



# ETHICAL VALUES AND OTHER KINDS OF VALUES

The word *ethics* has to do with good or doing the right thing. An *ethical decision* is the kind of decision that has to do with making a good choice. When people talk about *values*, they are often referring to *ethical values*—the kind of values that have to do with being good or doing the right thing. They mean the values that are good for a family.

There are lots of values, however, that have nothing to do with ethics. It is important to be able to tell the difference between ethical values and nonethical values if you want to get at the most basic ideas about goodness or doing the right thing. In the scenarios on the worksheet, you'll be exploring the difference between ethical and nonethical values.

If you feel some confusion about the difference, try this test. Ask yourself, "Is this value about goodness, or doing the right thing? Would you consider a person with this value to be a better person than someone without this value?"



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In each of the following examples, the ethical values and the nonethical values are underlined. Write an “E” over the ethical values. Write an “N” over the nonethical values. The first one is done for you.

SCENARIO #1: Jeff is very athletic and he plays on the basketball team. What I like most about the way he plays is that he’s such a team player. He would never keep the ball just to make a fancy play. He’s considerate of everybody else on his team.

N

Is being athletic about goodness or doing the right thing?

E

Is considerate?

SCENARIO #2: Sheila is one of the most responsible people I know. She is very adventurous and likes to challenge herself in all sorts of ways, but she doesn’t forget to be sensible. Once some of us climbed a really tall tree together, and then I had trouble getting down. Sheila didn’t just run off, but helped me find a way to the ground. She knew I could have hurt myself if she hadn’t stayed to help.

Is being responsible about goodness or doing the right thing?

Is adventurous?

**SCENARIO #3:** I like visiting Rakesh's family because they're so hospitable. They're pretty wealthy, but they never make me feel uncomfortable at their home. Just the opposite is true. They make me feel like a part of the family and we always have lots of fun.

Is being hospitable about goodness or doing the right thing?

Is wealthy?

**SCENARIO #4:** I like Samantha because she's respectful of everybody, even though she can be really funny. Some kids tell jokes that are hurtful and mean. Samantha knows how to make everybody laugh, and nobody gets hurt.

Is being respectful about goodness or doing the right thing?

Is funny?

**SCENARIO #5:** Barry is very musical, and sometimes I wish I could play the guitar as well as he can. I also admire his honesty. The other day, when band practice didn't go very well, he was the first to admit that he hadn't really practiced the way he'd promised.

Is being musical about goodness or doing the right thing?

Is honesty?

**SCENARIO #6:** Jill is very creative and will probably become an artist someday. She's a great help when we work on group projects because she always has good ideas about what we should do. She also is cooperative with everyone else. When we work together, I never feel like she's bossing me around, even though she usually knows the best way to go about getting the job done.

Is being creative about goodness or doing the right thing?

Is cooperative?