

KIDS of INTEGRITY

Cooperation



Can you eat with your hand tied to someone else's? How about playing Operation the same way? Are you as smart as a goose? Find out as you explore the value of cooperating!

There are loads of cool ideas here to help kids:

- put others' desires ahead of their own
- work and play peacefully and productively with others
- be submissive to God, parents, siblings and others.

You'll find this lesson helpful for addressing selfishness, a "my way or the high way" attitude, or a stubborn or argumentative resistance to helping with chores.

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Scripture verses in this lesson are quoted from the English Standard Version.

Parents' prayer

Before you begin leading your children through this study on cooperation, spend time alone with God interceding for His help. You can use the sample prayer below to guide you in praying for your children's character development.

If you prefer to pray your own original thoughts, read through the additional verses provided under "Scripture-guided prayer" for inspiration.

Sample prayer

Lord of All, as the God of love, You call us to live and work with others in unity. When Jesus prayed for all believers He asked that we would be one as He and You are one. He asked that we would be brought to complete unity to let the world know You sent Him and have loved everyone even as You loved Him. Your plan is that the love You have for Jesus would be in us and that Jesus Himself would live in us to show others what Your love looks like (John 17:20-26). Your wisdom that comes from heaven is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere (James 3:17). What an amazing recipe for living in caring community!

Sadly, I admit that my own impure motives and selfish desires have many times destroyed the unity in our family. Instead of working cooperatively with others, I have insisted on having things done my way. Rather than being merciful, I have been quick to judge or accuse. At times I have been unfairly biased, and in other instances I have been inconsiderate. Please forgive me and put Your Holy Spirit in me so I can have a selfless and submissive spirit.

For my children, _____ and _____, I ask You to give them a willingness to be cooperative. In order to earn a God-honouring grade in the "plays well with others" area of life, they need to learn to put the wishes of others ahead of their own. If _____ and _____ are tempted to be uncooperative because of a selfish agenda, please remind them that if they choose the way of peace, You will raise a harvest of righteousness around them (James 3:18). Please help them to see cooperation positively – as a way to live at peace with others, rather than as a limitation on their own

wishes. I also pray that You would give my children an understanding of the importance of submitting to You and to other authorities.

On behalf of our family, I invite Your Holy Spirit to inspire us to submit to one another out of reverence for You (Ephesians 5:21). In those situations where we impulsively hang on to control, inspire us to defer our own wishes to show that we love You more than we love having things our own way. Please help us take advantage of the ample opportunities we have each day to build a team attitude within our family unit. We commit our way to You and trust that You will make our righteousness shine like the dawn. We need You, the God who gives endurance and encouragement, to give us a spirit of unity in our home so that with one heart and mouth we may glorify You (Psalm 37:5-6, Romans 15:5-6). Amen.

Scripture-guided prayer for parents

Read and pray through one or more of the selected Scriptures under each heading. Focus on listening to God and allow His Spirit to direct you as you pray.

Character focus

Begin by thanking God for being a God of love and unity.

2 Chronicles 30:12 | John 17:20-26 | Ephesians 5:1-2 |
1 John 4:7-12 | 1 John 4:13-16

Heart search

Acknowledge where you lack unity in your relationships due to an unwillingness to be submissive.

2 Chronicles 30:8-9 | 1 Corinthians 1:10 |
1 Corinthians 13:4-7 | Galatians 5:19-21 |
Philippians 2:3

Gratitude

Thank God for the cooperative efforts you have witnessed within your family.

Family requests

Ask God to help you and your children live and work in cooperation with others.

Romans 15:5-6 | 2 Corinthians 13:11 | Ephesians 4:2-3
| Philippians 2:1-2 | Colossians 3:14-15

Kids talk with God

Use the sample prayers in this section to help your children learn to reach out to God in all things. Alternatively, if your children are ready to pray an original prayer, you may wish to use the Bible verses provided under "Scripture-guided prayer for children."

Sample prayers

Dear God, I want to do things Your way, not mine.
Amen.

Dear God, I confess that I often want things my way. Please help me to let _____ have their way instead. Amen.

Dear God, please help me submit to You so I can resist the devil (James 4:7). Amen.

Dear God, I don't feel like cooperating with _____. I really need Your Holy Spirit to help me!
Amen.

Dear God, please help me to cooperate when my parents ask me to do something I don't want to do. I do want to please You (Colossians 3:20). Amen.

Dear God, when I don't feel like cooperating, please help me to remember that it is good and pleasant when brothers (and sisters) live together in unity (Psalm 133:1). Amen.

Dear God, please help me to love my family so we can live together in perfect unity (Colossians 3:14).
Amen.

Dear God, please help me to remember that I can show I love someone by letting them have their way (1 Corinthians 13:5). Amen.

Scripture-guided prayer for children

Read through one of the selected Scriptures under each heading and help your children pray based on the verse you read. Encourage them to listen to God and allow His Spirit to guide them as they pray.

Character focus

Begin by thanking God for being a God of love and unity.

James 3:17 | 1 John 4:7 | 1 John 4:16

Heart search

Acknowledge when and how you have trouble getting along with others.

1 Corinthians 13:4 | 1 Corinthians 13:5 | Philippians 2:3

Gratitude

Thank God for ways you have seen your family cooperating.

Family requests

Ask God to help you, your siblings and parents to be cooperative.

Romans 15:5 | Philippians 2:4 | 2 Corinthians 13:11

Speak a blessing

Your affirmation will give tremendous encouragement to your children as they strive to cooperate with others. Use this section as a reminder to “speak a blessing” when you see evidence of this characteristic.

- _____, there has been a wonderful harvest of righteousness! You chose to keep the peace by _____ (James 3:18).
- _____, thank you for choosing to put others first.
- _____ is so cooperative!
- Thank you for cooperating! We share God’s love with others when we work / play together in unity.
- _____, you’re a real team player.
- It’s so nice to be around people who are working together cooperatively.
- I enjoy being around you when you _____.

- When we submit to each other we are honouring each other, and honouring God too (Ephesians 5:21).

Memory verses

Memorizing Scripture with your children helps God’s Spirit bring about lasting change. Choose a verse that your children can learn in a pre-determined period of time and aim to review the verse at least once every day.

Proverbs 13:10 “By insolence comes nothing but strife, but with those who take advice is wisdom.”

Proverbs 17:14 “The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out.”

Proverbs 20:3 “It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling.”

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!”

1 Corinthians 13:4-5 “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful . . .”

Ephesians 4:2b-3 “. . . with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Ephesians 5:21 “. . . submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Philippians 2:3 “Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”

Philippians 2:4 “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

Colossians 3:14 “And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”

Colossians 3:20 “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.”

2 John 1:6 “And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments; this is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, so that you should walk in it.”

Kick-off craft

Get ready to play a unique version of Bingo every day! In this activity, you'll make your own family game card and score a Bingo by cooperating with other members of the family.

Cooperation Bingo Directions

You'll need the following supplies:

- one large square of poster board or paper measuring 50 cm x 50 cm (20" x 20")
- 24 small squares of paper, each measuring 10 cm x 10 cm (4" x 4")
- felt-tip markers or crayons
- stamps or stickers for marking off Bingo squares (or make your own stamp from a potato).

1 Start by brainstorming as a family, listing ways that family members can submit to or cooperate with one another. You'll need at least 24 ideas. The list below will help get you started.

2 Work together to illustrate your 24 ideas, drawing one idea on each 10 cm x 10 cm square of paper. For clarity, also write a description below each illustration.

3 To make your family Bingo card, tape or glue the illustrated squares in a five-by-five grid on the large poster board. For the centre square, add a free square that says “unity” and is illustrated with a heart. Explain that when family members cooperate, the result is unity instead of discord.

(Discord means having grumpy attitudes toward each other.)

4 Post the Bingo card in a prominent location and play the game for a few days, letting your children take turns crossing off the relevant squares as the cooperative tasks are completed. Your goal is to complete one row (vertical, horizontal or diagonal) per family member. For example, if you have four people in your family, complete four rows. Celebrate your family's accomplishment with a special event that everyone will enjoy.

Here are some examples of submission and cooperation you may wish to use for your Bingo squares:

- Let someone go ahead of you through a doorway.
- Let someone go ahead of you while you are waiting in a line.
- Walk away from a potential conflict.
- Let another person speak first.
- Pass the food, when asked, during a meal.
- Before having seconds, offer them to others first.
- Let someone else choose which game to play.
- Let someone else choose which music to have on.
- Let someone else choose which DVD or TV show to watch.
- Allow another child to play with a favourite toy first.
- Eat a food you are less than fond of without whining.
- Say nothing negative for an hour.
- Overlook a fault or a negative comment.

- Sit still while someone combs your hair.
- Cooperate with the person helping you to get dressed.
- Plan and / or make a meal together.
- See someone working and offer to help.
- Help another family member clean their bedroom.
- Do a job that requires two people to complete (i.e. folding a blanket or a sheet, or sweeping the floor with one person holding the broom and the other holding the dustpan).
- Share a treat.
- Give someone else the larger portion of dessert.
- Carry a heavy object together.
- Share a sink.
- Do a job quickly, without complaining.
- Everyone help clean up after supper.
- Forgive someone before they say sorry.
- Set the table together.
- Share a small space without shoving and pushing.

Relevant Scripture

Psalm 133:1 “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!”

Philippians 2:1-2 “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.”

Bible stories

This section provides Bible stories with the theme of cooperation, along with questions to guide follow-up

discussions. Choose one story that is appropriate for your children. If the Bible passage is too complex for your children, paraphrase the story yourself or use the summary provided under “key concepts.”

Building together

Note: See “A cooperative building project” in the **hands-on options** section for a related activity.

Sitting and listening to this long story will give your children some empathy for the Israelites who had to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem! Before reading the story, share this background information:

In the years leading up to these events, God had allowed the king of a foreign country to capture most of the Israelites and bring them back to the foreign king’s country to work as slaves. Nehemiah was working for the foreign king. When Nehemiah heard that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down, he asked the king for permission to return to Jerusalem to lead others in rebuilding the city walls.

Read Nehemiah 3.

Questions for discussion

1. How do you feel after you have finished a long job or project?
2. How do you think the Israelites felt after they worked together to complete the wall of Jerusalem?
3. In verse three we read that the nobles of Tekoa would not help with the rebuilding. Why do you think they refused to join in the work?
4. Which jobs do you like to avoid?
5. How did the Bible say that Baruch son of Zabbai worked?
6. Do you think God was more pleased with the nobles of Tekoa, or with Baruch son of Zabbai?
7. How do you want others to think of you – as a zealous worker, a cooperative worker, or someone who refuses to do their part?

8. When the Israelites became fearful and discouraged, Nehemiah reminded them to keep trusting in God. If our family members or teammates are tired and feel like quitting, how can we encourage them?
9. How do you feel if someone quits in the middle of a game you are playing together?

Key concepts

The Bible says the nobles of Tekoa “would not put their shoulders to the work” of rebuilding the wall around Jerusalem (Nehemiah 3:5). We don’t know why these people refused to help, but we can imagine that perhaps they felt they were “too good” to do physical labour, or maybe they were simply lazy. All of us can be tempted to avoid work at times, but we are instructed in the Bible to work as though we are working for the Lord, not men (Colossians 3:23-24).

From the story in Nehemiah, it sounds like Baruch son of Zabbai was a hard worker. When we work it is important to do our jobs well in order to please those we are working for, but it is even more important to focus on working in a way that pleases God.

We also read in the Bible that God sees what we do and will reward us for what we do. During long and hard jobs it is easy to get to the point where you are tired or bored and want to quit. At these times we can encourage each other to keep on trusting God, just as Nehemiah encouraged the Israelites when they were fearful and discouraged (Nehemiah 4:14,20).

Relevant Scripture

Colossians 3:23-24 “**Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.**”

Matthew 16:27 “**For the Son of Man is going to come with His angels in the glory of His Father, and then He will repay each person according to what he has done.**”

Standing strong together

Before reading this Bible story, share this background information:

In the years leading up to these events, God had allowed the king of a foreign country to capture most of the Israelites and bring them back to the foreign king’s country to work as slaves. Nehemiah was working for the foreign king. When Nehemiah heard that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down, he asked the king for permission to return to Jerusalem to lead others in rebuilding the city walls. The king gave Nehemiah permission, so he went back to Jerusalem (Nehemiah 1:1-3, 2:4-9). When the rebuilding of the wall began, some neighbouring people wanted to put a stop to it. They made fun of the project and threatened to harm those who were building the wall.

Read Nehemiah 4:7-21.

Questions for discussion

1. Would you have been scared to stay and rebuild the wall if there were bad guys lurking around who wanted to harm you?
2. What did Nehemiah and the builders do?
3. What do you think would have happened if some of the Israelites rebuilding the wall had decided they didn’t want to follow Nehemiah’s plans for protection?
4. What kinds of excuses might the workers have made if they didn’t want to serve as soldiers?
5. The Israelites were under the leadership of Nehemiah. Who are your leaders?
6. Do you ever make excuses as to why you don’t want to do what your leaders ask?
7. If you were facing a problem, whose help would you want?
8. Is it easier to face problems when you are alone, or when you are with others?

Key concepts

Just as the Israelites began making progress on rebuilding the wall, a problem came up. Some of the people living in the surrounding area were very angry that the walls of Jerusalem were being rebuilt. They made fun of the workers and even threatened to come and hurt the people who were working on the wall. Nehemiah prayed, then made a plan. He posted guards day and night to watch over the walls. During the day, half of the people kept working on the rebuilding project while the other half stood guard with spears and swords.

Nehemiah told the people to “Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome” and to fight to protect their brothers, sons, daughters, wives and homes (Nehemiah 4:14). Nehemiah also made a plan that involved the cooperation of all the people of Israel. If anyone was attacked by their enemies, the trumpeter would blow the trumpet to let everyone else know they should come to that part of the wall and help those who were being attacked.

Nehemiah’s safety plan would never have worked if some of the Israelites had said, “I will not be a soldier. I won’t protect anyone but those in my own family.” In order for a team to succeed, each person must be willing to work cooperatively toward the same goal. Jesus even talked about this in the Bible when He said, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid to waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand” (Matthew 12:25). When we face a problem, we can ask for God’s help, just as Nehemiah did. It’s important that we support others too. The term “I’ve got your back” is a way of telling a family member or friend that you are watching out for his or her safety or well-being. Successful teams and families have members who encourage and look out for each other

Relevant Scripture

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!”

Matthew 12:25 “Knowing their thoughts, He said to them, ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is laid

waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand.’”

Submitting to authorities

Read Romans 13:1-7.

Questions for discussion

1. Who are the governing authorities in our community?
2. What rules do these governing authorities ask us to follow?
3. What happens if we break the rules?
4. What would happen if someone ignored a “yield” sign and drove their car into a lane of oncoming cars?
5. Who decides which people should be government leaders?

Key concepts

Being submissive means that we respect those in authority and obey the rules they put in place. Authorities include police officers, pastors, school teachers, principals and members of government (local, regional and national).

God is the one who decides which people should be in places of leadership and He wants us to submit to them. Our government has many rules that are similar to God’s rules in the Bible. For example, in our country we are not allowed to steal things or to kill or hurt other people. God’s rules and society’s rules are in place to protect us.

If we choose not to follow rules, we could be punished. If someone chooses to disobey the laws of the land, they can be asked to pay fines, be sent to jail, or be given unpaid work to do in their community. In a family, if children refuse to submit to the house rules they may lose privileges, be put in a time out, or be given extra work.

Relevant Scripture

1 Peter 2:13-14 “Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him

to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.”

Deuteronomy 10:12-13 “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good?”

Learning to submit to God

Read Judges 2:6-23.

Questions for discussion

1. What did the Israelites do to make God angry?
2. What are the names of the other gods they followed?
3. How did God discipline the Israelites?
4. Did they learn their lesson? (Deuteronomy 5:7)
5. Were the Israelites doing things God’s way or their own way?
6. Are you ever stubborn enough to insist on doing things your way, even if a parent has warned you of harsh consequences for refusing to obey?
7. Is life more pleasant when you cooperate, or when you refuse to do as your parents ask?
8. How are God’s instructions to children in Ephesians 6:1-3 similar to the instructions He gave the Israelites?

Key concepts

To submit to God means a person is willing to do things God’s way, and to live following God’s rules. The opposite of submission is rebelliousness and stubbornness. Rebellious or stubborn people insist on doing things their own way and refuse to follow rules and instructions.

The Israelites honoured God during the time Joshua was alive, but after he died the Bible tells us that the Israelites forgot to teach their children about

God’s faithfulness and how He cared for them. They started to worship the gods of the other people who lived in the land. This made God angry, so He allowed rival armies to defeat them.

After being taken over by their enemies, the Israelites would then become very miserable and God would have compassion on them and give them a leader, called a judge, who would save them from their enemies. The Israelites would follow God for a short time, but as soon as the judge died, they would quickly go back to following the other gods. The stubbornness of the Israelites finally made God angry enough that He decided to leave the foreigners in the Promised Land with the Israelites in order to test their willingness to stay faithful to Him. Similar to the warning God gave the Israelites about obeying Him, God tells children to obey their parents so that it may go well with them.

Relevant Scripture

Ephesians 6:1-3 “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’ (this is the first commandment with a promise), ‘that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.’ ”

Psalm 81:10-12 “I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it. But My people did not listen to My voice; Israel would not submit to Me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels.”

Working together for truth

To add excitement and anticipation, consider printing out 3 John 1:1-11 and sealing it in an envelope, then “discover” it in your mailbox – a letter from Pastor John! Prior to reading out the letter, hand out some pre-packaged snacks. Be sure to give out only one bag of fish crackers, one bag of carrots, one bag of small cookies and one bag of apple slices. Allow your children to decide who gets which bag, and how to share the snack fairly.

Read 3 John 1:1-11.

Questions for discussion

1. What do you think John meant when he said the believers were “walking in the truth”?

2. What does the word “hospitable” mean?
3. Why would God want us to be hospitable?
4. Diotrephes was not hospitable toward the travelling pastors. How can we make others feel welcome in our home?
5. How did Diotrephes make things difficult for others?
6. Gossiping (saying unkind things about others) is considered evil. What is the opposite of gossiping?
7. What is the meaning of the phrase, “He likes to put himself first”?
8. Can you think of any ways you can put others first?
9. Is it possible to “put someone first” in a conversation? If so, how?
10. Are there ever times that you want all the attention instead of being willing to share the attention with others?

Key concepts

John talks about three ways we can obey God’s commandments or “walk in truth.” They include speaking kindly and respectfully, putting others first, and showing hospitality. The Christians John was writing to showed hospitality to pastors who were visiting the region by letting them stay in their homes. They took care of each pastor’s needs so the travelling pastor could keep sharing the good news of God’s love with those who had not heard about Jesus yet.

Many people cooperated in this way, but John tells us about one man who was not cooperative. His name was Diotrephes. Diotrephes made things difficult for others by gossiping and insisting on being first himself. He also refused to welcome the visiting pastors and made life difficult for those who did.

When we are hospitable, we are treating others in a way that pleases God. We can make people feel

welcome in our home by sharing conversation, food, toys and a place to sleep or rest. Putting others first is another great way to please God. We can put others first by allowing them to have the first turn doing something fun, by letting them talk first, or by giving them first choice at snack time.

Relevant Scripture

1 Peter 4:8-10 “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace . . .”

Mark 9:34-35 “But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. And He sat down and called the twelve. And He said to them, ‘If anyone would be first, He must be last of all and servant of all.’”

A task requiring teamwork and determination

Read Mark 2:1-12.

Questions for discussion

1. How did the friends of the paralyzed man show that they cared for him?
2. What kind of teamwork would have been required to lower a man on a stretcher down through a roof?
3. What do you think the paralyzed man said to his friends afterward?
4. How do you feel after you have been part of a cooperative effort to help another person?
5. How can you show that you care for someone who is hurt or sick?
6. Do you have any friends or family members who don’t know that they can have Jesus as their friend?
7. How could you introduce them to Jesus?

Key concepts

Four men brought a paralyzed man to see Jesus, but the building was so crowded that they couldn't get in the door. Instead, they went up on the roof and dug a hole in it. Then they lowered the man down on his mat to see Jesus. The Bible tells us that when "Jesus saw their faith," He healed the man spiritually by forgiving his sins, then healed him physically too. For the first time, the man could walk! How special the paralyzed man must have felt to have four good friends put forth such a cooperative effort to help him see Jesus. His friends must have been pretty excited too when they saw their friend walking.

The best thing anyone can do for a friend is to introduce their friend to Jesus. If we have a friend or family member who is hurt or ill, we can ask them if it is okay with them if we pray for them and ask Jesus to heal them. In praying for someone, we are taking their problem to Jesus for them.

Relevant Scripture

Psalm 103:2-5 "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."

Creative discipline

Here are some suggestions to help you develop a spirit of collaboration in your children.

For problems with an uncooperative attitude

Biblical basis

James 3:13-18: "Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest

of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

James 4:7 "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Suggested disciplinary action

If one of your children refuses to submit to authority or cooperate, liken this to refusing to yield the right-of-way in traffic. Explain that if drivers refused to follow the rules of the road, the end result would be chaos. So it is in our homes – if kids disobey their parents, then their homes will lack harmony and will instead be full of chaos. God's plan is for our homes to be peaceful.

As a discipline measure, assign your child a task that involves sorting or organizing, or some form of restoring order. You'll likely need to work alongside your child. Take advantage of the time you spend together to further discuss the importance of cooperation. Here are a few ideas:

- Sort clean socks into matching pairs. Talk about the chaos that would be created if mismatched socks appeared in everyone's sock drawer. Imagine Dad trying to put on a child's sock when getting ready for work.
- Sort washed cutlery into the appropriate place in the drawer. Talk about what a bother it would be to set the table if all the silverware were mismatched.
- Tidy and sort shoes left in your hallway, closet or mudroom. Discuss why it is better to leave shoes tidy and in matching pairs, rather than all jumbled together.
- Sort recyclables and take a trip to the recycling depot. Chat about the importance of order versus chaos. Have your child imagine how difficult it would be for the recycling depot staff if all the containers were tossed in a single bin.

- Sort through a cluttered toy box, putting the toys in appropriate bins. Talk for the toys, pretending that some toys are cooperating and others are not. Explain to the toys that if they want to be played with, they need to be in the right bin so that your child can find them.
- Sort soiled laundry into colours and whites. Point out what would happen if you didn't sort the clothing before washing it: blue jeans would snag delicate fabrics, bright or dark colours would run into the whites, and the clothing would begin to look dingy and wear out quickly.
- Clean out an odds and ends drawer and ask your child to help sort paper clips, safety pins, coins, elastic bands and string into separate containers. Chat about how much easier it will be for you to find the items you need when they are well organized.
- Organize your food storage containers and ask your child to help figure out which lids go with which containers. Arrange the containers from small to large. Mention how easy it will now be to find containers for snacks and leftovers.

Affirmation

When the job is completed, pray with your child, basing your prayer on James 3:17-18: *“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”* Ask God to give your child wisdom from heaven in the form of a submissive and obedient heart that desires to spread peace rather than chaos.

Hands-on options

These easy-to-implement ideas will help you share with your children some simple but memorable lessons about cooperation. Choose one or two activities that will fit your schedule.

Fun with teamwork

drama / role play

Begin by introducing your children to the idea that work is more enjoyable when people work together

as a team. Explain the connection between the acronym TEAM and the slogan “Together Everyone Accomplishes More.” Or create your own family acronym or rhyme, for example, *When we work as one, more gets done and we have a ton of fun!*

Plan a brief family activity to reinforce the idea that working together cooperatively is enjoyable. (See the list below for ideas). Repeat your family slogan often during your activity.

- If your children enjoy drama and dance, make large cardboard or foam letters that spell “TEAM.” Help your children come up with a dance routine that spells out the word “TEAM” using coordinated footwork and arm movements.
- Select a large houseplant or a heavy piece of furniture that needs to be moved. Allow each child to try moving it alone (but not to the point of straining muscles). Then organize a team effort to lift the object to the desired location.
- Build a small human pyramid as a family. To add to the challenge, set up a camera with a self-timer and take a photo of the pyramid.
- Cooperatively wash your house or car windows with some family members working indoors and others outdoors. Work on the same windowpane at the same time, helping each other determine if the dirt or smudges are on the inside or the outside.

Talk about how everyone needed to do their part in order to complete the task. Discuss any events that threatened the unity of your team, then share ideas that help prevent discord when you work together. Pray and thank God for giving you a family to work and play with. Remember to recall your family's team slogan when you work together in the future.

Relevant Scripture

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 *“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!”*

Terrific traffic

physical activity

In this activity, you will work with your children to build an indoor “roadway” where they can practice safe “driving.” You will need coloured paper, markers, scissors, glue, tape, rope and chairs.

- 1 Using red and white paper, make “yield” signs and “stop” signs. Also make a “slow” sign similar to those that traffic controllers use during road construction. Place white paper strips across your roadway to mark a pedestrian crossing and add a pedestrian crossing sign.
- 2 Next, with the help of your children, set up a roadway by placing rope (or another indicator) on the floor. Be sure to include intersections where cars have to stop or yield. Tape the appropriate signs on chairs beside the road.
- 3 Help each child make a pretend car to drive. These can be either simple or elaborate. For example, you can tape a picture of your child’s preferred car onto their shirt, or make a car out of a cardboard box that is large enough for a child to wear over their body. Cut head and arm holes and allow your child to decorate it.
- 4 Begin by having your children follow you along the road listening to your directions on how to obey the traffic signs. Then allow your children to drive the course on their own, obeying the signs. You can hold the “slow” sign or have stuffed animals line up at the pedestrian crossing. Give out stickers as safe driver awards for your children to stick on their cars.

Afterward, read the Scripture verse provided below, then have your kids answer the following “safe driver quiz.” Give out “cooperative driver’s licences” in recognition for passing the test.

Questions for discussion

- When you see a “stop” sign, what should you do?
- What should a driver do when they come to a “yield” sign?

- If two drivers want to drive in the same lane at the same time, how do you decide who gets to go first?
- What do the words “defer to” or “submit” mean?
- Who makes up the rules drivers must follow on the road?
- What happens to drivers if they do not submit to these rules?
- Who makes the rules we follow in life?
- What does God think when people don’t follow the rules?

Key concepts

If a driver comes to a “stop” sign, the rules of the road require that they stop. Likewise, if a driver comes to a “yield” sign and sees another car coming down the road, they are required to stop and wait for the other car to go by before entering that roadway. The road signs tell drivers who has the “right-of-way” and who has to wait.

Obeying traffic signs is similar to obeying God’s rules or a parent’s instructions. Obedience is rewarded with blessings, and there may be discipline and pain involved when there is disobedience. For example, the driver of a car stops or submits when the road signs tell them to, because the driver knows that if they don’t obey the rules of the road, an accident could happen!

Note: If you live in a larger town or city that has a traffic safety centre, you may prefer to skip this at-home activity and instead take a field trip to learn about vehicle and pedestrian safety.

Relevant Scripture

Romans 13:1 “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.”

Cooperating in the kitchen

fun with food

In this activity, children will practice following another person's lead, and leading without being bossy. To prepare, you will need to mix up a batch of cookie dough (for cookie-cutter cookies) or bread dough. For a no-bake alternative, use playdough or modelling clay.

- 1 Choose one child to lead first and ask everyone else to cooperate by shaping the cookies or buns as the leader demonstrates. (Be sure to divide the dough into equal portions so that everyone gets a chance to be in the leadership role before the dough is used up.)
- 2 Take turns leading until everyone has had a chance to "teach" the others how to make cookie shapes.
- 3 This is an ideal time to let your children hear you saying, "Let's do it your way now." Also try to make comments similar to these: "We usually make round cookies or buns. What shapes do you think would taste good?" "I've never dreamed of a cookie that big!" Or, "You know, I always thought cookies were supposed to be round, but square ones look just fine too!"
- 4 After the cookies have been baked, sit down to enjoy them as a snack and take time to discuss how much fun it was to share design ideas with each other. Use the questions below in your discussion.

Questions for discussion

- Which role did you enjoy more: being the leader or the follower?
- How did you feel when someone told you to make cookies that seemed odd to you?
- When you are playing with a friend and they keep insisting on doing things their way, how do you feel?
- How do you think your friends feel when you are always telling them how to play a game?

- How can you cooperate with others during playtime so they can enjoy playing at our house?

Relevant Scripture

Ephesians 5:21 ". . . submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."

Proverbs 16:21 "The wise of heart is called discerning, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness."

A tale of two squirrels

drive time/anytime

This is a true story, but with names changed and some imaginative touches added. Feel free to further reinvent the tale to make it more interesting for your children.

A tale of two squirrels

Once there was a squirrel family with two children in it – a brother squirrel and a sister squirrel. Momma squirrel needed help storing food for winter, so she asked Brother and Sister to collect pinecones while she travelled farther into the woods to collect some hazelnuts.

For about an hour the young squirrels worked hard gathering cones from an evergreen tree near their home. Brother tossed the cones down from the high branches and Sister ran to collect them and put them in their winter storage pile.

Just as they were growing a little bored with the work, Brother hit Sister on the head with a pinecone – and she didn't like it one bit! She didn't wait to ask if it had been an accident. Instead, she ran straight up the tree trunk and out onto the branch where Brother sat. Then she bit his tail hard!

As you can imagine, Brother was shocked and angry. He chased Sister around the tree trunk. Around and around they ran, pausing every so often to listen for the chattering of the other one. The more they chattered at each other, the faster they ran up and down and around and around the tree.

"Chhhh! Chhhh! You have a fluffy tail," Brother mocked.

“Your fur is an ugly colour,” Sister screeched back.

This continued for the entire afternoon. The squirrel children knew they would be in trouble for getting nothing done, but neither one was willing to say sorry and begin cooperating again.

Six-year-old Jackson and his older sister, Olivia, were in their backyard raking leaves. As they worked, they watched the squirrels. When their father came out to check on their work, the children pointed to the funny, squabbling squirrels. Their father started laughing.

“Can you guess what their mother is going to say when she comes back?” he asked Olivia and Jackson.

Olivia and Jackson thought back to something that had happened the day before, when Olivia and Jackson had been arguing over their chores. They always argued over chores – about who had to do what, who was working harder, and who was working faster. But this time, their mother had timed their argument. They had argued for seven minutes about who should pick up some spilled beads!

Olivia had demanded that Jackson pick the beads up, since he had knocked them off the table. Jackson said it was Olivia’s fault for not tidying the beads away.

Remembering the argument, Jackson answered, “I think the mother squirrel might say something like Mom said to us yesterday.”

“And what was that?” asked his dad.

Olivia recalled and repeated her mom’s statement: “You’ve wasted so much time arguing, you could have had that job done already.”

The silly squirrels were still chasing each other when Momma squirrel returned. “Chhhh! Chhhh!” Momma squirrel scolded.

Jackson was distracted by the squirrels and dropped the bag that Olivia was loading leaves into. The

leaves spilt all over the ground. Before either of the children could blame the other and start fighting, their dad started making the squirrel’s noise.

“Chhhh! Chhhh!”

Both kids started laughing, and suddenly they were all throwing leaves at each other.

“Chhhh! Chhhh!” their dad said, imitating the squirrels again.

“Don’t pretend we’re squirrels, Dad!” begged Jackson. They heard more laughter coming from the direction of the house. It was their mother coming out to join them.

“I won’t call you squirrels,” she said, “unless I see or hear you acting like cheeky rodents again.”

After tossing some leaves at their mom, Olivia and Jackson worked with their parents to load all the leaves into the bag.

What do you think Olivia and Jackson’s parents said the next time the children started to fight instead of work?

A cooperative building project

science with a twist

Note: This practical suggestion works well in conjunction with the Bible story “Building together.”

The idea here is to build a city wall out of blocks to help your children understand what a cooperative effort looks and feels like. You will need building blocks of some sort, plus pictures or objects to represent the different gates in the wall that surrounded ancient Jerusalem.

- 1** First, explain to your children that you will be pretending to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Your wall will need to include structures that mimic these parts of the Jerusalem wall: the Sheep Gate, the Fish Gate, the “Old” Gate, the Tower of Ovens, the Valley Gate, the Dung Gate (have fun with this one), the Fountain Gate, the Water Gate, the projecting tower, the Horse Gate, the East Gate and the Inspection Gate.

- 2 Encourage your children to use their math skills in planning and designing the project. For example, there are a total of twelve gates. Ask your children how many to put on each side to ensure each side has the same number of gates.
- 3 Invite your children to search around your home to find objects to identify each part of the city wall. For example, for the Sheep Gate, one child might find a cotton ball while another finds a toy sheep. Place these objects near the Sheep Gate in your city wall.
- 4 Some children may prefer to stay on-site as builders while the others go off to find objects to identify the gates. The key is to work together toward a common goal and complete the large project together. Read some of the Bible verses provided to help your children understand the importance of encouraging each other and working in unity.
- 5 Afterward, help your children share their thoughts and experiences using the discussion questions below.

Questions for discussion

- How do you feel after you've finished a long job or project?
- How do you think the Israelites felt after they completed the wall around Jerusalem?
- Where did we get our building materials?
- Where do you think the Israelites got their building materials?
- Do you think the Israelites ever argued about who got to do the easy work (standing around "on guard" while the others carried rocks and wood)?
- Did you feel better when we were cooperating or when we were arguing?
- When we were building together, did anyone encourage you? Did you ever feel discouraged?

- Did you ever feel like quitting? If so, why did you keep building?

Key concepts

Now that we've built a small-scale model of the walls of Jerusalem, you'll be able to understand, at least a little, what the real-life task was like for the Israelites! We built our model with materials readily available in our home, but the Israelites had to find real wood and stone and make mortar to complete their project. Can you imagine how tired they got and how relieved and satisfied they must have felt once the project was completed? Did you notice that arguing and complaining can make a hard job seem harder? It's easier to keep working if we encourage each other and work cooperatively.

Relevant Scripture

Romans 15:5 "May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus . . ."

1 Thessalonians 5:11 "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."

Sweet, soft hearts

science with a twist

To do this experiment, you will need some lumps of hardened brown sugar and a cookie tray for each child.

- 1 Have your children sit at a table with a lump of sugar on a tray in front of them. Allow them to feel the lump and try to squeeze or shape it. They may succeed in breaking the lump, but they will not be able to mould it. Liken this to when people have "hard hearts" and are stubborn toward God.
- 2 Finish day one of the experiment by having each child place their sugar in a zipper-lock plastic bag. Slice an apple and have each child to put an apple slice in the bag with their brown sugar.
- 3 Enjoy eating the rest of the apple slices – plain or dipped in more brown sugar – as you read Proverbs 28:14 and Zechariah 7:12 and review the discussion questions.

- 4 The next day, have your children open their bag of sugar and try the same experiment. This time the sugar will be soft and mouldable. Liken this to having soft hearts toward God. Pray together and ask God to give you hearts that are willing to be moulded by Him.

Questions for discussion

- Why couldn't you shape the hard sugar?
 - What does it mean to be "hard-hearted"?
 - In Zechariah 17:12, how did the people make God very angry?
 - What did the sugar absorb to make it soft again?
 - How can we make sure our hearts are soft?
5. What do you think God would say about your heart?

Key concepts

People with "hard hearts" are stubborn and unwilling to change. On the other hand, soft-hearted people are more sensitive and adaptable. When our hearts are hard, God may have to "break us" to get our attention and to change our attitudes. Life is much sweeter when we let the Holy Spirit soften our hearts to give us Christ-like attitudes.

Relevant Scripture

Proverbs 28:14 "Blessed is the one who fears the Lord always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity."

Zechariah 7:12 "They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the Lord of hosts."

I spy cooperation

drive time/anytime

When you are out and about on errands, watch for people who are cooperating. You might see people at the side of the road changing a tire, carpenters building a house, store employees helping each other, or two people hauling a load together. Talk about the

cooperative aspect of their jobs and how tasks can be much easier when people work together.

Relevant Scripture

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him – a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

Solution sleuthing

drive time/anytime

When we live and work closely with others, we often need to cooperate. In everyday situations, whenever we are around other people, we need to consider how our actions affect those around us. Brainstorm together about situations where you need to cooperate, both inside your home and outside your home. For each situation, come up with a creative and cooperative solution. The first table provides an example. (See next page.)

Practice phrases you can say to let others know that you are willing to cooperate. Here are a few ideas:

- *You go ahead; I can wait.*
- *You go first; I don't mind waiting.*
- *I'll wait my turn.*
- *Would you like me to give you a hand with that?*
- *Can I get that for you?*
- *After you . . .* (with a gesture encouraging the other person to go ahead)

Relevant Scripture

Mark 9:35 "And He sat down and called the twelve. And He said to them, 'If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.'"

Cooperating as a family

Family situation

During a long trip, you stop at a gas station because everyone needs to use the washroom.

Two people want to heat up their snack in the microwave.

One person has the fridge door open. A second person can't get past to access the pantry.

One person is washing dishes. A second person wants to pour a drink of water from the faucet.

One person wants to go outside, but a second person is blocking the doorway while putting on their shoes.

Someone has an itchy spot on their back that's just out of reach.

Someone is doing the laundry and needs help folding clean sheets.

Creative solution

To decide who gets to visit the washroom first, invite family members to express their need on a scale of one to 10. The person with the most urgent need (10) goes first.

Cooperating with strangers

Public situation

Two people reach for the same bunch of bananas at the grocery store.

Just as you come to the end of the aisle at the grocery store, you almost run your cart into someone who is pushing their cart in the opposite direction.

When you are driving along the road, one lane suddenly ends and all vehicles must merge into a single lane.

Two people arrive at the fast food order desk at exactly the same time.

Two drivers both want the same spot in a busy parking lot.

While hiking on a narrow path, two families meet, each heading in opposite directions.

Someone is struggling to lift a heavy box into the trunk of their car.

Creative solution

Zax tracks

drama/roleplay

“The Zax” by Dr. Seuss is a fun story that reinforces lessons on cooperation. It’s featured in Dr. Seuss’ book, *The Sneetches and Other Stories*, which you may be able to borrow from your local library.

In the story, two creatures refuse to give way to each other and end up having a freeway built around them. The simple but entertaining storyline will help even very young children understand the foolishness of people (or nations) who are so stubborn that they refuse to make peace. After reading or viewing the story, have your children take turns acting it out. When they get to the impasse, have them say the following Seuss-like rhyme:

*We can stand here all day and miss out on our play,
Or we can choose to make way and get on with our day!*

Read your choice of the Bible verses provided below and ask your kids how the Zax story might have been different if the Zax had followed the instructions found in the Bible. Pray together and ask God to help you be people who are willing to submit to others, even when you would rather have your own way. At a future time, when one of your children is having difficulty submitting, gently remind him or her of the foolish stubbornness of the Zax.

Relevant Scripture

Proverbs 17:14 “The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out.”

Proverbs 20:3 “It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling.”

1 Corinthians 13:4-5 “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful . . .”

2 Corinthians 13:11 “Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.”

Cooperation operation

physical activity

Do you remember the children’s game called “Operation”? In this game from Hasbro, players use a pair of tweezers to remove organs and other body parts from a pretend body. A successful “operation” occurs when you remove a body part without touching the surrounding metal. (If you do touch the metal, a loud beep sounds.) If you have access to the game, play it, but have an adult partner with a child and hold the tweezers together instead of playing as individuals.

For even more fun, you can work as a family to create your own life-size version of the game using materials found in your home. You’ll need a large surface area such as a long table or couch to serve as an operating table.

These ideas will help you build a “body” to operate on, but encourage your children to come up with their own creative variations:

- Create feet from a pair of slippers.
- Form legs from cardboard tubes or two-litre pop bottles.
- Create knees from upside-down yogurt cups.
- Form a body from empty cereal boxes placed end to end.
- Arrange arms from long kitchen utensils.
- Add hands by placing rubber or winter gloves at the ends of the arms.
- Create a skinny neck from a juice box.
- Join a head to the neck, represented by an upside-down plastic bowl.
- Add facial features by forming eyes from carrot slices, trimming cauliflower to resemble ears, shaping a button nose from a mushroom, and cutting cucumbers or celery to resemble smiling lips and arched eyebrows.

- Finish with some hair formed from yarn or string.

To play the game, use two rubber spatulas to remove various parts of the body. Have people work in pairs, coordinating their efforts to lift the objects off the operating table and into a large bin. For added complexity, make notecards with illustrations of various body parts. Each team then draws a card to discover which body part they must remove. To add a competitive twist, time each round to see which team is the quickest to complete their operation.

One in the Spirit

drive time/anytime

Singing with a group or playing in a band is a form of cooperation. One person who is off beat or out of tune can ruin the whole song. Similarly, one uncooperative person can make a whole family miserable.

To reinforce the value of cooperation, watch an orchestra playing together and learn about the different instruments. If you get the chance, listen to how each instrument sounds alone and how beautiful they all sound when played together. For some hands-on music making, learn the song *We Are One in the Spirit* and sing it together as a family. You may want to play along on your own musical instruments as you sing.

*Note: See the **kick-off craft** section of the **harmony** lesson for some simple musical instruments you can make at home.*

The big cook

fun with food

Plan a “cooperative cooking” event to model the benefits of working together. You can cook as a family or organize an event with a group of friends. Ideally, your children will be a part of the team.

The idea behind cooperative cooking is to prepare large quantities of healthy, freezable meals. To find appropriate recipes, search online or use your own favourites. One helpful recipe book is *The Big Cook*. You can check it out at Thebigcook.com.

Depending on the ages of your children, you may need to hire a babysitter or have older children

care for youngsters who won't stay occupied in the kitchen for long. Another option is to recruit cooperative dads to care for the kids while the moms cook (or roles may be reversed).

For simplicity's sake, you may prefer to involve only your spouse and your kids in your cooperative cooking event. Don't be concerned if your children's participation slows things down. What matters is that they experience being part of the process.

As you eat your meals together, remind your children of the win-win results when everyone cooperated to cook and freeze meals.

Mouldable munchkins

creative crafts

Leave a lump of playdough out for a few days, allowing it to dry out. Once it's dry, give it to your children to play with. (Hopefully at least one child will express concern that it is too hard to shape!) Also give your children a lump of soft clay for comparison.

Play alongside your children and make a small pot or bowl shape, then invite them to make one too. As your children continue playing with the dough, read Jeremiah 18:1-12. Have the children form their own clay pots as they listen. When you get to verse seven, allow your children to squash their pots (if they wish) as an illustration of God's power.

Rebuild your pots as you continue reading verses eight to ten. Then use the discussion questions to talk to your children about the importance of being teachable and submissive. Conclude by teaching your children this simple prayer: *Lord, help me to be like the soft lump of clay. I want to do things Your way today!*

Questions for discussion

- Which is easier to shape into a bowl – the hard clay or the soft clay?
- In Jeremiah 18:11, what did God ask the Israelites to do?
- What does Jeremiah 18:12 say they will reply?
- Were the Israelites smart or foolish?

- Do you ever get off track and start following your own way instead of God’s way?
- Is God pleased when you are like hard clay?

Key concepts

Just as it is almost impossible to make anything with the hardened clay, God has a hard time shaping us into the people He wants us to be when we insist on doing things our way.

Many times God made it clear to the Israelites that He would bless them for following Him, but bring disaster if they chose to go their own way (Deuteronomy 8:1-20, 11:1-32, 26:16-19, 30:11-16). To us, it seems like a no-brainer: to obey God and be blessed is clearly the best choice. Unfortunately, we act like the Israelites sometimes. God’s Word says one thing, yet we disobey and do the exact opposite.

God asks us to love Him and to love others. When we “live in love” as described in Colossians 3:12-14 (being quick to forgive, kind, compassionate, humble, patient and gentle), we are living God’s way. When we live selfishly, expecting everything to go the way we want, we are living to please ourselves, not God.

Relevant Scripture

Isaiah 64:8-9 “But now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You are our potter; we are all the work of Your hand. Be not so terribly angry, O Lord, and remember not iniquity forever. Behold, please look, we are all your people.”

Nehemiah 9:29 “And You warned them in order to turn them back to Your law. Yet they acted presumptuously and did not obey Your commandments, but sinned against Your rules, which if a person does them, he shall live by them, and they turned a stubborn shoulder and stiffened their neck and would not obey.”

Colossians 3:12-14 “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”

The power of unity

physical activity

This game can be played indoors or out. To play, stand in a circle and have everyone, including the leader, hold hands. The leader then calls out different “hand to hand” combinations. For example, if the leader calls “Ben and Amy,” then Ben and Amy try to raise their joined hands in the air before the other players can all kneel on one knee. Raising hands or kneeling without breaking a hand-hold requires a cooperative effort. If a hand-hold is broken, or if the wrong hand-hold combination is raised, everyone who notices calls out “Oops!”

To add interest, share the leadership role, allowing everyone to take a turn calling out names. As people catch on to the game, you can also start calling out names more rapidly, giving less time for players to comply.

After you have played the game, take time to discuss each person’s reaction to this cooperative exercise. (You may want to postpone your discussion until you are travelling in your vehicle or having a meal together.)

Questions for discussion

- When a hand-hold combination was broken, did we still have a circle?
- Did you ever stop someone from raising their hand?
- Did you help someone find the correct hand to raise?
- What part of the game did you enjoy the most?
- Was there any part of the game you did not enjoy?
- How was the game similar to living in a family?
- What things do you do that break the unity in our family?

Key concepts

When we stand in a circle holding hands, we create a complete circle. However, if one person lets go of another person's hand, it breaks the continuity of the circle. Family life is like a circle in that we all play an important part in maintaining unity. For example, have you ever waited your turn to tell a story, only to have another family member interrupt you just as you finally get started? It only takes one person to create potential discord. The good news is that you can choose to maintain unity. The key is how you react to someone else's thoughtless actions.

God wants us to live in unity to let others know that God sent Jesus into the world and that He loves them (John 17:23). We show God that we revere Him when we submit to others, putting our own wishes and preferences aside in order to maintain peace (Ephesians 5:21). This is not always easy to do, but with God's help it is possible (Romans 15:5, 2 Chronicles 30:12).

Relevant Scripture

Romans 15:5 *“May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus . . .”*

Philippians 2:1-2 *“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.”*

Colossians 3:14 *“And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”*

May I have this dance?

physical activity

Ballroom dancing is a beautiful demonstration of a leader / follower relationship. Traditionally, the man leads and the woman follows. Either way, the dance couple needs to agree on who the leader is.

To enjoy the cooperative experience of ballroom dancing as a family, borrow a book or DVD from a library, or search online for instructions on how to dance a simple waltz. Practice with another family member until you master the basic steps. Have fun laughing over missteps and the bumps that occur

when one partner is not in step. Be sure to relish your sense of accomplishment when you are able to waltz well!

Cooperative meal

fun with food

This is a meal you won't forget! When your family arrives at the dinner table, pair them up as “eating partners.” Take strips of soft cloth and tie the partners' wrists together, then instruct each pair that they will need to communicate and cooperate to eat their meal successfully. (Depending on the ages and maturity of your children, you may prefer to try this at snack time or over dessert, or plan to serve finger foods only.)

If you have an odd number of people in your family, take turns partnering up. Each person may only use their tied hand to eat; the other hand must remain on their lap or tucked in a pocket.

Pray prior to eating, asking God to send His Spirit to give you love, peace and joy as you eat together.

During your meal, read your choice of the verses provided below, and use the discussion questions to create more dialogue on cooperation and the importance of relying on God for help in situations where there is potential for friction.

Questions for discussion

- How did you feel when you were trying to put food in your mouth, but you had to allow your hand to feed the other person instead?
- Was this a fun way to eat or do you prefer eating on your own?
- What was the funniest thing that happened to you?
- Did you ever feel frustrated or angry?
- If so, how did you handle the problem?
- We had to depend on each other in order to eat. How else do family members rely on each other?

Key concepts

The cooperative eating effort reminds us that is easy to get frustrated or angry when we are required to coordinate efforts. The Bible gives us a lot of valuable advice regarding these kinds of situations: stay under control, keep your cool, be quick to listen and slow to speak, speak gently, be willing to put the needs of others before your own, put up with each other and forgive readily! God gives us His Holy Spirit to create unity.

Relevant Scripture

Psalm 133:1 “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!”

Proverbs 29:11 “A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.”

1 Corinthians 10:24 “Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.”

Row, swim, cheer and skate

physical activity

Some sports demand precise coordination between team members. Search out online clips of rowing teams, pairs skating, or synchronized swimming or diving, and watch how precisely the athletes mimic each other. Or perhaps you'll be fortunate enough to watch similar teamwork in person. Then, the next time you are at the pool or the ice rink, see if your family “team” can be as coordinated as the athletes.

Use the discussion questions to link the beauty of the synchronized athletic performances with the joy of living in unity with others. Finish your chat by asking God to send His Holy Spirit to bring unity to your family. If you wish, your prayer can reflect the relevant Scripture passages, as follows:

“Lord Jesus, we know it is good and pleasant when we live together in harmony. Please help us to love like You do so we can be united like _____ (name your sport of choice). Remind us to think about others and not just ourselves. With Your help, we can remember to say, ‘Brother / Sister, let’s do it your way today.’ Amen.”

Questions for discussion

- Can you think of some sports where the athletes need to be very coordinated?
- What would happen if there wasn't complete cooperation among the athletes?
- Do you think working as a coordinated team is as easy as it looks?
- Was it easy when we tried it?
- Is it easy to get along with the people who live in our home?
- What are some ways we can practice living at peace with other people?
- What advice does Philippians 2:1-4 give about living in unity?

Key concepts

Rowing, synchronized swimming or diving, cheerleading and pairs figure skating are some examples of team sports that require incredible synchronization. The athletes competing in these sports often practice with their team or partner for years, and the results are a joy to watch.

God wants us to practice and develop an equally attractive kind of cooperation and coordination called “unity.” The Bible tells us that the secret to living in harmony or cooperation with others is to live unselfishly. We do this when we put the needs of others before our own.

Relevant Scripture

Psalm 133:1 “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!”

Philippians 2:1-4 “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

Lessons from the geese

science with a twist

Note: This set of five mini-lessons touches on aspects of cooperation already covered in other activities in this lesson. It works well as a framework for a week-long study or as a lesson recap. Before beginning these mini-lessons, watch a flock of geese flying in formation.

This lesson set is based on an article written in 1972 by Dr. Robert McNeish and entitled Lessons From the Geese. Dr. McNeish, who spent many years teaching science, first wrote this object lesson as part of a sermon he presented in his church. It is now used worldwide, both in churches and in the businesses community, as a helpful illustration of good leadership. Sue Widemark's research (see Suewidemark.com/lessonsgeese.htm) helped establish the validity of Dr. McNeish's authorship and the scientific accuracy of his premises.

The facts and principles presented below in italics are quoted from Dr. McNeish's original article.

• Teamwork

Fact:

As each goose flaps its wings it creates an "uplift" for the birds that follow. By flying in a V formation, the whole flock adds 71 per cent greater flying range than if each bird flew alone.

Lesson:

People who share a common direction and sense a community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are travelling on the thrust of one another.

Key concept:

We accomplish more when we work together cooperatively.

Activity options:

Try the "fun with teamwork" exercises in the hands-on options part of this lesson, or listen to the song *Lean on Me*.

• Harmony

Fact:

When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of flying alone. It quickly moves back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird in front of it.

Lesson:

If we have as much sense as a goose, we stay in formation with those headed where we want to go. We are willing to accept their help and give our help to others.

Key concept:

To succeed, everyone needs to work toward the same goal because even one person can make or break the unity of a group effort.

Activity options:

- Play "the power of unity" game from the hands-on options section.
- Read the "harmonious relationships in nature" hands-on option from the harmony lesson.
- Listen to the song *We Are One in the Spirit* and talk about how sharing God's love with each other makes a difference in the way we live and work together.
- Read 1 John 4:10-11 and 1 Peter 4:8 and talk about ways that "love covers over sin" when we readily offer each other grace and forgiveness.

• Sharing the lead

Fact:

When the lead goose tires, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies to the point position.

Lesson:

It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership. As with geese, people are interdependent on each other's skills, capabilities and unique arrangements of gifts, talents or resources.

Key concept:

“Leading” means using your God-given gifts and talents to serve God and others. Being willing to follow another person’s lead is as important as being willing to take a turn leading.

Activity options:

- Give everyone a chance to both lead and follow by doing the “cooperating in the kitchen” activity described in the **hands-on options** section of this lesson.
- Read Romans 12:4-8 and / or 1 Peter 4:10-11 and write a song or poem about using the gifts God has given each of you.
- Listen to *I Will Follow* by Chris Tomlin and talk about ways you can follow and serve Jesus.

• Encouragement**Fact:**

The geese flying in formation honk to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

Lesson:

We need to make sure our honking is encouraging. In groups where there is encouragement, the production is much greater. The power of encouragement is the quality of honking we seek.

Key concept:

Saying positive things is like giving others a “turbo boost” of energy. It helps others around us feel strong and productive and helps to keep everyone motivated.

Activity options:

- Do the “garbage busters” activity outlined in the **hands-on options** section of the **courtesy** lesson.
- Listen to a song about encouraging others and talk about how we can encourage others through what we say. *You Raise Me Up* is a good choice.

• Faithfulness**Fact:**

When a goose gets sick, wounded or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with it until it dies or is able to fly again. Then they launch out with another formation or catch up with the flock.

Lesson:

If we have as much sense as geese, we will stand by each other in difficult times as well as when we are strong.

Key concept:

An important aspect of being part of a group or a family is watching out for the well-being of other group members.

Activity options:

- Read the story about rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. (See “standing strong together” in the **Bible stories** section of this lesson.)
- Listen to the song *I’ll Stand by You* – or another song of your choice on faithfulness – and talk about what it means to “stand by” family members.
- Do the “faithfulness can mean sacrifice” activity found in the **hands-on options** section of the **faithfulness** lesson.

Recommended resources

For a list of children’s stories that reinforce the theme of this lesson, consult the home page for the cooperation lesson at KidsofIntegrity.com.