



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 3, 2011

FOX Rejects “John 3:16” Super Bowl Ad

As FOX Network puts the finishing touches on its advertisement lineup for the February 6th Super Bowl — arguably as popular a part of the evening as the game itself — one thing is certain: just about any thing will be permissible in the way of sex, sleaze, and crude humor. Apparently, however, one type of ad will not be permitted: those promoting positive values and faith in God.



Following last year’s media furor over a [Focus on the Family-sponsored pro-life spot](#) during the Super Bowl featuring Christian football phenomenon Tim Tebow (left) and his mother, FOX has put the kibosh on wholesome advocacy ads with the potential of offending any viewer with an opposing viewpoint.

Specifically, the network has rejected a 30-second spot from the Christian apologetics group [Fixed Point Foundation](#) advertising its website, [lookup316.com](#). The goal of the site, as its main page communicates, is to offer a “message of hope” base on the well-known New Testament scripture John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

The [ad itself](#) features a group of men and women viewing a televised football game in a living room. As the crowd cheers a play on the field, the camera focuses in on a player with the Scripture reference “John 3:16” written over the black under his eyes. When one of the group asks his buddy what the phrase means, someone reaches for a cell phone and says, “I’ll look it up,” as the ad fades to the website [Lookup3:16.com](#), and the phrase, “A Message of Hope.”

Larry Taunton, executive director of Fixed Point, explained his group’s reasoning in producing the ad for the big game. “If I had 30 seconds to say anything I wanted to an audience of millions, what would I say?” He wrote on the organization’s site. “I put this question to my friends. As we considered the question thoughtfully, we concluded that we would want to deliver a message of hope.”

Taunton emphasized that the spot “advertises no products, asks for no money, promotes no political platform and doesn’t even mention the sponsoring organization. It has a simple, yet direct message: Hope . . . ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only son.’”

But after Fixed Point had worked for months to shoot the spot and raise the millions needed to air it, FOX pulled the plug, explaining in a prepared statement: “As a matter of company policy, Fox Broadcasting Company does not accept advertising from religious organizations for the purpose of advancing particular beliefs or practices. The Fixed Point Foundation was provided with our guidelines prior to their submission of storyboards for our review. Upon examination, the advertising submitted clearly delivers a religious message and as a result has been rejected.”



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Taunton commented on FOX's decision, noting that "it seems one can advertise just about anything else. Few movie trailers are deemed too violent or beer commercials too sexual for primetime. But religious messages, particularly Christian ones, well, that's just too controversial."

While the Alabama-based group won't be able to air the ad nationally, it is planning to run it locally on Birmingham's Alabama's FOX affiliate, during the time the network reserves for local advertising. "We believe that Super Bowl XLV is an opportunity to encourage football fans to look up John 3:16," Fixed Point said on its website. "After all, John 3:16 is part of the culture of football," referring to the number of football players, such as Tim Tebow, who have taken to wearing the scripture reference on their eye black, as well as the longtime tradition of fans in the seats holding large signs bearing the phrase "John 3:16."

Said Taunton, "We want to generate a conversation about what this verse means and does it offer authentic hope — which I think it does."

Photo: In this Nov. 21, 2009, file photo, former Florida quarterback Tim Tebow sports a Bible verse (Rom 1:16) on his eye black: AP Images



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