

Bible Promotion: PERUVIAN STYLE

Creative promotion and distribution strategies are opening doors for the Peruvian Bible Society.

The Peruvian Bible Society (Sociedad Bíblica Peruana) expects to dramatically increase its distribution of the Scriptures. The Society faces the same distribution challenges that others do in Latin America. Normal distribution channels for Christian publications include bookstores, churches, religious events and clergy associations. So how is it that the Society expects such growth?

Gustavo Yábar, production manager for the Peruvian Bible Society, shares some of the projects that the team has developed.

Through buses and taxis

"It is our creative marketing campaign that has resulted in this explosive growth," says Yábar. "Approximately two years ago, we initiated a campaign with taxis and minivan drivers. We invited them through radio announcements to Christian events, where we handed them free literature. We visited bus stops and terminals and spoke to driver associations. At every opportunity we asked for a driver's permission to place a sticker on their vehicle."

The first year of the campaign, the bumper stickers promoted Bible reading with the slogan *Lea la Biblia* (Read the Bible). This year, the slogan is *Comparta la Biblia* (Share the Bible). Nearly four thousand stickers have been distributed to drivers who provide free promotion all over Lima, Peru's capital, a city of more than seven million people.

The stickers have greatly raised the profile of the Peruvian Bible Society, but were not enough to overcome other

barriers to Bible reading. Although Peru has a literacy rate of 85 percent, respondents to a Society survey confessed that often they do not read their Bibles. Lack of discipline was the most often-cited reason (48 percent of respondents), followed by lack of time (44 percent), lack of understanding (6 percent) and vision problems (2 percent).

To stimulate further interest in the Bible, the Society—with the support of the Christian Taxi Drivers Association in Peru—launched a new project July 16, 2000. It is distributing dramatized audio cassettes of the Gospel of Mark, provided by the Hosanna Ministry, to taxi and bus drivers. This way the Word of God is being heard in taxis, vans, and other forms of public transport. "Faith comes by hearing," says Yábar, "and this way many more people are

hearing the Gospel in Peru than ever before."

Another way that the Scriptures are reaching the public is through tickets. The Bible Society has signed an agree-



Buses and taxis display free bumper stickers designed to promote Bible reading.





The Peruvian Bible Society publishes Scripture in two Quechua dialects and in several Amazonian languages.

ment with one bus association to pay for half the cost of printing bus tickets. Each ticket carries a Scripture verse on the back. Yábar stressed this is not a commercial enterprise. The tickets are “not propaganda, but God’s Word.” The Society estimates that at least one million people are being exposed to the Bible message each month as a result of the audio cassettes and the verses printed on tickets.

Other distribution venues

Another breakthrough to the secular market occurred with a contact of Asian origin. He approached the Chinese owners of Wong stores, a popular supermarket chain, and requested permission to place Bible Society display stands in their stores. They agreed. The product sold in the supermarkets is geared to the mass market. It consists of eight mini-comics of Bible stories which appeal primarily to children and are priced economically.

The success of the Society’s efforts also meant that it had to improve its own sales outlet. Its bookstore, the Bible House (Casa de la Biblia), worked to provide a customer-friendly environment. A table and chairs for children keep the young ones happy, allowing parents a more relaxed visit. “Inquiries about the Bible have led to interest in other books, such as commentaries,” reports Yábar.

Additional projects

Following the example of many Bible societies in other countries, the Peruvian Bible Society has initiated a project to produce the first handwritten Bible of the new millennium, titled *La Primera Biblia Manuscrita del Tercer Milenio*. Christians are encouraged to donate small amounts of

money in exchange for the privilege of handwriting a verse of the Bible. Their donations support *Peru, Hay Esperanza* (Peru, There is Hope), a holistic project reaching families in Peru’s poorest state, Huancavelica.

Translations continue to form a large part of the Society’s work. Through collaboration with other United Bible Societies in Latin America, Wycliffe Bible Translators and the Swiss Mission in Peru, the Society has been able to publish Bibles in two Quechua language dialects, and Bible portions for ten Quechua regions in Peru as well as portions in 29 Amazonian languages.

Yábar is excited about the Bible Society’s work in reaching the indigenous people of Peru. “Some of the people who purchase the Bible in Peru do not know how to read, but they have come to know Christ. They purchase the Bible as a symbol of their commitment to Christ—as a symbol of their identification with him,” he says.

The Peruvian Bible Society aims to publish affordable Bibles and continues to explore ways to achieve greater self-sufficiency in its work. The continued creativity of its staff in promotion and distribution is having great results and increasing the visibility of its work for Protestants and Catholics alike. The Society is effectively fulfilling its mission of making God’s Word accessible to all Peruvians, in a language they can read and understand. ❖

Two mothers hold their children on their laps at a women’s Bible study.

