

# The Bible: Translations and Types

## Languages of the Bible

Obviously, the Bible was not originally written in English, Italian or any modern language. The Old Testament was written primarily in Hebrew with small parts in Aramaic. However, while Jesus most likely spoke Aramaic, most of the New Testament was originally written in Greek. Thus, all modern Bibles are translations of these original languages.

## Methods of Translation

1. Literal translation. Attempts to keep the exact words and phrases of the original. It is faithful to the original text, but sometimes hard to understand. Keeps a constant historical distance. Examples: King James Version (KJV), New American Standard Bible (NASB).
2. Dynamic equivalent (thought for thought) translation. Attempts to keep a constant historical distance with regard to history and facts, but updates the writing style and grammar. Examples: New International Version (NIV), Revised English Bible (REB).
3. Free translation (paraphrase). Translates the ideas from the original text but without being constrained by the original words or language. Seeks to eliminate historical distance. Readable, but possibly not precise. Examples: The Living Bible (TLB), The Message.

## Types of Bibles

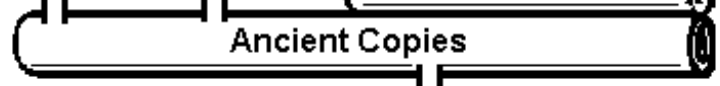
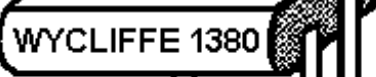
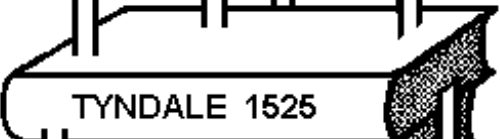
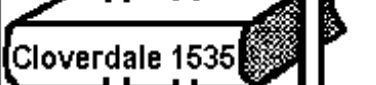
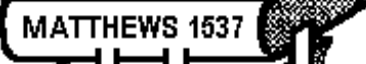
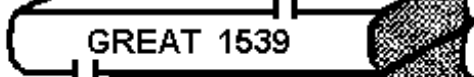
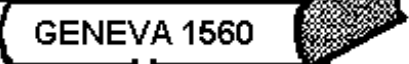
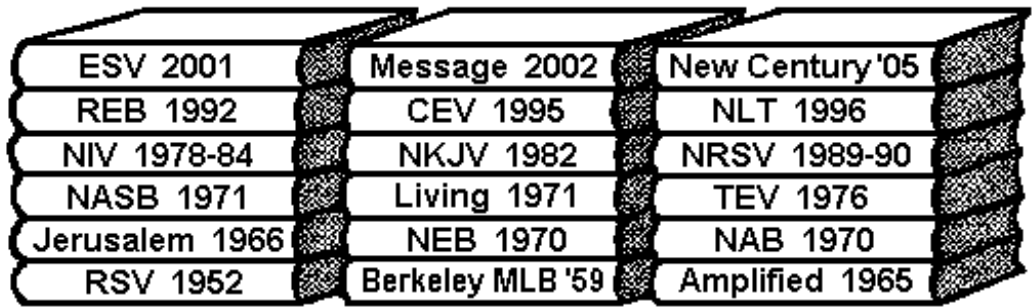
Most translations are available in several different types of Bible. Here are just a few of the many different kinds of Bibles.

1. Traditional. Text only. Minimal footnotes.
2. Study Bible. Such Bibles usually have extensive footnotes and explanatory notes next to the columns of text. They may also have extensive cross references, a narrative commentary, and maps. (Some also have a cyclopedic index and/or a concordance—see Reference Bible.)
3. Reference Bible. Usually has a cyclopedic index (like an encyclopedia with a reference to the verse where the word or thought is used), a concordance (like a dictionary of common words with examples of their usage and verse references for each example), and maps.
4. “Place in Life” Bible. Has meditations and thoughts about issues of concern to people at a particular stage in life. There are versions of these Bibles aimed at men, women, sports players, recovering addicts, new believers, converted Jews, small group members, and many others.
5. One-Year Bibles. Divided into 365 readings for each day of the year, usually with each having a portion of the Old Testament, New Testament, Psalms, and Proverbs.
6. Pastor’s Bible. Includes protocol outlines and recommended verses for hospital visits, weddings, funerals, and other events. Often has answers to frequently asked questions.
7. Children’s Bible. Usually includes color drawings, maps, and simplified stories.
8. Parallel Bible. Has from two to eight translations side by side.
9. Chronological Bible. Entire Bible in one continuous story with narration to cover gaps and make everything flow. The four gospels are harmonized into one, for example, and the writings of the prophets are placed in the proper historical place in the books of history.
10. Other Specialty Bibles. The Serendipity Bible, The Quest, Key Word Bible, Leadership Bible, Hebrew-Greek Keyword Bible, “Here’s Hope” Bible, Serenity Bible, and many others.

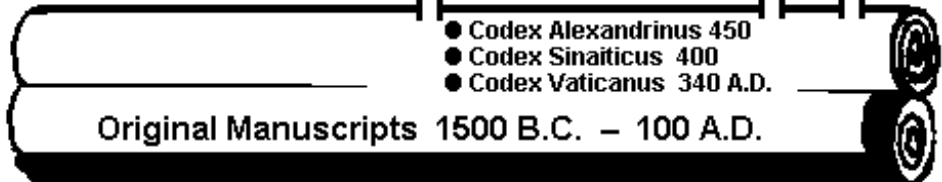
## My Personal Recommendation

For your main reading and study, use a dynamic equivalent translation (balanced between literal and paraphrase). Get one that draws upon newly-discovered sources (after 1966). The most widely used Bible today in the U.S. is the New International Version (NIV), which is a good choice. Select a type with good explanations, either a Study Bible or a Student Bible. Augment your main Bible with two or three others that appeal to you. —David Ahl, November 2010

MODERN  
ENGLISH  
TRANSLATIONS



- Codex Alexandrinus 450
- Codex Sinaiticus 400
- Codex Vaticanus 340 A.D.



Dead Sea Scrolls and other newly-discovered manuscripts



Chart adapted and updated from Thompson Chain Reference Study Bible by David Ahl, Nov. 2010, www.BibleStudyMen.com

## Bible Translations Comparison Chart

<b>Word for Word Translations</b>	<b>Reading Level</b>	<b>Description</b>
Interlinear	12 +	The original Masoretic (Jewish) text in Hebrew and Greek. English translations available. Very difficult to read and understand. Need a concordance.
New American Standard (NASB)	11.0	1971, updated 1995. A revision of the American Standard Version of 1901. Formal modern English; somewhat difficult but more readable than KJV.
Amplified	11.0	1965. Modern English version from original Greek text. Has bracketed words and phrases to help explain more difficult and complicated passages.
English Standard Version (ESV)	8.0	2001. A literal translation that makes use of recently discovered sources. Easier reading than other word for word translations.
Revised Standard Version (RSV)	8.7	1952. A revision of the ASV of 1901. Further revision to New Testament in 1971. Widely accepted by both Protestant and Roman Catholic churches.
King James Version (KJV)	12.0	1611. Draws heavily on the Bishops Bible (1568) and also on the Geneva Bible (1560). Difficult to read and understand due to 17 <sup>th</sup> Century vocabulary and style. Uses no original or recently discovered sources.
New King James Version (NKJV)	9.0	1982. Taken directly from KJV but with more modern words. Choppy reading because it maintains 17 <sup>th</sup> Century sentence structure.
New American Bible (NAB)	6.6	1970 with updates to 1991. Clear, straightforward translation from the Greek. The first Roman Catholic Bible in modern American English.
<b>Thought for Thought</b>		
Holman Christian Standard (HCSV)	8.5	2004. Highly readable, accurate translation in modern English. Good balance between word-for-word and thought-for-thought leans toward word-for-word.
New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)	10.4	1990. Revision of RSV, still literal, but moves in the thought-for-thought direction. Language not updated but tends to gender neutrality and political correctness.
New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)	7.4	1986. Revision of Jerusalem Bible (1966). Roman Catholic. Highly readable modern translation.

<b>Thought for Thought continued</b>	<b>Reading Level</b>	<b>Description</b>
New International Version (NIV)	7.8	1978. Completely new translation from oldest and best Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic sources. Accurate, smooth reading version in modern English. Most widely used Bible in USA. Today's NIV (TNIV, 2005) is gender neutral version of NIV.
New Century Version (NCV)	5.0	1987. Revision of International Children's Bible aimed at young readers and those with low reading skills. Gender neutral version published 1991.
New Living Translation (NLT)	6.3	1996, updated 2004. Converts of paraphrased Living Bible to a thought-for-thought translation. Highly readable in vocabulary and language. Gender neutral. Does not use original or recently discovered sources.
New Int'l Readers Version (NIrV)	2.9	1996. Revision of NIV for early readers. Uses simple short words and sentences.
Good News Bible (GNB) formerly Today's English Version (TEV)	6.0	1976. Faithful translation draws on Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic sources. Very simple, readable version without jargon. Uses limited vocabulary.
Revised English Bible (REB)	7.5	1989. Revision of New English Bible (1970). More "literary" than NIV and more dynamic equivalence. Highly readable. Most widely used Bible in UK.
Common English Bible (CEB)	n/a	2011. Fresh translation is highly readable but sickeningly politically correct and gender neutral. For example, "Son of Man" is translated as "human."
Contemporary English Version (CEV) aka "The Promise"	5.4	1995. Clear, simple English but with a mature style. Suitable for both children and adults.
<b>Paraphrase Translations</b>		
The Living Bible (TLB)	6.3	1971. Paraphrase translation by Ken Taylor largely based on ASV of 1901. Modern language is very easy to read and understand. Also a Catholic version.
The Message	4.8	1991-2002. Paraphrase translation by Eugene Peterson using modern American idioms. Easy to read but heavily criticized for scriptural deviations, altered meanings, informality, and lack of precision.