

Bible Versions to be wary of

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Summary: There are so many translations and paraphrases of the Bible. Is it really so vitally important which one we use to study from? And which ones are dangerous to study from? WHY are they dangerous? What's the difference between a word-for-word translation and a Paraphrase? What's the GOAL of Bible study?

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Hello my brothers and sisters in Jesus the Messiah.

Does it make any difference which translation we use for our daily Bible study? Absolutely. I'm talking about scriptures we are carefully reading when we want to know exactly what God inspired to write and what He wants us to know about his thoughts.

Manna was the bread from heaven, a picture of the word of God. They had to collect it every morning so they'd have food. We also must study God's word daily to sustain us.

There are so many translations and versions of the Bible. Which ones are best – but especially which ones should we be very careful of while choosing a Bible version to study from? And which Bible versions are just plain awful!?

I'm focusing on when we're STUDYING God's word and not just casually reading it.

Some years ago, we gave our two oldest grandsons a new Bible as a gift from us. I know one picked NKJV but I'm not sure now, years later, which translation the older grandson decided on. It may have been KJV.

But first realize this: there is NO perfect Bible translation out there. Every single word of the original hand-written books of the Bible by the authors thousands of years ago absolutely were God-breathed and inspired. We don't have any of the original handwritten words of God today – but what we have is very consistent for the most part, as evidenced by the Dead Sea Scrolls of the book of Isaiah.

But when you take a scripture and then have to translate it from the original Hebrew or Greek to one of our modern languages, it is so easy to change – even unintentionally – the meaning from what the original author intended or said. GOD, of course, is the author.

Having said that, I like to read and study verses or a chapter from *several* translations. I find my study feels deeper and clearer when I do. But I also find interesting differences and sometimes whole phrases missing from some translations. Did you know that many of the newer translations omit entire verses or parts of verses? They do!

Translating is not easy. Most Bibles I like are closer to a “word for word” translation, but none of them do that perfectly and completely. Another option is for the translator to state what he felt the author MEANT by his words – but that is no longer a “translation” but a “paraphrase”. *Those can be interesting, but understand paraphrases will inject much of their own theology into their version of the Bible.* So for example, years ago, one version translated Jesus’ words, “if you will enter into life” – to their paraphrase, “If you want to go to heaven...” That’s not what Jesus said!

So be careful with paraphrases! I do find them useful for Proverbs but have my guard way up for anything else.

Most translations add a word here or there to make the meaning of a verse clearer. When the KJV (King James Version) and NKJV do it, they *italicize* those words so you know those are added words. Sometimes those added words can help, but other times they change the meaning entirely. But at least you’ll know they’re added. Here are some of God’s warnings, though I didn’t list them in the audio.

Here are some warnings from God not to add to His word (Deuteronomy 4:2 “You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.”

Revelation 22:18-20 “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

Deuteronomy 12:32 “Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.”

But realize that TRANSLATING, and deciding exactly what to say, is more difficult than most people realize.

In Spanish, to say “good morning” – they say “buenos dias”. But literally translated word for word, you would say “good days”. Should I translate “buenos dias” to “good days” or “good morning”? And “Adios” – which we understand as “Good bye” is literally “to God”. And actually “Good Bye” was originally a shortened form of “God be with ye”.

If you’re struggling to understand the meaning of a verse or two, first try to check it out in the original Greek or Hebrew and see how those words can be translated and how they’re used in other verses. Get a copy of the free apps “Bible Hub” or even “Bible Gateway” for the many, many resources they have.

After that, compare that verse in various translations as well, and this often clears up the questions you have when you can read how it’s translated elsewhere.

A TRANSLATION tries to faithfully tell us what the original words were in Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek. That's a **"word for word" translation**. But sometimes, thousands of years after the words were first penned, it still seems unclear as languages change. If you try to read Chaucer's ancient English from a thousand years ago, you'll struggle to understand even ancient English, for example.

So now we have more and more Bibles that use **"PARAPHRASES"**, which means writing for us today what they conclude the author originally MEANT, but those won't be word for word. Even today, foreigners may not understand our modern English. Imagine translating word for word into Swahili or German, our expression "Hang in there". We mean "don't give up", so what should a translator say?

SO a paraphrase Bible cannot be AND IS NOT, a word-for-word translation. And it's changing the original words of God to something else. If their paraphrase is right on, then it's helpful – but still in my opinion is not something we should be doing with God's words and I'm careful not to conclude my own beliefs from them.

When the time comes for the "restoration of all things", I've said for many years now, that even the Bibles that we read around the world will have to be restored to their original, perfect and accurate meaning. NO Bible translation we use today is 100% perfect. ONLY the original words can be fully perfect and flawless.

Anyway, no translation is perfect. Some people believe the KJV (King James version, 1611) was inspired by God. But even the beloved KJV has several serious errors too. Like calling Passover in Acts 12:4 "Easter".

And the KJV and NKJV both wrongly include 1 John 5:7, which everyone realizes was an inserted verse to promote the Trinity, but was not in the original Greek. Almost all other translations leave that verse out!

1 John 5:7 KJV "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

That's another thing: instead of "Holy Spirit" the KJV says "Holy Ghost". God's spirit is not a ghost or apparition. I like the flow and rhythm of the KJV but prefer the updates and corrections the NKJV uses, while retaining much of the flow and rhythm of the KJV.

And this might shock a lot of you. The KJV is referred to as the King James VERSION, not Translation, because it was largely mostly an UPDATE of existing translations, but King James wanted people using just his "authorized" version.

Earlier English translations were the Wycliffe Bible, Miles Coverdale, William Tyndale's Bible, Geneva Bible and the Great Bible, authorized for church use publicly. The KJV sought to provide an updated version authorized by the King.

Besides the KJV and NKJV, probably other most reliable Bibles in use today are these: Legacy Bible and the New American Standard Bible, updated version (NASB updated,) Many also like the New International Version (NIV) or the ESV.

BUT the NIV's latest updated 2011 version introduces gender changes. "Brothers" or "brethren" in the original now becomes "Brothers and sisters". The word "the flesh" in Romans is changed to "the sinful nature". And whole phrases and even entire verses are erased – **like Matthew 17:21** where Jesus is telling us that some demonic influences require more, to get them out. He said, "this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting". But in the NIV and most others, your Bible goes from Verse 20 to Matt 17:22, and Matt 17:21 is **TOTALLY GONE** in the new NIV. The whole verse is **GONE**. And there are dozens of other examples I could cite, so be very **CAREFUL** with the NIV especially their newest 2011 version.

Some other translations like Legacy Bible, Amplified Bible, Holman Bible, put Matthew 17:21 into brackets, to identify they wonder if they should use that verse! But International Standard Version does include the verse. *But most "newer" translations do NOT include that verse at all! They just erase it!* Are you seeing why I use NKJV more? How do we just erase the verse about how we sometimes need the strength of prayer *with fasting*, to obliterate and demolish demonic strongholds? And many Bibles do just that; they just erase Matthew 17:21.

Versions that just erase Matt 17:21 include NIV, CJB (complete Jewish Bible) and even the popular ESV (English Standard Version), the New Living Translation, New English translation and more – just simply eradicate the whole verse! Too often the newer translations also downgrade who Jesus really is.

I would NOT use THESE Paraphrased Bibles to *STUDY* FROM

These Bibles I will now list below are PARAPHRASES, and are not translations. They take the liberty of adding words and inserting the doctrines of the person or group who produced the paraphrase. THIS IS VITAL to understand.

Let me say this first: if I could not get a hold of ANY Bible of any kind, except one of these I list below, I would probably take one of the first two I will mention, but not the last two Bibles I mention. *Having one of the first two would still be better than having no Bible at all.* But be cautious. for doctrinal purity, understand that these four versions below are not translations. They insert the doctrinal beliefs of their sponsor so you never quite know for sure what the original writer wrote in Greek or Hebrew unless you already know the Bible real well.

Sometimes, the paraphrase of the original words *does* make the section of scripture clearer to us today – IF they are on solid doctrinal ground. But that's the problem. Their Bible is based on the theology of the sponsor of the version, rather than the original words that were written in Hebrew or Greek.

NLT NEW LIVING TRANSLATION – vast improvement over the former Living Bible. In 1996 Living Bible was updated with a completely new translation by a team of 90 scholars. The NEW Living Translation (NLT) , to their credit, corrected many of the errors of the original Living Bible. The modern NLT is a huge improvement on their original version and I sometimes even quote from it.

So here are some versions I feel we'd do well to avoid:

The Message: Bible in Contemporary Language (Eugene H. Peterson)

This one is definitely a paraphrase from start to finish! It was intended to be a Bible that Peterson could use with his young family to help them understand the verses and the stories better, or so he thought. SO he came out with this version without a team of scholars helping him. But please. Don't use this as a study or reference Bible at all in your home or church. It's that far from the original words of God. And you end up reading one man's version of what he thinks is being said but this version certainly will not teach you what the Bible really says. Someone who doesn't know the Bible at all might say he likes this version, because it's easy English, but it's just not reliable and it should scare you to be taking these liberties with God's word. Don't use it! I don't believe Bible Hub even includes this paraphrase in their list of Bible translations. So don't study from this Bible.

Another very liberal paraphrase is Good News Bible. I don't mention it in my audio but just be aware that it also takes a lot of liberties with God's Word.

The Passion Translation (TPT). This is complete only in New Testament plus 24 Old Testament books so far – at least by mid-2025. *There is no way this can be called a "translation". It's clearly a paraphrase* – putting into their own different words what they concluded the author MEANT, not sharing exactly word for word what he said. And therein is the problem. But they also try to *improve* on what the original words were. That's the scary part.

Where they're doctrinally right, it's admittedly a beautiful paraphrase – but I'm still worried about all of God's many warnings not to add anything to His word. Many of their verses are 50% longer than the original because they add so many words. True, some are lovely, but the added words are not from God.

For example, in Psalm 23 you might even like their paraphrase better, but it's not what God said!

Psalm 23:1 -2 NKJV “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside the still waters”

Psalm 23:1–2 (TPT)

“The Lord is my Best Friend and my Shepherd. (added: My Best Friend)

I always have more than enough.

2 He offers a resting place for me in his luxurious love.

His tracks take me to an oasis of peace near the quiet brook of bliss.”

Sure, that's lovely, but it *adds many words* not in the original, to what God said and we should be scared to do that to God's original inspired words.

TPT focuses on the emotion and feelings they want you to feel, rather than God's exact words. So this version can be beautiful – but just keep your guard up and check other translations while reading this one.

Initially I loved this Bible, but then found that this version takes a LOT of liberties with changing the words to suit their doctrinal belief. For example, Hebrews 11:5a clearly says “by faith Enoch was taken away that he would not see death and was not found for God had taken him”. It does not say “Enoch did not die”. In fact in Heb

11:13 it clearly says, after talking about Enoch and others, “these ALL DIED, not having received the promises”.

But TPT says this at Hebrews 11:5: “Faith translated Enoch from this life and he was taken up into heaven! He never had to experience death; he just disappeared from this world because God promoted him...”

Heaven is actually never mentioned in verse 5. So they imposed their theology into their Bible, even though verse 13 says “These ALL DIED...” and “ALL” would have had to include ENOCH. This TPT version is NOT a translation!

Whenever you agree with their theological paraphrasing of scriptures, you’d probably love this version. But again, they’re toying with the word of God too much by changing the words and adding sentences like they do. So I would NOT use this version for a STUDY Bible – but as with any paraphrased Bible, you might enjoy some passages here and there for the way they see things. Just don’t base your BELIEFS on any of their paraphrases unless you first carefully check them out.

NEW WORLD TRANSLATION (NWT) – by the Jehovah’s Witnesses (JW).

This one, in my opinion, is very bad because the Witnesses actively and openly change verses to fit their JW theology. They do not believe that Jesus Christ eternally pre-existed as the Word, as GOD, so the scriptures you would want to turn to which should prove He was and is God, are altered.

This translation denies Jesus is/was God. John 8:58, where Jesus says “Before Abraham was, I AM” – using the very name of God revealed in Exodus 3, they change that verse to: “Before Abraham came into existence, I have been.” They do believe Jesus pre-existed and created mankind, but that Jesus was NOT a fully divine and an uncreated part of God.

In a NUTSHELL on this point: they preach a FALSE JESUS who was not and is not God, as God is God.

About 50 years ago, I was visiting with someone coming out of the JW faith and these topics about who Jesus is and was, came up. Up to that time, I had always invited people to use their own Bible as we discussed scripture. But she brought out her New World Translation, which at 22 years of age, I had never seen before. I was horrified to be unable to use my tried and tested passages to show Jesus was God if I had to use their Bible! They had changed the verses that much which related to the glory of Jesus Christ as being uncreated and everliving Word of God.

John 1:1 “...and the Word was God” – is changed in their Bible to “and the Word was a god”. Got that? They say “the Word was A god”.

Colossians 1:16a NKJV “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth...”

Colossians 1:16 NWT: “because by means of him all OTHER things were created in the heavens and on the earth, the things visible and the things invisible, whether they are thrones or lordships or governments or authorities. All OTHER things have been created through him and for him.”

Since they believe Jesus himself was a created being, they teach he was first created, and then he created all other things. In many other ways, they dilute the glory of exactly who Jesus was and is: He was and is uncreated GOD, fully divine.

Another point: NWT inserts “Jehovah” 237 times in their New Testament when the name “YHVH” or Yehovah was not even used once in the original Greek New Testament. They contend that when the New Testament quotes some Hebrew texts that use YHVH (or “the LORD”), they should be able to use Jehovah. But the texts they cite in the New Testament are from the Septuagint, a GREEK translation of the Hebrew scriptures, and none of those use YHVH in their Greek translation.

I’m sympathetic to using “Yehovah” – but in their case they’re adding a word not in the original New Testament.

YHVH is not in the Septuagint. So the NWT should not add this to their Bible in their New Testament. I would never buy, study from, or accept such a false Bible.

The INCLUSIVE Bible (2007)

Absolutely stay away from this one – a feminist agenda Bible. Thankfully it’s NOT being widely accepted in most Protestant, Catholic or other Christian churches. WHY? Because they cater to inclusivity, gender equality, and gender pronouns -- *and to the LGBTQ agenda.*

So “man” becomes “people” or “humankind” in this version. This may sound good to some – but it’s not what God said. I’ve hearing “humankind” being used more and more.

Instead of “Father” they say “Abba God”. And “the Son” becomes “the only begotten” (they don’t want to say “SON”). “The Son of Man” – referring to prophecies in Daniel and Ezekiel showing the Messiah comes from God even though He was a man – is changed to “the chosen one” or “the promised one”. No more “Son of Man”. And they actually insert some women’s names into the male-dominated genealogy lists. “Husband” or “wife” become “Partner”. It’s very progressive and liberal.

Certainly it is clear that it is not an accurate version at all. It will be hard to come to believe in right doctrine if you use this Bible. Throw this one away. I wouldn’t use it at all.

So I recommend you do not use any of these Bibles I’ve just now listed for your Bible STUDY. I use NKJV myself as it corrects a lot of misunderstandings from the old English of KJV and is in more modern English than KJV.

When you’re unclear about a passage

You found a verse you don’t understand. Now what should you do?

- Check the Hebrew or Greek original word and see how that word is used elsewhere.
- Then check out other translations – like NKJV, Legacy, NASB Updated, Holman, and some others and see how they render the verse.

A lot of times that will clear things up for you.

But sometimes, with the newer translations, you'll find whole sections questioned (Like John 9 about the woman caught in adultery and the end of Mark 16). It's good to know that those sections of scripture are not always in the other Greek or Hebrew sources that KJV and NKJV use.

The PURPOSE of Bible Study

In the meantime, ENJOY God's word. And make it your goal not to just come to really know the Word of God, but to come to INTIMATELY know the AUTHOR as well. We should study the scriptures that we might come to know Yeshua the Messiah. Paul stated this to be his overriding goal of his life –*“that I may KNOW him”* (Philippians 3:10).

John 5:38-40 NKJV “But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. 39 You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. 40 *But you are not willing to come to ME that you may have life.*”

Seek to know that you have gotten closer to Jesus the Christ after each session you have of studying His word. You're not only coming to know scripture, but coming to know the Author a whole lot better too.

Closing prayer.