



Christian Sports Guide for Parents & Sports Fans

When sports are a tool, we can use them to disciple and teach our kids Christian values and lessons for life. The current culture of sports, especially youth sports, is shifting towards pulling them away from Christ and sports. As parents, we should be having conversations with our children to help them think rightly before and after competitions, guiding them through the disappointment of failure or bench-warming, and as parents leading by example.

Christian parents must lead intentionally in every area of their children's involvement in sports. As the Sports Ministry Coordinator here at Old North Church, I wanted to share some tips and advice to help guide your young Christian athlete and ways that you can lead by example as a parent – and even as a sports fan.

Winning

Our responsibility is to teach our children the supremacy of Christ in all things. 1 Corinthians 9:25, Paul made it clear that a far more important goal exists than winning on an athletic field.

25 Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

Being the best

As parents, we need to understand that our kids shouldn't play sports to make it to the next level. Our kids should play sports because they love the game. If they do progress to the next level, that is fantastic! But if they don't make it, that is ok! It is also important to not force a sport upon them or even make it too demanding of them. Pushing our children to play a sport or be the best can lead to negative impacts such as decreased self-esteem, increased stress and anxiety, and burnout. It is important to recognize these signs.

Coaches

Always support the coach's decision. Whether it is about playing time or strategy. Even if they are wrong! The real issue is how the child responds to the situation. The coach is the authority on the team. Teach your child to assume that his/her coach knows more and is in a better position to make decisions for the team. It is the coach's role to make those decisions and not the players or parents. That means that unless the coach does something immoral or unethical his or her authority should be honored on the team. As parents leading by example, we must make sure to display this honor as well and not

complain or challenge a coach. The same goes for fans of professional sports! Children observe our behaviors and therefore learn these actions from us!

Leading By Example

Every decision we make regarding sports communicates to our children what we value as ultimate. Whether that is within youth sports or watching our favorite team play. Let us lead and show we value the glory of Christ above all else.

Unhealthy Themes & Trends in Youth Sports

- Kids are nervous and anxious because they are afraid to make mistakes and be yelled at after the game by coaches, parents, and even other players.
- Parents will hold their kids back in school for a supposed advantage in sports, regardless of the effect on academic and social relationships.
- Parents live their dream of sports through their children. Parents view their kids as the truer and better them or as the opportunity they didn't have or accomplish.
- Kids who are so over-scheduled that they're on multiple traveling teams in one season.

How to respond before & after competition

As parents, we typically have the same responses before and after the competition. They usually go have fun, play hard, and I love you. As Christian parents, we must say more to our children. Sports give a window into your child's character. We can shape and form them as we focus on Christ.

Before

- Enjoy the opportunity to compete
- Play in a self-sacrificial way that places your teammates and coaches ahead of yourself
- When you make a mistake, respond by cheering harder for your teammates
- When your teammates make a mistake, encourage them
- Honor the officials by showing respect and thanking them after the game
- Cheer as hard on the bench as you would if you were in the game

After

- What did you learn about yourself?
- Did you compete to the absolute best of your ability with no regrets about your effort?
- How did you respond when you failed?
- Were you others-centered?
- Did you honor your coaches and officials? Did you thank them?
- I love to watch you play and to see you learn, through competing, about living for Christ

If you are looking to learn more, the information within this guide was pulled from:

The Christian Athlete by Brian Smith

In the Arena by David E. Prince