

A group plan that teaches youth to critically view advertisements and media.

OVERVIEW

Advertising is both powerful and persuasive. Young people need training to see negative and harmful aspects of advertising. This discussion will help youth guard themselves against methods of persuasion.

LEADER PREPARATION

- Edit together a series of commercial clips from television. Attempt to tape commercials from shows that your audience watches.
- Prepare TV and VCR.
- Bring in a bottle of perfume, sneakers, jeans, and a watch.
- Gather several magazines. (At least one per five individuals—the more the better.)
- Obtain some bags of candy or other small treats.

GROUP BUILDING

- Break the group into four teams. Assign each group an item (perfume, sneakers, jeans, or watch). Explain that they are advertisers. They need to design and perform a 30-second commercial for television about the assigned product. Allow the teams ten minutes to prepare. Encourage creativity!
- Disperse magazines throughout the large group. Ask each person to find and remove two advertisements: one which is a "good" advertisement and example of a "bad" ad. Once they have all chosen their selections, collect the magazines. Have each person keep their advertisements for later discussion. Listen to reactions and comments from the group as they browse the magazines.

GROUP PRESENTATION

- Show the commercial segments on the VCR.
- Ask the following questions:
 - Which commercials did you like? And why?
 - Did you see any themes that could be considered negative? Which ones?

- What effects do these commercials have on you?
- Do they make you want to buy the product?

GROUP DISCUSSION

- Name your favorite commercial. Why do you like that one?
- What are some common themes in advertising? Which of these themes are positive? Which are negative?
- Is there fantasy in advertising? Give some examples. Can fantasy be harmful? Why or why not?
- Do you think advertisers do a good job at persuading you? Explain. What persuades you most? Do you think it is right or wrong for advertisers to try to persuade you to spend your money?

WRAP-UP

These issues that need to be reinforced from the discussion:

- People need to view advertisements with a critical eye.
- The goal of advertising is to persuade viewers for their opinion and/or money.
- Learn to decipher good and bad themes in advertising.
- Advertisements often sell images of fantasy which cannot be obtained in reality. (For example, perfume may help a person smell better, but not every member of the opposite sex will be attracted to a person because of that perfume.)
- People need to practice financial responsibility.
- Some forms of advertising can have harmful results.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

Ask the participants to take home their two advertisements. Tell the group that you will give prizes (candy or whatever treat you choose) to those individuals who come back to the next session—with the advertisements—and explain the themes of their advertisements, explaining whether they are positive or negative.

Organize a monthly program during which participants can either bring in advertisements or write a two-sentence description of one they viewed. They should share the themes of the ads and discuss the positive or

negative messages communicated. Keep a box of candy or treats handy for rewarding their efforts. This will keep them in the practice of critically viewing advertisements. It will also provide the leader an opportunity to encourage accountability among the group.

IMPLICATIONS

This discussion is important, as it teaches youth to be responsible in viewing and critiquing their environment. This discussion is most useful for youth group meetings, Bible clubs, Sunday school, and some small class settings.

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