

LIVING BY THE BIBLE

PART 1: DO I HAVE THE RIGHT BIBLE?

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There are so many English Bible translations that are both a blessing and a problem. It is a blessing that the Word of God is available to anyone who needs it in an easy-to-understand, accurate translation. It is a problem in that the different translations can create controversy and problems in Bible studies, teaching situations, etc. The differences between the translations can also be a subject of great division within the church body.

WARM-UP QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important for Christians to spend regular time reading the Bible?
2. How can Christians take an interest in reading the Bible regularly when they are already overloaded with too much information (email, texting, regular mail, phone calls, Internet ads, TV ads, news, sports, media, etc.)?

BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

According to Wikipedia, there are more than 450 English Bible translations today. So which one is best? The most popular translations were found to be: _____

THE TRANSLATION CHALLENGE



Original
languages

How far removed from the original language can the translator go without disturbing the original meaning?



Modern reader
languages

THREE TYPES OF TRANSLATIONS

Three major types represent different approaches to translating the biblical revelation (originally recorded in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) into English.

F _____

This type of translation takes a word-for-word approach—that is, for each Hebrew or Greek word in the biblical text, the translators have sought an equivalent English word that will communicate the same idea. These are closer to the original language but difficult to understand by the modern reader

Examples: King James Version (KJV), New King James Version (NKJV), English Standard Version (ESV), Revised Standard Version (RSV), New American Standard Bible (NASB)

F _____

This type of translation attempts to convey the thought expressed in the source text using equivalent expressions from a contemporary language like English ('thought for thought' translating). Also called a "dynamic equivalence" translation or a "balanced" translation. It attempts to keep a balance between the original language yet understandable by the modern reader.

Examples: New International Version (NIV), Today's New International Version (TNIV), New American Bible (NAB), New Jerusalem Bible (NJB), New Century Version (NCV).

F _____

This type of translation, or paraphrase, is a retelling of something in your own words. A paraphrase takes the meaning of a verse or passage of Scripture and attempts to freely express the meaning in "plain language" – essentially the words the author

of the paraphrase would use to say the same thing. These are easy for the modern reader to understand but they may be further from the original language.

Examples: New Living Translation (NLT), The Message (Msg), Living Bible (LB), Contemporary English Version (CEV), Good News Translation (GNT).

Translation Comparisons Using Exodus 30:13

Formal (Word-for-word): "This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD." (Exod. 30:13 KJV)

Functional (Thought-for-thought): "Each one who crosses over to those already counted is to give a half shekel, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs. This half shekel is an offering to the LORD." (Exod. 30:13 NIV)

Free (Paraphrase): "When you take a headcount of the Israelites to keep track of them, all must pay an atonement-tax to GOD for their life at the time of being registered so that nothing bad will happen because of the registration." (Exodus 30:13 MSG)

Table 1: Bible Translation Readability Grade Levels¹

TRANSLATION	GRADE LEVEL
Contemporary English Version (CEV)	5
English Standard Version (ESV)	10
Good News Translation (GNT)	5
King James Version (KJV)	12
Living Bible (LB)	5
New American Standard Bible (NASB)	11
New International Version (NIV)	8
New King James Version (NKJV)	8
New Living Translation (NLT)	6
Revised Standard Version (RSV)	12
The Message (Msg)	4
Today's New International Version (TNIV)	7

¹ Many of these grade levels were determined based on Flesch-Kincaid readability tests.

GUIDELINES FOR CHOOSING THE RIGHT BIBLE

If you are thinking about purchasing a Bible for yourself or as a gift, here is a quick guide to help you understand some of the choices available.

Don't let the variety of options discourage you from choosing a Bible for yourself or as a gift for someone else. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly. Whichever Bible translation you choose, God's Word will still make a difference in your life. As D.L. Moody once said, "The Bible will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from the Bible."

Choose a Bible with the _____.

A good technique is to have a set of Scripture verses you know well, and look those verses up in a translation you are unsure of. Then pick a translation that has familiar wording. Another good idea is to look at some of the most common verses that speak of the deity of Christ (John 1:1, 14; 8:58; 10:30; Titus 2:13) to make sure a Bible translation is true to the Word of God.

Choose a Study Bible that has _____.

Many excellent translations also have commentary notes added at the bottom of each page. They are often referred to as "Study Bibles" and may eliminate the need for separate costly Bible commentaries.

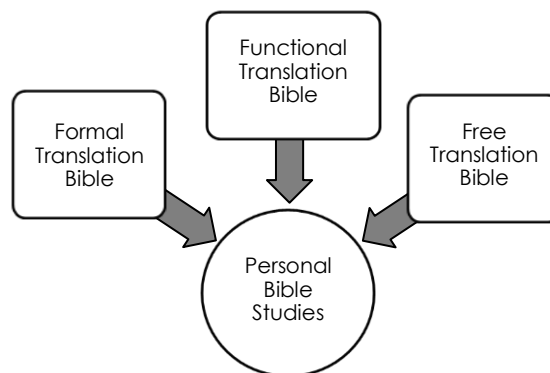
Choose a Bible translation that your _____.

Many churches often use a preferred translation used during the preaching/teaching portion of the service. If the preacher is using one type of translation and you are using another, it can be confusing. The same holds for many Bible study classes. Some teachers will use several translations to expose those in the class to the available various types and to accommodate multiple Bible translations being used by those in the class.

Use one of each _____.

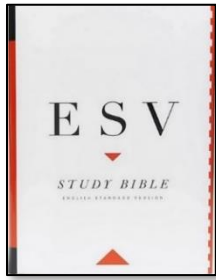
When doing a Bible study, it is often best to "triangulate" by using each of the three types of Bible Translations (formal, functional, and free translations).²

Most Bible translations can be found online.

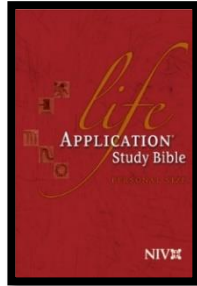


² For a list of the various Bible translations and their type (formal, functional, free) go to <https://www.mardel.com/bibletranslationguide>

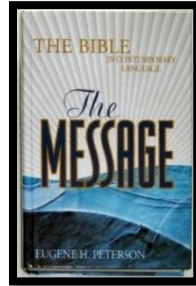
A SUGGESTED TRIO



Formal



Function



Free

SIX WAYS TO MANAGE TODAY'S INFORMATION OVERLOAD

1. Do the important things at the _____ (Bible reading, prayer).
2. Save _____ tasks for later in the day.
3. Take _____ during the day, especially when reading the Bible or praying)
4. Use email auto-responses stating _____.
5. Minimize _____.
6. Eliminate TV programs that _____.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

Bible Translation Guide, Mardel Christion & Education,
<https://www.mardel.com/bibletranslationguide>. Accessed September 24, 2020.

Why Are There So Many Translations and Which is Best? Got Questions.Org.
<https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-translations.html>. Accessed September 24, 2020.

Why Are There So Many Different Versions of the Bible? Christianity.com
<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/bible/why-are-there-so-many-different-versions-of-the-bible.html>. Accessed September 24, 2020.

Why Can't All Christians Agree on One Bible? GotQuestions.Org
<https://www.gotquestions.org/Christians-agree-Bible.html>. Accessed September 24, 2020.