

Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness (Lie)

A thought-provoking playlet for assembly or class

Scene outlines; characters to improvise the words.

Scene One

A boy (Jim. Use the real names of the characters apart from Joe Bloggs).

His mother.

This is a family scene. Jim's schoolwork and behaviour have been suffering because he has been hanging about with Joe Bloggs who is a bad influence, according to Jim's mum. She even threatens to go up to school to tell those teachers that the two boys must be kept apart.

Scene Two

In the street

A narrator explains that the weeks have gone by. Jim and Joe Bloggs have hardly seen each other but they happen to live in the same area. Jim is on the way home with his friends, when Joe Bloggs arrives.

The action: Jim and his friends are playing football. Joe Bloggs joins in. As they move across the stage, one by one the friends leave. They drop off at their street corners with the usual 'So long; be seeing you' remarks, until Joe Bloggs and Jim are the only ones playing. Jim suddenly realises that he is late and he rushes off with his football.

Scene Three

At Jim's home. Jim and his mother

The Mum says words on these lines: 'You're late again! I thought you were improving, but I should have known better, etc., etc., You've been with that Joe Bloggs, haven't you?'

Jim is careful not to actually say that he's not been with Joe Bloggs. He gets round it. 'Aw, Mum! I'm sorry I'm late. I forgot the time. I've been playing football with ... (he lists all the boys but misses out Joe Bloggs).'

Mum says, 'Well, wash your hands, then come and get your tea.'

Narrator: Was Jim telling a lie or wasn't he? He didn't actually say that he wasn't with Joe Bloggs.

Let the audience vote.

According to New Testament teaching, if you intend to deceive then you have told a lie, whatever words you said.

This assembly could be used with the playlet about not stealing; the theme being: Honesty in word and deed.

In class it can be an illustration of the ninth commandment. An entertaining story for reading on this topic is George Layton's *The Fib* (Longman's Knockouts).

For more depth of discussion in class, get the children to make up short scenes such as the following:

A wounded parachutist is hidden in a back room. A woman tends him. There is a knock on the door. The woman answers and finds an enemy soldier searching for the parachutist. What does she say?

A lady has bought a hideous dress. She wants to look her best for a special occasion. She asks her friend's opinion about the dress. The friend does not want to hurt her feelings but does not want her to go out looking a mess. What does the friend say?

A person is lying in bed dying from an incurable illness. A nurse comes in. The patient asks, 'I will get better, won't I?' What does the nurse reply?

After acting out these situations, discuss the dilemmas they raise, with particular attention to truthfulness.

© Janet Green 2012