



Vida Going Strong

By Jorge Julio Gonzalez

Jorge Julio Gonzalez directs a company offering Christian editorial services and project development, both for traditional publishing houses and ministries as well as for individual authors. He is author of [En verdad te digo...](#) (Truly I tell you...), a blog on Christian literature in Spanish. He is also the online editor of [LaBibliaWeb.com](#), the Spanish portal for United Bible Societies.

For more than 60 years, Editorial Vida [<http://www.editorialvida.com/>], the Hispanic division of Zondervan Publishing House [<http://www.zondervan.com/>], has distinguished itself in the publication and distribution of Bibles, books, Sunday school resources, and, in recent years, videos, audio books and Christian music. To get the idea, it is enough to recall a few of its record-setting bestsellers, such as the [Spanish translation of] *A Purpose-Driven Life*, by Rick Warren, with sales around 1.5 million copies; the different editions and styles of the [Spanish] New International Version (Nueva Versión Internacional); the [Spanish version] of the *Thompson Study Bible*; the bestsellers by Josh McDowell and David Wilkerson, among many other resources directed to Spanish-speaking readers.

Nevertheless, with the leadership of Dr. Esteban Fernández, Editorial Vida continues to gain and demonstrate new and surprising energy.

Editorial Vida's president talks about lessons learned and future expectations in this interview:

It is possible to make medium- or long-term predictions about the Christian publishing world? Where is Editorial Vida headed?

There is no doubt that, in the long run, the publishing industry—be it Christian or secular—will undergo changes. A digital world has arrived quite suddenly, and we must adapt to that change.

For the time being, particularly in our Spanish Christian publishing industry, I do not foresee great changes, since our market moves more slowly with regard to assimilating that technology, especially in Latin America.

I have no doubt that, every day, more and more of us will compete for the same market, and this will mean that we will all have to work more effectively to reach and serve consumers. We must also work diligently to make the market grow, so that we do not lose our current market share.

With regard to Editorial Vida, I believe we are functioning well, and that we are continuing to strengthen [our position] in the market as pioneers and innovators. We also continue to build bridges with our colleagues at other publishing houses and ministries.

What categories will grow in the array of Editorial Vida offerings?

Without a doubt, Bibles are our category of greatest growth, and where we have much strength. We want, nevertheless, to grow in all areas, so as to be faithful to our mission of “meeting the needs of people with

resources that glorify Jesus Christ and promote biblical principles.”¹

Our new strategic alliance with the Assemblies of God for the distribution of our new Sunday school curriculum means we are projecting sustained growth in that segment.

And, as breaking news for [*Cook Partners*,] I can say that we are investing very heavily in the area of academic resources, with a new line that is very close to being launched in the market, titled “Vida Theological Library” (Biblioteca Teológica Vida).

If a Christian publisher is an entrepreneur, an intellectual, and a minister, what’s the relative importance of these roles for Esteban Fernández?

As I see it, a Christian publisher must necessarily have a mixture of all those ingredients you mentioned. The measure of each has changed as I have grown in my career. When I began, the measures of each were different, but today my heart beats with 50 percent of the minister and the other 50 percent entrepreneur-intellectual. A minister is someone who is sensitive to the spiritual needs of people, and seeks ways to help them; an entrepreneur-intellectual executes God’s plan to make the help real.

What has been the love of your life as a publisher²? Is Esteban Fernández in love with a particular editorial project right now?

I am passionate about communication media. Magazines, in particular, have a special appeal to me. I am captivated by the editor-reader relationship that is established

in magazines, where in a few pages your article or editorial is making a space for itself among a pile of other ideas.

I am in love with good literature—Christian and secular—and with the Good News we have to give. I do not have a particular project I’m working on right now that appeals me to me more than the others, that would be like loving one child more than another.

Nevertheless I greatly enjoy working with an author with whom I can have a personal relationship, someone I can get to know beyond their writing: how they live, whether what they write is in agreement with their lifestyle.

Where do you see that Christian publishing houses are behind their secular counterparts in the publishing industry? Is there anything to recommend our work?

I do not believe we are behind secular publishing houses. We are walking side by side. I believe that, in terms of content, we are definitely in the lead. It seems to me we have greater focus in our publications.

Editorial Vida is celebrating its 60th anniversary. What are three key points of advice that you would give to a publishing company that is just starting out?

First: [Establish your organization] with a mission that transcends the commercial motive.

Second: [Ensure there is] focus and planning for that mission.

Third: Keep in mind that obtaining good results is not a sin.

All Christian publishing houses, one way or another, have a mission and specific content—which is not incongruent with seeking good results—that also leads us to have a specific audience, and this helps us in our marketing and promotion efforts [as we work together for the kingdom of God].

¹ NOTE: literal translation should be “providing the resources necessary to reach all people for Jesus Christ and help them grow in their faith,” but I used the other version because that is what is found on Zondervan’s site.

² Or, editor. The words are the same in Spanish.

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