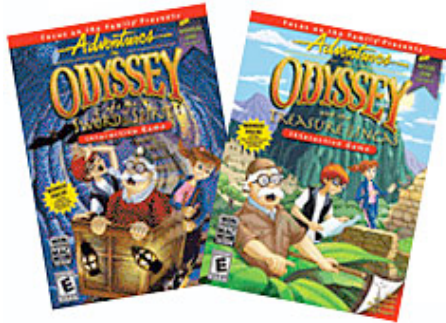


Moral video games: Raising character values

By Mary Flynn, Orlando



Parents strive to ensure their children are growing up with moral values and a good sense of right and wrong. However, with constant media attention geared toward violence and sex, a parent's duty of filtering the positive with the negative becomes increasingly important.

Digital Praise Inc., has released two computer games with the idea to "raise character values" while at the same time allowing kids the outlet of fun and adventure, said Bill Bean, vice president of marketing and sales.

"We feel there needs to be an alternative to the violent games kids play and it needs to be presented in a fun way. We knew it wouldn't be successful if it wasn't fun, we had to weave it into society and into what kids find fun."

— Bill Bean

"Adventures in Odyssey and the Sword of the Spirit" and "Adventures in Odyssey and the Treasure of the Incas," based on the "Focus of the Family" daily radio series "Adventures in Odyssey," is aimed at players age 8 and up. The series, which is estimated to be heard by more than 1.2 million listeners each day in the United States features the stories of Whit, Connie and Eugene in the fictional town of Odyssey as they explore events, concerns, and issues facing today's families.

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In the "Sword of the Spirit," users discover nine virtues including gentleness, kindness, peace, goodness, faithfulness, joyfulness, self-control and love through a number of different levels challenging children's mental, physical and moral challenges.

"We all want our children to be surrounded by only good things, good morals and a good education," Bean said. "Why not make it fun for them at the same time?"

Bean, who believes in repetitive subtle messaging, says children will do the right thing when they've seen it done in a small yet effective way.

"If you show someone younger the things that are morally right versus morally wrong, they will do the right thing later on."

Jaime Fazzina, a computer teacher at Ascension Catholic School in Melbourne, introduced both games to her students. Fazzina described the games much like the modern-day "Where in the World is Carmen San Diego?," which she says has always been a hit with students.

"I liked the game because it wasn't violent and it worked with their critical thinking," she said. "It's good when they work in pairs and can figure out the clues proposed in the games. I would recommend this game for classroom use."

Matthew Westlund, a fifth-grader in Fazzina's class, said he enjoyed playing "Treasure of the Incas" in his computer class. "It had a lot of adventure and it really kept my interest," he said. "If I was at home, I'd pick this game to play."

His classmate, Mark Midwood, agrees, saying that it was fun, and the clues leading to each level was what excited him. "It keeps me guessing, and I like the characters, too."

Both boys, avid Playstation users, said these games were something they would play on their own.

"We're not competing to one-up anything by our products," Bean said. "You can have fun without violence. We know there is a great battle to win the heart of the young, but we feel these games speak for themselves."

Both games are available through Christian retailers and online at www.digitalpraise.com, www.whitsend.org and www.amazon.com and can be played with an Apple or Windows computer.

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