



## Introduction

Many schools follow a programme of key values throughout the school year. These values can be an important framework for helping to define and validate the work of the school 'beyond the curriculum'. Each value can be used as the theme for collective worship, the focus for classroom reflection and the subject matter for main hall or quiet corner displays.

The Bible has so much to offer in this area of positive personal, relational and community values, and its timeless wisdom can help all schools pass on to the next generation the qualities of life that are most valuable and which, as Christians, we believe are not only God-given but also can be God-energised in our lives.

## Preparation

What follows is a series of ideas linked to the value of '**Cooperation**'.

It includes: key themes to explore, a key Bible verse to use, key concepts to unpack, ideas for displays and reflective corners, as well as Bible story links with further connections to material on the Barnabas websites.

## Development

### 1. Key themes to explore

- Working together for a shared goal - **operating in community**
- Partnership
- Pooling skills and gifts for a joint task
- Being prepared to give and take - appreciation of each other's contributions
- Compromise and coordination
- Getting on with other people
- Appreciating the specialness of each individual
- Needing each other

### 2. Key Bible verses and stories

'God has also given each of us different gifts to use...' (Romans 12:6, CEV - see also vv. 4 - 8). In other words, to each is given a gift for the good of all.

Paul uses the image of the human body as an example of how different parts work together for the good of the whole. Each part is important and necessary. He develops this image in 1 Corinthians 12:12 - 31.

Jesus chooses a team to work with - see the stories of the calling of the disciples at the beginning of the gospels. Each disciple is very different but all need to cooperate to share the good news of the



kingdom of God with others.

Nehemiah in the Old Testament led his team of all ages to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem on the return from exile. Their cooperation won the day against hostility and fear.

In his letters, Paul recognises that he needs others to get God's work done - for example, one person sows, another waters, but God gives the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6).

It was teams that led the first Christian churches, first in Jerusalem where deacons were appointed (Acts 6) and in Antioch (Acts 13). You could link this to a list of those with responsibility in a local church from their parish magazine or bulletin.

Note the story of the cooperation that became confusion in the tower of Babel in Genesis 11.

In the beginning, God made our world and chose to share it, enlisting our cooperation as good stewards to look after it (Genesis 1).

### 3. **Words about cooperation**

A dictionary definition:

Cooperation or co-operation is the process of working or acting together, which can be accomplished by both intentional and non-intentional agents. In its simplest form it involves things working in harmony, side by side, while in its more complicated forms, it can involve something as complex as the inner workings of a human being or even the social patterns of a nation. It is the alternative to working separately in competition.

Related sayings include:

A burden shared is a burden halved.

Everyone likes attention and cooperation... but you'll only get it when you give it!

Few burdens are too heavy when everyone lifts.

Better together.

Union gives strength.

Aesop

I love to hear a choir. I love the humanity to see the faces of real people devoting themselves to a piece of music. I like the teamwork. It makes me feel optimistic about the human race when I see them cooperating like that.

Paul McCartney

No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.

John Donne

Only strength can cooperate. Weakness can only beg.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

He that does good to another does good also to himself.

Seneca

The [Adinkra symbol](#) for cooperation from west Africa is interesting. It means: help me and let me help you.

Some useful images to work with:

An orchestra - with many instruments and sounds, but can produce a symphony only with cooperation

The four wheels of a cart - you need all the wheels working to move forward

The colours of the rainbow - useful for an assembly; the rainbow flag is used for unity/cooperation in many parts of the world - see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainbow\\_flag](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainbow_flag)

And a story:

A good story about cooperation from Africa is that of [The treasure chest](#) - another useful assembly idea.

#### 4. Key concepts to unpack

- Knowing your own gifts and recognising the gifts of others is a vital foundation for good cooperation. So organise a class exercise where each child is asked to appreciate what contributions and special talents all the others bring to the class. Everyone has a contribution to make for a task to be completed.
- Jigsaw pieces are useful here. No piece is a complete picture. Each piece has a bit to give and to receive from another. Each piece is unique in colour and shape.
- Cooperation means recognising our need of other people. It is a key building block for community. This is how a good team, committee or organisation is successful. Explore how a good team cooperates to win, or how a good school council or organising committee works together for the common good.
- Another image is that of any piece of machinery with lots of moving and interconnected parts such as a cog and gear. One piece on its own is useless and, if taken out, the whole machine will fail to work. But put back in and working together with all the other pieces, it plays its part, the machine works and the job is done.
- Explore the idea of 'withdrawing our cooperation' - being uncooperative - and how this can damage both the person and the group. Everyone suffers when one opts out and as a result that one misses out on discovering his or her own God-given gifts and specialness, which is

only discovered when it is given away and used in cooperation with others.

- You may, depending on the time of year, be able to link the theme of cooperation with harvest. [See our harvest-themed ideas.](#)

### 5. Ideas for a hall display or reflective corner in the classroom

Include pictures of teams working together such as: workers on a building site; a sports team (for example, curling); people working together in a rescue situation (at a fire, in a flood, a mountain rescue or aid workers in a disaster situation); members of a committee at work; an orchestra; workers in a hospital A&E.

*What sort of cooperation is happening here? Why is this cooperation good?*

Include visual aids of cooperation such as:

- a machine – maybe an old-fashioned mechanical toy
- jigsaw pieces – all the pieces are needed to make one big picture
- the musical score for an orchestral piece of music
- the rules of a game that needs cooperation
- the picture of a human body or skeleton, or maybe a person running

Include a picture of: an Olympic or multi-national ceremony; a local famous new building; the United Nations building

Include some pictures from the local area (perhaps taken by a class): the Co-operative Bank and/or Supermarket; a business with several partners in it; a doctors' surgery with different names on the plaque; a local hospital; a community centre building or town hall

Include a picture of: acrobats working together; performers working together (for example, Diversity from *X-factor* a few years ago); a tandem bike or tandem parachute jump

Include pictures of: children completing a team challenge on an outward bound course, such as crossing a river; children in groups working together in the classroom, maybe building the highest tower they can together out of newspaper, and so on

Include initials of organisations that are united by some cooperative task

*What cooperation is needed to make each of these work?*

Include a Bible verse with the Bible open at the right page (see Bible verses above)

Include some words and sayings about cooperation (see those given above)

Include some 3D visuals for cooperation such as:

- a paper chain made by a class or anything else done as a joint project



- small joined-up figurines made using split pins
- climbing equipment used by a team that scales heights

Include a special prayer on the theme (by a child perhaps)

*What is the secret of good cooperation?*

*What does it take to be part of a successful team?*

*How will you be cooperative today?*

## 6. Ideas for collective worship

[A story about a treasure chest in the jungle](#)

[A story about the choosing of the disciples](#) - all differences are needed in a team

## 7. Further work for the classroom and Bible story links

A key reflective question:

*When did you last cooperate with someone very different from you?*

Discussion starters on difference:

*My space* - some sense of personal identity and space can be good but when and how might it become unhelpful, do you think? How might this get in the way of cooperation?

*Indifference* - is difference a threat or an opportunity? It's so much easier to hang around with those people who are just like us but is that good for us in the end?

*That's just 'not me'* - what do you think best helps us individually to become the best we can be? Can we do it without cooperating with other, different people?

*Walls! Or I scream!* - just think how quickly and easily we build barriers between ourselves as human beings - between countries, races, ethnic groups, young and old, and so on. Why do we do this? Think of situations local and global where not cooperating has caused problems.

*Love won another* - what is the secret to overcoming our fear of people who think, act, speak and live differently from us? What makes us cooperative?

Activity:

Orange™ ran a campaign once using the slogan 'I am' and then added lines that suggest that each



one of us is the sum of all the people that we have ever met (or phoned). Write out your own personal 'I am' statement, including all the others who have helped make you who you are. For example:

*I am my father who inspired me.*

*I am my mother who loves me whatever happens.*

*I am my teacher who taught me to swim.*

We sometimes forget that Jesus spent much of his time working and cooperating with those who were very different - the outsiders, the strangers and the socially unacceptable. This breaking down of barriers and bringing people together is meant to be at the heart of the Christian gospel (look up Ephesians 2:14 - 18 and Galatians 3:26 - 29)

*Who are the outsiders, strangers and socially unacceptable people with whom you need to cooperate with rather than erecting barriers against them?*

Make up a picture of a truly fulfilled human being by filling in an outline of a body with lots of cut-out pictures from magazines and newspapers of as many different sorts of people you can find. Include a wide variety of colour, ethnicity, gender, age and so on. A picture of cooperation!

Bible story links:

[Lesson outline on overcoming prejudice - Peter and Cornelius](#)

[The Good Samaritan - helping others](#)

### **8. Further ideas for discussion and development of the theme**

*What classroom rules would you create to help your class be more cooperative?*

Use these as a discussion starter:

*Listen* carefully to others and be sure you understand what they are saying.

*Share* when you have something that others would like to have.

*Take turns* when there is something that nobody wants to do, or when more than one person wants to do the same thing.

*Compromise* when you have a serious conflict.

*Do your part* the very best that you possibly can. This will inspire others to do the same.

*Show appreciation* to people for what they contribute.



*Encourage people to do their best.*

*Make people feel needed.* Working together is a lot more fun that way.

*Don't isolate or exclude anyone.* Everybody has something valuable to offer, and nobody likes being left out.

Find out about the International Cooperation Movement started in 1921.