

Examples from the “Review of the 102” To Support the TEC Conclusions Supplemental Report to the 2013 WELS Convention

Note: The group of each reviewer is indicated by #1, #2, or #3.

#1—Group #1 = Synod workers

#2—Group #2 = Symposium participants from January 2012

#3—Group #3 = Younger pastors

Note: If a reviewing section has more than one biblical book, the section will be indicated by abbreviating the first biblical book in the section.

E.g. Ecc = Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations

Ob = Obadiah through Malachi

Gal = Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians

1) WELS pastors do not always agree on translation decisions.

Opinions can differ on translation philosophy

- I submit that “real translation” that follows the principles of Martin Luther isn’t necessarily going to be literal. A good translation ought to express the thoughts the way the receiving language expresses them. (Ezr #2)

- Luther’s gift in translating was in giving the German people a fluent, German Bible—that’s certainly true. But when I compare his translation with the current crop of English ones, I find that Luther often stays much closer to the original text. He preserves many more of the idioms and phrases of the original language. . . . I have more and more concerns with the dynamic-equivalent translational model, as it is currently employed. Too often I see translators who seem all too willing to ignore the important “little” words in Scripture. The connectives. The vocatives. A word like *Selah*—in the Psalms. *Hineh* or *Hen* in the Hebrew. I also see a tendency to substitute simpler English words like “rescue,” or phrases like “do what is right,” for words that are deep and rich in theological, soteriological meaning (ransom, redeem, righteousness). No doubt this is done with the end-user in mind. But it seems to me that the end product has lost something significant from the original. (Isa 40–66 #2)

- I’m not sold that a “Sunday” language (or I prefer “sacred” language—that is, set apart for a special purpose) read from the pulpit and lectern . . . is inappropriate any more than candles (instead of light bulbs), altars (instead of tables), or fonts (instead of sinks, or “water bowls”) are inappropriate in the Sunday service. These things are sacred, for a special use and purpose in our time spent with God. Therefore, I don’t know that a “Sunday” language is always bad and

might challenge the assumption that a translation ought to have a “common, current use” (criterion #2) or will be aimed at “English speakers who can handle Standard American English at a late primary school or early high school level” (criterion #5). (Mk #3)

Opinions can differ on general editorial decisions

- HCSB’s use of modern equivalents for units of time and measurement is good. (Ex #1; Jos #2; 1 Sa #3; 1 Ki #1, #2; 2 Ki #3; Eze #3; Isa 1–39 #2, #3; Jer #2; Eze #2)
HCSB’s use of modern equivalents for units of time and measurement is not good. (Ex #3; Nu #3; 2 Ki #1, Eze #2)
- HCSB has too many footnotes. (Nu #2; Jos #3; Ro #1)
It is good for HCSB to have so many footnotes. (Isa 40–66 #3)
- “Behold” is a good way to reproduce Hebrew *hineh* and Greek *idou*. (Ecc #3; Mt #2)
“Behold” is an example of archaic English not to be preferred. (Dt #1; 1 Ki #2; Pr #1)

Opinions can differ on gender inclusive language

- Some are comfortable with the gender inclusive language of NIV2011
 - In general, generic language was not distracting. In fact, it is a vast improvement (e.g. “mortals, those, a person’s, them/their”). (Job #1)
 - The NIV2011 intends to use gender inclusive language where the context does not limit the thought to males or females, but to retain gender exclusive language in passages where the context is limited to one gender. Certainly there is room for debate about individual passages, but in general I think that the NIV2011 has adequately followed their policy in the book of Proverbs. (Pr #1)
 - I discovered that in NIV2011 over 50% of the passages in Ecclesiastes changed due to many gender neutral situations, like “wise man” to “wise person.” I didn’t think any of the changes made much difference though. (Ecc #3)
 - On rare occasion the NIV2011’s gender-neutral approach to the nouns *adelphos* and *anthrōpos* and to certain pronouns was a bit awkward. Most of the time, however, I felt the changes were hardly noticeable or, as noted above, the right thing to do. (Ro #1)
 - In regard to male headship, the NIV2011 has not made my job of teaching this doctrine any more difficult (or easier) than it already is. The key passages used to establish this wonderful doctrine remain the same. I also do not believe that someone reading through the NIV2011 with truly fresh eyes would come to any different conclusion about the roles of man and woman than they would if they were to read NIV1984. In regard to gender inclusive language, I did not mark this change among any of the “best passages” in the NIV2011. However, neither did I include any of them among its “worst passages.” For the most part, what the NIV2011 did on paper is something we often already do in application—apply the section to our entire audience. In one way, the gender inclusive language of the NIV2011 has made our job easier—there is one less

mental hurdle we have to take down when reaching out with God's Word to biblically illiterate ears. (1 Th #3)

- Similar thoughts = Ecc #1; Mt #3
- Some are not comfortable with the gender inclusive language of NIV2011
 - I fully understand that all gender neutralizations are not created equal. I support neutralizing 1 Timothy 2:4, "God wants all people to be saved." . . . And yet, in my reading of the NIV2011 here and in other places . . . , I find the continual gymnastics to do whatever possible to avoid "unnecessary" masculine references to be a little pointless and insulting. (1 Sa #3)
 - I don't think the NIV2011's efforts to gender inclusive language convey accurately the meaning of Scripture. Not only gender specific pronouns but also nouns (*uios, teknov, pais*) are changed to gender neutral terms which, in some cases, obscure or change the meaning of the text. (Lk #2)
 - I feel that gender neutral language, while fine in theory, has been pushed to the point of weakening the message of the original in a few places in the selection that I reviewed. (Lk #3)
- Some think the "singular *they/their*" is OK
 - The NIV2011 is much more apt to substitute different pronouns for the 3rd person, masculine singular "he" that is often found in the text. Throughout chapter one the NIV2011 substitutes 2nd person singular "you," and in other sections it translates the 3rd plural "they" in accord with the change in English. Some would see this as an unnecessary change, or even a change for the worse. It does reflect modern English idiom, and in many—though not all—cases it would seem to be an improvement. (Lev #3)
 - I do not view the singular *they* as a problem. In this case [Numbers 35:31] it is an advantage. (Nu #1)
 - Even though I feel that the old "his" default made our choices much easier, I don't have a major problem with the singular "they/their." The use of the singular "they" has actually been growing on me. (Ezr #2)
- Some do not like the "singular *they/their*"
 - The gender inclusive [i.e. singular] "their" just doesn't sound natural to me. I agree that sometimes "their" is the new grammatical standard, but I'm not sure it's as blanketing as the study quoted by the NIV2011 suggests. (Job #3)
 - I despise the singular "they." (Lk #2)
 - While it is true that many people do speak this way today, it is also true, in this evaluator's humble opinion, that this is poor English grammar. (1 Co #3)
 - Old-timers may find that the NIV2011 use of "singular they" (as in Gal 6:3-5) sets the teeth on edge because it has not fully established itself as unobjectionable in formal usage. (Gal #2)
 - Similar thoughts = 1 Ki #2, #3; Mk #2

- Some think switching to the plural is OK
 - Isaiah 9:1—This verse is representative of NIV2011’s practice of replacing singular third person expressions with plurals. . . . In the vast majority of cases, I found these changes to be welcome. (#2)
 - [Proverbs] It is true that singulars and plurals go back and forth remarkably in the Hebrew text itself—in a way that often seems quite arbitrary. There are many verses where the Hebrew has a singular generic word in one half of the verse, and a plural in the other. . . . Was a deliberate difference in nuance intended between the singular and the plural? That would be hard to prove. It seems that a general truth could be expressed equally well with a singular or with a plural in Hebrew, with no difference in meaning. So I don’t see that the NIV2011 is distorting anything essential with the meaning in the way that it makes these passages gender inclusive. (Pr #1)
- Some think that something is lost by switching to the plural
 - Revelation 2:7—The confusion of singular and plural in an attempt to eliminate the male juxtaposes words which don’t fit, impersonalizes statements which ought to bring personal comfort or personal discomfort, and will require the unfortunate explanation, “Well the words don’t really say that . . .” (Rev #2)
- Some are pleased with “brothers and sisters” in NIV2011, at least in many occurrences
 - Acts 1:16—The previous verse says that Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about 120). In the immediate context it is clear that this group included women (v. 14). (#2)
 - I’m convinced that when most Americans hear *adelphoi* translated as “brothers,” they naturally understand it in the “males only” sense. Yet it’s quite obvious that Paul’s first audience included women as well as men. (Ro #1)
 - “Brothers and sisters” was for the most part helpful. A couple of times it seemed cumbersome, but it did not undermine Scripture’s roles of men and women. In some spots, “brothers and sisters” was much better. (Heb #3)
 - 2 John 3,5—“believers”/“brothers and sisters”—The NIV2011 has taken heat for how it handles gender issues in some passages. In these verses, their translation choices seem to be improvements which avoid the problems that might arise in teaching the doctrine of the roles of man and woman. (1 Pe #3)
 - Revelation—The use of *adelphoi* translated as “brothers and sisters” seems entirely appropriate in the context. (Rev #1)
 - Revelation—I think this is a wise translation to include females. (Rev #3)
- Some are not pleased with “brothers and sisters” in NIV2011, at least in some occurrences
 - Luke 14:12—I don’t believe that it is necessary to translate *adelphous* with “brothers and sisters.” (Lk #3)
 - I would prefer “brothers” with a footnote than the other way around. (Ac #3; Heb #1)

- The NIV2011 genericized rendering of *adelphoi* is consistently irritating especially to women in our congregation where men are taught to serve as Christ-like leaders. (Ro #2)
 - While the Greek word allows for both men and women, taking the liberty of adding “sisters” is unnecessary and perhaps a step-too-far. (1 Co #1)
 - Similar thoughts = Jos #2; Gal #1; 1 Pe #2
- Some think that “weaklings” instead of “women” is good in Isaiah 19:16/Jeremiah 50:37/Nahum 3:13 (Isa 1–39 #3; Jer #3)
 - Some think that “weaklings” instead of “women” is not good in Isaiah 19:16/Jeremiah 50:37/Nahum 3:13 (Isa 1–39 #2; Jer #1; Ob #1, #2)
- NIV2011 gender inclusive language is praised in some passages by some reviewers
 - Psalm 1:1—“Blessed is the one” (#3)
 - Psalm 49:16ff—“Do not be overawed when others grow rich” (instead of “a man”) (#1)
 - Isaiah 31:3—“the Egyptians are mere mortals and not God”—This is a good example of “gender-neutral” translating that, in fact, is a more accurate reflection of the text. . . . The point isn’t their gender, but the type of being they are. (#2)
 - Isaiah 53:3—“He was despised and rejected by mankind. . . Like one from whom people hide their faces” (#2)
 - Jeremiah 31:30—“Everyone will die for their own sin.” (#3)
 - Ezekiel 5:10—“parents will eat their children” (instead of fathers/sons) (#2)
 - Ezekiel 18:4—“everyone belongs to me, the parent as well as the child” (#3)
 - Daniel 7:4—“it stood on two feet like a human being, and the mind of a human was given to it.” (#2)
 - John 3:3—“No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” (#2)
 - John 12:36—“so that you may become children of God”—There is no reason on earth to preserve the male “sons” for this obvious Hebraism, as HCSB and the ESV feel it necessary to do. Luther had no such compunction: “*auf daß ihr des Lichtes Kinder seid.*” (#1)
 - John 6:58—“Your ancestors ate manna and died” (#2)
 - Acts 4:12—“no other name among mankind”—We might bemoan the fact that 21st century Americans no longer use or hear the word “men” to refer to both sexes, but they don’t. In this context it is clear that Paul is making the point that all people are saved by the name of Christ. The NIV2011 leaves no room for misunderstanding. (#2)
 - Acts 17:34—“Some of the people . . . Among them was . . . a woman named Damaris” (#2)
 - Ephesians 1:5—“for adoption to sonship”—In spite of all the gender neutral negativity surrounding the NIV2011, here is a case where it betters the HCSB in retaining the “sonship” concept in our adoption. (#3)

- NIV2011 gender inclusive language is criticized in some passages by some reviewers
 - Joshua 4:21—“In the future when your descendants ask their parents” (reviewer prefers “fathers”) (#2)
 - One of the NIV’s greatest strengths has always been how smoothly they rendered the original languages into readable English. In general, that is still true. However, the many circumlocutions to avoid gender specific language do have the effect of reducing this advantage. Quite often, these sections are harder to read and sometimes they do lose meaning. (1 Sa #2)
 - Ezekiel 3:18—“That wicked person will die for their sin.” (#2)
 - Amos 2:11—“I raised up prophets from among your children” (why not leave it “sons”?) (#2)
 - Matthew 18:15—“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you.” (#1, #2)
 - Luke 1:55—“to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors” (reviewer prefers “fathers”) (#3)
 - Luke 9:23—“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily” (#1)
 - Luke 14:5—“If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well” (reviewer prefers “son”) (#2)
 - Romans 14:2—“One person’s faith allows them to eat anything” (#3)
 - Hebrews 12:7—“God is treating you as his children” (reviewer prefers “sons”) (#2)

Opinions can differ on the evaluation of books

- Compare these two comments from different reviewers—both evaluating Matthew in the ESV:
 - I feel that there are too many passages in ESV which contort the word order in a way that would make readers stumble, especially in BIC and confirmation class settings, but even for the one publicly reading them. And some of the words and phrases are so archaic that I fear they will strike many readers as “this book is out of touch with my world.” (Mt #1)
 - ESV has received criticism as having too much archaic language. I found little in Matthew that was hard to understand or sounded out of date. (Mt #2)
- Compare these two comments from different reviewers—both evaluating Revelation in the ESV:
 - In general the ESV is a clumsy and literalistic translation. The translators needlessly use archaic words and phrases. They could have communicated just as precisely with a cleaner, more modern wording. Compared to the other two translations reviewed, there is nothing outstanding about ESV that commends it for usage. Both the NIV2011 and the HCSB do a much better job of translating precisely but smoothly. (Rev #1)
 - Using the ESV in devotional reading of the Psalms has demonstrated to me that what at first felt a little stiff became natural and flowing. I think, especially with the tendency towards literalness, that this would be a good translation to use. (Rev #2)

- Compare these two comments from different reviewers—both evaluating Joshua/Judges/Ruth in the NIV2011:
 - I found at least 80 more passages that were weakened from NIV1984 to NIV2011. Listing five of each like this makes the results look more balanced than it really is. There were many more problems in NIV2011 than in the other two. (Jos #2)
 - I really didn't find any passages [in NIV2011] that were weak enough to report here. . . . I thought the English flowed very well and was a very accurate reflection of the Hebrew in these sections. . . . Of the three, I felt this translation was the strongest overall. (Jos #3)

Opinions can differ on individual passages

- Leviticus 16:8—"Azazel" (ESV) is best (#2)
"scapegoat" (NIV2011) is best (#3)
- 2 Kings 2:23—"Get out of here" is a good choice (#1)
"Get out of here" loses the full sense of the statement (#3)
- "made love to" is a good choice (1 Sa #1)
"made love to" is a poor choice (2 Sa #2)
- "LORD Almighty" is better than "LORD of hosts" (2 Ki #2; Jer #2)
"LORD of hosts" is better than "LORD Almighty" (1 Kg #2; Da #1)
"LORD of armies" would be best (2 Sa #2)
- "whore/whoring" is a good choice (1 Sa #2; Eze #3; Ob #3)
"whore/whoring" is a poor choice (Jer #2)
- Ecclesiastes 1:2—"vanity of vanity" is a good choice (#2)
"vanity of vanity" is a poor choice (#1, #3)
- Jeremiah 12:2—"conscience" (HCSB) is a good choice for Hebrew "kidneys" (#3)
"conscience" (HCSB) is a poor choice for Hebrew "kidneys" (#2)
- Luke 1:27—"betrothed" is a good choice (#3)
"betrothed" is a poor choice (#1)
- Luke 1:23—"no word from God will ever fail" (NIV2011) is good (#3)
"no word from God will ever fail" (NIV2011) is not good (#2)
- Luke 12:19—"Soul" (ESV) is a good choice (#2)
"Soul" (ESV) is stilted (#1)
- John 1:51—"I assure you" (HCSB) is a good rendering of *amēn, amēn* (#1, #2)
"I assure you" (HCSB) is not a good rendering of *amēn, amēn* (#3)
- Philippians 2:6—"in the form of God" is better than "in very nature God" (#2)
"in very nature God" is better than "in the form of God" (#3)
- 1 Timothy 3:11—"women" is better than "wives" (#2)
"wives" is better than "women" (#3)
- Titus 1:6—"faithful to his wife" is a good rendering (#2)
"faithful to his wife" is not a good rendering (#1)

- 1 John 2:2; 4:10—“atoning sacrifice” is better than “propitiation” (#1, #3; Ro #2)
“propitiation” is better than “atoning sacrifice” (#2)

2) Each of the three translations has some generally recognized strengths.

- It is a choice of three good translations, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. Thanks be to God that he communicated his love and mercy to us on the pages of Scripture in the first place! (1 Ki #2)
- God’s people will be blessed with whichever translation we use. . . . I think our people would benefit from studying God’s Word by working with the three translations side by side as I did. The process was thought-provoking and spiritually enriching. (Gal #1)

3) Each of the three translations has some generally recognized weaknesses.

- If we don’t want to endorse NIV2011, we might want to go with an eclectic policy, rather than just endorsing HCSB exclusively. Detailed study keeps underscoring the truisms: *There are no perfect translations. Ad fonts . . .*” (Eze #2)
- If decades and dollars and divisions of worker training manpower were spent to produce a “WELS translation”—and that is a colossal “if”—one wonders how it would stand up to a review such as this one. (2 Ki #2)

4) The ESV has its strengths, but because of its widely recognized weaknesses in English style, it should not be considered as the exclusive publication translation of WELS.

ESV strength—it is a literal translation that could be useful as a study Bible

- Overall, I liked how the ESV, while certainly more wooden, kept closer to the text. In most cases, the more literal translation was not only very easy to understand, but more accurately conveyed what the Greek says. (Mk #3)
- Because of its faithfulness to the text, the ESV has much to commend it. It does a nice job of rendering the Greek into precise English. Sometimes, however, it’s *too* precise, in the sense that it communicates in an overly literalistic way that becomes cumbersome. The ESV is difficult to listen to when read aloud. The flow of the translation leaves much to be desired. This negatively impacts the usability for worship and publications. I could see the ESV being a good translation for personal study, especially for comparison with other translations. (Rev #1)

ESV strength—retains traditional terminology

- Psalm 23:3—“he leads me in paths of righteousness” (#3)
- Psalm 63:1—“my soul thirsts for you” (#3)
- Psalm 78:38—“he . . . atoned for their iniquity” (#2)
- Psalm 137:8—“blessed shall he be who repays you” (#2)
- Zechariah 9:9—“righteous and having salvation” (#1)
- Romans 1:7—“called to be saints” (#2)
- Hebrews 10:10 —“we have been sanctified” (#2)
- *Xristos* is always “Christ” (Mk #2; Jn #2)

ESV strength—in some individual passages

- Psalm 2:7—capitalization of “Son” (#3)
- Proverbs 8:22ff—best allows for reference to the pre-incarnate Christ (#3)
- Romans 9:33—“a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense” (#2)
- 1 Corinthians 7:39—“she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord” (#2)

ESV strength—there are Lutheran resources available with it

- The fact that the LCMS went with ESV makes it a little more usable for our circles. We will probably be able to find more resources with confessional Lutheran tendencies, making the ESV a decent choice for WELS. But the comments about language above still lead me to shy away from the ESV. (1 Th #2)

ESV strength—we could get used to it

- I didn’t like it at first. I got used to it as I was reading it. (Jer #1)
- In this reviewer’s opinion, with regular, widespread usage in our circles, the above-noted difficulties with the English style of the ESV could eventually be overcome. (Mt #3)
- Our laity—especially the less educated among them—will have more difficulty reading John in the ESV than the other two. However, I’m also confident that, after a few years of using the ESV, they will become accustomed to it. (Jn #3)
- While the reading level of this translation requires more of the reader than is required by NIV2011 and HCSB, I believe the ESV would be usable based on this sampling. Our people may have to do a little more work, but they would understand what God’s Word is saying to them. (1 Pe #2)

ESV weakness—its English style was criticized by reviewer after reviewer

- In my opinion, the ESV is not really a literal translation; it is an exercise in nostalgia. (Ge #3)
- Its style isn’t appropriate for 21st century public reading and most likely would also prove somewhat difficult for an average or below average reader, especially someone unfamiliar with Elizabethan English. (Nu #2)

- Through this exercise it has become very clear to me that, while it could serve well as a Bible for verse-by-verse study, the ESV is not a Bible to be regularly read aloud to non-specialists. Above I tried to focus on places where the ESV rendering is inaccurate or seriously impedes understanding. But something has to be said about the ESV's archaic vocabulary ("whoring," "stripes" [meaning "wounds"], "barren," "manslayer," "visiting" [as in "the iniquity of the fathers"], "suckle," "pate," "pare," "Behold," "lest," "sojourner," "frontlet," etc.). Then there are its convoluted sentences, its ambiguities when it is heard aurally ("wholly" or "holy" in 1:36? "your" or you're" in 2:7?), its anachronisms ("book," "barns"), and what seems at times like an almost intentional preference for the clumsy and obscure. In Deuteronomy—again, as a Bible for oral reading to non-specialists—the ESV is by far the worst choice of these three. (Dt #1)
- While there aren't any passages that are extremely weak on doctrinal or exegetical grounds, I would rate this translation as cumbersome and clunky compared to the English of the other two. It is overly literal at times, almost going out of its way to sound awkward where it doesn't need to. (Jos #3)
- Throughout this section, the English is wooden and literalistic. Every once in a while, it rises to excellence. But overall, it is very difficult to read. Again and again, it falls into the practice of declaring one English word to be the equivalent translation and then woodenly using that word no matter what the context is or how that choice distorts the meaning. Again and again, it slavishly reproduces Hebrew grammatical structures with no real reason to do so and without adding any real clarity at all. No one with any limitations in reading (either because of youth or educational issues) is going to find this translation usable. Without the printed text in front of you, it is difficult to imagine people hearing and comprehending the meaning of the text. (1 Sa #2)
- This translation just doesn't read very well. It often doesn't flow well, and its vocabulary is, well, dated or awkward. . . . I think our kids would particularly struggle with reading the ESV, so I rated it fairly low on acceptability for publications. While adults could probably handle the awkward English, I would worry that it would push us towards a "Biblish" or "Bible-speak" rather than having our Word of God in ordinary, real language. (2 Sa #2)
- The ESV in my section did a reliable job of translating the words into English. However, it often failed to produce "Good English." In a section of historical narrative like the one I was assigned, some passages are almost painful to read, not because of the content of the translation, but because of its English style. There are many paragraphs that include the word "And" far too often. Sometimes the ESV chooses a difficult to understand, lesser used English word rather than a commonly used and understood one. Children and the less literate among us would probably have a harder time understanding the ESV if it were used in public worship and other publications. It was hard to praise ESV for good translation when it was sitting next to NIV and HCSB. (2 Sa #3)
- I would NOT want to try to memorize ESV English! (1 Ki #3)
- Overall I had a very difficult time finding 5 passages I would consider strong. . . . I had a very difficult time limiting myself to 5 passages I would consider weak. (2 Ki #3)

- This was somewhat difficult, picking only five passages, for there were many places where I made the handwritten notes: poor English, clumsy translation, “clunky,” hard to read, or even difficult to understand. . . . To me the number of clumsy, poor English, etc. passages in the ESV is a major issue. (Ezr #2)
- I found many places of poor choice of English and had a hard time narrowing the 30 or so of them to 5. I found the ESV to be “clunky.” (Job #1)
- Doctrinally there is nothing that prevents WELS from using ESV in Isaiah 1–39 that I noticed. However, I rate it lowest because it often gets in the way of communicating God’s intended meaning by being literalistic or using archaic phrases that need to be decoded by the reader before comprehension. (Isa 1–39 #3)
- The translation is fine, but the English is awkward and difficult to understand. While some may argue that the English of the Bible should be more elevated than common, conversational English (I agree), this is too extreme. (Isa 40–66 #3)
- In my own congregation I asked Bible class attendees to compare different sections of Jeremiah over a period of several weeks. They were given the same passages from the three translations and were asked to rank them based on readability and clarity without being told which translation was which. Even though most of them grew up with the KJV, which would have made the ESV somewhat familiar to them, the ESV was almost always ranked last. . . . The English vocabulary and style make this translation more difficult to recommend. (Jer #3)
- I was truly shocked by the number of archaisms and awkward expressions found in the ESV. It’s the kind of thing you probably notice more when you’re doing a comparison study like this. Judging by the ease of reading the Scriptures I see displayed in the seminary chapel, I am convinced that even many of our younger pastors would have troubles with it, not to mention lay readers. . . . I would not like it in my home church. (Jn #1)
- Those who grew up with the KJV might appreciate the language of the ESV; however, I would guess that most everyone else will find it archaic and difficult to listen to. How important is readability? Well, I found myself least excited to sit down and read the ESV translation. When the processing effort becomes higher than the reward, I think most people struggle or shut down. Wouldn’t it be sad if fewer people read their Bibles because the *English* language was a barrier? If it is important for the translation that we choose to “communicate in the language of the people” (TEC criterion #2), then I don’t think the ESV is the translation we want. (Ac #2)
- By today’s standards the vocabulary frequently is archaic, certainly not appropriate for the majority of “native American English speakers at a late primary school or early high school level.” . . . I found several passages in the ESV translation of Romans nearly incomprehensible—almost as though the translators intended that they should be riddles. (Ro #1)
- With only a few exceptions, the majority of the translation felt clunky upon the tongue. . . . Perhaps this language would appeal to nostalgia in the many Christians who grew up on the KJV and its various versions. However, I fear that there would be more harm to outreach in America than there would be benefit from a throwback to the old glory days of when Scripture was unique in how it sounded. . . . I do not believe that the ESV would be a good choice for our publications. (Ro #3)

- The archaic language is the main barrier. The doctrinal aspect of the ESV is decent (with the exception of 2 Cor 1:15 and 1 Cor 11:3), but I would have a hard time putting some of the tougher passages in a bulletin or a BIC class. (1 Co #2)
- The translation is brutal at points. Hebrews is much rougher than James. It is not appropriate for reading in worship (not doctrinally) but for understanding and clarity. (Heb #3)
- The sentences of the ESV are rather long and difficult to follow when someone else reads them out loud and you do not have the text to follow along on. (1 Pe #1)
- Similar thoughts = Lev #3; Nu #3; Dt #3; Jos #1; 1 Sa #3; 1 Ki #2; 2 Ki #2; Ps 73–150 #3; Pr #1, #2; Ecc #1; Isa 1–39 #2; Isa 40–66 #1; Eze #2; Ob #3; Mk #3; Jn #3; Ac #1, #3; Gal #3.

ESV weakness—some passages offer no clear meaning

- Deuteronomy 24:12—“And if he is a poor man, you shall not sleep in his pledge.” (#2)
(the correct meaning = don’t sleep in the garment he has given as security)
- 1 Samuel 6:20—“And to whom shall he go up away from us?” (#3)
(the correct meaning = to whom will the ark go up from here?)
- Ephesians 6:6—“not by the way of eye-service” (#2)
(the correct meaning = don’t work only when watched)

ESV weakness—numerous passages could be misleading

- Numbers 12:8—“With him I speak mouth to mouth” (#1, #2)
(the correct meaning = face to face or directly)
- Deuteronomy 15:12—“If your brother, a Hebrew man or Hebrew woman” (#1)
(the correct meaning = two people, not three; a “woman” can be a “brother”)
- Deuteronomy 30:4—“If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven” (#1)
(the correct meaning = at the far horizon)
- Joshua 10:6—“Do not relax your hand from your servants” (#3)
(the correct meaning = do not abandon them)
- 1 Samuel 9:2—“From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people” (#3)
(the correct meaning = he was a head taller than any others)
- Esther 1:8—“There is no compulsion” (#3)
(the correct meaning = there was no limit on the consumption of alcohol)
- Proverbs 8:27—“when he drew a circle on the face of the deep” (#1)
(the correct meaning = when he laid out the horizon on the surface of the ocean)
- Lamentations 3:30—“let him be filled with insults” (#1)
(the correct meaning = let him be insulted by others)
- Amos 4:6—“I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities” (#2)
(the correct meaning = they had no food)
- John 12:11—“many of the Jews were going away” (#3)
(the correct meaning = they were deserting the Jews and going to Jesus)
- 2 Corinthians 1:15—“so that you might have a second experience of grace” (#2)
(the correct meaning = could benefit twice)

- Philippians 4:5—“Let your reasonableness be evident to everyone” (#2)
(better = “gentleness” or “kindness”)
- Colossians 1:15—“the firstborn of all creation” (#2)
(danger = could suggest that Christ was part of creation)
- Philemon 1:6—“the sharing of your faith” (#3)
(the correct meaning = not evangelism, but partnership in the faith)
- Hebrews 5:7—“In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers” (#2, #3)
(danger = could suggest that Jesus gave up his human nature when he ascended)
- Hebrews 12:17—“he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears” (#2)
(danger = could suggest that Esau sought repentance; rather he sought the blessing)

ESV weakness—in some other passages

- Genesis 49:10—“until tribute comes to him” —misses the messianic prophecy (#2)
- Exodus 7:13—“Pharaoh’s heart was hardened”—may be understood as the Lord’s work (#1)
- Psalm 16:10—“Sheol” not appreciated by some reviewers (Ps 1–72 #3; Nu #3; Isa #1)
- Psalm 119—“rules” instead of “laws” or “judgments” (#2)
- Proverbs 16:4—sounds like Calvinistic double predestination (#1)
- Proverbs 18:10—“The righteous man runs into it and is safe”—ESV often adds masculine language when it is not in the Hebrew (#1)
- Daniel 9:25—“an anointed one”—misses the messianic prophecy
- Romans 5:18—“one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men”—gender exclusive when there is no need (#1)
- 1 Corinthians 11:3—“the head of a wife is her husband”—implies that headship only applies in marriage (#2, #3)

ESV weakness—some questionable decisions about variant readings

- 2 Chronicles 3:4—“its height was 120 cubits” (#3)
- 1 Samuel 9:25—follows the Septuagint (#1)
- 1 Samuel 10:1—includes a long addition from the Septuagint (#1)

ESV weakness—it would not be ideal for mission work

- As a mission pastor in the Bible belt, I have seen way too many people abused by the KJV and its type of “English.” I’ve seen too many people misunderstanding the English and using that to support completely false teachings. I’d much rather save that struggle and focus on teaching the truth from Scripture rather than first “interpreting” what the English says for them as well. I’ve also seen too many people avoid reading Scripture at home because they “couldn’t understand” their KJV. ESV struggles with the same antiquated language for those people. (Ps 1–72 #2)
- When I think about lay people—and especially unchurched or newly churched people trying to read the ESV—especially in BIC—I almost get angry because they would have to translate the English into more readable English before they could understand what the Scriptures say. This

translation has its uses, but not in a mission congregation which is reaching out to unchurched people. (Eze #3)

- ESV comes across wooden and somewhat archaic. It gives the impression of “holy language” because it does not speak as we speak. Not an accurate communication of the style the Bible was written in. . . . Its style will be a roadblock to unbelievers. (Da #2)
- For WELS publications that would be used for outreach, teaching children, illiterate societies, etc.—anyone who is new in some degree to the English language, biblical doctrine, or both—the ESV is easily the weakest of these three options. (1 Th #3)

ESV weakness—it would be especially problematic for children

- I started out in favor of the ESV, but I have ended favoring NIV2011. My kids in confirmation class will find NIV2011 easier to read. I want their reading to be as relatively free of unnecessary obstacles as possible. Though the ESV has much to be commended for, its sentence structure generally would be harder for a confirmation-age student to process. (Ecc #2)
- I have sampled the ESV in confirmation instruction and cringe at the thought of using it exclusively in our publications for children. (Da #3)
- I definitely wouldn’t want to use it as a translation for the basis of catechism instructions. (Ob #2)
- I do, however, think that the English style is so antiquated that it would be nearly unintelligible to a large segment of the population, especially children. . . . I certainly would not like to see an ESV catechism or Sunday school curriculum. (Lk #3)

ESV weakness—it would be a step backwards for WELS to adopt the ESV

- In my judgment the ESV is in many places a rather mediocre translation. As a church body, we can do better. But could I live with it? Yes, I could. But to me it would be a major step backwards. (Ezr #2)
- The ESV scored the lowest grade of the three translations because it consistently uses less familiar, wooden, or slightly archaic terminology. Occasionally this clouds the meaning of the text for too many readers. In my opinion it would be a “step backward” that would reduce rather than increase the ability of the typical WELS member to read and understand the Scriptures. (Ezr #3)
- The alleged doctrinal clarity vs. the NIV2011 isn’t there and the English is way worse. It would definitely be a step back for our people from the NIV1984 and would take some getting used to. While it may work well for personal study, I don’t think it would be easy to use or listen to in Bible study or especially in worship. (Lk #2)
- Similar thoughts = Pr #1; Lk #1

ESV weakness—the ESV should not become the WELS publication translation

- I lost track of how many times I simply wrote the comment “clumsy” on my notes. . . . If we intend our translation to be used for instructing the young and those newer to the faith, and also reading aloud in worship, the ESV is not the way to go. (Ps 73–150 #2)

- Not ESV, exclusively. Please. If individual congregations prefer it, that's fine. That won't present doctrinal problems, but our synod should not go with just ESV. We can do better when it comes to clear English. (Eze #2)
- There are frequent expressions that seem awkward if not odd to the English ear. The commitment to being mostly literal may in many cases have resulted in a translation that often makes no sense or makes the sense a challenge to unravel. . . . Though I did like the ESV's translation of Micah, the language of the other books was just not acceptable for worship or for use in publication. (Ob #1)
- At first I thought the ESV had real potential to be used in WELS publications, but the more I read and compared it to the Greek, other translations, and contemporary English, the more I felt that it would be a poor choice. The style is frequently stiff and the choice of words and terms archaic. I do not recommend the ESV translation of 1 and 2 Corinthians for WELS publications. (1 Co #1)

5) The HCSB has its strengths, but we don't see that it is gaining widespread acceptance as a compromise translation for WELS due to a variety of weaknesses.

HCSB strength—fresh and insightful renderings

- This was a surprise to me. At times HCSB surpasses even NIV in selecting a word or phrase in common use—something that sounds like the way we really talk—without (usually) adopting a language register that would be inappropriate for the worship service. (Dt #1)
- Overall, I liked the way the HCSB read. It was fresh, contemporary, and understandable. (1 Kg #2)
- The poetry of the HCSB struck me as excellent in the 12th chapter specifically and elsewhere in general. . . . HCSB consistently seemed to win the subjective “artistic” category. . . . In general, the HCSB considers itself less bound to traditional translations and interpretations. This willingness to change sometimes works out well, sometimes not. (Job #3)
- Often enough, Holman is the most vivid of the three translations. . . . Holman seems to this reviewer to get closer to contemporary English idioms with some regularity, often with a boost in clarity. . . . When Holman departs from NIV2011 and ESV, you can often see fresh, yet legitimate translation possibilities. (Ecc #1)
- The HCSB surprised and intrigued this reviewer. Its translation was often the clearest and cleanest of the three. It is a fine translation of Isaiah 1–39 and its style would be appropriate for publications, reading in worship, education settings, and personal devotions. (Isa 1–39 #2)
- The HCSB has many uniquely vivid and helpful translations. (Da #3)
- As a newer translation, the HCSB finds a fresh way of communicating that works in most cases. (Lk #2)

HCSB strength—in some individual verses

- Psalm 2:7; 16:10—capitalization clearly puts Christ before the reader (#3)
- Psalm 113:7—“garbage pile” (#2)
- Psalm 124:7—“hunter” (instead of “fowler”) (#2)
- Proverbs 6:6—“slacker” (#1)
- Jeremiah 15:18—“like a mirage to me” (#2)
- Jeremiah 31:33—“I will put My teaching within them” (#3)
- Mark 16—There is a less intrusive marker of the longer ending (#2)
- 1 Timothy 5:9—“placed on the official support list” (#2)

HCSB strength—some reviewers were comfortable with the HCSB

- Overall the HCSB does an excellent job of balancing formal and dynamic equivalence and providing a clear, crisp, readable English translation at the “late primary or high school level” that is faithful to the original. . . . The HCSB is a very good translation of Leviticus for publication purposes. (Lev #3)
- Overall, I will have to admit that I was pleasantly surprised by the HCSB. I have a few hesitations about a seeming Baptist bias on rare occasions, but other than that, I think it could serve as a good translation for our synod. (Ac #2)
- The HCSB does a wonderful job of faithfully holding the heart of Greek terms and putting them into good, clear, engaging English. . . . The English feels very natural to a young American reader. . . . The HCSB is faithful in places I would not have expected, where integrity could have been sacrificed for readability. This translation would have a strong appeal to younger and upcoming generations. (Ro #3)
- HCSB is a strong translation which would serve our synod well. I would consider its treatment of 1 and 2 Corinthians to be very suitable for use in WELS. (1 Co #3)
- I would feel comfortable using the HCSB. It may not be quite as smooth as the NIV2011, but it gives me much the feel I was used to with NIV1984. There were no “deal-breakers” for me. (1 Pe #2)
- Similar thoughts = 2 Sa #3; Isa #2; Eze #3; Da #2; Mk #3; Lk #1; 1 Co #2

HCSB strength—if we want to avoid NIV2011, some consider HCSB the next best option

- More acceptable than ESV by a good portion. Less acceptable than NIV2011, but still quite acceptable. (2 Ki #2)
- I, personally, could live with Holman’s idiosyncrasies much easier than I could with those of the ESV. (Ecc #1)
- If we wanted to avoid the gender inclusive issue of the NIV2011, I feel that the HCSB (at least in Matthew’s Gospel) would be the next best option, since its English much better matches the English I hear people using today. (Mt #1)
- I came away liking the readability of the HCSB a lot more than I expected I would. Perhaps I graded it as low as I did by comparison with the NIV which is far and away the better translation in terms of readability. The HCSB is an acceptable translation with a number of oddities and quirks. It also retains far more archaisms and awkward expressions (due to a desire to preserve

a one-for-one correspondence with the original) than need be. Still and all, the HCSB is, in turn, far superior to the ESV and I would certainly find it acceptable as a compromise version for reading in church, based upon the section I read. (Jn #1)

- Similar thoughts = Pr #1; Eze #2; Ob #3

HCSB weakness—use of “Yahweh”

- This idiosyncrasy of HCSB in translating the divine name is not helpful any more than it is a certain rendering of what was originally vocalized. (Ex #1)
- In my opinion the use of the divine name YHWH would be the biggest obstacle to using this translation. (Nu #3)
- I did not like the use of “Yahweh” for the Tetragrammaton—it seems to me that this puts the translation on the fringe of modern Christendom. (Ps 73–150 #1)
- One could easily argue that “the LORD” is preferable in all passages, since it has the backing of the Septuagint, the New Testament, and two millennia of Bible translations. (Pr #1)
- When this reviewer tested these translations with parishioners, the use of Yah/Yahweh received a consistently negative reaction. (Isa 1–39 #2)
- Similar thoughts = Nu #2, Dt #1; Eze #3; Jer #2
- One reviewer likes it: For the most part, this little touch is a nice nuance in this reviewer’s opinion. (Lev #3)

HCSB weakness—inconsistent use of “Yahweh”

- The HCSB’s use of Yahweh is puzzling. I believe most readers could not explain why Yahweh was used in one instance and not another. I found it equally true as I examined the original text. (1 Ki #1)
- The HCSB uses Yahweh and the LORD in a way that seems interchangeable. It’s confusing and, in my opinion, tacky, as well as unwise to try to start using Yahweh in the face of such well-established English tradition to use the LORD. The interchangeable use gives the impression of speaking of two different divine names. Bad choice. (1 Kg #3)
- [Commenting on Isa 56:6] The HCSB translates the Tetragrammaton with “Yahweh,” but only sometimes. In this verse both “LORD” and “Yahweh” are used. I think people could handle the translation “Yahweh” if we needed to do so, but this inconsistency is strange. (Isa 40–66 #3)
- [Commenting on Jonah 1:14] The use of both LORD and Yahweh within the same verse is confusing. Reading through the assigned section, I didn’t get used to the Yahweh in general, either. (Ob #2)
- Similar thoughts = Jos #3; 1 Ki #2; 2 Ki #1, #3; Eze #2; Ps 1–72 #3; Ps 73–150 #1, #2; Pr #1; Jer #1; Eze #2, #3; Da #3; Ob #3

HCSB weakness—widespread use of “slave”

- I believe the use of the word “slave” instead of “servant” is significant, mostly based on the harsh connotation of American slavery that is often quickly thought of when the word is used, especially by African-Americans. I may be a bit slanted in that regard, I admit, since I am a white

pastor reaching out with the gospel in a primarily African-American community that has great sensitivity to race relations with whites. I do believe the term “slave” implies a stronger connection between the two groups (positively, in Christ) than the word “servant.” In my setting, however, I also believe this may be a stumbling block that may be too significant for many. (1 Th #3)

- Because of historical baggage in our society, translating “slave” for *doulos* does not seem to solve as many problems as it makes. (Ro #2)
- Similar thoughts = Lev #3; Lk #3; Rev #1, #2, #3

HCSB weakness—often translates “Messiah” for *Xristos*

- If John wanted to call Jesus the Messiah, he could have. There is a perfectly serviceable Greek transliteration of Messiah (*Messias*). Instead, John called him *Xristos*, so we should too. (Jn #3)
- Here, as in many of the Gospel passages, etc. in NIV2011, we come across a rather recent trend in translating the New Testament *Xristos* with the Hebrew term “Messiah” rather than the familiar “Christ.” Both words mean “the Anointed One.” “Messiah” certainly reminds us that our Savior is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. But I find this trend a weakness in English translating. (Heb #2)
- Similar thoughts = Mt #1; Ro #1, #2; Gal #1; Rev #1, #2

HCSB weakness—capitalizes pronouns for God

- I am not a proponent of capitalizing pronouns for God. It adds a linguistic (and sometimes interpretive) element that is not in the inspired text. (Isa 1–39 #1)
- Similar thoughts = Nu #1; Dt #1; 1 Kg #2, #3; Job #1; Pr #1; Isa 40–66 #3; Jer #2; Da #3; Mk #2; Jn #1; 1 Th #3; Heb #3; Rev #2
- One reviewer said he likes this feature: 1 Sa #3

HCSB weakness—too many contractions

- HCSB seems to have far too many contractions for a Bible that is to be read aloud. (Jos #2)
- Similar thoughts = Pr #1, #3; Ob #3

HCSB weakness—its word choice sometimes is too colloquial, too modern, and too graphic

- “testicles,” “penis” (Dt #1)
- “guy” (1 Ki #2)
- “praise songs,” “accountants,” “colleagues,” “beverages” (Ezr #2)
- “genitals” (Isa 40–66 #2, #3)
- “underwear” (Jer #1, #2, #3)

HCSB weakness—it sometimes is too wooden and has poor English style

- The HCSB was the least poetic of the three translations I evaluated, almost painfully non-poetic at times. (Ps 73–150 #2)

- While the translation is doctrinally sound, it often veers into overly and unnecessarily wooden constructions, sometimes at the expense of making a complete sentence or thought in modern English. (Ps 73–150 #3)
- Some places it is very stilted. Grammar is not smooth. (Isa 40–66 #1)
- Several renditions of statements from the apostle are nearly indecipherable. At the very least, the reader needs to read or hear them two or three times in order to understand them. (Ro #1)

HCSB weakness—a tendency to include questionable variant readings

- Matthew 6:13—the doxology of the Lord’s Prayer is included (#3)
- Acts 8:37—strange to include this verse with such weak testimony (#1, #2, #3)

HCSB weakness—occasionally has Baptist leanings, terminology, or patterns of expression

- 1 Samuel 16:13—“the Spirit of the LORD took control of David” (#1, #2)
- Psalm 4:5—In HCSB I noticed a slight leaning toward putting stress on obedience and the things we are doing instead of what is done by God. (Ps 1–72 #2)
- Psalm 22:9—“making me secure while at my mother’s breast” (rather than “making me trust in you”)—is this a denial of infant faith? (#3)
- Psalm 90:12—“so that we may develop wisdom” (#1)
- Matthew 3:11—Footnote: “Baptism was the means by which repentance was expressed publicly.”
- Matthew 19:28—“In the Messianic Age” may suggest millennialism (#1, #2)
- Matthew 26:28—“My blood that establishes the covenant” has unnecessary insertion (#2; Mk #1, #3; Lk #2, #3; 1 Co #1)
- Mark 1:4/Luke 3:3—Footnote: “a baptism based on repentance” (Mk #2; Lk #1, #3)
- Acts 22:16—“Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins by calling on His name” (#2, #3)
- Romans 7:5—Footnote: “a person’s life before accepting Christ” (#3)
- Colossians 2:11—“in the circumcision of the Messiah” obscures the connection with Baptism (#2)
- Revelation 6:9/20:4—“I saw the people” (rather than “souls”) may support millennialism (#2, #3)
- The HCSB is not a bad translation, but I found myself preferring it much less than I was expecting to. . . . There is a sense that there is an emphasis on “morality.” . . . It’s hard to quantify or put my finger on it exactly; it’s just an impression I get when reading it—a heavy emphasis on the moral aspect of the Christian’s life of faith. (Ac #1)

HCSB weakness—its overuse of the word “must” gives a legalistic tone

- [Leviticus 1:3] The HCSB clearly prefers to express the jussive with “must” rather than “shall” or “is to.” . . . The overuse of the word “must” gives an air of legalism to the book. (Lev #2)
- [Galatians 5:25] There is a “must-y” tone to a number of HCSB renderings of Pauline commands and exhortations. (Gal #2)

- [1 Peter 3:8, 10-11] Note all the pushy “should” and “must” words which shift the emphasis in sanctification from the evangelical to the legal. (1 Pe #2)
- Similar thoughts = 2 Sa #2; Jn #1

HCSB weakness—in some individual passages

- Genesis 1:1—Footnote: “When God began to create the sky and the earth” (#3)
- Numbers 24:17—no capitalization in this messianic prophecy (#2, #3)
- Psalm 16:10—“Sheol” not appreciated by some reviewers (Ps 1–72 #3; Nu #3; Isa #1; Eze #2)
- Psalm 45:6—Footnote: “Your divine throne is” or “Your throne is God’s” (#2)
- Psalm 84:12—“Happy” not appreciated by some in place of “blessed” (Ps 73–150 #1, #2; Pr #1)
- Proverbs 1:5—“A wise man will listen”—gender exclusive when there is no need (#1)
- Proverbs 8:23—seems to slam the door on a possible Messianic interpretation (#1, #3)
- Proverbs 16:6—often translates Hebrew *hesed* with “loyalty,” not “mercy” (#1, #2)
- Isaiah 12:2—“Yah” is just plain strange (Isa 1–39 #1, #3)
- Isaiah 49—no capitalized pronouns, although there are capitals in Isa 42, 50, and 53 (#3)
- John 12:13—“He who comes in the name of the Lord is the blessed One”—a fairly obvious mistranslation of a blessing formula (#1)
- Romans 3:28—“We conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law” – gender exclusive when there is no need (#1)
- Ephesians 4:10—Footnote: “that he might fulfill all things” (rather than “fill”) (#2)
- Hebrews 2:6-8—By its lack of capitalization, the HCSB understands Psalm 8 to be referring to mankind. (Heb #3)

HCSB weakness—“Decision Theology” page

- A significant “deal breaker” criterion for me is the “Decision page” that is found in every HCSB I have seen. (Ge #2)
- The single most troubling thing did not occur in this section and likely won’t be found in this review process if it is not mentioned: the “Plan of Salvation” (decision theology page) that seems to appear in every printed copy of HCSB. For some, this seems to be a deal-breaker. Promises that some day it might be removed in a special edition does not eliminate the problem that every copy that I can find has it in there. Sometimes it is not inside the cover, but in the middle of the Bible. (Jos #2)
- My greatest concern lies outside my assigned section—the plan of salvation and believer’s prayer included in the front pages that evidences clear decision theology. Tear out those two pages and remove my qualms. . . . I couldn’t really in good conscience put a Bible in pews or classrooms with that one or two page “Plan of Salvation.” (1 Sa #3)
- Of GREAT concern to me and MUST be addressed: on the page immediately after the Table of Contents in my hardcopy of HCSB is printed a page entitled “The Plan of Salvation” which leads up to the believer’s prayer and fosters Baptist “Decision Theology” teaching. (Ps 1–72 #2)

- This rating would have to change (to the bottom of the scale), if the HCSB insists on printing a decision theology page in every Bible. If they back off on that requirement, then this translation is a viable option for us. (Isa 40–66 #2)

HCSB weakness—does not have accompanying study materials that are Lutheran

- While I believe the translation itself is rather good, my concerns come more with any accompanying study materials. Just a quick perusal of the *HCSB Apologetics Bible* by my associate showed some gross areas in the realm of the sacraments. If the HCSB indeed becomes our common translation, I am worried that our members would let their guard down with some of the accompanying study materials. (1 Th #2)

HCSB weakness—too many quirks and oddities in HCSB

- The HCSB is a very idiosyncratic translation. Again and again, it makes odd choices. How it translates the names of the sacrifices, the words for military actions and equipment and formations (very common in 1 Samuel), the choices for modernizing direct speech, over and over again are just strange. I don't think we want to go that route. . . . I can't see us using a translation with the oddities this translation has. (1 Sa #2)
- The expression "HCSB is quirky" has been tossed about, and after spending some time with it I would reluctantly admit that the "quirky" word seems to fit. Again, word order is often sacrificed in order of retaining the phraseology of the Greek, to the detriment of the English reader's ear. However, it does not seem as "archaic" as the ESV and therefore I ranked it slightly higher. (Gal #3)
- The HCSB just reads quirky to me in any number of places. (Rev #2)
- Similar thoughts = Ps 1–72 #2, Isa 1–39 #3

HCSB weakness—needs revision

- The HCSB doesn't seem finished to me. It needs a couple more editions. (Ge #3)
- This translation could work if it goes through significant English style editing. The quality of the phrasing is uneven. For the most part I read it nearly as smoothly as the NIV, but then the occasional glitch. At times the translation was wooden, sounding like the work of an intermediate student of Hebrew, depending too much on the first words given in the lexicon rather than attending to fluent and clear rendering into English. Again, this version could be very good with strong editing, but how long will that take? In my view the HCSB is not ready yet to wheel out into our lecterns. (Jos #1)
- This translation has a very rough feel to it, like it needs a few more revisions. And even then I'm not sure it's better than other things out there. (1 Ki #3)
- From my study of the HCSB translation of Matthew, I do not think that this translation is "ready for prime time" yet in WELS publications. While it is a very readable translation in many ways, the current version of HCSB gives this reviewer the impression that it still needs stylistic, language, and grammar revisions. Like ESV and NIV2011, there is no doubt that HCSB is a strong translation worthy of our further consideration, yet at the present time it comes in third in my

mind. The “quirky,” at times colloquial, nature of word choices or sentence structure, elimination of poetry, and questionable use of debated verses could potentially make the use of HCSB challenging in our WELS publications. (Mt #3)

- The main reason, however, that I do not believe the HCSB is acceptable for WELS publications is simply the fact the translation is so young and seems to be still a work in progress. While it had, by far, the highest number of passages that struck me as better English translations than what I am used to, it also had a large number of passages that I found to be either unacceptable or just somewhat strange. I believe it deserves a spot on the pastor’s shelf as a reference and for devotional reading, but is not yet ready for widespread printing in WELS publications. (Lk #3)
- It is a good translation, but it still needs a lot of work. . . . It feels like a rough draft. Perhaps after a couple revisions this could be a better option. (Heb #3)
- Similar thoughts = 2 Sa #1; Pr #1.

HCSB weakness—not recommended

- I would not object to use of this translation. However, there are enough things that are as good or better in NIV2011 that I would have a hard time justifying a change unless there is other legitimate reason to do so. (2 Ki #3)
- Sometimes, the English style is just superb. Other times, it is inappropriate in its casual and idiomatic demeanor. There is certainly a notable effort. It’s just inconsistent. . . . For the reasons described above, I don’t think we could use HCSB in many of these books. (Ob #1)
- While the HCSB has its strengths as a Bible translation, I found many instances of awkward sentence structure, unclear and/or archaic language, I therefore do not recommend the HCSB translation of 1 and 2 Corinthians for WELS publications. (1 Co #1)

6) In spite of its generally recognized weaknesses, the NIV2011 is still considered the best option for WELS publications by most.

NIV2011 weakness—comments from the seven reviewers who criticized the NIV2011 strongly (below “5” on overall acceptability)

- [Genesis 22:18] IF ONLY the NIV2011 had not included this footnote! But they did. I find this to be a “deal breaker” because it is wholly, purposefully un-Messianic. . . . The repetition of this footnote throughout Genesis demonstrates NIV2011’s failure to respect clear messianic prophecy. It also, sadly, finds parallels not only in other NIV2011 footnotes, but also in “primary” translations pertaining to messianic prophecy. (Ge #2)
- Judges 4:4 “prophetess” changed to “prophet”—Literally, it says “woman prophetess” with some emphasis. The word “prophetess” is still acceptable and understood clearly. Actually, it’s understood more clearly than “prophet” for this verse. This change seems to be a reflection of a change in doctrinal views of women’s roles. This weakness in the area of man/woman roles continues through NIV2011. So this becomes a doctrinal weakness. (Jos #2)

- In general, the concerns I have with the NIV2011 can be grouped as follows. Cumulatively, I deem these concerns to become “deal breakers” relative to our use of NIV2011.
 - 1) Explication (repeatedly)
 - 2) Simplification of language used, resulting in a more “vanilla-like” translation. This is a translation that, rather consistently, loses words that the church has taught for a long time. “ransom,” “redeem,” “righteousness,” “iniquity,” “saint,” etc.
 - 3) Gender neutral issues. Were the NIV2011 to simply follow the principle to be “inclusive where the original is inclusive, and exclusive where the original is exclusive,” I would be comfortable with it. As the translation stands, however, it seems to have crossed a line from translation into editorializing.
 - 4) Messianic prophecy. In my assigned section, this wasn’t an issue. But when the rest of Scripture is studied (Psalms in particular), I can’t say the same thing.
 - 5) Textual criticism. There were a few minor instances in this section, where I could have focused more on the NIV2011’s chosen reading. Compared to the ESV and the HCSB, the NIV2011 more regularly left the Masoretic text behind, in favor of something else. Here it wasn’t a huge deal. In other portions of Scripture, the textual critical concerns become much greater. (Mark’s long ending. John’s story of the adulterous woman). (Isa 40–66 #2)
- Both the ESV and HCSB handle gender issues with more respect for God’s roles for men and women and less pandering to our society whose rejection is reflected in modern usage. (Ro #2)
- The NIV2011 has some improvements over the NIV1984. I noted some in the “good passages” section. Yet the creeping in of doctrinally questionable or flat-out bad theology makes this a weak translation to use for our publications. It will be more difficult to hold to the biblical doctrine of the roles/callings of men and women. Teaching Catechism will have a new wall in trying to teach about the Communion of Saints with a translation that doesn’t like the term “saint.” Though in a footnote (and how often does that come up in a publication?), even the doctrine of justification is having a leg chiseled at in chapter 3. Is it usable? Yes. Is it the best among those being considered? No. (Ro #3)
- [Hebrews 2:6-9] It is unacceptable to cloud the Messianic significance of this passage for the sake of gender issues, even if the footnote gives it accurately. We don’t read footnotes from the lectern. Social pressure should not trump God’s Word. (Heb #1)
- I think that the liberties the NIV2011 takes with God’s Word when it comes to things like gender inclusiveness, elimination of words such as *saints*, deciding that we don’t need to use the titles of the Savior which the Spirit inspired make the pile too high and wide for it to be a translation I’d encourage and use. (Rev #2)

NIV2011 weakness—in some individual passages

- Numbers 1:53—“the tabernacle of the covenant law” (instead of “testimony”) (#1; Jos #2)
- Numbers 27:18—“the spirit of leadership”—would prefer “Spirit” (#1, #3)
- 2 Kings 22:14—“the prophet Huldah” (#1)
- Psalm 2:7—capitalization of “son” would be preferred (#3)
- Psalm 110:1—capitalization of “lord” would be preferred (#1, #2, #3)

- Psalm 118:24—“The LORD has done it this very day”—changing a familiar verse (#1)
- Proverbs 8:23—“I was formed long ages ago”—makes it harder to see Christ (#1, #3)
- Jeremiah 23:6/33:16—“The LORD Our Righteous Savior” (#1, #2, #3)
- Habakkuk 2:4—“but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness” (#1, #2; Heb #2)
- Luke 2:36—“There was also a prophet, Anna” (#1)
- John 17:12—“the one doomed to destruction” raises thoughts of determinism (Jn #1)
- Acts 2:27—“realm of the dead” not appreciated by a number of reviewers, also in other passages (Nu #2, #3; Ps 1–72 #3; Isa 1–39 #3; Isa 40–66 #2; Eze #2; Mt #2; Ac #1, #3)
- Acts 2:27/4:26/13:35—capitalization of “holy one” and “anointed one” would be preferred (#2)
- Acts 6:3—“Brothers and sisters, choose seven men”—encourages women leading and voting in church matters (#3)
- Acts 15:10—“the necks of Gentiles”—too interpretive, the Greek has “disciples” (#2)
- Romans 16:1—“our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church” (#3)
- Romans 16:7—“Junia . . . outstanding among the apostles” (#3)
- Galatians 3:9—“those who rely on faith”—we put our faith in Christ, not in our faith (#2, #3)
- 1 Corinthians 7:39—“but he must belong to the Lord” (#1, #2)
- 1 Timothy 2:12—“to assume authority over a man” (#1, #2)
- Romans 9:33/1 Peter 2:8—“A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall” (Ro #1; 1 Pe #2)

NIV2011 weakness—Psalm 8 and Hebrews 2

- An arrogant and Scripturally abusive translation that demonstrates the worst aspects of the generic plural instead of the singular. Destroys all messianic content. (Ps 1–72 #1)
- The translation is defensible on the basis of how its first hearers might have understood it. ESV and HCSB agree that it is typical (not capitalizing “man”). Personally, I wish NIV2011 had not taken a stand (by pluralizing) that this prophecy must be typical rather than direct prophecy, that’s why I list it among the weakest—but I cannot call the translation inaccurate. There is room for teaching here. (Ps 1–72 #2)
- Though I personally lean towards a typical reference in the psalm referring to mankind, though it has only been perfectly fulfilled in Christ, and would not lean toward the idea that this is only a rectilinear prophecy, yet eliminating “the son of man” and then even adding a footnote “or *a son of man,*” and the changing to plural in verses 4,5,6 makes it all but impossible to see Christ in this psalm. (Ps 1–72 #3)
- [Hebrews 2] I would simply observe that this passage is poorly translated in NIV2011. The clear reference to our Savior is obscured by the NIV2011’s default use of “singular plurals” and gender inclusive expressions, which represent a foolish consistency that obscures a clear messianic prophecy. (Heb #2)
- [Hebrews 2] They translate the singular pronouns in the Psalm 8 quote with the plural noun/pronouns (translating it the same way as the HCSB). The NIV2011 translation is a possible translation (NPH People’s Bible preference), but they make the decision for the reader—mankind or Jesus? NIV2011 says mankind. I marked it “exegetical,” not “doctrinal” because it is

an exegetical choice—one that is possible, but limiting, and this choice does not undermine doctrine. (Heb #3)

NIV2011 weakness—undesirable footnotes

- Genesis 22:18—“will use the name of your offspring in blessings” (#2)
- Psalm 45:6—“Here the king is addressed as God’s representative” (#1, #2)
- Isaiah 7:14—“young woman” (#2, #3)
- Romans 3:22—“through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ” (#3)
- 1 Timothy 2:12—“a wife should learn” (#1)

NIV2011 weakness—some questionable decisions about variant readings

- Psalm 9:20—puts “*Selah*” into a footnote (#3; Ps 73–150 #2)
- Matthew 27:16—“Jesus Barabbas” (#2, #3)
- Mark 7:4—puts “dining couches” into a footnote (#2)
- Mark 16:9–20—intrusive marking of the final verses (#1, #2)
- Luke 10:42—“few things are needed” (#3)
- John 7:53–8:11—the NIV2011’s approach is overkill with this debated reading (border lines, in-text note, and italicized text) (Jn #1, #3)

NIV2011 weakness—sometimes translates “Messiah” for *Xristos*

- Matthew 1:1—As with the HCSB, I don’t like how NIV2011, in every instance I saw, put the Greek word “Christ” into “the Messiah.” I feel that too much is lost in that situation. (#1)
- Similar thoughts = Mk #2; Jn #3; Rev #1, #2, #3
- One reviewer commends NIV2011—The NIV2011 translates *Xristos* as “Messiah” when the word seems to be referring to Jesus’ Jewish messianic lineage. Since most people seem to think of “Christ” as simply Jesus’ last name, it seems to make sense to use another word to highlight the messianic import of this title in certain contexts. (Ac #2)

NIV2011 weakness—eliminates the word “saint”

- The NIV2011 sets itself apart as a translation which NEVER uses the English word “saints.” Some might see this as a strength because of cultural baggage attached to the term, especially from the Roman Catholic tradition. I view this as a decided weakness. The liturgy, hymns, and prayers of the English-speaking church are rich with the proper use of the term “saints.” Why cede this rich word to the Roman Catholics or surrender the teachable moment? What a comfort that we are called to be “saints,” and that we give thanks “for all the saints who from their labors rest . . .” I see this as a serious weakness in the NIV2011. (Heb #2)
- Similar thoughts = Ro #2, Rev #2, #3

NIV2011 weakness—sometimes does not use traditional theological terminology

- Job 33:26—“well-being” instead of “righteousness” (#3)
- Psalm 23:3—“the right paths” instead of “paths of righteousness” (#1)

- Psalm 149:4—“victory” instead of “salvation” (#1)
- Proverbs 21:21—“prosperity” instead of “righteousness” (#1, #2)
- Isaiah 48:18—“well-being” instead of “righteousness” (#1, #3)
- Isaiah 51:11—“rescued” instead of “redeemed”/“ransomed” (#2)
- Isaiah 62:1—“vindication” instead of “righteousness” (#1)

NIV2011 strength—communicates well

- Overall the NIV2011 did a fine job of balancing formal and dynamic equivalence, and provided the clearest, smoothest, most easily understood English translation for the target audience that was faithful to the original. Furthermore, there were few, if any, real weaknesses that were noted. (Lev #3)
- This verse illustrates a large advantage the NIV2011 has over the HCSB and the ESV—clarity in phrasing, in the sequences and connections between the clauses and phrases. . . . In contrast especially to the HCSB, the NIV2011 seems to be edited closely and fluently throughout the sections I read. (Jos #1)
- I found that the NIV2011 rendered the flavor of the Hebrew accurately and appropriately for a 2012 readership. . . . It retains the color and flavor of the Hebrew without making it stiff and stilted. My opinion: a much preferred reading for public worship and publications. (2 Sa #1)
- The NIV2011 is the clear leader of the pack when it comes to English style. Consistent, good English throughout at a level that can be readily understood by a majority of readers and/or listeners. (2 Sa #3)
- Elegant yet easy to understand. Simple enough for ESL folks, yet well suited for formal use in worship. (2 Ki #2)
- NIV2011 is by far the most readable of the translations compared. (Ps 1–72 #2)
- NIV2011 easily separates itself from ESV and HCSB on readability in Isaiah 1–39. It strikes a balance with speaking in poetic English, conveying the sense of the verse, and maintaining little things like word order or emphasis that HCSB often misses. (Isa 1–39 #3)
- The NIV2011 is eminently readable, conveying in clear, poetic, and picturesque language the truths God has revealed. With but few exceptions, it sounds very much like NIV1984. (Jer #2)
- The NIV2011 flows well and is easy to understand. In the survey I conducted in our Bible class it was almost always ranked first as readable and clear. It is the one that will be most familiar to our people, considering their experience with the NIV1984. (Jer #3)
- By and large the NIV2011 is well thought out and easy to read. . . . Where the NIV2011 makes an interpretive translation in this section, it is generally conservative in doing so. In this section, which contains a number of difficult passages, the NIV2011 is clearly a well-developed and easy-to-read translation. (Da #3)
- In general, the English style of NIV2011 as translated in Matthew is just as readable and accessible to modern English speakers as NIV1984 was, if not more so. The register of the language is at a level that is attainable for most English speakers today. Generally the flow of language and thought came across quite clearly when read aloud or when studying it on the page. (Mt #3)

- The English style of NIV2011 Luke is clearly superior to ESV and Holman. It is smooth and idiomatic while at the same time remaining faithful to the Greek. (Lk #1)
- Overall the NIV2011 was the easiest translation to read. The narrative moved forward smoothly and seemed to reflect the tone of the original. It has an engaging style and speaks in natural English. (Ac #2)
- After making a careful comparison I am convinced that the English style of the NIV2011 is far superior to that of the ESV and the HCSB. It's no contest. (Ro #1)
- I wonder if we (i.e. WELS) have made this a bigger deal than necessary. I'm not minimizing the importance of holding to the truth of God's Word, but based on quite a few conversations with laypeople, I think we have shaken people's confidence in verbal inspiration more than showing our high regard for even the smallest stroke of God's Word. That saddens me. I find the NIV2011 to be the easiest transition from what we are currently used to. But even more importantly, I believe it is the best communicating Bible we are evaluating. We want to communicate Jesus as clearly as possible. Thus, I would be comfortable in saying the NIV2011 is a gift from God for our church body at this time to help us communicate Jesus clearly. (1 Th #2)
- Similar thoughts = 1 Ki #3; 1 Co #1

NIV2011 strength—in some individual passages

- Proverbs 16:4—"The LORD works out everything to its proper end—even the wicked for a day of disaster" (#2)
- Proverbs 28:9—"If anyone turns a deaf ear to my instruction" (better than "law") (#1)
- Isaiah 66:24—"the worms that eat them will not die"—explicitation is good (#3)
- Matthew 5:32—"makes her the victim of adultery" (#1, #3)
- Luke 7:47—"her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown" (#1)
- Acts 3:21—"Heaven must receive him"—improvement in NIV2011 over NIV1984 (#2)
- Romans 3:25/7:7—the NIV2011 incorporated suggestions for improvement in these verses that were submitted by our WLS faculty (#1)
- Romans 3:24—"and all are justified freely" (#2)
- Romans 10:4—"Christ is the culmination of the law" (#1)
- 1 Corinthians 2:13—"explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words" (#1, #3)
- Jude 4—"whose condemnation was written about long ago"—avoids misunderstanding (#3)

NIV2011 strength—in spite of its weaknesses, it is still the best

- Some of the issues for which the NIV2011 has been challenged cannot be avoided. They come up even in these historical narratives. However, there was nothing in this section which would cause the NIV2011 to be unusable. Of the three translations, it was the easiest to read and understand. (1 Ki #2)
- NIV2011's questionable footnote in Isaiah 7:14 has been argued by some as a "deal breaker." I would add Isaiah 4:3 and 28:16 as verses that are significantly worse than HCSB or ESV. But on the whole it is overall superior for use in WELS publications than the other two in Isaiah 1–39. (Isa 1–39 #3)

- I feel confident using NIV2011's translation of Jeremiah and commending it to others in spite of the weakness in two key passages. (Jer #2)
- By far, hands down, no doubt about it, the NIV2011 is the best translation if our goal is appropriate English, faithful to the original, and acceptable for WELS publications and for use in a worship service. I have come to a whole new level of appreciation for the careful and thoughtful work of the NIV2011 translators. They have made some "mistakes" that do not disqualify their translation from use in our publications. By the end of the books that were assigned to me to review, I had a hard time looking carefully at the ESV. But I was anxious to see how the other two would treat especially those passages that were difficult to translate. The HCSB was often a pleasant surprise. The NIV2011 was the gorilla in the room that would not (usually) be beaten. (Ob #1)
- I came away convinced all the more of the overall superiority of the NIV2011 to both the ESV and the HCSB. If this study then had any impact on me, it was simply to work a deeper sense of just how good the NIV2011 is, and, in turn, to see just how bad the ESV comes off by comparison. (Jn #1)
- While there are a couple of unfortunate passages in the area of messianic prophecy, I believe that overall the NIV2011 best meets the TEC's criteria for a translation. (Ac #3)
- The "weak passages" in NIV2011 are no more of a problem than those I found in the ESV and the HCSB. As mentioned in my opening remarks, I believe all of them in coming years can effectively be addressed with exegetical essays, notes in a study Bible, and patient instruction from pastors and teachers. (Ro #1)

NIV2011 strength—transition would be easiest since we have used it for more than 30 years

- A reason for my evaluating NIV2011 so high is not only its intrinsic merits (which are considerable), but the benefits of continuity. We have more than 30 years of history with this version. The NIV2011 remains a fine translation. In Deuteronomy it presents *absolutely nothing* that would be a good reason to change to something else. (Dt #1)
- The NIV has the added merit of being the translation stream in which our synod has stood for 30 years. The style of the NIV2011 would be familiar to our audience and appropriate for publication, worship, devotion, educational settings, etc. (Isa 1–39 #2)
- NIV2011's translation of Matthew would provide a relatively easy transition from NIV1984, since in general the two translations are so similar, and where NIV2011 differs from NIV1984, it is generally an improvement. (Mt #3)
- We in WELS are accustomed to the sound and language of the NIV. This gives it a definite advantage for us. (Gal #3)
- Similar thoughts = Eze #3; Lk #2