

**A LIFE THAT COUNTS FOR ETERNITY**  
**Or a Life that Is Lived for Virtual Reality?**  
*(A Christian View of Video Gaming)*  
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INTRODUCTION

Video games are wildly popular—especially among young people (97 % of young responders—99% of boys, 94% of girls). One 2008 survey discovered that 63% of the US population plays video games with the average age at 35 years. Many of those who play meet the qualifications for addictive behavior.

Reports of marital breakups due to a spouse’s addiction to gaming are not uncommon. The money invested in video games is well over 55 billion dollars.

I am not going to say that video gaming is inherently sinful, and we must be careful not to blame all of society’s ills on gaming—childhood obesity, bad eyesight, poor social skills, etc. Gaming may be a factor, but cannot be the only culprit.

It is important, however that we evaluate gaming in the light of Biblical principles.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF **MATURITY**—both physical and spiritual.

Our culture tends to have a fetish on remaining youthful—which is often interpreted to be immaturity! In our society we tend to extend adolescence well into the period of adulthood—gaming is part of the reason for this. More and more young men are staying home and refusing to get full-time jobs or to get married until a much later age.

According to Austin Duncan, youth pastor at Grace Community Church, these young men generally are guilty of “a foolhardy rejection of wisdom, a stunted understanding of beauty, and a juvenile infatuation with fun and selfish pursuits” (*Right Thinking in a World Gone Wrong*, p. 44).

Young men need to **grow up and learn to take responsibility for their lives!** Video games teach little if anything about hard work, correct theology, integrity of character, and how to obtain and treat a wife and family. Video gamers often lack discipline and self control—part of the “fruit of the Spirit” demanded of the believer in Gal. 5:22 and a quality of the man of God in I Tim. 3:2. Peter tells us that a man is not to become enslaved by any habit (II

Pet. 2:19). Paul refused to be mastered by anything (I Cor. 6:12). He tells us that we are to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

## II. THE IMPORTANCE OF REALITY

Gaming immerses the player in an unreal world. As Duncan states well:

There is no galactic alliance; there are no ring-shaped planets harboring enemy aliens; and there are no dwarves, trolls, or goblins wandering in the woods. Your video game character is not really you. *You* are not a futuristic soldier, and international super spy, an immigrant car thief, a local crime boss, a guitar-strumming rock star, or even a sports hero. No, *you* are a Christian, called by God to make your life about something other than a digital fantasy world (p. 45).

Some video games give players the control over an avatar—an online personality representing the player in a virtual world—this avatar may or may not be an accurate reflection of him. The player may literally spend hundreds of hours developing and pursuing this character and living such a fantasy life.

What fascination with oneself! What indulgence! The Bible tells us that our job in life is to love God first and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:30-31); we are to deny ourselves and take up our cross (Mark 8:34). We are to serve others and to think of their best interests (Phil. 2:1-4). Instead, excessive use of video games fosters a selfish and hedonistic spirit.

It is possible for the believer to lose consciousness of what is real and what is important; his spiritual senses can become so dulled that he lose his focus on Christ (Heb. 12:1-3). **While the gamer spends hundreds of hours gaming, his unsaved friends and acquaintances continue on their way in the broad path leading to destruction with no attempt to show them the true Way (John 14:6) There is a real life and death struggle going on around us, and it is not in a video game!**

## III. THE IMPORTANCE OF ETERNITY

Time marches on. Life is short. Precious hours, days, weeks, months, years wasted can never be reclaimed. One day each believer will stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ and give account of his use of his time, talents, and opportunities.

Inordinate time spent in gaming, blogging, television, movies, internet surfing etc. is time lost forever. This is time that could have been used for Bible study, prayer, church attendance, witnessing, serving, etc. We need to rethink our use of time in light of passages like Psalm 90:12 and Ps. 39:4-5. Paul tells us that we are responsible to “redeem the time” (Eph. 5:15-17).

#### IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF PURITY

Many video games are rated M for Mature or AO for Adult Only. Yet more than half of teenage boys have a game with an M rating. The content of these games is what one might expect—extensive and graphic violence, prolific cursing, sexually explicit content, nudity, unlawful and crude behavior. Some of these games “denigrate the value of human life, promote greed, reward deceit” and other sinful behavior (Duncan, 49); The Bible plainly forbids such participation by believers (Prov. 6:17; Eph. 5:3; I Tim. 4:12).

*Grand Theft Auto* is one of the most popular video games for adolescent boys. It is supposed to be sold only to those 17 or older. Its label warns the buyer that it contains “blood,” “intense violence,” “strong language,” “use of drugs and alcohol,” “strong sexual content,” and “partial nudity.” Duncan points out that “players gain points as they murder, steal, deceive, covet, and solicit sexual favors, all while trying not to get caught.” The game has detailed graphics that make it all seem very lifelike.

In Phil. 4:8 Paul tells the believer the kind of thoughts that he ought to entertain; the above content does not in any way qualify!

#### CONCLUSION

It is time for believers to quit—press the “escape” button on the computer. The Bible calls us to **maturity, reality, eternity, and purity**. Biblical standards must govern the use of our “free time.” Even better, we ought to realize that we really have no “free time.” **ALL OF OUR TIME IS GOD’S TIME!** Ultimately we do not answer to our parents, spouses, or pastors, we answer to God Himself.