

## MONDAY MANNA

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### ADVERTISING: PLEASING AROMA, OR BAD ODOR?

By Rick Boxx

It seems the typical consumer holds a high level of scepticism toward advertising. According to the results of a study published on a marketing website, more than three in every four consumers – over 75 percent – believe most of the claims made in advertisements, regardless of the communications medium utilised, are exaggerated or intentionally misleading.

The men and women surveyed also identified the five industries they trust the least: weight loss; beauty supplies; alcoholic beverages; financial services, and automotive, in that order. So when we see or hear TV and radio commercials, or read newspaper, magazine or online ads for products in these areas, we are more than likely to conclude, “I do not believe it.”

In the business and professional world, one of our challenges is to sell our organisations, as well as products or services we offer. Understandably, in this process, we want to do all we can to persuade the potential buyer to try what we have to offer. However, in the excitement of attempting to do this, we can easily fall into the trap of distorting the truth and deceiving customers for the sake of the sale.

For those of us who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ, such deception is very problematic. It diminishes the image we seek to establish as sincere, genuine ambassadors – representatives – for Christ in the marketplace. It also undermines our evangelistic effectiveness. Why would someone take seriously our efforts to communicate the truth and reality of Jesus if they cannot even believe what we say about the tangible products and services our companies provide?

Think of it this way: When you walk into a room and are greeted by a pleasant aroma, how does that make you feel? Does that make you want to remain there for a while? How about stepping into a room that is filled with an offensive odour? You desire to get out of there as quickly as possible, right? It is interesting that the Bible addresses this very specifically:

Is our “aroma” pleasant or repulsive? In the New Testament, 2 Corinthians 2:15 teaches that whether we are aware of it or not, we present an “aroma” to everyone we encounter: “For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.” Think about you walking into a café and being greeted by pleasing coffee aromas, or a florist shop where the delicate fragrances of flowers beckon for your attention? As followers of Christ, we should strive to have the same impact on those with whom we work and encounter every day in the marketplace.

Our “scents” will not make sense to some. Certainly there are those who are offended by the mere mention of Jesus Christ. That is not our problem. But when we interact with people and they discover we are His followers, we should try to leave a favourable impression. “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander” (1 Peter 3:15-16).

To be effective ambassadors for Christ we must remember that even our business advertisements can serve to bring the aroma of Christ. Because they represent the values we embrace and what we believe.

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## Reflection/Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think many consumers are so sceptical of advertising content and claims?
2. In the interest of trying to persuade someone to buy a product or service you or your company offered, have you ever been tempted to overstate what it could do? Or have you been “victimised” by misleading advertising promises? How did that make you feel?
3. What connection do you think there is – or should be – between the faith we have in Jesus Christ and how we represent the products and services we offer in business through advertising, whether in print, through broadcast media, or even over the Internet?
4. How do you react to the idea of being an “ambassador for Jesus Christ” – that you are a walking, talking advertisement, positive or negative, for Him? Explain your answer.

### NOTE:

If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

- Leviticus 3:16;
- Numbers 15:13, 28:27;
- Isaiah 3:18-24;
- John 12:3;
- Colossians 4:5-6

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