

Preserving God's Word: Translations and Study Bibles

Eastridge church of Christ

Our Goal

Matthew 4:4

“But He answered, “It is written: Man must not live on bread alone, but on *every word* that comes from the mouth of God.”

2 Timothy 2:15

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”

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How to Choose a
Translation
for All Its Worth

A Guide to Understanding and Using Bible Versions

Gordon D. Fee
Mark L. Strauss



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- Why is this worth talking about?
 - If we don't faithfully translate the original Scriptures into our language, we no longer have God's words!
- Translation (Version) comparisons
 - Heb 2:6-8, Ro 16:1, 1 Tim 2:12 (gender, social)
 - Acts 2:38 (doctrine)
 - Acts 22:16 (doctrine)
 - A translation **must** faithfully reproduce the words and meaning of the original text, not change the words to fit our own personal, social or doctrinal agendas!

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- Translation Methodology
 - Word for word (formal equivalency)
 - Use the same words and in the same grammar and syntax construction as the original
 - Thought for thought (functional equivalency)
 - Changes the words and grammar slightly to better bring the original meaning into English
 - The personal biases of the translator may creep in
 - Paraphrases (Living translation, The Message)
 - Gender issues
 - “Literal” , “Gender accurate” or “gender neutral”

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Genesis 6:17 (NKJV)

“And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which *is* the breath of life; everything that *is* on the earth shall die.”

Genesis 6:17 (NIV 1984)

“I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish.”

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- Translation philosophy
 - Look at the make up of the translation team
 - Multiple members, multid denominational backgrounds
 - Checks and balances
 - Read their philosophy statement for the translation process
 - Read some of your favorite verses to see how they deal with them (Eph 2:8-10, Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, Titus 3:5, Ro 16:1)
 - Do you know trusted Bible class teachers or scholars that use and quote this translation?

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Luke 3:6 (Greek)

“And they shall see all flesh the salvation of God”.

Luke 3:6 (NKJV or ESV)

“And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

Luke 3:6 (NASB)

“AND ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE SALVATION OF GOD.”

Luke 3:6 (HCSB)

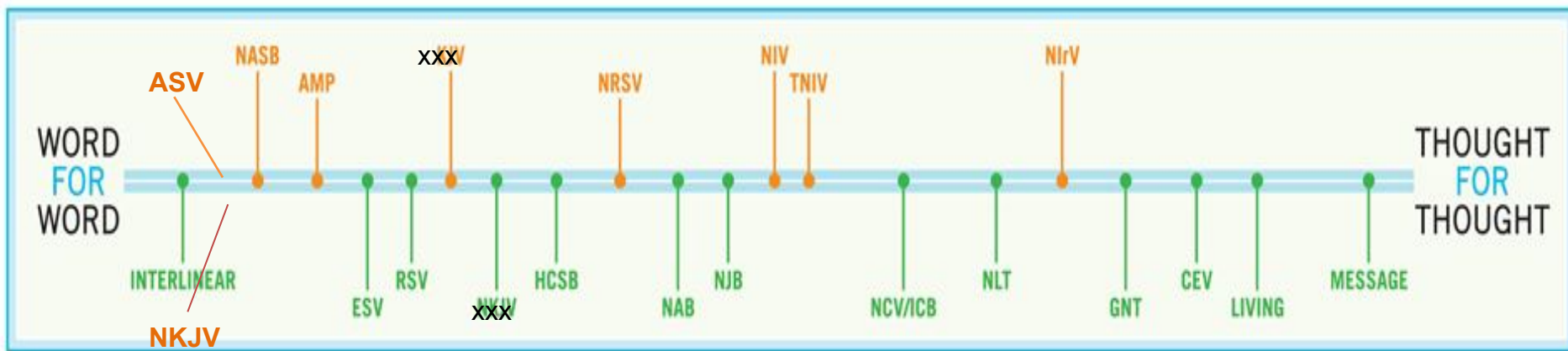
“and everyone will see the salvation of God.”

Luke 3:6 (NIV)

“And all mankind will see God's salvation.”

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TRANSLATION CONTINUUM



This continuum shows how different Bible translations fit into the word-for-word and thought-for-thought translation philosophies.

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Bible Translation By Grade Level

Translation	Grade Level
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KJV	12
RSV	12
NASB	11
NRSV	11
ESV	10
NIV	7-8
HCSB	7-8

Translation	Grade Level
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CEB	7
NKJV	7
NLT	6
GW	5
Message	4-5
NCV	3
NIRV	3

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- Translations: A suggested approach for picking a translation for study and reading
 - Own a Bible with a word for word translation, and own a bible with a thought for thought translation, and compare them frequently as questions arise.
 - Only use a paraphrase (The Message) in a very limited fashion, closely tethered to a true translation, and never for serious Bible study.
 - My favorites
 - NIV 1984, ERV (for kids) for “thought for thought”
 - ESV, NKJV, NASB, HCSB (CSB), ASV for “word for word”
 - Avoid: NLTse, NIV 2011
 - Own an interlinear bible?

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- Other considerations in picking your Bible for reading and study
 - From among the choices we have listed, you can be confident that they all do an excellent job of preserving God's word
 - Now look at other secondary issues like:
 - Font
 - Line and paragraph spacing
 - Page layout and aesthetic appeal
 - The layout of the study aids and choices they provide
 - The feel of the paper in your hands
 - Targeted audience (Apologetic, Archeology, Men's or Women's, etc)
 - Ease of reading, reading level

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- Study Bibles
 - Look at the contributors ... are there many and are they from different Christian backgrounds?
 - Look at the study notes for some of your favorite passages ... do they present a balanced list of options for interpretation?
 - What translation do they use?
 - Remember that chapter and paragraph headers are not part of Scripture (and neither were chapters and verses!)
 - My favorites: NIV'84SB, ESVSB, HCSB, NNISB

Preserving God's Word: Specific Translation Issues

- Gender translation issues
 - Literal vs Gender “accurate” vs Gender “neutral”
 - After learning koine Greek, my opinion on this issue has evolved and frankly changed.
 - One must be cautious to not change the intended meaning of the text by changing the gender of the pronouns in translation!

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- Gender neutral translation issue: Messianic prophecy
 - Study of Heb 2:6-10
 - NIV 1984, NASB = “son of man”, “him”, etc, referring to Christ as the Messianic fulfillment of Ps 8:4-6
 - Note that in the original language, all pronouns in this passage are masculine, singular! They refer to a man, specifically Jesus Christ, as the very passage is teaching.
 - NIV 2011, TNIV, NRSV = “human beings or mortals”, “them”, referring to all mankind, which could not fulfill Ps 8:4-6

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Heb 2:6-8 (NIV 84)

“But there is a place where someone has testified: “What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet.”

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Heb 2:6-8 (NIV 84)

“But there is a place where someone has testified: “What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet.”

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Heb 2:6-8 (NIV 2011)

“But there is a place where someone has testified: “What are mere mortals that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor and put everything under their feet.”

- In this example, a commitment to a social agenda (gender equality) has removed a Messianic prophecy from the Word of God!

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Ro 16:1 (NIV 1984, ESV, HCSB)

“I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant*[Others interpret this term in a technical sense: *deacon*, or *deaconess*, or *minister*] of the church in Cenchreae.

Romans 16:1 (NASB, NKJV)

“I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae”

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- Ro 16:1 NIV 2011
 - “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon^[a]^[b] of the church in Cenchreae.”
- **Footnotes:**
 - [a. Romans 16:1](#) Or *servant*
 - [b. Romans 16:1](#) The word *deacon* refers here to a Christian designated to serve with the overseers/elders of the church in a variety of ways; similarly in Phil. 1:1 and 1 Tim. 3:8,12.
- In this example, a social agenda has provided one of several possible interpretations of Scripture as a singular fact in the footnotes, which will confuse people and potentially cause them to believe women were installed as Deacons in NT times.

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1 Timothy 2:12 ESV, NASB (NIV 1984, HCSB, NKJV)

“I do not permit a woman to teach or to **exercise (have)** authority (Gr = “authentein”) over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.”

1 Timothy 2:12 (NIV 2011)

I do not permit a woman to teach or to **assume** authority over a man;^[a] she must be quiet.

Footnotes: a. Or *over her husband*

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- After the Eastridge Elders examined these and other issues with the new NIV 2011, we alerted our congregation that we do not recommend using it as a translation for reading or study.
- Our Elders also wrote Zondervan and asked them to keep the NIV '84 translation available going forward (they did not).
- Lastly we thanked the Southern Baptist Convention for their stand on the issue!
- LifeWay was asked to not sell it by the SBC!

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Acts 2:38 (ESV, NIV, HCSB, NKJB, NASB)

“And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for** the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 2:38 (NLTse)

“Peter replied, “Each of you must repent of your sins, turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **to show that you have received** forgiveness for your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” See Mt 26:28- same construction!

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Acts 22:16 (ESV, NASB, NIV, NKJV)

“And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.”

Acts 22:16 (HCSB)

“And now, why delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins by calling on His name.”

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- So what Translation can I trust? Are there any that faithfully reproduce God's Word?
- None are perfect, but many are excellent and faithfully reproduce the words and message of the inspired Scriptures
 - ESV, NIV 1984, NASB and NKJV
 - Great “combo”: 1984 NIV + ESV or NASB or NKJV
- IMO, It is best to translate the Scriptures word for word into the receptor language as closely as possible with both lexical and syntactic concordance to the original language, and let the reader interpret issues such as context and meaning.

Preserve God's Word!



Get into the Word, and get the Word into you!

