

INTERNATIONAL BIBLE SOCIETY HALTS REVISION PROCESS OF NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION (NIV) BIBLE

NIV Sponsor/Copyright Holder Puts Commitment to Serve the Church Ahead of Market Concerns

Colorado Springs, May 27, 1997 - Amid significant response about potential updates to the New International Version (NIV) Bible, International Bible Society (IBS) announced today that it will forego all plans to develop a revised edition of the NIV, the most widely distributed Bible in the English language, representing 45 percent of Bibles circulated in North America.

With this decision, IBS will also revise its current New International Readers Version (NIRV) Bible, geared to young readers and adults for whom English is a second language, to reflect a treatment of gender consistent with the NIV.

“The NIV doesn’t belong to IBS or our licensed publishers, it belongs to the people,” said Dr. Victor L. Oliver, board chair of IBS. “Virtually all other contemporary Bible translations already reflect gender treatments consistent with the language of today. However, the NIV has essentially become the Bible of the evangelical church, which has come to trust in and depend upon the NIV’s current accuracy, clarity and readability.”

Dr. Oliver noted that in recent weeks it has become very clear that many people in North America don’t want the NIV changed, even if many Bible scholars feel a revision could more clearly reflect shifts in English language usage, and more precisely render the meaning of the original texts into English for current and future generations.

“As the most popular contemporary version of the Bible ever published, we knew the significance of the current NIV,” said Dr. Lars Dunberg, president of IBS. “But it was not until the evangelical community became aware of a possible revision that we realized the beloved place this translation occupies for the Bible-reading public.”

Today’s announcement is part of a four-point resolution adopted by the IBS board of directors to reaffirm to churches in North America and around the world the ministry’s foundational commitment to “serve the church in evangelism and discipleship by providing God’s Word so that people around the world might come to faith and life in Jesus Christ.”

“We deeply care about the concerns of church leaders, scholars and Christian readers who favor gender-related language changes,” Dr. Dunberg said. “However this decision comes from our internal conviction that to move ahead would cause division within the body of Christ and therefore compromise our mission to serve the Church in the U.S. and abroad.”

The four-point IBS policy statement effectively eliminates incorporation of gender-related language revisions in any NIV Bible licensed by IBS to Zondervan Publishing House (ZPH), North American publisher of NIV, and Hodder & Stoughton, publisher of the NIV in the U.K. The resolution states that:

IBS has abandoned all plans for gender-related changes in future editions of the New International Version (NIV).

- The present (1984) NIV text will continue to be published. There are no plans for a further revised edition.
- IBS will begin immediately to revise the New International Readers Version (NIRV) in a way that reflects the treatment of gender in the NIV. IBS is directing the licensees who publish the current NIRV to publish only the revised NIRV edition as soon as it is ready.
- IBS will enter into negotiations with the publisher of the NIV in the U.K. on the matter of ceasing publication of its “inclusive language” edition of the NIV.

Referring to IBS plans to revise the NIRV to reflect gender treatment consistent with the NIV, Bruce E. Ryskamp, president of Zondervan Publishing House, believes that like the original version, the updated edition will stand the test of time.

“We stand behind the NlrV as the most accurate translation available today for children and for adults for whom English is a second language,” he said. “We respect IBS’ decision as the issue is one of language preference. It is a distinction without a difference in meaning between Bible versions. The NlrV we publish gives clear, accurate and easily understood expression to the timeless truth of God’s Word.”

In addition to the halt on gender-related revisions, the commitment to the 1984 NIV edition and the revision of the NlrV, the statement reinforces IBS’ consistent approach to the NIV around the world. This includes IBS entering into negotiations with the U.K. publisher of the NIV regarding cessation of its inclusive-language edition of the NIV, of which 5,000 copies are currently in print.

“Because our relationship with independent publishers in the U.S. and in other countries is contractual, we can request, but not dictate, that they respect our sense of responsibility as caretakers of this rich translation,” Dr. Oliver said.

The International Bible Society was founded in 1809 as a non-profit ministry to serve the Church in evangelism and discipleship by taking the Scriptures around the world, with a focus on larger people groups. This includes the “Let There Be Light” program to launch 35 new translations of the Bible in the next six years, equivalent to the addition of one-tenth of all the languages into which the entire Bible has been translated since the time of Christ.

POLICY STATEMENT BY THE INTERNATIONAL BIBLE SOCIETY (IBS) REGARDING THE NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION (NIV) OF THE BIBLE *May 27, 1997*

In consideration of the emphatic support by Christian leaders and reads for the NIV Bible and IBS’ mission to “serve the Church in evangelism and discipleship by providing God’s Word so that people around the world might come to faith and life in Jesus Christ,” the board of directors of the International Bible Society resolves that:

1. The international Bible Society (IBS) has abandoned all plans for gender-related changes in future editions of the New International Version (NIV).
2. The present (1984) NIV text will continue to be published. There are no plans for a further revised edition.
3. IBS will begin immediately to revise the New International Readers Version (NlrV) in a way that reflects the treatment of gender in the NIV. IBS is directing the licensees who publish the current NlrV to publish only the revised NlrV edition as soon as it is ready.
4. IBS will enter into negotiations with the publisher of the NIV in the U.K. on the matter of ceasing publication of its “inclusive language” edition” of the NIV.