

Honest Scales

Persuasion and Truth • Proverbs 11:1 (NIV)

THE SITUATION

You are halfway through the results slide when the number stops you: Version B is winning by 34 percent, and Version B is yours.

It carries a countdown timer that resets for every new visitor and a line reading “only 3 spots left,” though no inventory system here tracks spots.

Your roommate looks over and asks, without any particular edge in it, “Is any of that true?”

The client is going to love the number. Behind you, the timer runs out, blinks, and starts over for whoever loads the page next.

BIBLE ANALYSIS

A merchant kept a second set of weights under the counter and brought them out when a customer looked trusting: “The LORD detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favor with him” (Proverbs 11:1, NIV). It paid because nobody on the other side of the counter could inspect the scale.

A false timer is that same hidden weight, rewritten in code. Real persuasion gives reasons able to survive disclosure: benefits that exist and deadlines that sit on a calendar. Manipulation invents the condition and profits from your neighbor’s inability to look under the counter.

A metric moves and the thumb goes on the scale. We borrow permission from competitors and file the deception under growth.

A marketer who already shipped the false timer has not run out of grace. Christ never deceived anyone into the kingdom. He told the truth about sin and bore its judgment at the cross for the whole world, and through the gospel the Spirit gives that forgiveness and works the faith that receives it. That standing holds while you correct the weights, and it holds on the morning the corrected version underperforms.

The scale can also be rigged with statements that are technically true. A price shown without mandatory fees, an “up to” figure pulled from a rare best case: each works as a false weight even after the lawyers approve the wording. What settles it is what a reasonable customer believes before she buys. The woman watching your timer run down cannot check it, and she is the neighbor on the far side of that counter.

ACTION PLAN

The Decision. The slide is not finished yet, so the timer and the scarcity line come out now. Then find the urgency that is already there: a real enrollment deadline, or the honest cost of waiting another quarter. The test result belongs in the deck along with your reasons for saying the higher-converting version should not ship. Spend ten minutes with the customer service team; they hear which claims confuse people first.

The Inner Person. Discomfort by itself proves nothing, because a conscience can be poorly informed, oversensitive, or trained into silence. Test the tactic against God's Word and the facts. Here the claim is knowingly false, and that settles it. Confess the deception without hiding behind the team, and repair whatever live material is misleading customers today.

Try This. Run the claim through the sunlight test. Would this message keep working if the customer could watch you write the line and set the timer? If the answer is no, it gets rebuilt. Then write the ethical reasoning into the test report, so the next team does not put the weights back.

THREE TAKEAWAYS

- Commerce runs on truthful measures and on a neighbor's trust.
- Persuasion gives true reasons; manipulation profits from a falsehood the customer cannot see.
- The truthful gospel of Christ frees marketers to walk away from deceptive gains.

APPLY IT

Which tactic in your work would stop working the moment a customer saw how it was built?

PRAYER

Righteous God, forgive the dishonest scales we have been calling optimization. Your Son bought that forgiveness at the cross and hands it out in his gospel. Make our claims accurate and our urgency real, and keep us in the truth. Amen.

Going Deeper. Roland Cap Ehlke, *Proverbs, The People's Bible* (Northwestern Publishing House), on 11:1 and 20:10. *Luther's Catechism*, rev. ed. (Northwestern Publishing House, 2017), the Seventh and Eighth Commandments.