

Do Violent Movies Create Violent People?

The mass media creates the culture that shapes hearts and minds.

A typical American child will watch approximately 28 hours of TV a week. By the time they turn 18, they will have seen 200,000 acts of violence and more than 16,000 murders on screen.

Between the 1960s and 1990s, there was a 370 percent increase in violent crimes in America. Gory video games and gruesome television shows have been influencing children for decades. So much so that violent murders in horror films are being replicated by psychopathic people in real life.

Just this year, Luka Magnotta allegedly killed two people by copying the brutal murders of the films *American Psycho* and *Seven*. His fascination of film even led him to videotape himself committing the murders so he could post them online. He even recreated some of the circumstances in which the victims died in the movies.

Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold were obsessed with violent games like *Doom* before their involvement in the Columbine High School murders in Littleton, Colo. Several unsuccessful lawsuits against the video game companies were filed because of the incident.

Academy Award-winner Sir Anthony Hopkins, who's portrayed violent serial killers in years past, says that he's seen enough violence on the screen. He told newspapers that he "abhors the pornography of violence." These comments were made after reports came out that knife violence is on the rise in England.

He also said, "Now the act of violence with a gun or a knife is the norm, and we in the entertainment industry are partly responsible in making the presence of weapons such as knives almost an acceptable commonplace."

Is violent media to blame for some of these violent crimes? Should the media be held responsible for its bad influence on society?

Of course, each person, whether in business or in the entertainment industry or in any walk of life, is responsible for what he does or creates and for the future generations following him. As Edmund Burke (1729-1797), a member of the British Parliament and chief advocate of English and American concepts of liberty and justice, so eloquently said:

"Society is an open-ended partnership between generations. The dead and the unborn are as much members of society as the living. To dishonor the dead is to reject the relation on which society is built—a relation of obligation between generations. Those who have lost respect for the dead have ceased to be trustees of their inheritance. Inevitably, therefore, they lose the sense of obligation to future generations. The web of obligations shrinks to the present tense."

The blame of murder is and should be on the one who committed the crime. Proverbs 21:10 says, "The soul of the wicked desires evil." If we surround ourselves with evil, our minds will begin to embrace it. All men are responsible for their own actions no matter the circumstances, but parents can and should equip their children with proper tools for discerning movie content, such as those they can find through Movieguide or Ted Baehr and Pat Boone's book *The Culture-Wise Family*. Our job is not only to avoid movies that glorify gore and violence, but also to train ourselves and others in a biblical view of violence.

The land of Canaan was one of the most violent and vile countries there has ever been. Everything in Canaan was dedicated to immorality. This is why God commanded Israel to destroy Canaan and everything in it (see Deut. 20:16-18, Lev. 18:3). Because God is a God of justice, violence and war are sometimes necessary.

Even the greatest act of **mercy** required violence when Christ died on the cross. The difference between God's violent justice and violent slasher films is that **God's justice** is always restorative. Movies and games that have excessive gore and violence simply desensitize our minds and titillate our bloodlust. There is no redemption whatsoever in that!

On the other hand, war movies like *Bravheart* and *Gods and Generals* show violence properly. They show it as a sad necessity for defending righteousness and justice and protecting the weak.

As Romans 16:19 says, "I want you to be wise in what is good, and simple concerning evil."

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