

Which Bible Version Should I Use?

This question is best answer by first asking yourself, “What is the purpose for using the Bible at this moment?”

Just reading? The best version for you for reading is the version that is easy to read and speaks to you. Each version has its strength and weaknesses.

Bible Study? You need accurate translations and not just one translation. There are translations that take different angles and translation methods.

Different Methods:

You have a **Literal translation**. This method attempts to give an exact word for word translation. There is a weakness in this. There is a common perception among many Bible readers that the most accurate Bible translation is a “literal” one. Anyone who has ever studied a foreign language soon learns that this is mistaken. Take, for example, the Spanish sentence, ¿Cómo se llama? A literal (word-for-word) translation would be, “How yourself call?” Yet any first-year Spanish student knows that is a poor translation. The sentence means (in good idiomatic English) “What’s your name?” The form must be changed to express the meaning. The goal of translation is to reproduce the meaning of the text, not the form.

Also, words may have a different equivalent word depending on the context on how the word was used. So a word for word translation would not be feasible. As in any language the same word may have an opposite meaning. Take the word ‘fun’. One could use this word like this, “Let’s make fun of him.” This is definitely a negative use. Fun can also mean having a merry time. Most people that speak the English language can differentiate between the two meanings because you understand this in context. In a foreign language the context is not readily perceived. So a literal translation will not deliver the correct thought.

You have the **dynamic equivalence translation**. This method of translation is not a word for word translation. This translation method attempts to draw out the true meaning considering the language and how would the reader of that time period perceive what is being said. The meaning is then put down in thought patterns that the current reader can understand. One danger of a dynamic translation is it is possibility to superimpose the translator's thoughts on the translation. Exegesis or critical explanation of the interpretation of Scripture is being done for us also. We are dependent of the Scholarship of the Translators. There knowledge is usually better than ours, though. When you have multiple scholars the error of superimposition is lessened. If several

scholars agree on an interpretation of Scripture then you can trust the translation more so.

Here is a situation which is also familiar to many of us. The man is alone and reading his Bible. Probably he is reading the Septuagint version, because the passage cited from Isaiah 53:7-8 in Acts 8:32-33 is according to that version. In any case, he is having a problem understanding the passage that he is reading. When Philip comes along he asks the man if he understands the passage, and the man readily admits that he is in need of help. It is for this purpose that the Lord has sent Philip to him, who explains the passage he is reading and several others besides.

What do these two situations have in common? Both of them involve a Bible, an audience or reader, and a teacher appointed for the purpose of explaining the Bible. It is taken for granted that the Bible is not self-explanatory, and that the common reader or hearer stands in need of a teacher.

Sometimes we need help from a scholar to bring to light the meaning of Scripture. In this case the Holy Spirit brings Phillip to the Eunuch. Never discredit the Holy Spirit in sending a translator.

Then we have the **paraphrase**. This method results in nothing more than someone reading a passage and putting it into his/her own words.

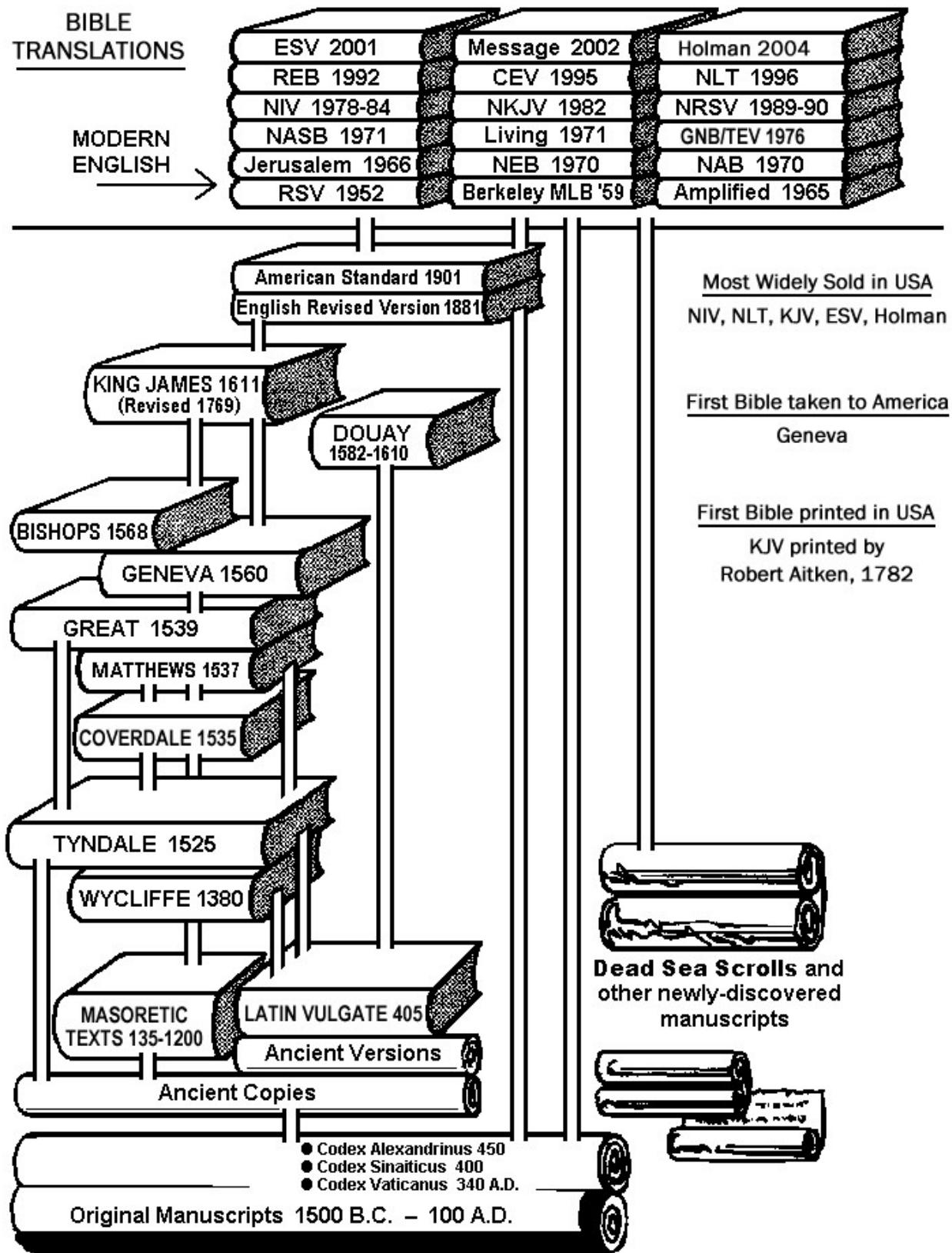
There is a **modified literal translation**. This process results in a translation that is as much as possible a word by word translation, but also, for understanding's sake, observes the syntax of the language into which it is translated.

A lot of people enjoy someone else's thoughts of in a paraphrase. "The Message" is a popular paraphrase. To say that "The Message" is a translation is an error. "The Message" is taking a translation and placing the author's own words to bring meaning out. These translations can lend a great deal of color and flavor for personal devotional study, but often take too many liberties to be reliable for teaching and even memorization.

Bible's that use Dynamic Equivalence would includes: The Common English Bible, New International (NIV), the New Living (NLV), and in part the English Standard (ESV).

Some problems with dated translations must be considered for instance: The King James Version, for example, and has lost some of its intelligibility for modern audiences. 1 Kings 11:1 tells us that "Solomon loved many strange women." Sounds like fun! However, in 1611, strange meant something closer to 'foreign' in English.

Here is a pictorial history of translations through the ages. Be reminded that the KJV has gone through many revisions through the ages, particularly the 1769 version.



Charted adapted, corrected and updated from Thompson Chain Reference Study Bible by David Ahl, 2015, www.BibleStudyMen.com

The important thing is to use a variety of translations and when a verse very much different from version to version usually means that there were translation difficulties. A word or two may not have an English equivalent. This is where you dig down and do word studies and try to discover the different variance in words.

Questions

Which Bible is the correct Bible for study?

Ans: For studying use a Dynamic equivalence and a modified literal translation.
Always have a “Strong’s” Concordance or “Young’s”

Which Bible is best for reading? This is the Bible that YOU find easy to read. The Holy Spirit helps you in any version.

What to tell others if they ask you which Bible to use.

Ans: Whatever Bible they will listen to!