

**News and Current Events :: Churches buying 'Passion' DVD in bulk****Churches buying 'Passion' DVD in bulk - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2004/7/22 20:16**

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Churches are being offered bulk discounts on The Passion of the Christ DVD in hopes that the second-biggest movie of 2004 will top DVD sales charts.

The Passion arrives on DVD Aug. 31, but pre-sales of the R-rated story of the final days of Jesus are 20% ahead of projections.

In an unprecedented move for a Hollywood studio, Fox sent fliers to hundreds of thousands of churches inviting them to buy special packs of 50 DVDs. Fox won't release numbers about the program; spokesman Steven Feldstein says, "This film brought people to the theater that normally don't go to movies and will also bring people into the DVD purchasing pool who weren't there before."

The biggest-selling DVD ever is G-rated Finding Nemo. Shrek 2, which has topped Nemo at the box office and is the No. 1 film of 2004, is due on DVD before Christmas.

Mel Gibson's subtitled Passion stunned Hollywood by taking in \$370.3 million at the box office. On home video (\$30; \$25 for VHS), it is expected to match blockbusters such as the Harry Potter movies, which each sold more than 10 million copies on DVD.

Early indications are that Fox's church-based promotion is helping drive sales. At Ebenezer Baptist Church in Occoquan, Va., "several people have placed orders for multiple copies," says Elaine Scott, a church trustee who ordered 100 DVDs for the church: "One person has ordered 20, so I know they will be sharing these DVDs with friends, family, co-workers." Scott expects to order more.