

Thinking Critically (and Christianly) about Super Bowl Commercials



Want to make your Super Bowl viewing experience productive? No doubt, the Super Bowl commercial debuts have become an event in and of themselves. Why not take the time to practice "thinking Christianly" about marketing by filtering this year's ads through the following questions? If you tape or TiVo the ads you'll be able to watch and talk about them after the game. At the very least, sit with your kids and filter the ads through "The Simple Seven" questions. If you want to go deeper, use the additional ad filtering questions.

Here's an additional suggestion just for all you youthworkers: Save your taped and TiVo'd ads and build next week's youth group meeting around them. Divide up into groups. Give each group one ad to process through "The Simple Seven" and the additional ad filtering questions. Come back together and have each group report on what they learned. It's a great way to get them to think consciously and critically about marketing, and to get them to see how God's Word applies to all of life!

The Simple Seven

What product is this ad selling?

What, besides the product, does this ad sell? (ideas, lifestyle, worldview, behaviors, etc.)

What's the bait, hook, and promise?

Complete this sentence: "This ad tells me, use _____ (the name of the product) and _____ (the result the ad promises).

Does the ad tell the truth? What? How?

Does the ad tell a lie(s)? What? How?

How does this ad and its messages agree or disagree with God's truth and what does that mean for me?

Additional Questions

Who made this ad?

Why was this ad made?

Who is this ad targeting?

What do the makers of this ad want me to do?

What's the plot?

What are the ad's themes and assumptions?

What techniques are being used to sell the product?

What does the camera say is most important? How are lighting, angles, focus, close-ups, etc. used?

How is the camera used to manipulate my emotions and create moods?

How is music used to manipulate my emotions and create moods?

How are the camera and music used to manipulate and distort reality?

What longing/need does this product promise to fulfill?

How are people treated and portrayed? Men? Women? Children? Parents? Authority figures? Etc.

If you use this product, what does the ad explicitly or implicitly say your life will be like?

If you don't use this product, what does the ad explicitly or implicitly say your life will be like?

What inadequacies, anxieties, and aspirations does the ad exploit?

Who/what is the redeemer/messiah in this ad?

Is this ad exploitive or manipulative? How?

What role do you think this ad plays in shaping the lives of your peers?

Is this product necessary? Why? Why not?

How does this ad try to make me need the product?

For more information on today's youth culture, visit the website of the
Center for Parent/Youth Understanding at
www.cpyu.org.