



WORD FOR WORD

*Why Orland Park
Christian Reformed Church is
using a new Bible translation*

The English Standard Version

Why Orland Park Christian Reformed Church is using a different Bible translation

Introduction and Summary

Alongside our move into a renovated sanctuary, the church staff and pastors asked the worship committee to approve and order new Bibles for the pews, largely because previous volumes are in disrepair, and because that version (1984) of the NIV is no longer in print or available for order.

Both of our current pastors, Derek Buikema and Dan Roeda, advocate that we move to purchase the English Standard Version as our pew Bibles. The only other translation we considered was the 2011 NIV translation. Both translations are approved for “use in worship” by the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

The worship committee discussed, researched, and debated the merits of both translations, and presented their findings to the shepherding elders. The shepherding elders discussed those findings in two meetings (November and December). In December, they met specifically to vote on a motion to approve the English Standard Version (ESV) as our new pew Bible. The shepherding elders voted overwhelmingly to approve the ESV.

Support for the English Standard Version

Most of us are accustomed to an age-old debate between using the King James Version and the NIV. The two sides of this debate will say that the KJV is closer to a literal translation and the NIV is easier to understand and apply. The ESV is fairly considered a mixture of the two different approaches. It attempts to improve on the language of the KJV while retaining what is called an “essentially literal” translation. It is worth pointing out that the ESV is very similar to the RSV (Revised Standard Version), a translation familiar to many of our older members.

Kevin DeYoung offers some advice from the conclusion of his case for changing to the ESV (this book was shared with members of the Worship Committee for study and feedback and is listed among the research resources on the last page).

“Choosing a Bible translation is not a life or death decision, but it’s far from a minor issue either. The Bible we study, the Bible used in our pulpits, the Bible read to our children is the Bible that will shape our vocabulary about God and even the way we think about God. The translation we choose can clarify difficult passages for us as the translators saw fit, or it can help us get closer to the world of the Bible, closer to the original languages, and closer to the figures and images of Scripture. The difference between the two approaches is not insignificant. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). So why not let these words—ancient, imaginative, and sometimes ambiguous—shine through as much as we can?”

This is probably the strongest argument for going with the ESV translation – it does not simplify wording for ease of understanding. In so doing, it provides a much more “word-for-word” presentation of God’s Word. Here, in bullet point, is the case for adopting the ESV translation:

- It is “essentially literal” where the NIV is “dynamically equivalent”
- It is a more transparent translation – the words are not hidden behind more lyrical phrasing or in an attempt to remove repetitive words or phrases
- It engages in less “over-translation” and “under-translation,” which means that the pastors can explain what the text means rather than explaining what the translators intended.
- The ESV does a better job (in DeYoung’s opinion) of using the same English word when translating a specific Greek or Hebrew word or words
- The ESV, in DeYoung’s experience, requires less correcting or cross-referencing than does the NIV when he preaches

Over the last few decades, most of us have acclimated to the NIV translation. The NIV has been the most commonly-used translation for Christian Reformed churches across North America since soon after its first version was released in 1978. That translation resulted in the 1984 edition, which has been our church’s pew Bible for many years.

One of the main concerns expressed about the current NIV was that several parts of Scripture were “updated” in the 2002 translation (also

known as the TNIV) to include more gender-inclusive language. The 2011 translation (which eventually returned the translation to the name “NIV”) “...modified and dropped some of the gender-neutral language of the TNIV, along with other changes. Translational issues with Paul’s letters were also addressed.” Some would argue that gender-neutral language is still pervasive, but NIV proponents would refer to these translation choices as “gender-accurate” (including both genders when it is implied by the original text, rather than relying on an inclusive interpretation of “man,” or “mankind”).

Supporters of the NIV translation point to the benefits of “dynamic equivalence,” making it more readable and accessible, and to the translation’s inherent prioritizing of correct application over correct “word-for-word” translation.

However, since these changes were made, the NIV has become less popular among churches, while the ESV has significantly increased in popularity.

Committee Input

Broadly speaking, the worship committee overwhelmingly supported the recommendation of the pastors to move to the ESV. A document presented to the shepherding elders provided some details behind those opinions, but worship committee members largely expressed support for a more “word-for-word” translation, and were generally seeking to support, rather than impede, the work of our preaching pastors.

The shepherding elders also discussed the merits of the ESV translation, and there were no significant concerns expressed by the members of the elders throughout their discussions in November and December.

Decision

At their December 12 meeting, the shepherding elders voted on and approved the ESV translation as our pew Bible moving forward.

Scripture Comparisons:

	ESV	NIV
Genesis 3:16	To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.”	To the woman he said, “I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”
1 Timothy 2:12	I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.	I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.
Romans 16:7	Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.	Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.
John 6:44	No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.	No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.
John 14:23	Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.	Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.
2 Samuel 23:8	These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb-basshebeth a Tahchemonite; he was chief of the three. He wielded his spear against eight hundred whom he killed at one time.	These are the names of David’s mighty warriors: Josheb-Basshebeth, a Tahkemonite, was chief of the Three; he raised his spear against eight hundred men, whom he killed in one encounter.
Psalms 8:4	what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?	what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?
Hebrews 2:6	It has been testified somewhere, “What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him?”	But there is a place where someone has testified: “What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him?”

Also: https://csbible.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/CSB_VerseComparisons.pdf

Additional Research Resources:

1. Christian Reformed Church in North America: Bible Translations (<https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/bible-translations>)
2. “Understanding Differences in Bible Translations” by Joan Huyser-Honig, 2012, Calvin Institute for Christian Worship (<https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/understanding-differences-in-bible-translations/>)
3. Wikipedia: New International Version (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_International_Version)
4. Wikipedia: English Standard Version (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Standard_Version)
5. Translation Comparison Chart (<http://www.apbrown2.net/web/TranslationComparisonChart.htm>)
6. Bible Chart with Grade Levels (http://kukis.org/Eng_trans/biblechart.pdf)
7. “Why our Church Switched to the ESV” by Kevin DeYoung, 2011, Crossway Publishing (<http://static.crossway.org/excerpt/why-our-church-switched-to-the-esv/why-our-church-switched-to-the-esv.pdf>)
8. “Why Translations Matter” by Larry Doornbos, 2013, Christian Reformed Church in North America Network website (<https://network.crcna.org/church-planting/why-translations-matter>)
9. “Farewell, NIV” by Jesse Johnson, September 4, 2013, CrippleGate (<http://thecripplegate.com/farewell-niv/>)
10. “Three Unmistakable Examples of Gender Politics in the New ESV Translation” by Carolyn Custis James, September 13, 2016, Missio Alliance website (<http://www.missioalliance.org/three-unmistakable-examples-of-gender-politics-in-the-new-esv-translation/>)
11. “Saying Farewell to the ESV” by Rachel Miller, January 30, 2017, The Aquila Report (<http://theaquilareport.com/saying-farewell-esv/>)
12. “9 Things You Should Know about the ESV Bible” by Joe Carter, September 30, 2016, The Gospel Coalition (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/9-things-you-should-know-about-the-esv-bible/>)
13. RSV/ESV comparison website (<http://www.bible-researcher.com/esv.html>)

14. “The NIV vs ESV and Why Piper Switched” by Matthew Blair, October 22, 2007, The Foolish Galatian (<https://thefoolishgalatian.wordpress.com/2007/10/22/niv-vs-esv-and-why-piper-switched/>)
15. “Good English With Minimal Translation: Why Bethlehem Uses the ESV” by John Piper, January 1, 2004, Desiring God Ministries (<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/good-english-with-minimal-translation-why-bethlehem-uses-the-esv>)
16. “ESV Readability Levels” by Crossway, August 8, 2005, Crossway (<https://www.crossway.org/articles/readability-grade-levels/>)
17. “The Heart Behind the ESV” by Crossway, October 7, 2017, Crossway (<https://www.crossway.org/articles/the-heart-behind-the-esv/>)
18. “Does the ESV Have an Agenda?” by Jeremy Pierce, December 19, 2006, Parableman (http://parablemania.ektopos.com/archives/2005/12/does_the_esv_ha.html)
19. “Arguments Against the ESV Considered” by BL Howes, August 9, 2009, PuritanBoard (<https://www.puritanboard.com/threads/arguments-against-the-esv-considered.51809/>)
20. “About that Desire: Eve and the ESV Bible Controversy” by Alexandria, September 24, 2016, Women in Theology (<https://womentheology.org/2016/09/24/about-that-desire-eve-and-esv-bible-controversy/>)

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