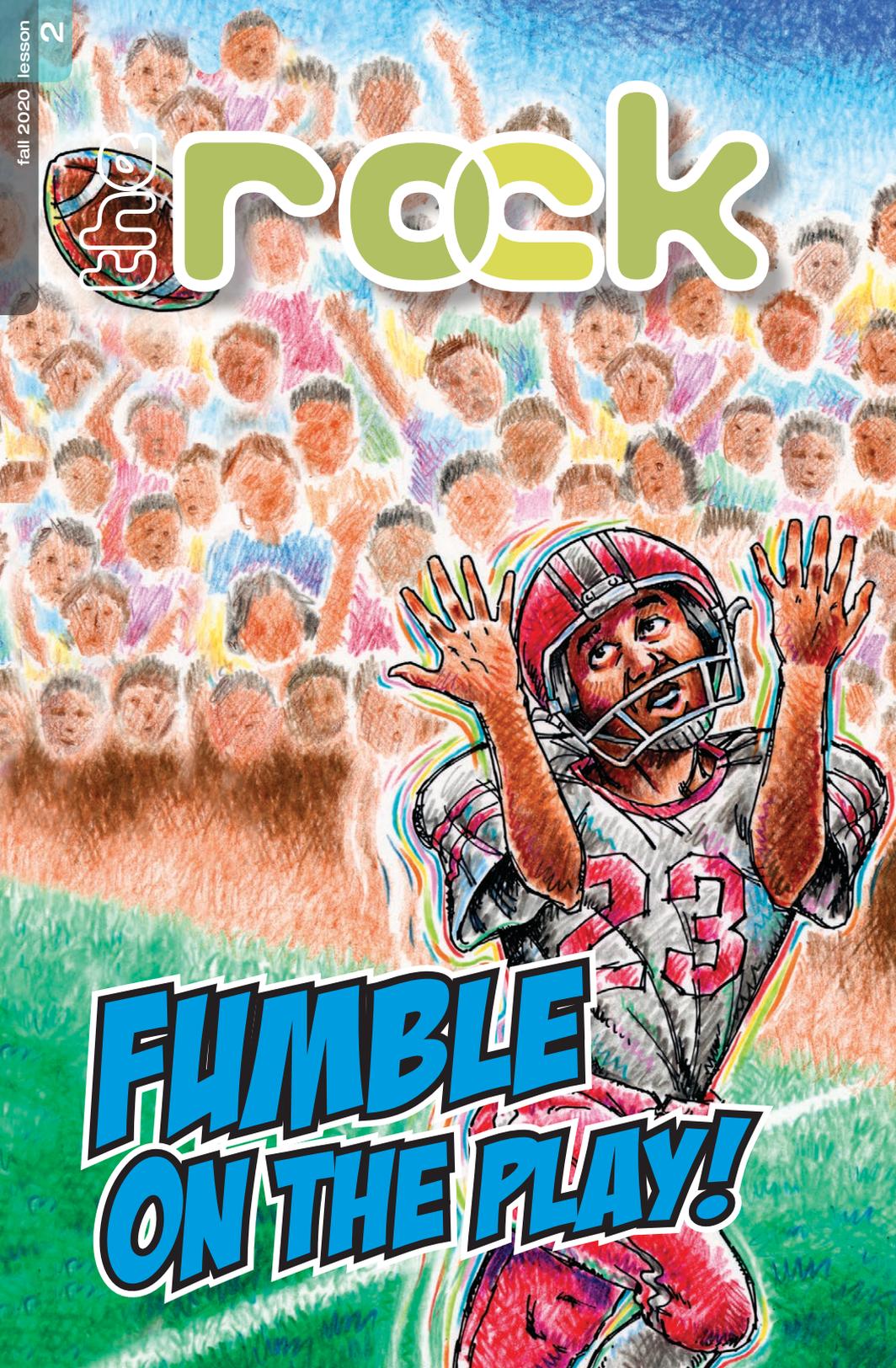


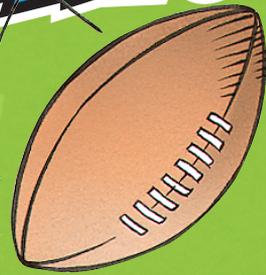


rack



**FUMBLE
ON THE PLAY!**

FUMBLE ON THE PLAY!



T

he boys waited for Crosby King to return to the huddle. When he got there, he put his hands on his knees as if nothing had happened. James Matthews, the left tackle for the Eisenhower Middle School football team, looked first at Eric Hamilton, the quarterback, then at Crosby. Obviously, Eric wasn't going to say anything, but James wasn't intimidated by Crosby.

"Hey, Crosby, that play was a '35 Dive.' That's you! You come off my left hip. You went the wrong way."

Crosby stood up and adjusted his pads on his broad shoulders. He frowned as he peered through his face mask. If Eric had said something, Crosby would have made a smart remark, but not with James, the biggest and most popular guy on the team. He could see his teammates staring at him, waiting for his reply. He pointed to Eric, "He turned the wrong way, so I swung wide for a pitch."

Angry at the lie, Eric took a step forward, then



thought better of it. Trailing by four points with only a little over two minutes left was no time to get into an argument with the so-called star running back.

Eric ducked his head into the huddle, his action duplicated by his 10 teammates. "Hook and go right, 3 in the flat," he announced, meaning that his right end should run five yards, turn, hesitate, and then break downfield while Crosby drifted into the open space.

The team broke the huddle with a handclap. On the snap, Eric faded back quickly, faked a pass to the left, then looked back to his right. Crosby was wide open. Eric fluttered the pass; Crosby squared himself to the ball, and then watched it bounce off his uniform numbers and drop to the ground. Crosby looked stunned.

Eric glanced toward the bench. Coach Torkelson had his arms crossed. From behind, Eric heard James mutter, "I gotta hear this one," referring to Crosby's certain excuse.

Jogging back to the huddle, Crosby shrugged his shoulders.

Tailing by four points with only a little over two minutes left was no time to get into an argument...

"Sorry, Eric," he began, surprising everyone for a moment, "but you had a weird spin on that one." Two players groaned. Most stared in disbelief.

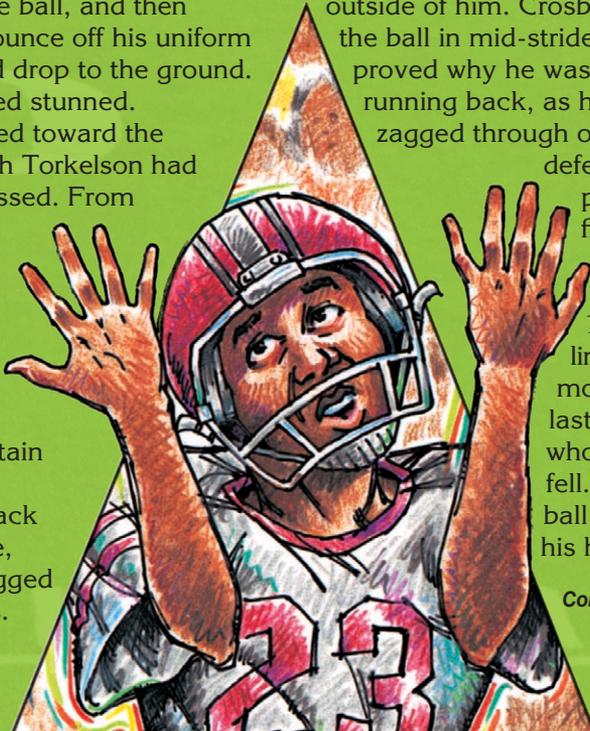
A new player entered the huddle to call the crucial third down play. "Coach wants an option right. He says we got to get a first down at least." Eric looked at the yard markers. It was third and 10 on the opponent's 40. Two minutes left.

On the snap, Eric moved down the line, dodged a linebacker, and then confronted a huge defensive end. Without hesitation, he pitched the ball to Crosby, who Eric knew would be outside of him. Crosby caught the ball in mid-stride, and then proved why he was such a great running back, as he zigged and zagged through oncoming defensive

players, fighting his way upfield.

At the 10-yard line, he put a move on the last defender who slipped and fell. Raising the ball high above his head in

Continued on page 6.



OFF THE HOOK

King Saul found out the hard way that God doesn't want excuses for disobedience. Suppose Saul had kept a journal about the battle with the Amalekites . . .



Imagine it's the evening after the prophet Samuel's first visit, and Saul writes . . .

War again. Samuel said God wants us to attack the Amalekites and destroy everything. Too bad God said we can't keep any loot. They're awfully rich and have lots of nice stuff.

1. Read 1 Samuel 15:1-3. If you were King Saul and God told you to prepare for battle, what would you be thinking? Write your own journal entry, expressing your thoughts and feelings.

2. Why do you think God wanted everything destroyed?

The day after the battle . . .
The Amalekites never knew what hit them. Very few losses in our troops. My plan was magnificent. You should have

seen the look on Agag's face when we captured him. My troops are in good spirits. Lots of loot for everyone. Samuel wants it destroyed, but I think it's good for morale. The men fought hard. We all deserve some reward.

3. On one hand the battle was a success. On the other hand it was a failure. What did Saul do to contribute to his ultimate failure? (See 1 Samuel 15:7-12.)

After Samuel's visit . . .

How can God do this to me? I'm a hero. So I didn't exactly obey everything God had said. So what if I kept a few sheep? I told Samuel I was going to use them as a sacrifice to God.

4. Read 1 Samuel 15:13-21. How did Saul justify his disobedience?

5. Read 1 Samuel 15:22-29. Come up with your own journal entry about Saul's visit from Samuel.



Today's Scripture

Selected verses from 1 Samuel 15

¹Samuel said to Saul, "I am the one the LORD sent to anoint you king over his people Israel; so listen now to the message from the LORD. ²This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. ³Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.' "

⁷Then Saul attacked the Amalekites all the way from Havilah to Shur, near the eastern border of Egypt. ⁸He took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and all his people he totally destroyed with the sword. ⁹But Saul and the army spared Agag and the best of the sheep and cattle, the fat calves and lambs—everything that was good. These they were unwilling to destroy completely, but everything that was despised and weak they totally destroyed.

¹⁰ Then the word of the LORD came to Samuel:

¹¹ "I regret that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions." Samuel was angry, and he cried out to the LORD all that night.

¹² Early in the morning Samuel got up and went to meet Saul, but he was told, "Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honor and has turned and gone on down to Gilgal."

¹³ When Samuel reached him, Saul said, "The LORD bless you! I have carried out the LORD's

instructions."

¹⁴ But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of sheep in my ears? What is this lowing of cattle that I hear?"

¹⁵ Saul answered, "The soldiers brought them from the Amalekites; they spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the LORD your God, but we totally destroyed the rest."

²⁰"But I did obey the LORD," Saul said. "I went on the mission the LORD assigned me. I completely destroyed the Amalekites and brought back Agag their king. ²¹ The soldiers took sheep and cattle from the plunder, the best of what was devoted to God, in order to sacrifice them to the Lord your God at Gilgal."

²² But Samuel replied: "Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

²⁴Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned. I violated the LORD's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the men and so I gave in to them. ²⁵ Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD."

²⁶ But Samuel said to him, "I will not go back with you. You have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you as king over Israel!"

²⁸ Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbors—to one better than you. ²⁹ He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a human being, that he should change his mind."





Questions to ask yourself:

□ What do you think is Crosby's main problem?

Continued from page 3.

triumph, he bobbled the ball, and to the horror of his teammates and fans, watched the ball squirt away, taking two bounces directly into the hands of the opponent still lying on the 10.

A minute and a half later, the game was over. Entering the locker room, Coach Torkelson heard Crosby complaining to a teammate about how the referee had substituted a slippery ball just before the play. The coach had just finished congratulating himself on how well he had controlled his disappointment and frustration, but now he cut loose into a tirade.

The coach lectured the entire team about accepting responsibility for their actions. He finished with comments aimed directly at Crosby's bowed head.

"One has to accept blame for failure. A man has to have enough courage not to expect others to shoulder things that are his fault." After several minutes of silence, he strode out of the room.

Crosby was the first one to say anything. "Man, did he go ballistic or what?" he said, forcing a small smile. "I don't see why he's blaming himself. I thought he coached a pretty good game."

□ What kinds of excuses do people make for their actions?

□ Why won't excuses work with God? What does He want instead?

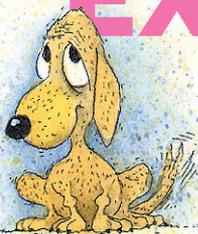


We put our heads together and came up with the top five excuses for not doing your homework.

WELL

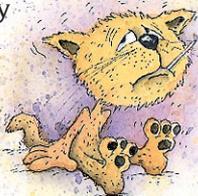
EXCU-U-USE

ME!



5. My mother thought my homework was a scrap of paper and used it to paper-train the dog. I didn't have time to do it over.

4. I got locked out of the house while my parents rushed my sick cat to the vet. By the time they got home, it was so late, they made me go to bed.



3. My parents said too much homework overstimulates the brain, which could lead to a stroke. So I didn't do it. (Yeah, that's the ticket.)

2. The president called me to go on a secret mission. I couldn't let my country down.

(And the top excuse for not doing your homework...)

WARNING:

These excuses haven't been tested in class, so you might not want to try them out on your teachers!

1. Yesterday I had temporary amnesia. By the time my memory returned, it was morning already.

Excuses, no matter how clever or funny, are just that—excuses. With or without them, you'll have to face the consequences of your actions, especially when you've sinned.

God doesn't want to hear excuses for our sins, but He does want to hear our sincere confession. Then He can and will forgive us.



every day devos

IF WE
CLAIM TO BE
WITHOUT SIN,
WE DECEIVE
OURSELVES
AND THE
TRUTH IS NOT
IN US. IF WE
CONFESS OUR
SINS, HE IS
FAITHFUL AND
JUST AND
WILL FORGIVE
US OUR SINS.

1 JOHN 1:8-9a

NO EXCUSES

Ever notice how easy it is to make excuses for our wrong actions? But making excuses—especially for sin—usually makes things worse.

MONDAY Think of a time you made an excuse for your sin, and describe the results. How might the outcome have been different if you had been honest and admitted your wrong?

TUESDAY Read 1 John 1:8-9a. List some sins (lying, for example) you tend to make excuses for, and then confess your sins to God, who promises to forgive you. When you're finished, tear up your list and throw it away.

WEDNESDAY See the news today? Notice anyone in the news making excuses for his or her wrong behavior? How do these excuses sound to you?

THURSDAY Read 1 John 1:8-9a again. What are the results of *not* admitting we sin? Write a prayer, thanking God for His promise in verse 9.

FRIDAY Make an effort to be honest with yourself about your actions, both right and wrong. Ask God to forgive the wrong, and thank Him for helping you do the right thing.

SATURDAY Make up a slogan to remind you of what 1 John 1:8-9a says. For example, "There's no excuse for sin, but there is forgiveness."

