

Bible verses compared: Improving clarity in contemporary English

News in the [March 8, 2005](#) issue

The recently published TNIV, now with an Old Testament translation that continues the shift toward gender-inclusive language, also strives to improve clarity in contemporary English, judging by a comparison of the new version with the wording in the NIV of the early 1980s.

The NIV begins Genesis 1:27, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him,” but the TNIV begins, “So God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them.”

Some of the lyrical wording in the famous 23rd Psalm may be missed. “I shall not be in want” becomes “I lack nothing.” The Lord “refreshes my soul” instead of “restores my soul,” and he guides me “along the right paths” instead of “in the paths of righteousness.”

But what is the walk through “the valley of the shadow of death” in that psalm? The TNIV rendition says succinctly it is a walk through “the darkest valley.”

At the start of Elisha’s ministry in 2 Kings 2:23-24 the NIV says two youths taunted the prophet, “Go on up, you bald-head!” In the TNIV the two boys jeer instead, “Get out of here, baldy!” The fate of the two boys and 40 of their friends remains the same: Elisha cursed them and two bears came out of the woods to maul them.

The admonitions in Leviticus (18:22, 20:13), often cited by opponents of homosexuality, are made more explicit. The “do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman” becomes in the TNIV “do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman.” Their fate remains the same: “They are to be put to death” (20:13).

The teacher in Ecclesiastes (9:1) reflects that the righteous and wise and what they do are in God’s hands, but “no man knows whether love or hate awaits him” (NIV) or “no one knows whether love or hate awaits them” (TNIV).