

Hope and Longings in TV Shows for Children

“...they are being catechized through regularity and repetition into a series of cultural beliefs that result in behaviors. . . now and for the rest of their lives.” - Walt Mueller

TV shows play a significant role in childhood, and children become emotionally attached to their favorite shows. They relate to the characters, whether they are pink ponies, sparkling elves, or six-year-old superheroes. Thus these stories are vital to the children’s worldview formation. Many of these fictional stories deal with our longings and need for hope. How, then, can we help the children to identify how and where their favorite characters search for hope? And how can we use these stories to talk about our own longings and need for hope – and what The Great Story of the Bible tells us about where hope is ultimately found? Examples from *My Little Pony*, *Mia and Me*, and *The Rocketeer* will be used throughout the workshop in order to illustrate typical messages in TV shows for children and how to identify and respond to them.

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I. Introduction

A. Formative years – between three and nine

- i. *“... a person’s worldview is primarily shaped and is firmly in place by the time someone reaches the age of 13, and key values are in place by the age of 6.”*

(The Barna Group)

- ii. *“No story exists neutrally, as raw entertainment without reference to cultural beliefs and values.”*

(Brian Godawa)

B. Kids, Popular Culture and Faith Formation

- i. *“If you avoid every cartoon, book, movie, website, etc. that somehow conflicts with a Christian worldview, you are losing the opportunity to have meaningful conversations and losing the opportunity for your kids to develop discernment and understanding.”*

(Natasha Crain)

- ii. Why look for hope and longings?

“If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up people to collect wood and don’t assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea”

(Antoine de Saint-Exupery)

II. CASE: *My Little Pony, Mia and Me and The Rocketeer*

- A. A short introduction to the shows
- B. Hope and Longings in these shows – some key trends
 - i. Let's go for an adventure
 - ii. Fighting for a better world
 - iii. Find your inner hero
 - iv. The need for belonging
 - v. Open or closed reality?

III. Hope and longings - and the Gospel

Take the leap and don't look down

Rise to the call (The Rocketeer)

- i. "Nobody can see Pantheas face and live" – the use of religious images
- ii. The fight against evil – hope lies in our own strength and courage
- iii. Explaining common Christian sayings
- iv. The need for belonging
- v. *"If we take the imagery of Scripture seriously, if we believe that God will one day give us the Morning Star and cause us to put on the splendour of the sun, then we may surmise that both the ancient myths and the modern poetry, so false as history, may be very near the truth as prophecy."*

(C. S. Lewis)

Q & A / Discussion

Suggested Readings:

- Dahle, Margunn Serigstad. *Understanding the Tweens Media World* (FOCL Talk 2014)
<http://foclonline.org/talk/understanding-tweens-media-world>

- Dahle, Margunn Serigstad. *Media Engagement in Youth Ministry: The Disney Universe as a Case Study*
<https://foclonline.org/talk/media-engagement-youth-ministry-disney-universe-case-study>
- The Barna Group. *Making Space for the Millennials: A Blue Print for Your Culture, Ministry, Leadership and Facilities* (Barna Group, 2014)
- Strange, Daniel. *Plugged In. Connecting your faith with what you watch, read, and play* (The Good Book Company, 2019)
- Muller, Walt. *Engaging the Soul of Youth Culture: Bridging Teen Worldviews and Christian Truth* (InterVarsity Press, 2006)
- Takacs, Stacy. *Interrogating Popular Culture: Key Questions* (Routledge, 2015)
- Turnau, Ted. *Popologetics: Popular Culture in Christian Perspective* (P & R Publishing, 2012)
- Ministry-To-Children: *Childrens Ministry Statistics 2019*
<https://ministry-to-children.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Childrens-Ministry-Statistics-2019.pdf>