

PARENTS CHRONICLE

Growing in Grace at Grandview Park

VIDEO GAMES, IDOLS, AND YOUR CHILD'S HEART BY CHAD MAHANEY

Video games are one of the most influential and time consuming recreational activities in our society today. On average gamers spend 18 hours per week playing video games. This extensive time investment is reflected in the money invested in video game consoles and software. In 2009, \$19.7 billion was spent on video games worldwide, \$2.6 billion more than was spent on movies in both box office ticket sales and DVD sales combined.* Many parents are surprised to discover that video games generate more profit than Hollywood.

What this all means is that few children escape the influence of video games, and the temptation to idolatry.

So how can parents lead their children in such a media-crazed world?

In this Q&A session my father, C.J. Mahaney, answers another father's question about how to monitor his child's use of video games. The following excerpt was originally recorded during a Pastors College meeting on December 4, 2009.

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Question: As kids get older, how do you deal with idols in their lives?...For example, my 12 year old son is generally obedient, but he loves to play video games. If that privilege is lifted he is like a different kid. How much do we restrict? Do we just say no more of this? What have you done in those situations?

C.J. Mahaney: Great question. We are always reluctant to answer parenting questions because they are so child specific, and the more you know about the child the more, I think, wise and precise you can be. But, in general, you want your child to be convinced that you can identify with them. So I want to find illustrations from my life that parallel an illustration in his life. So I could say, "Son, this is not a foreign topic to your dad. We are fellow sinners both in need of a savior."

So I want to do two things. I want to try to introduce my son to a study that

isn't correction specific to an occasion. I want to study the heart, I want to study anger, I want to study idolatry, unrelated to an occasion where I am bringing discipline, so that the study hopefully can have the most effect. I want to engage in a study from Scripture. I want to choose age-appropriate material. I want to choose appropriate passages. And then



my study with my son is supplemented by stories from my life, because I do the same thing. I don't cry anymore like a child but I know how to cry in adult ways. I want my child to know that no matter what the category, I can identify.

So let's say for my son fear of man would be a category. "Well, your dad is just as familiar with that, son, and here are the ways fear of man will play out in my life today." Not "Here are the ways fear of man played out when I was 16." No—"Here are the ways fear of man is a real temptation to your father this week." I think by humbling myself, I hope I make it easier for him to receive from me, so that when I say "Listen," it's not "Listen to your self-righteous father who is angry at you because he doesn't understand why it requires this kind of attention to help you to see how stupid a video game is."

It is too easy for me to view my son's form of idolatry as childish, but in essence, at root, there is no difference between our idolatries. His expression is consistent with a 12 year old, mine is consistent with a 56 year old, but in essence it's no different. Therefore I must make sure my heart is softened by my own sinful tendencies. I don't want the study to be punitive, I don't want it to be (if possible) connected or related to

discipline, because I think that can make it more difficult for a child to comprehend and to be convinced I have their best interest at heart. I want to supplement it with my own stories.

At 12 years old I would want to start leaving your son with questions to consider rather than pronouncements. But from 12 years old on up, it is far more complicated than when they are younger. For a toddler, discipline is pretty simple. You are not having to work through heart issues. It is a blatantly ethical world, at that age, nothing but right/wrong, yes/no. But as they get older you want to draw your child in and give him an opportunity to think about his own heart, think about it in relation to material, think about it in relation to Scripture, think about it with time for the Spirit to possibly convict. You are not bringing every conversation to a conclusion that he must agree with.

With your restrictions, you want to explain why you are doing what you are doing. Restrictions are important. We are fully for restrictions as long as the purpose is explained—so your child doesn't think this is just punitive action we are taking in your life without explanation, without a why, without a purpose. We want to create an alternative. We want to anticipate this temptation, anticipate this restriction and [ask] what alternative can we present to wean our child from that particular form of idolatry.

Helping our children identify idols is hard work. Your son may grow out of his love for video games, but he will not grow out of the idol factory in his heart. So as parents, we need the Lord's help, and we can be confident that he will lead and guide us as we serve and lead our children with the gospel.

This article was originally posted July 6, 2010, on the Sovereign Grace Ministries Blog, www.sovereigngraceministries.org/Blog/post/Video-Games-Idols-and-Your-Childs-Heart.aspx

*<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704789404574636531903626624.html>, <http://www.eweek.com/cfa/Midmarket/Video-Game-Sales-Down-Eight-Percent-in-2009-382390/>

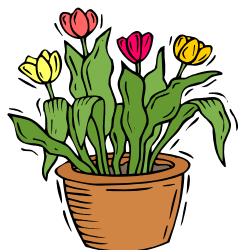
SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH CHILDREN

What do you want your children to know? There are many important facts children need to know, such as their telephone number or when the Declaration of Independence was signed. You surely want your children to know certain people, such as their grandparents (especially when you need babysitting!).

However, the thing you should want most for your children is for them to come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

Can children believe? Jesus makes it clear some can (Matthew 18:1-6). So, how can we make sure they do? The answer, of course, is...we can't!

One very important verse to remember when sharing Christ with anyone, children or adults, is 1 Corinthians 3:6. Paul says, "I planted the seed, [someone else] watered it, but God made it grow." Our job as parents is to plant and water the seed of the Gospel and trust God to make it grow.



Here are some ways to plant and water:

1. **Pray.** Pray for your children regularly. Pray for their salvation. Pray for opportunities to share Christ. Pray for spiritual understanding. Let your children hear you pray for them and for others to be saved. Pray!
2. **Be ready.** Be prepared to share the Gospel. Are you able to articulate the "good news" of the Gospel message with another person, whether child or adult?
3. **Talk.** Talk about God and the Bible. Review what your children learn at church. Ask them questions and encourage them to ask questions of you. Tell them how you came to know the Lord. Use object lessons to stimulate interest in spiritual things. However, avoid pushing your child to "make a decision" simply to please you.
4. **Trust.** Trust God for your children's salvation. Remember Jesus' words, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away" (John 6:37).



Resources for teaching your children to pray, including bookmarks you can purchase to help them pray for family members, friends, etc.

www.navpress.com/pray

Click on "Prayer Cards," "PRAYKIDS!" or "Teaching Kids."



READ MY QUIPS

- Bertha Belch, a missionary from Africa will be speaking tonight at Calvary Memorial Church in Racine. Come tonight and hear Bertha Belch all the way from Africa.
- *Announcement in the church bulletin for a National Prayer and Fasting Conference:* The cost for attending the Fasting and Prayer conference includes meals.
- Miss Charlene Mason sang "I Will Not Pass This Way Again" giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.
- Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Don't forget your husbands.
- Next Sunday is the family hayride and bonfire at the Fowlers'. Bring your own hot dogs and guns. Friends are welcome! Everyone come for a fun time.
- The peacemaking meeting scheduled for today has been cancelled due to a conflict.
- Next Thursday there will be tryouts for the choir. They need all the help they can get.
- Barbara remains in the hospital and needs blood donors for more transfusions. She is also having trouble sleeping and requests tapes of Pastor Jack's sermons.
- Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on October 24 in the church. So ends a friendship that began in their school days.

CLASSIC CHURCH BULLETIN BLOOPERS

- Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our community.
- Don't let worry kill you off --let the Church help.
- A bean supper will be held on Tuesday evening in the church hall. Music will follow.
- Eight new choir robes are currently needed, due to the addition of several new members and to the deterioration of some older ones.
- The senior choir invites any member of the congregation who enjoys sinning to join the choir.
- For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.
- Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person(s) you want remembered.
- Attend and you will hear an excellent speaker and heave a healthy lunch.
- The church will host an evening of fine dining, superb entertainment, and gracious hostility.
- This afternoon there will be a meeting in the north and south ends of the church. Children will be baptized at both ends.
- Potluck supper Sunday at 5:00 pm.--prayer and medication to follow.

GRANDVIEW PARK BAPTIST CHURCH CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES