



WHO IS THE WINNER?

The Giving & Getting Game

The Message of the World - The Message of the Church and Home

Instructions to group:

Prepare ahead of time small paper cups with 10-20 pieces of M&M's or varied pieces of cereal. (The edible item should be something that comes in a variety of colors.) Also include a spoon in each cup. When ready to play the game, hand out a cup and spoon to each person and say to the group,

"Now we are going to play the Giving and Getting game. Listen carefully as I give the instructions. The object of this game is simple: Either give or get candy/Trix cereal, using your spoon. You have two minutes to play. You may stand, if you are able. Go!"

As people engage in "the game," observe how the group reacts. Listen for comments. If people ask for further instructions, simply repeat what you said earlier.

Call time. Ask the following questions:

- Was the Giving and Getting game confusing? What would have made it easier?
- Was everyone playing by the same rules?
- Who do you think won? Why? (Accept and process all answers)
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What Does the World Say?

Invite people to sit again. They may keep and eat their "winnings." Regardless of what answers people have given, ask the group *"Who does the world say won?"* Encourage discussion.

[Below are suggested points for the follow-up presentation. The heart of this section is to emphasize the extent and influence of the world's message and the absence of the message of faith in

and from our congregations and in our homes. It is important to lift up the impact of this lapse and the urgent need for the practice of generosity based on our Christian faith. This sets the foundation for the entire Generosity Project!]

The cultural and political manifesto for our time is, "Never believe you have enough!"

Does the world say we should use our money for *giving* or *getting*? (*Getting*.) The world says the winner is the person who gets as much as possible. The world says the winner is the one with the most stuff. Commercials on TV want us to believe that we can buy happiness with money. If we don't have more things, we are missing out. The rule in the world today is that stuff equals happiness and the Good Life! We need to ask, "Is the Good Life the same as the Abundant Life?"

We live in an age and a culture that has lost touch with the source and foundation for The Good Life. Consuming and buying have become a way of living and now defines the quality of one's life. Experts in many fields agree that the economic and social consequences of today's consumerism are harmful to present and future generations. It will take an intentional and sustained effort by each of you present today, and meaningful conversation between all generations, to learn more about how people of faith define the Good Life and can live an abundant and generous life.

With our children receiving more than 3000 messages a day urging them to spend, where is the voice of the faith community inviting them to share?

At its foundation this is an issue of *Identity*! This is about how we teach and share the Book of Faith - God's Story. We need a concrete frame of reference for making sense of one's life. The story you tell yourself defines you and is ultimately what influences your spending, your sharing or saving. Today's logos and emblems are the current "Cross" or marker of who one is and what defines one's identity. There is a competition between "narratives" in our society. When we as Christians do not know or pass on God's Story or see God in our story, then scripture loses its capacity to effect our decisions – our purchases. We as Christians have a Story; we just have not been intentional about integrating this narrative into all aspects of our lives. (Thank you David Lose for these points.)

The world is intentional about its message to our kids, teens and households. Our kids learn a lot about money (along with everything else) from the media:

- 6-month old babies recognize corporate logos and mascots.
- Brand loyalty begins at age 2.
- Average 3-year old recognizes 100 different brand logos.
- Toddlers cannot distinguish a TV program from a commercial.
- Children ages 5-8 account for 41% of licensed character and entertainment merchandise sales in US and Canada.
- Not until age 8 can a child tell the difference between truthful and misleading advertising.
- Kids know they have to ask 9 times before the parent will give in to their buying request.
- The average child sees 25,000- 40,000 TV ads a year.
- 8-12 year olds spend \$30 billion of their own and parent's money each year and influence another \$150 billion of their parents spending.
- 2007 statistic: Companies spend \$17 billion a year to reach kids – double from 1992.

(Facts above from page 6 in Thrivent's "Parents, Kids and Money Matters") You may choose to write these figures on signs and place around the room. Or they are on the power point as well.

What is the Church's Message?

Facilitate responses . . .

Does the church have an intentional message that counters the message of the world? If not, then we are using the "Null Curriculum," we are teaching stewardship by what we are NOT teaching and what we do NOT talk about. Does the congregation equip homes to counter the message of the world? Why or why not? Is a fall Stewardship Campaign enough to counter the message of the world? How do you define the Good Life? Is it the same as the Abundant Life?

What Do We Teach at Home?

Facilitate responses . . .

How does the congregation equip homes for the faith practice of generosity and being good stewards? This is urgent work! The church is called to provide a place to practice and ways to practice. The church is called to equip homes to learn and speak the language and stories of faith – at home.

What Does the Bible Say?

Facilitate responses . . .

Do we tell Biblical stories so we can live a meaningful, generous and abundant life? The Bible says we can be happy when we are thankful for what we have. In Philippians 4:11 it says, "For I have learned how to get along happily whether I have much or little." So, the world says that using money to get more things is best. But is getting best? God is generous to us by giving us so many things. We should give generously back to God. It all belongs to God anyway. We are just taking care of it for God.

Research and Articles that Support Facts on Marketing to Kids

http://marketing-bulletin.massey.ac.nz/V20/MB_V20_A2_Baxter.pdf

<http://www.focusonthefamily.com/entertainment/mediawise/advertising-and-kids.aspx>

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/05/14/fyi/main2798401.shtml>

<http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2004/02/children-ads.aspx>

<http://www.parentfurther.com/technology-media>
(new home for Media Wise)