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# Not in MY House!

Matthew 5:5

*Russ Kennedy*

**Introduction** A current running ad for the National Football League depicts a huge professional football player in your face that is, in the camera, in your living room, a menacing scowl on his face, his lips curled in disdain, his eyes glaring, his shoulders bunched up and his helmet swinging club-like from his ham fist by the face mask. He screams, “Not in MY house”. This home field mantra has so fired up some players that the last two seasons have been marked by some of the most violent hits ever seen. While this is sport (supposedly), this kind of talk and attitude has filtered down now into college and high school sports. There is a defense of honor and place that borders on the maniacal and fuels unnecessary violent hits in hockey, football and soccer.

The upsurge of violence in our schools and on our streets has filled the news over the last decade. There is no mistaking that the level of viciousness and aggressiveness has escalated at an alarming rate. Parents are confronted with angry, aggressive and even dangerous, teens. From crude and profane lyrics in popular music to graphic video games, we are immersed in a cesspool of degrading depravity that is sucking our culture down into paganism.

This is not something isolated in the “world out there”. Many Christian schools are dealing with a level of anger, aggressiveness and violence rarely seen even in government schools 20 years ago. Christian parents are sometimes bewildered by the sullen seething silence of their teens. Churches are faced with and are dealing with growing abuse in homes. There is an alarming rise in teen siblings assaulting one another. And some parents face the humiliation of being intimidated and even beaten by their teens.

This morning, we want to take a look at the roots and results of violence in our homes and in our culture. My research over the last several weeks has, at times, been horrifying. I was stunned by the level of brutality, blood and gore that is de-rigueur for many, many video games. I am sure that I will shock many of you. I will be careful to be appropriate for all who are sitting here this morning. I intend to aim this message at all of you. I will probably offend many of you. I will challenge some fundamental assumptions about what we think is OK. I pray that all of you will be awakened to think more carefully about this issue. I pray God’s grace will help each of you to take the precepts and principles of God’s Word and evaluate yourself, your heart and your conduct, and rethink about these things.

## Violence in our Culture

Let's begin with a brief look at the violence in our culture.

### Examples in the News

It is almost trite to list news story after news story demonstrating the rising tide of violence, particularly in certain sub-cultures. The American Medical Association says, "When studying factors relating to violence, including poverty, racial discrimination, substance abuse, inadequate schools, joblessness, and family dissolution-they found that exposure to violent media was a factor in half of the 10,000 homicides committed each year."

Illustrations of what is going abound. The AP reported on Jason Bautista, 20, and Matthew Montejo, 15, who choked and dismembered their mother. They dumped her body and placed her head and hands in their bedroom closet. Jason said he got the idea from the HBO TV show "The Sopranos." Interviews with teen sniper suspect, Lee Malvo, reveal the he was a big video game player. His uncle claimed it helped him be a better shot. His favorite game was *Halo*. One of the skills he learned playing Halo was how to shoot long range. Rapper 50 Cent told Fox News, in March, 2003, "Where I'm from, the price of life is cheap...For \$5,000, you can get somebody killed."

### Studies in Television

Think about these statistics in relation to television.

- 1) Number of violent acts the average American child sees on TV by age 18: 200,000
- 2) Number of murders witnessed by children on television by the age 18: 16,000
- 3) Percentage of youth violence directly attributable to TV viewing: 10
- 4) Percentage of Hollywood executives who believe there is a link between TV violence and real violence: 80
- 5) Percentage of children polled who said they felt "upset" or "scared" by violence on television: 91
- 6) Percent increase in network news coverage of homicide between 1993 and 1996: 721
- 7) Percent reduction in the American homicide rate between 1993 and 1996: 20
- 8) Percent increase in number of violent scenes per hour on 10 major channels from 1992 to 1994: 41
- 9) Percentage of programs that show the long-term consequences of violence: 16
- 10) Percentage of violent programs that emphasize an anti-violence theme: 4

RealVision

While television is at best only a contributing factor, and possibly, a minor one at that, there is a correlation between these statistics and statistics on violence. Television and movies as largely passive media, are functioning like literature. It reflects on one hand the growing appetite for violence while at the same time feeding and fueling that same appetite.

### Virtual through Video Games

Modern technology has also introduced to an increasingly popular form of media, video games. Now, if you grew up with Pong and Atari, you have to make a serious adjustment in your thinking about video games. Video games range from harmless fun, to educational, to simulations, to interactive mind teasing strategy,

to the violent or erotic blood splattered gore of slasher movies. Just as we should not condemn any media as evil in and of itself, I should not be heard to say all video games are evil.

Do you recognize these pictures? They are the covers from some of the most popular video games on the market right now, every one of them rated M, that is, suitable only for 17 years or older. Yet, on one site, over half the reviews were from teens 15 or younger! Think BMX is a game about bicycles? If you insist.

Lets take a look at a couple of them as examples of the kind of violence, I believe, the Scriptures condemn.

**Grand Theft Auto** (Rated M) - Like it's immediate predecessor, Vice City, San Andreas strives to provide a wide, deep foundation for its freeform criminal game play by setting the story in a slightly exaggerated representation of a familiar (if not glorified) American subculture. As Vice City seemed inspired by Miami Vice, and the pastel decked, "me generation" ideals of the early 1980s, San Andreas is set in a time and place suggested by films like *Boyz N the Hood*, *Menace II Society*, or *Colors*, where riots eventually brought a whole city to a halt and awakened new consciousness across the country.

Frankly, this friendly review gives a very different impression from what actually goes on in the multiple editions of *Grand Theft Auto*. Here is what you actually do, taken from EGM Strategy Guide for Grand Theft Auto III: Vice City. There are tips given to players by the game company. There were lots of obscene remarks, but I will edit them out:

“The female dancer here will slink to the beat in a sultry display of polygonal porn that’s sure to have you \*\*\*\*\* the screen.” Next, “You don’t have to use the chainsaw to kill this guy, but it’s oh so much fun, especially since he’s so slow. Switch to your handgun or fists while running to catch up with him, then either plug him full of lead or flip fast to the chainsaw and cut him up good. Now all you have to do is escape the fuzz, who just happened to notice you killing people in broad daylight.” Further on, “Run to the car and shoot 3 or 4 cops on the way.” Later on, we are advised, “You should be able to see the passenger from here. Snipe him down, then quickly switch your aim to one of the truck’s tires and take it out. Now all you have to do is gun down the lame truck and it’s driver with it; the Uzi is perfect for that...” For more innocent fun, “Now that you’ve taken over the adult-movie studio, it’s time to find some decent adult movie stars. Go and pick up Candy \*\*\*\* from the pink blip on your radar. She’ll get out of the limo and talk to you, but her pimp shows up right behind her.”

Now remember, what I am describing to you here in words is being portrayed on the screen in state-of-the-art graphics. And Grand Theft Auto can barely make the top ten list in violent games!

Think these are appropriate for 13 year olds? They have a T – Teen rating.

**Wacked!** (Rated T – Teen) Here is a game that is reportedly for younger teens. It has a definite cartoonish look. However, listen to the description from the Xbox web site. [Wacked! Has] “Bizarre, yet appealing characters. Players meet a variety of contestants, each with their own quirky personality and unique traits, including Otto, the emaciated, narcoleptic dude who lets his recliner do all the work; and Lucy, whose sinfully attractive body is surpassed only by her cunning ability to use it.” While I could not download the clips from the game, there was one that was so lewd I couldn’t have shown it anyway.

I am not even going to attempt to deal with RAP and HipHop in all their sub-forms (better, sub-species). I looked at lyrics from a dozen of the most popular CD’s. These included 50 Cent, Eminem, Jay-Z, Black Eyed Peas, Lil Flip, Ja Rule and several songs from Linkn Park. The words ranged from idiotic nonsense to long strings of profanity to some of the most vile, verbal porn. If you parents want to read the lyrics of your teen’s music, go to [www.allthelyrics.com](http://www.allthelyrics.com).

So, do I have your attention? Let’s turn to the Scriptures and see what the Bible has to say about this issue of violence.

## Violence in the Scriptures

As we come to the Scriptures, I want to be sure you understand something. When we are talking about the problem of violence, we are not talking about either the legitimate use of violence in the military or self-defense of person or property. We are addressing the problems that we have reviewed and the contributing factors to them.

Now, let’s turn to the Scriptures and listen to God’s Word on this topic.

### When it Dominates

#### In a Culture

#### Genesis 6:5-13

The dominating force in the culture before the Flood was open, unrestrained wickedness in thought and deed. There are two terrible effects: the culture is corrupted and the world is filled with violence.

God marks out the violence of its culture as one of the primary reasons a universal destruction was necessary. The corruption and violence was so widespread, that the only solution was to utterly wipe it out and start over with a godly family.

#### In Individuals

#### Genesis 49:5-7

Simeon and Levi, two of the sons of Jacob and heads of the tribes of Israel, are characterized as being violent men. The evidence of being violent is in their killing of men and their hamstringing of oxen. Murder and cruelty are two symptoms of violence dominating a person.

The source of their violence is identified. They are angry men. Their anger is fierce, cruel and implacable. As a result, Jacob warns about entering into their council, their group or band. Do not associate with them or become a part of their fellowship. Anger and violence are contagious and corrupting. He also

says that the solution is to break up their association and scatter them throughout the tribes.

### **In Enemies**

**2 Samuel 22:2-5, 49**

This text is representative of a cluster of texts where enemies are violent. Since this song of praise is offered up in response to David's being delivered from the hand of Saul, the violence he is being saved from is that of Saul. David's response to Saul's many attempts to kill him was grounded in his seeing God as his defense and deliverer. This is foundational to our not being violent people.

## **God's Perspective**

The Scriptures are descriptive and detailed on God's perspective on violence.

### **No Justification for Violence**

**Job 16:16-17**

Job protests that he has no violence in his hand, even though he is suffering greatly. Even though he is full of grief and darkness, he is not a violent man. Therefore, his prayer for vindication is pure. Much of the violence, particularly in music today, is justified as an expression of the darkness, hopelessness and suffering they are experiencing. Their violent music is a call for vindication and justice in our world. This is a lie. Vindication and justice are not brought about by resorting to a call for immoral violence.

### **The Garb of Violence**

**Psalms 73:6-9**

This interesting verse describes a category of people who are all dressed up in pride and violence. Pride is their bling-bling. Violence is their outer garment. They are fool of folly. They are smart alecks, scoffers and venomous in their speech. They threaten others – "Not in my house!" They argue against God. And in wonderful turn of phrase, "their tongue struts through the earth." There is a very definite persona here. This is not what God's people are to be like. There is nothing godly here to emulate.

### **The Outworking of Violence**

**Psalms 7:14-16**

These important verses warn what will be the end of those who plan evil, plot mischief and promote violence. What they plan, plot and promote returns on them. They fall into their own pit. Their violence falls on their own heads. We see this over and over again in the RAP music world. Here are people planning evil and promoting violence. And they are physically attacked, shot and killed. God warned them that this would be the case.

We need to think about this as we approach life as Christians. Do we engage in the fantasies of violence? Do we imagine physical harm to people we hate? Do we list to music or participate in games that promote violence as a good thing?

### **God's Response to the Violent**

**Psalms 11:5-7**

God hates the man who loves violence. There is no way to avoid this pointed statement. The imprecatory prayer of verse 6 is grounded in the character of God who hates the wicked and violent (v.5) and loves the righteous and up-

right (v.7). While eternal condemnation awaits the wicked and violent, the righteous and upright shall see His face.

### **How to Avoid the Ways of the Violent**

### **Psalm 17:3-5**

This stanza in this Psalm guides in how to deal with this issue. We commit ourselves to being examined and tested by God (v.3). We open our hearts to His probing and we purpose to be pleasing to Him, regardless. Then, by the use of God's Word, here represented by the "word of your lips", we avoid the ways of the violent (v.4). The Word of God is how we know what their ways are, what those ways involve and what they will result in. The Word of God then gives us grace to not get on that path. Notice that it is not just violent people who are to be avoided. Their ways are also to be avoided.

### **Our Responsibility**

### **Proverbs 3:31-32; 24:1-2**

This is one of the rare proverbs that is an imperative. There are two parallel commands (v.31) and the cause (v.32). Verse 32 gives us the motivation for obeying the commands. God abominates the devious and He is the confidant of the upright.

You are not to envy a man of violence. You should not admire them. You should not hold them up as someone to emulate. You should not desire either the skill of their violence or what their violence gets them. Media often presents violent people through music, video, films and games with the effect that you think it is "cool" or "tough".

You are also not to choose ANY of his ways. The idea of ways in the Psalms and Proverbs points to how character and conduct become themes in a persons life. It is the "way" they are. The way they are in their hearts works itself out in the way they dress, act and walk. The anger, rebellion and aggression shows up in the external. It has to. So, we are not to choose those thematic ways either. Watch how they walk, dress, carry themselves. Watch how they talk. Look at their attitudes toward God, women, marriage and authority. Do not choose their ways.

What does this mean in the real world? Time to step on toes. Let me challenge you to think about each of the following areas and see if they fit just this text, much less most of the ones we have discussed.

Music – What do you listen to? What do you allow in your home?

Movies – Do you get a thrill out of the slasher movies? What about some of the so-called "action" movies?

Sports – Do you watch boxing or WWF? Why? Are these sports innately violent? How do you react to a really hard hit in football?

I am asking these questions in order for you to hear your heart. Does your heart love those things? Does your heart grate at having them challenged? Or are you poised for practical purity at all points. Listen to Hebrews 5:14, "But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil."

### **A Special Warning to Teens**

**Proverbs 19:26**

A son who is violent towards parents is a shame and a reproach. What is there more to say about this? You are a disgrace if you intimidate or threaten your parents in any way. If you have done this, immediately after this service, you need to repent of your sin. You need to go to your parents and ask their forgiveness. And you need to look carefully at your heart and your life to deal with those things that would bring you to such a disgraceful sin.

### **The Qualification for Leadership**

**1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7**

Finally, it is significant that in the qualifications for an elder, this issue is brought up. An elder must be not violent, but gentle. He must not be quarrelsome nor quick tempered. These qualities are to be aimed at by all Christian men. This is not a higher standard. It is expected thought that men who will bear office as pastor/elders will meet these qualifications. So, is your life filled with those things that promote meekness, gentleness, forbearance and longsuffering? Or do the movies you watch, the music you hear and the games you play promote the opposite?

## **Violence in our Homes**

I think at this point, many of you are beginning to think through some things in your homes and in your parenting. The great challenge for us is how to handle the pervasive violence coming through media.

Let me reinforce something here. We do not believe that exposure to violence *causes* your sons and daughters to be violent. It may orient, provoke, stir up, create and appetite for violence. But anger and frustration and rebellion are the heart issues that use violence as an expression.

### **Through Television and Movies**

Statistics are astonishing. A child who watches 3 hours of TV a day will be exposed over a year to over 3,000 murders, either by seeing the murder take place or by some direct viewing of the result of the murder. Studies have shown a direct correlation between violent acting out and acts in schools and the amount and kind of TV watching. Movies, whether you attend them or rent, need to discernment as well. With the technologies we have today, movie makers have an ability to vividly portray extraordinarily gruesome acts.

### **Through Music and Videos**

Now, I want to challenge teens in particular, but many of you adults as well. We read the verse from Proverbs 24:1-2. You should not envy nor desire to with evil people, people whose heart devise violence and whose lips talk trouble. If this is not a description of the whole genre of RAP music, then I don't know what is. A lot of goth, heavy metal, head-banger music has the same message: life stinks, get out of my face, and death is the best. I gave you some of the shocking words (they are not lyrics in the proper sense of the term) of the music some of you and your sons and daughters are listening to. Make no mistake. Words have power.

## Through Video Games

Here is the most dangerous contributor to violence in our sons and daughters. Here are the reasons you need to think through this carefully.

### **It is Active and Participatory**

With TV, movies, video and to some degree, music, you are a passive participant. You are not doing what they are doing. You are seeing it and observing it. You are at best, a voyeur. But with video games you are an active participant. You are doing what the game does. The most popular violent games are all, without exception, first person games. You are the shooter. Further, the ads and reviews tout a games “immersion” factor. Immersion is how realistic is the environment and the action. The point is to immerse the gamer into the action so that his world is seamless with the world of the game. Thank about that.

### **It is Vicarious Violence**

All of us would agree that fornication and adultery is sin. Most, if not all of us, would agree that hitting, striking, maiming, murdering, blowing up, dismembering, disarticulating other is sin. (Now, I am not talking about legitimate violence in war!) We would all agree that stealing, pillaging, defacing, destroying others property is sin.

Would you not agree that pornography is sin? Would you not agree that a video game that simulated sex was sin? That virtual, vicarious fornication is wrong?? Why then would you say that virtual vicarious shooting, maiming, murdering violence is also not sin? If vicarious sex is wrong, isn't vicarious violence?

What about multi-player games where you are actually hunting down and shooting one another? Do we need to re-think laser tag and paint ball?

### **It is Addictive and Hypnotic**

Finally, these games are addictive and hypnotic. Some of you live to play these things You spend hours and hours playing them. Where is your stewardship of time before God? Some of you know that if you try to stop playing these games, you are going to have withdrawal like reactions.

I'll say this to you. No matter how good the music, the video, the game, if it dominates you, you need to examine it carefully. Paul says that he would not be mastered by anything. And neither should we.

Parents, I am not counseling you to remove all video games from your home. But, I believe you have a responsibility for the content of all the media, whether television, internet, music, videos or games. You should be aware of what they are seeing and playing. You should teach discernment and give reasons. Certain things just simply need to be outlawed in your home as wicked. You don't allow X rated videos or cable movies – why would allow you allow M games? And know this, many of the lower rated games have cheat codes that actually change the level of violence and nudity to an M level.

**Conclusion** I want to close this morning with three simple calls:

*A CALL NOT TO TAKE THIS MESSAGE LIGHTLY.* It will be easy for many of you to hear this as a legalistic, over-reaction to a small segment of our sinful culture. Praise God if none of this is in your life or in your home. Praise God if you and your sons and daughters have open and free consciences with each other and before the face of God. But I am sure many of you do not. You know that your heart is inclined to anger and violence. You know you love the thump of the music, the splatter of the blood, the death on the screen. Consider your ways. Consider your God.

*A CALL TO COME TO CHRIST WHO IS MEEK AND GENTLE AND FULL OF MERCY.* His mighty transforming grace will take angry, violent, aggressive hearts and gentle them for His great glory. I pray that many of you have seen a side of yourselves that is dark and deadly. I pray you are appalled and stunned before God. So, in the midst of humble self exposure, run to Jesus – run to Him for forgiveness, cleansing and a changed heart.

*A CALL TO BE HERE TONIGHT FOR PASTOR DEVON'S MESSAGE.* Much of what I have done is exposed the sin, what we ought to put off. He will highlight graces, what we are to put on.

Yes, not in my house! None of these wicked things!

