



The Super Bowl LI parties are all cleaned up and the snacks have all been eaten, but for some, the football debate will go on. No, not a debate over deflated balls or legacies or politically charged commercials or halftime shows—the debate is over whether football is a safe sport for kids to play.

A government study supplied a few years ago reported that brain injuries were the reason for 250,000 ER visits by young athletes each year. And although most young people recover from these injuries quickly, the long-term effects may not be seen right away, and they can be serious—causing problems with thought processes, memory, and behavioral issues.

Some supporting the sport of football note that parents allow their children to engage in many potentially dangerous activities, such as bike riding, skiing, hockey, soccer, baseball, gymnastics, and so on. Many of these activities also result in severe injuries and the numbers in some categories can be even worse than those for football. But others argue that the typical actions in football require players to often collide with each other and players are encouraged (either by coaches or by their teammates) to hit their opponents as hard as they can—sometimes referred to by kids as “blowing people up.”

Organizers and coaches of the game say that safer methods can be put in place and point to training methods developed by the NFL-sponsored Heads Up Football program, which educates coaches and players on how to deal with concussions and encourages players to keep their heads out of the way during plays and lead with their shoulders and bodies instead. According to the NFL, after more training and safer methods were implemented, the occurrences of concussions in regular season games dropped by 25 percent. It does seem that these new programs are helping, but is it enough? That’s the questions many parents will be trying to answer as their children put away their jerseys and look forward to the next season.

As students arrive, give each of them a copy of the above article to read. Then discuss it in this way:

What do you think? Is football too dangerous for kids to play? Give reasons for your argument.

It’s important for young people to be involved in physical exercise, and playing a sport is one of the best ways to get regular exercise. Why do you think so much fuss is made about football in particular? Give some reasons why people might think football is more dangerous than other sports.

Sometimes when we try to do a healthy thing, we end up overdoing it. Has that ever happened to you? Tell about a time you thought you were making a healthy choice and then something negative or unexpected happened.

We all have our own ideas about how to be healthy. In this lesson, we’ll look at the first church and see what practices they put into place to make sure they stayed spiritually healthy.