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parenting CHRISTIAN kids



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Strive for Unity and Cooperation

POWERSOURCE

ASK GOD:

1. To help your family members work together as friends.
2. To reveal ways your family can become more unified—with each other and with Jesus.
3. For guidance as you direct your children to get along and work through conflicts.

Jesus calls his followers to work together and get along—within our own families and within his church.

Family unity can be challenging to put into practice. This is especially true during summer months, as more down time leads to boredom, and boredom leads to bickering.

How can you keep the peace in your family and strengthen bonds with one another? Here are expert tips.

Pray for each other. Lifting up other family members in prayer makes it difficult to stay angry at them.

Serve one another. Challenge siblings to perform one act of kindness for each other every day.

Hold family meetings. Make your expectations clear. Talk (and hug!) out problems as they arise.

Don't play favorites. Strive to ensure equal treatment in all areas of family life.

Praise positive behavior and cooperation whenever you see it.

Don't solve children's disagreements for them, but don't let conflicts escalate to physical violence.

If necessary, separate siblings for a while. That can make them eager to play with one another again.

Read on for more fun ideas to try.

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Family Members Unite!

Solid relationships are crucial to developing family unity. As children and parents grow closer to one another, they're better able to learn and grow together. They also can open up and trust others to help them make their way through life. It's the basic principle of the body of Christ at work—a concept that even preschoolers can grasp. No matter if your family is traditional, single-parent, blended, or multi-generational, these ideas will help you build mutual appreciation, nurture group identity, and develop an atmosphere of trust. Have fun leading your family members into greater community.



TEACHABLE MOMENTS

United in Jesus

Give family members each a 3-foot-long string of red licorice. Say: **Don't eat this yet. First, pull on the licorice to test how strong it is.**

Work together to braid three licorice strings together. Ask: **What do you think will happen if we pull on this now?**

Have two family members pull as hard as they can on the ends of the braided strand. Ask: **Why was this braid of licorice harder to break?**

Read aloud Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. Say: **Just as the licorice was stronger with three pieces together, we're stronger when we stick together as a family. When we love each other and work together, we show other people Jesus' love.**

Enjoy the licorice. Then close in prayer, asking Jesus to help you stick together and work together.

Stay Connected Sit in a circle and give each family member one paper clip. Try to connect all the paper clips with each person using only one hand. Afterward, discuss how well you worked together and what technique worked best. Also discuss what you learned about one another during the process.

In Agreement As a family, try to agree on an answer in each of these categories:

- A snack food you like to eat.
- A subject in school you like.
- A Bible account you like.
- A place you like to go for fun.
- A holiday you enjoy.
- A sport you enjoy.
- A TV program you enjoy.

Talk about how easy or difficult it was to agree. Ask: "Which statements were the most difficult to agree on? What was the most surprising thing we all agreed on? How can we have different opinions yet still get along?"

Assembly Line Love Work together to make a treat you can then deliver to neighbors or friends. For example, prepare special sandwiches or a fruit pizza, assembly line style. Talk about how each person makes an important contribution to the task—and to your family.

Come Over, Red Rover Invite neighborhood children over to play Red Rover (rules are available online). The goal is to break up teams. Afterward, talk with your family about how Jesus is sad when families and friends get mad and fight. Jesus wants us to stick together, and he helps us hold tightly to him and to one another. Then we won't break apart! Close by reading aloud John 17:11b.

A Helping Hand Using chairs, bedsheets, and clothespins, work together to create a house with a hole in the roof. Then use a blanket to lower an object into the house. Read Mark 2:1-5. Discuss how the friends cooperated and how that compares to the cooperation needed in this activity.

Teamwork Toss For each family member, use masking tape to attach the side of a small paper cup to a wide craft stick. Then tape one contraption to the tip of each person's right shoe. Spread ping-pong balls throughout the room, and try to scoop up the balls with your feet and drop them into a bucket. Play again, this time helping one another scoop up the balls. Talk about which method was easier and how working together can help us do things better and faster.

"Make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose."

—Philippians 2:2, NLT

MEDIA MADNESS



MOVIE

Title: *The Secret Life of Pets*

Genre: Animated family comedy

Rating: PG (for some rude humor)

Cast: Jenny Slate, Ellie Kemper, Louis C.K., Eric Stonestreet, Kevin Hart

Synopsis: The creators of the clever *Despicable Me* and *Minions* movies offer a funny glimpse into what happens when owners leave their pets alone for the day. Life is turned upside down for Max the dog when his owner brings home a “brother.” Max thinks everything is going well until the new dog shows up.

Our Take: This movie promises to be a big summer hit with all ages. Use it as a springboard to talk to children and preteens about dealing with changes and loss.



TV

Title: *The Shannara Chronicles*

Network: MTV

Synopsis: MTV has jumped into the original-programming ring with this swords-and-sorcery fantasy show, based on a popular book series by Terry Brooks. As an ancient tree dies, it weakens barriers and allows demons into the world. Young heroes and rogues fight to save the world.

Our Take: The early episodes of this show felt like *Shannara 90210*, but soon it began focusing more on action and character development. Even though the series is being touted as a teen-friendly *Games of Thrones*, there’s still plenty of subject matter to steer kids away from—including violence and partial nudity.



CULTURE & TRENDS

Summer Camp Trends If your kids are heading to camp this summer, you may notice better nutritional offerings, a focus on respecting the environment, community-service elements, thrill factors (such as zip-lining), and a possible “trial” period to see how your child likes the camp. *(campmanagement.com)*

Child-Free Breaks An Australian model is taking flak after revealing her secret to parenting sanity: child-free weekends. Rachael Finch says leaving her 2-year-old daughter with grandma every weekend helps her marriage and her child. Critics say good parents are full-time parents. *(yahoo.com)*

Games, Sites & Apps

PixlCross

This picture logic game has 150 pre-made puzzles, with four levels of difficulty. Use hints to fill in a grid and reveal a hidden image. A help feature is available if you get stuck. Creative types can also make and share their own puzzles.

FreeRice.com

Kids can exercise their brain power while doing good at this educational site. It donates 10 grains of rice to the U.N. World Food Program for every correct answer. The food is paid for by advertisers whose messages appear at the bottom of the screen. Subjects come in a range of difficulties.

Alto's Adventure

As Alto, you're living in a mountain village. Your llamas have escaped, so you snowboard down to get them—and complete one of 180 goals. This app's simple gameplay involves jumping and doing tricks while jumping. There's nothing questionable, so kids and adults can enjoy it.

STATS & STUDIES

Put Down the Paddle A 50-year research study reveals that spanking increases children's aggression and also leads to anxiety and depression. Still, an estimated 80% of children around the world are spanked or otherwise physically punished. *(Journal of Family Psychology; UNICEF)*

Targeting Preteens About 80% of all global brands now deploy a “tween strategy” in their marketing efforts. *(globalissues.org)*

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