



Specialty Bible Makes Waves

By Paulo Teixeira

The Bible Society of Brazil finds surprising success with its release of a New Testament for surfers.

A Hebrew scholar invited listeners to “find the Creator of the waves that you love to surf.” The setting for the Bible Society of Brazil’s September 2, 2006 release of the *Bíblia Do Surfista*, a New Testament for surfers, was Tombo Beach in Guarujá, a coastal city 88 kilometers south of São Paulo.

I preached a three-minute sermon, nothing more,” says Paulo Teixeira, translations and publishing secretary of the Bible Society of Brazil. “Then we went on with the party.”

The Bible was a joint project of the Bible Society and *Missão Surfistas de Cristo Brasil* (MSC), a ministry founded in 1989 in Olinda, Pernambuco, Brazil, that grew to become a national movement. MSC, or *Surfers for Christ*, seeks to evangelize and disciple surfers.

“The *Bíblia do Surfista* was developed over two years,” adds Teixeira. It uses an

up-to-date, easy to understand translation, and, features testimonies from Christian surfers who talk about the importance of God’s Word in their lives. Jójó de Olivera, who twice won Brazil’s national surfing championship, tells how his relationship with Christ helped him to stay focused through the pressures of competition. Through the pressures of competition.

“We printed 10,000 and sold out in just two weeks,” says Teixeira. “We had a commitment that 3,000 Bibles would be purchased by *Surfers for Christ*, and we printed 7,000 more to get a low enough unit cost. We thought that the Bibles might sell over two years. Instead, we sold out right away.”

How come the Bible Society’s sales projections were so low? Teixeira chuckles. “We did our usual marketing research,” he says, “talking to the principal buyers of our product: Christian bookstores, churches, lay leaders, women. They were not very encouraging.

“Churchgoers do not always have the best view of surfers,” he adds. “They think of them as beach bums, and forget how much a surfer’s love for the waves translates into a profound appreciation for Creation—and the Creator. So, we talked to everyone in our usual distribution channels—when we should have focused on the target audience for this product.

“It was a lesson for us. We tend to think that if we cannot print 70,000 copies or more, that maybe the project is not worth doing. In a market as large as ours, why invest in a Bible for such a small, specialized market? The success of this product makes us think that maybe there are other projects that we should look at, other specialized audiences that we can serve.

“The Biblia do Surfista presents the gospel in a way that appeals to surfers,” says Teixeira, “but it also does more than that. It can help transform the Church’s view of surfers. We can learn from them. They understand the importance of play and recreation. They have a tremendous sensibility toward ecological issues.

“This is a specialized product,” he continues. “A similar title might be useful in Australia, New Zealand, and a few other places. It is not for everyone, but it is just right for its target audience.”

Caption: This Bible invites surfers “who love a challenge” to apply Christian principles to their lives. It emphasizes our relationship with God, with others, and with our environment.

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