

CAN YOU BUY THAT?



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

2. When you make a purchase, do you usually buy the **advertised brand** (the one you recognize) or **another one** (say "Brand X")? Give one example of each.

Advertised brand—

Brand X—

3. List one brand name for the products below. Can you remember the advertisement for it?

Makeup—

Perfume or cologne—

Video games—

Cereal—

Beer—

Shoes—

Soft drink—

Shampoo—

Car—

Toothpaste—

Clothing—

Pizza—

4. Do you **A** (agree) or **D** (disagree)?

- a. Commercials are good because they help people decide what to buy.
- b. People buy many things they don't need because of advertising.
- c. People would be better off without advertising.

- d. Celebrities shouldn't make commercials.
- e. Most commercials are truthful.
- f. Advertisers shouldn't use sex to sell their products.

5. What do the following Bible verses have to say about advertising?

Ephesians 4:17-19

Ephesians 5:6

1 John 3:7-8

CAN YOU BUY THAT? [a d v e r t i s i n g]

THIS WEEK

Our society is engulfed by advertising. Think about it—it's everywhere! It's on TV, radio, billboards, stadium scoreboards, racecars, blimps, and airplanes—even on clothing! Companies target young people to create loyalty to a brand. And since teenagers are the age group that spends the most money on CDs, clothes, and movies, they're 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.

OPENER

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. 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 THE NUMBERS

1. Let the kids share their favorite commercials. Why do they like them? Have they bought the product? Why or why not?
2. 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 X. Then write the reasons given for each answer.
3. See how many different brand names your group can think of for each product. Discuss how they became aware of the brand. Point out how easy it is to remember certain ads—the mark of an effective advertisement!
4. This will most likely create a variety of responses. Let your kids debate the different issues. You might wish to have them take sides for their positions in a debate-style of discussion. Try to cover as many points of view as possible and keep the discussion open-minded.

5. Ask for their opinions—how can they apply these Bible verses to their lives? What do these say about today's advertising? How does this change how they view advertising?

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?

Point out that advertising isn't all bad. In fact, there are benefits to learning about a product. But, ads can also deceive and lie. What messages do your kids see or remember that aren't true?

Communicate how God views money and advertising. Getting caught up in the "gotta have it" mentality is unhealthy and sinful. Help your kids see that with that attitude they'll 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? Can it affect our relationship with him? How?

MORE

- Just how surrounded are your kids by advertisements? Ask your group to keep a list of everywhere they see advertisements. They might not realize just how surrounded they are by ads. Challenge them to take a close look 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 (both religious and not) has the media and society given 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. Holidays to include in the discussion are Easter, Christmas, All Saints Day (Halloween), Thanksgiving, and the Fourth of July.