

“...Dedicated to the Teaching Of Jesus”
November 18, 2007 * Matt.7:24-29

I. Our aim this morning – to talk about God’s Word (as part of our Mission Statement study) and to talk about the suffering Church (as part of our annual observance). The solution? Tell the stories of:

_____ & _____

What was the great work these men dedicated their lives to?

**The great work of _____ the Bible into the
_____ language.**

II. John Wycliffe

A. Born where & when?

B. What was Christianity like during this time?

C. What radical ideas did Wycliffe teach about the Church?

D. What did Wycliffe teach about the Eucharist?

E. How did the Pope respond?

F. What did Wycliffe do next? And why did he do it?
What was Bible knowledge like in his day?

III. What would Wycliffe say it means to be ‘dedicated to God’s Word’?

A. It means _____ it.

1. “But I don’t read!” What would Wycliffe say?

2. The Bible is called the ‘sword of the _____’.
Meaning what?

B. It means _____ to it.

1. What else must I do besides ‘hear’ God’s Word?

2. Will this be easy? Why or why not?

C. It means _____ it in others.

1. Beginning where?

IV. William Tyndale

A. What two things defeated the Pope’s attempt to repress the creation of the English Bible?

1. The inventing of the _____.

2. The flowering of the _____ under Martin Luther.

B. What were Luther’s three main teachings?

C. Take note of some of the key events in Tyndale’s life:

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I. Our aim this morning – to talk about God’s Word (as part of our Mission Statement study) and to talk about the suffering Church (as part of our annual observance). The solution? Tell the stories of:

John Wycliffe & William Tyndale

What was the great work these men dedicated their lives to?
The great work of translating the Bible into the English language.

II. John Wycliffe

A. Born where & when?

John Wycliffe was born more than 150 years before William Tyndale, in the Yorkshire region of England around the year 1330.

B. What was Christianity like during this time?

Would you long to live in a time when Christianity wasn’t broken up into hundreds of different denominations? Well this was it. This was a time when the only show in town was the Roman Catholic Church – ruled by priests and bishops all subject to the all-seeing, all-knowing, all-searching gaze of the Roman pontiff. This was a day and age when the papacy possessed supreme political power and spiritual power. The nod of the Pope’s head could move armies and cause kings to tremble. This was a day and age when to disagree with the will of the Pope and the teachings of the church meant imprisonment, torture, and death usually in a most unpleasant manner.

C. What radical ideas did Wycliffe teach about the Church?

Wycliffe argued that God had given civil rulers dominion over temporal matters, and God had given the Church dominion over spiritual matters. Wycliffe was very uncomfortable with the idea that the Church could wield worldly power, let alone concern itself

with worldly affairs such as property - nearly a third of England was owned by the Catholic Church in his day. And this led to a great deal of corruption in the clergy.

D. What did Wycliffe teach about the Eucharist?

In 1215, the Catholic church formally put its stamp of approval on the doctrine called Transubstantiation – where it was argued that the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ during the Mass. It’s the kind of argument that seems silly to our ears, but in that time, this doctrine was used as another validation of the Church’s control over all of society. How? If the Church had control over the very body and blood of the living God, then you’d better not mess around with her. Well, to this Wycliffe said, “Rubbish!” Transubstantiation is illogical, unscriptural and unfaithful to the teaching of the ancient church. The bread and wine are sacramental signs and symbols of Christ’s body and blood which must be appreciated by faith. If you show a mouse a piece of consecrated bread and a piece of unconsecrated bread, the mouse will eat both, because they’re both the same. Nothing of essence has changed about the bread, and so a little mouse disproves this abysmal doctrine, said Wycliffe.

E. How did the Pope respond?

He issued several “Papal bulls” against Wycliffe (a “bull” being a formal, written condemnation against heresy). Wycliffe - this “master of errors” declares the Pope, “has gone to such a pitch of detestable folly, that he feareth not to teach, or rather to vomit out of the filthy dungeon of his breast, certain erroneous and false propositions.” Wycliffe was summoned to Rome, and he likely would have been burned at the stake except for a fortuitous event, namely the pope dying and a controversy breaking out over who should replace him. So Wycliffe never went to Rome.

F. What did Wycliffe do next? And why did he do it?

What was Bible knowledge like in his day?

He was instead confined to a little parish near Oxford, he was forbidden to teach, and so, with ample time on his hands, Wycliffe spent the remaining seven years of his life working at the project for which he is famous today - the translation of scripture into the

English language. Wycliffe was grieved by the ignorance of Scripture displayed not only by the common people but by the common clergy. You might wonder without the Bible what exactly there was to teach the people back then. The stated task of the common village priest back then was to instruct the people in the creed, the commandments, the sacraments, the the seven virtues and the seven deadly sins, with maybe a few gospel stories tossed in on the side, if the priest knew any gospel stories.

III. *What would Wycliffe say it means to be ‘dedicated to God’s Word’?*

A. *It means receiving it.*

1. *“But I don’t read!” What would Wycliffe say?*

John Wycliffe would say, “My son, my daughter, read anyway.

2. *The Bible is called the ‘sword of the Spirit’. Meaning what?*

If you are Jesus’ disciple, then the Spirit of God is inside of you. The Spirit of God will help you to understand what you are reading, and then the Spirit of God will take what you are reading and like a sword, cut away the sin that’s infecting your heart, cut away the scales that are over your eyes, cut away the chains that Satan tries to wrap you up in. Not only that but the Spirit will take the truth you are bringing inside of you and like a sword, cause you to fight for what is good and godly, cause you to fight for the protection of your family and your church and your community.

B. *It means responding to it.*

1. *What else must I do besides ‘hear’ God’s Word?*

Jesus said, “Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” Receiving is how the transformation begins. Responding is how it is consummated. It won’t do you any good if you don’t attempt to put into practice what you are reading. James 1:22 – “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

2. *Will this be easy? Why or why not?*

You and I have a sin nature. What comes naturally to us is to sin, what feels natural to us is usually something selfish. “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death,” the Bible warns. We have moral and spiritual vertigo. Vertigo is something airplane pilots sometimes experience, when their instruments tell them one thing, and their eyes and senses and feelings tell them another. Pilots must learn in moments like that to trust their instruments – if they hope to survive. Reading God’s Word, especially early on will give you moral vertigo. It will tell you to forgive, when your body and mind is screaming at you to never let that anger go. God’s Word will tell you to turn your eyes away, when your eyes will be saying, “Show me! Show me!” God’s Word will tell you to give, when you’d rather hoard. Love, when you’d rather hate.

C. *It means reproducing it in others.*

1. *Beginning where?*

Begin with your family. Make sure you have family devotions frequently. Use that dinner time. Use that bedtime. Get your kids into youth group. When we stand back and look at this life from eternity, how do you think you’re going to evaluate that decision you’re making now to put sports ahead of Jesus, to put scouting and dance lessons and football ahead of Jesus. There’s nothing wrong with any of these things – they enrich our lives – but seek first the kingdom and all these things will be added unto you, Jesus said. It’s just too easy for most of us to give Jesus short-shrift.

IV. *William Tyndale*

A. *What two things defeated the Pope’s attempt to repress the creation of the English Bible?*

1. *The inventing of the printing press.*

2. *The flowering of the Reformation under Martin Luther.*

B. What were Luther's three main teachings?

Luther's teaching could be boiled down to three key ideas: *Christ alone*, Luther declared – not Christ and the pope as the Catholic church insisted. Not Christ and Mary. Not Christ and a labyrinth of saints you should pray to. Christ alone. And *Scripture alone*, Luther said – not Scripture and church tradition as the Catholic church believed. And *faith alone*, Luther insisted – not faith and all the silly hoops and gimmicks which the Catholic church invented, such as buying indulgences to shorten your stay in purgatory, collecting sacred relics, confessing to priests.

C. Take note of some of the key events in Tyndale's life:

In England, a group of scholars and students met to study Luther's doctrines. The group became known as "little Germany". Numbered in the group was a young, brilliant teacher named William Tyndale, who had acquired a mastery of Greek and Hebrew, the Bible's original languages. Once at a dinner engagement, Tyndale thoroughly embarrassed a local church official who tried to engage him in debate. Out of spite, the official had Tyndale dragged before a heresy hearing; Tyndale was cleared, but it forebode the trouble he would have in England, and it confirmed to him how ignorant people were about God's Word. He vowed at that time that he would give to England the Bible in her native tongue.

Shortly thereafter, he engaged another religious official in conversation, who said to Tyndale, "We'd be better without God's law than the Pope's." Tyndale was enraged, and he shouted, "*I defy the Pope and all his laws. If God spare my life, before many years I will cause a boy the drives the plow to know more of Scripture than you do.*"

He immediately set to work on his task, but he couldn't find a printer in England who would sponsor his work. So he moved to the European continent where with much diligence, the first English New Testament based on the original Greek and Hebrew was printed in 1526. England was soon swimming with Tyndale's Bibles. But Tyndale ran out of money and was unable to print any more Bibles. In one of the strange ironies of history, the Catholic officials in England were so aghast at what they saw, that they bought

up as many of Tyndale's Bibles as they possibly could, and then burned them. The irony being that the money they spent ended up in Tyndale's hands, where it financed the continued printing of his Bible. Pretty soon, there were more Bibles than ever in England. Tyndale continued revising his work, and then set out to translate the Old Testament.

In the early 1530s, the tide had turned in England. King Henry the VIII had himself thumbed his nose at the Pope by divorcing his Catholic wife Catherine of Aragon, and as a result Henry began showing a sympathetic interest in Protestantism, albeit not for the purest of reasons. But it's funny how God uses the silly politics of men to accomplish his purposes. It appeared that in a short time, Tyndale would be able to return to England to continue his work without harassment. However, in 1535, Tyndale was kidnapped from his home and imprisoned in the fortress of one of his enemies, the European emperor, Charles V, who was the nephew of Catherine of Aragon, whom King Henry VIII had publically disgraced and divorced. William Tyndale gave Charles a perfect way to repay the English king. On October 6, 1536, William Tyndale was convicted as a heretic, then strangled and burned, his last words being "Lord, open the king of England's eyes!" never realizing that a few months before, King Henry had granted official approval for the printing of English Bibles, based largely on William Tyndale's own translation.