

## Lesson 21

### *The Media Exposed*

#### TEACHER PREPARATION

##### KEY CONCEPTS

There is a vast difference between our “needs” and our “wants.” As educators, we must help students differentiate between the two. This is important in helping them to become content with life situations.

Students need to understand the force behind the advertising business and how it tries to manipulate their desires to want more “things.”

The promise of advertising is happiness. But happiness is situational, conditional, fleeting and addictive – we want more. Joy is foundational, relational and self-rewarding. Joy produces contentment.

Students need safe, joyful relationships to develop contentment for the things they have.

Advertising for cigarettes, alcohol and drugs influence the choices of our students based on the false promises of happiness.

Advertisers often use beautiful people to sell their products, which gives the perception if you buy the product, you will be beautiful, too.

##### OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. identify the difference between their “needs” and “wants.”
2. begin to recognize the difference between joy, contentment and happiness.
3. understand how advertising in the media is intent on manipulating their desires and creating a need for more things, thus creating a “must-have” addictive mentality.
4. realize the advertising about cigarettes, alcohol and drugs may trick them into making poor life choices.

5. have an understanding they can be content with what they have instead of focusing on what they don't have.

### KEY TERMS

1. **Needs:** items necessary for survival and daily living.
2. **Wants:** things we think we need to make our lives happier and fulfilled.
3. **Advertising:** the means used by the media to manipulate people into thinking they must have something.
4. **Media:** the transmission of ideas by means of television, Internet, magazines and newspapers.
5. **Delayed gratification:** putting “wants” off until later to experience the happiness or joy the acquisition of something will bring.
6. **Contentment:** the ability to be satisfied with the situation you are in or with what you have.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Our students are bombarded by the media with information telling them they cannot be happy or content without a certain thing. Advertising has become a major tool of an industry seeking to sell products by creating a perceived need and craving for their products in the minds of children as well as adults. It is imperative educators and parents teach students the difference between “needs” and “wants.” We need to reveal the methods used in advertising to create these emotions in our students. As adults, we need to help them become content with what they have and not accept the idea they have to always have something more to be happy and accepted. We need to help them realize advertisers often use beautiful people and/or lovely places to try to create a feeling – if you will only buy this product, you will be beautiful and have these wonderful experiences, too.

Our students also need to see how the advertising for cigarettes, alcohol and drugs presents a false promise for acceptance. The advertisers disregard health issues, cost issues and crime issues in their attempts to make money.

## MATERIALS/PREPARATION

1. In **Exploring the Lesson**, you will need two glasses (one filled with water and one filled with soda) for **Activity 1**. For **Activity 2**, you will need advertisements from magazines or newspapers showing toys, clothes, games, cigarettes, alcohol or drugs.
2. In **Discovering the Lesson** for **younger elementary students**, you will need a board and chalk or large paper and marker.
3. In **Discovering the Lesson** for **older elementary students**, you will need journals and pencils.
4. For **Applying the Lesson** for **younger elementary students**, you will need to bring a bag of items considered “needs” and some considered “wants” for **Activity 1**. For **Activity 2**, you will need paper, crayons or pencils. For **older elementary students**, you will need journals and pencils.
5. In **Sharing the Lesson**, you will need paper, pencils and/or crayons.
6. In **Going Deeper**, if you have access to a compass, you can include it in this section.

## LESSON

### BEGINNING THE LESSON

*[Say to the students:]* When you watch a program on television, you see advertisements between parts of the program. These advertisements are trying to get you to buy something – a product or a service. Sometimes, these advertisements make us think we need to buy the item, so we can be happy and other people will like us and want to be our friends. Let’s listen to what the Map of Wonders is trying to teach Trish, Hector and Dugan about how to avoid being tricked!

### READINESS (5 minutes)

*[Read to the students:]* **Chapter 21 – The Magic of the Media**

The three friends were sitting by the edge of the Map of Wonders, watching the massive dark blotches drifting over the beautiful parts of the map.

“You now have some firsthand experience with the darkness threatening our world,” said the Librarian as she walked up with Edgar at her side.

“You mean the addictive things like drugs and smoking that try to enslave us?” said Trish.

“Don’t forget alcohol,” added Dugan.

“Yes, all of those things promise something that can’t come true,” said the Librarian.

“What’s that?” asked Trish.

“They promise happiness and fulfillment, but any pleasure they might give is soon replaced with something no one wants,” nodded the Librarian. “Each of them makes us a slave to a desire they cannot satisfy. That’s why they are called ***DreamBreakers***.”

“Can they do that all by themselves?” asked Dugan.

“Excellent question, Dugan!” said the Librarian. “Why don’t you see if you can find the answer?”

“I know the drill,” smiled Dugan. “Map of Wonders, how about giving me a hand?”

As soon as Dugan spoke, a change occurred in the map. Two distant objects flew toward them, one from a large dark portion of the map and the other from a healthy side of the map.

“What do you think they are?” asked Hector. “Birds?”

“They look like big kites to me,” stated Trish.

The children kept watching as the two objects drew closer.

“They are billboards!” exclaimed Dugan. “I can see writing on them.”

“What do they say?” asked Hector rubbing his eyes.

“Hmmm,” mused Dugan, as the signs grew ever larger. “One says, **‘Necessity is the mother of invention’**. And the other says, **‘Invention is the mother of necessity’**.”

“How very odd,” added Trish.

Edgar walked up to the first billboard, sniffed it and then gave it a lick. As Edgar approached the second sign, the hair on the back of his neck began to rise and his tail stiffened.

“Okay, clearly Edgar has some problems with the second message,” stated Dugan. “But I’m not sure what either one means.”

### Story Activity

*[Say to the students:]* **Before we see what happens next with our friends, let’s see if we can figure out what each statement means. What would be a necessity?** *[Food, clothing, shelter — something we truly need.]* **What would be an invention?** *[Something someone created like a light bulb or a candy bar or a car, etc.]* **Okay, then what does the statement ‘Necessity is the mother of invention’ mean?** *[Our needs cause us to find or create something to meet our need. For example, I need food, like bread, so I invent a bakery. Or I need shelter, so I build a house.]*

**So, what does ‘Invention is the mother of necessity’ mean?** *[I invent something and try to make it into something we need. For example, I create a bracelet I want to sell, so I call it a ‘friendship bracelet.’ Everyone needs to show they have friends, right? So I will try to get them to buy my bracelets to give to their friends. Or I invent a new way to travel and then convince everyone they really need this new travel machine and can’t live without it.]*

*[Continue reading to the students:]*

As the three friends were discussing the differences in the two signs, Dugan walked around to the backside of the billboards. Down in the lower left corner of both signs was a small plaque.

One plaque read – **From the Department of Wise Sayings that Reflect Reality**

The other plaque read – **From the Department of Advertisement and Media Where Reality is Reshaped as We Want to See It**

“I can see why Edgar licked one and growled at the other,” observed Trish.

“And now, I know the answer to my question!” bragged Dugan.

“I’m sorry, but I forgot what your question was,” said Hector.

“I wondered if things that can be bad for us have the ability to make us want them all by themselves. And the answer is: ‘No.’ They have to market themselves as something more than they are to get us to want them.”

“Dugan, that may be the smartest thing you’ve said all day,” encouraged Trish.

“It might be the smartest thing he’s said all year!” laughed Hector.

**EXPLORE** (30 minutes)

*[Say to the students:]* **Dugan made a good observation. He realized that often the media markets things to make us want to buy them. Do you think that happens in your life? Today, we are going to talk about the difference between things we really need to live joyfully and things we want because we think they will make us happy.**

**Activity 1:** *[Have two glasses in front of the room. One of the glasses is filled with water and the other is filled with soda. Ask a few students to tell you what would they like to drink if they were very thirsty. Act like you are going to offer the soda to someone, but, instead, pour out the glass of soda. Their response might be displeasure. Do the same thing with the glass of water. What is their response to their thirst? They could live without having soda, but they cannot live without having water to quench their thirst.]*

*[Say to the students:] So, which glass was filled with a need and which was filled with a want? If you could have as much water as you needed in a week or only six cans of soda for a week, which option would you choose? [You want them to realize if they choose the soda, they would be very thirsty after a few days and would have nothing to drink. They need to recognize their body needs water to function.]*

*[Have the class define the difference between a need and a want. You may want to invite **older elementary students** to write their thoughts in their journals.]*

**Activity 2:** *[Cut out advertisements from various magazines or newspapers. Show the class ads for various toys, shoes, clothes and games. Say to the students:]*

- 1. What item is this advertisement trying to get people to buy?**
- 2. Is this item something you need or something you want?**
- 3. How does this picture make you feel about the item?**
- 4. Why would you want to buy this?**
- 5. How would you feel if you did not have the money to buy this?**
- 6. Why do you think companies spend a lot of money on advertising?**
- 7. Do you think everything you see in the advertisement is true? Why or why not?**
- 8. Could you feel content if you did not have this item? Why or why not?**

*[Now, show ads for cigarettes, alcohol and drugs. Repeat the questions. Discuss the deeper danger of thinking these ads are true and how this could affect your health, future dreams and goals.]*

**DISCOVER** (15 minutes)

**For Younger Elementary Students:**

*[Say to the students:] Let's draw pictures on the board of some of the things you touched or used today. [It might include clothes, food, the dog, the bus, toothbrush, etc.] Now, let's look at our pictures and draw a circle around everything that is a need. When we finish, we will talk about the difference between what we circled and what we didn't circle and how we can understand what is a need and what is a want. [Allow time for discussion.]*

**For Older Elementary Students**

*[Have the students make a list in their journals of all the things they touched or used during the day. It might include clothes, food, the dog, the bus, toothbrush, etc. Then have them go back through their list and circle the items that are truly needs.]*

*[Think/Pair/Share: Have the students share the items they circled on their list with the person sitting next to them. They should explain to their partner why each item they circled is a need and not a want.]*

*[Say to the students:] If you had a limited amount of money, what would you buy first? [This exercise should reveal how they would spend their money and what their wants would be.]*

**(Optional homework assignment)**

*[Have the students watch 30 minutes of TV and write down what the advertisements were trying to get them to buy. In class the next day, apply the needs or wants "test" to each one. Discuss ads promoting cigarettes, alcohol or drugs. How were those items presented to encourage people to want to buy them?]*

**APPLY** (15 minutes)

**For Younger Elementary Students**

**Activity 1:** *[Play the "Need or Want" game. Bring in a large bag with items like toys, shoes, food, toothbrush, games, etc. Invite a student to come to the front and pull out one item at a time. Discuss with the class whether the item is a need or a want.]*

**Activity 2:** *[Say to the students:] Draw a picture of something you want, but don't really need. Think/Pair/Share with your neighbor how you know it is a want and not a need.*

### **For Older Elementary Students**

*[Ask the students to write in their journals the answers to these questions you will write on the board.]*

- 1. One way I can be content with what I have is to be \_\_\_\_\_.**
- 2. When I see ads about cigarettes, alcohol or drugs, this is what I will think \_\_\_\_\_.**

**SHARE** (15 minutes)

### **For Younger Elementary Students**

*[As a class, create an ad telling the truth about an object the students want to pretend they are selling. Talk about how it is important to tell the truth when you are advertising items.]*

### **For Older Elementary Students**

*[Have each student create an ad telling the truth about an object he/she wants to pretend they are selling. Talk about how it is important to tell the truth when you are advertising items. Share their ads with each other.]*

## **ENDING THE LESSON**

*[A goal of this lesson was to help students understand the difference between a need and a want in their lives. With that understanding, we looked at the advertising business and what drives the message behind the ad. We took a closer look at the advertising of things harmful to our students' future. Continue to help them see they must recognize truthfulness in ads.]*

### **GOING DEEPER** (optional)

*[Say to the students:] In the last lesson, I had everyone point north. Let's do that again (with eyes open). Okay, we all agree north is in this direction. But I see some variation in where you are pointing. [Go to the wall and move back and forth checking where the students are pointing. Ask one student:] So, (student's name), am I standing exactly where north is? [Move according to their thoughts of where north is located. Ask another student who is pointing somewhat differently:] (Student's name), what do*



**you think? You seem to be pointing a bit more to the left (or right).** *[Ask others for their suggestions. Mark the most common spot with a piece of tape. If you have access to a compass, you can bring it out and ask for one student to come near and verify which direction the compass is pointing. If not, you can verify the correct direction of north from previous discussions.]*  
**We didn't miss by much. Can you think of why we might need to know exactly which way is north? For a short trip, being a little off course wouldn't matter much. But for a longer trip, a slight error in direction could have big consequences. Let's see if that's true. I need five volunteers.**

*[Say to the first volunteer:]* **Please stand on the side of the room directly across from our "true north." You are going to be our "true north compass," pointing us in the direction of north. You will hold the ends of two strings.**

*[Say to the second volunteer:]* **I would like for you to take one end of a string "true north" is holding and take five steps straight ahead and stop.**

*[Say to the third volunteer:]* **I would like for you to take the end of the other string our "true north" is holding and turn just slightly off north and take five steps.**

*[Say to the students:]* **What do you notice?** *[They should notice the two volunteers holding the strings are close together.]*

*[Say to the fourth volunteer:]* **Go stand in front of the third volunteer who was just slightly off of north, take her string and continue to walk along the path she was heading until you reach the end of the room.**

*[Say to the fifth volunteer:]* **Go stand in front of the second volunteer who took five straight steps, take her string and keep walking straight ahead to the end of the room.**

*[Say to the students:]* **What do you notice?** *[Wait for answers.]* **After the first five steps, the students were pretty close. What happened?** *[Allow time for responses.]* **The farther they walked, the wider the gap between them. This example helps us realize the longer we walk in the wrong**

direction, the bigger our mistake seems to become. Look how far off of “true north” they ended up. Let’s see if we find that idea in the Bible.

*[Say to the students:]* Let me ask a question. How can you tell if a story you are reading is a happy story or a sad story? Sometimes a story has sad things in it, but is happy at the end. We usually think of that as a happy story. The reverse is also true. A story can begin happy, but have a sad ending. The ancient Greek playwrights called a story with a sad ending a “tragedy,” and one with a happy ending a “comedy.” Which will your life be? Jesus’s follower, Paul, warns about those who follow a lifestyle of *DreamBreakers*:

“They get drunk, carry on at wild parties, and do other evil things as well. I told you before, and I am telling you again: No one who does these things will share in the blessings of God’s kingdom” (*Galatians 5:21, Contemporary English Version*).

Does anyone have any ideas about how this verse might be similar to the direction experiment we did today? Just like our game of traveling took us farther and farther away from our goal, we can also get farther and farther away from our life goals by participating in *DreamBreakers*. If we do that, at the end of our life’s journey, we will not be where we wanted to be. In other words, if we participate in hurtful and harmful behavior, over time we are led further away from our dreams. The writer of Galatians gave us a look down the road to the end result of letting our lives revolve around things that hurt us — we will miss out on the richness of life God has for us.

But there is good news and a way to not miss out on the blessings of God. We all need to figure out who or what is our “true north.” It is very important you keep your eyes and minds on your “true north” in order to be sure you are walking in the right direction. This will help you as you seek to reach your goals and dreams.

## PARENT-TEACHER CONNECTION

There is a vast difference between what we perceive are our “needs” and “wants.” Parents and educators can help students differentiate between the two. This is important in helping them become content with situations in life. Students also need to understand the force behind the advertising business and how it tries to manipulate their desires to want more “things.” Advertisements for cigarettes, alcohol and drugs influence the choices of your children based on the false promise of happiness.

### Questions you might ask your child:

1. Do you remember some of the ways you can know whether you need something or just want it? (In class, we talked about eight questions to ask to help us know whether you need an item or want it, especially when we see advertisements on television, in a magazine, on a billboard or on the Internet.)
  - *Is this item something you need or something you want?*
  - *How does this picture in the ad make you feel about the item?*
  - *Why would you want to buy this?*
  - *How would you feel if you did not have the money to buy this?*
  - *Why do you think companies spend a lot of money on advertising?*
  - *Do you think everything you see in the advertisement is true?*  
*Why or why not?*
  - *Would you feel content if you did not have this item?*  
*Why or why not?*
2. Can you tell me some of the differences between happiness and joy? (Happiness is situational, conditional, fleeting and addictive – we want more. Joy is foundational, relational and self-rewarding. Joy produces contentment.)

Parents, share about a time when the media influenced you to buy something. How did you feel about the purchase later?

