



WEEK 2: ALL PARTICIPANTS

How many of you have walked away from a soccer game and feel like you should have won, but got “jipped”? Who do you usually blame? (other team, your own teammates, the ref, Loud parents:)

This past weekend one of the Elevate girls’ club teams played in a highly competitive tournament. They played four games in two days...the last game of the tournament both teams were playing with every last strand of energy they had left. All over the field were fouls, tough plays, and subsequently questionable calls. The other team’s parents were freaking out because they felt like the Elevate girls were fouling their girls, the Elevate girls were upset because of their opponents’ physicality and trash talk. In the end, the Elevate girls lost by just one goal. They played some fantastic soccer all weekend, and should have walked away very pleased, but of course they came off in tears because they had fought so hard and with so much emotion and energy, the loss was tough.

What are some excuses we make when we lose? Who do we blame?

The girls had a similar response...they were naturally upset with the ref, the other team, and more. But in the end the team must take responsibility for the loss. In sports one of the greatest missed opportunities to grow is playing the “blame game” rather than accepting one’s role in the loss. We must accept in the end, the referee is not perfect, but nor are we as athletes, nor are the parents and coaches yelling on the sideline...we never make 100% correct touches, passes, or shots. All the participants are imperfect.

In Genesis we find one of the most EPIC examples of the blame game...anyone know which story I might be talking about? The story of Adam and Eve! Adam and Eve were the first man and woman created by God. They were placed in a *perfect*, beautiful garden called Eden. They were over the animals and plants and were made in the image of God. They were allowed to eat any of the delicious plants God had placed there, but were Told by God not to take the fruit of ONE tree...the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Both Adam and Eve knew this, but so did Satan who came to Eve in the form of a Serpent and convinced Eve she would be as wise as God if she would eat the forbidden fruit. So she did....and then she convinced Adam to try it as well! As soon as they did it they realized they had done wrong and felt ashamed. They had been offered protection, food, and unity with God, but they did the one thing they were asked not to. **When God asked Adam what he had done who did he blame? Did he take responsibility for it?** He blamed Eve as if she had force-fed him the fruit! **And what about Eve..what did she do?** She blamed the serpent. This is a story of the moment sin entered the world, and there was no one to blame except themselves!

What is “sin?” (Sin is Disobeying God) **Are any of you so perfect that you NEVER make God unhappy, never sin?** (NO! And if you think that’s not true, lets talk to your parents:) Sadly Adam and Eve started their existence in God’s presence but sin separated them from God. God is perfect and requires perfection to be in Heaven with Him. God expelled them from their paradise, and sin, death, and suffering entered the world from then on.

It can be easy to blame our siblings, our circumstance, or others for the mistakes we’ve made. But in the end we need to understand and accept that we MESS UP and make bad choices...ALL of us! Romans 6:23 says the “wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life”. In other words, God already knew we would make poor choices sometimes and would disappoint Him. He knew on our own we would never be able to reach perfection and live with Him. But He sent His Son to die on the cross for our sins so we could be forgiven and spend eternity with Him. Rather than blaming others for our mistakes, we are told we should accept that we have sinned and acknowledge that Christ has already made a way for all our sins to be forgiven!