

Bible Translations: Find the Right One for You

Your study will be enriched when you explore different versions.

Have you ever wondered if you made the right choice when you purchased your last Bible? A few key questions will help you evaluate which Bible meets your needs.

1. How was it translated? Three basic methods of Scripture translation are used: word for word, thought for thought and paraphrasing.

Word for word is also known as “literal translation.” Bibles in this category include New American Standard Bible and King James Version.

Thought for thought is sometimes called “dynamic translation.” Bibles in this category include New Revised Standard Version, and New International Version.

Paraphrases generally are not translations but revisions of translated versions of the Bible. Some are created with careful attention to the original languages; some are not. Contemporary paraphrases include The Living Bible and The Message.

2. Who translated it? An individual? A nonprofit organization? An international team of experts? Better translations generally emerge from large, diverse groups. Also consider whether the person or group behind the paraphrase could be the reason for its popularity or unpopularity.

3. Which manuscripts were used? Many original versions were lost during the early church period. Some have since been found. Translations differ depending on the manuscripts' source languages: Hebrew and Aramaic for Old Testament and Greek for New Testament.

Here are overviews of several popular Bibles.

1. **The Amplified Bible** was published in 1954 with the goal of "amplifying" texts for the reader by providing several possible meanings of the Greek and Hebrew words. The system of brackets used to denote amplification sometimes makes for fragmented reading.
2. **The Contemporary English Version** was published in 1995 by the American Bible Society. The goal of the 100 scholars on the translation team was to make it understandable without sounding childish. describes it as written for a fifth-grade reading level.
3. **The King James Version** was published in 1611 and is the most well-known version. More than 50 scholars produced the translation. It sometimes stirs controversy because readers claim it as the only acceptable Bible translation.
4. **The Living Bible** was written by Kenneth Taylor as a paraphrase of the American Standard Bible. It has been widely popular because of its readability, but it has been criticized for being too interpretive.
5. **The Message**, a paraphrase of the New Testament, was published in 1993 by NavPress. The publisher's goal was "to convert the tone, the rhythm, the events, the ideas, into the way we actually think and speak."
6. **The New American Standard Bible** was published by the Lockman Foundation in 1971. The nonprofit group formed a team of 32 scholars to produce a literal translation of the wording of the original texts.

7. **The New International Version** was written by a group of more than 100 scholars. It was published in 1978 by Zondervan with the goal of striking the perfect midpoint between literal translation and paraphrase.
8. **Today's New International Version**, an update of the NIV, created quite a stir when the New Testament version released in 2002. The controversy stemmed from disagreements among Christians over the use of gender-inclusive language. The full-Bible version released in 2005.
9. **The New King James Version** was published by Thomas Nelson Publishers in 1982. The goal was to revise the traditional King James Version, keeping its literal translation but making it easier to read.
10. **The New Living Translation**, published by Tyndale in 1996, is the work of more than 90 interdenominational scholars. The goal was to revise The Living Bible, making it more accurate and thus moving it from the category of paraphrase to translation.
11. **The New Revised Standard Version** was published in 1990 by Zondervan. It is a revision of the Revised Standard Version, which itself is a revision of the American Standard Version. The goal was to create a revision based on the texts of older biblical manuscripts and changes in English usage.

As you conduct your research and pick out the Bible that is right for you, keep in mind that the most important thing is to choose a Bible you will actually read!

Deborah Marrie