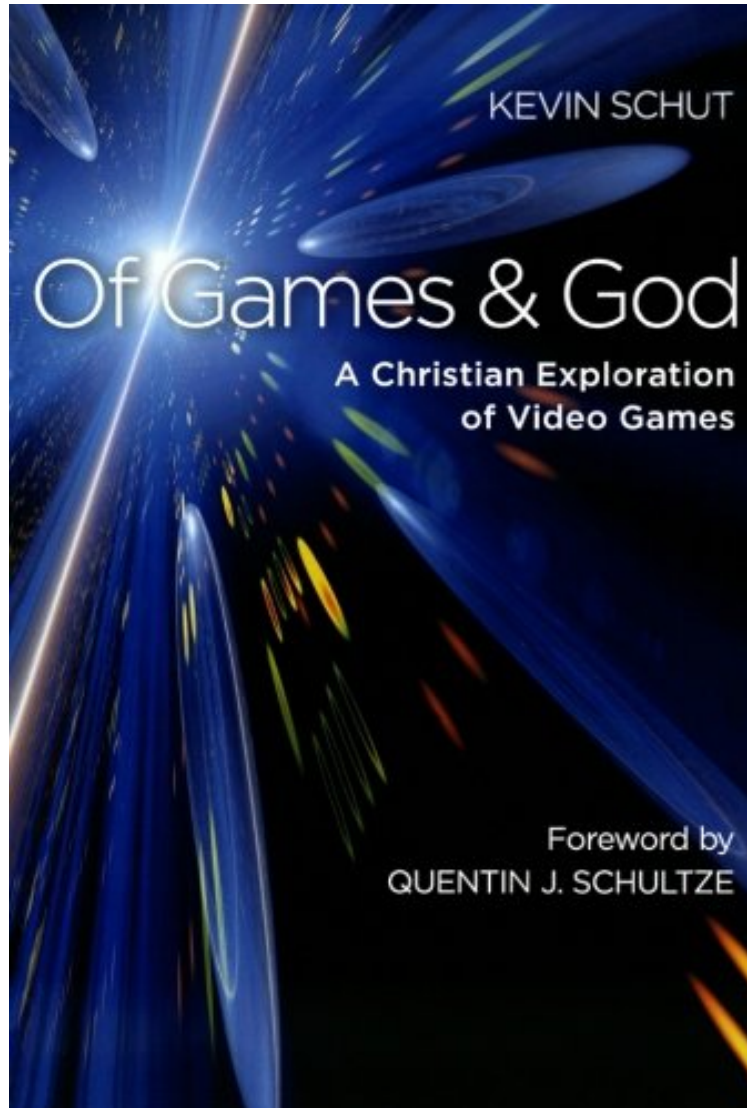


[Read ebook] Of Games and God: A Christian Exploration of Video Games

Of Games and God: A Christian Exploration of Video Games

Kevin Schut

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Kevin Schut : Of Games and God: A Christian Exploration of Video Games before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Of Games and God: A Christian Exploration of Video Games:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An Excellent Source On The SubjectBy Nick PetersDr. Schut's book is an excellent one that I can easily say that when I got to the end, I was rather surprised. I hadn't been keeping that much track. This is the kind of book I wish I had had when I was in high school and dealing with issues of doubt and such. I have seen enough damage done by people who are critical of the medium of video games but have not engaged

with it. For my part, I am going to turn 37 later this year and yet I still consider myself a gamer. My favorite kinds of games are RPGs. I am still bothered that I have not got to play *Breath of the Wild*. *Final Fantasy* is another favorite series of mine and it's my wife's hope that somehow we can save up enough money or find someone generous so that we can get a Nintendo Switch so she can play the new *Pokemon* games. Like me, Schut is also a gamer. He has seriously wrestled with the arguments on both sides. His favorite games seem to be ones like *Red Dead Redemption* and *Civilization*. He also does not deny at all that he is thoroughly committed to Jesus. So what does he say about the games? Schut does say we need to listen to criticisms. Take time to pay attention to what is being said. At the same time, we should be hoping for critical evaluation and not self-righteous evaluation. Also, we are living in an age where games are more and more common, including games on our iPhones and Kindles and such. Many people who would likely never play a video game have no problem playing something like *Words With Friends* for instance. There's also games that are popular such as *Candy Crush* which has now become a gameshow, and *Angry Birds*, which has had its own movie. He also speaks out against our attempts to Christianize everything. Something is not automatically Christian because it mentions Jesus. Many of us would say the *Chronicles of Narnia* are Christian, which indeed they are, but you will not find Jesus explicitly mentioned anywhere in them. Our Christian material is usually preachy and we're very good at reaching ourselves, but not everyone else. We also have to pay attention to what kind of medium a video game is. One noted difference is that it is interactive. No matter how many times you read *The Lord of the Rings* nothing new will happen. The story will be the same. No matter how many times you watch the movie, nothing new will happen. Every time you play the game, something different will happen. Of course, there can often be some overriding parameters set for you by the designers of the game, but you have great freedom and influence on the story. No two playings will be the same. He also does get into the topic of a demonic scare. I was pleased to hear like me, he had a great interest in *Dungeons and Dragons* as well as *Magic: The Gathering*. For me, in high school, my friends and I didn't care for the school lunch at all, so rather than have lunch, we'd go to the library and play *Magic* all afternoon together. Unfortunately, too many people have brought into scare stories about such things. Consider the Pulling Report for instance. People who latch onto this do a disservice to those who play the games. Most people who are playing these games are for the most part the same as any other interest. It's sadly the few that no doubt have other issues going on beforehand that are emphasized. This naturally gets us into the question of violence in video games. Schut doesn't shy away from this one, though he does say each person needs to evaluate this for themselves as well. It could be that part of our world is we live in a fallen world and sometimes violence could be what needs to be done. One aspect of this I was considering is that if I'm playing a game like *Final Fantasy*, one could consider reasoning with a human being, but if a hungry carnivorous creature is coming after me, reason will not work. Another issue is game addiction. Games do have a tendency to draw us in, reward our achievements, and make us want to do more. There will be a little bit more on this later, but let's discuss how it relates to addiction. Can some people get addicted? Yes. Still, there is no proven condition like this. Many people do learn to manage their time well. The question is not what do you do, but what do you not do? He also says a temporary obsession is okay. When *Breath of the Wild* came out, many of my friends were indeed engrossed in that for awhile. (And I hate them for it in a loving Christian way.) What about sexuality in video games? It is only in the world of video games that a woman can go into battle wearing pretty much a bikini and count that as armor. Video games are usually a world dominated by men, but there are plenty of female gamers. (My wife is playing *Pokemon* as we speak.) The representation on the other hand can be quite different. Women are usually eye candy. There are some exceptions, such as Samus Aran, but we only need think of Lara Croft in *Tomb Raider* and the obsession with some people on finding a nude code for her. Now to what I said there would be more on later when talking about addiction. What about education? Video games could be a great source of education. For instance, when I studied Greek in Bible College, we used a program called *Parson's Greek Tutor*. I would like very much to get my hands on this again as the interactive format made it much easier for me to learn the material and at the time, I was moving ahead of the class even. Every round was a game and I wanted to get perfect and would settle for nothing less which made sure I learned the material very well. As one working on learning the language now, I look back and wish I still had that. Video games can be used in such a way for us today. There is something real in the concept of edutainment. Ask a gamer about the information they need in a game and many times they will know it because they have to know it to play well. It is practical knowledge for them. But what about concerns about the digital age killing our minds? To some extent, this is true. To another extent, the digital age is here to stay and we have to do the most with it that we can. Every new medium brings with it changes. The print medium brought changes as does the internet medium and the video game medium. It's easy to strike at the medium instead of the human sinful tendency. Schut also has a section on Christians in the video game industry. Many of these are dedicated people and want to do the best they can. They see their work as an act of service to God in trying to make the best game possible. There are few explicitly Christian video games, and this could be a good thing as sadly, many of those are just awful and only reach those of us who are already Christians. Abandoning the industry will only do for that what it does for Hollywood. We need Christians in every field being salt and light. No discussion would be complete without the social aspects. I remember years ago getting together with my brother-in-law and some of his friends. No doubt, I was the youngest one there, but we spent all of one afternoon playing *Goldeneye* together. In

Charlotte, I would get together with some friends every Sunday night. After some time playing Super Smash Brothers Brawl we would go bowling. When it came time for my bachelor party, all we did was bring the Wii over to a guy's apartment complex who had a big screen and played Smash Brothers all night long together. Games have had a way of bringing people together and uniting them. Gaming conventions are places where people can very often be themselves and form friendships easily. It could be that the gamer today is no longer the single guy sitting in his mother's basement. If you're a gamer, you owe it to yourself to read Schut's book. It is a gripping look at a neglected medium and one that we need more of. I appreciate that he sent me a copy for review purposes and I look very much forward to interviewing him on my podcast about this. In Christ, Nick Peters

Deeper Waters Apologetics 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A must read for Christian gamers and those wanting to learn more about this exciting medium. By Luther84

For those new to critical writing about the medium of video games, Kevin Schut's book provides a very nice introduction that any adult reader will find accessible. He recognizes the challenge of writing about video games for both outsiders, avid gamers, and everyone in between, and he strikes a good balance throughout. As someone who plays a lot of video games and tends to stay up to date on the games industry there were very few times I felt Dr. Schut "dumbing down" for the sake of those who don't know games as well. Rather, I was often surprised and pleased with his thoughtful and fair discussion of the issues of violence, game addiction, fantasy and "escape", and the purposes of video games and those who make them. I was confronted with some new ideas from time to time, but more often I came face to face with ideas I as a Christian gamer consider often, but never had never seen so eloquently stated, deeply-explored, or well-supported as in this book. For Christians who love video games this book is an important one, but a lot of the most valuable insights for me would likely be valuable for people of any faith persuasion. His concise summary of the state of the games industry and the ways it is changing in chapter 8 is one example. Another that comes to mind is his treatment of the important question: What do my actions in video games mean for me in real life?

This book was entertaining as well as educational, and it brought me as a Christian gamer to a deeper appreciation for the medium I love, reminded me why games move me, and how asked me to consider how I can better follow Christ in my own life. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I would buy it again!

By tollerlove

I bought this book because I wanted to learn more about how games are an effective media, from the Christian perspective. I was super excited when I got this book, and I carry it with me everywhere because it is such a good read. This book is worth every penny! I love that he covers Christian games as well as secular games. I also liked that this book just came out this year, so the information is very current. From reading some of the other reviews before I bought it, I knew that he was very careful to be balanced, which is great, but I was also glad to see that he gives his opinion as well as sharing both sides of information so that you can make your own decision. There is a lot of solid information in this book, and I know it will be a great reference for me to have forever!

Video games are big business, generating billions of dollars annually. The long-held stereotype of the gamer as a solitary teen hunched in front of his computer screen for hours is inconsistent with the current makeup of a diverse and vibrant gaming community. The rise of this cultural phenomenon raises a host of questions: Are some games too violent? Do they hurt or help our learning? Do they encourage escapism? How do games portray gender? Such questions have generated lots of talk, but missing from much of the discussion has been a Christian perspective. Kevin Schut, a communications expert and an enthusiastic gamer himself, offers a lively, balanced, and informed Christian evaluation of video games and video game culture. He expertly engages a variety of issues, encouraging readers to consider both the perils and the promise of this major cultural phenomenon. The book includes a foreword by Quentin J. Schultze.

From the Back Cover "A must read for anyone with questions on the compatibility of the Christian faith and interactive entertainment." "With solid research and intellectual curiosity, Kevin Schut dispels myths, debunks stereotypes, and offers an informed, levelheaded, and accessible analysis of a perplexing and contentious subject. Of Games and God is a valuable resource that invites players and skeptics alike into a critical discussion of the dark spots and bright lights of interactive video games." --William D. Romanowski, author of *Reforming Hollywood: How American Protestants Fought for Freedom at the Movies* and *Eyes Wide Open: Looking for God in Popular Culture*

"Of Games and God provides a balanced, research-driven perspective on the hugely influential video game industry. A must read for anyone with questions on the compatibility of the Christian faith and interactive entertainment." --Joseph M. Tringali, general manager at 5TH Cell, developer for *Scribblenauts* and *Drawn to Life*

"An engaging introduction to the topic of video games written for Christians, particularly those who have never considered the value of video games or those who wish to defend them as a worthy pastime. Balanced in its perspective, broad in its scope, and written for a general audience, *Of Games and God* fills a niche that has long been waiting to be filled." --Mark J. P. Wolf, Concordia University Wisconsin; editor of *The Medium of the Video Game*

"Gaming is a notoriously difficult topic to analyze and the relationship between gamers and churchgoers is typically less than cozy. Nevertheless Kevin Schut explores the problems and promise of today's dominant cultural medium with insight and understanding of both gamer and church cultures. Like it or not, gaming is a powerful vehicle for teaching values and ethics, and churches that ignore

how gaming is speaking to their teens and young adults do so at their own peril. But with this great book, every gaming noob can speak l33t and grasp the relevant social trends at the same time."--Chris Skaggs, Soma Games"Outstanding read! If you're a gamer, media junkie, teacher, parent, or student, you need to read this book. Christians and non-Christians alike will find gems of truth throughout the book. Reading it is only the beginning of the conversation!"--Kelly Zmak, Infinite Game Publishing

About the AuthorKevin Schut (PhD, University of Iowa) is associate professor and chair of the department of media and communication at Trinity Western University in Langley, British Columbia. His research uses video games to investigate the intersection of communication, technology, and culture. He has published articles and chapters on video games and history, games and mythology, and evangelical involvement with video games.