Who Controls the Bible Text You Read?

Copyright restrictions and ownership chains for 13 English Bible translations, traced from license terms to the people and institutions that ultimately control them. Research current as of October 15, 2026.

Bottom line

The **Berean Standard Bible (BSB)** is the only modern, mainstream-quality translation here with no owner and no restrictions. It was dedicated to the public domain on April 30, 2023; its publishers ask only that altered texts not carry the Berean name.

Every other modern translation is privately copyrighted. Free use stops at 500 or 1,000 verses and never covers a complete book, so a full-Bible ebook requires a negotiated license from each owner.

Two of the five best-known translations route to one media company. NIV (U.S. commercial rights) and NKJV sit under HarperCollins, owned by News Corp. Its voting stock is controlled by LGC Holdco (33.3%), owned by trusts for Lachlan, Grace and Chloe Murdoch, with votes directed by Lachlan's appointee.

Most of News Corp's equity is owned by index funds, but they don't vote it. Vanguard, BlackRock and State Street hold the non-voting Class A shares; the Murdoch entity's third of the voting Class B sets direction.

The ESV now forbids open licensing outright. Crossway's 2025 notice bars quoting the ESV in any Creative Commons-licensed work and bars translating it.

The KJV is free everywhere except the UK, where perpetual Crown letters patent limit printing to Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press and Collins (a HarperCollins imprint).

Translation	STEP 1 Copyright & restrictions	STEP 2 Copyright holder → publisher / licensee	STEP 3 Ownership chain → ultimate control
BSB Berean Standard Bible Public domain	**Public domain (CC0) since Apr 30, 2023.** Unlimited use, commercial included. Attribution appreciated, not required; don't use the Berean name on altered text. **Whole-Bible ebook: yes.**	No copyright holder. Produced by Bible Hub, Discovery Bible, OpenBible.com and the Berean Bible Translation Committee.	**No one controls the text.**
KJV King James Version Public domain*	**Public domain outside the UK.** In the UK, perpetual Crown letters patent restrict printing and importing. **Whole-Bible ebook: yes** (except UK print).	UK only: the British Crown, licensed to Cambridge University Press (King's Printer), Oxford University Press and Collins.	Collins → HarperCollins → News Corp **Crown patent holders, UK only.**
NIV New International Version Nonprofit owner Corporate licensees	**Up to 500 verses free.** No complete book; under 25% of your work; commercial commentaries need permission; "NIV" is a trademark. **Whole-Bible ebook: license required.**	Biblica (nonprofit, Palmer Lake, CO; founded 1809 as the New York Bible Society) owns the text. Commercial rights: Zondervan (North America), Hodder & Stoughton (UK).	**U.S.:** Zondervan → HarperCollins Christian Publishing → HarperCollins → News Corp → LGC Holdco **UK:** Hodder & Stoughton → Hachette UK → Lagardère (66% Louis Hachette Group) → Bolloré Group (31%) **Text: Biblica's board. Sales: Murdoch family (U.S.), Bolloré family (UK).**
NKJV New King James Version Corporate	**Up to 500 verses free.** No complete book; under 25% of your work; not in commentaries or reference works. **Whole-Bible ebook: license required.**	Thomas Nelson holds the copyright and publishes.	Thomas Nelson → HarperCollins Christian Publishing (bought 2012) → HarperCollins → News Corp **LGC Holdco, 33.3% of voting stock; Lachlan Murdoch directs the votes.**
ESV English Standard Version Nonprofit	**Up to 500 verses free.** No more than half a book; under 25% of your work; not in reference works. **Banned from any Creative Commons-licensed work; may not be translated.** **Whole-Bible ebook: license required.**	Crossway, "a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers." Text adapted from the RSV (copyright: National Council of Churches).	Crossway → Good News Publishers (nonprofit, Wheaton, IL) **Good News Publishers' board.**
NLT New Living Translation Nonprofit	**Up to 500 verses free.** No complete book; under 25% of your work. **Whole-Bible ebook: license required.**	Tyndale House Foundation holds copyright; Tyndale House Publishers publishes.	Publisher and Foundation merged 2019 → Tyndale House Ministries (nonprofit, Carol Stream, IL) **Tyndale House Ministries; Taylor family, third generation of leadership.**
MSG The Message Author + nonprofit	**Up to 500 verses free.** No complete book; under 25% of your work. **Whole-Bible ebook: license required.**	Eugene H. Peterson, the author (died 2018). Published by NavPress; permissions handled by Tyndale.	NavPress → The Navigators (nonprofit, Colorado Springs; owns NavPress outright) → Tyndale runs sales and distribution since 2014 **Peterson's rights, administered by The Navigators and Tyndale.**
NASB · LSB New American Standard · Legacy Standard Nonprofit	**Up to 1,000 verses free.** No complete book; at most 50% of your work; no more than 1,000 verses stored electronically. **Whole-Bible ebook: license required.**	The Lockman Foundation (nonprofit, La Habra, CA; founded 1942). LSB managed with Three Sixteen Publishing.	No parent **Lockman Foundation board.**

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CSB Christian Standard Bible Denominational	**Up to 1,000 verses free.** No complete book; at most 50% of your work. **Whole-Bible ebook: license required.**	Holman Bible Publishers.	Holman → B&H Publishing Group → Lifeway Christian Resources **Southern Baptist Convention (Lifeway is a self-funded SBC entity).**
NRSVue New Revised Standard, Updated Ecumenical	**Up to 500 verses free.** Anything more needs NCC approval. **Whole-Bible ebook: license required.**	National Council of Churches; licensed through its affiliate Friendship Press. Rights run by Riggins Rights Management.	Friendship Press → National Council of Churches **NCC, the ecumenical body of U.S. mainline denominations.**
CEB Common English Bible Denominational	**Up to 500 verses free.** No complete book; under 25% of your work; commercial reference works need permission. **Whole-Bible ebook: license required.**	Common English Bible; permissions through the United Methodist Publishing House.	CEB → United Methodist Publishing House (Abingdon, Cokesbury) **United Methodist Publishing House.**
NABRE New American Bible, Revised Catholic	**No free allowance stated.** Notice forbids reproduction in any form without written permission. **Whole-Bible ebook: license required.**	Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc.	CCD → Approved and overseen by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops **U.S. Catholic bishops.**
NET New English Translation Ministry LLC	**Verse text free without a cap for non-commercial use,** with credit. Commercial use and the translator notes need permission. **Commercial ebook: license required.**	Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. Print editions now published by Thomas Nelson under a partnership.	Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. → Sponsored by Biblical Studies Foundation (bible.org), a 501(c)(3) in Richardson, TX **Print:** Thomas Nelson → HarperCollins → News Corp **The bible.org ministry; the LLC's members are not publicly filed.**

Who owns News Corp?

Two share classes: only Class B votes. Lachlan Murdoch chairs the board; Rupert is chairman emeritus with no vote.

Voting Class B (~180M shares)	
LGC Holdco LLC (Murdoch trusts)	**33.3%**
Vanguard	~5.6%
SOF Ltd. (Cayman Islands fund; controller not disclosed)	~5.4%
Independent Franchise Partners	~5.1%
State Street	~4.4%
BlackRock	~4.2%
Non-voting Class A (~361M shares)	
Vanguard	~16.6%
BlackRock	~10.4%
State Street	~9.7%
Independent Franchise Partners	8.8%

LGC Holdco is owned equally by trusts for Lachlan, Grace and Chloe Murdoch and managed by Cruden 2, LLC; votes are directed by Lachlan's appointed managing director. 30.4M of its Class B shares are pledged as loan collateral. Institutional percentages are approximate, computed from 13F/13G filings (Dec 2025–Aug 2026).

Who owns Hachette (NIV in the UK)?

Hodder & Stoughton is part of Hachette UK, owned by Lagardère, which since Vivendi's 2024 split sits under Louis Hachette Group.

Louis Hachette Group	
Bolloré Group (Bolloré family)	**31%**
Arnaud Lagardère	8.7%
Public and institutions	~60%
Lagardère SA	
Louis Hachette Group	66.3%
Vivendi SE	13.4%
Qatar Investment Authority (Qatar sovereign wealth fund)	11.5%

A Paris court ruled in July 2026 that Bolloré did not control Vivendi at the time of the split; Bolloré's 31% of Louis Hachette Group is unaffected.

Who owns Biblical Studies Press?

Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. holds the NET copyright and trademarks. It is the publishing arm of the bible.org ministry: the NET was sponsored by the **Biblical Studies Foundation**, a 501(c)(3) in Richardson, TX (EIN 75-2572778, recognized 1995), which runs bible.org.

The LLC's own members are not in any public filing found, so its formal ownership could not be confirmed beyond this ministry tie.

Corporate overlap: Thomas Nelson (HarperCollins) now publishes NET print Bibles in partnership with Biblical Studies Press, so NET print editions also route to News Corp, even though the text stays with the ministry.

Also worth knowing: Bible Gateway, the largest Bible-reading website, is operated by HarperCollins Christian Publishing.

Sources: berean.bible/terms.htm · biblica.com and harpercollinschristian.com/permissions (NIV) · crossway.org/permissions (ESV) · tyndale.com/foundation; Bible Gateway version pages (NLT, MSG, NKJV, NABRE) · christianretailing.com (NavPress–Tyndale, 2013) · lockman.org (NASB) · biblia.com CSB notice; lifeway.com/about · nrsv.friendshippress.org · commonenglishbible.com/permissions · usccb.org · netbible.com; GuideStar 75-2572778; DTS Voice (NET/Thomas Nelson) · ebible.org (KJV) · News Corp 2026 proxy, Nov 2025 DEFA14A and IFP 13G/A, sec.gov; 13F data via stockzoa and blarkad · Murdoch settlement: News Corp filings, AdNews, The Hollywood Reporter (Sept 2025) · bollore.com; Lagardère holders via StocksGuide · ActuaLitté (Bolloré/Vivendi ruling, July 2026). *Research summary, not legal advice; verify terms with each publisher before relying on a limit.*