



## Converse ad may Wade into controversy

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Some marketers say Converse Inc. is taking a risk by airing a commercial where NBA superstar Dwyane Wade expounds on his religious beliefs.

In a 30-second TV spot for the North Andover-based shoe maker titled "Faith," Wade gives a strong opinion about God that could ruffle the feathers of non-believers, some marketers said.

"If you don't have faith in what God does for the Earth and for you," Wade says in the ad, "then you're lost."

A strong statement like that could turn people off in a time when the nation is divided over religious beliefs, said **Kel Kelly**, founder and chief executive of Westboro marketing firm **Kel & Partners**. "I actually think it's a very risky strategy in light of everything that's going on," she said.

"He doesn't just say you have to have faith, he says you have to have faith in God," Kelly said. "I think there's a lot of people who don't have faith that are doing fine."

But Steve Connelly, partner and chief creative officer of Boston ad shop Connelly Partners, said the ad won't likely cause any uproar among the mainstream masses.

"I don't think what he said would equate him with the religious right," he said. "It just makes him normal to other people who think there are others to thank for success rather than just luck."

The ad is one of a series of seven spots featuring Wade - a guard with the Miami Heat - that were filmed by director Spike Lee. Each commercial uses a personalized, quiet look at the young basketball star and is designed to promote Converse's "WADE 1.3" line of sneakers. The spots began running late last month.

Converse is owned by Nike Inc.

“Converse welcomes any and all opinions on our advertising,” said Chief Marketing Officer David Maddocks in a statement. “We are a democratic brand in a democratic country. People’s right to have an opinion on our advertising is as valid as Dwyane Wade’s right to share his opinion on his faith and our right to share it with the public.”