

In homes around the world, the green leather book with gold lettering holds a place of special honor. For many, *The Living Bible* is the book that enabled them to understand Scripture as never before.

For Dr. Kenneth Taylor, making Scripture accessible for all people was his life's passion.

On Friday, June 10, just before noon, Taylor passed away in his home, with his family at his side. He leaves behind a legacy of Christian service that will live on for years to come.

Even at 88 years old, Taylor's enthusiasm and fervor for his work never waned. His commitment and desire to serve God, evidenced by the fact that he rarely missed a day in the office, remained strong right up until his death.

Taylor was born on May 8, 1917, in Portland, Oregon, to George and Charlotte Huff Taylor. Due in large part to his pastor father and godly mother, Taylor developed a solid faith in Christ and a deep respect for the Bible at a very young age. He graduated from Wheaton College (Wheaton, Illinois) in 1938, attended Dallas Theological Seminary for three years, and graduated from Northern Baptist Seminary in 1944.

Taylor, who spent 65 years in the publishing industry, began his career as editor of *HIS* magazine and later served as director of Moody Press in Chicago. He was the author of many children's books, including *The Bible in Pictures for Little Eyes* and *My First Bible in Pictures*.

But Ken Taylor is probably best known as the man who wrote *The Living Bible*, a paraphrase of Scripture that to date has sold more than 40 million copies.

The Living Bible was born out of Taylor's deep desire for his children to understand God's Word. Taylor and his wife, Margaret, raised ten children in their Wheaton home. Each night, as a part of their evening routine, the family spent time reading the Bible, singing hymns, and praying together. But Ken found the King James Version of the Bible—the most commonly used translation at the time—especially difficult for his young children to understand.

Taylor recalled that as a young man, he had also been frustrated by the complicated 17th century language of the King James Version, and he didn't want his children to have to struggle in the same way. So to help his family make better sense of the Bible, Taylor began to reword specific passages in simple, conversational language, easy enough for even his youngest child to understand. Soon the children were responding to what they were hearing, and Taylor knew he was on to something. He began to paraphrase more passages from the New Testament, often during his daily train commute from Wheaton to Moody Press in downtown Chicago.

Taylor finished his paraphrase of the New Testament epistles in 1962, but he was chagrined to find that no publishers shared his enthusiasm for the project, which he called *Living Letters*. Finally, although they had little money and two children already in college, Ken and Margaret decided to publish *Living Letters* themselves. Paul Benson, president of Lithocolor Press, offered to print 2,000 copies and allow the Taylors to pay for them when the books sold.

Taylor named his fledgling company Tyndale House Publishers, after William Tyndale, the 16th century reformer who was burned at the stake for translating the Bible into English. In its early days, Tyndale House was literally a kitchen-table operation. The older daughters typed Ken's manuscripts, Margaret typed invoices and mailing labels, and the younger children stuffed envelopes and packed books ordered by bookstores.

As Taylor continued to paraphrase the rest of the Scripture, orders for *Living Letters* trickled in slowly. But when evangelist Billy Graham began to use Taylor's work as a premium for his television broadcasts, demand for the books began in earnest.

In 1967 the *Living New Testament* was published, and in 1971 the complete *Living Bible* was released to an eager public. It became the best-selling book in the United States for the next three years, after which *Publisher's Weekly* decided not to allow Bibles to compete with "regular books" for a spot on the best-seller list!

As the success of *The Living Bible* continued to grow, Taylor's quiet generosity and heart for Christian service remained firm. He and Margaret committed right from the start to deposit all profits from *The Living Bible* into a charitable trust. Rather than reaping a financial reward from his years of labor, Taylor insisted that the Bible's royalties be donated to Tyndale House Foundation, whose purpose is to support mission projects around the world. The foundation is still in place today and continues to promote Taylor's vision and mission of making the Bible accessible and available to everyone.

Taylor was president of Tyndale House Publishers until 1984, when he turned over the reins to his son Mark. Ken continued to serve as chairman of the board from 1984 until his death.

Today millions of readers around the world are familiar with Tyndale products, including such best-selling titles as *Left Behind*, *Bringing Up Boys*, and the New Living Translation. Each year the company's 260 employees produce 250 new products.

As employees pass Taylor's now-darkened office, they know there is still much work to be done. While its founder may no longer be physically present, Tyndale's calling is stronger than ever: to create products that make the living Word of God accessible for all. Their role, as the corporate mission statement articulates, is to carry on Ken Taylor's passion and "minister to the spiritual needs of people, primarily through literature consistent with biblical principles."