

Systematic Theology

A study of the major doctrines of Scripture

TOPIC 7 – HERMENEUTICS: BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION
LESSON 135 – PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR BIBLE STUDY

PRINCIPLES OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION – LOUIS BERKHOF
KNOWING SCRIPTURE – RC SPROUL – PGS. 128-145

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Bible Translations

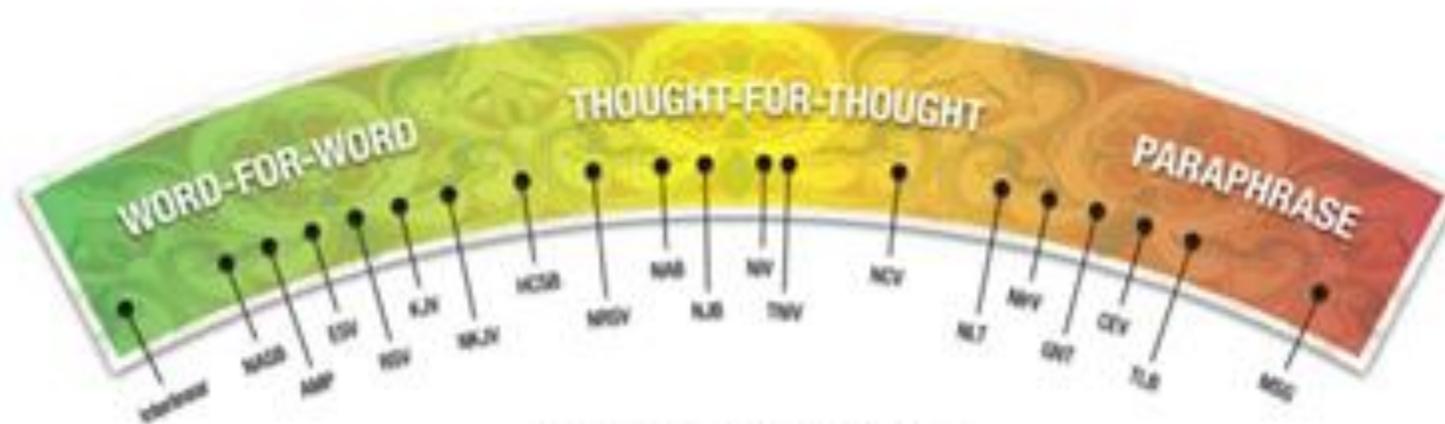
- ▶ What translations should I use for my personal Bible study?
- ▶ There are some notable differences between translations that need to be recognized:
- ▶ 1. Formal Equivalence – the translators seek to follow the Greek and Hebrew text as closely as possible in a word-by-word pattern. This insures verbal accuracy but at times, due to the nature of translating ancient languages into modern languages can result in a text that may be difficult to read or sound awkward. Examples of Bibles translated like this are the NASB, NKJV, and ESV.

Bible Translations

- ▶ 2. Functional Equivalence – also known as Dynamic Equivalence, seeks maximum readability and reading style with a minimum of verbal distortions. Since words put together produce thoughts, this method attempts to translate thought for thought even if some words are not needed to convey the idea. Examples of this type of translation includes the NRSV and NIV.
- ▶ 3. Paraphrase or Free Translation – this is an expansion of the functional equivalence to the point of striving to so simplify the text that ideas are conveyed by changing words and thoughts to match the context or understanding of the reader. Examples include *The Living Bible* and *The Message*.
- ▶ The more a translation moves toward a paraphrase the greater the danger of distortion.

Bible Translations

Types of Bible Translations



NASB - New American Standard Bible
AMP - Amplified Bible
ESV - English Standard Version
RSV - Revised Standard Version
KJV - King James Version
NKJV - New King James Version

HCSB - Holman Christian Standard Bible
NRSV - New Revised Standard Version
NAB - New American Bible
NJB - New Jerusalem Bible
NIV - New International Version
TNIV - Today's New International Version
NCV - New Century Version
NLT - New Living Translation

NIV - New International Reader's Version
GNT - Good News Translation
(also Good News Bible)
CEV - Contemporary English Version
TLB - The Living Bible
MSG - The Message

Study Bibles

- ▶ Marginal notes and foot notes have been added to many editions of the Bible going all the way back to the Geneva Bible published in 1599. This English Bible included chapter and verse designations and marginal notes from many leaders of the Reformation to help explain verses.
- ▶ Marginal notes can include textual variants, help with archaic words, and cross references.
- ▶ Commentary notes can be helpful to explain the text. Good study Bibles include the Reformation Study Bible, The MacArthur Study Bible, and The ESV Study Bible.
- ▶ While study Bibles can be helpful, especially for new believers, the dangers include equating the notes with the text of Scripture itself or introducing error or even false doctrine.

The King James Bible

- ▶ Any time that a translation of the Bible enjoys the preeminent position of acceptance and usage over such a long period of time there are bound to be protests when its position of honor is challenged.
- ▶ The influence of the KJV on our culture and language cannot be overstated. It is an accurate word-for-word translation that introduced many phrases into the English language that previously had not existed.
- ▶ However, there is no inspired translation of the Bible. The Bible, in its original autographs was inspired, but translations, by their very nature, may at times obscure the meaning of a text. Those who think that the KJV is the only inspired Bible on the planet, if logically consistent, would then have to believe that to read the Bible a person must be taught English.

Commentaries

- ▶ Commentaries can be an indispensable tool for the student of the Bible. Competent commentaries help us avoid relying on our own judgment or “private interpretations”, serving as a check and balance for our own prejudicial tendencies or pet doctrines.
- ▶ There are single volume, whole Bible commentaries all the way to extremely technical commentaries on single books of the Bible, some offering pastoral or devotional exposition and others highly “critical” exegesis.
- ▶ Commentary sets come in all levels and some individual series commentaries provide the very best options (but also the most expensive), as long as the individual is proven to be a good student himself and a solid expositor.
- ▶ Ligonier has a collection of the best and top commentaries on each Book of the Bible available here: <https://www.ligonier.org/posts/top-commentaries-on-every-book-of-the-bible>

Concordances and Bible Dictionaries

- ▶ Everyone needs at least one good concordance and a good Bible dictionary. It also helps to have a good Bible atlas.
- ▶ Concordances will give you a list of every verse where a specific word occurs throughout the Scriptures and are available based on the version of the Bible being studied.
- ▶ Good Bible dictionaries include *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, or *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia*.
- ▶ Atlases include: *Baker's Bible Atlas*, *The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands*, *The Macmillan Bible Atlas*, or *the Oxford Bible Atlas*.

Word Studies

- ▶ One rule 5 for Biblical interpretation we have examined is the importance of the meaning of words. Word studies like *Vine's Expository Dictionary*, *The Complete Word Study of the New Testament* (by Spiros Zodhiates), *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (by Kittel and Friedrich), and *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (by Archer, Harris, and Waltke) help show how words are used and defined within the difference contexts that they are found.

Greek and Hebrew Helps

- ▶ A few tools to use when working with or learning the Biblical languages include:
 - ▶ 1. Interlinear translations – the Greek text is given in parallel lines to the English translation.
 - ▶ 2. Metzger's frequency list – Bruce Metzger of Princeton Theological Seminary provided this tool for students of NT Greek. It catalogs any word that appears 10 or more times in the New Testament. This helps gain a mastery of over 1000 Greek words and gives a working knowledge of NT vocabulary.
 - ▶ 3. Greek grammars – These are available as seminary level text books or can be geared to the ordinary reader and there are several software programs now that teach Greek.

Greek and Hebrew Helps

- ▶ 4. Greek lexicons – these Greek dictionaries can be used by anyone who learns the Greek script and alphabet. The standard has been *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* by Walter Bauer and F. Wilbur Gingrich, and edited by William F Ardt and Frederick Danker. Another Lexicon is *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* by Joseph Thayer.
- ▶ 5. Other tools – there are also analytical and topical concordances of the Greek New Testament and the Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT)
- ▶ 6. Hebrew Lexicons include *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Francis Brown, SR Driver, and Charles Briggs.

Bible Software

- ▶ Most all of what we have discussed is available in several popular software packages:
- ▶ Bible Works
- ▶ Logos Bible Software
- ▶ PC Study Bible
- ▶ WORDsearch
- ▶ And there are helpful Bible sites that serve as concordances and also offer commentaries by passage: BibleGateway.com, Blue Letter Bible, Crosswalk.com, and ReGreek.com are all recommended.

Bible Reading Programs

- ▶ There are any multitude of Bible reading programs available with text assignments by date, or that include devotional thoughts with a passage for each day. Most are geared toward reading through the Bible in a year.
- ▶ Conclusion: “We who live in the Western World are living in a post-Christian era. The influence of the church has been greatly eroded in our culture. That means the influence of Christian people has been weak. I believe that a critical key for church renewal is to be found in adult education. I dream of a multitude of articulate and knowledgeable Christians making a new impact on our society. That dream cannot be realized unless we know and use the tools of intelligent Bible study.” – RC Sproul

Next Week

- ▶ Lesson 136: Exegetical Fallacies: Word Study Fallacies
(Book: *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd Edition by DA Carson)