

Scripts for Life

The narratives that we encounter in films express a vision for life, sometimes explicitly and sometimes in more subtle ways. These stories grab our imagination and shape the ways in which we think, live, and search for hope. But Christians need to see themselves as part of God's story, not the stories that we pick up from films. In this session, we will focus on helpful ways to watch and understand films as Christians, and how we can relate to their stories in different ways in our families, youth groups, Bible study groups, in preaching and other contexts. Throughout the session, we will give examples from our book, *Focus: Film*, on how to use film on the church arena.

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Anne Solfrid Brennhovd serves as the editor of the Damaris Norway website SnakkOmTro.no (Talk About Faith) and is an established speaker and writer. She has been with the Damaris Norway team since 2001 and has also taught part-time at Fjelltun Bible School in Stavanger. SnakkOmTro.no is a website serving a wide range of teachers, youth leaders, pastors, parents and young people, providing resources for engaging with popular culture and apologetics.

I. Introduction

"It's as if the films and other popular media provide us with a script on how to live our lives." - O. Sigurdson

A. Stories and Meaning-Making

1. *"Increasingly, popular cultural worlds guide us in our quest for meaning."* (T. Turnau)
2. *"No story exists neutrally, as raw entertainment without reference to cultural beliefs and values."* (B. Godawa)
3. *"[Both] the filmmaker and the film-viewer are in the storytelling business."* (R. K. Johnston)

B. Stories and Worldview Formation

1. *"The moving picture has become a preacher, and its sermons are most effective because they are addressed to the eye rather than to the ear."* (K. S. Hover 1911)
2. *"Without question, the media plays an important role when it comes to religious socialization in our culture."* (M. Lövheim)

3. *“In order to live well and wisely in the complexity of digital Babylon – and thereby diffuse anxiety – we must build our muscles of cultural discernment: the ability to compare the beliefs, values, customs, and creations of the world we live in (digital Babylon) to those of the world we belong to (the kingdom of God).”* (D. Kinnaman & M. Matlock)
4. *“A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.”* (J. W. Sire)

II. **The stories and the Story**

- *Some stories may not be true, but they express Truth with capital T.* (P. Cooke)

A. Platform: from *Content analysis* through *Worldview theory* to *Theological aesthetics*

- i. Emotional level
- ii. Aesthetic level
- iii. Values & worldview level
- iv. View of values, humanity, reality and faith (as trust and search for meaning)
- v. Normative level (theological level)
- vi. Points of contact, points of tension

III. **Methodology: *Double listening* as the missiological approach**

A. The art of carefully listening both to Scripture and to the contemporary world, in order to relate the one to the other.

IV. **The book *Focus: Film* as a Case**

“The next generation of pastors, teachers and therapists must not only learn the language of film, but also develop the art of interpretation – seeing and hearing what’s happening on the big (and small) screens.” (G. Detweiler)

A. Film in the family

- i. Case study, illustrating two simple tools for conversation

- B. Film in the youth group
 - i. Case study, illustrating key approaches
- C. Film in the Bible study-group
 - i. Case study, illustrating key approaches
- D. Film from the pulpit
 - i. Case study, illustrating key approaches

Q & A / Discussion

Suggested Resources:

- Brennhovd, Anne Solfrid: *Shame, Youth Culture and the Gospel* (ELF 2017)
<https://foclonline.org/talk/shame-youth-culture-and-gospel>
- Brennhovd, Anne Solfrid & M. S. Dahle: *Focus: Film* (Iko-forlaget, 2020) To be published.
- *Childrens Ministry Statistics 2019*
<https://ministry-to-children.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Childrens-Ministry-Statistics-2019.pdf>
- Dahle, Margunn Serigstad. *Understanding the Tweens Media World* (ELF 2014)
<http://foclonline.org/talk/understanding-tweens-media-world>
- Dahle, Margunn Serigstad. *Media Engagement in Youth Ministry: The Disney Universe as a Case Study* (ELF 2016)
<https://foclonline.org/talk/media-engagement-youth-ministry-disney-universe-case-study>
- Dahle, Margunn Serigstad: “Story and Meaning Making: A Multilevel Approach to Film in Faith Education” in Cloete, A. (ed.) *Interdisciplinary Reflections on the Interplay between Religion, Film and Youth*. (Sun Press, 2019)
- *Making Space for the Millennials: A Blue Print for Your Culture, Ministry, Leadership and Facilities* (Barna Group, 2014)
- 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)
- Watkins, Tony: *Focus: The Art and Soul of Cinema* (Authentic Media, 2007)