

Tyndale House Founder Kenneth Taylor Dies

Kenneth Taylor, creator of The Living Bible and founder of Tyndale House Publishers, died June 10 in his home in Wheaton, Ill. He was 88.

Taylor's translation, which has sold more than 40 million copies, began as a project to help his children understand God's Word. And while Tyndale has become one of the largest Christian publishing houses, Taylor started it humbly, using the family's dining room as the company's first office.

Launched in 1962, Tyndale was named after William Tyndale, the 16th century reformer who was burned at the stake for translating the Bible into English. Taylor and his wife, Margaret, began with the publication of Living Letters, a paraphrase of the New Testament epistles.

The first printing was 2,000 copies, but when evangelist Billy Graham began to promote Taylor's work on his television broadcasts, demand for the books dramatically increased. In 1967 the Living New Testament was published, and in 1971 the complete Living Bible was released, becoming the best-selling book in the U.S. for the next three years.

A pastor's son, Taylor was born May 8, 1917, in Portland, Ore. He graduated from Wheaton College in 1938, receiving an undergraduate degree in zoology. He also attended Dallas

Theological Seminary for three years and graduated from Northern Baptist Seminary in Chicago in 1944.

Taylor began his 65-year career as editor of HIS magazine and later served as director of Moody Press in Chicago. In April 1950, while working at Moody Press, Taylor helped found the Christian Booksellers Association, an international trade association now known simply as CBA. Taylor was inducted into the CBA Hall of Honor in 1989. In 2001, he received a Visionary Industry Pioneer award from Christian Retailing, which is published by Charisma's parent company, Strang Communications.

In 1984, he turned Tyndale over to his son Mark, but remained chairman of the board until his death. "Making Scripture accessible for all people was my father's passion," Mark Taylor said, adding that people have told him they became a Christian upon reading The Living Bible. "Even at 88 years old, [my father's] enthusiasm and fervor for his work never waned," he noted.

Tim LaHaye, co-author of the Left Behind series, which is published by Tyndale, said Taylor "contributed greatly to the harvest of souls and worldwide growth of the church that is going on in the world today."

James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, credited Taylor with playing an integral role in helping to launch the Colorado-based ministry in 1977. "I asked if he and Tyndale would consider

underwriting our efforts, and he provided a grant of \$35,000, which allowed us to get Focus under way,” Dobson said. “We may never have made it on the air if it hadn’t been for the generous support we received from him at that juncture.”

Taylor is survived by his wife, Margaret, 10 children, 28 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren. A funeral service was held June 15 at Wheaton College.

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