

GIVE OR TAKE [generosity — Proverbs 11]

THIS WEEK

High schoolers sometimes struggle with being takers and being mature, generous givers. Some are making own money and paying for their own cars and clothes. Others are still relying heavily on their parents for financial support. During this time, they'll develop an attitude toward giving that will affect them the rest of their lives. Giving doesn't mean money alone—it includes actions and time! This TalkSheet will discuss generosity and what it means to give even when they are flat broke.

OPENER

What would your group members do in these situations? Challenge them to think honestly and realistically about their responses.

- You're always sharing your stuff with your sister, who is three years younger than you. Because you have a job and make money, you buy more clothes, CDs, and stuff. You were trying to be generous, but now you think your sister is taking advantage of you.
- You leave the theater with some friends and pass a beggar on the street. He asks you for extra change, but all you have is a \$10 bill.
- Your pastor says that you should tithe 10 percent of what you make. But you're only making minimum wage at a burger joint and need the money!
- Your grandpa likes to hand over extra money to you—after all, you're his favorite grandkid (or so you think!). Sometimes he gives you \$50.
- Your school is hosting a food and clothing drive for a nearby mission organization. They ask if you'll volunteer an hour or two to help out.

What does each of these situations say about generosity? How would your group members respond to each of these? Point out that some are healthy examples of generosity and some aren't. Take a few minutes to talk about their responses.

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Ask for some willing students to share their answers. When do they buy gifts for others and why? When was the last time they went out of their way to buy someone something? How often do they buy themselves stuff compared to buying others stuff?
2. Invite your students to discuss who they would give the gift of their dreams to and why. How would it make them feel to be able to give such a gift? Why?
3. Discuss God's strange (but functional!) economy—To give is to gain, to die is to live, to be last is to be first. Ask your students to brainstorm how

these principles might apply in modern, real-life situations.

4. Ask the group to sum up what it means to live a life of godly generosity. How do these attributes apply to their own lives? Encourage them to give specific examples or share stories from their experiences.

THE CLOSE

Wrap up by asking what the benefits are of being a giver. How are others affected by their generosity? How does giving change the person who gives? What happens when giving people give too much? Or when the takers take too much? Talk about balancing giving with taking. Then challenge your group to follow up on the ideas they brainstormed in question 6. Finally, is there something that you as a group can do together to show your generosity?

MORE

- You may want to—and if your kids are interested—pick names anonymously for secret supporters. Then for a week, two weeks, a month, or more, these people can secretly support and encourage each other by giving small gifts, a letter, or even just prayer. Maybe do it this for a special event or holiday. Either way, follow up with your group and ask them how it felt to give and to receive. What was easier or harder? And how did they feel when they gave and didn't receive (or vice versa?). Why is it hard to give unconditionally?
- You may want to talk about the paradox of giving within a society like America. With all the advertisements, shopping malls, and Internet shopping, it's no wonder that kids are saturated with the "take all-have all" mentality. How can your kids survive in this culture and maintain or develop a giving nature? What can they do to keep themselves and others from getting caught up in wanting it all? How much do they get from their parents? And are they giving anything back?