

Bible Translations

1. **Why do we need different translations?** – Unless you read Hebrew and Greek – the original language of the Bible – you must choose from one of the many English translations of the Bible. English translations differ due to the manuscripts the translations are based on as well as the philosophy of translation used.
2. **Usually done by teams of scholars** – Come with assumptions; Exceptions – *The Message*
3. **Philosophy of translation** – Decision about how far the translator will go to bridge the gap between the two languages. How they attempt to stay true to the original language while making it understandable to the reader. There are some defined groupings of translations, but they all fall along a spectrum from highly literal to highly paraphrased. There is no perfect literal translation from one language to another because of inherent differences in the structure and vocabularies of languages.
 - **Formal Equivalent** (also known as **Word for Word**, literal) – These translations are the closest to the grammar and syntax of the original language, but they can often sound wooden. Also, this kind of translation makes no consideration for cultural changes. (Ex: Amplified, KJV, ESV, NASB, RSV, ASV.)
 - **Dynamic Equivalent** (also known as **Thought-for-thought**) – These translations work to keep the overall original *thought* rather than attempt a literal word for word translation. Although not as technically accurate as the Formal Equivalent, they are much easier for 21st century westerners to understand. For instance, Dynamic Equivalent translations change idioms, figures of speech, and measurements into “equivalent” terms that we will understand. But also try to maintain historical and factual accuracy. (Ex: NLT, CEB, REB) Example of a need: Translating “it’s raining cats and dogs” into another language.
 - **Optimal Equivalent** – This “**in-between**” philosophy group is not on all the lists. But the NIV is the prime example. Desire to soften the stilted reading of the Formal Equivalent but still stay closer to the original language than the Dynamic Equivalent. (NIV, NJKV, CSB, NRSV)
 - **Paraphrase** (Free) – This translation group departs the furthest from the original language but it provides a fresh reading experience. A paraphrase is more of a big-idea-for-big-idea translation. It takes liberties with the literal words to create a “storytelling” feel. This translation group is fine for casual and inspirational reading but not recommended for study. With the paraphrase’s “storytelling” format, it would be great for family devotions with young children. (Ex: The Message, The Living Bible, Phillips)
4. **What Type of translation do you need?** – depends on your purpose.
 - a. Bible study?
 - i. Word-for-word is best for in-depth – particularly word studies
 - ii. Thought-for-thought acceptable for light study
 - b. Devotional reading/personal application? – thought-for-thought or Paraphrase; I love the NLT
 - c. Family devotions? Young children? – the paraphrase
 - d. Scripture memory? – the one you are most familiar with; your favorite; use it consistently for memory