

The Way of Christ Ministries

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Choosing A Bible

2 Timothy 3:16–17 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*¹

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1 Introduction

If you walk into a bookstore or visit an online book retailer's website and go to the bible sections, you will probably find an overwhelming selection of bibles. In this teaching, we will look at why there are so many different bibles, and more importantly, which one(s) you should read, as choosing the correct Bible is important. We will also look at some other books that can be helpful, in addition to your Bible. I recommend you read my teaching *The Bible*, if you haven't done so already as it provides a solid foundation about the Bible.

2 Why So Many Different Bibles?

The uninformed may well ask, “You have the Old Testament (written in Hebrew and Aramaic), and the New Testament, (written in Greek) and you simply translate those into English and thus you only need one English Bible. Simple.” Well, the truth is, it’s not that simple. There are many reasons why there are so many Bibles, let’s take a look at some of the reasons:

2.1 Bible Types

Besides the “regular” Bible that may be sitting on your bookshelf, there are other types of Bibles. For example, Study Bibles, which contain added footnotes or teaching to provide background or help in understanding. These are discussed more thoroughly in [subsection 2.1.7](#) below.

2.1.1 Outreach Bibles

Outreach Bibles are used for evangelism, to reach out to the unchurched. They usually only contain only the New Testament, and the Old Testament books of Psalms and Proverbs; some are pocket-sized. Parents often give pocket-sized Bibles to their sons and daughters when they go off to college or war. Outreach Bibles are also great for giving to homeless people or other lost souls. Be sure to *offer* them the Bible, never force people to take it. Christianity never uses force.

Years ago while walking down the street, I was given an outreach Bible by the *Gideons International*.² It is pocket size, measuring approximate 4.5x3 inches, and less than an inch thick, and it has an orange water-resistant plastic cover. At my age, the print is quite small and difficult for me to read, even with my reading glasses. Yet I still cherish this Bible because of its wonderful purpose.

2.1.2 Interlinear Bibles

Interlinear Bibles for those studying the original Hebrew or Greek languages. In [Figure 1](#), taken from my interlinear Bible [12], we can see the Hebrew text from [Genesis 1:1](#), and underneath the equivalent English words. Notice that the Hebrew language is a right-to-left language, and it would be extraordinarily difficult to read without reversing the word order.

Translating the biblical Greek language into English is no easy task either; see [subsection 3.9](#) for more information.

2.1.3 Parallel Bibles

There are *Parallel Bibles* which contain more than one translation, useful for studying and comparing different translations side-by-side. Parallel Bibles are somewhat obsolete these days since websites and Bible software ([section 6](#)) can easily display translations in parallel.

² The organization is best know for putting Bibles in every Hotel and Motel room.



Figure 1: Genesis 1:1

I have an interesting out-of-print Bible called *The Word* [15] which contains 26 different English translations. It uses the KJV (King James Version) as a base, and shows words or phrases that differ in the other translations. It was published in 1993 so, alas, it does not contain the latest Bible translations.

2.1.4 Daily Bibles & Devotionals

Daily Bibles and devotionals provide usually short readings, meant to be read on a daily basis. Devotionals can take on many forms, from a passage of scripture to fictional stories or fables. See for example, [7], a daily Bible. Daily Bibles and devotionals are fine, but they are no substitute for serious Bible study and prayer.

2.1.5 Chronological Bibles

There are some chronological Bibles, for example, [14], which put the Bible into chronological order. These may help reduce confusion, especially when studying the Old Testament. However, God did not give us a chronological Bible initially, so the Bible is probably meant to be read in the canon order.

2.1.6 Audio Bibles

Audio Bibles are a relaxing way to listen to the Bible. They are also helpful to learn the pronunciation of names or other strange words in the Bible. Audio Bibles can be found online, for example, here:

<https://www.biblica.com/resources/niv-audio-bible-listen-online-for-free/>
and here:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

2.1.7 Study Bibles

A vast variety of study Bibles have been created. These are often geared towards specific demographic groups of readers, such as women, or men, or those recovering from addictions, etc. There are also study Bibles that provide background information regarding the history and culture of the times and people written about in

the Bible. There is also at least one archeological study Bible that I am aware of, [16]. A couple of study Bibles worthy of special mention, as described in the next subsections.

2.1.7.1 Life Application Study Bibles Publisher Lifeway (<https://www.lifeway.com/>) has produced a series of *Life Application Study* Bibles, which are currently in their third edition. In my opinion, the footnotes in these Bibles are the most helpful and practical of any study Bible I have come across. My only criticism is that they support the tripartite heresy, (see my teachings *The Bible* and *The Old Testament Law*). The Life Application Bibles are published with several different translations: NIV, NLT, KJV, NLT, and NKJV.

2.1.7.2 The Green Bible The Green Bible is an NRSV (see section 3 on the following page) study Bible with an emphasis on environmental issues and teachings, published in 2008.³ All the way back to Adam and Eve, humans were taught to be good stewards of our planet Earth. If we do not practice environmentalism and sustainability, we are not practicing the Bible's primary message of "love the Lord your God, and love your neighbor as yourself." Selfishly using up the Earth's resources during our generation and leaving nothing for our children or our children's children is not love, it is not putting the needs of others ahead of our own.⁴

Thinking like an environmentalist is an important attitude that goes with being a Christian. Churches today neglect to teach this to adults and children for the benefit of future generations. It is important to understand that in the devil's great hatred for God, he hates God's creation as well—the devil delights in watching us slowly destroy our planet. For more information, please see: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Green-Bible.html>

2.1.8 Children's Bibles

There is a plethora of children's Bibles available today. These typically contain lots of photos or drawings, easy to read wording and large type faces. I am concerned that these Bibles, parents, and preachers put too much emphasis on the Old Testament teachings, the tangible and exciting events in the history of Israel; however they are lacking in the New Testament teachings of the indwelling Holy Spirit and our Lord's command to love one another. See my other teachings entitled *The Baptism of the Holy Spirit*, *The Old Testament Law*, and *Illumination*.

2.2 Sizes

I have already mentioned pocket-sized outreach Bibles above, but there are other Bible sizes such as *Large Print Editions* which are great for people with vision issues. They are especially helpful to the elderly, among whom I count myself.

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Green_Bible

⁴ *Philippians 2:3-4*

Online Bibles and Bible software can be also be used to read with almost any desired font size, if you don't mind staring at a screen.

2.3 Bindings and Covers

Bibles come with different coverings and bindings, which are pretty much a matter of personal taste. Hardcover, paperback, and cloth or vinyl coverings are readily available, as are leather coverings, usually at an added cost.

Most Bibles have traditional book bindings, but some are available with loose pages in a 3-ring binder. This makes it easy to add your own notes to your Bible. Wide-margin Bibles also provide space for adding notes to your Bible.

Indexed bibles contain thumb-indexes (commonly found in large dictionaries) to help locate a particular book of the Bible quickly (see [Figure 2](#)). If you study your Bible regularly, you will learn your way around your Bible to the point that the thumb-indexes become unnecessary.



Figure 2: An Indexed Bible

3 Translations

There are an enormous number of languages in our world, and the Bible has been translated, at least in part, to most of these languages. See my teaching entitled [The Bible](#) for more statistics about the Bible. Even among the English Bibles, there have been dozens of English translations written over the years. Choosing a good translation is very important, so I devote an entire section to this subject.

3.1 Translation Names

There are many English bible translations, all with different names. All the names are usually given three or four letter abbreviations. Here is a non-exhaustive list of Bible translations in [Table 1](#).

Note that some Bibles, such as the New American Standard, have different versions and publication dates. This is because some Bibles undergo updates, to correct errors or adapt to the ever-evolving English language.

The TNIV Bible has been discontinued, as well as older editions of the NIV, since the publication of the 2011 edition of the NIV Bible. If you have one of these older

Abbr	Name	Abbr	Name
AMP	Amplified Bible	NASB	New American Standard '77
CEB	Common English Bible	NASU	New American Standard '95
CEV	Contemporary English	NCV	New Century Version
CJB	Complete Jewish Bible	NET	New English Translation
CSB	Christian Standard Bible	NirV	New International Reader's
ERV	Easy to Read Version	NIV	New International Version
ESV	English Standard Version	NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
GNT	Good News Translation	NJT	New Jewish Translation
GW	God's Word	NKJV	New King James Version
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard	NLT	New Living Translation
ICB	International Children's Bible	NRSV	New Revised Standard Ver.
ISV	International Standard Version	REB	Revised English Bible
KB	Knox Bible	RSV	Revised Standard Version
KJV	King James Version	TLB	The Living Translation
LB	Living Bible	TLV	Tree of Life Version
LEB	Lexham English Bible	TM	The Message
LSV	Literal Standard Version	TNIV	Today's NIV
MEV	Modern English Version	TPT	The Passion Translation
NAB	New American Bible	TV	The Voice
NAS20	New American Standard 2020	WEB	World English Bible

Table 1: Translation Abbreviations

Bibles, I recommend updating to the most current version. A more extensive list of Bible translations can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/yz8y8kpe>.

3.2 Reading Levels

Only 54% of adults in the United States have prose literacy below the 6th-grade level.⁵ A whopping 21% of adults in the US are illiterate as of 2023.⁶ These illiteracy statistics surprised me. Fortunately different English translations are designed to reach particular reading levels as shown in [Table 2](#):⁷

Grade levels assigned to various Bible translations are merely approximations. The NIrV (New International Reader's Version) is based on the NIV translation, but uses smaller words and is a particularly good and easy version to read.⁸

Check out <http://gunning-fog-index.com/>, where you can paste text and it will tell you the approximate reading level. I ran a portion of text from a few different Bibles and the scores matched [Table 2](#) quite well. I ran some text from my own teachings and received an average score of twelve.

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literacy_in_the_United_States

⁶ <https://www.thinkimpact.com/literacy-statistics/>

⁷ <https://tinyurl.com/yc7cycee>

⁸ <https://tinyurl.com/bn6fm52p>

Abbr	Grade	Abbr	Grade
KJV	12	CSB	7
RSV	12	NET	7
WEB	12	NKJV	7
NRSV	11	NLT	6
NASB	11	GW	5
ESV	10	MSG	4–5
HCSB	7-8	NCV	3
NIV	7-8	NiRV	3
CEB	7		

Table 2: Translation Reading Levels

3.3 English as a Second Language

For many people living in the United States, English is a second language for them (ESL), as many are immigrants whose primary language might Spanish, Polish, German, etc. There are ESL Bibles and dual language Bibles available, or another option is to get an easy to read English translation like the NiRV.

3.4 Bible Translation Controversy

For hundreds of years, there has been controversy regarding Bible translations. Some people were martyred for translating the Bible into the vernacular languages. For example, William Tyndale was arrested and executed for translating the Bible into English. Even to the present day, people have been murdered for smuggling Bibles into countries or territories where Bibles are forbidden. Obviously the people committing these murders were not true Christians. Please pray to thank God for those who bring his word to the world, and for their protection.

3.5 Source Text

The Greek or Hebrew source texts, i.e. scrolls, on which translations are based affect the accuracy of the translation. Generally, the older sources are thought to be closest to the original manuscripts and are considered to provide the best translations. The original KJV (King James Version) was an English translation sourced from the Latin Vulgate translation; thus it was a translation of a translation. Four hundred plus years later, we have a better understanding of the ancient languages and better source texts:

“Most biblical scholars, however, believe that knowledge of ancient Hebrew and Greek has improved over the centuries. Coupled with advances in the fields of textual criticism, biblical archaeology, and linguistics, this has enabled the creation of more accurate translations, whichever texts are chosen as the basis.”⁹

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible_version_debate

3.6 Translation Methods

Translation methods or translation philosophies (see [Table 3](#)) tend to fall on a spectrum, from *Formal Equivalence* or word-for-word, to *Dynamic Equivalence* in the middle, to *Functional Equivalence*, also called “though-for-through” or paraphrase. In general, formal equivalence translations tend to be more difficult to read or understand, whereas functional equivalence translations lose accuracy since they deviate considerably more from the original languages.

Name	Description	Examples
Formal Equivalence	Word for word	KJV, NASB, ESV
Dynamic Equivalence	Thought for thought	NIV, NLT
Functional Equivalence	Paraphrase	TLB, TM

Table 3: Translation Methods

We can show approximately where various Bible translations fall on a continuum between formal equivalence and functional equivalence as shown in [Figure 3](#).

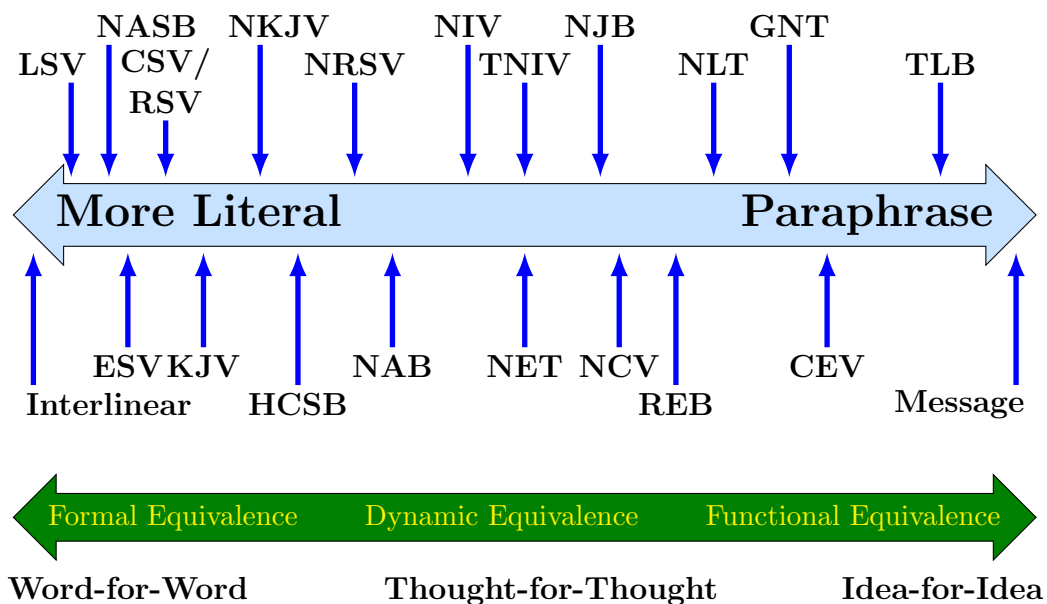


Figure 3: Bible Translations Spectrum

The NIV (New International Version) set out to strike a balance between dynamic and formal equivalence.

3.7 Version Popularity

Monthly sales figures give us an idea of the popularity of various Bible versions. [Table 4](#) shows the top ten as of July 2023.¹⁰

¹⁰<https://christianbookexpo.com/bestseller/translations.php?id=0723>

Rank	Name	Abbr	Published
1	New International Version	NIV	1978/2011
2	Christian Standard Bible	CSB	2017
3	English Standard Version	ESV	2001
4	New Living Translation	NLT	1996
5	King James Version	KJV	1611
6	New King James Version	NKJV	1982
7	Reina-Valera	RVR	1602
8	New International Reader's Version	NIrV	1996
9	New American Standard Bible	NASB	1971
10	New Revised Standard Version	NRSV	1989

Table 4: Bible Best Sellers

3.8 Gender Issues

There has been controversy in recent decades on the use of gender neutral or gender inclusive wording in modern Bible translations.¹¹ In the original languages, male language was used almost exclusively. Consider this example:

Matthew 5:9 (ESV) *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*

Matthew 5:9 (NIV) *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

In this verse, the ESV translation uses the word “son” while the NIV translation uses the word “children”. This original Greek word is *huiós* (υἱός) which can mean son, child (of either gender), or descendant (in any generation).

God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the patriarchs, Moses, and so on are clearly male. Yet there are many places in scripture, such as our example above, that clearly speak of men and women, and I have no problem with translations that are gender inclusive when done properly. However, I would not be supportive of any language referring to other than the two standard genders. Gender-inclusive must be done for the correct motives—to reach out to more people. It should not be used, for example, to appease feminists.

3.9 A Literal Translation?

People often ask “Why can’t we have a literal translation?” Well, we know the Hebrew language is right-to-left, so that wouldn’t work. I’m afraid I don’t know the Hebrew language well enough to know what other difficulties and pitfalls there would be to creating a literal translation from the Hebrew language.

The Greek language used to write the New Testament is called *Koine Greek*, also called “common Greek”, “Biblical Greek”, or “Hellenistic Greek”. Prior to my studying the Bible’s Greek language, I naïvely thought one could simply substitute an English word for each Greek word, thus creating a literal translation.

¹¹https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_in_Bible_translation

It is much more difficult and complex to translate Greek into English. Some examples:

1. In English, the order of our words ties them together so that we know the subjects, verbs, objects, etc.. Consider the simple sentence “Jerry threw the ball.” If we rearrange the words in any other order the sentence would not make sense. See how [John 3:16](#) would look if translated literally in [Figure 4](#):

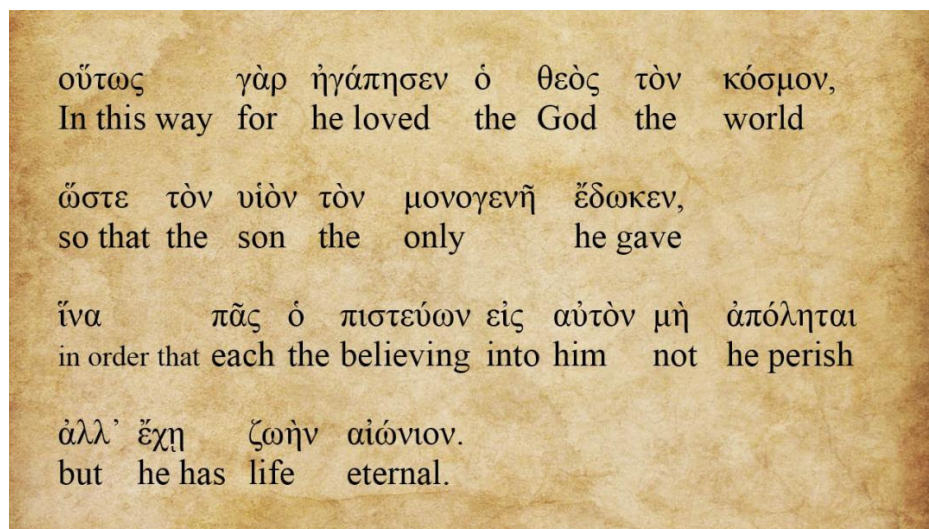


Figure 4: John 3:16 Literally

In the Greek language, words are associated with one another by their endings or declensions (nouns, pronouns, and adjectives) or conjugates for verbs. Often times, more important words are placed near the beginning of a sentence.

2. In English, we know a word can several meanings,¹² and the same is true of Greek words.
3. In the original Hebrew and Greek writings, there was usually no punctuation and no paragraphs. It is up to the translator to choose how to break scripture into sentences and add the correct punctuation. We know that something as simple as a comma can mean the difference between life and death:
 - “Let’s eat grandma.”
 - “Let’s eat, grandma.”

4 Tampering With God's Words

The Bible gives us very stern warnings not to tamper with God's words:

Deuteronomy 4:2 *Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.*

¹²The word ‘set’ with 430 senses listed in the Second Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, published in 1989 has the most meanings for any one English word.

Deuteronomy 12:32 *See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.*

Proverbs 30:5–6 *“Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.*

Revelation 22:18–19 *[Jesus speaking:] I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.*

In the next section, we will look at some Bibles to avoid, where in some cases, God’s word has been tampered with.

5 Bibles to Avoid

I would be leery of translations from a single author, as their personal biases would likely influence their translating. Translations produced by a team or committee of Protestant or non-denominational Christians usually provide the most well-balanced unbiased translations.

5.1 Denomination-Specific Bibles

Some denominations have their own Bible translations, which is bad because they are translating to fit their doctrines and traditions, rather than deriving their doctrines from scripture. It is best to look for Bibles that were translated by a Protestant cross-denominational team or committee.

5.1.1 New World Translation (NWT)

The NWT is used by the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

“Among the whole Bible translations not discussed are some that are theologically biased, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses New World Translation (1961). This is an extremely literal translation filled with the heretical doctrines of this cult.” — [3, pg. 41]

The heresys’ in the NWT make this Bible unsuitable for anyone to use. You can read more bout the NWT here: <https://tinyurl.com/rwj3wu3j>

5.1.2 The Passion Translation (TPT)

The TPT is primarily the work of a single author, a wild paraphrase in which text is added not appearing in the original languages, and is geared towards an unorthodox cult-like denomination. It should be strongly avoided. More specific criticisms can be found here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Passion_Translation

5.2 King James Version (KJV)

Frankly, I wish the KJV Bible would fade away into the annals of history. At one time it was the most popular English Bible translation; the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, and their ancestors grew up with this translation. I know some misguided people will defend the KJV to their dying day, however let's examine some problems with the KJV:

- The KJV is more inspired than other versions—Wrong, as we continue down this list, we see there are several problems with the KJV.
- The KJV is the most accurate translations—Wrong, the newer ESV, NASB, and LSV are all more accurate translations because they had access to better source material and used better translation methods. Moreover, the KJV is a translation of the Latin Vulgate, so it is a translation of a translation, or a second-generation translation.
- The newer translations are corrupt—Wrong, again newer translations had better source material and translation methods. Some people object to gender-inclusive language, but there is nothing wrong with gender-inclusive if it is done properly and for the right reasons.
- The KJV is better because it has more words—Wrong, the extra words and verses were added by the translators; the added words are not part of the original, older, language writings.
- The KJV uses the language of Shakespeare—While old English may sound impressive, but those English words have different or even opposite meanings today. I can tell you from experience that teens and twenty-somethings hate reading the KJV. It turns them off to scripture, and it is a terrible version for evangelizing.

Consider this example, in which it sounds like the KJV is telling us to covet the wealth of others:

1 Corinthians 10:24 (KJV) *Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.*

Here is a more correct translation from the NIV:

1 Corinthians 10:24 *No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.*

Another examples occurs in Luke 2:14:

Luke 2:14 (KJV) *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*

It seems the heavenly hosts are wishing good will to all men. However, the ESV and NIV translate this more accurately:

Luke 2:14 (ESV) *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"*

Luke 2:14 (NIV) *"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."*

5.3 The Conservative Bible

First, we must begin with Conservapedia, established in 2006 by American conservative Andrew Schlafly to counter his perceived “liberal bias” on Wikipedia.¹³ Conservapedia promotes long debunked falsehoods and conspiracy theories.

Its greatest sin may be the hosting and production of the “Conservative Bible Project”, a crowd-sourced English translation based on the KJV, in order to remove all of the “liberal bias” in the Bible.¹⁴ They are altering God’s words, even removing passages, to fit their twisted social/political views. The fact is that liberal social/political views are more closely aligned with New Testament teachings. The Conservative Bible is demonic and should be avoided at all costs. There is no shortage of criticism towards this project:

- <https://tinyurl.com/cxkhhvdy>
- <https://tinyurl.com/59k2cbmd>
- <http://tinyurl.com/mr3p4xea>
- <http://tinyurl.com/yckcur2t>
- <https://tinyurl.com/4jwbpptd>
- <http://tinyurl.com/49z6dzkr>
- <http://tinyurl.com/y5ndtj99>
- <http://tinyurl.com/yp7hjd34>
- <https://tinyurl.com/basbrxsb>

Jesus and the rest of the New Testament teaches and indeed insists that Christians exhibit love, mercy, compassion, empathy, and generosity. These “liberal biases” are anathema to the conservative mindset.

5.4 God Bless the USA Bible

This Bible was first published in 2021.¹⁵ There are so many things wrong with this Bible, it’s difficult to know where to start. First, it is a KJV translation, whose shortcomings we discussed in section 5.2 on the preceding page. Let’s consider the more egregious problems.

This Bible promotes “Christian Nationalism”. Christian nationalism is a demonic heresy that contains a number of sins:

- It promotes patriotism, or love of country. This in itself consists of two sins: a love of the world, and pride, which is the root of all sin.¹⁶

¹³<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservapedia>

¹⁴https://www.conservapedia.com/Conservative_Bible_Project

¹⁵<https://tinyurl.com/2w6nj5pc>

¹⁶See my teachings entitled *Pride and Humility* and *Woldliness*.

James 4:4 *You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*

- It promotes divisiveness, hatred, prejudice, racism, and white supremacy.
- It contains the worldly documents of men such as the Declaration of Independence, US Constitution, and Pledge Of Allegiance, to name a few.¹⁷
- It blurs the separation of church and state.¹⁸
- Promotes a demonic theocracy based on false doctrines, much like Islam.

This Bible has all the same problems as the Conservative Bible, as discussed in section 5.3 on the previous page and should definitely be avoided. Also see my teaching entitled *Christian Nationalism*.

5.5 Paraphrase Bibles

It may be stretching the truth to call paraphrase Bibles translations; they actually fall somewhere between a translation and a commentary. Paraphrase Bibles are usually one person's interpretation of what God's word says filtered through their own personal beliefs. Paraphrase Bibles trample over God's carefully chosen words, and they should not be used exclusively or for serious Bible study.

5.5.1 The Living Bible (TLB)

While well intentioned, the LB is a paraphrase created by author Kenneth Taylor in 1971.¹⁹ As such it suffers from some of the problems of single-author paraphrases, however it was not as widely criticized as other other paraphrases. It eventually gave rise to the NLT, see section 8.3 on page 20.

5.5.2 The Message (MSG)

The MSG²⁰ is a paraphrase from a single author, Eugene Peterson. It is perhaps the most popular of the paraphrase Bibles today. Many people have said they enjoy reading it, because it is "fresh" sounding, using contemporary American slang. It is best to be avoided and it should never be used for serious study. You can read about mixed reviews here: <https://tinyurl.com/ne2b3sjm>. A very critical review can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/mpa48we6>.

5.5.3 The Mirror Study Bible (MSB)

The MSB is another single-author paraphrase which promotes the author's heretical doctrine of universalism, and other ideas contrary to the original scripture. It should most certainly be avoided. You can read more about it here: <https://tinyurl.com/25j5p28j> and here: <https://tinyurl.com/yc878y7f>

¹⁷ See my teaching entitled *Politics*.

¹⁸ See my teaching entitled *Government*.

¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Living_Bible

²⁰ <https://messagebible.com/>

5.6 Amplified Bibles

Amplified Bibles add words usually in italics or brackets in an attempt to help make the text easier to understand. These Bibles are largely a matter of personal taste; I find the added words to be distracting. While the authors meant well, they are on thin-ice as they are tampering with God's word.

6 Electronic Bible Resources

6.1 Online Resources

There are a multitude of Bible resources available online. I suggest you Google to find what you are looking for. The one website I find myself using most often is Step Bible <https://www.stepbible.org>. It is good for looking at various translations in parallel (including the original Hebrew and Greek) and is highly customizable. Some others can be found here:

- <http://www.biblegateway.com>
- <http://biblehub.com>
- <http://biblica.com>
- <http://www.biblestudytools.com>

Additional Resources

<https://www.gotquestions.org/New-English-Translation-NET.html>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Bible-translations.html>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/New-Living-Translation-NLT.html>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/New-Revised-Standard-Version-NRSV.html>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Common-English-Bible-CEB.html>

<https://www.biblereviewblog.com/blog/net-full-notes-edition>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_English_Translation

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bible_version_debate

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modern_English_Bible_translations

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_World_Translation_of_the_Holy_Scriptures

<https://tinyurl.com/33baxuhp>

<https://wycliffe.org.uk/story/how-to-choose-the-best-bible-translation>

<https://tinyurl.com/44exsv3r>

<https://www.harvestcommunitychurch.com/esv>

6.2 Bible Apps

There are many Bible apps available today, and I highly recommend having the Bible as close as your phone.

As for myself, when shopping for a Bible app (and there weren't as many a few decades ago), I wanted an app that would meet the following requirements:

- The app had to let me highlight text.
- The app had to allow me to write notes tied to specific Bible verses.
- The app had to allow me to create book ribbons (or book marks), and to save verses.
- The app had to work on my iPhone, MacBook Pro, and my desktop Windows computer.
- The app had to synchronize my highlights, notes, etc. across platforms; e.g., if I record a note on my iPhone, the note has to show up when I open the app on my MacBook.
- Searching capabilities. I was pleasantly surprised that the app I tried first also supported wildcards in searches. For example, searching for “interced*” finds words like intercede, intercedes, interceded, and interceding.

The first app I tried that met my requirements was called *Olive Tree Bible Study*, <https://www.olivetree.com/>. The app is free, but you must purchase most Bibles and other books, unless they are in the public domain.

I can't really endorse Olive Tree, or claim it is the best app out there because it is the only app I have ever used. It still meets my requirements and I am very happy with it. As I have purchased numerous Bibles and other books for it, and I not interested in switching to a different app.

Check the App Store for your particular device to see what is available; and be sure to read the descriptions carefully.

7 Other Books

There are a plethora of books written to help you get the most out of your Bible.

7.1 Dictionaries

Bible dictionaries can be very helpful, e.g. [2]—these are usually more than your typical dictionary which only gives word definitions. Bible dictionaries often contain brief articles like an encyclopedia which provide background information on places, biographic information about people in the Bible, and so forth. If you have children, you might consider an illustrated Bible dictionary with lots of pictures

7.2 Concordances

A *concordance* is like an index to the Bible; if you lookup a word in a concordance, it will list every passage where the word occurs in your Bible. Concordances are becoming obsolete because these days you can search for words in a Bible electronically; see [section 6](#). If you do buy concordance, make sure it is for the

same translation/version of the Bible you are using. Concordances which use the Strong's numbering system will work well with most modern translation of the Bible.

7.3 Commentaries

Commentaries are books written to help you interpret or understand the Bible; they are usually written by a single author, giving his or her opinion/interpretation about the Bible; in most cases, the authors are vetted experts in their field. A commentary typically covers one or more books of the Bible. Some commentaries come in sets that cover the entire Bible, or the entire New Testament.

While some commentaries are available freely online, as their copyrights expired and they now reside in the public domain. However, for those who are serious about preaching or teaching, you may want to purchase one or more commentary sets to own. If you are considering purchasing a commentary or a set, they can be quite expensive and ebook versions are usually more affordable. (They can also take up a great deal of space; my commentary sets occupy most of two book cases.) Here are some things to consider:

- Pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit, as you would for any large purchase.
- Does the commentary include the Bible verses? Some commentaries give a Bible verse or passage, and then comments about that passage. Other commentaries only provide a chapter and verse number followed by comments, therefore you must refer to your own Bible to read along with the commentary.
- Does the commentary contain a lot of Hebrew or Greek? Some commentaries are very scholarly and often focus on the details of translating of the original languages. Other commentaries are more focused on the meaning or application of the Bible passages, such as the Life Application commentaries.
- Ask your Pastor if he recommends a commentary set. He might have one or more commentary sets which you can look through and compare.
- You might visit a brick-and-mortar or online book store, so you can browse and compare commentaries.

Some people on the internet recommend *Layman's New Testament Bible Commentary: Easy-to-Understand Insights into Matthew through Revelation* [13] as one of the easiest commentaries to read. I have not read this one, so I cannot offer an opinion about it.

Of the several commentary sets that I own, by far my favorite is the *New Testament Commentary* by William Hendriksen and Simon Kistemaker. While Mr. Hendriksen intended to write the entire series, he was called home to be with our Lord before he could finish all the volumes. The publisher, Baker Book House, arranged for Mr. Kistemaker to write the unfinished volumes. The writing style between the two authors is not significantly different and both men seem knowledgeable in their writing, although these commentaries are slanted towards Calvinism. (See my teachings *Calvinism and Arminianism* and *Becoming a Christian*.)

This set includes the scripture passages, using the author's own translation, and keeps the Greek to a minimum, usually relegated to footnotes. These commentaries focus on both translation issues and the meaning of the Bible passages. I have not seen these commentaries sold as a hardcopy set lately, but the individual volumes are available on <http://Amazon.com> at the time of this writing. The set is available for purchase in the *Olive Tree Bible Study* app (section 6).

7.4 Miscellaneous Books

If you are new to the Bible, there are many books available to help you understand the Bible. I've chosen some below which will be the most helpful to new Bible readers.

1. *The Bible for Dummies*

Don't let your pride put you off²¹ to *The Bible for Dummies* [6] due to its title. How I wish I had this book when I read the Bible straight through for the first time. I purchased this book immediately after reading completely through my Bible and have regretted ever since that I did not have it before hand.

The Bible can be very confusing to new Christians, especially the Old Testament books. *The Bible for Dummies* takes you through the Bible book by book, so that you have some background and an overview or highlights of what that book of Bible is about. It's sort of like being given a program before you watch an Italian opera—without it you won't know what's going on.²² Like its title, the book sometimes uses humor to explain things without being irreverent.

2. *Unlocking the Bible*

David Pawson's wonderful book *Unlocking the Bible—A Unique Overview of the Whole Bible* [9] covers the Bible book-by-book, but with greater depth and detail than *The Bible for Dummies*. At over 1,300 pages, it is meatier than the aforementioned book. Note that there is a companion book *Unlocking the Bible—Charts, diagrams and images*, which contains photos, maps, charts, and diagrams Mr. Pawson used when teaching the Bible, which is also worth purchasing. It will also be useful if you view or listen to any of his sermons online. See <https://www.davidpawson.org/> and YouTube.

3. *Great Doctrines of the Bible*

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones' *Great Doctrines of the Bible (Three volumes in one)* [8] is a great beginning source of Bible doctrines, after having read the Bible. The book is based on a series of sermons or teachings given on Friday evenings at his church in London. You have the option to listen to these and his other sermons online here: <https://www.mljtrust.org/sermons/>.

Since Dr. Lloyd-Jones is a Calvinist, I cannot agree all of his theology, however, he is one of best preachers of the last century, and an example of what

²¹I passed out copies of this book to a Bible study group and some people looked seriously offended.

²²Full disclosure—I have never seen an Italian opera, but hopefully you get the point.

good preaching is. If I had to describe his preaching in one word, I would say he is *thorough*.

If you are still thirsty to learn more, I recommend getting or reading a book on Systematic Theology. The Bible is not organized like an encyclopedia, doctrinal information is scattered about throughout the Bible. (Maybe this was God's way of getting us to read all of it.) Systematic theology is the study of theology organized systematically (obviously); usually organized by doctrines.

If you want a good but basic, user-friendly introduction to theology, I recommend Charles Ryrie's *Basic Theology* [10]. For a deeper thorough, but very readable treatise on theology, I recommend Norman Geisler's four volume set on systematic theology [5].

8 My Recommendations

8.1 New International Version (NIV)

For new Christians or for someone who is using a KJV or other undesirable Bible, I strongly recommend getting an NIV translation, 2011, or newer version. You can read about the NIV translation here: <https://www.biblica.com/niv-bible/>. If you can afford it, it would be even better to get an *NIV Life Application Study Bible*.

The Life Application Study Bibles is available in several different translations. You can read about them here: <https://www.tyndale.com/sites/lasb/>.

The footnotes in this study Bible are the most insightful and practical for any Christian, and I highly recommend this study Bible (especially in the NIV translation). However, there is one common heresy in their notes about what is called the *Tripartite Heresy*. See the section in my teaching *The Bible* about the tripartite Heresy. The comments in the *Life Application Study Bible* gets this wrong in the comments on Galatians 3:24–25.

8.2 English Standard Version (ESV)

For more serious Bible study and a more accurate translation, I recommend the ESV translation: <https://www.esv.org/>. There is also an *ESV Study Bible*, but I find the comments there often restate the obvious and are not all the helpful.

8.3 New Living Translation (NLT)

The NLT has a rather unique origin and doesn't fall easily into any translation category, thus it deserves special mention. Kenneth Taylor (author of TLB) and his colleagues at Tyndale House Publishers gathered 90 Greek and Hebrew scholars to produce a revised and updated edition of TLB. Their work resulted in the NLT—the *New Living Translation* which was published in 1996.

It is fair to say that the creation of the NLT was prompted in part by the success of TLB and the need for a user-friendly translation. However, the NLT is not

a derivative of TLB, as the translation team went back to the original language sources. Since the NLT's original publication in 1996, there have been various updated editions, the most recent being in 2015.²³ After its original publication, the next and subsequent editions diverged even further from TLB.

The NLT uses a mixture of translation methods, from formal equivalence, dynamic equivalence, and functional equivalence in its translation philosophy; it falls roughly in the middle between the NIV and TLB translations, as shown in figure 3 on page 9. It would be wrong to call the NLT a true paraphrase. Here is a comparison of a passage from the Book of Colossians using the ESV, NIV, and NLT translations:

Colossians 3:12–14 (ESV) *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*

Colossians 3:12–14 (NIV) *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.*

Colossians 3:12–14 (NLT) *Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.*

I like the NLT and occasionally use it for teaching when the more literal translations are difficult to understand. You can learn more about the NLT here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Living_Translation.

8.4 New English Translation (NET)

The NET Bible was designed to be available for free on the internet for worldwide use: <https://netbible.com/>. It was written by 25 scholars who wanted to be faithful to the original texts, while still readable (it rates 7th grade on the readability scale, table 2 on page 8). It falls in the middle of our continuum of translation methods (figure 3 on page 9).

There is also a for-purchase version of the NET which contains other 60,000 translation notes from the translators. This makes the NET unique and a valuable resource for people interested in Bible translation.

In either case, be sure to get the 2nd edition, 2019 or newer, which contains numerous improvements over the first edition.

²³<https://tyndale.com/nlt/>

9 Application

I wish there was one translation that was perfect, or least one I could quote from exclusively in my teachings. However, there are times when a translation does not make a point as clearly or as strongly as it should. A good pastor in his preaching or teaching will use different translations to make God's word as clear as possible to us. We do this out of love, because when we quote from scripture we want to use the best translation possible for our listeners and readers to understand God's words.

Remember that it is our responsibility to learn what God has to say to us via the Bible. We are not to look for Bibles that tell us what we want to hear, but for Bibles that tell us what we need to hear.

To properly understand Christianity, it is extremely important to at least read the New Testament. Many people fail to do this and the result is confusion, false teachings, and heresies. Many people shipwreck their faith by not having all of the facts. The devil is, of course, trying to confuse and mislead as many Christians as possible. The word of God is one of our best protections from the devil's influence:

Ephesians 6:17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Where do you go next? The following teachings (in order) will help you continue on your spiritual journey:

1. [*Why Read the Bible?*](#)
2. [*How to Read Your Bible*](#)
3. [*Becoming a Christian*](#)

10 Prayer

“Heavenly Father, thank you for your scripture to help us better know you and your will. Thank you for the gift of your Son Jesus, in whom we have the forgiveness of our sins and eternal life. Please fill us with your Holy Spirit to give us light and understanding of your words. We pray in Jesus' name that translators and publishers will strive to give us more accurate and objective translations, not be influenced by tradition or to please people, nor for any false agendas. May you be glorified by the accurate understanding of your words. Your words are truth; help us to always see truth and not be deceived. Make us zealous for your words father, that we will always desire to read them, and that we will search them for the answers to life's problems. Help us to grow in Christ's likeness and live according to your will. Amen.”

A References & Further Reading

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- [16] Zondervan (Publisher); *NIV Archeological Study Bible*; Zondervan; 2005.

B Scripture References

Genesis

1:1; 3

Deuteronomy

4:2; 11

12:32; 11

Proverbs

30:5–6; 11

Matthew

5:9; 10,10

Luke

2:14; 13,13,13

John

3:16; 11

1 Corinthians

10:24; 13,13

Ephesians

6:17; 22

Philippians

2:3–4; 5

Colossians

3:12–14; 21,21,21

2 Timothy

3:16–17; 1

James

4:4; 14

Revelation

22:18–19; 12