

Bible Translations

Introduction

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A question I am often asked in biblical studies is “**What Bible is the best for serious Bible study?**” There are obviously many Bibles available in book stores and on web pages like Amazon.com.

This is good question since most of us come from different home, or religious or church backgrounds!

A quick, but serious answer!

“The one you will read!”

Now for a more serious answer!

First, be careful of bibles translated by a church or church organizations such as the *Jehovah Witnesses*, or the *Church of Jesus Christ*, the *Mormons*! They trend to supporting their own religious persuasion rather than the religious persuasions of the *original apostolic writers* like Paul, Peter, John, Mark, or Luke.

Second, be careful of translations made by one person, like *J. B. Phillips Bible*, or *The Message*, of *David Jeremiah*. They tend to support their own theological persuasion, uncorrected by other good scholars.

Third, prefer a Bible translated by a good sized committee representing many religious persuasions. Any personal theological persuasions not supported by the original text will be questioned on religious grounds as well as from good textual studies. Such translations present a more balanced scholarly view of the original text.

Fourth, select a Bible that supports a *wide traditional view of biblical theology* which has been examined and corrected through the centuries of careful linguistic and biblical study.

Balanced Bible Translations

The following list of Bible translations have stood the test of careful linguistic, grammatical, and historical studies.

They have stood the scrutiny of language (Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, English, Spanish) linguistic etymological, theological, doctrinal, and ecclesiastical history.

All languages, Hebrew, Greek, English, Spanish, German, go through a history of word meaning according to the spoken dialect of the group making and reading the different translations. Word meanings with denotation in the 1611, the King James Bible, have changed over the 500 years of the growth and international spread of the English language.

Word meanings in England may have different meanings in the USA, and these meanings are reflected in the modern Bibles!

The King James Version New King James Version

The English of the 1611 translation, the *King James Version*, is not readily readable and understood in in some English speaking communities in 2025. This has resulted in new translations such as the *New King James Version* of 1982.

Good translations, but care is needed when reading these versions! More modern translations are preferred!

When the KJV was originally published as the King James Authorized Version, 1611, it went through a series of versions depending on which denomination survived the numerous religious wars in England in the late 17th centuries! In some the, the Catholic Church, 14 Apocryphal books were included. This was challenged by the Protestant Cromwellian churches which excluded the Apocryphal books, but included in some Church of England versions!

The readers own religious ecclesiastical persuasion will determine which version is chosen. Primarily the KJV read today is the *Church of England* or *Protestant* version. It is a good translation with the caveat that English spoken in the USA, England, the British Commonwealth, and other English speaking countries, varies significantly in some places. Take for instance the words baptism, bishop, pastor, deacon, etc. which are all influenced by the Church of England.

American Standard Version, 1901

New American Standard Bible, 1971, 1977, 1995, 2020

The ASV and NASV were obviously *American reader* oriented in efforts to address the English spoken variations, and the Church of England's religious influences!

These versions represent *committee scholarship translations* from a wide variety of religious persuasions.

The ASV needed upgraded from the 1911 for newer developments in the American culture and Protestant churches.

The NASV (sometimes called NASB) are good versions which have attempted to keep pace with sexual and Gender concepts that predominate among younger generations.

The popularity of the NASV has declined in recent years due to the discovery of some excellent manuscripts, the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, and the *Nag Hammadi Tractates*, that have provided excellent linguistic and historical resources for translation.

Revised Standard Version, RSV, 1951, 1971

New Revised Standard Version, NRSV, 1989

These versions represent *committee scholarship translations* from a wide variety of religious persuasions. Their primary reason for revision has been the development and scholarship information from the new manuscript discoveries in Qumran, the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, and North Egypt, Coptic, *Nag Hammadi Tractates*.

Some attention has been given to modern *cultural gender preferences*, but these are of minor importance.

New International Version, NIV, 1984

In 1955, a businessman, Howard Long, was convinced of the need for a contemporary English translation of the Bible. While sharing these concerns with a business associate, he shared his unhappiness with the King James Version claiming that the KJV did not communicate the gospel clearly

because of its archaic language. His concern was reading the Bible to children from the Bible whose English the children could not understand. He shared the frustration with his pastor, Peter DeJong. They who were inspired by the thought of a Bible in contemporary English. The two men petitioned their denomination, *Christian Reformed Church, CRC*, with the need for a contemporary English Bible. After initial rejection, *the CRC endorsed a committee* to investigate the issue in 1957. The original group comprised a *small evangelical committee* whose membership, chosen by DeJong's church, included members from several denominations.

Their translation methodology was a mix of *word-for-word translation*, blended with *phrase-by-phrase comments making paragraph sense*. The translation in many places is more a *commentary* than a *translation by inductive exegesis*.

The NIV is favored by many with poor English reading ability.

The English Standard Version, ESV, 2001

The ESV, the English Standard Version, is an English translation in contemporary English style. It was published in 2001 by Crossway Bible. It was created by a team of over one-hundred leading evangelical scholars and ministers whose aim was to produce a translation that balances fidelity to the original text with modern readability, an improvement on the NIV. The ESV is essentially a literal translation focusing on word-for-word accuracy, literary excellence, and depth of meaning.

It is available in hundreds of print editions, free digital versions, through ESV.org.

The ESV is an excellent translation running parallel to the RSV in translation in popular modern day English and gender sensitivity.