

2. Lost in Translation

(The basic tool – a good translation)

Introduction

Did you know that the 66 books of the Bible were written in three different languages?

- Hebrew (most of OT)
- Aramaic (bits of Daniel and Ezra)
- Greek (NT)

WARNING: Using just **one** translation means you are using **one** Bible translators interpretation.

e.g. 1 Corinthians 7:36 in NKJV, NASB, TNIV, NEB.

- For general reading use one translation.
- For study use several translations.

1. The Science of Translation

1) What is the original text?

- There is no original handwritten text.
- There are thousands of whole and partial manuscripts over a 1400 year period (NT)
- Later manuscripts differ from earlier ones!

TIP: You see variants in the footnotes of Bibles.

Translators look at the **evidence:** quality of copying tradition, age of manuscript, habits of copiers, author's style and vocabulary.

TIP: Translations based on later, medieval manuscripts (e.g. KJV and NKJV) are not as accurate as modern translations.

2) What words shall we use in English?

There is a sliding scale of translation between the biblical Hebrew or Greek and English:

Literal > Dynamic > Free

e.g. Should lamp = lamp, lantern or torch?

What is a "coal of fire?"

Activity: Simply from hearing or reading two verses, can you place the Bibles on the scale?

Note: We use NLT (at the Free end of Dynamic for reading in church). Gavin's preferred version for every day use is the Dynamic TNIV or 2011 NIV. His Free 'rap' version is to inspire interest!

TIP: Go for a Dynamic translation such as the 2011 NIV or NRSV!

What's a talent?

Question: Does 'flesh' = flesh, body, human nature, sinful nature, law or worldly viewpoint?

Answer: Literal? (flesh) Dynamic? (all of them apart from flesh)

What do you do with rhyming words in the original Hebrew? The word for 'summer' and 'end' sound almost the same in Amos 8:1-2. The NRSV forgets the play on words. The TNIV keeps the play on words but changes the meaning!

Translations have moved to be more gender inclusive... No more "Blessed is the man..."

2. How do I choose a translation?

We recommend...

- **NIV** (New International Version, 2011 Update) or **TNIV** (Today's New International Version, 2005)
- www.biblegateway.com

And for study...

1. **NRSV** (New Revised Standard Version) – an update to the RSV (Revised Standard Version) – more literal.
2. **GNB** (Good News Bible) or **REB** (Revised English Bible) – updated NEB - slightly freer
3. **NJB** (New Jerusalem Bible) – an update to the Jerusalem Bible or **NLT** (New Living Translation, 2007) – even freer!

Be aware of...

- **Amplified Bible** – uses multiple words, better to use different translations than this Bible
- **KJV** (King James Version) – old but beautiful language, poor translation
- **NKJV** (New King James Version) – newer language but poor translation.
- **The Message, The Street Bible, The Living Bible** – Free translations, good for a different perspective but not for daily devotions or study.

Avoid at all costs...

New World Translation (1961) – Jehovah Witness – a literal Bible full of heretical teaching!