

Ron Luce Speaks Out on Video Game Link to Newtown Massacre

The shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary school in Newtown, Conn. last December has left us stunned and shocked. We have a hard time wrapping our heads around the kind of evil it must have taken to shoot, in cold blood, 20 children and six educators. None of these people had any connection to the troubled 20-year-old man who committed this heinous act, except the man's mother. Facts are still coming out, but the motive is still a mystery.

My heart goes out to the families who lost their precious children, and to the families who lost their wives, sisters and aunts. The lives of these 26 people were cut short at the hands of a young man acting out of pure evil.

All of us want to know how something like this could have happened. We wonder what tragedies like this tell us about ourselves, our culture. What does it say about *us* that these kinds of atrocities occur, that our culture would somehow allow or stimulate these kinds of acts of violence?

If we know nothing else about this 20-year old gunman, fresh out of his teens, we know for sure that he had been submerged in a culture of violence from a very young age. We know that, in addition to suspected social disorders, he played violent video games. We also know that television and movie violence has gone up. Studies show that the typical American child will view more than 200,000 acts of violence, including more than 16,000 murders before age 18. Television programs display 812 violent acts per hour; children's programming, particularly cartoons, displays up to 20 violent acts hourly.

The data is overwhelming. The more young people are exposed to this violence, the more they are likely to participate in this

violence.

This kind of drastic horror should force us, as parents, to reconsider at least some of the things that we allow our kids to view or participate in.

What's the real cost of a video game?

It's not the \$60 you may be paying when you pick up the latest title from the video game store. You might not see immediate consequences, but the fact that there "could" be consequences should be enough for us to take caution. Parents should not only pay attention to video game ratings. For example, the popular *Call of Duty* game series is rated "Mature" and contains blood and gore, intense violence, strong language, suggestive themes and drug use. But they should also closely monitor the games they do allow their kids to play, and limit the amount of time their kids are exposed to media in general.

We should also reconsider allowing our kids to see R-rated movies, which are full of drastic violence. I've seen parents shuffle their kids into these kinds of movies because it's the only way the parent can see it if they can't get a babysitter. This should be thoughtfully reconsidered.

What more can we do?

In addition to being aware of our children's well-being and being an important, present part of their lives, we should pray for them. I wrote a book several years ago called *Re-Create* that gives great tips for how you can be a strong Christian influence in the lives of your teens and set them on a path that will lead them closer to God.

We should also protect our kids to from "practicing" violence through video games, or desensitizing them through repetitive exposure to violence through television and movies.

Finally, as the body of Christ, we can find one teen,

somewhere and try to begin a real conversation with them. Your simple effort to build an authentic relationship with a teenager could make a real difference and show them that a human being is more important than a video simulation. We can save this generation from a culture of violence one teen at a time.

Ron Luce *is founder and president of Teen Mania.*