

Lesson 8: The History of the English Bible

- 1227:** Stephen Langton chapter divisions.
1384: John Wycliffe, first English (Hand-Written) copy of the complete Bible
1448: Nathan (Jewish Rabbi) divides the O.T. into verses.
1455: Gutenberg Invents the printing press.
1516: Erasmus produces a Greek/Latin parallel N.T.
1522: Martin Luther's German N.T.
1526: William Tyndale's N.T.
1535: Myles Coverdale's Bible
1537: Tyndale-Matthews Bible
1539: The Great Bible
1555: Robert Estienne (Stephanus) divides N.T. into verses.
1560: The Geneva Bible
1568: The Bishops Bible
1609: The Douay-Rheims Bible
1611: King James Bible (AV) (KJV)
1782: Robert Aitken's Bible
1885: English Revised Version Bible
1898: Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament
1901: American Standard Version
1952: Revised Standard Version (RSV)
1966: Good News Translation (GNT)
1971: New American Standard Bible (NASB)
1971: The Living Bible
1973: New International Version (NIV)
1982: New King James Version (NKJV)
1996: New Living Translation (NLT)
2002: English Standard Version (ESV)
2004: Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)
2021: Legacy Standard Bible (LSB)

Translation Philosophies: How the Bible Comes to Us in English

1. Formal Equivalence (Word-for-Word)

Definition: Formal equivalence seeks to translate the text as literally as possible, preserving the exact words, structure, and grammar of the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The goal is to stay as close to the original wording as English allows.

Purpose: To reflect what the Bible says—word-for-word accuracy, even at the expense of smooth readability.

NASB (New American Standard Bible) – highest commitment to literal accuracy

ESV (English Standard Version) – slightly smoother but still formal

KJV (King James Version) and **NKJV (New King James Version)** – traditional formal equivalence

2. Dynamic Equivalence (Thought-for-Thought)

Definition: Dynamic (or functional) equivalence focuses on translating the *meaning* or *thought* of the original text rather than the exact words. It seeks to produce the same effect on modern readers that the original message had on ancient readers.

Purpose: To reflect what the Bible *means*—prioritizing comprehension and clarity over strict form.

Best for: Devotional reading, evangelism, and general comprehension.

NIV (New International Version) – balances accuracy and clarity

NLT (New Living Translation) – highly readable, engaging language

3. Paraphrase (Rephrased for Readability)

Definition: A paraphrase is not a direct translation from the original languages, but a restatement of existing English translations in very modern, idiomatic language.

Purpose: To communicate the overall *idea* and emotional tone in contemporary speech.

The Living Bible (TLB) – a paraphrase of the ASV

The Message (MSG) – by Eugene Peterson, very free and expressive

4. Balanced or Optimal Equivalence (Middle Ground)

Definition: Balanced translations aim to bridge the gap between formal and dynamic equivalence—preserving accuracy while using natural, readable English. This is often called *optimal equivalence*.

Purpose: To blend faithfulness to the text with modern readability.

CSB (Christian Standard Bible) – emphasizes “optimal equivalence”

5. Hybrid or Legacy Literal (Modern Formal Precision)

Definition: A newer translation philosophy combining the linguistic precision of formal equivalence with modern scholarly updates and linguistic clarity. It emphasizes exactness of the original text while using refined English style.

Purpose: To retain theological and textual precision with modern scholarship.

LSB (Legacy Standard Bible) – a refinement of the NASB, emphasizing consistency (e.g., always translating *Yahweh* as “Yahweh”)

ESV (English Standard Version) – classic example of “essentially literal” translation

Example: Luke 1:37 - Greek (literal order): *Because not will be impossible from God every word.*

Version	Rendering	Type
KJV / ESV	“For nothing will be impossible with God.”	<i>Formal-equivalence</i>
NIV / CSB	“For no word from God will ever fail.”	<i>Dynamic-equivalence</i>
NLT	“For the word of God will never fail.”	<i>Thought-for-thought</i>
The Message	“Nothing, you see, is impossible with God.”	<i>Paraphrase</i>

In-Depth Study: *ESV, NASB, LSB, KJV* — most faithful to original wording; ideal for pastors, teachers, and seminary students.

Devotional Reading: *NLT, CSB, GNT* — fluent, emotionally resonant, ideal for spiritual formation and daily meditation.

Balanced Approach: *CSB, HCSB, NIV* — maintain accuracy while offering clear modern English.

Theological Precision: *LSB, NASB, ESV* — for readers who value exactness in word choice and structure.

Translation	Year	Philosophy	Readability	Strength	Ideal Use
GNT	1966	Dynamic	★★★★★	Simple clarity	Evangelism, devotion
Living Bible	1971	Paraphrase	★★★★★	Conversational style	Family, outreach
NASB/95/2020	1971 / 1995 / 2020	Formal	★★☆☆☆	Literal accuracy	Exegesis, study
NIV	1979 / 2011	Balanced	★★★★☆	Readable yet accurate	Church, devotions
NKJV	1982	Formal	★★★☆☆	Classic style, familiar	KJV readers
NLT	1996 / 2004	Dynamic	★★★★★	Smooth, natural	Devotional reading
HCSB	2004	Hybrid	★★★★☆	Balanced precision	Study, transition
CSB	2017	Hybrid	★★★★★	Accurate yet readable	Church, devotion
ESV	2001	Formal	★★★★☆	Theological precision	Study, preaching
LSB	2021	Formal	★★☆☆☆	Consistent and exact	Seminary, theology
KJV	1611 (1769)	Formal	★★★☆☆	Literary beauty; historical influence	Traditional, Strong's concordance

