



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on January 23, 2010

CBS Offers Preliminary Blessing to Pro-life Super Bowl Ad

In the world of Super Bowl advertising, there is one apparent guiding principle: Almost anything goes, as long as it is more entertaining than the actual game, and as long as it doesn't enter the arena of faith or cross a pre-determined and secularly rigid ideological line. The rule of thumb seems to be that sex and sophomoric humor sell and are, thus, overwhelmingly welcome on Super Bowl Sunday. By contrast, advertisers must never consider challenging viewers to raise their perspectives above the sensual and bawdy to thoughts that are truly noble and good.



But recently a glimmer of hope streaked across the cultural horizon as CBS, the network sponsoring this year's NFL Super Bowl on February 7, gave its preliminary approval to the script of a pro-family ad that Focus on the Family would like to run during the big game. According to David Goetzl of *Media Daily News*, the fact that CBS approved the ad script suggests that the 30-second spot will contain nothing so offensive to American sensibilities as the idea that human life is sacred and America need to get back to its ancient and erstwhile custom of protecting it from pre-cradle to grave. Noted Goetzl, "The network has a policy of prohibiting advocacy ads, even ones that carry an 'implicit' endorsement for a side in a public debate" — that debate being the "ugly" and non-entertaining one about whether the killing of some 50 million babies over the last 37 years has been moral and right.

The proposed ad is set to feature former Florida quarterback and Heisman Trophy winner Tim Tebow and his mother Pam sharing a personal story that centers on the theme "Celebrate Family, Celebrate Life." While as of this writing Focus on the Family had not released details, the commercial will most likely highlight Pam Tebow's 1987 pregnancy, during which she became ill while on a church mission trip and was advised by doctors to terminate her pregnancy. She didn't, as demonstrated by Tim Tebow's presence in the ad, and the results are inspiring for all who care to take note. The homeschooled Tebow went on to an awe-inspiring college football career, and his prospects for success at the professional level are solid.

Jim Daly, president and CEO of Focus on the Family, explained that the proposed ad is all about reaching out with hope and inspiration during a time when "families need to be inspired." But opponents of the ad object on two levels. First of all, there is a core of powerful and politically manipulative groups, including abortion proponents and homosexual activists, who have a keen interest in thwarting any positive efforts by Focus on the Family. After all, Focus has been a high-profile leader in campaigns to end abortion and to halt the normalization of the homosexual lifestyle in American society.

The other group expressing opposition to the ad has no ideological axe to grind. Their beef is based on pure selfishness. You see, this is the Super Bowl and they have no desire during this entertainment orgy of being reminded that there are stark realities beyond the frivolity of professional football.



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In response to the news of the Focus ad running during an event that has become almost sacred among hardcore sports fans, CBS sports columnist Gregg Doyel declared, "Leave my football alone." A corny Doritos or frankly stupid Bud Lite commercial does not count as an intrusion into the grid-iron shrine. But somehow, a highly talented quarterback (and potential NFL great) talking about the importance of valuing life is nothing more than a major annoyance.

Doyel complained that, assuming the final commercial is approved by the powers that be at CBS, "there are going to be about 100 million of us who won't be happy for 30 seconds of the Super Bowl." In pure mockery, Doyel described the "beautiful, undeniable message" that will inspire the overwhelming majority of those who view the ad. "Still, I don't want to see," he complained. "Not during the d*** Super Bowl."

Most likely Doyel and friends will be disappointed to find that the commercial survives the final Super Bowl cut, as Focus on the Family sanitizes its message sufficiently to satisfy even the most ideologically squeamish of CBS' censors. One other factor is in the organization's favor. It announced that a small core of "very generous and committed friends" have come up with the \$2.5 million or so that will be required for Focus on the Family to enter the ranks of elite Super Bowl advertisers.

No doubt Focus did its market research before agreeing to pony up the small fortune required to get its ad aired. For the right product (or message) and the right ad, the pay back on a Super Bowl spot can be significant. For example, GoDaddy.com, whose Super Bowl ads over the past several years have been noted for their objectionable and nasty content (in other words, truly champion Super Bowl advertisements!), increased its market share of new Web domain registrations (the service it sells) from 16 percent when it first began advertising during the Super Bowl in 2005, to 46 percent of the market in 2009. According to *Ad Age*, a good share of the traffic to its website was driven by GoDaddy's invitation during the Super Bowl for viewers to log on to its website to view an "uncensored" (read: even more sexually explicit and disgusting) version of the ad that ran during the game.

The fact that the Super Bowl draws one of the single largest television audiences during the whole broadcast year is certainly not lost on Focus on the Family (the 2008 game drew an average of 97.5 million viewers in the U.S.). In an economy that has many non-profits scurrying desperately to find ways to overcome dramatic shortfalls in donations to their causes, Focus on the Family's reason for shelling out millions for 30 seconds of Super Bowl air time may be about more than just encouraging viewers to "Celebrate Family."

After all, if just a minute fraction of the nearly 100 million viewers end up logging on to Focus on the Family's website and joining the ranks of the group's already mammoth donor database, like the other Super Bowl advertisers selling sex, beer, Doritos, widgets, and sundry services, the results might equate into multiplied millions of dollars filling the war chest of Focus on the Family — dollars that will go to battle abortion, the homosexual agenda, pornography, and other social ills that have been assaulting traditional family values.

Money well spent, many would argue.

Photo of Tim Tebow: AP Images



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