

# BIBLE CHALLENGE 2019

Week 4: January 20-26

## *Which Translation Should I Choose?*

Read: Deuteronomy 4:2; 8:3; 9:10; 11:18-21; 29:29; Psalm 102:18; 119:105,130; Proverbs 3:18-21; 4:13; 23:23; 30:5-6; **Isaiah 8:20**; 25:1; 40:8; 55:11; 66:1-2; Jeremiah 23:36; Matthew 5:17-19; Mark 7:7; John 12:48; 14:15-16; Acts 17:11-12; 2 Corinthians 10:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; **2 Timothy 1:13-14**; 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:15-16; Revelation 1:3; 22:18-19. Read 2 Chronicles 1 in its entirety.

Oh my, when you go to the Bible book store or an online seller of Bibles, there are more different versions of the Bible to choose from than you can shake a stick at. Perhaps that is why so many non-Christians think that the Bible is not authoritative — because each one sounds a little (and sometimes a lot!) different. So, which translation should we choose?

I want to answer this in two ways. The first is the most basic way — choose a translation *that you will read and understand*. The bottom line is that you may have the best version of the Bible in print, but if you don't read it, it won't do you any good. So, the best Bible is the one in which you will spend time, carefully studying so that you can learn what it is that God is teaching you.

The second part of the question is a little more difficult. There really are a lot of good options out there when it comes to translations of the Bible. In fact, what I often encourage people to do is to get several versions of the Bible and compare them. This often helps you get close to the original sense or meaning of the text — remember, the Bible wasn't written in English, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament was written in Greek, plus there is a little bit of Aramaic thrown into both. If you can read these languages, great! But if you cannot, you need to rely on a translation and there is some interpretation that is done in any translation work. Reading multiple Bibles helps you see those areas where certain interpretive decisions were made by the translators.

### *Essentially Literal Translations:*

Calling a translation "literal" is a bit of a stretch, but some translations try to translate the Bible word for word and get you as close to the original language as good English will allow. In scholarly circles, these translations are called "Formal Equivalence" translations. Examples of Formal Equivalence translations are the King James Version, the English Standard Version, and the New Revised Standard Version. In church, you also hear me talking about Young's Literal Translation, and this too, falls into the category of Formal Equivalence.

### *Phrase by Phrase Translations:*

Some translators, though, point out that a word for word translation often leaves idioms and figures of speech garbled and thus they argue for a translation philosophy that translates each phrase or idea with an equivalent phrase or idea in English. These translations are less literal, but are often easier to understand. This philosophy has been given different names over the years, but today it is referred to as "Functional Equivalence." Examples of Bibles that seek a Functional Equivalence are the New International Version, the New Living Translation, and the New English Translation.

### *Paraphrases:*

Personally speaking, my least favorite approach to translation is that of a paraphrase. Here the author is taking the text and rewording it in a way consistent with how he, the translator understands it. In some ways, these might be considered loose commentaries on the Bible, not truly translations. The most familiar paraphrases are The Message and The Living Bible.

### *Optimal Equivalence:*

When the Holman Christian Standard Bible (CSB) was published, they claimed an alternate approach that was meant to combine Formal and Functional equivalence into one approach — an approach they called "Optimal Equivalence." Passages that could be translated word for word were done that way and other passages, were translated more idiomatically.

### *A Note about the King James Version*

For the record, the King James version is a good translation of the Bible so long as you understand the old language that is used and that certain words have changed their meanings...for example, in 1611, when the KJV was originally translated, the word, "peculiar" meant to belong to or possessed by someone, not to be weird (see the implications of that in 1 Peter 2:9). That said, there are some people who insist that the King James Version of the Bible is the only reliable Bible in existence and that people cannot be saved unless they sit under King James Version preaching.

Friends, that is silly. True, there are some variations and variant texts — we have far more ancient manuscripts from ancient times available to us today than the KJV translators in 1611. Yet, the vast majority of the differences are superficial at best and no essential point of theology is blurred or absent from the more modern translations, unlike what some people may have you believe.

### *A Note about the English Standard Version*

No translation is perfect and that goes for the ESV as well. Yet, I think that the ESV does an excellent job in maintaining a balance between literalness of meaning and readability. You will also notice that while we read from the ESV in church, when I preach, the text that I preach from is the Greek or Hebrew respectively and you will hear elements of my own translation work coming through as I present the text to you.

Why do I translate when there are good translations available? There are two main reasons. First, translation slows me down as I often need to look up the meanings of words. This practice helps me to better understand the text myself before I try and communicate the text to you. Second, I want to be able to proclaim to you, "Thus says the Lord" not "Thus says the ESV Translation Committee."

Again, no translation is perfect. But the Word of God, in its original manuscripts, is.

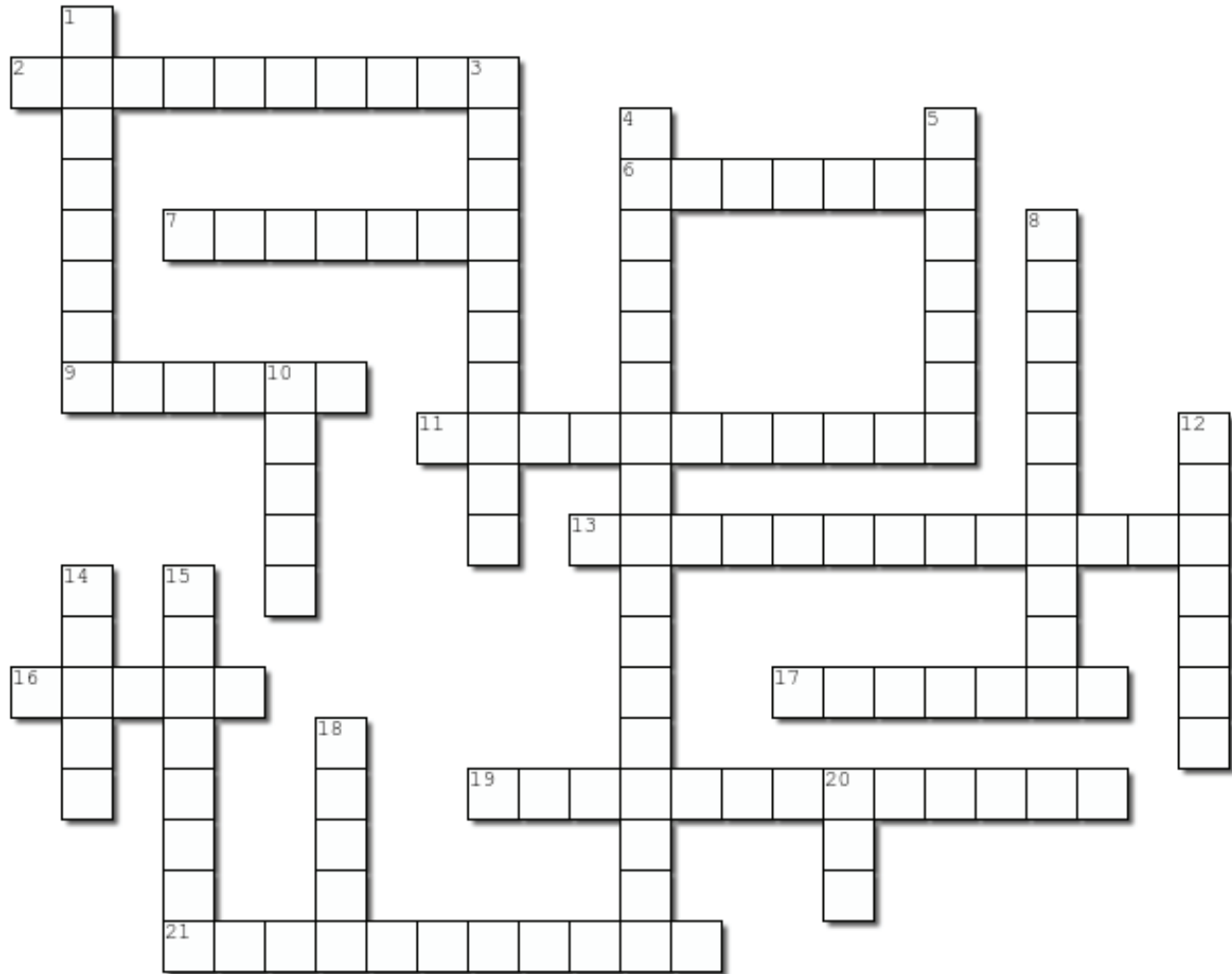
### *A Note about Study Bibles*

In addition to Bibles, there are lots of study bibles you can choose from that contain notes and explanations at the bottom of the page. These notes can often be very helpful, just remember that they are not part of the inspired text. In fact, some of these study notes are downright in error. So, be careful as to the study Bible you choose. Look to see who the contributors are or ask someone like me what the theological "slant" of the commentators happens to be. An example of a good, solid study Bible is The Reformed Study Bible along with The Geneva Study Bible. Though it was popular for a long time, an example of a study Bible with questionable notes is the Scofield Study Bible, which comes from the perspective of Classical Dispensationalism and thus contains a number of spurious ideas.

### *So Which Do I Choose?*

As I mentioned above, ideally, choose several and then compare when you read. If you are looking for a personal recommendation, I have used the ESV since my days in seminary (it was the translation they recommended). It is fairly literal, very readable, and it keeps the rhythm of many of the passages that I memorized from the King James as a kid (in other words, the 23rd Psalm still sounds like the 23rd Psalm). Personally, I don't use a study Bible as I prefer to make my own notes in the margins, but I do like a Bible that has a center row of Scriptural cross-references — these I find quite helpful. If you are looking for a gift for a younger person, perhaps consider the CSB.

# Week 4: Which Translation of the Bible?



Created using [TheTeachersCorner.net](http://TheTeachersCorner.net) [Crossword Puzzle Maker](#)

## **Across**

2. If anyone takes away from the prophesy of the book, he loses his share in the \_\_\_\_\_ (3 words).
6. The CSB has coined a new type of translation approach — \_\_\_\_\_ equivalence.
7. The Word of the Lord stands \_\_\_\_\_.
9. These things belong to God but the revealed things belong to us and to our children forever.
11. The Tablets of the Ten Commandments were written by the \_\_\_\_\_. (3 words)
13. This is the kind of milk that the Christian ought to desire (2 words).
16. Old Testament believers were commanded to write the Scriptures on their doorposts and post them at their \_\_\_\_\_.
17. These converts were more noble than the Thessalonians because they searched the scriptures and examined Paul's Message.
19. The unfolding of the Scriptures gives this to the simple.
21. These Bibles have notes at the bottom that act like a commentary.

## **Down**

1. Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the \_\_\_\_\_, not to abolish them.
3. Test \_\_\_\_\_ by the Word of God.
4. This translation method is sometimes called 'Essentially Literal.' (2 words)
5. The one who reads Revelation is called \_\_\_\_\_.
8. We are to hold tight to sound wisdom and \_\_\_\_\_.
10. One of the places that Solomon got his horses.
12. This son of David asked for knowledge and wisdom instead of wealth or long life.
14. The one who relaxes the commandments of God is called \_\_\_\_\_ in the kingdom of God.
15. God looks favorably on those who do this at his word.
18. The word of God is living and active and sharper than a two-edged \_\_\_\_\_.
20. 'You shall not \_\_\_\_\_ to the word I command you'