

Wrington & Lynch Chapels Minister's Website Article October 2020

Haven't games changed? Computer games have not only overtaken board games, but have themselves changed. You no longer shoot blobby aliens on your Spectrum ZX. Computers and computer games now affect us all. For example, my son went to get money from a bank machine a few years ago, but it didn't recognise his card. He tried another machine. Eventually he found a note on the bank door that said the branch wasn't open because the computer had a problem. Computers affect our lives.

A large part of the game world is called Massive Multi-player Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPG). People log on through the internet and join hundreds of others around the world. You live out your fantasies. You can become female or male, a child or adult, an elf or human), a wizard who turns people into frogs (if you're not one). You live maybe the life you wish you had. Instead of stacking shelves, you become important and powerful. Some people even became famous because of how well they did in a virtual world. Weird, huh?

MMORPGs also expand networks. At one time, gamers holed up in their bedrooms, talking to no one. Now they play with people from around the world. Occasionally, MMORPGs even help relationships. I heard of a father and daughter who meet up in one game to spend time together. The company who produced the Lord of the Rings game surveyed their players, asking why they played. The main reason was that their friends played.

But, how much do virtual worlds take over? Some people have cosmetic surgery to look like their virtual character. Some get addicted, playing for hours, only breaking to sleep, eat, or use the bathroom. A South Korean man played for 50 hours, non-stop, and died from heart attack. There are now clinics for addicted children.

Why mention this? Remember, time is short. Entertainment and relaxation have their place, but we shouldn't let them dominate. We can all get caught in unhealthy pursuits. Who hasn't dithered time away when we should have used it productively? Who hasn't spent too long gossiping? Who doesn't grumble when we know it does no good? Yet I wonder if MMORPGs, emails, texts, etc are a way to hide. God has given us a real world in love. We are surrounded by people. Yet we hide, because if we don't see someone face to face, they can't guess how we really feel. We don't want to show our vulnerability.

That's not the Christian gospel. Jesus came in weakness, as a baby. He suffered like us; was hounded, hated, and used the cross to defeat evil. He loves each of us as we are, not the false smile, the cheery email and text message. MMORPGs can deny the person God made us to be. We forget how unique we are.

Dreams have their place. But, the bible shows a fantastic future. God offers a life more fulfilling and enriching than we imagine. We will one day be transformed, and dwell in God's presence. Whilst we wait, especially in this time of Covid-19, can we appreciate how 'fearfully and wonderfully' God made us? You may desire to be powerful, rich or beautiful, but it's more important to be rich towards God and each other. Our challenge is to live as intended: in love and grace, following our Lord Jesus.

If you have any questions, please make contact through this website. May God bless you.

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