



August 2014

# parenting CHRISTIAN kids



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## The Influence of Video Games

### POWERSOURCE

#### ASK GOD:

1. To help your kids “level up” in their relationship with God.
2. For diligence in scrutinizing what your kids are playing.
3. To give your kids wisdom in the decisions they make when you’re around.

Revenues for the video game industry were at \$58 billion in 2013—and that doesn’t even include games on smart phones and tablets. That’s six times more than the movie industry made. Video games are a *force*.

A whopping 60 percent of Americans play video games, with gender percentages almost equal, according to the Entertainment Software Association.

So how do we deal with this force in our lives? It’s never been more important. Music is influential, but kids are only listening. Movies are influential, but kids are only watching. But with video games, they’re *doing*. And that can affect them more than the other forms of entertainment.

Let’s be diligent with the entertainment our kids take in. Here are resources to turn to next time you’re not sure whether a video game is appropriate.

**ESRB.org**—Every game has to have an ESRB rating. This site gives the rating for a game and the broad reasons for that rating.

**commonsensemedia.org**—This site gives detailed descriptions of the content in movies, books, and video games. The site isn’t religious; they’re merely reporting.

**pluggedin.com**—This site provides details about game play and reviews the games from a biblical standpoint.

Let’s stay strong—and pay attention to what our kids are paying attention to.

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## TEACHABLE MOMENTS

### Gaming

Gather the family around a video game console. (If you don't have any video games, a board game could work here, too.) Choose an appropriate game, and a person to blindfold. Give the controller to the blindfolded person and have another member of the family guide the blindfolded person as he or she plays.

Take turns with different people being blindfolded and leading people through the game. Afterward, ask:

**Why was it so hard to progress through the game when you couldn't see? How is this like what we do in our everyday lives with the decisions we make? How can we learn to make better choices in our lives?**

Close in prayer: **God, help us keep our eyes on you and make good decisions by following your lead. In Jesus' name, amen.**

## Level Up Your Armor

In many video games, the first thing a player must do is create an avatar, or character. In fact, you can't play the game until you've chosen your human warrior, complete with armor for the ensuing battle, a variety of weapons, even a snazzy haircut. In Ephesians, we see that dressing for spiritual battle is as important as dressing for a physical battle. If you go into battle—virtual, spiritual, or otherwise—without all your armor, you'll never come out alive. The armor of God in Ephesians 6 covers us from head to toe for spiritual battle. Discuss the importance of God's armor everyday with your kids using these talking points.

The description of the armor of God implies that character, not brute force, wins the battle. The armor in Ephesians represents truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation.

The belt of truth is the first item, and the belt holds the weapons. Without truth and sincerity, there can be no victory. It's no coincidence the body armor or righteousness covers your heart. Decency, honesty, and virtue are synonyms for righteousness. Walk in peace as you put on the shoes of Good News. Completing your spiritual ensemble are a helmet, shield, and sword—for cover, defense, and offense.

Wear salvation as a helmet, enveloping your mind with thoughts of divine deliverance, rescue, and recovery. Your shield, crafted from pure faith, is able to block attacks meant to wound and burn. Stand firm as you wield God's Word as a sword, dividing truth from lies with one fell swoop.

Once you've put on your armor, expect to use it. You can't get dressed for battle and expect to sit on the sidelines. In Ephesians, we see an attack that the devil uses: the fiery arrow. He uses these fiery arrows—insults, self-deprecating

thoughts, doubts—to wound us, to scar us.

But the shield of faith is the perfect article of armor to deflect and defend from such attacks. In Genesis 3:1-5, the devil twisted God's words, confusing Eve. The helmet of salvation combats these mind games.

Satan used the same strategy in an effort to tempt Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11. Jesus counterattacked with the sharp edge of God's Word. At every turn, God has equipped us to defend, attack, and succeed. Together with shield, sword, and the full armor of God, we stand firm in victory.

One way you can help your kids learn to put on their own armor is to make sure you have your armor on first. Time spent with God, and learning to use the tools he's given us, can help us step into situations with our kids. Be bold and courageous, and you'll teach your children to be the same.

*(Adapted from Group's Living Inside Out curriculum.)*

**“Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.”—Proverbs 4:23**

# MEDIA MADNESS



## MOVIE

**Title:** *The Giver*

**Genre:** Drama, Sci-Fi

**Rating:** Not yet rated

**Cast:** Jeff Bridges, Meryl Streep, Brenton Thwaites

**Synopsis:** In this film version of the popular young-adult novel, a young man lives in a colorless future world of conformity and seeming contentment. When he finds out they're all being duped by those in power, he must escape to save everyone.

**Our Take:** The noted book won the 1994 Newbery Medal, and it's been read in countless classrooms. But we're not sure how Hollywood will adapt the storyline, so exercise caution. Debrief with your kids about how a life without Jesus is also colorless and full of conformity.



## BOOK

**Title:** *The Warden and the Wolf King*

**Author:** Andrew Peterson

**Synopsis:** This concluding book in the epic Wingfeather Saga finds the people of the Green Hollow preparing for a final battle with Gnag the Nameless and the Fangs of Dang. Everyone must come together to overcome the danger.

**Our Take:** Singer Andrew Peterson uses his skills as a lyricist to breathe life into his fiction. This series is full of adventure, danger, and fantastic beasts, but it's the characters' love and sacrifice for each other that really makes this series shine. We speak from experience when we say it's perfect read-aloud material for you and your kids.



## CULTURE & TRENDS

### What's In a Name?—

Schoolteachers appear to have lower expectations of kids with unusual names. Those kids also tend to achieve lower at school compared with their peers who have more common names. (*thetimes.co.uk*)

## QUICK STATS

**Drowning**—For children under age 5, drowning is a leading cause of accidental death. Drowning rates surpass those of fatal accidents in recent years, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (*livescience.com*)

**Car Problems**—Fourteen percent of parents say they've left a child alone inside a vehicle. That number jumps to 23 percent for parents with children under age 3. And 25 percent of parents admit they forgot a child younger than 3 in a parked car. (*fortmilltimes.com*)

## Games, Sites & Apps

### Forbidden Desert

Go retro with this tabletop game the whole family can enjoy. You and your fellow adventurers have crashed in the desert, and you have to work together to piece together a flying machine to escape the desert. You win or lose together.

### thetoymaker.com

This terrific website offers free paper toys you can print out, cut, and glue. There are animals, math and learning toys, toys that move, animals, and even gift boxes and card holders.

### Grandpa in Space App

This \$1.99 iPhone and iPad app uses a whimsical grandpa to teach about the planets and space. There are also games that let kids create their own space ship, and learn opposites and counting. Available in the App Store.

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This page is designed to help educate parents and isn't meant to endorse any movie, music, or product. Our prayer is that you'll make informed decisions about what your children watch, read, listen to, and play.