

WANTING IT ALL [materialism]

THIS WEEK

Teenagers are saturated in a culture that values money and possessions more than any other. Your kids feel the pressure everywhere they go. Take shopping malls for example—they've become one of America's most popular hang out spots! Teenagers spend more money today than ever on CDs, video games, movies, and clothes. Unfortunately, not much has been done to teach kids about materialism and the dangers of getting caught up in "wanting it all." This session will help your youth understand the materialistic world that they live in.

OPEN

You may want to start by asking your kids to make a list of all the material things that they or their families own. This means everything—beds, TVs, radios, CDs, video games, and so on. Make a list on a whiteboard or poster board. You'll probably end up with an extensive list of items. Some families will have more than one item, like a radio or TV. You may want to illustrate how much stuff Americans have—most of which they don't need to survive! Put a circle around those that are necessary for survival (probably not very many).

Want another idea? Play a version of The Price is Right using pictures of expensive items cut out of magazines. If your group is big, split the group up into teams so everyone can play. Then ask each person or team how much they think an item is worth. Whoever guesses the closest can either (you decide) get a point or gain some amount of money. However you want to play is fine, depending on how much time you have. Whatever team ends up with the most points or the most money wins.

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Make a master list of the what your kids want. Have them circle all the things on the wish list that they think they need as opposed to the things they just want.
2. Let your group express their feelings about the difficulty of living in such a materialistic culture. You may want to discuss feelings concerning money and wealth. What do they do with guilt, jealousy, pride, and so on?
3. This situation will bring up a few points for discussion. Should a junior in high school be working 15 to 18 hours a week? Should parents be so lenient? Should Brandy's parents make her buy her own clothes, makeup, and so on? Should Brandy tithe to her church?

4. Ask for a vote on each of the statements, according to the way the kids answered. If everyone agrees on a particular statement, move on to the next. If there are many different opinions, ask them to defend their points of view.

5. Ask some of the kids to read aloud their personalized versions of verses. Then choose one (or more) to discuss in more depth.

THE CLOSE

Materialism is a trap—it's easy to get caught up in wanting it all. Money doesn't buy happiness. The Bible teaches the love of money is idolatry and says "you cannot serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24). Money buys things, but not the things of God—happiness, joy, love, peace—and most importantly, eternal life.

Discuss with the group how Jesus lived and how he challenged his disciples to leave everything and follow him. Although times are different, they're still called to follow him and leave our wants behind. He'll give them what need (and more) if they trust and follow him.

What is one thing that your kids can change about their lifestyle to make them a little less materialistic? Brainstorm with them how to change what they think about possessions. What can they do to make a small change or two?

MORE

- There are many people out there in need of clothes, food, and Christian love. Together with your kids, plan a Christian service project for those who don't have what they need. This can be a big project—possibly traveling to help in another city or foreign country—or something smaller, such as collecting clothing, food, having a garage sale for a charity or working in a shelter.
- Ask several group members find articles or advertisements from magazines or newspapers that deal with spending money, saving money, getting rich, topic like that. Discuss with the group how they are influenced everywhere by the media. What messages does the TV, radio, and Internet send? How are they affected by advertisements see everywhere, from billboards to junk mail?
- How do your kids spend their money? Have them keep track of everything that they spend money on in a given week and write it down. Then talk with them about what they bought and whether or not the item(s) was something they needed or wanted. They'll be surprised to see how they've spent their money!