

## **How Do I Choose the Right Bible?**

Just a few decades ago, there was one English Bible translation—the King James Version. Our choices were limited to black, blue, or burgundy in real or bonded leather. Today, choosing a Bible can be confusing and overwhelming. There are over a dozen popular translations (NIV, NLT, ESV, HCSB, NASB, etc). There are a variety of formats (thin line, reference, study, chain reference, pocket, journal, etc) and a range of audiences (men, women, teens, military, graduates, coaches, athletes, etc). How do you choose?

The choice of format and whether or not you want one geared towards a specific audience is really a matter of preference. Understanding the differences in translations can be a bit more complicated.

Here's the backstory on translations.

The Bible was not written in English; it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. That means the Bibles we have today have been translated from their original languages. There are two primary ways to translate scripture.

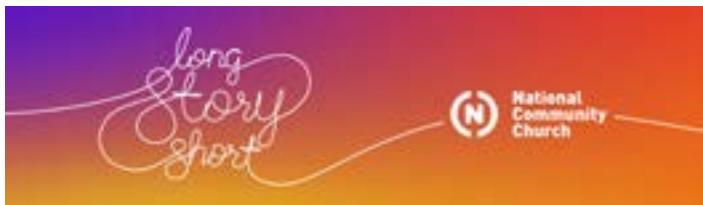
One is “word-for-word.” In this approach, the translators attempt to translate each original word into its closest English equivalent. The advantage of this approach is that it maintains integrity and accuracy of the language. The disadvantage is that it can be clunky to read and metaphors and symbolism can get lost in cultural disconnect. In short, word-for-word translations have a higher level of accuracy but a lower level of readability.

The other method, “thought-for-thought” (also called dynamic equivalence), attempts to translate phrases and ideas from the original to the closest English equivalent. While these translations are not as concerned about strict adherence to original grammatical structures, they seek to preserve and advance a higher level of understanding. In short, thought-for-thought translations have a higher level of readability but a lower level of accuracy.

Which should you choose? There isn't one right answer. It largely depends on your preference, personality, and purpose.

Most experts identify the NIV (New International Version) as the best balance between readability and accuracy. That's the translation that is used most at NCC.

For biblical study, you may want to choose a translation that is more word-for-word, like an ESV (English Standard Version), NASB(New American Standard Bible), or HCSB (Holman Christian Standard Bible).



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For devotional reading or for reading large chunks of the Bible at once, you may want something a bit more readable, like the NLT (New Living Translation) or CEV (Contemporary English Version).

For meditation or memorization, some find the lyrical and poetic language of the KJV (King James Version) or NKJV (New King James Version) helpful.

Every now and then, it's good to change things up and read a translation that gives a totally different perspective and refreshes words and phrases that may be missed due to over-familiarity. The Message and The Voice are good for switching it up.

The following websites give good information on the differences between translations:

<http://bibleresources.americanbible.org/resource/a-brief-description-of-popular-bible-translations>

<https://www.christianbook.com/page/bibles/about-bibles/about-translations>

The Bible App ([www.bible.com](http://www.bible.com)) and Bible Gateway ([www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)) let you see passages in several different translations.

### **The translation you choose is not as important as the transformation you pursue.**

Always read looking for evidence of God's character, pictures of Jesus, and opportunities for activation and application.