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Sore Loser

n/a
Ready:

Don’t gloat when your enemy falls, and don’t let your heart rejoice when he stumbles, or the Lord will see, be displeased, and turn His wrath away from him.
Proverbs 24:17-18

Set

In 2001, golfer Annika Sorenstam dominated the women’s professional tour, winning eight tournaments and topping two million dollars in earnings. After that phenomenal year, Annika’s chief rival, Karrie Webb, commented that she’d eat her hat if Annika won eight tournaments in the coming year. The following season, Annika won eleven tournaments and earned nearly three million dollars in prize money.

Sometimes the competition is too strong. This simple truth is often difficult for highly competitive coaches and athletes to understand. The fact remains, though, we can’t win them all. John Wooden didn’t win every basketball game that he coached. Jack Nicklaus didn’t win every golf tournament that he entered. Cy Young didn’t win every baseball game that he pitched. Mature coaches and athletes take it a step further; they learn to appreciate the competition’s performance. No athlete enjoys losing or is content with losing. When the inevitable loss occurs, however, the true sportsman or woman appreciates the performance of the victor and congratulates the opponent on a job well done.

We all know that even Christians can sometimes struggle to celebrate the victories of others. Perhaps someone else got the job or a cross-town rival won the tournament. Whatever the situation, we have a tendency to focus more on our loss than on the other person’s gain. But the mature Christian recognizes God’s will in every aspect of life, knowing that His perfect will may involve losses or apparent setbacks. After all, the suffering and death of Jesus Christ was God’s plan!

How we respond to these situations reveals what is in our hearts. While the world expects bitterness and resentment in defeat, Christians can stand out by congratulating the victor, knowing that Christ has already won the ultimate victory for us. Not only will this simple act gain the respect of others, it will also make us more gracious on those occasions when we’re the victors.

Go

1. How do you react to another coach’s success?
2. What are some of the greatest lessons you’ve learned from your losses?

3. How do you teach your players to respond to victories and to defeats?

Workout

Jonah 3:1–4:3
Luke 15:11-32
1 John 2:3-11

Overtime

Lord, empower me to live today with the grace and integrity of Your will! Amen.

Bible Reference:
1 John 2

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