

An Emerging Generation Made in the Image of Disney?

The Disney Universe plays a highly significant role globally in worldview formation at an early age. What are the key values that are being communicated through movies, theme-parks, toys etc.? This session draws on content analysis from a worldview perspective, focusing on the issues of identity and meaning, and highlighting challenges and opportunities for Christian discipleship in family and church contexts.

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I. Introduction

A. Disney as a global storyteller

“... Disney has created a world of fantasy... that both entertains and educates children in this country [US] and around the world.” (*Mark Pinsky*)

B. Stories as key sources in worldview / identity formation

“All stories teach, whether the storyteller intends them to or not. They teach the world we create. They teach the morality we live by. They teach it much more effectively than moral precepts and instructions.” (*Philip Pullman*)

II. Personal worldview / identity development

A. Developing a personal worldview (1):

Different circles: “Self”, “Peers”, “World” and “Beyond”

B. Developing a personal worldview (2):

Different contexts: Home, Church, School – and the Media

III. Disney stories – and magic

“Magic takes you away and shows you a better life. And then it allows you to apply it to your real life.” (*Leonard Maltin*)

- A. Stories being the art form of transformation

- B. Stories providing psychological help in preparing for future life challenges

IV. Disney stories: key values and worldviews – using movies as “listening post”

“We like to have a point of view in our stories, not an obvious moral, but a worthwhile theme.” (*Walt Disney*)

- A. The animation movies – and the disneyfication of folktales

- B. The animation movies – and mixed moral messages

- C. The movie *Cinderella* (1950 and 2015) as a case study

Identifying traces of worldviews:

View of values

View of humanity

View of reality

View of faith (as anchoring search for meaning / trust)

Identifying points to celebrate and points to challenge

V. The need for media literacy / media awareness / media critique

- A. Key tasks

- B. Celebrating and challenging

VI. Applications for Christian discipleship

- A. Issues of identity and meaning

- B. Some applications for the family context

- C. Some applications for the church context

VII. Q / A – Discussion

Suggested Readings:

- Anthony, Michael J. ed. (2006). *Perspectives on Children's Spiritual Formation. Four Views*. Nashville, TN: B&A Academic.
- Howell, D. (2002). Religion and Youth Culture. In C. Partridge (red.) *Dictionary of Contemporary Religion in the Western World*. Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, s. 130-134.
- Lyon, David (2000). *Jesus in Disneyland: Religion in Postmodern Times*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- McCracken, Brett (2013). "Watching" in B. McCracken *Gray Matters: Navigating the Space between Legalism & Liberty*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, s. 131-188.
- Pinsky, Mark I. (2004). *The Gospel According to Disney: Faith, Trust, and Pixie Dust*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Thomas, Bob (1994). *Walt Disney: An American Original*. New York, NY: Disney Editions.
- Ward, Annalee R. Ward (2002). *Mouse Morality: The Rhetoric of Disney Animated Film*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.