

Ecuador Missionaries Wage Spiritual Warfare 'en Español'

Bill McDonald recognizes the spiritual and cultural warfare being waged for souls in Latin America. As missionaries to Ecuador since 1989, and founders of a prominent television network, he and his wife, Connie, have experienced it firsthand.

The enemy raised the ante earlier this year when Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad launched a Spanish-language channel from his country, via satellite, targeting Spanish-speaking individuals around the world. McDonald, co-founder and president of the Unsión television network in Cuenca, Ecuador, knew he had to enter the fray.

This month, Unsión, which McDonald terms as "Christian worldview television," will launch its programming via satellite with a potential increase in viewership from 500,000 to more than 400 million Hispanic viewers.

"Most cable systems in Latin America already carry Al-Jazeera, a Muslim-based media service," McDonald said. "But in January, Iran launched a family values network via satellite. Their goal is to influence the culture and the future of Latin America with their values. It's an open door for the Muslim culture to be ushered right into Latin America.

"Iran has a lot to gain by coming into South America. They want to come in and win the culture via the media. We have had the idea of taking our station to satellite for a while, but we've had some big mountains to cross. But, we want in on the fight for the future and the culture. As a church, we need to get in on this battle. It's like David fighting Goliath, but God wouldn't give us these types of resources if he didn't

want us in on such battles.”

Since the launch of Unsión TV in 2003, the station has documented tens of thousands of conversions—people who have responded to the message of the gospel presented through the network’s programming. Along with a number of other Latin American countries, Ecuador is predominantly Catholic in its religious beliefs.

News programs, sports events, cooking shows and programs with traditional family values can be seen on Unsión during a typical day, as well as commercials for products such as Coca-Cola and for local car dealerships. McDonald said the network also produces some religious programs and commercials.

The network has impacted the Ecuadorean culture at the highest levels. Earlier this year, President Rafael Correa requested to appear on Unsión Television for an exclusive interview, and praised the McDonalds and the network for their programming. He also discussed new political and constitutional reforms in Ecuador.

“Unsión TV is perhaps the most watched channel in Cuenca and Azuay,” Correa said in a translated message. “It is very objective and not in favor or against the government, a way a TV channel should be. It is the property of a foreigner, an evangelical American. What a shame it is that in order to have objectivity or impartiality, you have to have a channel that is owned by a foreigner.

“With Unsión TV, you can see their good faith, the transparency of an interviewer, without seeking harm. You can see the ethics in the Americans.”

Following the interview, McDonald didn’t waste an opportunity to witness to Correa. He presented the president with copies of the New Testament for himself and his wife. McDonald said Correa asked McDonald to **pray** for him as well.

"I thought it was quite impressive that he would choose Unsión Television to speak to the city (Cuenca)," McDonald said. "This assured me of a couple of things: First, we are seen as the voice of Cuenca. And second, our philosophy of being a Christian worldview station has given us a clear image of honesty, integrity and grace."

When the McDonalds first arrived in Ecuador, their immediate goals were for church planting. The couple continues to be involved in that endeavor, but Bill and Connie are now involved in so much more.

The McDonalds established the Unsión Foundation, a nonprofit organization that has three main objectives: communication, the community and education. Under that umbrella is UnsiónMed, an outpatient clinic in Cuenca that opened in February.

Un Buen Consejo (UBC), which means "Good Advice," has been an essential part of Unsión Ministries since its beginning. UBC is a counseling center and is the heart of Unsión Ministries, offering biblical, godly advice for an array of personal and family issues. It also points people to the World of God to help them discover truth and their identity in Christ.

"We have been so blessed, and this really is an exciting time for us," McDonald said. "We feel like we're making a lot of inroads into the Hispanic culture. Our goal is to become the No. 1 Hispanic station in the world. That may sound crazy, but I think, why not?"

"We want to be storytellers. Jesus was a storyteller. We want to be in the marketplace, as he was, and to help shape the culture."