

PARENTING THE NEXT GENERATION

HELPING YOUNG ELITE SPORTSPEOPLE CONNECT SPORT AND FAITH



CONTENTS

- 
- 4** **RIDING THE PARENTING ROLLERCOASTER**
- 6** **WHAT OTHER SUPPORT IS THERE FOR ME AND MY CHILD?**
- 7** **MEET THE WRITERS**
- 8** **HOW DO I HELP MY CHILD DEAL WITH THE CULTURE OF ELITE SPORT?**
- 10** **WHAT CAN I DO WHEN MY CHILD'S SPORT CLASHES WITH CHURCH OR YOUTH GROUP?**
- 12** **HOW DO I KEEP JESUS AT THE CENTRE OF EVERYTHING WHEN TRYING TO BALANCE SPORT, CHURCH AND LIFE?**
- 14** **HOW CAN I HELP OUR CHURCH UNDERSTAND OUR SITUATION AND KNOW HOW TO SUPPORT US BEST?**



16

HOW DO I RESPOND IN A GODLY WAY TO MY CHILD'S SUCCESS AND FAILURE?

18

HOW DO I MAKE SURE I WALK CLOSELY WITH JESUS DURING THE BUSY TIMES?

20

HOW DO I HELP MY CHILD DEAL WITH UNCERTAINTY IN SPORT?

22

HOW CAN I BE DISTINCTIVE AS A CHRISTIAN AMONGST OTHER PARENTS AND GUARDIANS OF YPAS?

24

HOW DO I MAINTAIN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WITH MY SPOUSE AND OTHER CHILDREN WHEN ONE CHILD TAKES SO MUCH COMMITMENT?

26

HOW DO I HELP MY CHILD DEAL WITH DISAPPOINTMENT IN SPORT?



RIDING THE PARENTING ROLLERCOASTER

It started at the local club with the coach saying she had potential. Little did we know this was the beginning of an exciting but daunting journey into a completely different world for both of us. There is now a training session every day, regular trips up and down the country, homework being squeezed in whenever there are spare minutes, church seems to have slipped down the priority list and socialising with friends is non-existent.... and it's not just her!

As a parent, I often feel like a taxi service. Housework gets left undone, church and homegroup are increasingly hard to attend, and spending time with family and friends now needs a place in the diary!

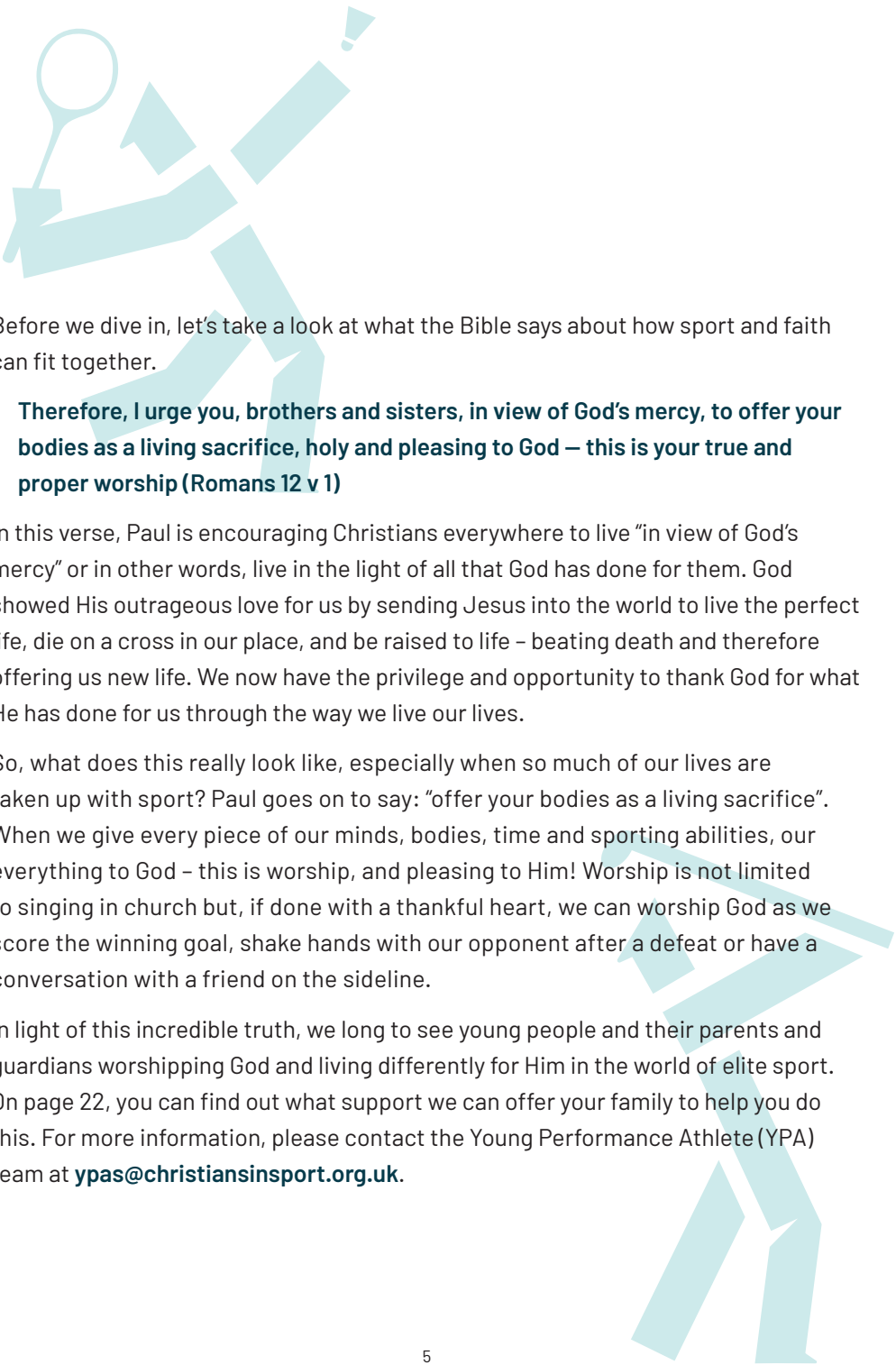
But I do love it...

SOUND FAMILIAR?

There are of course immense joys and celebrations in walking with a child on their journey in elite sport. Watching them improve, mature, succeed and push themselves to the max using the many gifts, talents and abilities that God has given them; sharing with them the thrill of winning and achieving the goals they are striving towards, as well as the clear enjoyment and fun they are having.

However, alongside this is having to deal with frustrated tempers after the matches that don't go so well, making sure enough time is spent with your other children, deciding whether to go to church or a training session and trying to explain your new way of life to other people – especially at church.

This booklet is designed to address some of the top questions asked by parents and guardians in these situations. Each answer gives a principle from the Bible, followed by suggestions of how it could be applied. Naturally, every situation is different, so there are questions at the end of each answer for you to think about and discuss with others.



Before we dive in, let's take a look at what the Bible says about how sport and faith can fit together.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship (Romans 12 v 1)

In this verse, Paul is encouraging Christians everywhere to live “in view of God's mercy” or in other words, live in the light of all that God has done for them. God showed His outrageous love for us by sending Jesus into the world to live the perfect life, die on a cross in our place, and be raised to life – beating death and therefore offering us new life. We now have the privilege and opportunity to thank God for what He has done for us through the way we live our lives.

So, what does this really look like, especially when so much of our lives are taken up with sport? Paul goes on to say: “offer your bodies as a living sacrifice”. When we give every piece of our minds, bodies, time and sporting abilities, our everything to God – this is worship, and pleasing to Him! Worship is not limited to singing in church but, if done with a thankful heart, we can worship God as we score the winning goal, shake hands with our opponent after a defeat or have a conversation with a friend on the sideline.

In light of this incredible truth, we long to see young people and their parents and guardians worshipping God and living differently for Him in the world of elite sport. On page 22, you can find out what support we can offer your family to help you do this. For more information, please contact the Young Performance Athlete (YPA) team at ypas@christiansinsport.org.uk.

WHAT OTHER SUPPORT IS THERE FOR ME AND MY CHILD?



While this booklet can never answer all the questions you might have, we hope it will prove helpful for you. We would also like to suggest some other ways you could be supported as your child continues to journey on the performance pathway in their sport.

The Christians in Sport website (christiansinsport.org.uk) has a large number of articles, Bible studies, books and video blogs which address many of the topics touched on in this booklet. Have a browse through to find out more.

The Christians in Sport podcast (christiansinsport.org.uk/podcast) has a variety of interviews with ex-professional sportspeople talking about their sport and faith, and includes discussions on similar issues to those found in this booklet.

We have a team dedicated to supporting YPAs and families in a number of different ways, including:

- **Prayer support:** to pray as you face tough decisions and for YPAs as they compete
- **Gatherings:** where possible we try to link up YPA families we know of in the same sport or location to be encouraged by meeting others in similar situations. We have an online parents' gathering monthly, and online YPA gatherings for both 15-17 year olds and 18-23 year olds fortnightly.
- **Mentoring:** in some cases, it may be appropriate for a YPA to have a mentor from Christians in Sport who keeps in contact regularly to pray, encourage and read the Bible together.

You can find more information about our Young Performance Athlete (YPA) programme at christiansinsport.org.uk/ypas.

MEET THE WRITERS



GRAHAM DANIELS

Graham is General Director of Christians in Sport. He was a YPA at Cardiff City FC and is now a Director at Cambridge United FC where he has significant contact with their Academy players.



JULIA WILKINSON

Jules supports elite athletes as part of Christians in Sport's Performance Team. She trained as a PE teacher and is married to Pete, a church pastor. Their four children have all been on performance pathways, so she has personal experience of many of the issues highlighted in this booklet.

IAN LANCASTER

Ian was a YPA on the books of Carlisle United FC as a young professional and is now a member of Alchester Running Club. Part of Ian's role within Christians in Sport over the years has been to help establish our YPA work.



01

HOW DO I HELP MY CHILD DEAL WITH THE CULTURE OF ELITE SPORT?

Elite sport is often a real pressure-cooker environment. It's said that it was UCLA football coach Henry Sanders who first told his team: "I'll be honest. Winning isn't everything," then following a long pause: "It's the only thing!" Whoever said it first, it is a very accurate summary of the elite sport subculture.

Playing is about winning and coaching is about creating winners - although there will be differences in how this is displayed in a team sport compared to an individual one.

Indeed, many coaches hone the skill of pushing a young athlete to stay hungry for success by chiding their failures and praising their successes (but not too much to stop them becoming complacent).

So when he or she is winning, the young sportsperson feels great, but what they (and we) fail to realise is that all the time we may be ingraining in them a mindset that attaches their identity to their performance. We are sowing in them the seeds of real problems later on. When they start to lose, it is not just a loss, it is much more than that because their identity is bound up with it. As a result, they feel like they are a loser and torn apart.

What can a parent or guardian do to counter this insidious trend?

1. Firstly, help your child to cultivate a **grace-based mindset** rather than a performance-based one. Colossians 3 v 1-4 urges us to set our minds on who Christ is and what He has done and not on our achievements. Far from lessening the motivation to play, it increases it because we now do all things for God's glory (Colossians 3 v 17), secure in knowing we are loved by God regardless of our

performance. This provides much greater security to cope with the tough and exposing subculture of elite sport.

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3 v 1-4)

2. A second consideration is that whilst sport is a vital part of God's good creation, we do need to recognise the Bible is clear that "physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (1 Timothy 4 v 8). Please hear me as a passionate sports person, this is not undermining the importance of sport, but it is **elevating the importance of spiritual growth**. It is therefore worth asking whether as players devoted to our sport, or parents and guardians devoted to our children's sport, we show as much commitment to godliness. The stark reality is that long after my sporting ability has faded, my character will endure. I sense this is almost a bigger problem for parents and guardians, who with admirable commitment pour hours into their children's sport, but as one youth worker put it to me recently: "if only I saw as much passion for their children's spiritual growth!"

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- 1 How much is your identity as a parent or guardian bound up with your child's success as a player?
- 2 Can you love your child in a way that sees them as valuable regardless of winning?
- 3 What are you contributing in cash and calendar to your child's spiritual growth?

02

WHAT CAN I DO WHEN MY CHILD'S SPORT CLASHES WITH CHURCH OR YOUTH GROUP?

This is completely where the rubber hits the road. I can't think of any parent or guardian who wouldn't struggle with this. It's not so much a question of right or wrong, but of wisdom.

People will come at this from different sides of the fence. The approach will be very different depending on the age of your child. If they are young, you're making the decisions, but if they're older, they will probably have more of a say in them.

The younger they are, the harder it is for them to get Christian fellowship. It may be easier for them to do a Bible study, but fellowship with their church family is absolutely key.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

(Hebrews 10 v 24-25)

Based on the call of Hebrews 10 v 24-25, my best advice is to **think and pray through this issue** before arriving at a conclusion and then draw some lines in the sand. How will you, along with your church family, spur one another on towards love and good deeds? What does it look like to not giving up meeting together? When the pressure comes from your child, their teammates, the coach or other parents and guardians, it becomes almost impossible to say no!

For myself, the starting point with this question must be **guarding my own heart**. Despite saying and believing that the most important thing is for my child to know Jesus, I very easily get swept along by the sport. I love watching and can tell myself that it is vital that I am on the touchline sharing Jesus with the other parents and guardians. Of course, this is a good thing. However, I know my heart drifts very quickly and it's not long before I find that I am disappointed that no child has a match that Sunday and I can go to church!

Here are a few practical areas I found it helpful to think about:

- 1 Be aware of a **one-off session** that clashes with church versus **regular training** on a Sunday morning or whatever time your church meets. Missing church occasionally should mean there will still be regular fellowship. However, if the regular sporting commitment is on a Sunday, where is that regular Bible teaching and 'spurring on' going to come from?
- 2 **Youth group** is key. Is that at a time your child can attend? Talk to the youth leader and pastor. Explain the dilemma you're facing. Is there another local church at a more convenient time which will welcome youth?
- 3 It is essential to be **talking to your church** and making them aware that there is a conflict here. Ask for the leaders' wisdom and work through the situation together. There may be others in the church also facing difficulties in getting along on a Sunday such as shift workers.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- 1 Have you already drawn 'lines in the sand' on this issue? What new information justifies breaking them?
- 2 Have you discussed this honestly with your spouse or a close Christian friend? Do you need to discuss it together with your pastor or youth worker?
- 3 Is your ultimate desire for your child still that they **love Jesus with all their heart**?

03

HOW DO I KEEP JESUS AT THE CENTRE OF EVERYTHING WHEN TRYING TO BALANCE SPORT, CHURCH AND LIFE?

We may not always realise it, but the great news is that Jesus IS at the centre of everything:

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Colossians 1 v 15-17)

This reminds us that Jesus has created **all things**, sustains **all things** and has redeemed **all things**, so that in **all things** He might have the supremacy. The best advice then is to remember that when we are stretched to our limits in trying to balance all aspects of our children's lives, it's not a case of 'trying to keep Jesus central' but of recognising and acknowledging how central He already is.

Here are two principles that may help you to live this out day by day:

- **Guard** your heart in Christ Jesus because everything flows from it (Proverbs 4 v 23). It's worth acknowledging that very often it isn't actually being busy that's our problem, but that being busy actually exposes our fundamental problem. At the height of His ministry, Jesus was enormously busy but radically God-centred in all things because He guarded His heart. One way of guarding the heart is to focus on God more regularly throughout the day with prayer that, as we read in the next point, keeps us focussed on Him.

- **Commit** all aspects of your life to God. Just as it is good discipline to get into giving thanks for food because in doing so we remind ourselves that it is a gift from God to be received with gratitude, why not get into the habit of committing things to God with your children? That could be a quick pause and prayer in the car as you drop your kids off at school, or as you drive to church or the sports practice. What a wonderful habit it is to offer a prayer at the beginning of the day as a family committing it to God. What about giving thanks at the end of the day before bedtime? All of these are good daily interventions that will help us to focus on and to recognise God's centrality through Jesus Christ in our moment by moment living.

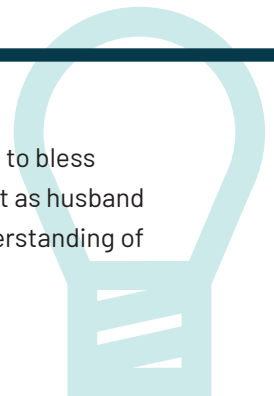
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- 1 Will you keep reminding yourself of Colossians 1 v 15-17 when you feel out of control?
- 2 Can you remind yourself that your heart defaults so quickly away from godliness?
- 3 To guard your heart, will you speak to God regularly and often throughout the day?

TOP TIP

What we have found really helps us is to pray for our children, to bless them whenever we can. In our discussions, we also found that as husband and wife we need to work together to have some shared understanding of how we can support our children as individuals.

Parents of a YPA badminton player



04

HOW CAN I HELP OUR CHURCH UNDERSTAND OUR SITUATION AND KNOW HOW TO SUPPORT US BEST?

Conversation is king here! When Paul is speaking to the elders/leaders of the church in Ephesus, he leaves them with these words:

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood (Acts 20 v 28)

The leaders of the church have been given a role and responsibility to watch over themselves and the people within their care. They are to be shepherds of the flock that God has given them. Our church leaders have been given responsibility and are empowered by the Holy Spirit to look after us and our children.

So, what does it look like to live as sheep under the care of shepherds who have themselves been commissioned under Christ as the head of His church?

Know: Realise that your pastor(s) and church leadership team are there for you. With God's help, they will be striving to fulfil their responsibility and therefore will be praying and thinking of you, your family and your circumstances.

Submit: Hebrews 13 v 17 is a challenging verse for us in our individualistic age. It talks of submitting to and obeying our church leaders, recognising that they are "keeping watch over our souls". It also mentions trying to ensure that this is a joy for the leaders and not a problem or a pain for them!

Pastors generally find it difficult when someone comes to them and says: "We have prayed about this and have decided to do x... what do you think about it?" That doesn't really model a godly submission to leadership!

Involve: If we are to submit, it's good to involve our church leaders by helping them understand our situation and concerns. If we do this, they can be praying specifically and give thoughtful advice.

Try to initiate a discussion with the right pastoral team member (it may be the pastor, assistant minister or a youth worker). Invite them round for a meal to create an opportunity to explain the tensions you are feeling and the pressures and temptations you are experiencing. Ask them for their input, for their prayers and perhaps ask them for opportunities to pray together about the situation. In some cases, churches may be able to offer support such as assigning an appropriate adult as spiritual mentor to your child or meeting up with the youth worker for support if attending regularly on a Sunday or at youth group is difficult.

Rarely do pastors want to prescribe what to do in any given situation. They will want to give guidelines from biblical principles. A wise pastor will hopefully recognise the difficulties of the decision and will want to prayerfully support you through it.

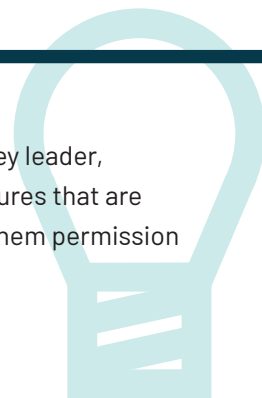
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- 1 Who is the best person in your church leadership team to approach about your situation?
- 2 How can you show a godly submission to leadership?
- 3 Are there Christian friends you can share this issue with?

TOP TIP

We think it is helpful to develop an open relationship with a key leader, keeping them up to date with training and competition pressures that are preventing attendance, sharing prayer requests, and giving them permission to challenge if they feel appropriate.

Parents of a YPA sailor



05

HOW DO I RESPOND IN A GODLY WAY TO MY CHILD'S SUCCESS AND FAILURE?

What does success and failure look like for my child involved in sport?

The world and certainly the sports culture have pretty tight answers to that question.

Success = winning, beating others, signing the next contract, achieving the next goal.

Failure = losing, not being the best, not being offered that next contract, falling short of any goals set.

How careful we need to be as parents and guardians that we don't fall into the trap of defining success and failure as the sports world around us does.

In Luke 10 v 20 the disciples return to Jesus after a time of great 'success' on mission. Jesus' response is so helpful for parents and guardians. He neither unequivocally celebrates with them in their success because He recognises the seeds of idolatry that are starting to germinate. Nor though does he pour scorn on their joy by just warning them about the danger of finding it 'in' these things. Instead He celebrates with them, but gives them a careful word of caution:

However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

(Luke 10 v 20)

His point is that there is a difference between **rejoicing** about **something** and **rejoicing in something**. To find our joy in something is to make it our source of joy and our very identity becomes bound up with it.

This can be the problem for parents, guardians and children alike - their success becomes their (and our) source of joy. It seems great when they are winning, but when they lose they feel they have let us down and let themselves down (and if we are honest we can feel that too). It is also helpful to think how you respond practically to your child's result. Reacting as a supporter is very different to responding as a trainer or coach would.

A conversation with a former elite athlete recently, worryingly, brought this to life. She described her worth, her existence and even the feeling of being loved through the context of her performance. "I felt loved by my parents when I was winning" she went on... "so in the end I was striving to perform and win on the sole basis of being accepted and loved by my family". How very sad and yet how close to home could this reality be for Christian parents and guardians?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- 1 Where do you place too much emphasis on your child winning, on their performance or on their progress?
- 2 How will you put your child's successes and failures into perspective?
- 3 How can you and your child rejoice in the greatest prize of all - your security in heaven?



06

HOW DO I MAKE SURE I WALK CLOSELY WITH JESUS DURING THE BUSY TIMES?



The best thing I can do for my child is walk closely with Jesus. That can be a battle for all of us, so I need to be honest with myself here. A spouse or Christian friend can also help with accountability, and praying with them is essential.

If I'm a busy parent or guardian and can fit lots in, there's really no excuse why I can't fit in a **quiet time looking at God's word**. I can use busyness as an excuse, but in all honesty if an extra training session is called for I will always make time for it, so it is a question of my priorities.

At the same time, we need to **be realistic**. Could you aim for 10 or 15 minutes? Could you have a rule that you don't look at your phone before reading the Bible each day?

And how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

(2 Timothy 3 v 15-17)

God did not make church for His benefit, but graciously for ours as we need it. To keep walking with Jesus, I need to keep reading my Bible, keep meeting with other Christians and keep praying. I know this, but I won't always feel like doing them. That's why passages like 2 Timothy 3 v 15-17 are so helpful. Not only does God's word contain the power to save us, it also contains all we need to live as servants of God.

To help with discipline, here are a few tips based on what I found helpful:

- Allow your spouse or a close Christian friend to ask **difficult questions** about your walk with Jesus
- Ask people to commit to being in a **prayer triplet** with you
- Use **Bible study notes** to focus your reading
- **Download the sermon** if you missed hearing it

They say it takes three weeks to form a habit and three days to break it! Another good habit is to pray that we would truly delight and find joy in God's word, rather than seeing it as a duty and something we must squeeze in. This is something I'm sure we long to model to our child!

I love watching my kids play sport, but there have been lots of times when I could have got involved with **lift shares** and gone to church instead. We need to find a balance.

If there's training every night, is there a **daytime group** at church I could go to? If I'm at work full-time, is there a **lunchtime meeting** I could attend? I know the battle is my heart, but it's always a struggle, whoever you are. I need to take responsibility for my own relationship with Jesus, I can't just sit there waiting for something to be done for me. So being vulnerable and asking others to walk alongside you is a good start.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- 1 Do you appreciate the power of God's word? What must you change to prioritise your own Bible reading and praying?
- 2 Is there anyone else who can take your child to training or a match so that you can get to church or a fellowship group?
- 3 Who are you accountable with in your local church?

07

HOW DO I HELP MY CHILD DEAL WITH UNCERTAINTY IN SPORT?

There is nothing certain in life, even less so in sport!

Sport is so unpredictable; one moment you are celebrating success, the next you are commiserating with your child. One moment you are trying to keep their feet on the ground after a major win, the next you are desperately searching for the right words to build them up after a discouraging performance.

We have only touched on trying to deal with the ever-changing world of winning and losing, success and failure. What about the questions that come with these changes... When will I recover from this injury? Will I get selected after that performance? Will I get on with my new teammates? What if the coach doesn't like me?

In the rollercoaster journey of youth performance sport, where uncertainty is certain, how do you help your child as you wrestle with these questions?

Remind them of these steadfast certainties and remain steadfast amidst relentless uncertainty.

Let us look at them one at a time.

1. Remind them of the steadfast certainties

In Colossians 1v21-22 we get a description from Paul of the wonderful truth of the reconciling work of God through Jesus. It is definitive and conclusive. We were once enemies of God because of our rejection of him but now HE has done a work that cannot be undone. The death of Jesus makes us right before a holy God. It is utter freedom in the eyes of God – He holds nothing against us. Absolutely nothing!

This is wonderful unchanging truth because the God who has made it happen is

steadfast and unchangeable. He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

When everything in sport and life is changeable, there is real comfort, freedom and hope in knowing that the status of a Christian before God never changes and is always certain. These are truths to remind yourself of as you parent, as well as remind your child whether they trust in him or they don't - a standing before a holy God really matters.

2. Remain steadfast in the relentless uncertainties

Colossians 1v23 is a call for the Christian to live out who they have become.

“If you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel.”

The unfailing status has been achieved by Jesus, now the Christian is empowered to hold onto this truth. It is a call to be resilient. To be firmly established. To hold unmovably to something that won't let you down. What is that will not let us down? It is the hope that is found in the gospel.

“Hope is a joyful expectation for the future, based on true events in the past, which changes everything about my present” (Hope Explored 2021)

The reason why hope keeps bringing hope is because it is rooted in true events of the past. Unchangeable truth that cannot grow legs of uncertainty!

So, when the uncertainties in your child's sport come thick and fast, remember the hope that is found in the good news of Jesus. Immovable and unchanging certain hope. Work out ways of speaking it into your life daily and into the life of your child. Keep coming back to it. Be relentless in your pursuit of it - This certain hope changes everything about the present changeable uncertain world of youth performance sport. This certain hope brings great joy!

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- 1** What uncertainties are you and your child facing at the moment?
- 2** How do you talk about the uncertainties of sport with your child?
- 3** How can you keep finding fresh ways of reminding your child about the unchanging truths of the gospel?

08

HOW CAN I BE DISTINCTIVE AS A CHRISTIAN AMONGST OTHER PARENTS AND GUARDIANS OF YPAS?

As parents and guardians, we need to remember what the gospel has achieved for us – everything! Because of this, we live to a different drum beat and obey the call to be who we have become...to live out a life that is distinct. The danger is that our focus can be so wrapped up in our children that we forget who we have become and don't pay as much attention to our behaviour, thought processes and witness to the other parents and guardians around us. Yet with the large amount of time often spent with them, what an opportunity we have to invest in these relationships.

Within Christians in Sport we encourage all Christian sportspeople to pray, play, say (see Colossians 4 v 2-6) as the key way to be distinctive and to reach the world of sport for Christ. This simple but helpful method is just as applicable to parents and guardians.

So, what might this look like?

- **Pray** for other parents and guardians on the way to, during and after sport training and fixtures:
 - (v 3) That God would open a door for you to speak of the message of Jesus.
 - (v 4) That you would be bold in taking those opportunities to chat about your faith.
- **Play** (v 5) Be wise in the way you act around other parents and guardians at training and fixtures. It's good to look in the mirror regularly and ask yourself how your behaviour matches the message you bring. Where are you tempted to conform to the pattern of the world you're immersed in? How is your attitude towards officials, coaches and your child when they are performing? Ask God to help you be wise, so that the light of your new identity might be seen by all around you.

- **Say** (v 6) How can you let your conversation be full of grace and seasoned with salt?

A helpful framework might be:

'Your news' - Ask other parents and guardians about their family, their hobbies, their work. Show a real interest in them and try and get to know the rhythms of their lives. In time, at some point they will ask you similar questions.

'My news' - When you are asked such questions, look for natural ways to weave your faith in Jesus throughout your answer. Can you mention church and what a significant impact it has on you each week?

'Good news' - As you become more intentional in your relationships, very often you will have an opportunity to share a little of what the good news of Jesus is. Look for things to invite other parents and guardians along to, like a carol service or guest event and even to come and experience church with you.

So, in all of this, we need God's help and His desire that other parents and guardians may see our good deeds and glorify our Father in heaven.

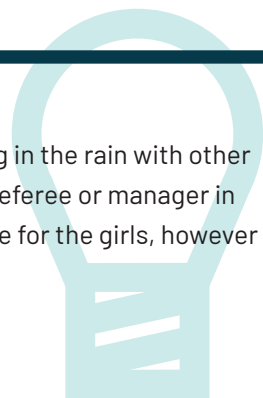
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- 1 Which other parents and guardians could you be developing relationships with, praying for and seeking to be a witness to?
- 2 What does it look like for you to be distinctive?
- 3 How much of a priority is this for you?

TOP TIP

My husband and I spent a lot of time on the sidelines shivering in the rain with other parents! We tried to welcome new parents, not criticise the referee or manager in conversations and we tried to show a consistent care and love for the girls, however they had played, well or not.

Parent of a YPA footballer



09

HOW DO I MAINTAIN HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WITH MY SPOUSE AND OTHER CHILDREN WHEN ONE CHILD TAKES SO MUCH COMMITMENT?

It's really tricky not to get swept along by all the sporting commitments that can seem to take over family life. One practical response can be to put regular times in the diary when you step back and **assess** how things are going.

I found it helpful to ensure all our children could **express** how they felt about family life - even if they said it was totally unfair that another child was getting preferential treatment! You may not have the perfect solution to the problem, but talking it through is a great start.

This question does come down to practical things. It's missing the cup final to go to the school sports day where your other child is running one race. It's going to be very different in every family. This is where your relationship between each other as parents or guardians is vital. You need to **listen** to each other.

There are ways to help each other, especially if we view sport differently. It is not a negative if one of you loves sport and will always say yes and one loathes it and will always say no. Regularly talking and listening will ensure you make wise decisions together. If you are married, the Lord has brought you together, so working situations through as a team is key. As a single parent or guardian, healthy relationships with wider family members and trusted Christian friends are so valuable. Bible passages like Colossians 3 v 15-17 are honest that these things are not always easy, but as God's people we are called to serve each other in all circumstances.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

(Colossians 3 v 15-17)

However much you love watching your child play sport, could **lift sharing** sometimes be an option? As well as your child learning a bit of independence, it gives you more time at home and helps you keep a healthier attitude to the sport and not to get obsessed with how they are doing. When they're older, they will be able to get on a bus or a train - you don't need to be at every match. Are there other ways your child could be independent to ease some pressure on your time?

As with our relationship with God, we must recognise that no relationship can survive, let alone grow, if no time is put into it. We need to **prioritise time** for each other.

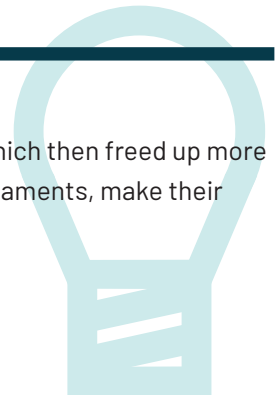
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- 1 Have you considered lift sharing or other opportunities to create more time?
- 2 When was the last time you had some quality time with your spouse or a good Christian friend?
- 3 When was the last time you missed a match to do something with each of your other children?

TOP TIP

We tried to think of other responsibilities to give our child, which then freed up more time for us. They can learn to pack their own bag, enter tournaments, make their own lunch..."

Parents of a YPA squash player



10

HOW DO I HELP MY CHILD DEAL WITH DISAPPOINTMENT IN SPORT?

"In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed."

1 Peter 1v6-7

Disappointment is a real thing! It is a gut-wrenching, all-consuming monster that can appear at any moment and overwhelm your child. It comes with the usual stuff in sport (a defeat, missing out on team selection, an injury) but also in the subtle (a discouraging word from a teammate, a comment from a coach, unhappy with an area of performance you're unaware of).

If you're in the business of parenting young performance athletes, you need to be ready to support your child, and yourself, through disappointment.

Peter writes to Christians who have been scattered throughout the area due to persecution. Let's pull out three things in these verses that can help us face disappointment.

1. He is honest about their current situation – it's real and he doesn't overlook it

"...though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials."

Perhaps a danger for parents is an underlying desire for their children to always be happy. So, when disappointments come you naturally and quickly want them to move on and be positive.

Peter recognises the grief, the trials, the disappointment. He calls it out and he doesn't hide it or pretend it's not there.

What would be helpful for your child here? Maybe, that you don't overlook disappointment. That you don't pretend it's not there and come out with glib

comments like 'don't worry' or 'it will all work out'. How can you be sensitive and aware of disappointment – the obvious and the subtle – we all need the Spirit's help here. It's not wrong to feel disappointed, but how you respond to it is important.

2. He sees a bigger picture

"...These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold"

Peter points to the fact that trials have a purpose – God uses trials and disappointments to build our trust in Him. This might be most relevant for parents & guardians. The disappointments your child faces and the way they respond and treat you in those moments can be a real test.

Peter says that your faith in the Lord Jesus is **the** most important thing, of greater value than gold. The refining process isn't always easy, it can be fiery! Could you encourage your child to see that the highs and lows, the ups and downs are all wonderful opportunities to grow our faith in the one who holds us tightly?

3. He points to a greater outcome

"...may result in praise, glory, and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed."

We were designed to praise God and give him glory. When we do this, we're satisfied in the moment and king Jesus is honoured when He returns again. Peter points to a time when Jesus is coming back. A time when all disappointment in sport and life will be washed away. A time when a stumbling faith in those toughest moments of parenting will result in the honour of Jesus. He will turn to you and those who trust in Him and say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

When those tough moments of disappointment for you and your child come, however hard, Peter says keep trusting in Him, for he'll never ever let you down.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- 1** How do you currently respond to your child's disappointment?
- 2** How have these verses helped you to think differently about disappointment?
- 3** In a period of disappointment, what are some helpful and not helpful things to say to your child?



T 01869 255 630

E info@christiansinsport.org.uk

W www.christiansinsport.org.uk

Frampton House
Unit D1
Telford Road Industrial Estate
Bicester
OX26 4LD

Registered Charity number for
England and Wales 1086570

Registered Charity number for
Scotland SC045299.

Company number 4146081