

Sideline Selling

While a part-time job is often the will of God for a minister, it is very important for the minister to carefully consider any business ventures he may become involved in. Before becoming involved as a salesman or distributor for a company, the minister needs to investigate the product well, as he must protect his reputation as a servant of God.

It is a regular business practice that companies specifically aim for ministers to become their salesmen, because a minister is a trusted community leader. If a minister sells a product the public will trust it because of their good reputation, and also because the people have been taught to “by faith” believe in what the pastor or Christian worker tells them. Through this way many questionable or inferior products are profitably sold. However, what can also be sold away and lost is the reputation of a man or woman called to be a servant of God. As a result, it is very important to thoroughly investigate a product before you sell it.

#1 – IS THE PRODUCT OF GOOD QUALITY? Some products are not sold through regular stores because they are of bad or deceptive quality. One example was a ‘miracle oil’ which it was claimed could be put in a car so that the car would never need an oil change again. Unfortunately no such true ‘miracle oil’ has been invented, and the pastor who was selling this only had a video and some papers to back up the empty promises. I told him that before he sold it, he should use it in his own car for a few years and prove that it works first. The reason is that if his product did not work, it would start to destroy the engines of the cars that it was put in, and their owners would become very angry. The end result is that the pastor could lose his good reputation in the church and community.

So it is important to first prove that the product works well, and then also that it works in a safe way. Of great concern are many of the health products that not only promise ‘miracle’ cures, but sometimes actually give near-miraculous results! The reason for the great concern is that many of these health cures actually contain large amounts of steroids. Steroids are a dangerous type of hormonal drug that can produce near-miraculous results for many sicknesses including arthritis & inflammation, fatigue, asthma, skin diseases and the lack of appetite. Many athletes take steroids to become stronger and gain more muscle weight. However, steroids are also very dangerous, because while they produce ‘miraculous’ results for a few years, they produce worse illnesses within 5 to 15 years including deadly liver, kidney, and heart diseases, stunted growth, high blood pressure and brittle bones (osteoporosis). As a result doctors only prescribe steroids in small amounts or when the life of the patient is in danger. The negative long-term results of taking steroids are often very much worse than the good short-term results.

If you use a health product that can produce near-miraculous benefits, the chances are high that it illegally contains steroids. While no statistics are available in the Philippines, it has been documented in Pakistan that 60% of the ‘miracle cures’ sold in their nation actually contain steroids. Of course, none of these health products admit that they contain steroids- as this is even illegal as well as dangerous- but many people are willing to cripple or kill other people if their merchandise can make them rich.

If someone sells a health product that contains steroids, the people may report immediate good results, but the salesman may be unaware that it can have dangerous or deadly results within 5 to 15 years. You may make a good profit, but beware lest you slowly cripple or kill the people who buy your product because they trust you as a pastor!

#2 – IS THE PRODUCT OF REASONABLE VALUE? Some companies sell good products, but at a cost that makes their merchandise a financial burden to many instead of a blessing. As an example, back in 1996 an Amway distributor in the USA contacted me and asked if I would help him get the Amway company started in the Philippines. If I helped him I was promised a financial reward to help me in my ministry.

I am aware that Amway is a reputable company. They sell good quality products, but usually at a higher price than for similar products that can be bought in stores. I also know that Amway does good business in many nations such as Japan, where people can afford to pay high prices for good products. However, as the Philippines is not a wealthy nation, I did not want to start promoting products that would often cost much more than similar products that are already available.

When Amway set up its distribution in the Philippines in 1997 many pastors became distributors. In one province many pastors actually stopped giving home Bible studies to instead hold Amway promotions! But because their more expensive products did not continue to sell well, most of the pastors have stopped promoting their products.

Some other products, while often of good quality, require that you pay a high price to become a distributor. Then if you convince other people to become distributors you receive a lot of the money paid by the people who join the company under you. If you can convince many people to become distributors you can quickly earn a lot of money, even if you have not sold any of the product! This kind of company setup, called “networking,” is often aimed at making their profits more from selling their distributor rights than for actually selling their product. If you convince many people to become distributors you can make a lot of money, but it is usually at their expense. Unless they can in turn get many more people to become distributors they will lose much of their investment, and they may also lose their trust in your leadership if you lead them into an unprofitable business venture!

Those called to be pastors or Christian workers sacrifice many things to become servants of God and servants of the people. Much time, effort, and ministry is required to gain the trust and respect of the people. The ministry often offers a very low salary, which is why many pastors need to look for a good part-time job! But once you have sacrificed to gain the respect of the people, be careful that you do not lose their respect through promoting wrong business schemes or products. You might quickly gain a financial profit, but it may be at the expense of your reputation in your community and your eternal rewards in heaven. Guard the integrity of your ministry, and seek to lead everyone under your care into wise and righteous business undertakings. For all of your sacrifices in the ministry be careful that you gain an abundant eternal reward that will be yours forever.