

Game Over

All things become visible when they are exposed by the light.

Ephesians 5:13

Our son Samuel was a top-rated tennis player at age 14, before he was diagnosed with a rare neurological disease. But he struggled at times with getting angry at himself. I warned him often about dealing with this. And although he tested our limits periodically, he always seemed to get himself under control before we felt the need to take drastic action.

Except at one particular tournament. Samuel was well ahead of his opponent but still missed shots he thought he should have made. Soon, he began beating the air with his racquet.

I looked sternly in his direction, making eye contact.

Not long after, he slammed a ball into the chain-link fence. I stood up.

Finally, he angrily whacked the fence with his racquet.

That did it. I walked out onto the court and declared, “This match is over. My son forfeits for poor sportsmanship.”

It was a difficult moment. You could have heard a pin drop. The look of shock on Samuel’s face was one I’ll never forget. But it didn’t matter. It was character-training time. And however hot the attention felt on my back from both the spectators and from Samuel, I was determined to make my point. And believe me—I did!

There will be times—if you haven’t experienced them already—when your children will need to be stunned by what their misbehavior can cost them. They need to know that the game they are playing is not the ultimate objective. It is an opportunity to grow their character. To win the game and lose at life is not the goal.

Discuss

What is important: the game or life? What misbehavior in your children could force you to conduct some out-in-the-open correction?

Pray

Pray that God will give you the courage to do what is needed to shape the character of your children.

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