

CAN YOU BUY THAT?

1. Think of your favorite television commercial. What product does it advertise?

2. List three positive things and three negative things about advertising.

3. How do you usually shop?

- I don't shop on the Internet
- By catalog
- Let my mom do it
- In outlets
- In stores

4. When shopping, do you usually buy name brand or generic?

5. What do you think—A (agree) or D (disagree)?

- Advertising uses sex too much to sell products.
- Advertisements are usually ignored.
- Advertising helps people make intelligent decisions about their purchases.
- Advertisements shouldn't feature professional athletes and other celebrities.
- Advertisements generally lie about products.
- Advertising influences people to buy things they don't need or want.
- Advertisers treat consumers as if they were stupid.
- Advertising reaches the subconscious level of the mind.
- Advertisements should never be trusted.
- Advertising should not be done on the Internet.

6. Read the following verses, and write what each one says about advertising.

Ephesians 4:17-19

Ephesians 5:6

1 John 3:7-8



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THIS WEEK

Our society is engulfed in advertising. Think about it—it's everywhere! It's on TV, radio, billboards, stadium scoreboards, racecars, blimps and airplanes—even on clothing. Companies target younger people to create loyalty to a certain brand. And since teenagers are the age group that spends the most money on CDs, clothes, and movies, they are prime targets. But, they're a bit naïve about what they see and hear. This discussion allows you to point out how false advertising can trick them into the "gotta have it" mentality.

OPEN

Videotape several TV commercials and show them to your group. After each one, stop and talk about the ad. What did the advertisement say? What makes you want (or not to) buy the product? What is manipulative about the ad, if anything? Explain that companies spend millions of dollars in advertising every year. On a given Super Bowl Sunday, companies spend millions for every second of airtime. Why do they put so much money and energy into advertising? What are some of the best advertisements that your kids have seen? Why did they like them?

Another good lead-in is to make a list of advertising slogans and have the kids guess the product each represents. Or have your kids list slogans for products like make up, perfume or cologne, video games, cereal, soft drinks, shampoo, cars, etc. You'll be amazed what they remember and recognize! Feel free to use this as a game and give points to teams who can name the most slogans in a given amount of time.

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Let the kids share their favorite commercials. Why do they like them? Have they bought the product? Why or why not?
2. Make a master list of the responses and refer to them during the rest of the discussion. Why is advertising good or bad? How necessary is it in some cases?
3. Why do they shop where they do? Why do those who shop on-line why they prefer it to actual stores? Do the products meet their expectations when they finally arrive? What are the pros and cons of shopping by the Web, catalog, or in a store?
4. Most will respond by saying, "it depends..." A good way to handle this is to make two lists, one of advertised brands and another brand. Then write the reasons given for each answer.

5. These statements will generate a variety of responses. Allow the kids to debate the different issues that arise with each. You may want divide them up according to their answers.

6. How do these verses apply to advertising? What would God say about the media and how it sells to the public?

THE CLOSE

Challenge your kids to take a close look at the ads they watch and hear. Since the goal is to make money, advertisers will always try to make the product look good. Talk about ways that they can discern these messages. What questions can they ask when they see or hear an ad? How can they limit the amount of ads that they see or hear?

Communicate how God views money and advertising. Getting caught up in the "gotta have it" mentality is unhealthy and sinful. They start to want more and more—soon they become more greedy and unhappy with what they have. God wants us to be content and to rely on him. How does advertising affect the way they view God?

MORE

- Ask your group to keep a list of everywhere they see advertisements. Your kids might not realize just how surrounded they are. Challenge them to take a close look around them during the week as they go to school and hang out with friends. Have them keep an eye out for ads on clothing, on buses, on the Internet, and even on cereal boxes. Have them bring their lists and talk about them. Where did they see advertising? How did it make them feel?
- What impact has advertising had on national holidays, especially Christmas? Talk about advertising in this context. How would they view Christmas if they didn't have to shop, buy, or receive gifts? What if there were no Easter bunnies or gifts from Santa? What if Valentine's Day was just about showing love and not giving away roses, candy, or paper cards? What meaning has the media and society given (both religious and not) our holidays, like Easter or Thanksgiving? Make a two-column list—With Ads and Without Ads. Have them list words or ideas about each holiday from these perspectives.