

UNLOCKING GOD'S WORD

SESSION 3: HAVING THE RIGHT TOOLS (Part 1): 'A good TRANSLATION'

Does it matter what version of the Bible you read? Isn't it just a matter of personal preference which one I choose?

INTRODUCTION:

66 books in our protestant Bible

HEBREW: most of the OLD TESTAMENT

ARIMAIC: a sister language to Hebrew used in HALF of Daniel
 ...and 2 passages in Ezra.

GREEK: all of the NEW TESTAMENT

That means that our basic tool for reading the Bible is a contemporary English translation (or several)

EXAMPLE: Lets look at the following 4 translations of 1 CORINTHIANS 7:36

NKJV:	'If any man thinks that he is behaving improperly toward his virgin...'
NASB:	'If any man thinks he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin <i>daughter</i> ...'
NIV:	'If anyone is worried that he might not be acting honourably toward the virgin he is engaged to...'
NEB:	'If a man has a partner in celibacy and feels that he is not behaving properly towards her...'

Q. So what do you do?

FIRSTLY: A good practice to regularly read ONE main translation,
 This will help with MEMORISATION and give you consistency.

The better translations will have notes in the margin
 ...at many places where there are difficulties.

HOWEVER, for study you should have SEVERAL well-chosen translations.

Q. So, which TRANSLATION should you choose?

Some of the choices that modern translators have to make involve the following:

1. ORIGINAL language: the language being translated FROM
2. RECEPTOR language: the language being translated INTO
3. HISTORICAL distance: the differences between the 2 languages in *words, grammar* and *idioms* – as well as *culture* and *history*.
4. **FORMAL** equivalence: the attempt to keep as close to the ‘form’ of the Hebrew & Greek, WORDS and GRAMMAR, as can be conveniently put into *UNDERSTANDABLE* English. This approach to translation is described as ‘*literal*.’ Keeps historical distance intact at ALL points
5. **FUNCTIONAL** equivalence: the attempt to keep the ‘meaning’ of the Hebrew or Greek, but to express these things in the normal way of saying the same thing in English today. This type of translation is described as a ‘*dynamic equivalent*.’ It sustains historical distance on all historical and factual matters but is an update of language, grammar and style.
6. **FREE** translation: the attempt to translate the IDEAS from one language to another, with less concern about using the exact words of the original (also known as a paraphrase). Tries to eliminate the historical distance as much as possible but still be faithful to the intent of the original text. The danger is that it can easily become TOO FREE.
7. THEORY of translation: whether a translator puts their primary emphasis on FORMAL (Literal) or FUNCTIONAL (dynamic) equivalency (i.e. the degree to which they are prepared to go to bridge the gap between the 2 languages.

EXAMPLE: should ‘lamp’ be translated ‘flashlight’ or ‘torch’ where they serve the purpose that a lamp once did. Or should they translate it as ‘lamp’ and let the reader bridge the gap themselves.

The several translations of the whole Bible that are most easily accessible can be placed on a 'historical distance scale' (as shown below):

(1) ORIGINAL VERSIONS:

LITERAL Equivalence (Formal)			DYNAMIC Equivalence (Functional)				FREE		
KJV	NASB	RSV	NIV ¹	NAB	GNB	JB	NEB	LB	

(2) REVISED VERSIONS:

LITERAL Equivalence (Formal)		DYNAMIC Equivalence (Functional)				FREE	
NKJV	HSCB	NRSV ESV	NIV² ⁽²⁰¹¹⁾	NJB	REB	NLT	The Message

Our view is that the best theory of translation is the one that remains as faithful as possible to both ...the ORIGINAL and RECEPTOR languages.

BUT when something has to 'give' it should be in favour of the receptor language (English in our case) ...without losing the meaning of the original language.

Your **BASIC READING** and **STUDYING** translation should probably be something in the NIV / NRSV range.

Your **SECONDARY** sources should come from either side of the scale

Abbreviations of Translations:

ESV	The English Standard Version, 2001
GNB	The Good News Bible, 1992
HCSB	The Holman Christian Standard Bible, 2003
JB	The Jerusalem Bible, 1966
KJV	The King James Version (also know as the Authorised Version), 1611
LB	The Living Bible, 1971
NAB	The New American Bible, 1970
NASB	The New American Standard Bible, 1995
NEB	The New English Bible, 1961
NIV	The New International Version, 2011
NJB	The New Jerusalem Bible, 1985
NKJV	The New King James Version, 1982
NLT	The New Living Translation, 1997
NRSV	The New Revised Standard Version, 1991
REB	The Revised English Bible, 1989
RSV	The Revised Standard Version, 1952