



William Tyndale (1490s – 1536)

A Man of PERSEVERANCE

William's Story

In England in the 1500s, most parents could not read the Christmas story from the Bible to their children. Parents were not allowed to teach their children the Lord's Prayer or the Ten Commandments in English, because it was against the law. Children did not learn the 23rd Psalm or any other Bible verses in English.

At the time, only a few people in England could read the Bible, at all. It was available to them only in Latin, and most of the people could speak and read only English.

Church leaders did not want the Bible to be translated into English. They thought less educated people would not understand the Scriptures and that their misunderstanding would lead them to follow false teachings.

But translator William Tyndale loved God's Word and yearned to make it available to everyone. He persevered in his plan to translate the Bible from the original Hebrew and Greek into English, even when the plan angered important people.

He once told a church official, "If God spare my life ... I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost."

That kind of talk got William into trouble with the government and the church. As he secretly worked on his translation, he avoided capture by moving from one location to another. He persevered in his work. Finally, in 1526, his English New Testament was printed in Germany. William smuggled copies into England by ship, in bales of cotton.

The King of England opposed his work, and the church responded by ordering the New Testament to be burned. In addition, William lost the translation of several books in a shipwreck and had to rewrite them.

William was betrayed by a "friend," arrested and sentenced to death. His final words were, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes." His prayer was answered a year after his death, when King Henry VIII authorized the Scriptures to be translated and printed in English.

Key Bible Verses:

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us." (Hebrews 12:1, NIV)

Key Word: PERSEVERANCE

Perseverance: Diligence and determination in completing something despite difficulties or delays

John 1:1 in the original Greek

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

John 1:1 in Latin

in principio erat Verbum et Verbum erat apud Deum et Deus erat Verbum

William Tyndale's translation

In the beginnyng was the worde and the worde was with God: and the worde was God.
— Tyndale Bible



Henry Phillips

Henry Phillips pretended he was William's friend so he could betray William to the authorities. His betrayal led to William's capture. (Who betrayed Jesus in a way that led to His capture?)



Danger

Parents in England had been arrested for teaching their children the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments in English. William knew the danger of making the Bible available in English. It was against the law to write or even own any portion of a Bible in English. Today, though, we have the freedom to learn the Ten Commandments in English. How many can you name?



Extreme Handwriting

William had finished translating the New Testament and part of the Old Testament when Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy (the Pentateuch) were destroyed in a shipwreck. He had to rewrite them by hand — more than 150,000 words!



Answered Prayer

William's final prayer before he entered eternity was for the king. One year later, in 1537, King Henry VIII approved the printing of the Bible in English.



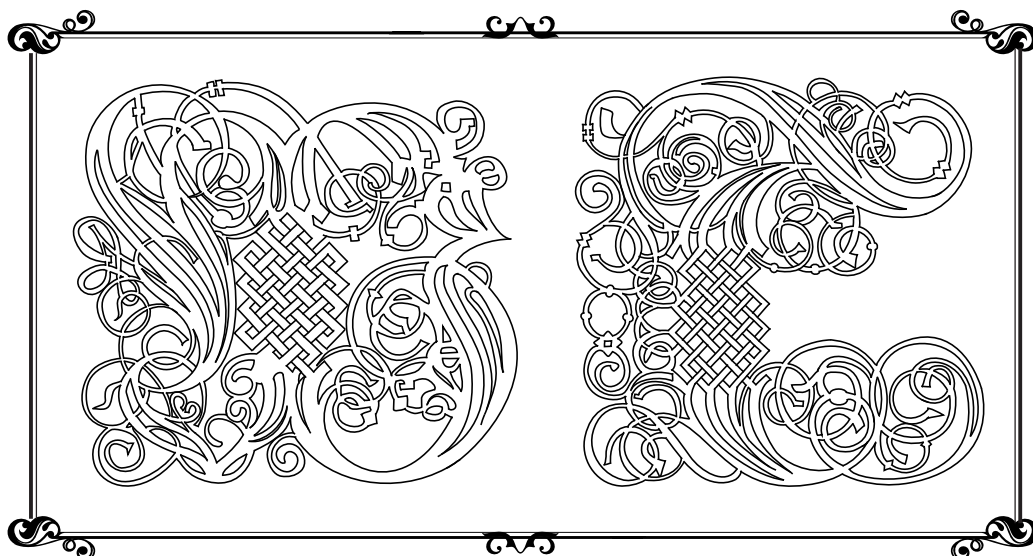
Not Many Left

Thousands of copies of William's New Testament were distributed in England. Fewer than five first editions exist today.



Image to Color

A monogram is a design using a person's initials. William Tyndale's monogram appeared in the Matthew's Bible, published in the year after William's death. The monogram recognized William's contribution to the making of the English Bible.



Bible Verse Cryptogram



After William smuggled his New Testament into England, furious authorities devised a plan to keep people from reading it. They bought many of the books to prevent others from having them. Then, they burned them! However, copies still made it into the hands of eager seekers. The money from the authorities' purchases helped support William while he continued doing the difficult translation work they opposed.

Solve the cryptogram to read one of the verses from the New Testament that William translated. *Here are two big hints:* The letter “T” below stands for “E” and the word “PERSEVERANCE” appears twice. The answer is in the Answer Key and is found in Romans 5:3–4 (NIV).

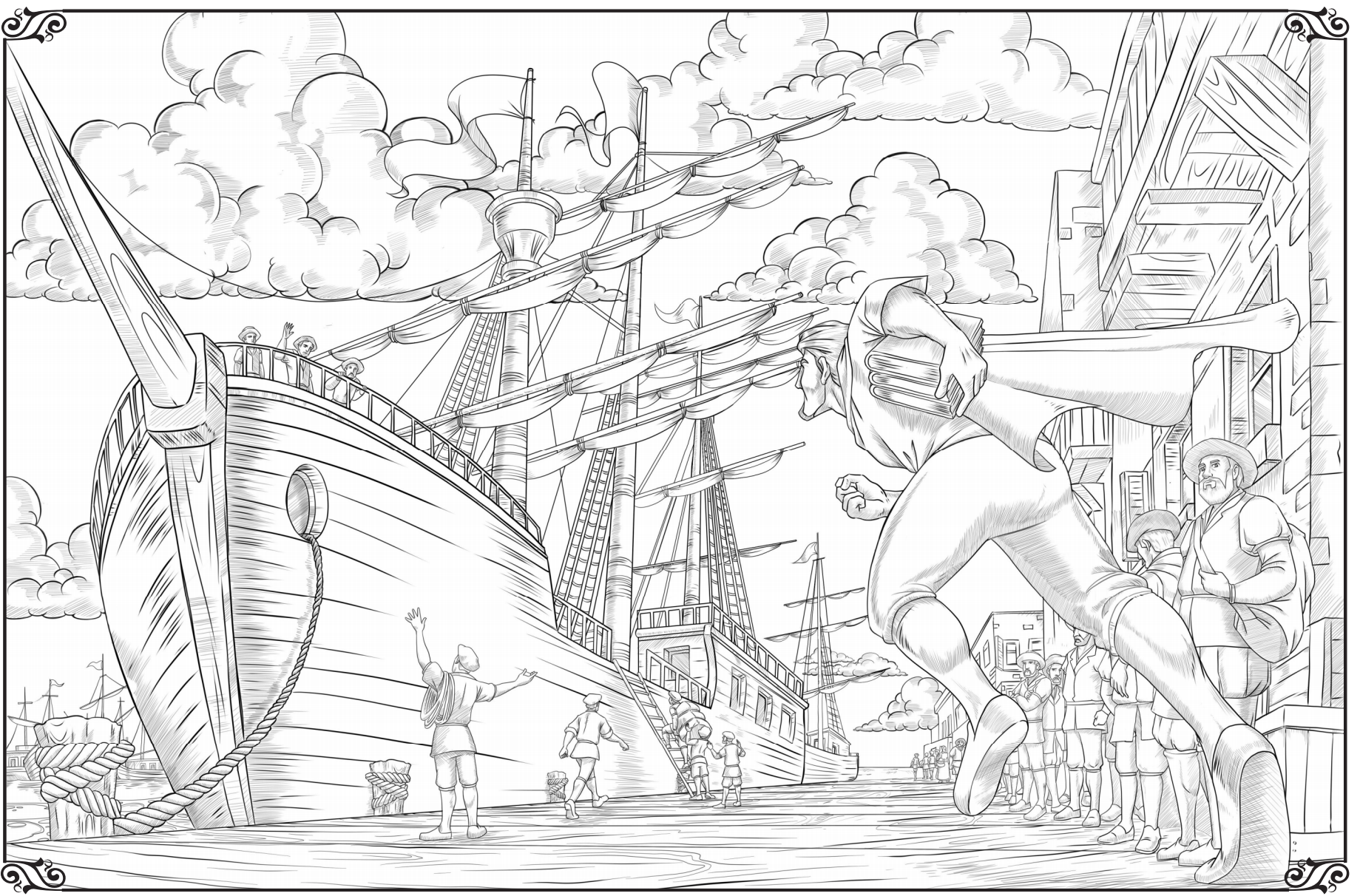
V T Z X M G I X G N S K U G Y N M Y H H T N K U I M

C T W Z Y M T V T A U G V P J Z P M Y H H T N K U I

R N G E Y W T M R T N M T B T N Z U W T;

R T N M T B T N Z U W T, W J Z N Z W P T N;

Z U E W J Z N Z W P T N, J G R T.



William avoided capture by moving from place to place.

Make a Feather Quill Pen



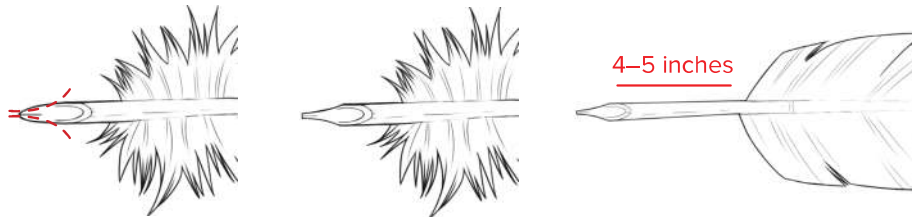
In William Tyndale's time, people wrote with quill pens made from feathers. Use the instructions below to make your own feather quill pen.

Needed: Turkey feathers (available at craft stores); a craft knife or other sharp cutting tool; an adult experienced in using cutting tools safely; a toothpick; and calligraphy ink.

1. Starting about an inch from the tip of the feather, slice off the tip of the feather at a 45-degree angle. (Note: You may want to use plastic drinking straws or additional turkey feathers to practice cutting the tip into the proper shape.) Using a toothpick, clean the feather membranes out a few inches from the inside of the feather's shaft.
2. Make a slit about 1/8 inch long in the center of the longer end of the tip. The slit will help the pen hold ink.
3. Whittle the tip with the cutting tool to form a shape that resembles the tip of a fountain pen.
4. On a cutting board or other hard surface, trim off the pointed end of the tip.



5. Remove about 4 to 5 inches of the feather barbs to make a comfortable quill for your hand.



6. Dip the quill in ink. Gently brush off the end of the quill on the top rim of the bottle to remove excess ink.
7. Holding it at an 45- to 90-degree angle, write with the pen, dipping it in ink again after every four or five letters. Your quill pen writing will improve with practice.

Suggested verses to write:

Romans 10:17, Psalm 119:105,
John 5:39, 1 John 5:11,
2 Timothy 3:16, Isaiah 40:8,
Matthew 24:35, Jeremiah
23:29, Luke 24:25

Hiding Scripture

William Tyndale and the readers of his English Bible had to hide their copies of Scripture. Using your quill pen, write Bible verses on index cards or pieces of paper. Where would you hide the verses if you didn't want anyone to find them? Hide the verses in different places in your room or classroom.

What Do You Think?



William Tyndale was a Bible smuggler, hiding English Bibles in bales of cotton and other goods. William was breaking the laws of England by providing people with Bibles.

Should Christians ever break the law?

Read each pair of ideas below, and decide which one in each pair is the most important consideration in deciding whether Christians should smuggle Bibles into countries where the Bible is illegal. Write your thoughts on the line below each pair.

1. • The Bible says, “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities” (Romans 13:1). This verse means that Christians must not take Bibles into countries where government leaders do not want Bibles.
 - Christ commanded His followers, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15). “All the world” includes countries where it is illegal to preach the gospel. In that case, “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

2. • Christians must obey all the laws and commands of rulers, even if those laws cause them to disobey God’s Word.
 - The following people in the Bible disobeyed government rulers in order to obey God: Moses’ mother, Rahab, Daniel, the apostles and others.

3. • Christians should show respect and tolerance for the beliefs of those who don’t follow Christ. Giving them Bibles does not show respect for their beliefs.
 - When we tell others the Good News of the way to eternal life, we are demonstrating our extreme love for them. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

Research

Find out the names of five countries where owning or sharing Bibles is still illegal today.

Learning to Persevere



“You won’t believe what my dad said!” Seth reported to his friends at school one day. “He said I can’t play soccer if I get any grades below a C!”

“It must be dumb parent week,” Nicole joined in from the other end of the lunch table. “My mom wants me to learn to mow the lawn starting this Saturday!”

Everyone looked at Hannah. She always had something disrespectful to say about her parents or teachers that made her classmates laugh. She prayed silently for strength. “I just don’t have anything interesting to say today,” she said. A few of her classmates groaned, but they moved onto another topic. “Thank you, God,” she prayed.

The leader at Hannah’s Bible study group had challenged the group to make a commitment for the next week on following Philippians 2:14, “Do all things without grumbling or disputing.” It seemed like an impossible task for Hannah. She was always grumbling and complaining.

But she decided to ask God to forgive her and help her change.

That night, God did something that put Hannah’s commitment to the test. Hannah’s parents told her to give them her phone every night after supper until her homework and chores were completed. Hannah normally would have grumbled and complained, even though she knew she wasted too much time on her phone.

She asked God for strength, then handed over her phone, smiled, and walked quietly to her room.

Her mom and dad were amazed. She heard them talking to each other, and her mom even called a friend and talked to her about Hannah’s new attitude. She would tell her classmates at school about depending on God to change her heart and help her persevere in overcoming “grumbling and complaining,” but not yet. She needed more experience depending on God for strength to obey and persevere no matter what.

To think about:

Why did Hannah want to wait before telling her classmates about what she was doing? How might they react when she tells them she no longer wants to complain about her parents?

Should Hannah have told her parents about her plan?

What obstacles did William Tyndale face? How do you think he was able to persevere?