

## Foreword

Marketing can be and usually is an invaluable function for a company selling a product or service. It provides the “air cover” for the “foot soldiers” – the company’s sales people. Effective marketing can make good products great and can even make bad products seem good. It could be the fancy packaging in which it is enclosed or a famous ‘pitch man’ that says you can’t live without it.

The artful skill of marketing, if taken too far is labeled “deceptive” or “false advertising.” The likelihood for this happening is far greater when the product is bad – and is all but guaranteed when the product is bad for us. Maybe the best and most relatable example of this was the marketing efforts of the tobacco industry. The life threatening and highly addictive product was dressed up as glamorous and cool by expert product placement in Hollywood blockbusters and sponsorship by the biggest sports heroes.

There are many companies known for their great marketing and sterling brands. Through their marketing efforts, their logo is immediately recognizable and invokes strong, positive emotions. But marketing efforts and the resulting brand identity is not reserved for large corporations. Individuals can also engage in marketing their own person and building their own brand. Names like Donald Trump, Richard Branson or Martha Stewart might come to mind. But, hands down, there is no individual that has built a greater brand than Oprah Winfrey.

Her “brand” did not happen by accident. It came about by great marketing. In fact, it is not a stretch to say that hers is possibly the largest and most complete marketing engine the world has ever known. All the tenants of a great marketing engine are present:

- Her celebrity is second to none giving her world-wide recognition and influence. Just one example of this is her book club. It is famous for making previously obscure titles instant best

sellers. There's even a book about the impact of her book club, *From obscurity to bestseller: Examining the impact of Oprah Book Club selections*.

- Her outlets of TV, radio, Internet and print provide massive “air cover.” In 2009 she is launching her own network - “OWN”.
- Her image is that of a compassionate humanitarian, built on programs such as the “The Oprah Winfrey Foundation” established in the 80s, the “Angel Network” established in the 90s, and other campaigns such as “Pay it Forward” and her ongoing aid to Africa.

But a trend has been present for some time that would indicate there is something more to Oprah than just celebrity and humanitarian. It's a trend that should not be ignored by the Christian as the signs have been there along the way. Her “Remember Your Spirit” segments began in the mid-1990s and encouraged people to find strength and direction from within. More recently, in truly a defining moment for many of her “followers”, she denied that Christ was the only way to salvation... or a term that Oprah might prefer – “spiritual enlightenment”. The mission should be clear to everyone; it certainly is to her own employees. The recently named president of Oprah's forthcoming network said “OWN embodies the ideals I value most. This is the chance of a lifetime to work on expanding a brand and a philosophy I so greatly admire.”

If you are not convinced, then her latest “project” should prove the point. It has all the trappings of good marketing gone bad and forces a conclusion that this machine has evolved to be used for evil. Oprah's lifting up of Eckhart Tolle's book, “A New Earth” seems a natural stop on the journey that she started years ago. But unlike past books, she has unleashed more of her marketing engine to tout its false worth and spread its empty message... a message that flies in the face of Biblical teaching and Christian beliefs.

Perhaps there is no one better fit to expose the deceptive message of Oprah's latest book project than Charlie Brackett. He has a lifetime of sales and marketing experience in business and practical Bible studies in the United States and Europe. After a career at IBM and two successful business ventures of his own, my father dedicated his time to study, apply and teach others the true and timeless "life principles" found in the Bible. His dedication is fueled by more than just personal conviction, but an understanding that the Bible is the absolute truth and that Jesus is the one and only way to salvation (and spiritual enlightenment).

Darren Brackett