

KJV Still America's Favorite Bible Version

In spite of its sometimes archaic language and the variety and availability of more modern translations, according to a recent study by LifeWay Research, the King James Version of the Bible remains the most beloved translation. The poll of 1,004 American 18 and older was conducted to mark the 400th anniversary of the King James Version, published in 1611 under the direction of England's King James I.

More than half of all American adults (62 percent) own a KJV Bible, and those who read the Bible regularly are more likely to read the KJV. Eighty-two percent of Americans who read the Bible at least once a month own a KJV, and 67 percent of American adults who own a Bible have a KJV.

Since its publication in 1611, the KJV has influenced the language of the English-speaking world, the study noted, generating now-common phrases such as "fight the good fight," "reap the whirlwind" and "feet of clay."

Age has a bearing on the use of the KJV: While 76 percent of Americans 55 years and older who own a Bible have a KJV, only 67 percent of those ages 35 to 54 own a copy. For those under 35 years old, the percentage owning a copy drops to 56 percent.

Although the KJV is sometimes considered to be difficult to read, LifeWay's research suggested that even younger readers appreciate its poetic language. Only 21 percent of those under 35 say they find the language "hard to understand," compared with 31 percent ages 35 to 54 who say the same and 28 percent 55 and older.

While newer versions use updated and readable language and often drawn on more reliable Greek and Hebrew manuscripts for

translation, most would admit that an element of continuity and familiarity is lost in not having a common translation that is used by everyone—from pastors preaching in the pulpits to children memorizing passages in Christian education programs.