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No matter how interested you are in cricket, it's Australia's national game. Indeed, when he was Prime Minister, John Howard, reckoned he had the second most important job in the nation after the Australian cricket captain. If that's true, then a year ago, in March, we had a crisis of national leadership when our nation's captain, vice captain and another player were caught tampering with the ball.

One year later, on March 29, 2019, the most severe bans ever handed down by Cricket Australia for on field behaviour will come to an end. After a year's forced absence, former captain, Steve Smith, and former vice captain, David Warner will once more be eligible to play for Australia, New South Wales and their Big Bash teams.

When the ball tampering was discovered the almost universal response from media commentators and the general public was that the punishment needed to be significant. One online poll with over 45,000 responses had 91% saying that Smith should lose the captaincy for good.

All of this shows that most Australians not only **don't believe** in winning by any means, but they also **do believe** in honesty and justice. And they want the consequences of justice applied equally – even if it means losing international competitions because our best players are absent through penalty.

However, if we want justice applied equally to others then we need to be willing to have it applied equally to

ourselves as well. And that's going to be tough. Because if we're honest we'll need to admit that we've all done things that deserve punishment.

And if we're brutally honest... we'll acknowledge that the one person we absolutely must talk to about our wrongdoing is God. After all, He's our maker. Ultimately, we're going to have to answer to him. In the Bible, God makes it clear that, 'all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God'.

God's standards are much higher than ours. His standard is perfection. Which means he cannot tolerate evil and will not allow it into heaven with him.

The good news though, is that if we front up to God now about our failings God is willing to offer an amnesty for the penalty we deserve. Instead of punishing us God promises that our penalty has been dealt with by Jesus at the cross. The Bible puts it this way

*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God (1 Peter. 3:18)*

So, take the amnesty. Pray now.

**Prayer:** Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus to take my penalty on himself at the cross. Please help me to live with you as my Lord.

**Bible verse:** "... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" Romans 3:23