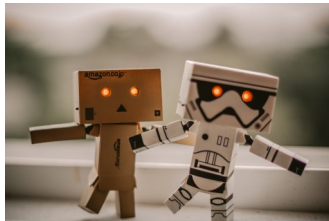


We Need a Translator!

by Pr. Brett Jenkins, Lutheran CORE Board Member

Twenty two years ago I started in ministry as a full-time youth minister. I was twenty six years old and looked the part; I had a passion for Jesus, I played guitar, was willing to get down on the floor to chat with the youth... and I had way more hair than I do now. I was never exactly cool, but I still knew what cool looked like. I understood and remembered in my bones what it felt like to face all the trials that accompany being 12-21 years old.

No more... and it's not just me or people in my age group. My wife's research assistant of 25 tells her that she doesn't understand undergraduates anymore, let alone high school and middle school students. They seem to possess a language all their own, and that language changes faster than anyone even a few years older can account for.



Digital immigrants and digital natives, Fortnite, Post Malone, #ByeByeBikini, Yanny vs. Laurel, Childish Gambino, 13 Reasons Why, Amino Apps, Sick Boy, Black Mirror, Anti-Heroes... if most of these words seem foreign to you, join the club of which I'm president. I know I need to connect with the youth in my life and ministry who understand the world to which these terms belong, but to be honest, I'm not sure I have the time — or ability — to make the leap.

The Culture Translator

A few months ago I came across a youth ministry resource called *The Culture Translator*. Headed up by a group of thoughtful and engaged younger Evangelicals, this weekly email to my inbox gives me a couple of highlights of what's happening in teen culture that week so I am not completely in the dark and out of touch. As with any resource, you are not going to agree with everything you read there, but their thoughtful, even-handed, non-reactionary approach to a teen culture that appears to me at times (as a 48-year-old) to range from simply frenetic to downright disturbing is extremely helpful. Their parent ministry Axis also offers pamphlets and downloadable video curricula for congregational or family use.

I have found these resources to be enormously helpful as I minister both to teens and to their parents. I would encourage you to check them out at <https://axis.org> whether you are a pastor, parent, grandparent, or just someone who loves the kids in your congregation.