

How Can I Get More Out of My Bible Reading? Bonus Lesson

Lesson 5: Translations and Interpretation

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2.15)

Homework Review: Read Colossians 4. Apply the principles you learned in this lesson; Read Colossians 4 in more than one translation; Read The NET Bible notes to Colossians 4.

Q. *Share something you read from the Bible this week, what it means, and how you are applying it to your life.*

INTRODUCTION TO LESSON FOUR:

Q. *Why are there some many translations of the Bible?*

Because your language changes; the ones you read must be updated.

Q. *Why are the newer translations of the Bible missing verses?*

Textual Criticism; earlier manuscripts are missing them; the rule: the earlier the better for accuracy.

Q. *Is the KJV the only Bible we should use?*

If you speak King James English, then go for it. Otherwise, no.

Q. *How does the translation process impact the inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility of the Bible?*

Translations are not inspired so the only impact would be is if you don't have a faithful translation.

Q. *Should I use a paraphrase of the Bible?*

It depends; it depends on what you intend to use it for.

I. Translations and Interpretation

A. Introductory Comments:

1. 66 books – 3 different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek)

2. Most of us must use a good English Translation

a. the very fact that we read the Bible in English means we are already involved in translation.

b. the person who reads the Bible only in English is at the mercy of the translator(s).

c. if we use only one translation we are committed to the exegetical choices of that translation as the Word of God.

example – **I Cor. 7:36** (looking at it from different translations)

CSB - If any man thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to, if she is getting beyond the usual age for marriage, and he feels he should marry—he can do what he wants. He is not sinning; they can get married.

NASB - But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter, if she is past her youth, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry.

ESV - If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin.

B. Of Translations and Translators: What does it all mean?

- 1) Original Language – the language that one is translating from.
- 2) Receptor Language – the language that one is translating into.
- 3) Historical distance – has to do with the differences that exist between the original and receptor language, both in matters of words, grammar, and idioms as well as in matters of culture and history.
- 4) Formal equivalence – the attempt to keep as close to the “form” of the Hebrew or Greek, both in words and grammar, as can be conveniently put into understandable English. (wooden)
- 5) Functional equivalence – the attempt to keep the meaning of the Hebrew or Greek but to put their words and idioms into what would be the normal way of saying the same thing in English.
- 6) Dynamic (optimal) equivalence – keep historical distance on all historical and factual matters but “update” matters of language, grammar, and style.
- 7) Free Translation – the attempt to translate the ideas from one language to another, with less concern about using the exact words of the original (paraphrase).
- 8) Theory of translation has basically to do with whether one puts primary emphasis on formal or on functional equivalency, that is, the degree to which one is willing to go in order to bridge the gap between the two languages, either in use of words and grammar or in bridging the historical distance by offering a modern equivalent.

II. How to Use Translations to study the Bible

A. Use a variety of translations

1. Read a passage or chapter or book from a different translation than you normally use
2. Note any differences between translations in choice of words, order, and so on.
3. Keep in mind which translation is more formal and which is more functional. (See diagram)
4. Paraphrase the chapter into your own words.

Example to use: I Timothy 3:1-7

B. Keep in mind Historical Distance

1. Weights, measures, and money – drachma anyone?
2. Euphemisms
 - a. translate literally but perhaps leave an English-speaking reader bewildered or guessing
 - b. translate the formal equivalent but perhaps offend or shock the reader
 - c. translate with a functionally equivalent euphemism

Example: Matthew 16:18 – The gates of hell is a Jewish expression meaning “realm of the dead.” It is talking about Death. Not Hell and how we must fight against it. The Church will not be overcome, or vanquished by death.

3. Vocabulary

4. Wordplays

5. Grammar and syntax

a. One of the characteristics of Greek is its fondness for what are known as genitive constructions (dependent clauses used in a variety of ways).

b. Thousands of times in the OT the KJV translators woodenly followed the Hebrew word order in a way that does not produce normal idiomatic English.

6. Matters of Gender

C. Derive applications that can be defended no matter the translation

“Perhaps the most important hermeneutical principle to learn from textual criticism is that one must not derive theological or ethical principles solely from passages that are textually uncertain. When significant textual variants appear in a given passage, the sensible Bible reader will derive interpretations and applications that can be defended no matter which version of the text one follows. So, too, students should always base synthesis of biblical doctrine and practice on textually certain texts.”

III. Biblical fallacies related to Translations and Interpretation

A. Pick and choose my translation to get the word I want

B. Use only one translation (KJV only)

C. Act as if all translations / paraphrases are equal = the RSV and the Message are Equal

IV. Bible Study Tip

The Use of Translations: Use mainly one translation for your study and memorization of Scripture. If you use mainly a literal (formal) translation for study, consult a more functional (dynamic) translation for comparison in difficult parts and vice versa. Use only a free (paraphrase) translation for devotion and inspiration.