

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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A recent question submitted in the Question Box went something like this: *“Is it a sin for a Christian to play video games that are violent?”*

This week’s bulletin is used to present a couple of articles that can be helpful in answering that question. Thank you for your interest in finding personal applications for the Word of God in your life. -GFS

Training Killers

David Grossman is a military psychologist (retired). His business is training young men how to kill other human beings. He coined the word “killology” for the specialized discipline of altering patterns of thought so as to accommodate killing. He made a profession of grooming soldiers, law enforcement personnel, etc., in how to deaden their natural inhibitions against taking human life in the event they feel (for societal reasons) forced to do so. He claims to be “an expert in the field of ‘killology.’”

In late summer of 1998, Grossman's article, "Trained to Kill," appeared in the prominent Protestant journal, *Christianity Today* (August 10). In this fascinating essay, Lt. Col. Grossman argued, from his own vantage point, what rational people have known for millennia—namely, that there is a natural resistance within the soul against the extinction of a fellow human's life.

There is a moral "ought not-ness" in those who are fashioned in the very image of God (Genesis 1:26). This sensitivity cries out with the message that we are not autonomous creatures who have the right to arbitrarily choose to destroy the physical lives of others. Grossman's thesis is this: innate reticence must be gradually eroded if man is to become a killing machine.

Col. Grossman points out, for example, that studies during World War II revealed the shocking fact that only about fifteen to twenty percent of the military's riflemen could bring themselves to fire at a living target. Military officials began working on the problem with a brainwashing program.

By the time of the Korean war, fifty-five percent of the soldiers were willing to kill. In the Vietnam conflict, the rate climbed to ninety percent. But this turn-around was not without its problems. There were numerous cases where soldiers virtually went berserk, killing old people, women, and small children. Moreover, there has been considerable postwar trauma of an unusual sort.

But the main thesis of Grossman's article is this: the psychological tactics that he employed for many years in achieving his goals

with young men who are conditioned to kill are now incorporated into the **video games** that youngsters play. Too, many of the **entertainment outlets** (TV, movies) to which they are exposed have the same deleterious effect, so that more and more kids are becoming killers—and at incredibly tender ages.

Grossman begins his case by directing attention to what he calls the “virus of violence.” Murders and attempted murders have skyrocketed since the FBI began recording statistics in 1957. The per-capita murder rate doubled between 1957 and 1992, and even the rate of attempted murders (aggravated assault) exploded. The nation’s prisons are bulging with men and women who have no regard for the sanctity of human life, and this calloused disposition has filtered down to many of our preteen youngsters.

Col. Grossman then turns his attention to the methodology utilized to break down moral restraint. He mentions, for example, brutalization. This is the treatment to which the soldier is subjected the moment he enters boot camp—namely, a barrage of physical and verbal abuses designed to destroy personal values and replace them with new, dehumanized codes of conduct.

Grossman observes that this is precisely the effect that constant exposure to violence on television and in video games (not to mention the violence many children see among their own family members) is having upon our youth. A plethora of fights, rapes, murders, screaming profanities, etc., do something to a child’s mind (anyone’s mind thus exposed, for that matter). The

gentleman cites data from the *Journal of the American Medical Association* to document the devastating impact that media violence has had and is producing among the youth of our nation.

Isn't it about time that we wake up to the emotional and spiritual damage that television and video entertainment are wreaking within our families? Yes, television is a valuable medium; but it is extremely dangerous as well. A child's viewing time needs to be severely limited and strictly monitored.

Parents must take their child-rearing responsibility more seriously!

- Wayne Jackson

Editor's Note: The article which was printed in *Christianity Today* Magazine should be carefully and thoughtfully read. Parents should share the information with their children, adapted, of course, to their age level. It may be found via the internet:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1998/august10/8t9030.html>

Gangster Rap and New Video Games Promote Evil and Violence

I recently viewed a story on one of the network news shows exploring Gangster Rap. Gangster Rap is a new type of rap music that glorifies the violent crimes committed by gangsters. The news story attempted to uncover whether Gangster Rap promotes violence or simply serves as a vent for the frustrations of youth. You may also have heard about new video games released for

the 1993 Christmas shopping season that allow interaction and fantasy with sex and violent crimes. The debate surrounding Gangster Rap and video games exploiting sex and violence is whether interaction through recreation increases one's desire to carnally engage in similar "real life" activities.

The scientific, philosophical, and psychiatric communities will debate this question for years as they have debated it in the past with heavy metal music. But, God reveals the working of the human mind and body in such matters of association.

Gangster Rap and sexually violent video games are evil. There is little trouble establishing this fact since evil is defined as "morally reprehensible: sinful, wicked, arising from actual or imputed bad character or conduct, causing harm" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary). I doubt that any honest and moral person would disagree that Gangster Rap and sexually violent video games qualify as evil and sinful.

The Bible explicitly teaches that Christians are to refrain from evil. John teaches in 3 John 11: "do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God." Other translations of this passage read: "follow not that which is evil." So, we learn that Christians should not imitate (or follow) that which is evil. And, since Gangster Rap and sexually violent video games are evil, Christians should not engage in the using of such evil devices.

Jesus teaches numerous lessons that Christians should flee from evil. In Matthew 7:17-18 Jesus says that every good tree bears

good fruit and every bad tree bears bad fruit. So, if we are Christians, we will bear good fruit in avoiding such things that are evil. In Matthew 12:34-35 and Matthew 15:19 Jesus teaches that sin and evil come from a person's heart. So, if we have a good heart we will do good things, but if we have an evil heart we will do evil things. Wherefore, if one is engaging in anything evil inclusive of Gangster Rap and sexually violent video games, it is because evil is in his heart, otherwise Gangster Rap and sexually violent video games would be shunned. Jesus says: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matt. 15:19).

To answer the question as to whether Gangster Rap and sexually violent video games will promote evil and violence in society, we appeal to 1 Corinthians 15:33. Here, Paul writes the Corinthians regarding a dispute over the resurrection. In this verse he tells them that if a person associates with evil people that propagate heresies (there is no resurrection), the good person will eventually be corrupted. Paul says: "Do not be deceived: `Evil company corrupts good habits.'" Some people today are trying to deceive us into thinking that associating and recreating with such evil things as Gangster Rap and sexually violent video games will not corrupt society. But, the Bible warns that we are not to be deceived we imitate the things with which we associate. For example, if you move to England for a few years, you will begin to develop an English accent. And, much to your surprise, your friends in the United States will be able to tell a significant difference in your speech, but you may only detect a minute change from your original speech. The same is true with everything we do. We naturally imitate the people with whom we associate. Often, we do

not realize that changes have occurred until they have been drawn to our attention.

Therefore, Christians are to put away all evil inclusive of Gangster Rap and sexually violent video games. Let us as Christians attend to our duty to: "Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good" (Rom. 12:9). And, "we should not lust after evil things" (1 Cor. 10:6). Also, "Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thess. 5: 21 - 22). Furthermore, let us make known to all of the world that evil and violence will be propagated in society which allows Gangster Rap and sexually violent video games to exist as well as all else that is evil.

- Allan E. McNabb, Guardian of Truth XXXVIII: 7, p. 15, April 7, 1994

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"What Makes Christians Different?"* (text: 1 Pet. 2:24-25); Sunday evening: *"OBADIAH: The Proud Will Be Humbled!"*