

The Day I Discovered an Unexploded Bomb

By Roy Lawrence

It was back in the days of World War Two when it happened. My memories of the war are childhood memories, because I was a boy at the time, but they are still surprisingly clear. Of course, as a child I was kept well away from the front and the fighting. But from time to time the war came to me.

I lived with my mother and father in a village called Davyhulme on the outskirts of Manchester.

Night after night enemy planes used to fly overhead on their way to bomb the industrial complex at Trafford Park, a few miles away. If they failed to drop all their bombs on Trafford Park, they would get rid of them on

their way home, and so occasionally a bomb would fall somewhere near our house.

I had a sand pit in which I used to play. It was in the middle of the lawn in

our back garden. One morning when I went out into the garden, I found to my total astonishment that there in the middle of my sand pit was an unexploded bomb!

Perhaps I ought to admit that I was not altogether displeased at this discovery. At the school which I attended, bits of shrapnel from bombs and shells were regarded as 'prize possessions'. If we found any, we could trade them for sweets or toys or other goodies. So, if I could manage to take this bomb to pieces, goodness knows what loot I could amass in exchange for its contents.

So I went and brought two of my friends, and then collected the hammer and chisel which my father kept in the garage. Then the three of us went to my sand pit, where I started to chip away at the outside of the bomb.

At this point my father came around the corner of the house and saw what we were doing. He almost had an apoplectic fit on the spot, and in no time at all my friends and I were well separated from our bomb, and the bomb disposal squad was quickly called.





Violent video games have the capacity to be an unexploded bomb.

When the bomb disposal squad arrived, they crawled on their stomachs across the lawn, and then slowly and delicately made the bomb safe.

I suppose I felt a bit peeved about the whole incident. Our fun had been spoilt. Our liberty had been infringed. But of course my father was absolutely right. If he had not acted so promptly, I could very well not have been here to tell the tale.

A Parable for Our Time

The reason I am retelling this tale now is that, not only is it a good yarn, a good 'Boys Own' story, but

is interlaced with pornographic sites. Each of these is like an unexploded bomb, full of potential to damage our lives. But there is no shortage of people who find themselves playing with these sites and slavering over them. It is a great mistake. Those who toy with pornography are all too likely to find that very soon, they are themselves the ones who are being toyed with. Pornography can so

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easily become an escalating addiction. We can go from the net to sex shops and to a pornographic lifestyle, which is self-destructive, as well as potentially harmful to others.

To take another example, many children seem to have a great liking these days for violent video games. They plead for their parents to buy them, and parents often do so, just for the

sake of a quiet life. But each one has the capacity to be an unexploded bomb, and you never know when fantasy violence will spill over into the real thing. We were all appalled when it was reported not long ago that two children had bullied and tortured two others almost to the point of committing murder. Not surprisingly, it was found that they had every opportunity to fantasise about violence in their own home.

Recently the media here in the United Kingdom have reported research has revealed that Britain is becoming what is termed 'a more liberal, tolerant, and relaxed society'. The radio programme in which I heard the report was full of self-congratulation, and seemed not to see the unexploded

bomb concealed beneath the statistics. It is apparent, however, to anyone looking around with open eyes that once you abandon a commitment to

basic moral standards, once you ignore biblical teaching about right and wrong, once you start treating the concept of 'sin' as an irrelevance or a joke or just plain bad taste, the consequences are chaotic and explosive: socially, medically, economically, and in all sorts of other ways.

A Personal Unexploded Bomb?

Still, let's put aside for a moment reflections about our society and about the world generally. Let's apply all this at a rather more personal level. What about you and me? Do we have unexploded bombs of our own which we are playing about with? Are we toying with some private sin? Perhaps taking pleasure in a prejudice of some kind? Or in conceit? Or spite? Or some sort of impure thought sequence? Or what about dishonesty? It need not necessarily be financial, but could perhaps involve stealing credit or kudos—or



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even time—which does not rightly belong to us?

Every personal sin has the capacity to be an unexploded bomb. We toy with them at our peril. So, is it time for a bomb hunt? If so, what shall we use as a bomb detector?

There is no shortage of bomb detectors in the Bible. How about the Ten Commandments, for instance? They can be found in their original form in Exodus, chapter 20, verses 1-17, and the art of using them is to see and apply the principles which underlie each one. So for instance, when we read the sixth commandment, 'Thou shalt do no murder', we can find that this is highly relevant to us, even if we are not killers in any crude sense.

This is a world in which many die needlessly. We belong to the third of the world which is well-fed, even overfed. But another third goes hungry daily, and a further third experiences such extremities of starvation that people habitually die of malnutrition. We could do something about it by helping organisations which care for the sick and starving. But do we? And what about the mental and spiritual equivalents of murder? Do we promote peace, or do we bear hatred in our hearts and injure others by word or deed? Are we guilty of

'character assassination'? Do we ever indulge in malicious gossip? Or at a more literal level, have we worked out how we feel about abortion or the needless slaughter of animals?

Perhaps you would rather find your bomb detector in the New Testament.

If so, how about 1 Corinthians 13, the famous chapter built around the phrase, 'Love is...'? All we have to do is to change the words: 'Love is...' to 'Am I...?' or 'Do I...?' 'Am I patient, am I kind? Do I know no jealousy? Do I make no parade, never give myself airs? Am I never selfish? Am I never glad when others go wrong?' And so on.

The best of all bomb detectors is Jesus himself. He has promised his followers, 'I am with you always, to the end of the age'.¹ If we have claimed this promise and allow him to walk with us through life, all we have to do is to ask ourselves, 'When I am with Jesus, can I feel at ease if I do this, think that, say the other?' If not, we



Are we guilty of 'character assassination' or malicious gossip?

will have found an unexploded bomb in the sand pit of our soul.

What if you try this out and find one? We are often unwilling to find these unexploded bombs because we are not sure what should come next, but the answer is surprisingly simple. Jesus is not only the supreme bomb detector, he is also the world's greatest bomb disposer. All we have to do is to step aside and allow him to deal with the situation. We have to pray, 'Deliver us from evil', and we have to mean it. For he can take your personal unexploded bomb and mine into his scarred hands and carry it well away. And if that weren't enough good news, there is more. For, before long, those same scarred hands will bring us something infinitely better than the unexploded bomb to put in its place.

Notes

¹ Matthew 28:20

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