

Parenting Tools:

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As you begin to consider sports for your children, remember your priorities for them. We live in a sports-crazed society where it is easy to get caught up in the crowd and gravitate toward one of two extremes. Either “we live for sports” or “sports are an evil to be avoided.” The challenge is finding balance and making sports work for your family, instead of your family working for sports.

The two major themes related to the psychology of young, school-aged children are acceptance and achievement. As parents, we must define what acceptance and achievement look like for ourselves before our children begin sports, and determine what our goals are for our children in playing sports. What we as parents praise is what our children will attach value and worth to and will seek to achieve. So here are a few thoughts to consider along with some possible responses.

How do we define a “win?”

If a “win” is tied solely to the score at the end of the game, then winning is all that matters and our children are taught to win at all costs. What if winning is only part of what we define as a “win?” If we choose to highlight and praise sportsmanship, personal improvement and effort, then we can “win” even when we lose. Our kids want our acceptance and approval, and how we respond to the outcome of their game is going to send a clear message of our values.

What is our personal level of involvement?

The challenge here is to remember the purpose of our children playing sports. It is really for them to have the opportunity to work

as a team, learn values associated with playing a sport, and be challenged to achieve goals. It is not about us living through them and infusing their game with our competitive desire. Our level of passion must follow their level of passion. As parents our role in sports is to support, encourage, guide and supervise. When we step beyond this role we are actually hindering instead of helping.

How do we, as a family, represent Christ in our league?

We are called to be ambassadors for Christ and we cannot simply leave Christ in the parking lot at sporting events. We have to filter our actions and reactions through this truth. We have to step back, remove ourselves, and ask the question, “If another parent responded this way, what would I think of them?” Other parents are already asking this question, and how we react to our children, their coaches, the other team and the referees reveals our character to a world that needs Jesus.

Solomon’s words in Ecclesiastes 3:1 are applicable here: “There is an appointed time for everything. And there is an appointed time for every event under heaven.” We need to let our children enjoy this season of life as they play, learn and grow.