

# TNIV Study Bible

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*Zondervan | Eds. Kenneth L. Barker et al. | Reviewed by Aída Besançon Spencer*

I am so thankful Zondervan has decided to publish the *TNIV Study Bible*. When the Today's New International Version first was published in the United States, I asked one Zondervan editor if they would ever print the *NIV Study Bible* with the TNIV text. The answer was, "Maybe. Let's wait and see."

Why did I think this updating was necessary? Second Timothy 2:2 and 3:17 are rendered by the New International Version as "entrust to reliable *men* who will also be qualified to teach others" and Scripture is intended "so that the *man* of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work," whereas the TNIV renders "entrust to reliable *people* who will also be qualified to teach others" and Scripture is intended "so that God's people may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." The Greek uses the generic *anthrōpos*. The translation has serious ramifications for the inclusion of women in ministry. In addition, the TNIV has improved the accuracy and orthodoxy of certain renderings, such as Philippians 2:6. Instead of the inconsistent rendering ("Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be *grasped*" [NIV]), the TNIV clarifies that Jesus is always God ("Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be *used to his own advantage*" [TNIV])—similar to the NRSV, "who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be *exploited*." The incarnation was an act of humility for Jesus, but Jesus was (and remains) always God. That is why the *Zondervan TNIV Study Bible* is necessary.

I like the notes and the marginal references in the *TNIV Study Bible* because they include some reference to all data. Every possible question has some helpful information. When it comes to texts more debated by the evangelical community, such as 1 Timothy 2:12, the notes present both sides and leave the reader to decide. For example, the *TNIV Study Bible* note reads: "Some believe that Paul here prohibited teaching only by women not properly instructed. . . . Others maintain that Paul did not allow a woman to be an official teacher in the assembled church." The *Study Bible for Women* may have more thorough egalitarian answers, but only the New Testament has been published. In addition, the *TNIV Study Bible* is broader. At 2,486 pages, it includes marginal references, footnotes on a wide variety of topics, charts, maps, and a concordance.

The *Archaeological Study Bible*, of course, has helpful notes on background matters, but at times it is slanted toward the complementarian side. For example, the *Archaeological Study Bible* note on 1 Timothy 2:12–14 is very close to the *TNIV Study Bible*, but it begins with the more conservative perspective: "Some believe that Paul in these verses restricted women in all circumstances and cultures from teaching or exercising authority over men," but it ends "Paul's

restriction on women teaching certainly made sense in a world that refused to give women teachers a hearing and in which most women were uneducated.” Further, in a topical article, it concludes about marriage that Paul “not surprisingly assumed a top-down, male-dominated social order” (1,922). The *TNIV Study Bible* does agree that in 1 Peter 3:1 “submission” of wives is submission “to a recognized authority”; however, it goes on to specify that “weaker partner” refers only to “physical strength” and not inferiority. The reissued *New Pilgrim Bible*, an Arminian version, says about 1 Timothy 2:12: “Although the woman is just as near and dear to God, and has just as exalted a position in God’s family as any man (Gal. 3:28), the Ephesian women were not to speak with authority in church worship and government. Paul himself acknowledged that women publicly prayed and prophesied (1 Cor. 11:5).” The *Harper Study Bible* with the NRSV is also helpful. Like the *TNIV Study Bible*, the *NRSV Harper Study Bible* tries to remain neutral: “Churches vary widely. . . . Some ordain women to the gospel ministry; others do not ordain women but permit them to speak in the worship services; others prohibit women from participating in any official capacity in a worship setting. The Scriptures do not speak explicitly enough to settle the issue for the satisfaction of all” (note to 1 Cor. 14:34–35). The NRSV does have a more literal translation that is helpful for interpretation, but it is mainly hampered by the lack of capital letters for the “Holy Spirit” in the Old Testament. For example, Genesis 1:2 is translated by the TNIV as “and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters,” whereas the NRSV reads “while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters” (with a note “Or while the spirit of God”). *Ruach* in Hebrew can refer to “Spirit, spirit, or wind.” But, why is the NRSV translation of *ruach* of God never capitalized in the Old Testament? The NRSV Old Testament editors appear biased against the idea of the Trinity (but not the New Testament editors).

Of course, all these study Bibles make valuable contributions. But I recommend highly the *Zondervan TNIV Study Bible* because it contains a gender-inclusive evangelical text with extensive notes and aids.

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