

# HOW DO I CHOOSE A BIBLE TRANSLATION

AT THE RED DOOR COMMUNITY CHURCH

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## WHAT WE BELIEVE

We believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are God's revelation to us and the final authority for faith and life – His revealed and absolute truth. We believe the Word is God breathed, infallible as originally given, and has ultimate authority in all matters of faith, conduct and experience. Gods Word is alive and active and has the power to transform lives. We believe scripture is sufficient for knowing God. It is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.

## **Acts 17:11-12**

Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. As a result, many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.

In the book of Acts, Luke records an account of a community of people from the city of Berea who were eager to hear and know about Jesus through Paul's teaching. However, what the Berean's are really known and commended for is their diligence in taking what they heard and then searching God's Word to confirm that what Paul was teaching was true. And what was the fruit of their eagerness and their diligence to know the truth? It was belief, or to put it another way, faith in Jesus. And this not just for those in the Jewish synagogue but for Greek citizens of Berea also.

This attitude is one that all disciples of Jesus would do well to embrace and one that we would greatly exhort and encourage all members of Red Door to emulate. To say that truth matters is something of an understatement. Jesus himself declares that he is "the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6)", and in John 8:31-32 Jesus says, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Further, Jesus says of the Holy Spirit that he will guide us into all truth (John 16:13) and in John 17:17 he prays to the Father "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." Speaking of Satan in John 8:44 Jesus says "He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." And in 2 Timothy 4:3-4 Paul pens these sobering words, "For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths."

What can we learn from these Scriptures? Truth matters. Truth saves, liberates and sanctifies. But we also learn that within the human heart is a propensity to turn from truth and to desire to hear teaching that agrees with our sinful, broken nature and that we also have an enemy whose tool and weapon against us is anti-truth, i.e. lies.

Truth matters. It matters big-time. In light of this, where do we then go to learn, know and receive truth? The same place the Berean's did. Scripture – aka The Bible. But in our modern age that then leads to another question. Which Bible? There's so many to choose from. Are they all reliable? How do I decide what translation I should be reading? These are really important questions to consider and work through. What follows is a short discussion to help answer these questions and to help provide an understanding of how Scripture is translated from the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.

## **TYPES OF BIBLE TRANSLATIONS**

There are two main types of Bible translations

### **Formal equivalence**

This is a word for word translation of the original language where the emphasis is on retaining both the word order and sentence structure of the original language.

### **Functional equivalence**

This is more of a ‘thought for thought’ translation where the focus is to produce the closest equivalent in both meaning and style of the original language.

The following is an example of different translations of 1 Kings 2:10 where we can see how the KJV and NIV (formal equivalence) differ from the NLT (functional equivalence), with the NLT providing the clearest meaning on the text.

### **KJV**

“So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.”

### **NIV**

“Then David rested with his fathers and was buried in the City of David.”

### **NLT**

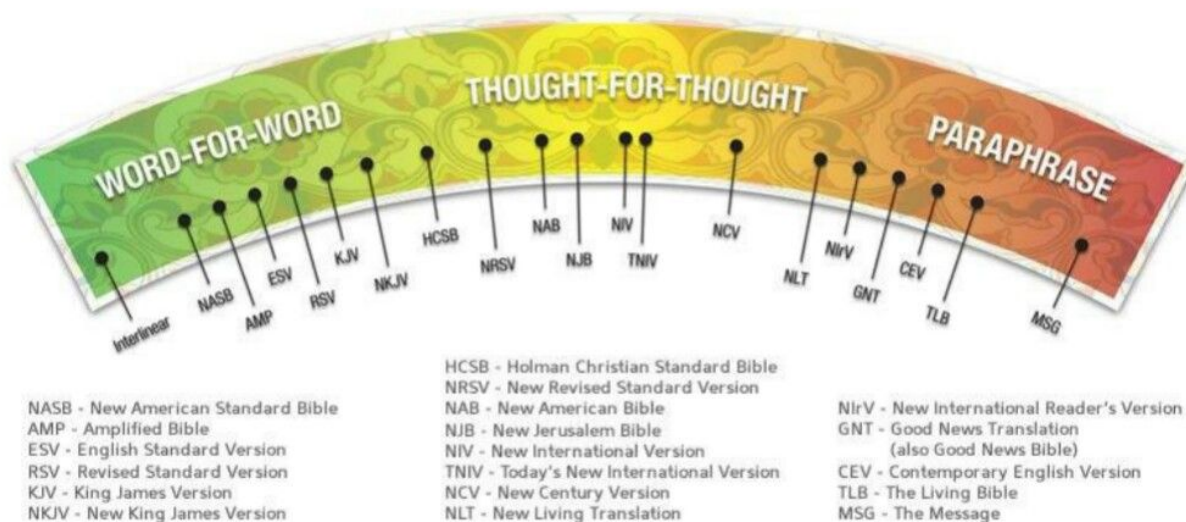
“Then David died and was buried in the City of David.”

## **WHAT IS A PARAPHRASE**

There is a third type or category of the Bible and that is a paraphrase. A paraphrase is not technically a translation. With a paraphrase, the author takes a translation of the Bible and puts it into his or her own words and seeks to express the text in contemporary language. The author of a paraphrase usually does not start with the Bible in its original languages. The most well-known example of a paraphrase is The Message.

The below image shows where the most common translations fit on the spectrum from word-for-word (formal equivalence), to thought for thought (functional equivalence) and paraphrase.

## Types of Bible Translations



### WHICH TRANSLATION SHOULD I READ?

The answer to this question depends on what you are reading it for. If you're reading for devotional purposes, then something like the NIV or NLT are good translations. If you are reading for bible study purposes, then we would recommend the ESV or the NASB.

We would also suggest that you regularly read from at least two different translations because no translation is perfect, and each has its own pros and cons. We would also suggest that of the two translations one would be from the word-for-word end of the spectrum with the other from the thought-for-thought. For example, the ESV and the NIV. Parallel bibles that list 2-4 different translations alongside each other can be helpful.

A quick word on paraphrases...The Message paraphrase is much loved by many Christians and it can be a helpful introduction to the Bible for some. However, we would caution against using The Message as your go-to, regular reading Bible. The best way to treat a paraphrase such as The Message is like a commentary. You would read a Bible commentary to get an understanding of what a person has to say about a particular part of Scripture, but you wouldn't treat the words of a commentary as authoritative like one would the Bible.

Another popular Bible that is promoted as a translation, but which is actually more of a paraphrase is The Passion (TPT). Most biblical scholars agree that it is misleading to call TPT a translation as it goes far beyond translating word-for-word or thought-for-thought and often

inserts concepts, words and ideas not found in the original text. Also, like the Message, TPT was written by only one person. This greatly increases the likelihood of personal bias's and convictions being imported into the text. The major translations of the Bible are all worked on by committees of experts to mitigate against this.

Another red flag in regard to TPT is found in this statement from the TPT promotional website: "In past translations wonderfully gifted scholars were trained to focus on other factors besides the emotion of the text. As Brian has studied the original biblical manuscripts, he has uncovered what he believes is the love language of God that has been missing from other translations." As one writer stated in response to this, "God's love language is not hidden, or missing; it is in plain sight in the many excellent translations we have available. The Word of God, in any language, is a book of love and literature, heart and head, passion and perceptiveness, foundations and fire. It doesn't need adding to."

The Word of God is truth, and therefore we need to be really careful and considered about the Bible we hold in our hands and read and receive as truth - that we read and receive as The Word of God. As such our leadership team and teaching will generally aim to use formal equivalence version when we teach and preach.

### **Further reading**

How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding and Using Bible Versions by Gordon D. Fee and Mark L. Strauss, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007.

The Bible in Translation - The Gospel Coalition  
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-bible-in-translation/>

What's Wrong With The Passion "Translation"? - Think Theology  
[https://thinktheology.co.uk/blog/article/whats\\_wrong\\_with\\_the\\_passion\\_translation](https://thinktheology.co.uk/blog/article/whats_wrong_with_the_passion_translation)

### **Need to talk**

As always if you would like to discuss any of the above, please make a time with one of our pastoral staff by emailing us at [enter@thereddoor.cc](mailto:enter@thereddoor.cc)

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