

COOPERATION: MORE THAN JUST A DREAM

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In the beginning, when God created Adam, he was alone. God knew it was not good for Adam to be on his own, so he created Eve ([Genesis 2:18](#)). Since then, people have been working together to accomplish all sorts of incredible things.

Sometimes people are good at working together. This is illustrated in today's Bible reading from [Nehemiah 3:1-16](#), which recounts the tale of God's people working together to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in 52 days even though the people living in the land around Jerusalem were trying to demoralize and stop them.



But sometimes people need more practice to cooperate reasonably. Sometimes, **we** need more practice. **Sometimes, our children need more practice.** Since cooperation doesn't always come naturally, how can we teach it to our children?

Chores as a Teaching Tool

Like almost everything, teamwork begins at home. We help our children learn how to cooperate with others when we teach them to share toys with a sibling, when we work with them to pick up the toys strewn across the living room or playroom floor, or even when we ask them to pass the carrot sticks at supper.

If you are struggling to get any sort of cooperation in your house, here are a few tips:

1. **Watch Your Words:** When you would like your child to help out, try using this phrase: "[name], please do [whatever it is you need them to do] now." Then, watch them and count to 10 silently before asking them again. It might seem strange, but I've noticed that when I phrase it this way, instead of as a question, my children are more likely to help out.
2. **Start Small:** When I step into a messy room, I sometimes get overwhelmed and don't know where to begin. Your children might react similarly, so start small instead of asking them to clean their room. Ask them to pick up one thing—like the Lego pieces or clothes—at a time.
3. **Model it:** Instead of doing something else while your children are cleaning their room or doing the dishes, work alongside them. Let them see you being a good helper, and show them you are a team.

Cooperative Games Are Learning Opportunities

Learning doesn't have to be boring. You can teach teamwork by playing a cooperative game with your children. We love role-playing games. In my house, the boys' characters (and thus the boys) have to work together to devise and execute a plan to overcome whatever obstacle the game master has set before them. If you don't think you're creative enough to create a story, you can plunk your children's characters into a Bible story.

Let Others Help You

Your children aren't the only ones God wants to work with others. In the same way, God saw it wasn't good for *Adam* to try to do everything on his own; he also knows it isn't good for *us* always to work alone. God also wants us to be part of a team ([Romans 12:3-10](#)), even if we don't always want to admit it. So, if you feel like you are struggling, please reach out and ask for help from your family, friends, or professionals.

Want to do a deep dive? Check out Family Fire's article: [On The Parent Playground: Community or Comfort Zone?](#)

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