



Word on the Street Discussion Time: In the game

You could use this discussion starter with your family, friends, or maybe in your class or your Church youth group. Read the story then use the questions to start discussion., then do the same with the Bible story. It will probably take about half an hour. Try to finish with a moment of prayer.

For the first couple of years of secondary school, everyone thought of Tom as a chilled out and gentle guy. Even though he was naturally muscular, no-one had ever seen him use it to create violence. Quick-witted and clever, he was the sort of person who let his mouth do the talking, rather than his fists.

But as he got older, bigger, and even more muscular, Tom started to change. He became more physical with his friends, and then with his enemies. Suddenly, Tom was in the middle of every fight the school grounds had to offer.

The school became concerned and so the headmaster asked his parents to come in for a chat. His dad had no idea what might have triggered this violent change in Tom's behaviour, but his mum saw it differently. Since Christmas, a few months earlier, she explained that Tom had been spending a lot of time playing on his new games console. He only really bothered with one game, a super-violent beat-em-up called *Battle Carnage*.

Tom's dad laughed off the suggestion that a video game might be responsible for his son's behaviour, and suggested it was probably more to do with hormones. His wife and the headmaster were not so sure.

- Do you think there's a link between computer game violence and real-life violence? Why?
- Do you play computer games? If so, how much do you think they can influence your behaviour?
- What computer games are popular today? What kinds do you find most fun or exciting to play?
- Do you think people should follow age restrictions on games? If so, how closely should we stick to the guidance? If not, why not?

Read Colossians 3: 5-14

- How much of the negative stuff mentioned in v5 and v8 do you find in computer games, movies, TV shows and music? What do you think the influence of these might be?
- How much of the positive stuff mentioned in v12 do you find in the same things? Are there certain areas of the media that offer this? Are they attractive? Why or why not?
- Why do you think the writer, Paul, tells Christians to put the first set of things aside and focus on the second?
- Do you think the world would change if the media was full of the ideas in v12? If so, how?

An extended version of this discussion appears in *The Ideas Factory: 100 Adaptable Discussion Starters for Teens*, by Martin Saunders, Editor of *Youthwork* magazine. It is reproduced here with his kind permission.