

GIMME, GIMME [g r e e d — P r o v e r b s 2 3]

THIS WEEK

Most junior highers and middle schoolers don't have thousands in the bank—but they know about the power of money. Society has taught them that happiness and money are directly related. The Bible gives people a different perspective on wealth. It warns kids and adults that the minute they fix their gaze on the dollar, it sprouts wings and flies away. This TalkSheet session is designed to help your students to understand that eternal treasures aren't made of money.

OPENER

Tell your students that they must choose a career. One job pays \$100,000 per year but is really stressful and difficult. The other job is really fun, but pays barely enough to get by. Ask your students to select the job they would choose for a career, and to go to the side of the room that reflects their choice—side one with great pay or side two with enjoyable work. After they've chosen their sides, discuss the reasons for their choices. Make a list of their ideas and priorities for choosing what they did. Have their parents had to deal with these situations? What do they think most people in the world do in this situation? How about missionaries, pastors, or private-school teachers? Use this discussion as an opportunity to introduce today's topic.

Or you may want to bring in a stack of ads from the Sunday paper, some magazines with advertisements, or some catalogs, etc. Break the your group into clusters of three to five and ask them to cut out stuff from the ads that they personally own and stuff that they want to have. Then have them make two stacks of the cut out ads—things they have and things they want to have. Ask the groups to compare which stack is bigger. Do they need the stuff they want? Why or why not?

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Would your kids want to have money? Take a poll of the groups' responses and use this question to further the discussion of their desire for money. Why does money appear on so many of their wish lists? What would they rather have, their health or lots of money?
2. How did your kids spend their money? What did they buy? Check out if any of them had regrets about the money they've spent. Point out that sometimes people burn with desire for some object, but become bored with it once they've gotten it. Have your kids experienced this in their own lives?

3. How did your kids rank these items? Rank them as a group and decide which one is the most dangerous and why. What problems does money make in your kids' spiritual lives? Which difficulties seem most dangerous to your students?
4. What do these verses say about wealth? How do these verses apply to your kids' lives? You may want to have them rewrite these verses in their own words and to insert their own examples. Then have a few of them share what they wrote.
5. How important is making money to your kids? If you don't want to ask for specific responses, ask how many of them rank more toward the right or left. Where would teenagers in general put themselves on this scale? Where on this scale should a warning flag go? What can your kids do to keep a godly perspective on money?

THE CLOSE

Society is consumed with material things and living the good life. Some of your kids may have parents, family members, or friends who have a lot of money—and spend it. Point out the danger of getting caught up in the “gimme” mentality. It's hard not to get caught up in spending money in a society focused on advertisements and shopping malls. Encourage your students to make a priority of investing in things that can't be taken away—their faith in God, their relationships with others, and who they are as a person. Challenge them to bring their needs and desires to God and to trust him with their wants.

MORE

- How do advertisements affect materialism and consumerism? Ask your kids to make a list of everywhere they see advertisements—on clothing, on buses, on the Internet, and even on cereal boxes. Where do they see advertising? How does advertising influence people to buy things they don't need? How can your kids keep advertisements from getting to them? You may want to show a few videotaped commercials and talk about the message that is given.
- How do your kids spend their money—or the allowance that their parents give them? Ask your kids to 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!