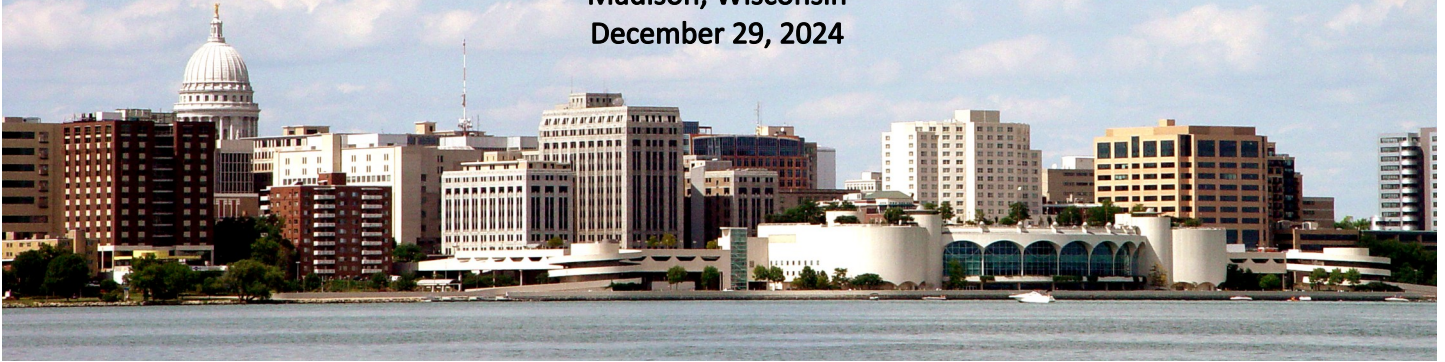


Translating God's Word

How We Got the Bible: Part 6

Baxter T. Exum (#1766)
Four Lakes Church of Christ
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Good morning and welcome to the Four Lakes congregation! If you are visiting with us today, we are happy to have you with us, and we'd like to ask that you fill out a visitor card – either online or on a card from the pew in front of you. And we also invite you to pass along any questions or prayer concerns in that way.

Before we get to our study of the word today, Aaron and I would like to give just a brief update on our search for a new church facility. There are times when we have been completely out of space in this building, so we have looked at several properties through the years. We looked at another one a few weeks ago, and it looks interesting, but the price tag is a bit problematic. It's located just a few blocks southwest of the intersection of the Beltline and Highway 51, it has seating for just over 200, it's all on one level (so it's handicapped accessible, including the restrooms), but they are asking \$1,019,000. So, we don't want to get too excited about it, but it is something that we would ask you to be praying about before we progress any further. As a congregation, we are not really in a position to take on an mortgage at this point, so we'll be reaching out for some outside help over the next few weeks, and we just wanted to give you a heads-up on that.

We are here this morning to preach the good news that God loves us and sent his Son Jesus to save us: He died on the cross, he was buried, and he was raised up from the dead on the first day of the week. We respond to this good news by turning to God in faith, by turning away from sin, by publicly proclaiming our faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and by allowing ourselves to be buried with Jesus in baptism, an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins. And, as usual, we do have several examples to share this week, starting with an update from somewhere in the Philippines. They say that, "God is good! Tonight at the Javier Church of Christ Youth Fellowship, 6 young people accepted Christ as their Savior as they were baptized for the remission of their sins. Even though it was dark, raining and cold, it did not stop them from accepting the Gospel message. Please pray for our new brothers and sisters in Christ. Jhunina Abines, Joel Abines, Jhuniel Gula, Shane Caballes, Shenelle Octbre and Christine Joy Banquisio." They then quote 3 John 4, where John says that, *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."* So good to see it!

This next one comes to us from the Harlem congregation over in New York. They posted a few days ago, and they simply say, "Welcome Steve, Lexxis, Alan and Kaila."

This next one comes from the Bridge Avenue congregation down in Weslaco, Texas. They posted this week, and they say, “Rejoice with us we have a new brother in Christ! Jorge Hinojosa made the decision to obey the gospel and be baptized for the forgiveness of his sins this evening (Acts 2:38). His wife Ashley made the same decision back in June. Ashley was one of the kids that came to worship as part of bus ministry about 20 years ago. She came back to church early this year and brought her family. We are so happy they are now part of our eternal family of God.” And I love this one, especially because of the connection with this man’s wife from 20 years ago. I would not be shocked at all to learn that someone obeys the gospel 20 years from now as the result of our clothing give-away or maybe the Bible correspondence course program. There’s a verse in Isaiah where God refers to the word that goes out from his mouth, and he says that his word, *“...will not return to me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.”* Twenty years ago, somebody picked up a kid on a church bus, and this week her husband has now obeyed the gospel.

The last one this morning comes from the Shillington Church of Christ in Reading, Pennsylvania. Chris Boyce, their evangelist, says, “Glory to God, I baptized Richard Mansaray from Sierra Leone yesterday! He has been coming to our church for about a year and goes to University here. He left Islam when he was 16. Please pray for him.” That is amazing! Sierra Leone is a nation on the western coast of northern Africa, between Guinea and Liberia. We could certainly travel across the Atlantic to preach in that nation (and we are thankful for those who do), but there is a sense in which Sierra Leone has come to us, and we are thankful for this opportunity in Pennsylvania. As always, we share these pictures by way of encouragement and as our invitation to you to consider obeying the good news yourself. If we can help, if you’d like to study together, please let us know. Pull me aside after worship, or give me a call or send a text to 608-224-0274.

This morning, we are concluding our study concerning HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE. We started several weeks ago by taking a look at the written word of God. Then we looked at the writing of ancient books. Then, we had two lessons where we asked whether the manuscripts we have today are reliable. Last week we looked at the canon of scripture. And this week we take a look at what’s involved in translating the word of God.

As we begin, as we start to dig into this, I want to share a brief quote from Guy N. Woods, a true scholar among churches of Christ during the mid-1900’s. Brother Woods was a man who spent his entire life studying the word of God, and brother Woods once said, “There is no translation so bad that one cannot learn the truth from it and be saved, and there is no translation so good that it is perfect.” I appreciate that! I believe that this is a true statement, and it’s something we do need to keep in mind as we study the challenge of translating God’s word this morning.

As we study, I’d like to divide our lesson into several parts. First of all, I want us to realize that whenever we study this issue, we need to be thankful (and I’ll explain why in just a moment). Secondly, we’ll take a look at two very important principles to keep in mind when choosing a translation. And then, as we close, I’d like to apply what we’ve learned by noting just a few very practical things to keep in mind as we go looking for a good translation.

I. First of all, though, let’s go into this discussion with a healthy dose of THANKSGIVING.

We need to be extremely thankful that we have the ability to read the Bible in our own language. Sometimes we tend to forget this. I don’t know whether we always appreciate what we have. In fact, we should be thanking God that our biggest problem is not in FINDING an English translation, but our biggest problem comes in DECIDING which one of the MANY is best. Current estimates suggest that there are over 7,100 languages being spoken in the world today. However, when it comes to the Bible, we find that the entire Bible

has been translated into only 700 of those languages. It's hard for me to imagine not having a translation of the bible in our own language, and yet there are more than 6,000 languages that have not yet seen a complete translation of the Bible. There are people working literally around the clock right now to translate God's word into other languages. One of the more recent efforts involves *Da Jesus Book*, an effort to translate the Bible into Hawaiian Pidgin. With my wife's mom's side the the family coming from Hawaii, this is especially meaningful to our family. It is a beautiful work, done by Wycliffe Bible Translators. Remember that name (Wycliffe), because we will be back to him in just a moment. But there are still more than 6,000 languages without a complete translation of the Bible.

However, as we look back through history, we find that the need for translating God's word has gone back many years, and the first reference to a translation can be found as far back as the Old Testament book of Nehemiah. In Nehemiah 8, as the Jewish people returned to Jerusalem after a period of exile, Ezra the scribe read the books of the Law of Moses at a special wooden podium that had been constructed for that purpose. And the statement on translation comes in Nehemiah 8:8 (p. 777). The Bible says that Ezra the scribe read from early in the morning until midday, and all of the people stood out of their respect for God's word as he read. Please notice Nehemiah 8:8, where the Bible says that, ***"They read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the sense so that they understood the reading."*** In other words, during the time of exile, the people had forgotten their Hebrew language (the children had grown up learning the language of Babylon), and so the scriptures for the first time had to be translated into the common language of the people.

As far as English is concerned, we know that in 1382, a man by the name of John Wycliffe started translating the Bible from Latin into English, and his translation was completed in 1384. At that time, copies were made by hand, and the Roman Catholic Church did everything they could do to destroy those copies and discourage Wycliffe's work. People were punished for reading or listening to Wycliffe's translation, some were even burned at the stake. Wycliffe died of a stroke before the Catholic Church could kill him, but in 1428 (44 years after his death), Catholic officials dug up Wycliffe's remains, burned his bones, and scattered the ashes in a river. You can read about this, by the way, in the official encyclopedia of the Catholic Church (complete with the seal of the pope on it). Wycliffe was actually excommunicated 28 years after his death. Can you imagine the anger it would take to remove someone from the church 28 years after that person has died? We are coming up on the 30th anniversary of the Four Lakes congregation being established this coming year. So, this goes back almost as long as we've been a congregation. We need to ask ourselves why they would do that. They did that because they were threatened by the common people having access to the word of God in their own language. Due to the work of John Wycliffe, people no longer had to trust the religious leaders to teach them the word of God, the priests were no longer the "filters" of truth, but the people were able to study the word of God on their own.

William Tyndale was another well-known translator shortly after that time, and Tyndale was the first to translate the entire Bible directly from Greek to English. Remember, Wycliffe translated the Bible from Latin, so Tyndale took it back a step, from Greek to English. His English New Testament was completed in 1525, and unlike Wycliffe's translation, Tyndale's was printed on the printing press, so it was much more available (being much less expensive than a hand-written copy). Remember, Gutenberg invented the printing press in 1439, and the Bible was the first book to be printed. Well, in May of 1535, William Tyndale was arrested, and after 17 months in prison, he was sentenced to death as a heretic. He was strangled and burned at the stake on October 6, 1536; again, primarily for translating the Bible from Greek to English. At least once in this series of lessons, we've sung about those "ancient words, holy words of our faith, handed down to this age; came to us through sacrifice, o heed the faithful words of Christ!"

And speaking of making a hand-written copy of the Bible, we need to understand how expensive that would've been. Imagine how expensive Bibles would be today if we had to pay someone to make us a hand-written copy. Imagine the work involved in making a copy by hand. We actually have a bit of insight into this work in some of the marginal notes as some of those handwritten copies were completed. For example, in the margin of one handwritten copy, one scribe wrote these words, "He who does not know how to write supposed it to be no labor; but though only three fingers write, the whole body labors." In my mind, I'm picturing a guy digging ditches cutting on a scribe, "Must be nice, doing nothing but writing all day!" But, if any of you do any writing, if you sit at a desk all day, you know it is definitely work! It's a different kind of work, but writing can definitely be hard work. Another scribe wrote in the margin of his work, "Writing bows one's back, thrusts the ribs into one's stomach, and fosters a general debility of the body." In another manuscript of the gospel accounts, there is a marginal note indicating that there was a heavy snowstorm going on outside at the time and that the scribe's ink froze, his hand became numb, and the pen fell from his fingers! I say these things only to emphasize how thankful we need to be that we have so many options when it comes to having a copy of the Bible in our own language.

To appreciate the cost involved, try to imagine me offering you a ream of paper, a pen, and a Bible, and imagine me asking you to make me a copy. How much would you charge for that copy? Assuming that it would take about a year, and the taking an average salary here in Madison, what would you charge? I would suggest that a fair price would be somewhere around \$100,000. You might want some health insurance, though, and maybe a few benefits, maybe a few weeks of vacation, you may need a few more pens, and a decent desk and a chair, and the cost of that Bible may get up around \$150,000 or so.

Now, let me ask: If a copy of the Bible were to cost upwards of \$150,000, how many Bibles would you have in your house? We would be taking out mortgages and loans, not for homes and cars, but for Bibles, just to read one on our own. I would suggest, then, that we need to be extremely thankful that we can go online right now, and we can have a very nice Bible delivered to our home later tonight or tomorrow morning for less than \$20. And not only that, but the Bibles we have today are neatly printed, bound in leather, marked with page numbers, complete with cross references, and maps, and charts, the words of Jesus in red, and on and on. I have several dozen Bibles at home right now. We probably have well over a hundred Bibles in this building right now. I have a waterproof Bible. We just got my mom a chronological Bible, where the whole thing is arranged in chronological order (instead of canonical order). We have large print editions. We have audio Bibles. Our phones have access to thousands of Bibles, searchable by reference or by words or phrases in hundreds of languages. We are so incredibly blessed! And I say all of this just to emphasize that we have no idea the kind of agony that people have gone through to get us to this point. People like William Tyndale have been murdered to give us this privilege. So, first of all, let us be thankful!

II. With this spirit of thanksgiving, I'd like to suggest TWO BASIC PRINCIPLES for when it comes to choosing a good translation.

And we'll start with the suggestion that any translation we use ought to have a GOOD TEXTUAL BASE. Over the past few weeks, we've noted that we have somewhere around 7,000 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. We don't have any originals, but we do have some bits and pieces going back to within a few decades of the originals, which is absolutely amazing. Some manuscripts, though, are more recent. They may be more complete, but they are copies of copies of copies. And as with any handwritten documents, we expect some variations between them. We covered this last week. When it comes to creating a translation, then, we need to start by figuring out what to translate. When we come to a variation, which reading is most accurate? This process is known as textual criticism.

There were some huge advances in this area in the late 1800's, primarily by a two-man team with the last names Westcott and Hort. As these two men looked into the manuscript evidence they had at the time, they started to develop some basic principles to determine the correct reading. And remember, as we learned last week, nearly all of these issues are very minor (spelling errors in proper names, differences in word order, and so on). We could study this for months, but I'll try to summarize their studies on the wall up here. If, though some manuscripts said "Jesus Christ the Lord" and others said "the Lord Jesus Christ," 1.) They would take the older reading, because they realized that the oldest manuscripts were probably more accurate. 2.) They would take the reading supported by the most ancient writers. In other words, everything being equal, the variant quoted by the most ancient writers was probably the correct one. 3.) They would try to reconstruct the history of the variant. In other words, they tried to trace an odd reading back to when it first appeared. 4.) They would take the quality of the manuscript over the number of times a particular reading was copied. In other words, it's not necessarily a matter of counting the number of manuscripts that read a certain way; after all, if a mistake is made and that mistake is copied over and over, the number of copies means nothing. 5.) They preferred taking the shorter reading of a verse, because scribes tended to elaborate as opposed to leaving something out (like that explanation of the stirring of the water we looked at last week). They found that the shorter reading was generally more accurate. 6.) And finally, they would give preference to the more difficult reading, because they found that scribes would tend to smooth out any difficulties. These six principles revolutionized the translation process. But let's remember: These guys didn't come along until the late 1800's, several hundred years after a translation like the King James. The King James is based on what is known as the "Majority Text," where translators gave preference to the number of readings with no real regard for the age of each reading, even though we recognize today that it's more important to be closer to the original if at all possible.

Not only that, but we have found much older and better manuscripts over the past 400+ years since the King James was first translated. For example, the last six verses of Revelation were completely missing from the few Greek manuscripts they had available at the time the KJV was first translated. They didn't have them in Greek, but they had them in Latin. So, you know what they did? They translated those verses from Latin, back into Greek, and then to English. If you know anything about translating anything, that's a nightmare! Well, as a result of that decision, Revelation 22:19 in the original KJV refers to the "*book of life*" when it should refer to the "*tree of life*." I don't think that'll cause anyone to be lost, but it's not quite as accurate as it should be. The translators of the New King James Version, by the way, limited themselves to the manuscripts they had back in 1611. So, the language is updated (no more thee's and thou's), but the textual base is still inferior (which explains a ton of footnotes), because since 1611, we have found a lot of older (better and more accurate) manuscripts. I might compare it to going to a doctor who diagnoses you with appendicitis, but you insist that she only treats you with the medical knowledge that was widely available in the early 1600's. That makes no sense! When we were kids, by the way, my dad took us to the International Museum of Surgical Science down in Chicago. It made me incredibly thankful for advances in the field of medicine. So also, we need to be incredibly thankful for the advances that have been made in evaluating ancient manuscripts. The first big idea here, though, is that even before we start translating, we want a good textual base, we want the oldest and most accurate and reliable manuscripts (which involves the science of textual criticism).

Secondly, in addition to wanting a translation that's based on the oldest and most accurate manuscript evidence, we also want a translation that is both accurate and understandable at the same time. And if you've ever studied a foreign language, then you know that this is a constant struggle. It is difficult to make a word-for-word translation that can actually be understood. There are many words in Hebrew and Greek that do not have a direct English equivalent. The same goes for Spanish, or French, or any other language. Language is difficult. There are figures of speech. There are differences in word order. And so, when we start translating the Bible into English, we have a decision to make: Do we want a translation that is accurate, or do we want a

translation we can understand? On one hand, since the actual WORDS of scripture are inspired, we would obviously prefer as close to word-for-word as possible. But on the other hand, we also want to understand what we are reading; after all, that's the point of having a translation!

I'm putting a chart on the wall up here, and this is my feeble attempt to put this in terms we can understand. On the far left side, I've put an "interlinear." An interlinear is basically the Greek text with a direct translation of each word underneath it. As I was preparing today's lesson, I looked up John 3:16, a very familiar verse. Consider the direct and word-for-word translation. It says, *"For thus loved God the world, so as the Son the only begotten He gave, that everyone believing in Him may not perish but may have life eternal."* That is an extremely accurate translation of John 3:16, but is that how we talk today? No! It's English, it's a translation, but it is nothing close to how we talk to each other on a daily basis. In fact, if I were to start talking like this, the medical type people we have with us today should probably come up here immediately and evaluate whether I'm having a stroke. The word of God is inspired and we will be judged by the words of this book; therefore, we want as close to a word-for-word translation as possible (which the interlinear does), but we also have to understand it.

On the other extreme up here, we have a paraphrase. A paraphrase is not so much a translation as it is somebody reading the text and trying to communicate the thought behind it. In my opinion, there's a value to reading a paraphrase from time to time, but in my opinion a paraphrase has tipped the scale to the point of being so understandable that it is no longer accurate. One of the most popular paraphrases is *The Message*. The author makes some great points and usually does a great job communicating the thought behind each passage, but when you compare it to an interlinear, there are all kinds of words that aren't even there. Years ago, when we were taking the ferry home from Alaska, we had no cell service for 3-4 days, and we stopped in Ketchikan for a few hours. I found a thrift store and bought a copy of *The Message* to read on the rest of the trip. I've read through it several times, and I love it, because it's so new and unfamiliar, in a sense. But I have to realize: It's a paraphrase, not a word-for-word translation. So, I would consider something like *The Message* more of a commentary than a translation.

I've already mentioned the KJV and the NKJV a few moments ago, pointing out that they are based on some inferior manuscript evidence (only what we had available to us back in the early 1600's). And that's why I've put them in brackets up here. Yes, they are pretty close to word-for-word, but they miss it in terms of the manuscript evidence. I would point out that the KJV has gone through a number of revisions through the years. By the way, the 1631 edition was known as the "Adulterer's Bible," because they accidentally left out the *"not"* in the command, *"Thou shalt NOT commit adultery."* That was a big "oops" right there. We're in the middle of an egg recall from Costco right now, but this recall was so much more important! Most people, though, are using the revision of 1769, but I want to put a page from the original 1611 edition on the wall up here for a moment. As you can see, it is a beautiful work of art, but it is incredibly difficult to read. I have a good friend who loves the KJV, and James 1:21 is his favorite verse, but it is also my favorite verse to make fun of (we were made for each other)! I actually printed a high quality copy of this page and sent it to him, and he framed it. But in that verse, they have James referring to *"the superfluity of naughtiness."* I have no idea what that means, but it is, though, very fun to say.

The point is: The English language has changed dramatically over the past 400 years. There are some words in the KJV that aren't even in a dictionary today. Other words have changed, even to the point of being obscene (or at the least, being offensive) to some people. As a middle school teacher, my wife said (out of the blue) this week, "You know, I'm glad Caleb gave us a heads up concerning that word in the song we sang last week." The KJV is full of words like that! I'll put a few references on the wall up here if you'd like to know what I'm talking about. Feel free to take a pic and look these up later (as evidence that language changes over time). For one

rather mild example, we might consider Philemon 20, where Paul says (in the KJV), *“Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.”* Now, that’s just gross, isn’t it! I’m trying to imagine walking up to Gary when he walks in on a Sunday morning, “Brother, you have really refreshed my bowels in the Lord this morning!” That’s terrible. That sounds like some kind of a medical procedure. Four hundred years ago, though, if you talked about your bowels being refreshed, it was apparently quite a compliment, but today the picture is quite different, isn’t it?

Another concern is that King James himself gave some very specific and unfortunate instructions to his translators, in order to maintain the traditions of the Church of England, basically telling his translators to make it sound “churchy.” And that’s how we ended up with the word “baptism” instead of “immersion” in most of our English translations from that point forward. Think of the harm that was done by this move more than 400 years ago. King James knew that if his translators actually translated the word baptism as “immersion,” they’d be contradicting what was being done at the time in the Church of England. So, they basically created a new English word by transliterating the Greek word (converting Greek to English without translating it). This allowed them to define baptism as sprinkling. King James’ instructions are why we have “church” instead of the more accurate “congregation” or “assembly.” This is why we have the word “Easter” in Acts 12:4, even though the word “Easter” is not in the original text. The original text refers to the “Passover” in that verse, but the KJV says “Easter.” Again, the king instructed his translators to use terms that were more in line with the teaching of the Church of England at that time. The KJV uses the word “hell” to translate three different Greek words, GEHENNA, TARTARUS, AND HADES – so, we have Jesus going to “hell” between his death and resurrection; but no, Jesus never went to hell. We have references to mythical creatures, such as the “unicorn” (in Numbers 23:22). Another challenge is that the KJV is written on a 12th grade reading level. You pretty much need to be a senior in high school to understand it.

I want to skip over to the middle of this chart, where we find the NIV, and the reading level of the NIV is somewhere around the 7th or 8th grade. So, it’s easier to understand than an interlinear, but it’s not way over here with the paraphrase; it’s somewhere in the middle. And just to try to summarize a chart like this, I would suggest staying as far to the left up here as your reading level will allow, while checking in with some of the others on difficult passages. And then, also be aware of some of the issues with each of these translations. As we had that quote from Guy N. Woods at the beginning of today’s lesson, “There is no translation so bad that one cannot learn the truth from it and be saved, and there is no translation so good that it is perfect.” I appreciate that. Some are obviously better than others, but each of them have their peculiarities. In the NIV, for example, we have several references to our *“sinful nature”* (throughout Romans 8), and we have the reference in Psalm 51 to David being *“sinful at birth.”* That reflects a certain bias of the translators, I believe.

I have settled on the NASB (the 1995 Edition) for most of my preaching and studies. The NASB is well-known for being extremely accurate with verb tenses. But, it is somewhat more difficult to read and understand than the NIV. One of the greatest weaknesses with the NASB is their very unfortunate translation of the word *“fornication”* (a word referring to *“sexual sin”*). You may want to be turning with me to Matthew 19. Unfortunately, the NASB just translates this word as *“immorality”* instead of the more specific *“sexual immorality.”* The word is sometimes explained in the footnotes (as it is in Matthew 19:9), but not always. In Matthew 19:9, the NASB has Jesus giving *“immorality”* as the only reason for divorce. But, as we know, the Lord was actually talking about *“sexual immorality,”* a word that is much more specific. The danger, then, is that somebody may try to justify divorcing a spouse for any sin – he steals, he’s mean, she’s bad at managing money, and so on – when, in fact, Jesus is far more specific than that. But, we need to be aware of it.

I also have a great respect for the English Standard Version. As this one has gained market share, they’ve been able to have more options available than the NASB (thus, the waterproof Bible I mentioned earlier). The ESV

has published what are known as “reader’s editions,” where they’ve formatted the text not for deep study, but for reading. The gospel accounts, for example, have no footnotes, no chapter and verse divisions, but they are laid out for the purpose of just sitting down and reading. The good thing is that you can really get into the text, almost getting lost in it like you’re reading a novel or something. The downside is: You may have no idea where you are in the Bible.

Conclusion:

We could study this for years, but as we close, I want to make just a few very practical suggestions:

If you are looking for a Bible, first of all, find a translation with a good textual base (pretty much, one that’s been done since the late 1800’s), and on that scale we looked at earlier, get one as close to word-for-word as possible, while still being understandable at your reading level. And I would give the reminder: Let’s not be too dogmatic that “this is the only decent translation and everybody else is wrong.” There are strengths and weaknesses with each one. And this is an ongoing discussion for several reasons: First of all, we continue to find older and older manuscripts. And secondly, the English language is constantly evolving. Therefore, by necessity, my favorite translation right now might be out of date in 20 or 30 years – not because God’s word has changed, but because the language we speak is constantly changing. Language is a moving target.

Secondly, I would suggest comparing several translations. We have that ability today. Some of you were here when we studied through the book of Proverbs in our Wednesday evening class. You may remember how we scrolled through Proverbs simultaneously in three translations: The NASB, the NIV, and *The Message*. We half jokingly labeled those three columns, “What the text says,” “What the text probably means,” and “What some dude thinks the text means.” And I say “half-jokingly,” because the NIV and *The Message* were actually better than the NASB in communicating the THOUGHT behind so many of those figures of speech in a book like Proverbs. There are times in Proverbs where a literal word-for-word translation makes no sense whatsoever.

Years ago, I think I remember Aaron having a Bible that had the NIV and the NASB next to each other in two columns. I like that. Or, we can use a site like www.blueletterbible.org. You can type in a reference and look it up in almost any English translation. You can look into the Greek or Hebrew behind it. You can compare 30 translations of a single verse at the same time. And this is why it’s so good to come together to study. We may have a dozen translations opened up in front of us in any given Bible class. There is a value to that.

Thirdly, if you already have a favorite Bible of your own, I would encourage you to sit down this week and just read the “Principles of Translation” at the beginning. It might be referred to as the “Foreword,” or something like that. I’m guessing most of us are using translations (we’re not reading directly from the Hebrew and Greek); therefore, since we are relying on the scholarship of others for our salvation, it is pretty important that we know what these people had in mind when they went to work translating this document for us. Pay attention to their philosophy of translation. What was their goal? How do they handle some of the issues we’ve looked at over the past several weeks? How do they handle that balance between being literal and being easy to understand. Some translations, for example, add words to help a passage make sense. But how do they indicate that? Or do they? I’m thinking about 1 Corinthians 7:9, where Paul is discussing marriage, and he says that ***“it is better to marry than to burn.”*** The NASB adds, ***“it is better to marry than to burn with passion,”*** but ***“with passion”*** is in italics, indicating that it was added to help the passage make sense. Some translations just say that ***“it is better to marry than to burn.”*** That’s more accurate, because it leaves it open. There are other ways to ***“burn,”*** as a result of committing sexual sin, aren’t there? So, if they add ***“with passion,”*** I really want to know about it. We have something similar in Philippians 2:4, where Paul says, ***“do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”*** The word ***“merely”*** is

not in the original, but was added by the translators to help it make sense. So, the NASB puts it in italics. Literally, the passage says, *“do not look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”*

And then, finally, I would go back to our first point today: Let’s be thankful that we have the Bible in our own language. What an absolute blessing! We don’t have to trust what some priest or other religious leader says about the Bible, but we can read it on our own in our own language. If you are not in the habit of doing so already, I would encourage you to consider reading through the Bible this year. Or maybe just read the New Testament. I’ve shared my all-time favorite Bible reading schedule with you by email last night. I’ve put it in the cubbyholes today. But the guy has arranged the New Testament in a way that makes sense and in a way where the gospel accounts are spread throughout the year. But, whatever works for you.

I am so thankful for the requests that have led to this series of lessons. Here in this room we have hundreds of Bibles available to us. What a blessing! Let’s close our study by going to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

We are thankful this morning for your written word. We are thankful that your word has been preserved for us down through the years. We are thankful for all of the sacrifices that have been made so that we can read your word in our own language. Help us, Father, to listen and to obey. We ask for your help as we share the good news of your Son to the world around us.

We come to you this morning in Jesus’ name. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com