

# A Guide to Translations

Why are there so many translations, and which one should I use?

The Bible was written over approximately 1,500 years in three different languages, with the most recent writings dating back around 2,000 years. The Bible was not originally written in English and was not written in a culture that we are familiar with currently. Different languages and cultures lead to the complication of having a set of documents that retain their original meaning while remaining readable and understandable to us.

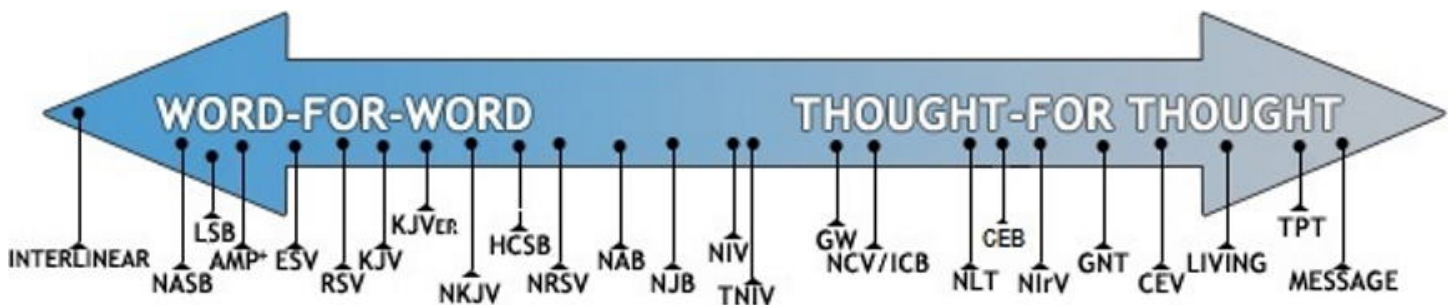
Fortunately, God inspired all Scripture, so He created a written document that will stand the test of time and multiple languages. God has also inspired scholars to learn ancient languages and cultures, enabling them to translate His word into a usable form today.

All Bible Translators are attempting to do their best to balance faithfulness to the accuracy of God's Word with readability in today's English. Bible Scholars and those who can advise on translations would refer to these two extremes as "Word for Word" translations (faithfulness/accuracy) and "Thought for Thought" translations (readability). Word-for-word translations require the reader to do more interpretive work themselves. Thought-for-thought translations do more of the interpretation and paraphrase what they think the text means.

The word-for-word (aka formal equivalent or literal translation) approach seeks to represent the original Greek and Hebrew in a more word-for-word manner and preserve—as far as possible—original word order, grammar, and syntax. Many prefer this method because each Greek or Hebrew word is generally represented by the same English word in all occurrences. Some of the more literal translations include: the King James Version (KJV), the New King James Version (NKJV), the English Standard Version (ESV), and the New American Standard Bible (NASB).

On the other end of the spectrum, we find the thought-for-thought translation (also referred to as a paraphrase or functional equivalent). This approach is more concerned with putting the meaning of the passage in a colloquial language familiar to the reader. This type of translation seeks to render the ideas of the original text as accurately as possible in the target language (like English). Some examples in this category are: The Philips New Testament in Modern English, The Living Bible, and The Message (by Eugene Peterson). Many find this translation more readable, especially for new readers.

The middle of the spectrum is occupied by the dynamic equivalent, or mediating translation. These translations seek to strike a balance between the two translation approaches. They are sometimes more literal, sometimes more colloquial or conversational, depending on the subject and text. Some examples in this category are the New International Version (NIV) and the New American Bible (NAB).





## COMPARISON OF TOP BIBLE VERSIONS

VERSION	YEAR	TRANSLATION TYPE	RDG. LVL.*	EXAMPLE PASSAGE (1 CORINTHIANS 15:50)
NIV	1978 (REV. 2011)	Functional (slight)	Med-Easy	I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.
KJV	1611	Formal (medium)	Hard	Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.
NKJV	1982	Formal (medium)	Medium	Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.
NRSVUE	1989 (REV. 2021)	Formal (medium)	Med-Hard	What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.
ESV	2001 (REV. 2016)	Formal (medium)	Med-Hard	I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.
NASB	1971 (REV. 2020)	Formal (heavy)	Hard	Now I say this, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.
NABRE	2011	Formal (slight)	Medium	This I declare, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption.
CSB	2004 (REV. 2017)	Formal (slight)	Med-Easy	What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor can corruption inherit incorruption.
NLT	1996 (REV. 2015)	Functional (medium)	Easy	What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that our physical bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These dying bodies cannot inherit what will last forever.
CEB	2011	Functional (medium)	Med-Easy	This is what I'm saying, brothers and sisters: Flesh and blood can't inherit God's kingdom. Something that rots can't inherit something that doesn't decay.
AMP	1965 (REV. 2015)	Paraphrase (Formal)	Hard	Now I say this, believers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit nor be part of the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable (mortal) inherit the imperishable (immortal).
MSG	1993-2002	Paraphrase (Functional)	Easy	I need to emphasize, friends, that our natural, earthly lives don't in themselves lead us by their very nature into the kingdom of God. Their very "nature" is to die, so how could they "naturally" end up in the Life kingdom?
* Easy = U.S. Middle School Reading Level   Medium = Early High School   Hard = Late High School				

Sources:



[The Bible Project](#)



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