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## Darkness and Light

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This article is going to be a bit different today. Not different in the sense that it is still focused on the spiritual. What I mean by “different” is that I would like to share with you a personal experience I encountered this past week. While it may seem light-hearted and silly at first, there really is a good lesson to be learned from it.

Every once in a while I take a trip to the mall; more accurately to the *EB Games* shop in the mall. I trade in my old games for store credit which I use to purchase newer games. This way I can save money for the truly important things in life while still getting some new games every now and then.

Well I had brought a good heap of old games with me (over 20), and had earned enough credit to get a new free game. So I looked around trying to make a good decision on a game I could truly enjoy (a hard thing to do with most of the games today). I previously had a bad experience with a game that was truly evil; to the point where I could actually feel the evil present and it disrupted my sleep. I didn't want to make the same mistake twice, so I searched hard for a good game.

The first game that caught my eye was *Super Smash Brothers: Melee* for the Nintendo GameCube. I had played the previous version of the game on the Nintendo 64 and wasn't overly impressed with it, but the game caught my eye none-the-less. I placed it back on the shelf thinking “This game is too childish”.

The next game that I noticed was *Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance*. “Now this is more like it!” I thought to myself. Real fighting styles too. I have enjoyed the Mortal Kombat series of games and movies ever since they debuted. However I wanted to be sure, so I inquired about the game to the friendly store clerk, who told me that there is a slightly better version of the game: *Mortal Kombat: Deception*. I thanked him for his advice and took his recommendation.

Upon arriving back home, I eagerly opened the wrapping and was excited to try out my new game. Impressive visuals greeted me with good sound and music to accompany. “This was a good choice” I said. I played the game some, and indeed, the fighting was fun, albeit a bit unsophisticated (each character had only about five or six special maneuvers (which the clerk did warn me of I must add).

I put the game away and went to exercise and practice, followed by a shower and dinner. However my mind was still on the game during all of that, which is very odd even for a

new game. Something just didn't feel right. However I didn't find any foul language or evil symbols in the game, so I chalked it up to a strange anomaly and moved on.

Sure enough, that night my sleep was disrupted again just like the other game I mentioned earlier. I couldn't figure it out... Why was this game troubling me? There was no foul language or evil symbols, no drug references no nudity, no obvious signs of hidden messages or any satanic references except for one stage named "Hells Foundry", but that didn't really bother me to be honest.

I prayed and asked God "Why is this game bothering me, Lord?" – It then occurred to me, the answer I had been searching for:

It was the images of the game itself. This was easily the darkest game in the series to date; and whether I was realizing it or not, while I was playing the game the images were seeping into my soul and mind and beginning to change me ever so subtly.

I decided that I would return the game tomorrow, and slept soundly the rest of the night. The next morning as I was on my way to return the game there was an instance where I was gripped with a very potent urge to keep the game. It was very shocking. I then decided that if the game was getting such a strong hold on me to actually produce that level of desire to keep the game than it would definitely be in my best interest to return it.

Then I thought to myself "Well then what game *should* I get?" – The answer was very clear. The game that the Lord first showed me... *Super Smash Brothers: Melee*. The game that I had denied because I thought it wouldn't suit me for being too childish.

As it turned out, this game is actually more sophisticated and deep than Mortal Kombat ever was! It is actually such a faster pace that it takes a greater amount of skill to master it. I am having much more fun with this game than I ever could have with the other.

So what can we learn from this experience? The Bible is actually very clear about the dangers of the images we see and what we hear. Those things enter into our minds and shape who we become even if we don't realize it.

*"The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" (Matthew 6:22-23)*

In this Television era we are bombarded with images of evil from greed to lust to murder; unimaginable darkness. We must be exceedingly careful of what we allow ourselves to see and hear.

Now to be perfectly clear, I am not saying that all Television shows are evil. I am also not saying that all computer games are evil. There are some that are evil and some that aren't. We can't take it to the extreme of either side. What this calls for is sound judgment.

Satan is not stupid. He knows how to entice people. He knows exactly what your “bad eye” wants to look at and exactly what your sinful nature desires. He will appear as something pleasurable in an attempt to lead you astray [See: 2 Corinthians 11:14].

If I had not listened to the still small voice of the Lord and returned that game, not only would I have allowed the evil to remain and unwittingly allowed it to change me; but I also would’ve missed out on the best God had for me.

### **How to judge what is good and evil**

So how do we know what is evil and what isn’t? Ask God for the wisdom to judge.

*“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.”*

(James 1:5-6)

That second part is important: Ask with faith without doubting. If you ask God for wisdom, but do not believe you will actually receive it, then what good has your asking done? Be strong and have faith, trust in your Lord or He is not really your Lord.

Also, be open to God. If you take the time to be still for a few moments, He will speak to you just as He did with me. He speaks using that little inner-voice that we all have; the one that says “no” when we want to do something wrong; the one that nags at you after you’ve committed a sin. Don’t be angry when that voice nags you, it is God speaking to your heart to try and teach. I have learned to greatly respect and heed that voice, and I pray the same is true for you.

You may find that Christianity is a lot like the Super Smash Brothers game to you. You may think that it is too childish, or doesn’t suit you for other reasons. You may go in search of other things to satisfy you, only to be left empty later on. I urge you not to turn away and miss out on the best God has for you. If you do not yet know Christ, and you feel like something is missing, there is a way for you to rectify that right now. You can pray this simple prayer wherever you are, there is no distance in prayer and there is no rule saying that God will only hear you in a church. All that is required is that you pray this prayer with sincerity and that it is not just words to you but that you mean it with all of your heart:

"Lord Jesus, I now know that I have sin in my life. I have been searching for other things to fill a void that only You can fill. I thank you for Your sacrifice for me, and I make You the Lord of my life. Please forgive me of all my sins. Thank You. Amen."

If you prayed that prayer and meant it, than you have just crossed over from darkness into light. That light is the light of the Lord. You are now "Born Again", what that means is that your spirit is clean, you are a new person. You no longer have anything to fear. Society (specifically Television) has placed a large stigma on Christians, but don’t let that

detour you at all Your eternal soul is worth so much more, that's why Satan works so hard to try and stop people, and he will try to stop you as well, so please be on your best mental and spiritual guard.

If you don't yet have a reliable copy of the Holy Bible (or any copy at all) I would suggest getting a copy as soon as possible. I would recommend either the NIV (New International Version) or the ESV (English Standard Version) as those two versions are in my opinion the easiest translations to read while still remaining accurate and faithful to the original text.

Stay strong and Rise to the Challenge!

James