

## CPYU 3(D) REVIEW

### Video Game:

# *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2*

By Greg Jones

**Background/summary:** *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* is part of the immensely popular *Call of Duty* series, which is a first person shooter. The game has three modes: campaign (single player story mode), special operations (two player multiplayer mission-based games), and online multiplayer. The game is rated "M" for mature, due to intense violence, blood, language, and drug reference. It was one of the most pre-ordered games ever. This highly anticipated game release sold nearly five million copies in the first twenty-four hours, earning \$310 million and making it the highest grossing launch in entertainment history, including movies, albums and other video games.

#### **Discover: What is the message/worldview?:**

- The first thing a gamer notices upon launching the game is a "content warning." The game was in the news (maybe as a publicity stunt, or perhaps legitimately) for an especially disturbing mission. In one of the story mode's earlier missions, gamers are put in a situation where they are working alongside terrorists, infiltrating their group. While in an airport, the gamer's character, along with the terrorists, must fight their way through the terminal. The terrorists begin indiscriminately murdering the civilians in the airport. It IS possible to accomplish this mission without killing innocent civilians. The game does NOT force the player to do anything more than defend themselves, however the option is there for some disturbing decisions.
- The game follows storylines in the United States, Brazil, and various places in Europe. As the first person player in the story mode, the gamer plays the role of a soldier in the Special Forces Task Force 141, a multinational unit.
- Like other versions in the *Call of Duty* series, the worldview seems to be one of objective-based wartime game play. Through the missions, gamers are forced to make often-tactical yet sometimes moral decisions.
- Most gamers spend the majority of their time with this game playing online multilplayer. Though that mode consists strictly of short games such as Team Deathmatch, Capture the Flag, and other unique objective games like Sabotage and Demolition, it involves a considerable amount of communication between gamers who are otherwise strangers. This unique format invites strangers of all sorts into gamers' homes and lives.



### **Discern: How does it stand in light of the biblical message/worldview?**

- The primary message of the single player mode regards Special Forces military operations. Amid these relatively normal military actions (such as killing terrorists and saving the world), there is a mission where you, the gamer, infiltrate a terrorist organization. This leads to tough questions about lying and justified warfare. How can these actions help the “greater good” and who determines the greater good?
- The main issue here is killing. Is there such a thing as justified killing? Are there just wars? Though the Bible explains, “Thou shalt not kill,” the game (like real life) complicates morality.
- Christ’s message is clearly one of peace. There’s no message of violence in the New Testament, therefore the game may seem to be in direct conflict with God’s Word. However, the game provides a context and opportunity for mature Christian players to interact with non-Christians in an extremely popular gaming format.
- In terms of the multiplayer, the game can really foster an opportunity for community. Not only can pre-existing friends stay connected through playing this game type, it also can help mutual friends connect. In other words, it can be an opportunity for evangelism or simply sharing in each other’s lives in ways that most gamers (15-35 year old males) do not typically experience through other mediums.

### **Decide: What do I do with it?**

- The especially difficult moral decisions regarding the terrorist group and killing civilians makes this game a bit more difficult to handle than the other games in the *Call of Duty* series. Though this does not make the game a total failure or “bad” game, it should make parents seriously consider purchasing this game. These issues, like scenes from popular movies, need to be discussed with children who will come in contact with the game. Assume that most children over 12 years old will, at the very least, hear friends discussing this game (and this controversial mission) in their community.
- Many Christians will dismiss a game like this without giving it a chance. However, considering some of the other popular games that are on the market today, this game provides some advantages. It presents opportunities for cooperation and strategy amidst questions about morality and justified war.
- The main thing that gamers (and their parents) should do with this game is think critically about what they are doing. How does killing make you feel? Does getting a “head shot” make you feel good? Is the game desensitizing you to killing? How do you compartmentalize the killing?
- All youth leaders should at least familiarize themselves with this game. The online games only take a few minutes to get the feel, yet they are extremely popular. Similar to sports, this game provides a context for competition. Players often talk trash to one another, commenting on equipment setups, playing styles, and gamertags. Simply being a part of the community will help youth leaders see the virtual culture that surrounds the *Call of Duty* franchise.
- Parents should be strongly cautioned regarding the violence. Sadly, there are dozens of very young players often online. However, the “M for Mature” rating is well deserved. There are scenes of gory violence, even in the fast-paced multiplayer game. The general nature of killing opponents, even in the objective-based games, is unfit for anyone too young to watch an R-rated movie. Older gamers should also be cautioned to think critically about the game and the images it brings to their eyes.
- As we have recommended regarding other video games, carefully monitor the Internet game play. Encourage gamers to only play with their friends on private conversation lines. Keep video game hours limited, keep the system located where responsible adults can monitor conversations and attitudes, and most of all find ways to make it fun for the gamer.

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