

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, March 25, 2015 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

ALL ABOUT THE BIBLE
How We Got the Bible – Translation
2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:19-21

FOR REVIEW

Let's review just a little bit where we have been in our study "All About the Bible." This study is primarily concerned with how we got the Bible, is it reliable and how to get the most out of it. We began our study by looking at what the Bible says about the itself. You know... the claims that the Bible makes about itself. Our two key text for what the Bible claims about itself and the key texts for our study are:

2 Timothy 3:16-17

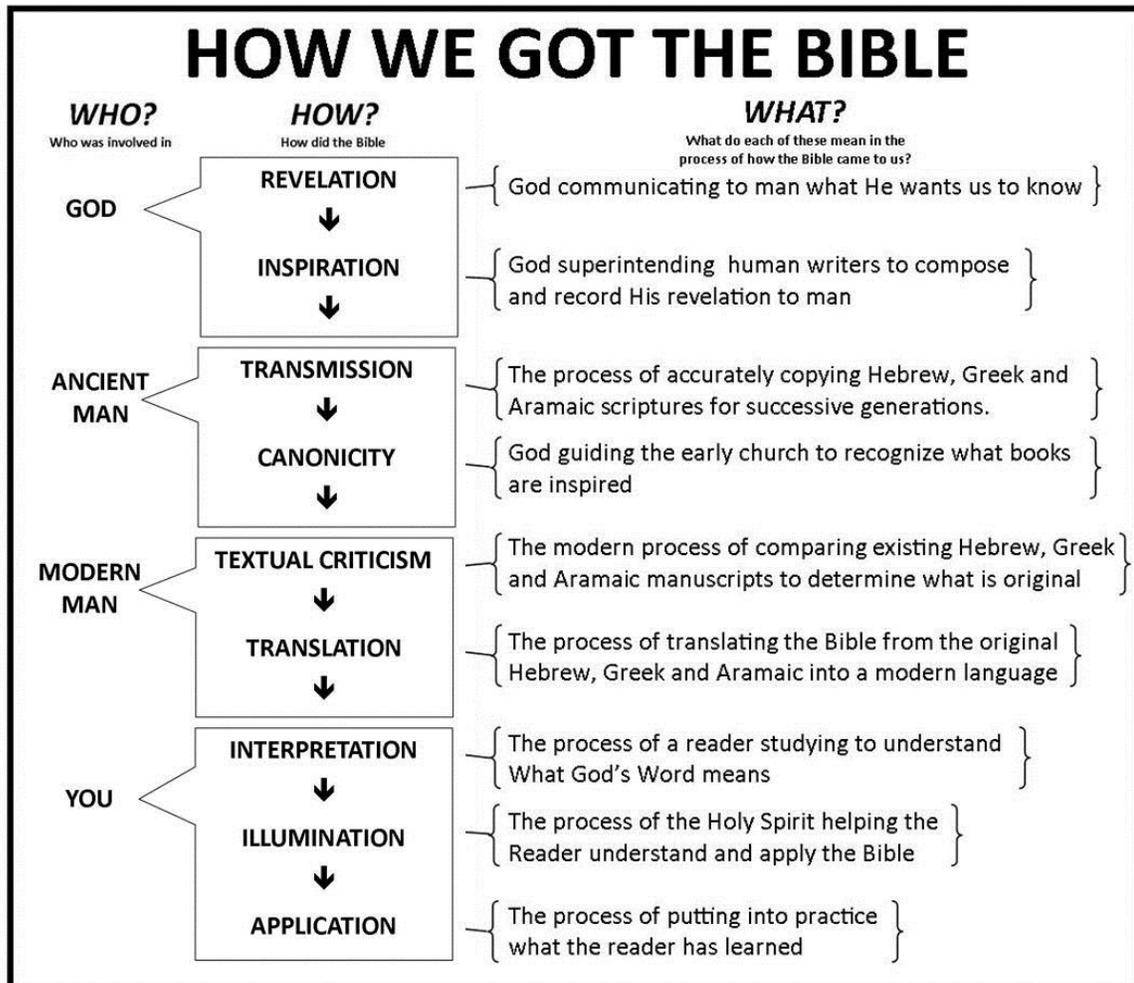
"¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." - 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

2 Peter 1:19-21

"¹⁹ We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." – 2 Peter 1:19-21 (NIV)

Observation: *Based on these two verses we must affirm that at some point our faith in the claims of the Bible must be relied upon for the ultimate acceptance and believe in the Bible as the Word of God. The Bible claim it and therefore we must choose to either believe it by faith and place the full force of our being on that claim or reject it. From this point the study of how we got the Bible and how it has been preserved by God for us becomes based solely on our understanding of what the Bible says about itself and the external evidences that point to and reinforce those claims. A major point to understand in a study like this is that it may not answer all your questions, may leave you feeling a bit vulnerable about the reliability of the Bible, and may leave you with more questions. That is why faith must be our beginning place in accepting God's Word as itself. With that said there is more external evidence that points to the Bible's claims about itself, its reliability and trustworthiness and authenticity, and the fact that it is the Word of God as it claims... there is more evidence of these things than there is for any other piece of literature or sacred writing every produced by man.*

Below you will find a diagram/chart that we have been using that basically details the who, how and what of how the Bible came to us.



So up to this point in our study we have looked at God's revelation and inspiration, and we have examined how ancient man transmitted what God revealed and inspired him to write down for us, and then we took a look at how those writing were compiled and collected and determined to be the Word of God, and were recognize as the canon of scripture, the Bible. We have also examined the science of textual criticism and the process by which we are able to determine what the original manuscripts of the Bible said. The next important step in the process of how the Bible came to us would be translation... basically how the Bible came to be in a language that we can understand.

The process of translation may carry with it some important and sometimes controversial and troubling questions... questions like:

5 Questions Raised Concerning Translation:

1. Has anything been lost in translation?

2. **How do we know that the translations that we have are accurate and accurately reflect what the original manuscripts of the Bible said?**
3. **What is the best translation that we have?**
4. **Why do some consider the King James Version of the Bible the only legitimate translation of the Bible and all other modern translations heretical?**
5. **What is the difference between a translation, a version and a paraphrase?**

This study may not fully or adequately answer all of these questions, but it will perhaps at least give some tools that may assist in our understanding of how the answers to these questions may be secured. I think a place to start is with some Bible translations basics.

IMPORTANCE OF BIBLE TRANSLATION

The Bible has continued to be the bestselling Book year after year, and in America, we're surrounded by Bibles. That's a good and bad thing.

The Good and Bad of the Bible's Availability Because of Translation:

1. **The Good = Nearly everyone has unrestricted access to God's Word**
2. **The Bad = We forget the costly price that great men of God paid to give us unrestricted access to God's Word through translation**

A Brief History of the Cost of Translation into Our Language: I am going to give you some names and dates to jot down that will help to give us a brief history of the cost that we often take for granted in having our Bible translations that we do have today.

1. Jerome – 382, The Latin Vulgate

Some in the Church recognize the name Jerome, and know that he was commissioned by Pope Damasus I in 382 to make a revision of various old Latin translations of the Bible that existed at the time. Jerome's Vulgate was the result – an early fifth century version of the Bible in Latin.

However, Jerome's efforts didn't change the fact that the Bible still wasn't available in the language of the common people.

2. John Wycliffe – 1382, The Wycliffe Translation (Bible), first English Translation (from the Latin Vulgate)... complete English Bible

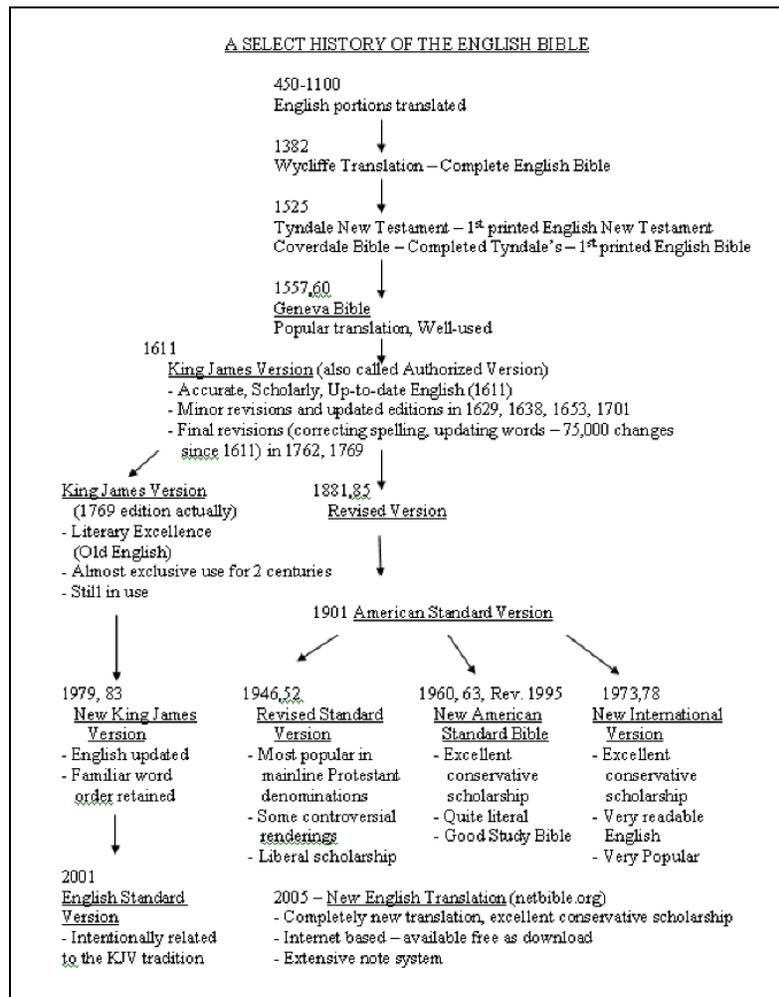
That tide began to turn with John Wycliffe (ca. A.D. 1330-1384) who is normally credited with creating the first English translation of the entire Bible from the Vulgate.

3. William Tyndale – 1525, Tyndale New Testament, first printed English New Testament, Coverdale Bible (completed Tyndale's work for first printed English Bible),

Then, a little more than a century later, William Tyndale (ca. 1492 – 1536) created the first English translation of the Bible that drew directly from the Hebrew and Greek texts. His work was also the first to benefit from the then new medium of print, which allowed for its wide distribution.

Because Tyndale's believed that the Bible belonged to everyone – and because he opposed Henry VIII's divorce on the grounds that it violated Scripture – the king had Tyndale arrested and confined to the castle of Vilvoorde, which is outside of Brussels, for over a year. Tyndale was then strangled, impaled, and burned at the stake.

Men like Wycliffe and Tyndale humble me greatly. In my study and throughout my home, I have many different Bibles. I also have Bible software on my computer, iPad, and Smartphone. If you're a Christian, maybe the same can be said of you. The next time you pick up any copy of God's Word on whatever media you happen to be using at the time, bow your head, and thank God for men like Wycliffe and Tyndale who sacrificed much so we can enjoy such easy access to the Truth.



BIBLE TRANSLATION BASICS

Despite the fact that many Christians have never given thought as to how the Bible they were have or use was produced for their native language, emotions can surprisingly and quickly run very hot when someone questions the veracity of a particular Bible translation. Recently I've been asked by a number of other believers my opinion on what the "best" Bible translation is, so I thought I'd cover some ground here that can hopefully be used to answer the question in the

future for those who wonder about the same thing. An important place to start with some Bible translation basics is to understand how we get our “translations.”

Place a check mark beside the diagram below that you “think” best illustrates how we get our English translations that we use today (i.e. KJV, NKJV, NIV, NASB, etc)

Diagram 1

HEBREW → GREEK → LATIN → GERMAN → ENGLISH

Diagram 2

HEBREW → ENGLISH & GREEK → ENGLISH

Some people have the mistaken notion that the Bibles we have today are unreliable because of constant retranslation. But the translations we have today are not the end of a long chain of translation. They are translated directly from Hebrew (O.T.) and Greek (N.T.) manuscripts. You should have checked diagram 2 above as best illustrating how we get our English translations today. The Bibles we use today are not retranslated from one language to another until we get our English translations today. Our best English translations today are not translations from Latin or from German, although many of our earliest manuscripts were in those two languages. Rather our modern translations today are directly translated into our English language from the original languages they were written in... namely Hebrew, Greek and rarely Aramaic.

And here is something very important for you to know and understand about Bible translation. The translation process has, for the most part, produced improved modern Bibles in several ways.

3 Ways The Bible Translation Process Has Improved Our Bible Translations Today:

1. **Better original texts from the science of textual criticism** - By studying and comparing the many available Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, scholars are able to determine the original as accurately as possible. This has given us better Hebrew and Greek originals from which to translate into English. Simply put, the advances in the science textual criticism today and the scientific and archeological advances in discovery today give us better data to know what the original said.
2. **Better understanding** - Recent scholarship and again archeological advances has helped us to better understand various Bible terms in light of Bible culture.
3. **Better Readability** - Modern translations put the Bible into a more readable forms

BIBLE TRANSLATION TERMS

It is important to understand some of the terms that go along with and often get associated with the subject of Bible translation.

4 Important Terms Associated with Bible Translation:

1. **Translation** – A translation is a rendering of the Bible in a language different than the one in which it was written. A translation is intended to be as literal as possible and still be easily read. There are basically two types of translations.

2 Types of Translations:

(1) **Versions** – Versions are the various translations of the Bible within one modern language.

Example: English Versions = King James Version, American Standard Version, New International Version, English Standard Version, etc.

(2) **Version Revisions** – Some modern versions could also be called “revisions” because they are largely based on a previous version which has been updated. The following chart will help you to understand how version revisions work.

Example: Today’s New International Version (TNIV & NIV), New American Standard Version, New King James Version, etc.

VERSION	REVISION OF VERSION
New International Version (1973, 1978, 1984)	Today’s New International Version (TNIV) and New International Version (2005, 2011)
American Standard Version (1901)	Revised Standard Version (1946/1952 revision)
	New American Standard Version (1960 revision)
King James Version (1611) (1612)	New King James Version (1982 revision)

2. **Paraphrase** – A paraphrase is a less literal rendering of the Bible, restating the text to give the original sense but not attempting to literally translate each term in the original language. A paraphrase attempts to translate the ideas from the original text without being constrained by the original words or language. The end result is something that is very readable, but certainly not exact or true to the original texts as far as translation goes.

Examples: Living Bible, Phillips, Today’s English Version (formerly called Good News for Modern Man), The Amplified Bible (verses are greatly expanded to explain each phrase), The Message

3. **Interlinears** – An “interlinear” is a Bible study tool which contains an exactly literal rendering of each Hebrew or Greek term. Interlinears are actually copies of the Hebrew and Greek text with a literal English translation printed below. It follows the word order and grammar of the original language whether or not it is easily readable in the modern language (English for example). Interlinears can be helpful for study purposes (particularly if the reader has some knowledge of Hebrew and Greek), but are not useful as a Bible for regular reading.

Example: Today’s Parallel Greek-English New Testament

4. **Children’s Bible Story Books** – These are even less literal than paraphrases. No attempt is made to “translate” the Bible text. These books merely selectively “retell” the story portions of the Bible. One good example for the youngest children (3-7) is Kenneth Taylor’s “New

Bible In Pictures For Little Eyes.” Bible Story Books are different than most Children’s Bibles which are actually regular translations or paraphrases printed with pictures appropriate to children. (International Children’s Bible, NKJV Explorers Bible for Kids, NIV Adventure Bible, etc.)

Example: New Bible in Pictures for Little Eyes

The chart below compares the various “Bibles” according to how literal they are and may help you to understand the differences and how each may be useful in understanding and getting the most out of God’s Word.

MOST LITERAL TO LEAST LITERAL COMPARISON CHART

**Most Literal
Literal**

Least



Interlinears	Versions	Paraphrases	Bible Story Books
Today’s Parallel Greek-English New Testament	King James Ver. New International Ver. American Standard Ver. English Standard Ver. New American Standard New Living Translation	The Living Bible Philips Translation Today’s English Ver. Amplified Bible The Message	New Bible in Pictures for Little Eyes

Observation: *Since neither translations nor paraphrases are exactly literal, there will always be a degree of “interpretation” in them. That is, to put the Greek or Hebrew words and phrases into readable English, the translator has to decide to some degree what each term means. Paraphrases have more “interpretation” than translations. That makes paraphrases easier reading because it seems everything is explained. But for that reason, they also will be less reliable, because you only know what the person doing the paraphrase thought a particular verse or phrase means. So it is best to stick with translations for most study and reading. Modern translations are very readable and yet they allow the reader to draw more of his own conclusions when the meaning is vague. Paraphrases are valuable for younger readers and perhaps for reading through large portions at a time for getting the “big picture”*

Versions and paraphrases themselves are not “inspired” by God. Some ultra-conservative Christian groups wrongly suggest that the King James Version has special authority as a version over all the others. It is true that the KJV has had the greatest impact of any translation and for the longest time (1611 through the present). But there is no special divine authority attached to it over others. It is also true that some versions have misleading portions because they were done by a cult (New World Translation – Jehovah’s Witnesses). Other versions have certain renderings that are controversial because they were done by scholars that do not have an evangelical perspective (Revised Standard Version – a more liberal biblical scholarship – endorsed by the National Council of Churches; Douay Version and the New American Bible – Catholic scholars, etc.). Ultimately, the reliability of a particular version depends not on some special authority from God but upon the accuracy, knowledge, and spiritual integrity of the scholars doing the translation.

A QUICK LOOK AT BIBLE TRANSLATION PHILOSOPHIES

Although some could argue there are more, I believe there to be three general philosophies or methodologies that are used to translate the Scriptures.

3 General Philosophies of Bible Translation:

1. **The Free Translation Method** - The first is the free translation or paraphrase approach. As its name implies, a paraphrase attempts to translate the ideas from the original text without being constrained by the original words or language. The end result is something that is very readable, but certainly not exact or true to the original texts because the author is focused on restating and either elongating or summarizing what the actual inspired texts say. An example of a popular paraphrase is Eugene Peterson's "The Message". "The Living Bible" is also a popular paraphrase.

***NOTE:** The next two Bible translation methods can be summarized by Friedrich Schleiermacher who wrote, "Either the translator leaves the writer alone as much as possible and moves the reader toward the writer, or he leaves the reader alone as much as possible and moves the writer toward the reader."*

2. **The Dynamic Equivalence Method** - The second Bible translation method is the dynamic or functional equivalence approach. It does not translate by structural units or words but by "meaningful mouthfuls" or "thought by thought" with the goal being to reproduce a response in the reader that is equivalent to the response the original readers of that time would have had. The most popular example of the dynamic equivalent translation method is the New International Version (NIV).
3. **The Literal Equivalence Method** - The third Bible translation philosophy is known as either the literal equivalence method or is sometimes called the literal/formal method. It starts with a word for word translation, but will conform to the target language grammar by adding words to assist in readability. However, it still remains lexically a word-for-word or sentence-for-sentence translation. The most common literal formal translations are The King James Version (KJV) and New King James (NKJV), the New American Standard Bible (NASB), and the semi-recent English Standard Version (ESV).

Which Translation is "Best"?

I doubt any Christian would disagree on the importance of having a Bible in their hand that accurately reflects the very words God gave to the inspired writers of Scripture. Therefore, every believer should commit themselves to using a text whose goal is to accurately and faithfully communicate the meaning of the original text. But which translation should that be?

I've yet to meet any scholar, theologian, pastor, apologist, etc., who believes that a paraphrase is the best translation to use for Bible reading or study. A paraphrase may be interesting to use from time to time to see how a particular translator might summarize or reword the sacred text for everyday speech, but outside of a textual comparison with more studious translations, the paraphrase should be discarded – at least where methodological Bible study is concerned.

Removing the paraphrase from the mix leaves us with the dynamic vs. formal equivalence approaches. To get an at-a-glance understanding of the key differences between the two

methods, Dr. Thomas Howe, in a critique of the dynamic equivalence approach written in an edition of the Christian Apologetics Journal (Vol. 5, No 1, Spring 2006), reproduced the following chart from Dr. Norman Geisler that summarizes the differences between the two:

	Dynamic Equivalence	Literal / Formal Equivalence
Essence of	Thought-for-thought	Sentence-for-Sentence
Proper Setting	Target Language	Source Language
Interpretation	Thematic Interpretation	Linguistic Interpretation
Meaning / Words	Meaning Expressed without Words (Know Thought Apart from Words)	No Meaning Expressed without Words (Know Thought Through Words)
Locus of Meaning	In the Mind	In the Text
Goal	Reproduce Same Effect	Reproduce Same Meaning
Focus	Response to the Message	Form of the message

Again, the goal of the dynamic equivalence is to produce the same effect in the reader today as the original text did back in its day. The objective of the literal formal is to reproduce the same meaning for the reader today as the original text did back in the first century.

WHAT IS THE BEST BIBLE TRANSLATION TO US TODAY?

All of the major English translations (versions) that we have today are excellent and reliable. I have my preferences, but appreciate them all. If I was to suggest a couple of the best today I would recommend the New King James Version and the English Standard Version. For readability I would still suggest the New International Version. You will see that there is not a great deal of difference between any of these.

What about study bibles? Yes, yes, yes! I highly suggest them! You might as well take advantage of the scholarship available to you though a good study Bible, but some are better than others. Paul tells us in Ephesians, “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” ([Ephesians 4:11-12](#)). Now my question is – what is the difference in a gifted expository teacher explaining the Scriptures from the pulpit and a gifted expository teacher explaining the Scriptures with notes inside a Bible? To me, there is no difference.

I personally have many different study Bibles that I use and refer to, and have greatly benefited from the commentary and other information contained within them. Of course, not all study Bibles are created equal and some definitely pack more of a punch than others. Here are the ones I routinely use for study ranked in order of which I believe contain the most beneficial

information:

5 Suggested Study Bible:

1. The MacArthur Study Bible- This is the Mac-Daddy (pun intended) of study Bibles. To me, the thing I look for most in a study Bible is one that doesn't skip over the tough parts of Scripture and contains commentary for most every verse that's meaningful on the page. I haven't found a study Bible that equals MacArthur's in that respect. I have to smile at some pages in his study Bible like the first page of John where 85% of the page is his commentary and 15% is the actual text, but I appreciate MacArthur's attention to detail and the deep insight he provides. My favorite and best recommend.

2. The ESV Study Bible - This study Bible should come with wheels so you can pull it behind you when you go into church. It's a whopper. But, that's good in that the scholars commissioned to provide commentary took their job seriously and supply lots of good information including competing views on difficult passages. Plus, there's a plethora of articles and other help aids that add to the weight of this monster. I don't have this one yet.

4. The Life Application Bible - When teaching through a passage, good Bible teachers always follow the three key steps for biblical exposition: (1) Observation – what do I see? (2) Interpretation – what does it mean? (3) Application – how does it apply to life? What I like about this study Bible is it reminds you to not forget the third step.

5. The Apologetics Study Bible - Not only do you get good commentary on various passages in this study Bible, but there are solid articles throughout the work that answer critical questions about the Christian faith and give evidence for why what you're reading is true.

6. The Reformation Study Bible - I enjoy Dr. R. C. Sproul's teaching so much and I can wholeheartedly recommend this study Bible to you, though I have not yet purchased this one. However, it has the least amount of commentary in it of all my study Bibles. What I do like, though, are the various historical articles and commentaries on reformed theology that run throughout the Bible.

Conclusions

It's sometimes said that the best Bible is the one that you read. Maybe that's true, but why not make the Bible that you read one that takes pains to faithfully reproduce the text from the original languages in the most accurate way possible?