

Truth, Identity and Morality: Tweens, TV-shows and the Gospel

"If you want to know the real heart of a person, or a society, find out what entertains them, what delights them." (Ted Turnau)

Through streaming, TV-shows are increasingly being aimed at specific segments in society. This results in a bewildering jungle of productions for every individual family member. Shows targeting tweens have traditionally been regarded as second-rate, but many high-quality shows are now emerging for this age group, which often spends time alone in front of the screen. What do shows like *Winx*, *The Worst Witch*, *Trollhunters* and *Dragons: Riders of Berk* tell kids about truth, identity and morality? How does the Gospel relate to these key themes?

Anne Solfrid Brennhovd is the editor of the Norwegian website SnakkOmTro.no (Talk About Faith) and a speaker and writer for Damaris Norway. She has been with the Damaris Norway team since 2001, and has served as a part-time teacher 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 in popular culture and apologetics.

I. Introduction

A. The concept of Tweens

B. Youth Culture, Popular Culture, and Youth Ministry

a. *"No story exists neutrally, as raw entertainment without reference to cultural beliefs and values."* (Brian Godawa)

C. Tweens and Popular Culture

a. *"...drawing on different age performances through their television use, moving between shows for young children and shows aimed at an older audience."* (Ingvild Kvale Sørensen)

II. What are these shows all about?

A. A short introduction to *Winx*, *The Worst Witch*, *Trollhunters* and *Dragons: Riders of Berk*.

B. Key trends

a. Career-driven and success-oriented

- b. Fighting for a better world
- c. Find your inner hero
- d. The need for belonging

III. Truth, identity, and morality – in cartoons?

IV. TV-shows for tweens - and the Gospel

- a. The integration of faith and occupation
- b. The Gospel and the problem of evil
- c. I can do anything through Him who gives me strength
- d. The need for belonging - and our possibilities

V. 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. *An Emerging Generation Made in the Image of Disney* (FOCL Talk 2015)
<http://foclonline.org/talk/emerging-generation-made-image-disney>

- The Barna Group. *Making Space for the Millennials: A Blue Print for Your Culture, Ministry, Leadership and Facilities* (Barna Group, 2014)
- Harrison, Glynn. *The Big Ego Trip: Finding true significance in a Culture of Self-esteem* (InterVarsity Press, 2013)
- 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)