras provide additional activity choices.

Lesson Overview

Lesson Parts	Activities	Materials Given	Supplies Needed
1. Introduction (2-3 minutes)	All Ages <i>The Eighth Commandment</i>	introduction p. 2	
2. Readings & Questions (5-7 minutes)	All Ages select readings for your group	readings pp. 2-3 questions p. 4 talk-about picture p. 5	Bible for ages 11-14
3. Activities choose 1-2 activities (15-20 minutes) Note: Activity ages are approximate. Choose activities that will work for your group.	Ages 3-6 <i>“What Is that Bleating I Hear?”</i> cylinder project	directions p. 6 <i>“What Is That Bleating I Hear” Cylinder</i> p. 7	stapler or tape; small pieces of brown paper or cardboard; cotton balls; glue; crayons, colored pencils or markers
	Ages 7-10 <i>Saul and Samuel Shadow Box</i> paper cut and fold	directions p. 8 <i>Saul and Samuel Shadow Box</i> p. 9	colored pencils or markers, scissors, tape
	Ages 11-14 <i>Two Truths and a Lie</i> activity & discussion	directions pp. 10 <i>Two Truths and a Lie Examples</i> p. 11 <i>Lying and Its Consequences</i> p. 12	pens or pencils
	Ages 3-10 picture to color	<i>Samuel and Saul</i> p. 13	crayons or markers
4. Closing & Recitation (2-3 minutes)	All Ages wrap-up	<i>Recitation Slips</i> p. 14	scissors or paper cutter
Online Extras	All Ages additional activities	online links p. 14	various

Introduction: The Eighth Commandment

The eighth commandment is on the second table of the commandments. It is the fourth commandment about loving our neighbor. The Lord tells us,

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. Exodus 20:16

The eighth commandment says we should not bear false witness. “Bearing false witness” is another way of saying we are to tell the truth and are not to tell lies.

- We may think of lying as saying something that is not true, but there are other kinds of lying too.
- Sometimes people twist the truth, as we will see in our story.
- Exaggeration is another form of lying. Can you think of an example in which the truth was “twisted” or “exaggerated”?
- Some kinds of lying are subtle. For example, we may *think* bad things about others when we really know little or nothing about them. Or sometimes we may hear voices in our minds telling us we are not good at something, or will never be able to do something we care about. Have you experienced this?

Our story today is about King Saul and the prophet Samuel. The Lord told Saul to fight the Amalekites, a warlike people who attacked the children of Israel, just as bad thoughts sometimes attack us. At first, it seemed as if King Saul obeyed, but pay attention to what he did and did not do. This parable teaches that it is easy to fight something that is obviously doing harm. But it is not so easy to give up things we enjoy that seems harmless, even when the Word says they are wrong.

Reading Ages 3-6: Saul Lies to Samuel

This is a short retelling of the story for young children. To tell the story in your own words using a picture, see the talk-about picture on p. 5.

Our story is about how King Saul learned to obey the Lord.

The Lord told Saul to destroy Israel’s enemies, the Amalekites, and everything that was theirs. So Saul attacked them and won a big battle!

But Saul did not do everything that the Lord had told him to do. Instead of destroying everything, He saved their king, Agag, and their best animals.

When the prophet Samuel heard that Saul had disobeyed the Lord, he was upset and went to see Saul. Saul told Samuel, “I have performed the commandment of the Lord.”

But Samuel knew that Saul was lying. He heard the noise of the animals that Saul had kept. So he asked, “What is this bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?”

Saul made an excuse. He said he was going to sacrifice the animals to the Lord. But Samuel said, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.”

Because Saul did not do as the Lord asked, the Lord told him he could not continue to be the king.

Reading Ages 7-10: Saul Lies to Samuel

New Church Concept

Teacher Background

Appearing as a false witness against one's neighbor or giving false evidence means in the strictest natural sense not being a false witness before a judge, or before other people out of court, against someone who is wrongly accused of some crime, and asserting this in God's name, or swearing by anything else holy, or by oneself, or by such things as affect the reputation of one's name. In a wider natural sense this commandment forbids all kinds of lying and hypocrisy in public life with evil intent; also, criticizing and slandering one's neighbor so as to undermine their honor, name and reputation, on which the whole of a person's character depends. In the widest natural sense it includes using trickery, guile and deliberate wrong-dealing against someone for various causes, such as enmity, hatred, revenge, envy, rivalry, etc. These evil actions contain bearing false witness hidden within them. See *True Christian Religion* 321

A retelling of the story for children.

The Amalekites lived in the southern part of the land of Canaan. They were clever fighters and often attacked Israel. So the Lord told his prophet Samuel to speak to King Saul and tell him to destroy the Amalekites and everything that was theirs.

King Saul did what the Lord commanded. He attacked the Amalekites and chased them far into the wilderness. But he did not obey everything that the Lord had commanded him to do. While he destroyed everything that was worthless, he saved Agag, the Amalekite king, and he also kept the best sheep, oxen and lambs.

Then the Lord came to His priest, Samuel and said, "I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments." When the Lord told Samuel what Saul had done, Samuel was very sad and cried out to the Lord all night.

When Saul finished fighting, he returned to his home in Gilgal. Samuel went there to meet him, and Saul said, "I have performed the commandment of the Lord."

But Samuel heard the noise of animals, and he knew that Saul was lying. So he said, "What is this bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"

Then Saul tried to cover up what he had done. He made excuses for keeping the best sheep and oxen and said he was going to sacrifice them to the Lord.

Then Samuel was angry about Saul's lie and said, "Be quiet!" He asked Saul why he had not obeyed everything the Lord had asked him to do. This time, Saul blamed the people, saying that they had wanted to keep the animals to sacrifice. But Samuel said, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice."

Saul had heard what the Lord commanded, but ignored the part that he did not like. Samuel told him that since he had rejected the Lord he would no longer be king.

Saul begged Samuel to stay and worship the Lord with him. Samuel refused, but, as he turned to go, Saul grabbed the edge of his robe and it tore. It was a sign that the kingdom would be torn from Saul.

When Saul finally admitted that he done wrong and sinned, Samuel agreed to worship the Lord with him.

Reading Ages 11-14: Saul Lies to Samuel

Read 1 Samuel 15:10-31 or use the retelling above.

Questions Ages 3-6

1. What did the Lord tell Saul to do? (Saul was to destroy the Amalekites who attacked Israel.)
2. Did Saul do as the Lord asked him to? (No. He did attack the Amalekites, but he did not do everything the Lord asked him to.)
3. How did Samuel know that Saul was not telling the truth? (The Lord had told him that Saul disobeyed, and he heard animals making noises.)
4. What excuse did Saul give for disobeying? (He said the animals were for the Lord.)
5. What should Saul have done? (Obeyed everything, as the Lord asked him to. He should not have saved the king and the animals.)

Questions Ages 7-10

1. In what way did Saul obey the Lord? (He destroyed everything the Amalekites had that was worthless.)
2. How did Saul disobey the Lord? (He kept the king alive and kept the animals for himself.)
3. Why was this a problem? (He was disobeying the Lord.) The king and the animals were the best things from the Amalekites. Keeping them showed that Saul did not really want to destroy them.
4. What excuse did Saul make for saving the animals? (That he was going to sacrifice them to the Lord.)
5. What did Samuel mean when he said, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice”? (It is better to do what is right to begin with than to try to make up for it later.)
6. What happened as a result of Saul’s choice? (He would no longer be king of Israel.) The kingdom would be torn from him, just as Samuel’s robe tore in his hand.

Questions Ages 11-14

1. What is the main theme of this story? (We should obey all that the Lord commands us to do—even when certain things appear good to us, and we’d rather not get rid of them.)
2. In what way did Saul tell the truth about obeying? (He got rid of some of the things he was told to.) This would be like going through the motions of admitting we did something wrong or saying that we’re sorry.
3. In what way did Saul lie? (He kept the most valuable living things for himself.) This is like admitting we’ve done something wrong but hanging on to negative feelings and thoughts. What kinds of negative thoughts and feelings might people hang onto? (What we said or did wasn’t really wrong. It was someone else’s fault. Someone is just making it into a big deal, etc.) To get rid of evil in our lives we also have to not only stop doing wrong things, but get rid the wrong thoughts and feelings too.
4. In this story, Samuel, the Lord’s prophet, represents the Lord’s presence with us. Saul tearing Samuel’s robe was a sign that the kingdom would be torn from Saul since he had rejected the Lord. How might we “tear” the Lord’s kingdom from ourselves? (We are tearing ourselves away from the Lord’s kingdom when we insist on doing something we know to be wrong.)



Ages 3-6: “What Is That Bleating I Hear?”

Materials Needed

“What Is That Bleating I Hear” Cylinder; stapler or tape; cotton balls; scraps of cardboard, brown paper, or brown paper bags; crayons, colored pencils or markers

Prepare in Advance

Print copies of “What Is That Bleating I Hear” Cylinder and gather the other supplies. You may wish to make a sample to show the children.

Children will decorate a flat picture of Saul and Samuel and the sheep and cows that Saul had not destroyed. Then they will form the picture into a cylinder.

1. Do you remember how Samuel knew that Saul was lying to him? (He could hear the bleating of the animals that Saul had kept against the Lord’s command.)
2. These animals probably included cows and sheep. What sounds do those animals make?
3. If you heard those noises would you know that animals were near, even if you couldn’t see them?
4. We’re going to make a picture showing Saul and Samuel and the animals. At the end, we’ll make it into a circle to show how Samuel could hear the animals but not see them.
5. Give each child a copy of the “What Is That Bleating I Hear” Cylinder with cotton wool and scraps of brown paper. Show them how to glue the cotton balls on the sheep and tear pieces of the paper to glue on the cows. Children can also color in Saul and Samuel and the flowers at the bottom of the picture.
6. Help children roll their pictures up and tape or staple the sides together to form a cylinder. (See picture above.)
7. Children can now turn the cylinder to see that the animals were close by, but Samuel could not see them.
8. Lead children in a simple retelling of the story:
 - Saul said, “I have performed the commandment of the Lord.”
 - But Samuel could hear animals making noises! (Encourage the children to hold their cylinders so they only see Saul and Samuel and make the sounds of sheep and cows.)
 - So Samuel asked, “What is this bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?” Because of the sounds of the animals, Samuel knew that Saul was lying.

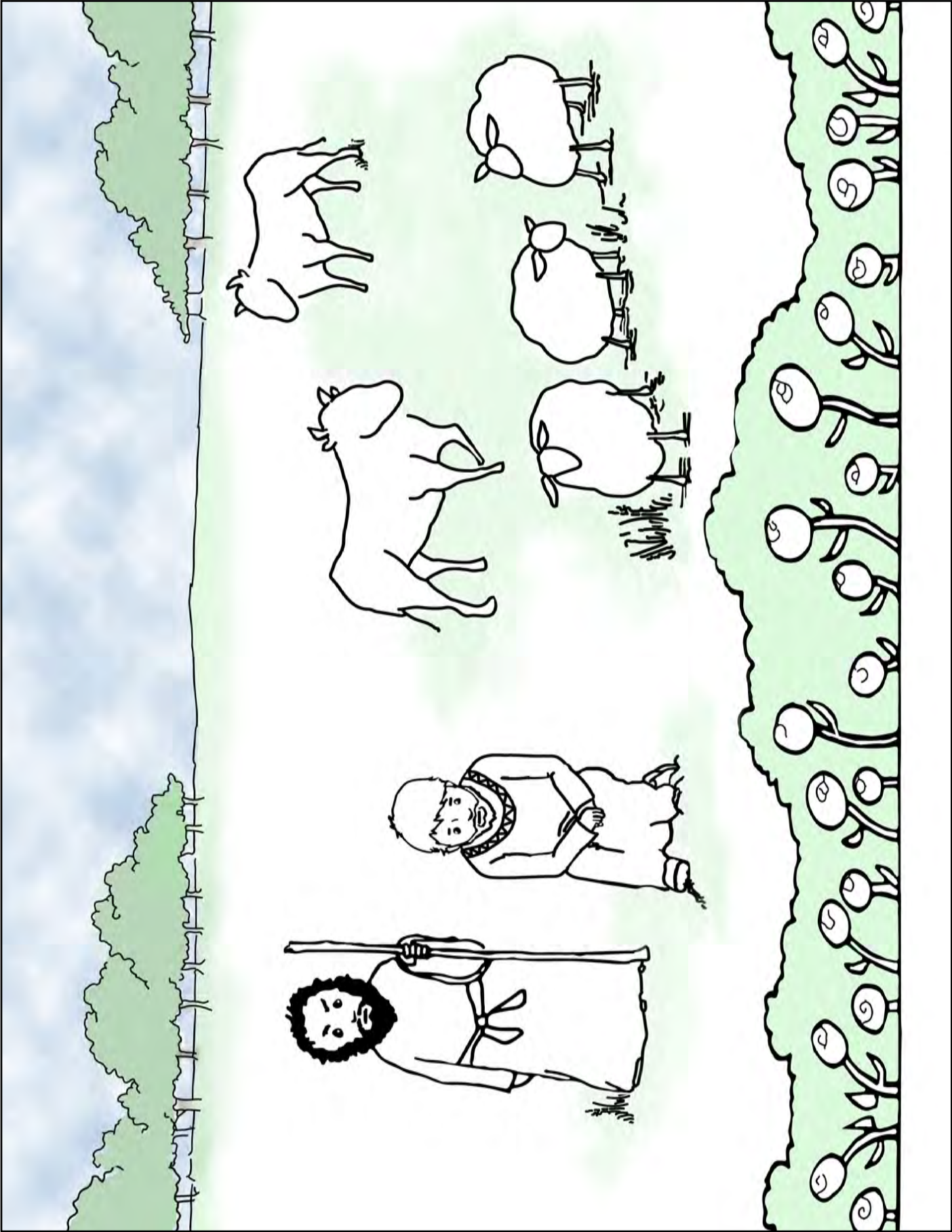


New Church Concept Teacher Background

“In the spiritual sense bearing false witness means persuading others that false ideas of faith are true and that evil ways of life are good, and that true ideas are false and good ways are evil.... [I]t means doing so deliberately, and not out of ignorance; that is, after knowing what truth and goodness are, but not before. For the Lord says: ‘If you were blind, you would not be committing a sin; but now you say, We see, therefore your sin remains’, John 9:41.” *True Christian Religion* 322

New Church Concept Teacher Background

“In the celestial sense bearing false witness means speaking blasphemy against the Lord and the Word, thus chasing truth out of the church. For the Lord is truth itself, and so equally is the Word. On the contrary, bearing witness in this sense means speaking the truth, and testimony means truth itself. That too is why the Ten Commandments are called the testimony. Because the Lord is truth itself, He says of Himself that He bears witness and is Himself His own witness.” *True Christian Religion* 323



Ages 7-10: Saul & Samuel Shadowbox

Materials Needed

copy of *Saul & Samuel Shadowbox* for each child; crayons, colored pencils or markers; scissors; tape

Prepare in Advance

Print copies of *Saul & Samuel Shadowbox*. If there is time, make a sample to show the children how the shadowbox works.

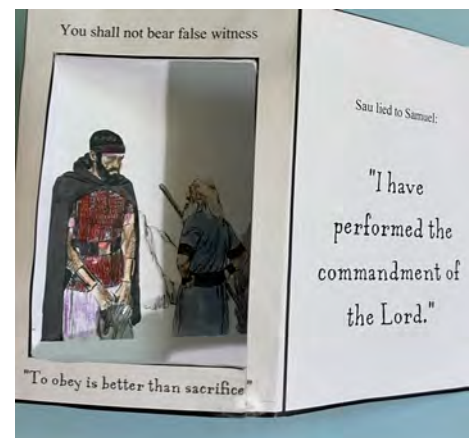
New Church Concept

Teacher Background

The Lord is constantly forgiving people's sins; but sins cling to people no matter how much they suppose them to have been forgiven. They are not removed except through a life in keeping with the commandments of faith. To the extent that someone's life is in keeping with the commandments, their sins are removed and forgiven. For a person is withheld from evil by the Lord and maintained in good. People can be withheld from evil in the next life to the extent that during their lifetime they resisted evil, and they can be maintained in good to the extent that during their lifetime they were doing good out of an affection for it. See *Arcana Coelestia* 8393

In this project, three pictures depict Saul lying to Samuel, the Lord's presence with Saul, and Samuel hearing the animals. The pictures are assembled into a shadowbox. Gently squeezing the box in different ways allows students to re-tell the story of King Saul lying to Samuel.

1. We are going to make a shadowbox showing the story of Saul lying to Samuel.
2. Give each child a copy of the *Saul & Samuel Shadowbox*, and assorted crayons, colored pencils or markers. Invite them to add color to the pictures of Samuel and Saul and the Lord.
3. Start to make the shadowbox by folding the page in half lengthwise along the center line with the printed side showing.
4. Using scissors and cutting through both layers of paper, cut out the blank rectangle as shown in the picture to the right. Cut straight in from the edge and around the rectangle to make a window.
5. Tape the edge of the box where you made a cut to access the rectangle.
6. Form the box by folding along the three lines between the pictures with the pictures on the "inside" and the quotations on the outside. Complete the box by taping the two edges together.
7. Gently squeeze the sides of the box so that the picture of Saul lying to Samuel shows through the window. Samuel could hear the animals, but not see them.
8. Squeeze the box the other way to see the animals that Samuel heard!
9. Holding the box squarely shows the Lord in the center. He is there, no matter what we are doing. He sees everything and knows what is in our hearts.
10. Eventually, Saul repented for what he had done. The Lord wants us to see our mistakes so that we can say we are sorry, too. This is how He brings us into heaven.



	Samuel knew Saul lied: “What then is this bleating in my ears?”
	
	Saul lied to Samuel: “I have performed the commandment of the Lord.”
	You shall not bear false witness Cut out window. “To obey is better than sacrifice”

Ages 11-14: Two Truths and a Lie

Materials Needed

copies of *Two Truths and a Lie Examples* to share, a copy of *Lying and Its Consequences* for each student, pens or pencils

Prepare in Advance

Print copies of *Two Truths and a Lie Examples* to share, and a copy of *Lying and Its Consequences* for each student.

Saul told Samuel a partial truth: he had killed the Amalekites. But since the Lord had told him to *completely destroy* them, his statement was in fact a lie. In saving the best animals and the king alive he showed that he believed they had value and did not want to part with them.

The Amalekites were a ruthless enemy who snuck up from behind Israel in battle. They correspond to falsity of a subtle and selfish kind that is deeply rooted in our will and sneakily attacks good affections. Half-way measures to get rid of this evil do nothing.

Students will play the game two truths and a lie and participate in a guided discussion about some of the subtle outcomes of lying.



New Church Concept

Teacher Background

“Those who deliberately or with intent to deceive speak falsehoods, and utter them in a tone which imitates spiritual affection—even more so if they intersperse them with truths from the Word, which are thus falsified—these people were called by the ancients spell-makers; and also soothsayers and serpents of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. These counterfeiters, liars and deceivers can be likened to people who chat in pleasant and friendly fashion with their enemies, and all the time they are talking, hold a dagger behind their backs with which to kill them.”

True Christian Religion 324

1. Spiritually, Saul’s action was like destroying “worthless” things, things that outwardly appear wrong, such as stealing and lying. However, Saul stopped short of getting rid of deeper spiritual evils of the heart, things that really seem valuable to us.
2. Invite students (and the teacher) to come up with two true statements and one lie about themselves to share with the group. If students have trouble thinking of things, offer the handout *Two Truths and a Lie* to stimulate thinking.
3. When everyone is ready, share two truths and a lie with the group. Students will try to identify the statements that are true, and the one that is a lie.
4. Give each student a copy of *Lying and Its Consequences* and ask them to circle all statements that they think are true. Be sure to mention that since motivations are key to actions, answers are not necessarily ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. Even though two people may do the same thing, their actions may be motivated by very different loves. Discuss answers as a group.
5. Read the statement in the yellow box. Does thinking about times that you’ve told lies as ‘mistakes’, open up new options for you?

New Church Concept

Teacher Background

“A mouth symbolizes speech, preaching, and doctrine. And deceit symbolizes a persuasion to evil by means of falsity, especially with cunning and purpose. For someone who urges something with cunning or deceit also does so on purpose. Indeed, cunning or deceit proposes it to itself, conceals it, and acts on it when given the opportunity.” *Apocalypse Revealed* 624

Likes/Dislikes

- My favorite animals are....
- I can't stand it when....
- I am a (vegetarian/picky eater/meat and potatoes lover).
- My favorite place in the world is....

Skills

- I can play the (harmonica/piano/tambourine).
- I can (juggle/wiggle my ears/do handstands).
- I never learned how to (ride a bicycle/braid my hair/draw).
- I'm a great (whistler/knitter/artist/cook).

Experiences

- I have visited (the Eiffel tower/Disney Land/Siberia).
- I've met (name of famous person).
- I've never seen (name of a famous movie).
- I've eaten (puffer fish/bug/a frog/no meat ever).

Wishes/Dreams

- When I was younger, my dream was to be a (firefighter/zookeeper/contortionist).
- I've always wanted to try (lassoing a cow/ riding in a balloon/hang gliding/horseback riding/slack lining).
- One of the places I want to visit most is (the Great Wall of China/the Pyramids/the bottom of the ocean).
- I hope to eventually (win a race/run a marathon/hike Mount Everest).

Family

- I am related to (Abraham Lincoln/William the Conqueror).
- I am the youngest (of five siblings/in my orchestra/to have won a spelling bee).
- My mother has worked (in a coal mine/as a chef/around the clock).
- I once owned a pet (hamster/frog/dog) named....

Random/Weird

- I am deathly afraid of (spontaneous combustion/knives/hot sauce/ghosts).
- I brush my teeth four times a day.
- I'm allergic to (strawberries/pumpkins/handshakes).
- I've never (had my nails painted/eaten a Pop-Tart/used someone else's toothbrush/broken a bone).

Circle all answers that you think are true and discuss them with your group. Answers are not necessarily “right” or “wrong”. Our motives are a key factor in whether or not something is right or wrong.

1. It’s not wrong to tell a lie if

- a. it saves someone’s life.
- b. gets me out of trouble.
- c. protects my country.
- d. prevents someone from being hurt.
- e. it won’t hurt anyone.

2. Bearing false witness (lying) about others can lead to

- a. losing the trust others have in us.
- b. protecting others from knowing what we really think.
- c. protecting friends from what others are saying.
- d. feelings of guilt and shame.
- e. the destruction of friendships.

3. Telling a half-truth is better than lying outright if

- a. we didn’t know we were doing something wrong.
- b. someone else ‘made’ us do something we didn’t want to.
- c. we are too embarrassed to admit what we have done.
- d. nobody will discover the truth.
- e. others would be hurt if they knew the truth.

4. If everybody stretched the truth (lied a little)

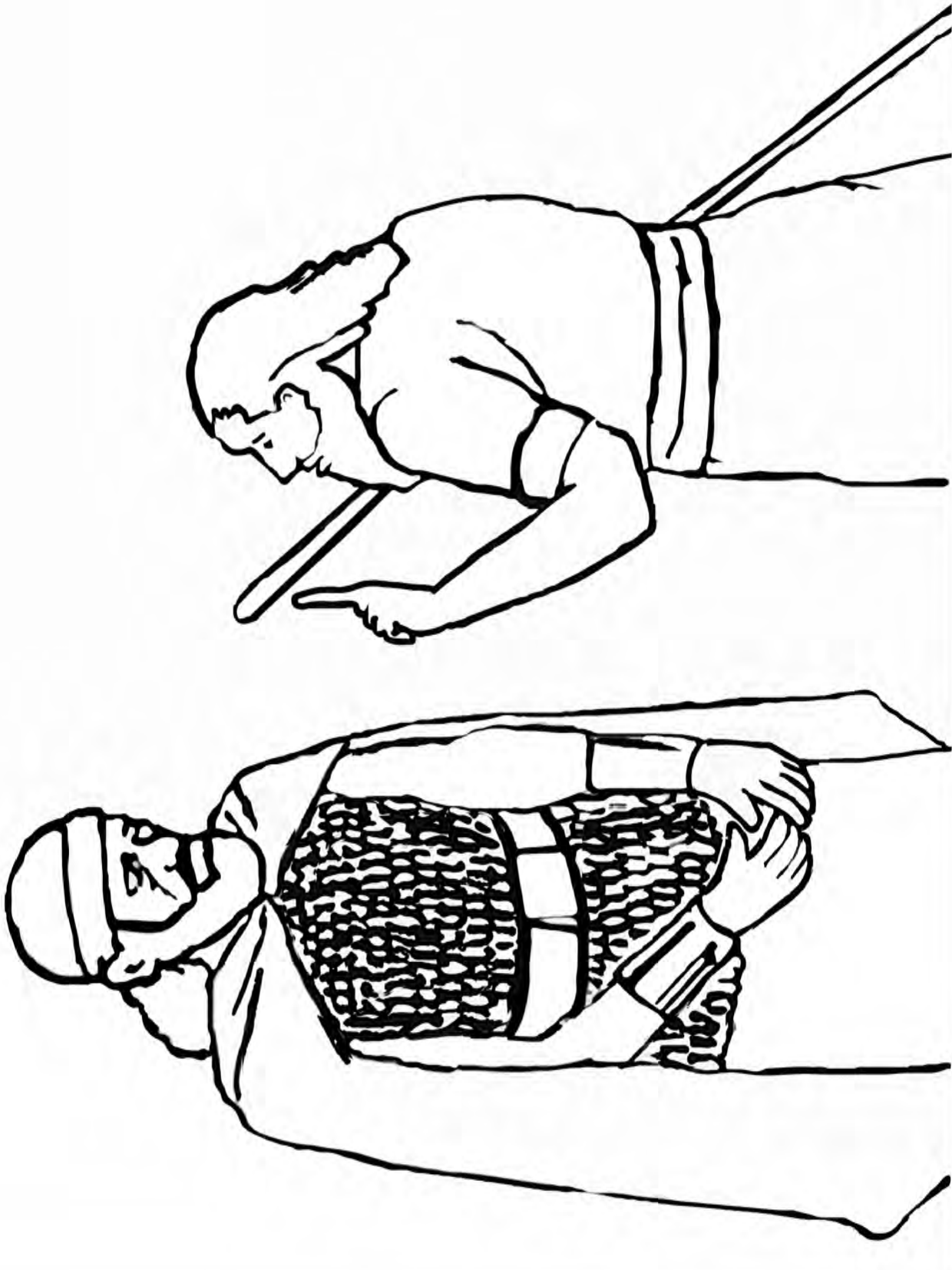
- a. society would become corrupt.
- b. it would be impossible to trust anyone.
- c. people would be more successful.
- d. there would be fewer conflicts.
- e. we would be confused about what’s true.

5. Having potential lies come into our minds means that

- a. we should be worried that we are on the path to hell.
- b. should recognize that evil spirits are suggesting we break the Ten Commandments.
- c. we have the freedom to choose a different path.
- d. we are experiencing a temptation.
- e. conscience can help us decide the right thing to do.

We all make mistakes. Your parents and grandparents made mistakes. Your teachers make mistakes and you have made and will make mistakes. These are inevitable as we make choices hourly. World leaders make important choices every day, but in terms of eternity, their choices are no more or no less important than those you must make. In God’s eyes we are all equally important. Life is about practicing to do what is right—and it does take a lifetime of practice. The most important part of all of us is what other people cannot see—that is, what goes on in our hearts and minds. Some mistakes that seem large in your mind may not appear that way to others, and may be too small to even seem significant in the grand scheme of life. But big or small, you can learn from your errors and start each new day knowing it holds new possibilities for change and progress.

(Adapted from *The Top of the Yardstick* by Donnette Alfelt)



Closing & Recitation

The eighth commandment, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” means we are not to tell lies about other people or about what we have done.

Today we add the eighth commandment to the commandments which we have already learned. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. Let’s say it together now. Take home a recitation slip and practice the first five commandments each day.

The Ten Commandments	The Ten Commandments
1. You shall have no other gods before My face.	1. You shall have no other gods before My face.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.	2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.	3. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
4. Honor your father and your mother.	4. Honor your father and your mother.
5. You shall not murder.	5. You shall not murder.
6. You shall not commit adultery.	6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.	7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.	8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
Exodus 20:3-16	Exodus 20:3-16

Online Extras

Looking for something “extra”? Try these online ideas!

Ages 3-6 *King Saul Disobeys* <http://childrensbiblelessons.blogspot.com/2014/07/lesson-king-saul-disobeys.html>

Ages 7-10 *Saul Disobeys God Maze* (p. 7) https://freesundayschoolcurriculum.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/5/0/12503916/lesson_96_saul_disobeys_god.pdf

Ages 11-14 *Saul Spares Agag and Loses the Kingdom*, a play <https://www.newchurchvineyard.org/file/play-saul-spares-agag-and-loses-the-kingdom-1-samuel15.pdf>