

## CPYU 3(D) REVIEW

### Video Game: *Call of Duty: World at War*

By Greg Jones

**Background/summary:** This World War II first person shooter game released in November of 2008. The game is a highly anticipated sequel in the famed *Call of Duty* series that has already made four very successful games, including the most recent *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*, which made monumental strides in weaponry, combat technology, and Internet multiplayer gaming. The rating on *World at War* by the ESRB is "Mature," due to graphic shooting violence. Nevertheless, this game proves to be a big hit amongst players of all ages, as evidenced by the near-constant 100,000+ gamers playing the Xbox Live online multiplayer at any given time.

#### Discover: What is the message/worldview?:

- The main storyline of this game involves two theaters of World War II, fighting as an American Marine in the Pacific theater (against the Japanese) and as a Russian in the European theater (against the Germans).
- As you progress through the game, there are a series of cut-scenes that enact various storyline pieces and introduce the player to the tasks he/she must complete. The cut scenes show everything from brutal executions to triumphal rescues, depending on location in the storyline.
- Because of the war setting, bad language and bloody violence are prevalent throughout the game. Although this may seem a bit excessive, it does grasp some of the reality experienced by real soldiers, so is at least within context.
- The real reason most gamers love the *COD* series is the online multiplayer, particularly through Xbox Live on the Xbox360 system. This allows players an unlimited supply of real human competition in various game modes including capture the flag, "war," search and destroy, etc. These various game modes, coupled with an addictive "challenge" system that allows gamers to unlock new weapons and game features, keep even seasoned veterans coming back for more.
- While most games pride themselves on a 30-hour total game play, *World at War* has individuals logging exponentially more hours due to the constant desire to "rank up" through the online multiplayer challenges.
- The overall worldview of the game is one of war and carnage, but with an underlying theme that perseverance through trials ultimately can prevail.



### Discern: How does it stand in light of the biblical message/worldview?

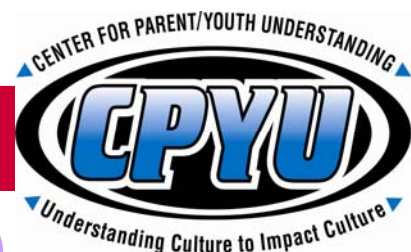
- While killing is an obvious key component to the game, it is within the context of a war that many consider historically a “justified” conflict. The brutality, however, seems a bit excessive and unnecessary.
- The Bible is not shy about including stories of weapons and warfare. Throughout the course of human history it has been necessary to stop genocide and corruption. While there are debates about the “morality” of killing within war, this game offers an excellent example to talk with teens about war.
- Be careful not to disregard this game merely for the “killing” aspect. While killing is prohibited in the Bible, it is also quite prevalent within certain contexts. While this video game desensitizes gamers from the reality of killing, it encourages teamwork, good communication, cooperation, and competition. Just as boys playing in the woods inevitably make guns or swords out of the sticks on the ground, this game provides a more exciting version of that old fashioned imaginary combat.



### Decide: What do I do with it?

- Ultimately, this game is not suited for players who would not be allowed to see an R-rated movie. The violence and frequent killing is quite unnecessary for any young gamers.
- This game is extremely useful as a teaching tool for teens, particularly teen boys. Grasping on masculine desires to kill and destroy, this game provides an outlet for boys to “kill” friends and enemies in a disconnected way. It provides an opportunity to explain the necessary *cognitive disconnect* between life in movies, video games, or other media and how we act in “the real world.” While this is not a license to commit violence in the community, it allows for deeper conversations about national pride, racism, violence, killing, and even gender identity.
- Carefully monitor the Internet multiplayer format for this game. No children should be allowed on the Internet multiplayer format, supervised or otherwise. There are players who specifically say harmful and offensive remarks just to upset the other players. Even older, more mature players, will find it useful to utilize “private chats” with friends, or the new “party mode” within Xbox Live to prevent contact with offensive strangers.

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