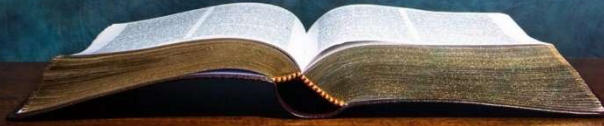


Midweek Study

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HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE



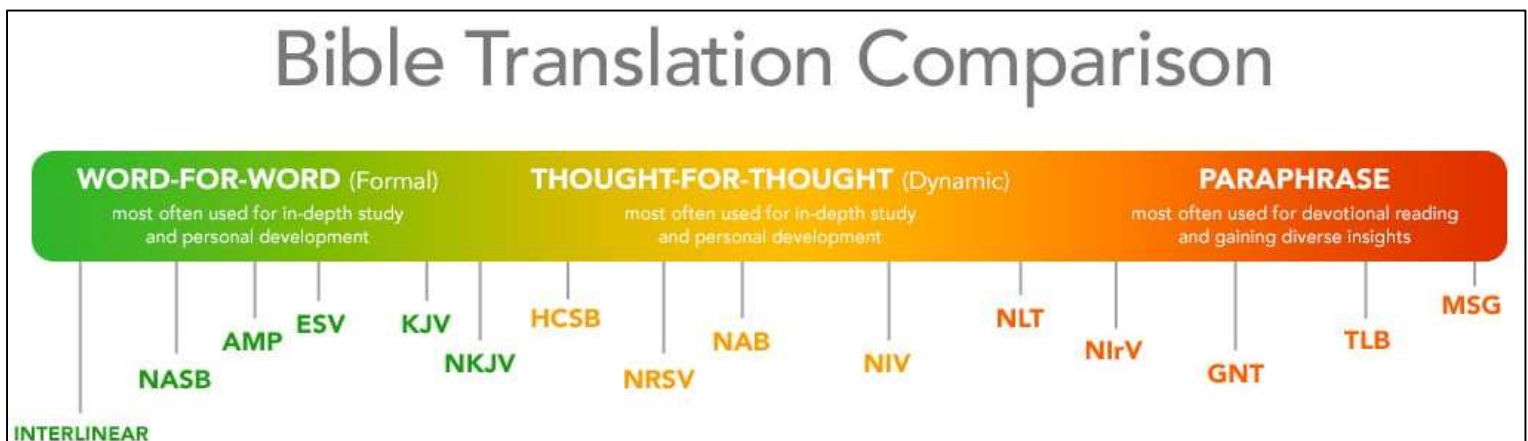
Which Bible Translation Should I Use?

2 Timothy 2:15, "Study to show yourself approved of God, a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." [KJV]

*Acts 17:11, "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and **searched the Scriptures daily** to find out whether these things were so." [NKJV]*

Why are there so many versions of the Bible?

- 1) **The manuscript basis for a translation.** The 1611 KJV (as well as KJV and NKJV) have been translated from Erasmus' edition of the Greek text, called the *Textus Receptus*, and based on about 6 manuscripts from the Byzantine grouping. Since then, hundreds of other manuscripts from different areas have been found. Slight variations exist in our English translations because some translators value one manuscript over another. Example: ending of Mark.
- 2) **The meaning of words change over time.** If you were to pick up an old 1611 King James Version, as originally written, it would be difficult to read.
- 3) **Different versions approach translation differently. There are 2 main approaches:**
 - **WORD-FOR-WORD - The Formally Equivalent Translation** - this type is very concerned to preserve the number of words and grammatical constructions from the original.
 - **THOUGHT-FOR-THOUGHT - The Functionally Equivalent** (sometimes called dynamically equivalent) - this type seeks to accurately convey the same meaning in a new language but not so concerned about preserving the same number of words or equivalent grammatical constructions. The New Living Translation (NLT) is a good example of the functionally equivalent translation. The NASB is a good example of the formally equivalent translation.



Because languages are so different, a formally equivalent translation results in a stilted English style. The NASB and the ESV are examples of the formally equivalent translations. For reading large portions of Scripture (reading through the Bible, ex.), one might choose a functionally equivalent translation, but for careful verse-by-verse study, one would want a more formally equivalent translation. In explaining a difficult text, I sometime find it helpful to quote other Bible translations other than the NKJV (from which I preach) to clarify the passage, sometimes even a paraphrase (ex. Romans 12:1-2, Phillips Paraphrase or Phil. 3:8, CEV)

A Paraphrase is not really a Bible translation but an attempt to freely word the meaning of a biblical text (generally done by one person). The Living Bible was written by Kenneth Taylor to help his children understand the Bible better, but its popularity has caused the paraphrase to be re-worked into the New Living Translation (by a team of scholars). The Message by Eugene Peterson puts the language in the “gritty” language of every day life.

Virtually all translators acknowledge that Paul’s letters addressed to adelphoi (“brothers”) in churches were in reality for all Christians, both men and women. The question remains, however, whether a Bible translation should render the expression adelphoi as “brothers and sisters” or “brothers. **Is “brothers and sisters” an interpretation or translation?** As one can see, this debate involves the distinction between formally and functionally equivalent translation theories. **Scholars favoring the more gender-neutral translations are usually more inclined toward functionally equivalent translation theory.** Those favoring a more strict correspondence of expressions are usually more disposed toward formally equivalent approaches to translation. Conservative, Bible-believing scholars, however, are agreed that Greek and Hebrew masculine pronouns for God should be rendered as masculine English pronouns (“he,” “his” or “him”) because God has revealed himself as Father.

TRANSLATION GUIDELINES

A. BEWARE OF THOSE BY ONE INDIVIDUAL...

1. Though well intentioned, such translations often express the views of one person or convey the theological bias of that individual.
2. It is better to find translations produced by a committee of scholars often with hundreds of experts in Hebrew and Greek who examine and critique each other’s work in the translation

B. BEWARE OF THOSE BY HERETICAL RELIGIOUS GROUPS...

1. The **Joseph Smith Translation** for the Mormon Church. Though Joseph Smith did not know biblical languages, he claims to have been inspired to alter the KJV. He added a prediction of his own coming to Genesis 50.
2. “The **New World Translation** is an utterly unreliable translation produced by the Jehovah’s Witnesses to support their heretical brand of theology. The translation strips Jesus of His full deity.” [Ron Rhodes, *The Complete Guide to Bible Translations* (Eugene, OR, Harvest House, 2009), 250.]
 - a. E.g., the NWT translation of **Jn 1:1-2** (“the word was a god”)
 - b. E.g., the NWT translation of **Co 1:16-17** (inserting “other” four times, though completely absent in Greek. It reads, “because by means of him all **other** things were created ... All **other** things have been created through him and for him. Also, he is before all **other** things, and by means of him all **other** things were made to exist.”)

C. A FEW RECOMMENDED ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS...

1. **King James Version (KJV)**
 - a. A classic, but somewhat archaic
 - b. Many people have problems with or misunderstand the old English
2. **New King James Version (NKJV)**
 - a. An updated KJV, desiring to preserve the beauty of the KJV
 - b. My personal choice, very easy to read**
3. **New American Standard Bible (NASB)**
 - a. An update to the ASV
 - b. My second choice, though sentence structure is often wooden**
5. **English Standard Version (ESV)**
 - a. Desiring to be poetic, like the KJV, NKJV
 - b. Desiring to be accurate, like NASB