

About Bible Translations

For some people, just thinking about all of the various Bible translations can be overwhelming. But what exactly is a Bible translation? Translations, simply put, take the original Greek and Hebrew texts and put them into the English language.

There are a many accurate and high quality Bible translations available today. The translation method used for each Bible is what differentiates one Bible from another.

Translating the Bible is not easy.

Ask any Greek or Hebrew scholar and they'll tell you that translation is a long and arduous process...one that takes years. For example, a committee of 13 of the most respected evangelical scholars in the world spearheaded the translation of both the New International Version (NIV) and the Today's New International Version (TNIV) Bible translations. This committee spent more than 10 years working on Today's New International Version (TNIV), a readable, reliable translation for today's generation. Prior to that endeavor, the same committee spent roughly 13 years translating the New International Version (NIV), the most read, most trusted translation.

So why is Bible translation so difficult?

Well, for starters there's no such thing as a word-for-word translation. Anytime you translate something from one language into another language, there is some degree of interpretation.

Take for example the Spanish phrase
"¿Como se llama?"

The most literal translation of that phrase is, "How you call?"

But a meaning-based translation is,
"What is your name?"

Which is more accurate?

The scholars who translated the TNIV and NIV would tell you the second phrase is much more accurate, because it captures the meaning of "¿Como se llama?" in everyday English. And we think most English speakers would agree.

Therefore, the goal of Bible translation is not simply to swap words, but to translate the text in a way that conveys the original, intended meaning.

But why do we need to keep translating the Bible into English? Don't we have enough versions already?

Before you answer that, consider this: In only 10 years, Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary made 100,000 changes and added 10,000 new words.

Language changes—and it changes quickly.

Whether it's advancements in biblical scholarship or just plain clearer English, there will always be new Bible translations as well as a variety of translations available for you to choose from.

There are three basic approaches to translation including:

Word-for-Word:

As much as possible, biblical scholars take each "word" from the original Greek or Hebrew text and an English word in its place.

Thought-for-Thought: Translators take the "meaning" of the original language and rewrite it in modern language that's easy to read and understand.

Balanced Approach: Scholars translate word-for-word where it results in a translation that's both clear and accurate. But where a ***word-for-word*** approach might result in an unclear or inaccurate translation (take the ¿Como se llama? example above), *these translations use the most natural English possible to clearly and accurately communicate the meaning.*

Paraphrases help people who are new to the Bible understand it. And literal translations are helpful for people who want to study each word. The NIV and TNIV are literal where possible and "thought-for-thought" where necessary to help the reader understand. The NIV and TNIV are the best balance between accuracy and readability.

The graphic on the back can help you understand how each translation fits into the philosophies

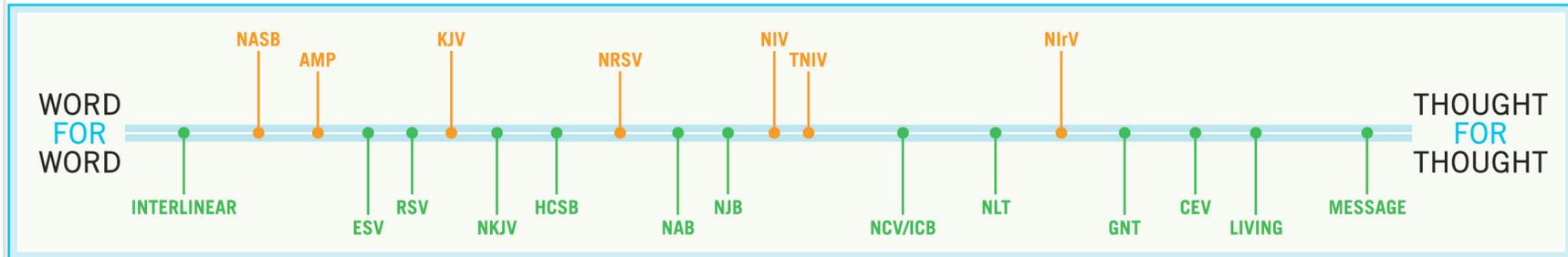
There are five main translation families that make up over 90 percent of all Bibles sold. The main translation families include:

1. The New International Version Family: New International Version (NIV), Today's New International Version (TNIV), New International Reader's Version (NIRV), and La Biblia Nueva Versión Internacional (NVI).

2. The King James Version Family: King James Version (KJV), New King James Version (NKJV).
3. The New Living Translation (NLT).
4. The New American Standard Bible (NASB).
5. Paraphrase Bibles such as The Message.

In addition to these five translation families, there are a number of other translations available.

TRANSLATION CONTINUUM



This continuum shows how different Bible translations fit into the word-for-word and thought-for-thought translation philosophies.