

'Bible Navigator X' reaches out to video gamers

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) — Attention video gamers: The Bible is coming to an Xbox near you.

LifeWay Christian Resources recently announced plans to introduce an Xbox 360 application featuring the complete Holman Christian Standard Bible. Due out in December, "[Bible Navigator X](#)" is thought to be the first complete Bible on a video game.

Aaron Linne, executive producer of digital marketing for B&H Publishing Group, a division of the Southern Baptist Convention publishing house, said the project has been a dream of his since the Xbox 360 was launched in 2005 with an announcement that there would be downloadable games.

Aaron Linne, pictured here in his Facebook profile, says \"Bible Navigator X\" is thought to be the first Bible designed for a video game.

Linne managed to get someone on the phone at Microsoft, but at the time there was no way to make the idea work, because it wasn't a game. Nowadays, however, video gamers [use their consoles](#) for various entertainment options like downloading movies and television shows, streaming music and posting to Facebook and Twitter.

"The Bible is a message of hope that doesn't need to be confined to scrolls

or books or PCs; the Good News can be read on iPhones, Kindles and the Xbox 360 too," Linne said in an e-mail interview.

A Nov. 10 press [release](#) introducing the Xbox Bible exploded onto tech websites all over the world. A Google search for "Bible Navigator X" Nov. 18 produced about 83,700 hits.

"We are very pleased with the initial response we have received regarding the application," Linne said. "It's exciting seeing people talk about the Bible and its impact on culture."

Linne, a graduate of Liberty University who first went to work for LifeWay as a digital-media producer, said his bosses were willing to take a financial risk even in this weak economy if it meant spreading the gospel.

Once he started working with a developer in the Xbox community on adapting the "[HCSB Bible Navigator](#)," a CD-ROM program for personal computers introduced in 2003, he said it fit the medium perfectly.

"It feels natural and nice," he [wrote](#) on his blog, "like the Xbox was made to host the Bible."

"Bible Navigator X" will sell for \$5 or 400 Microsoft Points, an online currency that allows users to purchase products without using a credit card. It will be downloadable at Xbox.com through the "Xbox LIVE Indie Games" [channel](#), which is devoted to original games made, reviewed and played by the online community.

Since other handheld devices don't offer a similar toolset, the application is available only for Xbox, Linne said, but he is interested in developing it for other platforms when the opportunities arise.

"I think the responses we've seen all show that the Bible is a life-changing text, and we're happy to be able to move it to a new platform and media

that is ripe with potential," he said.

Writing for *Collide Magazine* in April, Linne [said](#) the "near future" of the Bible probably lies with electronic publishing. He pointed to Martin Luther's translation of the New Testament into a dialect of German in 1522, which opened the door not only for the Protestant Reformation but also for his chosen dialect to become the standard German language.

While the printed word has had a good run, he said, analysts predict 88 percent of revenue growth for publishing and advertising companies in the next few years will come from the digital medium.

Already there are online Bibles, mobile Bibles for handheld digital devices like the iPhone and community services that allow users to share sermons and other thoughts on social-networking sites.

"We must find ways to engage the life-changing Scriptures in a way that is meaningful to the culture that exists around it," Linne concluded. "This is the key for any future thinking about the Bible."

"Just as the Gutenberg press and the printed Bible created a print-based world, the digital revolution has created new opportunities for new relationships not only with each other but with (and between) sacred texts and secular media," he wrote. "The power of the Bible's words can do great things, so let's think about the future of delivering those words to people who so desperately need to read, hear, see, and interact with them."

-Bob Allen is senior writer for Associated Baptist Press.