

Why the English Standard Version?

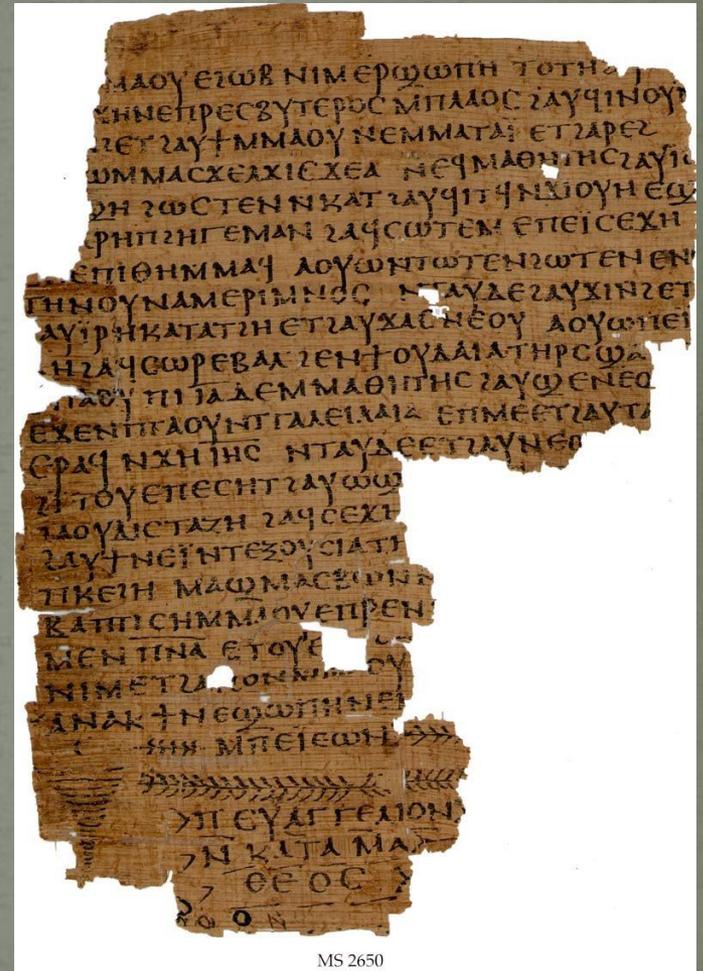


“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”

II Tim. 3:16

“...no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

II Peter 1:20,21



Verbal / Plenary Inspiration

“A special act of God in which the Holy Spirit providentially guided the human authors to convey His Word infallibly and without error in all that they affirm in the original manuscripts by using their individual situations and personalities in a proper relationship with the rest of Scripture.”

“*verbal*” – every word; “*plenary*” – fully, every part, all that it addresses

History of English Translations

- 500 AD:** Scriptures translated into over 500 languages.
- 600 AD:** Only Latin translation is allowed for Scripture.
- 1384 AD:** Wycliffe is the first person to produce a hand-written copy of the complete Bible in English
- 1455 AD:** Gutenberg invents the printing press; books may now be mass-produced instead of individually hand-written. The first book ever printed is Gutenberg's Bible in Latin.
- 1522 AD:** Martin Luther's German New Testament.
- 1526 AD:** William Tyndale's New Testament; the first New Testament printed in the English language.
- 1535 AD:** Myles Coverdale's Bible; the first complete Bible printed in the English language
- 1560 AD:** The Geneva Bible Printed; the first English language Bible to add numbered verses to each chapter; Reformed study notes
- 1611 AD:** The King James Bible printed

1901 AD: The "American Standard Version"; the first major American revision of the KJV.

1971 AD: The "New American Standard Bible" (NASB) is published as a "modern and accurate *word for word* English translation" of the Bible.

1973 AD: The "New International Version" (NIV) is published as a "modern and accurate *phrase for phrase* English translation" of the Bible.

1982 AD: The "New King James Version" (NKJV) is published as a "modern English version maintaining the original style of the King James."

2002 AD: The English Standard Version (ESV) is published as a translation to bridge the gap between the accuracy of the NASB and the readability of the NIV.

The Goal of Bible Translation

- Before 1950 – to translate the words of the Bible from the original Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic texts into a contemporary language
- After 1950 – to translate the *thoughts* of the original texts into a contemporary language
 - when a word or phrase in the original is foreign to a contemporary reader, it is replaced with an equivalent word or phrase
 - “thought-for-thought”, not “word-for-word”

Preface to the NIV version: “Because for most readers today the phrases ‘the Lord of Hosts’ and ‘God of hosts’ have little meaning, this version renders them ‘the Lord Almighty’ and ‘God Almighty’”

“[Newer translations] diminish the glory of divine revelation by being more concerned with the human reader than the divine author.”

John McArthur

“Essentially Literal” Translation

“The ESV is an ‘essential literal’ translation that seeks as far as possible to capture the precise wording of the original text and the personal style of each Biblical writer. As such, its emphasis is on ‘word-for-word’ correspondence, at the same time taking into account differences of grammar, syntax, and idiom between current literary English and the original languages. Thus it seeks to be transparent to the original text, letting the reader see as directly as possible the structure and meaning of the original.”

ESV Preface

Problems With Dynamic Equivalence

1. Dynamic Equivalence Attempts to Separate Meanings from the Words of Scripture
2. Dynamic Equivalence Leads to Confusion in the Church
3. Dynamic Equivalence Distances the Reader from the Original Author
4. Dynamic Equivalence Lessens Theological Precision
5. Dynamic Equivalence Detracts from the Literary Qualities of the Bible



1. Dynamic Equivalence Attempts to Separate Meanings from the Words of Scripture

- Exact wording is important (e.g., contracts, vows, quotes, instructions)
 - we wouldn't normally allow others to interpret our meaning instead of our words – e.g., marital spats
- Problematic changes – metaphors to direct statements; antiquated to modern; complex to simple; technical or theological to simple; specific gender to non-gender; longer sentences to shorter sentences
- “Essentially literal” translation attempts to leave ambiguities in the English that are actually there in the original languages





- John 6:27 in “essentially literal” translations:
 - “...for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal” (NASB)
 - “...because God the Father has set His seal on Him” (NKJV)
 - “For on Him God the Father has set His seal” (ESV)
- John 6:27 in “dynamic equivalence” translations:
 - “On Him God the Father has placed His seal of approval” (NIV)
 - “...because God the Father has given Him the right to do so” (CEV)
 - “For God the Father has sent me for that very purpose” (NLT)
 - “He and what He does are guaranteed by God the Father to last” (TM)

2. Dynamic Equivalence Distances the Reader from the Original Author

- A mediator is placed between the reader and the prophet or apostle – the translator – resulting in unnecessary interpretation and the “priesthood of all believers” is diminished
- Psalm 23:5 in “essentially literal” translations: “You anoint my head with oil”
- Psalm 23:5 in “dynamic equivalence” translations: “You welcome me as an honored guest” (GNB); “You honor me as a guest” (CEV)
- II Cor. 5:14 – “For the love of Christ controls us...” (ESV) – Christ’s love for us or our love for Him? “For Christ’s love compels us...” (NIV)



3. Dynamic Equivalence Lessens Theological Precision



- William Tyndale – coined the term “atonement” in order to be faithful to the original text
- Romans 3:24 – “...we are justified by His grace as a gift.” (ESV)
- GNB – “...we are put right with God.”
- NLT – “God in His gracious kindness declares us not guilty.”
- CEV – “God treats us much better than we deserve.”

- Propitiation: I John 4:10 (ESV) – “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son *to be the propitiation for our sins.*”
 - A sacrifice which satisfies and turns away the wrath of God, resulting in reconciliation between God and the offender.
- NIV – “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son *as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*”
- CEV – “Real love isn't our love for God, but his love for us. God sent his Son *to be the sacrifice by which our sins are forgiven.*”

4. Dynamic Equivalence Detracts from the Literary Qualities of the Bible

- Leland Ryken: “It robs the Bible of the power that literature conveys. And it changes the nature of the writing that God by His Holy Spirit moved the Biblical writers to produce.”
- Psalm 35:10 – “All my bones shall say, ‘O Lord, who is like You...’ (ESV); “My whole being will exclaim, ‘Who is like You, O Lord?’” (NIV)
- Psalm 73:4,7 – “For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek... Their eyes swell out through fatness; their hearts overflow with follies.” (ESV); “They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong... From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits.” (NIV)

5. Dynamic Equivalence Leads to Confusion in the Church



- Results in loss of confidence in reliability
- Results in lack of commonality in corporate reading
- Results in less memorization

“The broad diversity of English translations over the last half-century lets us all pretend we're biblical scholars, sitting at our desks surrounded by half a dozen versions and picking the rendition on any particular subject that we happen to like the best. The problem is that little by little, such Bibles become our word instead of God's word. Meanwhile, other bad things happen. We memorize God's word a lot less than we did a generation or two ago. We do less unison reading in worship...”

“Part of all that, admittedly, is the confusing bafflement that comes from having several dozen translations. But part of it is also a reduced sense of respect, duty, and awe, precipitated by making too common that which people used to hold in wonder and veneration. In a strange sense, God's blessing us with His word in easy availability and variety has become an unexpected curse.”

World Magazine, July 28, 2001

Gender Neutral Controversy

“...think of this NIV picture of the wicked man in chapter 15 of the book of Job: "he shakes his fist at God and vaunts himself against the Almighty.” Compare that with the image produced by TNIV translators: "they shake their fists at God and vaunt themselves against the Almighty." An author who wrote about a lonely individual, only to find that his editor had turned his passage into a story about a mob in rebellion, would be rightfully angry.”

World Magazine, February 26, 2005

“every jot and tittle”

Psalm 34:20 (ESV) – “He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.”

Psalm 34:20 (TNIV) – “He protects all *their* bones, not one of them will be broken.”

John 19:36 (ESV) – “For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: ‘Not one of His bones will be broken.’”



“The whole notion of a ‘transparent’ translation is a key difference in translation philosophy... Will immediate intelligibility trump almost all other consideration, or will we allow the ‘otherness’ of an ancient, foreign book to shine through as much as possible? Should Bible translation be a guide through the forest of interpretative difficulties or a window that makes the original language, style, and ambiguity of the text as transparent as possible? I have to side with the ESV. When it comes to understanding and living by God’s Word, I want teachers to teach and translations to be transparent.”

Kevin DeYoung

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Matthew 4:4

