

2. You've Been Given a Quest

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
(Gal. 2:20)

One of the most popular types of video game is the roleplaying game (RPG). Traditionally set in a medieval fantasy world, RPGs require the hero to develop skills and accomplish various quests. It might mean slaying a dragon, saving a princess, or exploring a dungeon, but there's always a quest or mission.

Most RPG quests start the same way: a non-player character gives you a mission which you agree to in exchange for a reward. You've just signed up for a quest. It will require preparation, it will require overcoming obstacles, and it will most certainly require you to avoid distractions

to complete it, but in the end the reward will be well worth the trouble.

When you sign up to be a Christian you are saying yes to the greatest quest of all time. You are repenting of your sins, trusting in Christ's sacrifice, and acknowledging that Jesus is Lord over all, including your life. It's agreeing with God that your life is not your own and offering all of it to Him as a living sacrifice (1 Cor. 6:19-20; Rom. 12:1-2). The King of the universe has set you free from sin but He has also set you on a quest. This quest will require preparation, there will be obstacles to overcome, and there will be distractions that tempt you to abandon the mission. But in the end, the reward will be well worth it.¹

Distractions are everywhere, aren't they? In an RPG, for example, there is the big quest that makes up the main story line, but there are also side quests you can undertake. These unrelated adventures are easier to accomplish but they pay out much smaller rewards than the main quest. And while these side quests might be fun and moderately rewarding, if you spend

1 For more on this quest, check out the *Justification, Sanctification & Glorification* booklets in the Track series.

all your time engaging in these diversions, you will never beat the main quest.

I think for some Christians, video games themselves can become like a side quest, a diversion from the main mission of life. That can happen with anything, not just video games. Entertainment is not necessarily sinful, but it needs to be put in its proper place. Anything—a job, a hobby, or video games—can get in the way of the mission Jesus has given us, if we let it. The quest of the Christian life is far too important a mission to be sidetracked by anything else. But what exactly is the quest of the Christian life? What are we supposed to be doing with our time here on earth?

MISSION ACCEPTED

If you asked a room full of believers what the mission of the Christian life is, you would likely get a variety of responses. Some might say the mission is to help those in need, others might say it's to proclaim the gospel to the lost, still others would suggest the goal is simply to avoid sinning. Those things are all true to some degree, but they are only aspects of the main quest. The Westminster Shorter Catechism summarizes the Christian's mission simply: 'The chief end of man is to glorify God and

enjoy Him forever.’ Your mission is to glorify God. But have you accepted the mission?

One of the worst things in a game is that feeling when you reach the end of a level and realize you have forgotten to bring some crucial item. But in real life the stakes are much higher. If you reach the end of this life and have not obtained the most important possession of all, it really is game over for you—eternally. So, to even begin the quest of the Christian life, you have to first have Jesus Christ. He is not an optional add-on, and you need Jesus not just for the mission He gives you, but because you’ve got a serious problem.

THE RED RING OF DEATH

Microsoft’s Xbox 360, released in 2005, was supposed to be a revolutionary gaming console. But the early versions were plagued by a manufacturing flaw. The Red Ring of Death as it came to be known was the thing every Xbox 360 owner dreaded. The console had a circle of four indicator lights on the front which normally blink green in various patterns indicating the system was functioning properly. But the Red Ring of Death (or RROD for short) was when all four lights turned ominously red. When that happened, it was game over. Your

shiny new video game console would never turn on again.

This problem was so widespread that Microsoft had to create an exchange program and explain to customers what had gone wrong. It turns out the RROD failure was due to an inferior material being used to bond some of the internal components in place. As the system would heat up during extended game play a specific bonding point would become soft and eventually it would completely break. This usually caused a horrible grinding noise as it put a deep, disk-ruining scratch into whatever game you happened to be playing at the time (R.I.P., my copy of *Halo 3*). And just like that your video console was transformed into a \$500 doorstop. Every Xbox 360 owner had heard stories about the RROD and prayed it wouldn't happen to them. But if you played long enough, it was inevitable. There was a flaw in the system.

The Red Ring of Death was due to a flaw in the machine's design. Mankind has a flaw too, though it is not due to any negligence on the part of our Designer. Every human being is born pre-broken due to sin. We have all inherited the guilt of the first man, Adam,

who sinned against God (Romans 5:12). And we have been complicit in this rebellion against our Maker ever since.

Daily we sin against God, choosing our desires over His commands. No one can argue that they have not. God's Word says we are all guilty: 'for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (Rom. 3:23). And this sin has damning consequences. 'For the wages of sin is death' (Rom. 6:23).

A wage is what you are owed; what you deserve for your work. But the wages we have earned aren't a sack of digital gold pieces, or a +10 sword; it's death—eternal death. Apart from Christ we are all destined for eternal doom.

This seemingly severe consequence is because God, being a just judge, will not allow mankind's rebellion to go unpunished. He created us for a mission: to bring Him glory. But instead, we have marred the image of God by choosing sin. A day is coming when God will judge every person who has ever lived, and we will all get what we are owed (Heb. 9:27). And the terrifying news is that there is nothing we can do about it on our own. No number of good deeds, prayers, or church

services will save us. It is entirely hopeless in our own strength. There is no way out.

That is, unless God makes a way.

GOOD NEWS

The good news is that God has made a way for sinners like us to be saved from this destiny. Our problem is that we need to be forgiven, and we need to be righteous. To be righteous simply means that your life and attitudes are perfectly conformed to God's standards. The problem, as we have seen, is that we don't meet God's standards—we have fallen short. But how can a broken creature become righteous in God's sight, if we've already fallen short?

What is needed then is a substitute. If you are going to be made righteous in God's eyes, someone needs to stand in your place to take the punishment you deserve (remember, the wages of sin is death). Someone must fulfill the righteousness required to be acceptable in God's sight. The good news of the gospel should really be called the great news, because it announces that someone has indeed come to stand in the place of sinners like us!

Jesus Christ is that substitute. Two thousand years ago, God the Father sent His only Son, Jesus, into the world as a human. This was a

rescue mission born out of love (John 3:16). Jesus lived a perfectly righteous life, never sinning, and always obeying. And He died as a sacrifice to pay the wage of death that sinners owed to God. Jesus came so that unrighteous sinners like you and me could be forgiven for our sins and obtain a right standing before God. And Jesus rose from the dead three days later, proving that He was who He said He was and defeating death. So now all who trust in Him can be forgiven, declared righteous, and have eternal life.

If you repent of your sin and believe in Jesus you become united to Him in such a way that when God looks on you, He sees Christ's death as atoning for your sins and His righteousness as counting toward your account. Then we are no longer like the Xbox 360, flawed and destined for destruction. In Christ, we have forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life! 'For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive' (1 Cor. 15:22). And you also receive that great life's mission. But if you don't start with Christ, the quest to glorify God with your life will be entirely fruitless.

CONCLUSION

Putting your faith in Jesus Christ is just the beginning of the quest. Once we are in Christ by faith, we are then equipped to fulfill our purpose, to glorify God with our lives. The rest of the life of a Christian is living out that mission in God's power.

On this epic journey, the biggest danger is that we would forget that mission or be put off course by lesser things. The world is so full of distractions, and video games can become one of those distractions. They have the potential to enslave us and draw us away from what God has called us to do. That's really the whole point of this book. If our gaming has the potential to hinder our pursuit of glorifying God, then we need to scrutinize the place we will allow games to occupy in our lives. Games are great to enjoy in their proper place, but we have to be on the lookout for side quests that take the place of the main quest.

We've talked about addiction and the mission God has given us, but let's take it a layer deeper. What *exactly* is it about video games that makes us love them so much? Why are they so enthralling? What desires in our hearts are video games seeking to satisfy? If

we can better understand what it is in games that captures our hearts, we will see how the true object of those longings is really found in Christ.

Main Point

God has given us the greatest mission of all, and we must be careful to not be distracted by lesser missions.

Questions for Reflection

- Are you a Christian? How do you know?
- Do you ever feel like other things can distract you from following Christ like you should?
- What are some things you can do to keep yourself focused on the main mission?