

The Daring Mission of William Tyndale by Steven J. Lawson, Reformation Trust Publishing, Sandford, FL, 2015. (49 Quotes Selected by Doug Nichols)

1. True Church Programs by Deep Study of Scripture

Every true program in church history is conditioned by a new and deeper study of the Scripture. . . . While the Humanists went back to ancient classics and revived the spirit of Greek and Roman paganism, the Reformers went back to the sacred Scriptures in the original language and revived the spirit of apostolic Christianity. –Philip Schaff (Page xv)

2. Spiritual Darkness of the World Banished

By translating the Bible into English, this brilliant linguist ignited the flame that would banish the spiritual darkness in England. Tyndale’s translation of the Scripture unveiled the divine light of biblical truth that would shine across the English-speaking world, ushering in the dawning of a new day. (Page xvi-xvii).

3. Tyndale was a Remarkable Scholar, Proficient in Eight Languages

In this dark hour, God raised up William Tyndale, an unmatched individual who possessed extraordinary linguistic skills combined with an unwavering devotion to the Bible. He was a remarkable scholar, proficient in eight languages—Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, English, German, and French. He possessed an unsurpassed ability to work with the sound, rhythms, and senses of the English language. But in order to do his translation work, he would be forced to leave his native England, never to return. (Page xx)

4. True Reformation Always Emanates from God’s Word

The only true reformation is that which emanates from the Word of God. The Holy Scriptures, by bearing witness to the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God, create in man by the Holy Ghost a faith which justifies him.
J. H. Merle d’Aubigne’ (Page 1)

5. Tyndale was the Father of the English Bible & English Reformation

William Tyndale, by translating the Bible from the Greek and Hebrew, became the “true father of the English Bible” and launched a global influence for the spread of God’s Word, extending to the present day. He likewise became the father of the English Reformation, as well as the father of the Modern English language. (Page 1)

6. Clergyman's Ignorance Spurred Tyndale on to Translate the Bible into English

As local priests came to dine at the Welsh manor, Tyndale witnessed firsthand the appalling biblical ignorance of the Roman church. During one meal, he found himself in a heated debate with a Catholic clergyman. The priest asserted, "We had better be without God's law than the pope's. Tyndale boldly responded, "I defy the pope and all his laws." He then added that "if God spared him life, ere many years he would cause a boy that drives the plough to know more of the Scripture than he does." Tyndale was echoing Erasmus' words in the preface to his recently published Greek New Testament: "I would to God that the plowman would sing a text of the Scripture at the plow and that the weaver would hum them to the tune of his shuttle." From that point forward, the ambitious task of translating the Bible into English was the dominating pursuit of his life. (Page 8-9)

7. Tyndale was Exiled Because of His Translation of the Bible

In the spring of 1524, at age 30, Tyndale sailed to the European Continent to launch his translation and publishing endeavor. He would do it without the King of England's consent, a clear breach of the established law. As a result, every biblical text he translated, he translated illegally. When he departed his native shores, Tyndale lived in exile for the remainder of his life. Never again would he return to his beloved homeland. For the next twelve years, Tyndale would live on foreign soil as a fugitive and outlaw of the English crown. (Page 10-11)

8. Greek to English Bibles First Mechanically Printed

Tyndale's New Testament was the first to be translated from the original Greek into English. Further, it was the first English Bible to be mechanically printed. Previously, there were only a few handwritten copies of John Wycliffe's Bible in English, translated a century and a half earlier. But Wycliffe's rendering was loosely translated from Latin, not Greek. Tyndale's work was far superior. Schoeffer completed the initial print run by producing some three thousand copies. Over the next eight years, two additional revised editions of Tyndale's New Testament would follow, as well as several pirated editions published by unauthorized printers. (Page 12-13)

9. Bibles Shipped Hidden in Cotton Bales & Sold for a Week's Wages

Ready for delivery in the spring of 1526, Tyndale shipped his Bibles, hidden in bales of cotton, along the international trade routes to England. German Lutheran cloth merchants in England received the disguised shipment, ready to distribute the

Bibles. Once past the royal agents, these forbidden books were picked up by a secret Protestant society, the Christian Brethren, and taken through England to various cities, universities, and monasteries. The newly printed Bibles were sold to eager Englishmen—merchants, students, tailors, weavers, bricklayers, and peasants alike—all hungry to read and grow in their knowledge of God’s Word. Each New Testament cost three shillings and two pence, a week’s wages for a skilled laborer—a remarkable affordable price for the average person. (Page 13)

10. Tyndale Could Not Be Diverted from His Heart’s Passion

Tyndale was undaunted in his mission and could not be diverted from fulfilling this singular passion of his heart. In defiance of the English throne, he chose to continue his daring pursuit. (Page 19)

11. In Prison He Converted His Keeper & His Daughter & Household

The Martyrologist John Foxe wrote that as Tyndale sat in prison, he “was affecting his very enemies” as “he converted his keeper, the keeper’s daughter, and others of his household.” Though cold and suffering within the bowels of this stone prison, like the Apostle Paul in his Roman prison, Tyndale’s heart was still ablaze with gospel truth and undeniable joy. (Page 24)

12. Tyndale’s Trial August 1536; he was Condemned as a Heretic

In August 1536, Tyndale stood trial before his accusers, who leveled a long list of charges against him. Among his offences, Tyndale asserted that justification is by faith alone, human traditions cannot bind the conscience, the human will is bound by sin, there is no purgatory, neither Mary nor the saints offer prayers for us, and we are not to pray to them. All this made Tyndale an enemy of both church and state. He was condemned as a heretic. (Page 24)

13. Tyndale Responsible for Nearly Every English Translation

Almost five hundred years later, the river of Scripture continues to flow mightily across the face of the globe. Tyndale’s translation and those based on it formed the basis of the King James Version in 1611, and through it, nearly every English translation since. Today, English translations are numerous, yet they have their singular origin in Tyndale’s foundational work. Publishers of English Bibles continue to stand upon the sturdy shoulders of Tyndale’s pioneering efforts. Given that English is an international language, the ongoing influence of William Tyndale extends to the farthest corners of the world. (Page 27-28)

14. Grounded in Sovereign Grace

Tyndale was more than a mildly theological thinker. He is at last being understood as, theologically as well as linguistically, well ahead of his time. For him, as decades later for Calvin . . . the overriding message of the New Testament is the sovereignty of God. Everything is contained in that. It must never, as he wrote, be lost from sight. . . . For Tyndale, God is, above all, sovereign, active in the individual and history. — David Daniell (Page 29)

15. God Alone can Change the Hearts of Kings and Play-Boys Alike

Hailed as “the greatest of the early English protestants,” William Tyndale was a Reformer in every sense of the word. This certainly included his theology. Undergirding his belief in Reformation truly was his unwavering commitment to the sovereignty of God in the salvation of sinners. It was this deep confidence in the doctrine of grace that gave him staying power in his tireless efforts to translate the Bible into English. Tyndale was convinced that the power of God alone could change the hearts of kings and play-boys alike. The glorious truth that Christ would build His church compelled Tyndale to bring the Scriptures to the English people in their own language, regardless of the danger he faced. (Page 29-30)

16. Grace Preserved Tyndale in Difficult Times

These glorious doctrines of grace gave Tyndale confidence to persevere through difficult and dangerous times that could not be removed even by the fire at the stake or the noose of the martyr. (Page 31)

17. Sin Fatally Poisons Human Nature Completely

Tyndale strongly maintained that every part of human nature is corrupted by sin, and sin affects the entire person—mind, will, and affections. This inherited condition renders every person fatally polluted by deadly poison. (Page 33)

18. The Human Race is Like a Corpse – No Soul

This doctrine alone could account for the cruel treatment he faced in the world.

Tyndale stated that the entire human race is like a corpse without a soul and spiritually dead. John Piper concludes: “This view of human sinfulness set the stage for Tyndale’s grasp of the glory of God’s sovereign grace in the gospel.” This is the fatal condition in which all unregenerate humans exist. (Page 38)

19. Sovereign Election

Tyndale was committed to the biblical teaching of the sovereign election of God. He believed God acted before time began, in eternal love, in choosing a people whom He would save. God set His heart upon a people, elected out of the mass of fallen humanity, to be His own possession. This election of man was not based upon any foreseen choice within man. Rather, it was entirely by the free exercise of God's will. (Page 39)

20. Plucked Out of Adam – Grafted in Christ

Divine election is unto salvation, not to be explained away as merely to service. The divine choice determines those chosen would be no longer in Adam, but in Christ. Tyndale taught that election is unto eternal life.

By grace (that is to say, by favor) we are plucked out of Adam, the ground of all evil, and grafted in Christ, the root of all goodness. (Page 40)

21. Sovereign Election Honors God and Scripture

Tyndale affirmed that sovereign election glorifies God, humbles man, initiates salvation, and honors Scripture. This doctrine gave Tyndale confidence in all his endeavors as he was reliant upon God for all things. (Page 43)

22. Christ Purchased Salvation for the True Church

Tyndale asserted that the cross of Christ did not merely make salvation possible, with man's response necessary to make it a saving atonement. Instead, he wrote that Christ actually purchased salvation for all who would believe, securing for them eternal life. He maintained: "I am heir of heaven by grace and Christ's purchasing." If Christ purchased salvation for all, then all will be saved. But He died for the true church, and it is only believers who are saved. John Piper attributes to Tyndale the teaching of "blood-bought sovereign grace." (Page 44)

23. Christ is Every Thing in Salvation and Worthy of Praise

There is nothing that man can do to earn eternal life. All salvation is by Christ alone. He said, "He is our Redeemer, Deliverer, Reconciler, Mediator, Intercessor, Advocate, Attorney, Solicitor, our Hope, Comforter, Shield, Protection, Defender, Strength, Health, Satisfaction, and Salvation." From beginning to end, Christ is everything in salvation and is worthy of praise and exaltation that none may boast in His glorious presence. (Page 45)

24. Saving Faith Is Bestowed by God When the Sinner Believes

Tyndale affirmed that the Holy Spirit must create saving faith in the heart of the sinner if he is to believe the gospel. When the Word is preached, Tyndale taught, God bestows saving faith in the hearts of those who will believe. In other words, saving faith is bestowed by God through the preaching of the Word, it enters the unbelieving heart, and simultaneously the Word is believed. In that moment, the sinner is set free from his bondage to sin:

When His word is preached, faith roots herself in the heart of the elect; as faith enters, and the word of God is believed, the power of God loosens the heart from captivity and bondage under sin. (Page 49-50)

25. God Has All Tyrants in His Hand

Regardless of the opposition he faced, Tyndale was confident that God acted in history and ordained all events according to His perfect council. Even the greatest of men, including kings and governors, are subject to His supreme will: “God [has] all tyrants in His hand, and lets them not do whatever they would , but as much only as He appoints them to do.” (Page 53)

26. Tyndale Took Great Risks to Fulfill God’s Will

Tyndale viewed his entire life as being in subjection to the great purpose of God, even in his hours of greatest adversity. As he carried out his daring mission, these truths emboldened Tyndale to take great risks with his life in order to fulfill what he believed was God’s will. He acknowledged that his work would only advance “if it be God’s will that I shall further labor in His harvest.” Regardless of what rose up against him, Tyndale was convinced that the eternal purposes of God were moving forward according to His eternal, sovereign plan. With strong, passionate reliance upon God, Tyndale pressed on in his work with mounting confidence in the overruling providence of sovereign God. It would be these overarching doctrines that would fuel his faith and give him an unflinching confidence in God. (Page 54)

27. Tyndale’s Prologue in His Bible

He writes as one deeply immersed in the Bible. Tyndale was not simply translating the scriptures, but was personally absorbing them. In the prologue, Tyndale states:

I have here translated (brethren and sisters most dear and tenderly beloved in Christ) the New Testament for your spiritual edifying, consolation, and solace: Exhorting instantly and beseeching those that are better seen in the tongues than I, and that have

higher gifts of grace to interpret the sense of the Scripture and meaning of the Spirit, than I, to consider and ponder my labor, and that with the spirit of meekness. And if they perceive in any place that I have not attained the very sense of the tongue, or meaning of the scripture; or have not given the right English word, that they put in their hands to amend it, remembering that so is their duty to do. For we have not received the gifts of God for ourselves only, or for to hide them, but for to bestow them unto the honoring of God and Christ, and edifying of the congregation, which is the body of Christ. (Page 69)

28. Tyndale Translated the Bible for the Masses, the Man on the Street

As Tyndale's translated the Greek text into English, he did so with extraordinary ability and skill. His unique gift was translating in a manner that is personal and direct. He used the everyday words of the marketplace in order to have his work understood by the common man. Moreover, he arranged his well-chosen words in simple sentences to facilitate comprehension. He did not write for the elite in the academy, but for the man on the street. Tyndale wrote with the aim of bringing the truth of Scripture to the masses of common people. His style was contemporary, yet majestic. His work set the standard for all English translations that would follow. (Page 71-72)

29. Encouragement for People Endeavoring to do God's Work

Many of you reading these pages know something of the challenges facing the pursuit of God's will. Some of you may be wandering about, as in a thick fog, uncertain about whether you can even move forward in accomplishing God's will. Still others of you are beginning a task that you believe is given to you by the Lord, but are already willing to abandon its cause because it had been initially unsuccessful or has met with great opposition. You are beginning to doubt whether this is God's mission for you because of this lack of success and the opposition you face. Could this be where you find yourself?

May it be that we learn from the life and fortitude of William Tyndale. Even as the print shop was raided and his work was abruptly halted, he persevered and continued working to the very end. This Englishman did not sound the retreat, nor did he take even one step back from his intended goal of bringing God's Word to the common people. May each of us likewise press on in serving the Lord and what His Word would have us do, always advancing with our eyes fixed ahead, never looking back. Let us not question the sovereign hand of God. Rather, let us set our gaze upon God and pursue, wherever He has placed us, the work for which He has gifted us. By His grace and for His glory, may we faithfully carry it out to its accomplished end. (Page 74-75)

30. Plowboy to Know Scripture Like the Pope

Come what may, Tyndale was driven to translate the New Testament into English. His goal remained unaltered: to allow a plowboy to know as much of Scripture as the pope. (Page 78)

31. Make the Bible Accessible to the English People

He believed no Christian can be sanctified apart from the Word, making an English translation even more important. Tyndale wanted to make the Scripture open and accessible to the English people, and he wanted to put the Bible in their hands, for their own eyes to read. (Page 78)

32. An English Bible not Optional, but Mandatory

The mission before Tyndale was clear. He was heavily burdened for the eternal destiny of the English speaking world. An English Bible was not optional, but mandatory. Without the Bible in English, Tyndale asserted, the preacher might as well be speaking to pigs:

It is truly as good to preach it to swine as to men, if you preach it in a tongue they understand not. How shall I prepare myself to God's commandments? How shall I be thankful to Christ for His kindness? How shall I believe the truth and promises which God has sworn, while you tell them unto me in a tongue which I understand not? (Page 79)

33. Tyndale was Persistent in His Mission

There are many unique aspects to examine in order to understand how Tyndale accomplished this incredible task. But one fact is unmistakable: Tyndale was persistent in carrying out this daring mission. (Page 79)

34. Luther Defies Church Tradition and Ecclesiastical Authority

Luther defied church tradition and ecclesiastical authority by saying. "My conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise; here I stand, may God help me, Amen. (Page 80)

35. Tyndale Made Four- to Five-Thousand Changes to His Translations

Other translation errors in the 1526 edition would be discovered and later corrected. Tyndale would make these adjustments in his 1534 and 1535 edition. In

fact, he would make approximately four thousand corrections in these future editions. Some scholars have set the number as high as five thousand changes and corrections. Most of these are slight adjustments, though a few are significant. (Page 88-89)

36. Common People Purchased the New Testament

Yet, it was the common man who mainly purchased these copies. People from all walks of life bought Tyndale's New Testament, including landowners, farmers, tailors, attorneys, carpenters, bricklayers, tinkers, professors, students, weavers, blacksmiths, and more. (Page 90)

37. Tyndale's Dream Was Realized, the Plowboy had the Word of God

The cost of purchasing one of Tyndale's Bibles was relatively low. When compared with other similar-sized books, the larger print run of this New Testament kept the price affordable. This allowed ordinary people to purchase their own copy. The cost was approximately half a week's wages for a common laborer. Farmers would offer a wagon of hay for a New Testament. Some people pooled resources in order to buy a copy to share. For the first time, a printed New Testament was available in English for those who could pay one shilling and eight pence for an unbound copy. A bound copy sold for a shilling extra.

Tyndale's dream was being realized. The plowboy in the field at last had the Word of God available to him. (Page 90)

38. Father of Modern English Language

With his New Testament, Tyndale became the father of the Modern English language. He shaped the syntax, grammar, and vocabulary of the English language more than any man who ever lived—more than author Geoffrey Chaucer, the playwright William Shakespeare, or poet Percy Shelley and John Keats. (Page 93-94)

39. From Middle English to Early Modern English

The English language at the dawn of the sixteenth century was crude and unrefined. It lacked precision and standardization, a strange mixture of Anglo-Saxon and Norman features with ancient Latin vocabulary, contained in disorganized syntax. Tyndale proved to be its change agent. As he translated the Bible, giving careful thought to words, phrases, and clauses, Tyndale shaped the language at its transition point from Middle English to Early Modern English. The speech of a nation was constructed in his

mind and flowed from his pen. In providing the English Bible, Tyndale became the father of Modern English. (Page 94)

40. 84% of King James New Testament is Word-for-Word Copy of Tyndale's Work

Eighty-four percent of the King James New Testament is a word-for-word copy of Tyndale's work. (Page 94)

41. Producing the Pentateuch

Indomitable in will and resolute in spirit, William Tyndale was never one to be slack when there was work of God to be done. The need was too great. Tyndale was fully determined to translate the entire Bible into his native tongue, and nothing could drive him from this estimable task. He believed the work must be completed with haste, for his beloved homeland, shrouded in spiritual darkness, was in desperate need of the gospel of Christ. He was convinced that what he did had to be done urgently. Tyndale was undeniably a Reformer not only in his doctrine, but in the propulsion and pace of his life. (Page 97-98)

42. Tyndale Chose Anglo-Saxon Words of One Syllable

Wherever possible, Tyndale chose words of Anglo-Saxon origin, rather than those of Latin or Norman derivation. Thus he selected words such as faith instead of fidelity, worship over adoration and goodness over virtue. Rather than using multi-syllable words, Tyndale attempted to use one-syllable words whenever he could. For Tyndale, less is more in translation. This simplicity would aid the case of reading and understanding for the audience. (Page 103)

43. Prologue of Deuteronomy

The shortest of the five prologues in the Pentateuch is "A Prologue into the Fifth Book of Moses Called Deuteronomy." Its message calls for believers to have "love to God out of faith," which produces "the love of a man's neighbor." The fifth prologue gives a brief synopsis of most of the chapters in Deuteronomy.

This book is worthy to be read in, day and night, and never to be out of hands: for it is the most excellent of all the books of Moses. It is easy also and light, and a very pure gospel, a preaching of faith and love: deducing the love of God out of faith, and the love of a man's neighbor out of the love of God. Herein also thou mayest learn right meditation or contemplation, which is nothing else save the calling to mind, and a

repeating in the heart, of the glorious and wonderful deeds of God, and of His terrible handling of His enemies. (Page 117-118)

44. Tyndale's Bible, England's Most Precious Gift to the World

In producing the first translation of the Pentateuch, Tyndale distinguished himself as a remarkable Hebrew scholar. Given the tools of his day, Tyndale's mastery of the Hebrew language was nothing short of astonishing. Tyndale performed his work at such a high level of excellence that some eighty years later when a team of scholars met to create the Authorized or King James Version, they could scarcely improve upon Tyndale's. In fact, Tyndale's translation was done at such a high level of proficiency that his work endures to the present hour through the many subsequent English translations it has influenced. Of all the gifts England has given to the world, none can surpass this masterful treasure. Wherever English is read, Tyndale's Bible is a priceless legacy. (Page 119-120)

45. True Greatness of England, Tyndale's Bible

The true greatness of England has been the English Bible. Over the past centuries, England has been a people of the Bible, and it has distributed that holy book's message to the four corners of the globe. The leading influence on this dissemination of biblical truth was the translation and publication work of William Tyndale. He was the first to present England with a Bible translated from the original Hebrew and Greek in their own language.

May the Word of God spread to the nations of the world in this day. May the sacrifice made by Tyndale five centuries ago be ever expanding in its influence in this hour. (Page 120-121)

46. Tyndale's Noblest Moment, His Revision of His Bible in 1534

When the 1526 New Testament was printed, Tyndale had already begun compiling a list of corrections he knew would eventually need to be made. In the postscript of the 1526 edition, he begged his readers for feedback regarding needed improvements for a revised translation. In 1534, eight and a half years after the first edition was published, Tyndale finished his tedious revision, which became his crowning achievement. New Testament scholar B. F. Westcott called this version his "noblest monument." Tyndale expert David Daniell hailed it as "the glory of his life's work." (Page 124)

47. Tyndale Wouldn't Stop Until He Was Martyred

With his face set like flint toward the goal of bringing the Word of God to the English people, William Tyndale pressed forward continually in the work of God. The adversity he faced was daunting, and the dangers he encountered were life-threatening. Nevertheless, as a man of remarkable perseverance, Tyndale endured in his mission. Resolute in his labors, Tyndale would never cease until he had translated the entire Bible into English and it was placed into the hands of the plowboy in his beloved homeland. With stubborn tenacity, Tyndale would not stop until the hangman's noose strangled him and fire consumed him. (Page 147-148)

48. Tyndale's Translation Used in Most of KJV and KJV Used in Many New Bibles

Tyndale's translation inspired the great translations that followed, including the Great Bible (1539, also compiled by Coverdale), the Geneva Bible (1560), the Bishops' Bible (1568), the Douay Rheims Bible (1582-1609), and the Authorized or King James Version (1611). A complete analysis of the King James shows that Tyndale's words account for eighty-four percent of the New Testament and more than seventy-five percent of the Old Testament. Many of the great modern English versions stand in the King James traditions and thus also draw inspiration from Tyndale, including the Revised Standard Version, the New American Standard Bible, and the English Standard Version. (Page 164)

49. We Need More Tyndales and the Work That He Died for Today

We want again Tyndales to tenaciously face the insurmountable obstacles before them and overcome them with zealous resolve for the glory of God. We need Tyndales who translate the Bible into the language of foreign people groups around the world. We need Tyndales to proclaim the gospel through the written page in the face of imminent danger. We need Tyndales who passionately love the Word of God to fill every pulpit, every seminary, every Sunday school class, every lectern.

Let us learn to say with David—and no doubt with Tyndale—“How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psalm 119:103 esv) (Page 164-165)