

## God Games Seek Souls, Not Profit By John Gartner

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PORTLAND, Oregon -- While most game developers are motivated by the glory of creating a hit and focused on chasing the almighty dollar, the programmers who gathered at the Christian Game Developers Conference want to bring glory to the Almighty.

"The secular industry is trying to be more shocking ... and we want to show that games can be inspired by more than just violence and lust," said Ralph Bagley, CEO of [N'Lightning Software Development](#). Bagley said the group wants to offer wholesome, family oriented alternatives but does not want to limit choice. "It's not about censorship," he said.

"We will shake up the industry in a positive way," said Bagley, whose latest game is *Ringo the Rolling Cherub*, the story of a fallen angel with an attitude.

The [Christian Game Developers Foundation](#), which organized the conference, includes more than 40 companies, according to Bagley, who is also a spokesman for the group. The nonprofit organization raises money that helps launch Christian game companies. He said the maximum grant is \$500,000.

While the conference had many of the earmarks of a software developers' conference (casual attire, lots of black T-shirts, free pizza), the exhibit area sported fewer than 20 tables. Devoid of promotional glitz, it had a communal vibe. Event organizers said approximately 115 people attended the four-day event, which was held on the campus of Cascade College.

"We are all working together to promote the greater good," said Bill Bean, vice president of marketing and sales for [Digital Praise](#). Although he works for a for-profit company, Bean said he often refers other developers to his distributors and helps them find staff. "Our boss is upstairs," Bean said.

Bean said he was an executive at software company Caere (now ScanSoft)

when he met Peter Fokos at a Bible study meeting, and together they founded Digital Praise. He quit his job to start the business in July 2003 and mortgaged his house to invest in the company, which has grown to 58 people.

"We are taking the Christian paradigm and applying it to gameplay," said Laurence Escalante, who looks like he should be filling out college applications instead of launching a game company. Escalante, 23, works full time as a financial adviser in Perth, Australia, and became "fully leveraged" to found White Knight Games, where he is the managing director.

Escalante's passion for video games was inflamed by hours of playing the massive multiplayer game *World of Warcraft*. He came up with the concept behind *Timothy and Titus* because he perceived a need for games "about people who should be seen as heroes." White Knight will donate 10 percent of the profits from its games to help the needy in the Philippines, where much of the game is being developed.

Role-playing game *The Rebel Planet* had the most sophisticated graphics of the titles on display, a testament to lead programmer Peter Churness' love of computer-generated imagery. Churness, who is also the founder of [Rebel Planet Creations](#), said, "Bless the people in the secular (gaming) world. I rejoice in seeing great graphics."

Churness, who is a Lutheran pastor, says it's tough competing with industry Goliaths like Electronic Arts when you are a David with a limited payroll for programmers. "It is a business after all," he said, but a few successes by Christian developers could create more competition for wholesome gaming. "Secular publishers will recognize that this is an untapped market."



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