

Lesson #1

WHICH BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD?



Introduction

“Pastor, why are they changing God’s Word?” Have you heard this question? Have you asked it as you’ve heard about the new 2011 revision of the NIV Bible? Have you wondered it as you’ve seen more new translations hit the shelves at your local bookstore than

you can keep track of? How can all these translations be so different and yet be God’s Word? Can we even be sure we know what God’s Word says anymore?

On the other hand, it has also been stated: The KJV is the Word of God! Can a translation claim to be God’s Word? Is one translation God’s Word to the exclusion of others? Do you have to be able to read Greek or Hebrew or Aramaic to be able to know what God’s Word really says?

Activity

Let’s try something: Form groups of four people. Have one person in the group write a sentence on a blank piece of paper. Now read what you have written to someone else in your group. Now have someone else in your group write down what you said on the blank below:

Now have another person in your group tear up the piece of paper on which your original sentence had been written down.

Evaluate as a group: Do you still have the word of the original person? Did the person who heard the sentence read to them hear the word of the person who made up the original sentence? Is the word written on the blank on this sheet still the word of the original person even though the original was destroyed?

Study

This little exercise helps us to wrestle with some of the issues involved when we ask the question, “What is the Word of God?”

We believe that the Bible is the verbally inspired Word of God. That means that we believe that the words themselves, not just general ideas are the true Word of God. Look up these passages and explain why we would say this.

2 Timothy 3:16 -

2 Peter 1:20-21 -

John 10:35 -

Galatians 3:16 -

This leads us to the teaching we call the doctrine of Verbal Inspiration. It means we have a very high regard for the Scriptures—every word. It is right and proper that we treat the Bible with respect, as the very Word of God. The question is, “Which Bible?”

If only the original words and syllables which the prophets, psalmists, kings, and apostles wrote comprise the Bible, then we are in trouble. We have none of these originals. They are all either lost or destroyed. We have only copies of the originals.

Consider even this account of Scripture which tells us what happened to some of the “Bible” which Jeremiah had written at the Lord’s command. What was destroyed? What was not?

Jeremiah 36:20-32

Still, look at what Scripture says about God’s Word:

Isaiah 40:8 (1 Peter 1:23-25) -

Psalms 119:89 -

Matthew 24:35 -

So are the words and syllables on the paper the Word of God? What is it that lasts forever?



If this were not true, then we could not translate the Bible and everyone would have to learn Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek in order to hear the Word of God so that they could believe (Romans 10:17). But consider this passage from Scripture:

Acts 2:4-11

What was being spoken by the disciples? (See v. 11) With what word forms and grammar was it being spoken? Were the people hearing God's Word?



Carrying out the Great Commission (Mt 28:19, Mark 16:15) would be impossible if the letters and syllables of the Greek or Hebrew or Aramaic were essentially the Word of God. Why?

Yet, the language and the letters and characters of the original Greek and Hebrew/Aramaic are extremely important. (Note that we have already seen that even the very words and forms were important to Jesus and Paul as they conveyed Scripture truth.) Consider also the following passages. What do they say about the forms and words of the original Scriptures?

Matthew 5:18 -

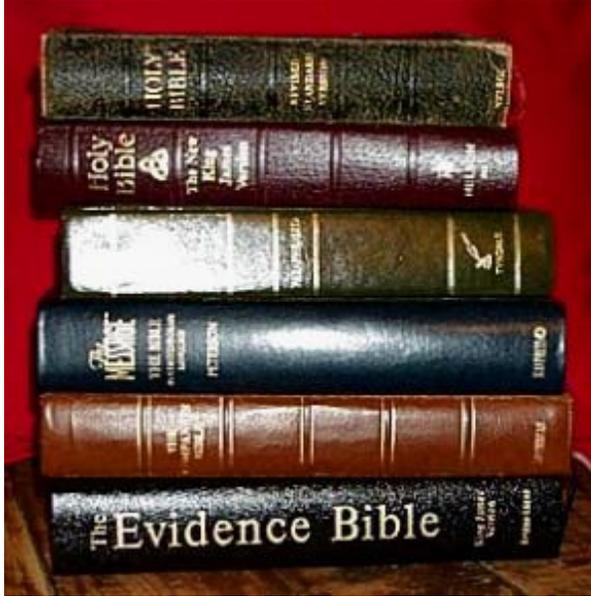
Deuteronomy 4:2 (12:32) -

Revelation 22:18 -

Therefore, we may say that a translation is *God's Word* to the degree that it carefully reproduces the meaning of the original words. Yet this is never on a par with the original languages (due to the difficulty of translating and carrying a meaning into another language to the same degree as it is conveyed in the original). This will be the topic of our next study.

For further study: You may want to do further study on your own regarding the topics that are taken up in these four lessons. We suggest that you look up the Web site of the Translation Evaluation Committee (TEC) at the following address: www.wels.net/translation. There are links to articles and comparisons that can give you much more information located on this page.

Lesson #2



UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATION

Introduction

Italian saying: *traduttore traditore* roughly means “Translator is a traitor.”

Why do you think they said this? How might it be true?

“It loses something in the translation” we say. Why do we say that? How is that true?

“Es tut mir leid” the German says. Literally that translates, “It does me sorrow.” In English this means, “I’m sorry.” Is that an accurate translation?

Activity

Two Examples:

1) English: Gerald ran a red light and had the brass in the squad cars chasing him up and down the suburbs half the night. When the law finally caught up with him they threw the book at him and put him in the slammer. When he called his parents they were beside themselves and nearly stroked. Fortunately his brother was cool with it and checked him out of there and brought him back to his place.

Spanish back to English: Gerald ran a red light and had a bronze in the police cars chasing him around the mid-periphery of the night. When the law finally caught up with the book he released him and put him in jail. When he called his parents were astonished and touched almost. Fortunately his brother was well with him and check him out of there and brought him back to his place.

Chinese back to English: Gerald ran a red light, and a police car chasing him and the suburbs of brass half the night. When the law finally caught up with him, they threw in his book and his hell. When he told his parents, themselves and their side nearly touching. Fortunately, his brother, cooling, and check his presence, and brought him back to his place.

Russian back to English: Gerald ran a red light and was in command of brass cars chasing him up and down suburban part of the night. When the law finally caught up with him, they threw the book at him and put him in the Slammer. When he called his parents, they were furious and almost stroked. Fortunately, his brother was cool with it and checked it out and brought him back to his place.

2) English: The shy, diminutive girl distanced herself from the crowd when the skirmish began. She was horrified to have caused such a scene. The boisterous boy she had declined to date had gone off the deep end when she had resisted his advance. It was not her intent to hurt his feelings, she was just more a wall-flower than spring blossom when it came to boys. It did, however, peak her interest to see the more reserved boy defending her honor with the hot-headed fellow.

Spanish back to English: The shy girl, short distanced himself from the crowd when the skirmish began. She was horrified to cause a scene. The boisterous boy who had refused to date had gone through the walls when she had resisted his advances. He did not intend to hurt his feelings, was just over a wall flower blossoms in spring, when it comes to children. He did, however, the peak of interest to see the child more reserved defend his honor with fellow visionaries.

Chinese back to English: Shy, diminutive girl away from the crowd when his skirmishes began. She caused such a scene in horror. In the lively boy, she refused to shut down the date has ended, she has been deeply resistant to his advances. It was not her intention to hurt his feelings, she just spent more than spring flowering wall, when it came to the boy. It is, however, the peak to see more of her interest in the retention of boys and hot-headed guy defending her honor.

Russian back to English: A shy, diminutive woman distanced herself from the crowd when the shooting started. She was horrified, called a stsenu.Shumnye boy, whom she refused to date had gone to the far end, when she resisted his advance. It was not her intention to hurt his feelings, she was just a wall-flower in spring bloom than when he came to the boys. This, however, the peak of its interest to see more reticent boy defending his honor with a hot guy.

What do you notice about the translations of the other languages back in to English?

What does this tell you about the task of translating from one language into another?

Why is it not possible to simply translate word for word from one language into another?

Discussion

Luther said, “Because someone has the gift of languages and understands them, that does not enable him to turn one into the other and to translate well. Translating is a special grace and gift of God.” (cited in Plass 1948:333).

Discuss. Why would Luther say this? What experiences was he drawing upon?

Luther also said, “I have undertaken to translate the Bible into German. This was good for me; otherwise I might have died in the mistaken notion that I was a learned fellow” (Plass *ibid.*:105).

Discuss. Why would Luther say this? What does it show about Luther as he approached the task of translating? What does that say to us about translations which we use today?

Working with some passages:

1 Corinthians 7:39 (NA26)

³⁹ Γυνή δέδεταί ἐφ’ ὅσον χρόνον ζῆ ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς· ἐὰν δὲ κοιμηθῆ ὁ ἀνὴρ, ἐλευθέρα ἐστὶν ᾧ θέλει γαμηθῆναι, μόνον ἐν κυρίῳ.

Word for Word Translation:

A woman/wife is bound upon how much time the man/husband might live. But if ever the man/husband might fall asleep, free is she to whom she desires to be married—only in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:39 (NIV84)

A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:39 (NIV11)

A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:39 (ESV)

A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:39 (HCSB)

A wife is bound as long as her husband is living. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to anyone she wants—only in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:39 (NASB95)

A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:39 (AV)

The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:39 (GW)

A married woman must remain with her husband as long as he lives. If her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but only if the man is a Christian.

1 Corinthians 7:39 (NLT)

A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. If her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but only if he loves the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:39 (AAT)

A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. If her husband dies, she's free to marry anyone she wants to, but it should be in the Lord.

Questions:

Would the word for word translation be a good one to use in an English Bible? Why or why not?

What does “only in the Lord” mean?

Why in this case might the NIV84, the NIV11, the GW, and the NLT Bibles not be the best translation? Might this phrase mean what they say? Then why not translate that way? Is this translation wrong? Is it accurate? What judgment do the translators have to use?

Titus 2:11 (NA26)

¹¹ Ἐπεφάνη γὰρ ἡ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ σωτήριος πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις

Word for Word Translation: For appeared the grace of God saving to all people.

Titus 2:11 (NIV84)

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

Titus 2:11 (NIV11)

For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.

Titus 2:11 (ESV)

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,

Titus 2:11 (NASB95)

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,

Titus 2:11 (HCSB)

For the grace of God has appeared with salvation for all people,

Titus 2:11 (AV)

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

Titus 2:11 (GW)

After all, God's saving kindness has appeared for the benefit of all people.

Titus 2:11 (NLT)

For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people.

Titus 2:11 (AAT)

God has shown His grace. It brings salvation to all people...

Questions:

What differences do you notice in these translations?

The word *anthrōpos* in Greek most often refers to “mankind” or “people in general” rather than to a male, although it can sometimes be used to mean a male human being. Which do you think fits the context best here? So which is a better translation?

The word “saving” is an adjective in the Greek and modifies the word “grace.” However, the question is what is the relationship between the noun and the adjective? In what way is grace saving? Does it bring salvation? What do you think of the NIV’s change to “offers” salvation in the 2011 revision?

Because the adjective in the Greek sentence is not in the “normal” position, but comes after the phrase “grace of God,” some have taken the dative object (in English a prepositional phrase: “to all people”) to go along with the adjective. Others have taken it to go along with the verb at the beginning of the sentence. These two possible translations result:

The grace of God which brings salvation to all people appeared.

The grace of God which brings salvation appeared to all people

What is the difference in meaning? Could both be true? In the context does one fit better than the other?

Is either translation right or wrong? Is either more accurate than the other?

What must the translator do as he translates this passage?

Matthew 5:18 (NA26)

¹⁸ ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν· ἕως ἂν παρέλθῃ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ, ἰὼτα ἐν ἡ μία κεραία οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου, ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται.

Word for Word Translation: For truly I say to you, until whenever the heaven and the earth might pass away, one iota or one horn (hook) will surely not pass away from the law, until whenever all things might become.

Matthew 5:18 (NIV84)

I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Matthew 5:18 (NIV11)

For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

Matthew 5:18 (ESV)

For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

Matthew 5:18 (NASB95)

“For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

Matthew 5:18 (HCSB)

For I assure you: Until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass from the law until all things are accomplished.

Matthew 5:18 (AV)

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Matthew 5:18 (GW)

I can guarantee this truth: Until the earth and the heavens disappear, neither a period nor a comma will disappear from Moses’ Teachings before everything has come true.

Matthew 5:18 (NLT)

I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved.

Matthew 5:18 (AAT)

I tell you the truth, till heaven and earth pass away, not an *i* or the dot of an *i* of the Law will pass away till everything is done.

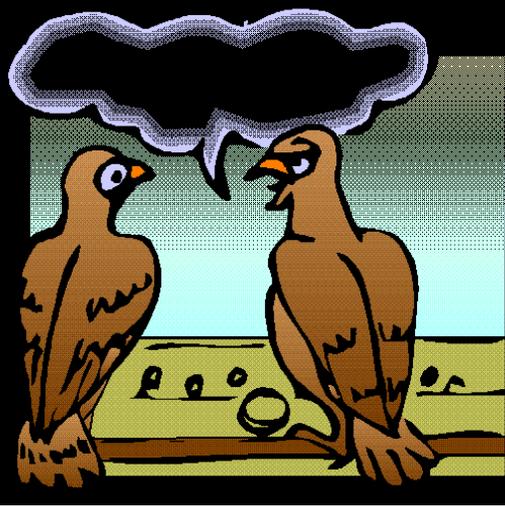
Questions:

A “yod” was a letter in the Hebrew alphabet which was very small—something like our apostrophe. Its name in Greek is “iota.” Some Hebrew letters also had little strokes or “horns” on them which completed the look of the letter. So Jesus is telling his Jewish audience that even these slightest features of the written Hebrew alphabet would not pass away from God’s Old Testament revelation. What is the difficulty for a translator who is translating this passage into English?

Why is the translator *not* being inaccurate if he changes “iota” and “horn” into concepts that would more readily communicate to an English reader familiar with an English alphabet?

Do any of these translations communicate better than another? If so, how?

Lesson #3



THE PROBLEM WITH LANGUAGE

1 Did you tweet anyone today?

Match the following with the correct definition by placing the corresponding letter in the blank.

- | | |
|------------|--|
| ___ gay | a) Someone who waits on your table |
| ___ mouse | b) Junk e-mails |
| ___ tweet | c) The writing part of a book or newspaper |
| ___ web | d) A person who is a stranger in a country |
| ___ dumb | e) Happy |
| ___ surf | f) A canned food product consisting of pork |
| ___ text | g) A short message that is posted on Twitter |
| ___ spam | h) Not able to speak |
| ___ server | i) Waves breaking onto a beach |
| ___ alien | j) What a spider makes |
| | k) To be homosexual |
| | l) A small rodent |
| | m) A person from outer space |
| | n) A pointing device for computers |
| | o) To send a message with a cell phone |
| | p) A network of computers and information |
| | q) A main computer to which others connect |
| | r) A soft sound that a young bird makes |
| | s) Stupid, not very smart |
| | t) Looking for information on the internet |

What did you notice about the words and definitions above?

What does this tell you about the English language?

What does that mean for a Bible translation that wants to continue to communicate with people in the language which they speak every day?

What would happen, for example, if the translators were to use the word “gay” for happy people in the Bible?

One of the reasons the NIV was updated was because of the change in word meanings in our English language.

Put an X before the phrase that you feel is correct.

It’s me. OR It’s I.

It’s they. OR It’s them.

He’s taller than I. OR He’s taller than me.

Betty and me went to the store. OR Betty and I went to the store.

He gave it to Ben and myself. OR He gave it to Ben and me.

Just between you and me. OR Just between you and I.

Tell me whom you are talking about. OR Tell me about whom you are talking.

Some of these are bad grammar and some are good grammar according to traditional rules of grammar. Yet some of the bad grammar examples have become so common they sound *right* to us. For example, even though it isn’t correct, most people today say “It’s me!” If you say, “It is I!” many people look at you like you are some kind of weird person. Likewise most of us think nothing of ending our sentences with prepositions. Yet this is against generally accepted rules of grammar. It has become so common, however, that it is the way most of us communicate.

Another feature of our language that has changed is that “they, them, their” are filling in for singular, gender-neutral antecedents (words to which they refer). This has happened for a number of reasons. One is that the English language has no gender-neutral 3rd person singular pronouns. [In older English there actually was such a pronoun: “hit.”] So “they” sometimes is

used as a substitute. Additionally, the English language used to use the pronouns “he, him, his” as gender-neutral pronouns. But somewhat due to the influence of the feminist movement of years ago, this pronoun has lost its gender-neutral connotation for many (if not most) people. Many today hear a masculine when they hear “he” or “him.” So more and more “they” has found its way into our communication as a replacement.

Consider the following examples:

Everyone should do his best in whatever situations he finds himself in. (This agrees in number but does not agree in the indefinite gender.)

Suggested revision: **Everyone should do his or her best in whatever situations he or she finds himself or herself in.** (This maintains number agreement as both are singulars, but burdens the sentence with awkwardness in trying to cover the indefinite gender of the antecedent.)

Revision: **Everyone should do their best in whatever situations they find themselves in.** (This agrees in logical number since everyone implies a plural even though it is singular and also agrees in gender since “their, they and themselves” are indefinite in gender, able to refer to either a male or female.)

Consider some examples from the KJV showing that this was occasionally done years ago in the English language:

Matthew 18:35 (AV)

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Numbers 2:34 (AV)

And the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses: so they pitched by their standards, and so they set forward, every one after their families, according to the house of their fathers.

Joshua 21:42 (AV)

These cities were every one with their suburbs round about them: thus were all these cities.

READ each of the following sentences aloud:

Anyone who thinks they left their hat in the theater, should leave their cell number with the clerk.

Each child who left their toy in the playroom, should check with their parents before leaving.

Each person who came to the play should hold on to their ticket for the drawing following.

Anyone who is wearing smooth-soled shoes, should watch their step on the newly waxed tiles.

Anyone who wants to commune today, should announce their intention to the pastor.

Now go back and substitute “he” or “him” or “his” for the “they” or “them” or “their” in each of those sentences. Do you find that it sounds a bit strange? That’s because more and more this is the way we speak. Not all grammars are in favor of this. But a huge database called the Collins Bank of English Usage was consulted by the NIV Committee on Bible Translation (CBT). This database showed that in written and spoken English this kind of substitution was very common and growing. So the CBT made the decision to use this way of speaking when there were impersonal/gender neutral or collective words followed by pronouns.

Discuss.

Is it good for a Bible Translation to keep up with the way people speak the language?

Have you ever noticed that young people often use words differently than older people are used to? Why is that?

Why will translations need to steer away from “slang” expressions while at the same time being aware of changes in the structure of the English language and changes in word meanings?

As language changes, why is it difficult for one generation to “give up” the way they are used to speaking for the sake of another generation? Why will it be necessary for someone to make a sacrifice? Who will make that sacrifice?

Another change that many have noticed in some of the new translations, including the NIV11, is that in some places instead of saying “all men” they now say “all people” or “everyone.” This again has to do with the way people hear language today. Years ago people heard the word “man” or “men” in some contexts and understood this to mean “all people.” Many believe that today more and more people hear “males” exclusively when they hear those expressions. Since the word “men” or “man” was often used for a Greek word which meant “human beings” or “people,” many translations have chosen to translate it with “people” or “human beings” in many places rather than “men.”

Let’s take a look at just a few examples:

EXAMPLE 1

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (NA26)

³ τοῦτο καλὸν καὶ ἀπόδεκτον ἐνώπιον τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ, ⁴ ὃς πάντας ἀνθρώπους θέλει σωθῆναι καὶ εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἔλθεῖν.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (NIV84)

This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (NIV11)

This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (ESV)

This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (NASB95)

This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (HCSB)

This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (AV)

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; ⁴ Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (GW)

This is good and pleases God our Savior. ⁴ He wants all people to be saved and to learn the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (NLT)

This is good and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (AAT)

This is good and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants all people to be saved and to come to know the truth.

Take a closer look:

Look at the context of 1 Timothy 2:3-4 (vv. 1-9). In verse 5 *anthrwpōs* (person, human being) is used two more times. First it is plural (people) and then singular (person or human being). [Note

that “all people” in v. 6 is a translation of the Greek word “all” without another word with it. The “people” is understood by the Greek and added in the English translation for clarity based on the context.] In v. 8 Paul uses a different Greek word when he says, “I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer...” This Greek word is not *anthrōpos*, but *avn̄p*. That latter word means “man” as opposed to “woman.” Note that in v. 9 Paul contrasts what he says in verse 8 with “women.” The problem is that when NIV84 and some of the other translations translate all these words using “men” in our English translation, the shift and the point of what Paul is saying is lost.

EXAMPLE 2

Matthew 4:19 (NA26)

¹⁹ καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου, καὶ ποιήσω ὑμᾶς ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων.

Matthew 4:19 (NIV84)

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.”

Matthew 4:19 (NIV11)

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."

Matthew 4:19 (ESV)

And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Matthew 4:19 (NASB95)

And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Matthew 4:19 (HCSB)

“Follow Me,” He told them, “and I will make you fish for people!”

Matthew 4:19 (AV)

And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Matthew 4:19 (GW)

Jesus said to them, “Come, follow me! I will teach you how to catch people instead of fish.”

Matthew 4:19 (NLT)

Jesus called out to them, “Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!”

Matthew 4:19 (AAT)

“Come follow Me,” Jesus told them, “and I will make you fishers of men.”

Once again, the word used here which follows “fishers of ” is the plural of the Greek word which commonly means “human beings” or “people.” Notice how it is variously translated.

Discuss:

Why would Jesus use the Greek word for “human beings” here instead of the word for “man” as opposed to woman?

Is Jesus saying that he only wants his disciples to be fishers of men and not women?

In the context, which translation(s) more adequately expresses what Jesus is saying?

EXAMPLE 3

Matthew 8:9 (NA26)

⁹ καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος εἰμι ὑπὸ ἐξουσίαν, ἔχων ὑπ' ἐμαυτὸν στρατιώτας, καὶ λέγω τούτῳ· πορεύθητι, καὶ πορεύεται, καὶ ἄλλῳ· ἔρχου, καὶ ἔρχεται, καὶ τῷ δούλῳ μου· ποιήσον τοῦτο, καὶ ποιεῖ.

Matthew 8:9 (NIV84)

For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

Matthew 8:9 (NIV11)

For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

Matthew 8:9 (ESV)

For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

Matthew 8:9 (NASB95)

“For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.”

Matthew 8:9 (HCSB)

For I too am a man under authority, having soldiers under my command. I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes; and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.”

Matthew 8:9 (AV)

For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

Matthew 8:9 (GW)

As you know, I'm in a chain of command and have soldiers at my command. I tell one of them, 'Go!' and he goes, and another, 'Come!' and he comes. I tell my servant, 'Do this!' and he does it."

Matthew 8:9 (NLT)

I know this because I am under the authority of my superior officers, and I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, 'Go,' and they go, or 'Come,' and they come. And if I say to my slaves, 'Do this,' they do it."

Matthew 8:9 (AAT)

"I'm only a man who has to obey others, but I have soldiers under me. I tell one of them, Go, and he goes. And another, Come, and he comes. And my slave, Do this, and he does it."

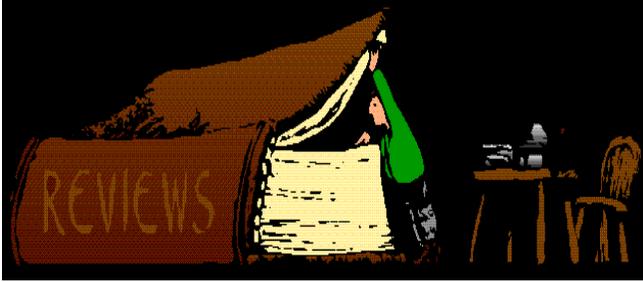
Discuss:

In this passage again the Greek word *anthrwpōs* is used. However, most of the translations, including NIV11, translate it with "man" here instead of using "people" or "human being" as we've seen in other places. Why would the context of this verse lead them to translate it this way here—and properly so?

What do you notice about translating and the use of language from these three examples?

For further study: You may want to do further study on your own regarding the topics that are taken up in these four lessons. We suggest that you look up the Web site of the Translation Evaluation Committee (TEC) at the following address: www.wels.net/translation. There are links to articles and comparisons that can give you much more information located on this page.

Lesson #4



PRINCIPLES AND PURPOSES

Introduction

Try reading the following English translations of John 3:16:

Anglo-Saxon Proto-English Manuscripts (995 AD): "God lufode middan-eard swa, dat he seade his an-cennedan sunu, dat nan ne forweorde de on hine gely ac habbe dat ece lif."

Wycliff (1380): "for god loued so the world; that he gaf his oon bigetun sone, that eche man that bileueth in him perisch not: but haue euerlastyng e liif,"

Tyndale (1534): "For God so loveth the worlde, that he hath given his only sonne, that none that beleve in him, shuld perisshe: but shuld have everlastinge lyfe."

Great Bible (1539): "For God so loued the worlde, that he gaue his only begotten sonne, that whosoeuer beleueth in him, shulde not perisshe, but haue euerlasting lyfe."

Geneva (1560): "For God so loueth the world, that he hath geuen his only begotten Sonne: that none that beleue in him, should peryshe, but haue euerlasting lyfe."

Rheims (1582): "For so God loued the vworld, that he gaue his only-begotten sonne: that euery one that beleueth in him, perish not, but may haue life euerlasting"

1st Ed. King James (1611): "For God so loued the world, that he gaue his only begotten Sonne: that whosoeuer beleueth in him, should not perish, but haue euerlasting life."

Common KJV (1679): "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

New International Version (1984): "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

[First seven quotes above used by permission of WWW.GREATSITE.COM © 2002]

Discuss:

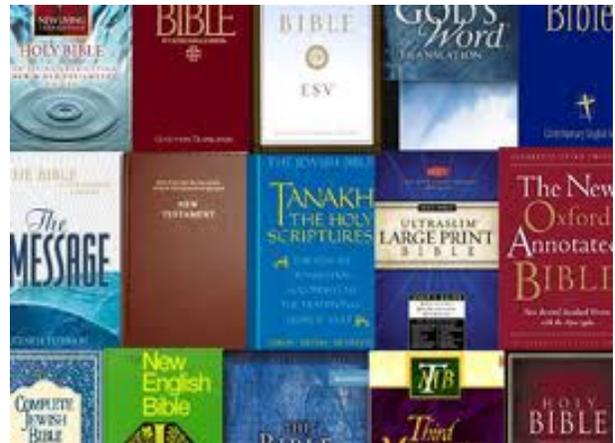
Considering the history of the English language through the years as outlined in the translations above, do you think it is a good thing to have new English translations?

From the time the KJV received widespread use in the 1600's until the late 1800's, there were very few English translations other than the KJV. Do you think this was good or bad? Why?

From the late 1800's until 1970 (about 100 years) there were a handful of new English translations that became popular in America (the American Standard Version - ASV; Revised Standard Version - RSV; Berkeley Bible; New English Bible - NEB) What might have brought about the need for newer translations during this time period?

From 1970 until today there have been manifold new English translations, including

New American Standard Bible (NASB),
New International Version (NIV),
Today's English Version (TEV),
English Standard Version (ESV),
New King James Version (NKJV),
Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB),
God's Word (GW),
Living Bible (LB),
New Jerusalem Bible (NJB),
An American Translation (AAT),
New English Translation (NET), and
New Living Translation (NLT)



....just to name some of the most popular ones.

Why do you suppose there have been so many new translations in the last 40 years?

Purposes

Consider the following quote:

“Now the race is on for translators to be the most imaginative and visionary. Indicative of the inquisitiveness of human nature, many are accepting the challenge to produce more sensationally reading bibles that exhibit a greater latitude of imagination. Dynamics and Paraphrases are interpretative by nature and this should be well understood by the reader, because this freedom has often removed the guard rails of safety where not a few verses have leaped from roadbeds of propriety into fields of recklessness.” (Written by Ronald J. Gordon Published: April, 1997 ~ Last Updated: August, 2011 © accessed from <http://www.cob-net.org/compare.htm> on 12/10/2011)

How do these words reinforce the emphasis at our synod's seminary to have our pastoral candidates continue to graduate with a working knowledge of the original languages of the Bible?

As we've seen in this study, a "faithful" and "accurate" translation isn't just putting down an English equivalent word for each Hebrew or Greek word—which is more or less what many of our pastors do in their studies as they search for the meaning of a Scripture text. A translation also needs to communicate to a target audience in a way in which that audience can understand.

What would you think will be the difference in a translation that is geared for...

- use at a grade school level?
- use in a prison with criminals?
- use as a pastor's resource to check his translation?
- use as a Bible to be read in a worship service?
- use in an assisted living home where most of the residents suffer from dementia or Alzheimer's disease?
- use in a pre-school?

Perhaps, as suggested above, there will be some modern translations which we will have to reject simply because they recklessly abandon the truth of Scripture in ways that we can't accept. Some paraphrases that take overly great liberty with the text of the Scripture might fall into this category. So do those where the translators do not acknowledge the Verbal Inspiration of the Bible.

But there are any number of modern English translations that render the original languages in accurate and understandable English (though no translation is perfect). How will we select a translation to use? What determines for us what a "good" translation is? More importantly, on what basis will our synod select one translation from among these translations to use as the publishing version for our synod?

Principles

The Translation Evaluation Committee which was established by our synod in 2010 to help us to evaluate the many new translations now available and especially the new NIV 2011 revision has developed and is operating with the following principles for evaluating a translation. A brief expansion on each principle is given below each principle in bold.

1. **We expect a translation to conform to the presuppositions of faith. These include a firm conviction that we are dealing with God’s verbally-inspired, inerrant Word. Though speaking through many different human authors, one single divine Author addresses us in every word. The Scriptures find their center and beating heart in Jesus Christ, our Savior. The whole Bible testifies of him and in his name proclaims repentance and remission of sins.**

- This is fundamental and not disputable. If you do not believe the Bible is God’s Word and that its focus is Jesus Christ, then you cannot approach it with the proper frame of mind to translate it into another language.

2. **We expect, with Luther, that a translation will communicate in the language of the people, using idioms and expressions that are understandable and in common, current use.**

- This is saying that we believe that what is heard read from the lectern and pulpit on Sunday should not be vastly different English than what is heard by the members of our congregations every other day of the week as they converse with one another and carry on their business. There should not be a language “heard at church” and a language “used at home.”
- This not saying it should be full of “slang,” however. It should use language that is acceptable and respectable in current usage.

3. **We expect that a translation will understand itself as a “direct quotation” of an ancient document, rather than merely supplying the “gist” of the original’s meaning in a contemporizing paraphrase.**

- This is saying that when we read Isaiah it should strike us that he was a prophet of ancient Israel and not a street preacher of today. John the Baptist chastising the Jewish leaders should not sound like a modern evangelist in a sports stadium revival service.

4. **We expect, with Luther, that when theologically necessary a translation will adhere closely to the exact wording of the original.**

- This is saying that while we want the translation to speak the language of those who will be reading it, there may be times when in order to maintain accuracy to the meaning of God’s Word a translation may have to use words that sacrifice some readability.

- Note that there is some tension between this principle and number 2. That's OK. Translating is not always uncomplicated. There is give and take that has to be done. Uniformity in how we translate isn't always possible. Sometimes a translation might be a bit "freer" in its wording to really allow the audience to understand the meaning quickly and easily. Other times it may "tighten up" to come as close as possible to the exact wording of the original language even though it takes more effort on the audience's part to figure out the meaning. This is a judgment call on the part of the translator who wants to communicate the Word of God as accurately as possible.

5. **We expect that the translation will be aimed at native English speakers who can handle Standard American English at a late-primary school or early high school level, people who are neither professional theologians nor biblical illiterates. They can appreciate the difference between texts that don't aim at literary beauty and those that do, and they have some appreciation for the latter.**

- This helps us direct what kind of translation we will want to use as our publishing translation. We aren't expecting this to be read by preschoolers. Nor do we see this as the translation that pastors will use to compare and check their more literal translation work done for sermons.
- The focus that we have in mind is the average English speaker and reader among us. There are some in the audience who might not yet have a 7-10th grade reading level. There are some who are far beyond that with doctorates before their names. Our target reader and speaker is somewhere in-between.

We expect that the primary way in which most WELS people experience most of the Bible most of the time is by hearing it read—in the context of the public worship service. Consideration must therefore be given to a translation's suitability for being read aloud.

- Where do most of our members come into contact with God's Word? For better or for worse, isn't it in the worship service or catechism class? Isn't it where Scripture is being read aloud? For this reason we felt it was important that the translation is easy to understand when being read. Going back to principle number 2 this suggests that it uses words that people are used to hearing. It speaks in grammar that is familiar to people on a day to day basis. It doesn't take "translating" effort to go from the English I am hearing to the English I understand.

Discuss:

What do you think of these principles? Do you agree? Disagree? Why or why not?

Why are these principles sometimes going to have a certain amount of tension between them?

Why are these principles only going to lead us to what we think is the “best” of the translations for our purpose and not to the “only” translation for our purpose?

For further study: You may want to do further study on your own regarding the topics that are taken up in these four lessons. We suggest that you look up the Web site of the Translation Evaluation Committee (TEC) at the following address: www.wels.net/translation. There are links to articles and comparisons that can give you much more information located on this page.