

Aug 3 | Written By Amy Green

# Video Games: A Medium After God's Own Heart

As a Christian game developer, creating the form of entertainment that most Christians decry as a wasteland, I am forced to ask the question: Is there any value here? If I were to, in the words of Paul, focus my attention specifically on, “whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable.”

Would there be anything to focus on in games? ***When Paul says, “if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things.” What does that inspire me to think about within video games?***

I was recently invited to a gathering of Christian game developers where we discussed these kinds of things. Chris Skaggs, owner of [Soma Games](#), created an event called Imladris for us to contemplate together the future of the game industry, and at one point he asked, “What do games offer the world that other media and art forms do not?”

And the answer that sprung from my heart was:

Agency - always, always agency.

***There is no other medium that values agency like video games do.*** A film does not care about my free will. Its story will march forward at the carefully sculpted pace of the editor's will. A song does not watch for its listener's response to the melody in order to craft for them a personalized chorus. A painting on the wall is open to every viewer's interpretation but not their influence. You can not rearrange the colors or shift the point of view. The artist has chosen their will above your own.

But agency is the lifeblood of video games. Their players demand choice. Players insist that their actions impact the outcome of the game. And videogames gladly bend to their will as developers devise innovative ways to honor that will. ***A great game does not dictate; it responds. It values free will over almost everything else.***

And for me, at least, these great games paint a picture of God. One of the most maddening things about God is that He values free will over almost everything else. It creates all kinds of problems. Life would be much simpler if agency weren't so highly valued. The times when I am most likely to shake my fist at God and call him cruel are the times when He has stubbornly valued free will over my idea of what is good. "How can you be good, God, when the world is filled with so much suffering and brokenness?" My cry has been echoed by millions of others who came before me, and it will resound into the future as millions more continue to ask, "How can a good and all-powerful God allow suffering?" We have a philosophical and theological term for this question,

“Theodicy.” I would argue it is the biggest stumbling block for people who feel some pull toward God. And for me, the answer is simple but disagreeable: **God values free will. He values free will over our comfort, our blessing, our safety, and our joy. He values free will over our individual lives.**

Perhaps God believes that suffering is truly wrong, but it seems, in His estimation, human suffering is less wrong than a total lack of human agency, the condition that would be required to prevent human suffering. I misunderstand God the most when I fail to value free will the way He values it. And to be clear, I totally misunderstand God! I don't get it. I don't think free will is the greatest good. I have experienced profound suffering, and I don't see it as an acceptable price to pay for our freedom. I don't understand a God who says, “I would rather you suffer than experience a life without agency.” And so, I am often angry at God. Accusations rise up in my heart because I do not value what God values. I don't see it yet. But if God is good, and He says that He is, then my values must bend to match His. I can not ask Him to change His values to match mine. If I want to be able to comprehend the goodness of God, I must begin to esteem free will the way He esteems it and see it as something worth preserving at all costs.

And so I return to video games. There is no question they are changing our culture. And it would be easy to make a list of all the negative ways games are impacting society, but Paul said that instead, we should think about whatever is noble, right, and admirable. And so, I look at video games, and I marvel at how they are transforming the world by creating a generation that values free will in a way that previous generations have never imagined. **Games, as a medium that puts agency first, help us as we play them, begin to understand a God who puts agency first - a God who has sacrificed**

**everything to preserve our free will.** Theodicy finds an answer in free will, but it has always been an answer that's hard to hear. My ears are not tuned to hear it correctly, but video games are a tutor to help us understand an aspect of God's character that has been hard for us to comprehend. The more we value free will, the easier it will be to comprehend God's goodness. So perhaps, in this way, video games, more than any other medium, have the opportunity to lead us closer to the heart of God.

## Agency | Free Will | Paul



Amy Green

Amy Green is a speaker, writer, and poet. Amy is an award-winning writer and narrative designer for video games that have received international press attention.

She has given a TED talk about the loss of her son and the unique way her family grieved.

After spending over fifteen years leading youth groups, women's ministries, and Sunday school classes, she is passionate about setting people free to relate to God more genuinely. Her current project is a book about rebuilding her faith after the death of her son, Joel.

Amy Green lives in Loveland, CO with her husband and four of their children.

Amy's work with Numinous Games has been recognized by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, South by Southwest, Games for Change, the Independent Game Developers Association, the Game Awards and has been featured in press coverage by

The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Wired Magazine, Popular Science,  
<https://www.amynoeelgreen.com/>  
RadioLab, CBS Sunday Morning, The BBC, the Guardian, and many other publications.

# The Complexity of Games & The Simplicity of Christ

# Connecting Minecraft With Christ

[Blog](#) [About](#) [Contact](#) [Subscribe](#)