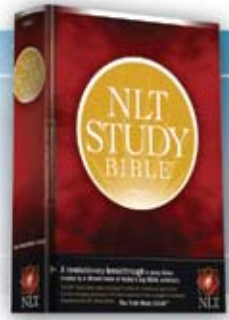


A Q&A with Mark D. Taylor

President, Tyndale House Publishers

Executive Editor and Chief Stylist, the *NLT Study Bible*



Q: Mark, most people can't help but connect Tyndale to Living Letters, which became The Living Bible, published by your dad in 1962 when he founded the company. How does the NLT Study Bible fit into that history of the company?

A: Tyndale House Publishers was founded in 1962 with the publication of *Living Letters*, which my father had worked on for many years as he rode the commuter train to his job in Chicago. He could see that we kids were having a hard time understanding the old English in the King James Version of the Bible during family devotions, so he created a paraphrase that would make the message of the Bible more understandable to us.

It was that same desire to make the Bible clear and understandable that prompted us to create the *New Living Translation*. *The Living Bible* is a paraphrase, and while a paraphrase is useful for bringing fresh perspective on biblical truth, we felt the world needed a truly easy-to-read translation for serious Bible study and as a text for preaching and teaching the Bible. We wanted to create a translation that renders the message of the original text of Scripture into clear, contemporary English, overcoming some of the barriers of history, culture, and language that keep people from reading and understanding God's Word. We brought together ninety world-class Bible scholars with the goal of creating the most understandable dynamic-equivalence translation possible. The *New Living Translation* puts the message of Scripture into everyday language, making the Word of God accessible to the average reader.

During the editorial development of the *New Living Translation*, we knew that the project would ultimately culminate in a study Bible. So 48 scholars and editors have been working specifically on the study notes and features of the *NLT Study Bible* for the past seven years, but the complete project really represents the apex of everything that we've been working toward for nearly twenty years.

Q: How have you been involved personally with the *NLT Study Bible*?

A: I have been involved from the very beginning— going back to the late 1980s. I was the chief stylist for the *New Living Translation*, and I've served as executive editor of the *NLT Study Bible*. One of the joys of this project has been interacting with the biblical scholars who created the notes and features. And of course it's a rewarding challenge to make sure that the wording is truly easy to read and understand.

Q: What do you think makes the *NLT Study Bible* unique among study Bibles?

A: The *NLT Study Bible* is a wonderful combination of the readable text of the *New Living Translation* and the world-class scholarship of the writers who created the study notes. Some of the best biblical scholars in the world wrote the notes for the *NLT Study Bible*, seeking to answer all of the questions the average reader will have as he or she reads through the Bible text. So, for example, the notes and articles in the study Bible help the reader understand the ancient Near Eastern concept of the covenant, and how the covenant is central both to the OT and to the NT. We comment on how Lot could make his horrible offer to send his virgin daughters out to be ravaged by the gang of men surrounding his house (Gen 19:8). We talk about the relationship between circumcision (OT) and baptism (NT).

The truth is, in most study Bibles the notes try to explain the text because the text needs to be explained. But in the *NLT Study Bible*, the text itself is self-explanatory. Still we know that readers always have questions: What was going on here? Why did he say that? What is the relationship between these two people? The *NLT Study Bible* tries to answer

the questions that the average reader is going to have—not to understand the text, because the text itself is already understandable, but to help the reader understand the bigger picture of what is being communicated and why.

Early in the process of editing the *NLT Study Bible*, I did a comparison of all the notes for Exodus in the *NIV Study Bible* and the *NLT Study Bible*. Interestingly, I found only 30% overlap on the kinds of topics addressed in the notes. So even if someone already has one or more study Bibles, they will gain vast new resources by adding the *NLT Study Bible* to their treasury.

Q: What are the features of the *NLT Study Bible* that you think readers will welcome most?

A: In addition to the study notes, there are theme notes, personality profiles, longer articles, introductions to the Old Testament and the New Testament, maps, charts, and timelines. But what really struck me personally as I participated in editing all of this material was the book introductions. The introductions help the reader get an overview of everything that is going on that book. Whether it is one of the Old Testament books of history or one of the New Testament letters, the book introductions help the reader get an overview before diving into the text.

Q: Tyndale already publishes a number of Bible products that have set the standard, including the *Life Application Study Bible*, *The Life Recovery Bible* and *The One-Year Bible*, which have unique purposes and audiences. What would you say is the unique purpose and audience for the *NLT Study Bible*?

A: The purpose of the *NLT Study Bible* is to provide pastors and lay-people with the tools they need to understand the Bible beyond understanding the words themselves—to help them understand the bigger picture of the stories and themes of the Bible. In terms of audience, we believe the *NLT Study Bible* will be the best study Bible available for serious Bible students—from pastors preparing sermons, to Sunday school teachers preparing lessons, to individuals working their way through group Bible studies or personal devotions.

Q: Most of today's leading Bible publishers are for-profit companies who exist to make money for the shareholders. Where does the money from sales of NLT products (including the *NLT Study Bible*) go, and what difference do you think that makes in how Tyndale approaches the publication and distribution of Bible products?

A: In 2001 my parents gave most of the stock of Tyndale House Publishers to the Tyndale House Foundation. So we are a tax-paying company owned by a not-for-profit foundation. The company pays royalties to the Foundation for every NLT Bible that we sell, and the company also pays dividends to the Foundation to help support its program of making grants to other charities all around the world. (In 2008, the Foundation will make grants totaling \$4.6 million.) In this way, we fulfill our corporate purpose both by the products we publish and by helping other ministries do what they do best. It's the best of all worlds!

Q: Can you give us some examples of the kind of work the Tyndale Foundation supports?

A: We have a broad list of organizations to whom we make grants. For example, each year we make a major gift to The Seed Company, an affiliate of Wycliffe Bible Translators that trains people from minority languages to translate the Bible into their own language. We also support various Christian social service agencies here in the Chicago area—and everything in between!

Q: A few years down the road, what will cause you to say that the publication of the *NLT Study Bible* has been successful? How do you measure that personally, and as the president of Tyndale?

A: Our corporate purpose is to “minister to the spiritual needs of people, primarily through literature consistent with biblical principles.” The problem is that we don't usually see how our products are helping people grow. But it's always rewarding to hear from readers who say that the NLT has revolutionized the way they read and understand the Bible—or how a particular book has helped them navigate a life crisis. As we stand on the threshold of the publication of the *NLT Study Bible*, I have absolute confidence that it will open new windows of understanding for millions of readers. That's why we do what we do!