# **From Manuscript to Modern**

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The Origin of Scripture

# Introduction

Session 3 of our 5-part mini-series on understanding the Bible.

So far we’ve considered the history of God’s revelation, and how the Bible is the climax of God’s self-disclosure. He *wants* us to know Him, Creation contains enough evidence to leave us without excuse if we *don’t* seek to know Him, and the Bible is the spectacular final word on what God wants us to know.

And last week we considered the history of the Bible itself. The Bible is 66 books, 39 in the OT and 27 in the New. We looked at how and when they were written, the languages used, and a little on how it’s been preserved over the centuries.

## Today

Today is session 3: From Manuscript to Modern.

It covers two distinct units.

1. From Thousands to One - an introduction to Textual Criticism

a. Building on our brief review last week of the extant manuscripts

b. An overview of how those many manuscripts are analysed to produce a complete OT or NT volume.

2. From Ancient to Modern - the challenge of translation

a. Translating the ancient languages is challenging - I’ll show you some examples to illustrate why

b. Review different approaches taken

As we do so, the key takeaways will be

• Textual criticism is the process of seeking the original text from the available copies.

• The simply outcome: there is good grounds to be very confident in our Bibles.

• Some questions do remain here and there, but they are nearly all trivial and NO important doctrine or truth is in doubt.

• Translation of the text is as much art as science! And as such, it’s very valuable for us to have a foundational knowledge of the original language and thought.

• There are different approaches that translators take, and we should be aware of what they are, and what it means.

• I’ll show you a few of my recommended Bibles.

## Find your Bible’s Principles of Translation

Open your Bible and before Genesis, you’ll find several pages you probably haven’t read before. They don’t show up on any Bible reading plan!

One of those pages will be entitled something like “Principles of Translation,” where you will find the editorial board’s explanations on their approach.

The ESV and NIV both have a preface that does much the same thing.

And basically, it covers my two points above.

• What primary sources of the original language were used

• How has the text be translated

It includes some specifics about how the translators have handled the language. The NASB, for example says:

**New American Standard Bible (2020) Foreword**

The NASB strives to adhere as closely as possible to the original languages of the Holy Scriptures and to make the translation in a fluent and readable style according to current English usage.

The ESV has a very good, descriptive Translation Philosophy. It begins by saying:

**English Standard Version Translation Philosophy**

The ESV is an “essentially literal” translation that seeks as far as possible to reproduce the precise wording of the original text and the personal style of each Bible writer. As such, its emphasis is on “word-for-word” correspondence, at the same time taking full account of differences in grammar, syntax, and idiom between current literary English and the original languages. Thus it seeks to be transparent to the original text, letting the reader see as directly as possible the structure and exact force of the original.

It then goes on to discuss different approaches that can be taken.

By the end of today, you’ll be able to understand that page!

# Thousands to One - Introduction to Textual Criticism

Let’s get into our first section: “From Thousands to One.”

## The Challenge

As a reminder, the challenge before us is taking thousands of manuscripts and attempting to recreate the original, God-breathed words.

We do not have any original manuscripts. However, the volume of copies available is absolutely outstanding - no other ancient texts compare.

1. Julius Caesars “De Bello Gallico” is a critical primary source for understanding Roman history, as well as crucial for history of Britain, Germany and France. Written in the mid-1st C BC, we have about 75 manuscripts, with the two earliest being from the mid 8th C. That’s about 1,000 years. They divide into 2 families with significant differences.

2. Consider also The Works of Plato. He wrote a few documents 400 BC. We have about 250 manuscripts, the oldest surviving manuscript being the Clarke Plato from 895. That’s a gap of 1,300 years!

How does it compare?

## Biblical Manuscripts

For the OT, we have

• Over 3,000 Hebrew Manuscripts

• 8,000 manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate - dating from around 400 AD

• 1,500 manuscripts of the Septuagint - known as LXX - Roman for 70.

• Plus some other sources, such as the Syriac Peshitta and the Samaritan Pentateuch.

While the Masoretic texts are relatively recent, the LXX and the now the DSS in particular give much more ancient versions.

For the NT, we have an abundance:

• Over 5,700 Greek Manuscripts, from early 2nd C through to 16th C.

• Early translations into Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Arminian, Georgian, Gothic and Arabic

• Quotes from letters and commentaries by early Church leaders (over a million quotes have been catalogued!)

In terms of timing, I showed you a fragment last week that is probably just 50 years or less from the originals. And we have complete New Testaments that are less than 300 years from the originals.

So it’s not even close. We have orders of magnitude more Biblical manuscripts. And generally speaking, the agreement between them is far greater than other historical documents.

The Lord our God has seen to it that we have this wealth of data.

And I think He revealed the Dead Sea Scrolls recently, in this increasingly sceptical time, to give even more proof to the world that this is HIS Word.

### Manuscript Traditions

For both the Old and New Testament, scholars group the manuscripts into families, or “manuscript traditions” as they’re known.

I went through the OT last week - the Masoretic being the primary Hebrew text, the Septuagint is the Greek translation and the Dead Sea Scrolls provide amazing evidence that the Masoretic is incredibly well-preserved.

For the New Testament, the scriptures were written and then widely distributed very early on. What this means is you tend to get regional variations.

The three major textual traditions for the New Testament are:

• The **Alexandrian Texts** are from or associated with Egypt. Codex Sinaiticus, the one I showed you last week from around 350 AD, is one example. Codex Vaticanus is another.

• The **Western Texts** come from Italy, France and North Africa - i.e. the Western Roman area. The Codex Bezae is a 5th C document in both Greek and Latin. Also the Old Latin manuscripts of the Vulgate, date from the 2nd Century and would be classed as Western Texts.

• The **Byzantine Texts** come from Asia Minor (Turkey) and Greece. This is actually the bulk of the New Testament manuscripts, with something like 90% of our surviving Greek texts being in this group.

These groupings are also characterised by distinctive style as well.

## Process of Textual Criticism

So how do we take these thousands of manuscripts, work through the slight differences here and there, and produce something we can confidently say “*this is the Bible?”*

Criticism, not in the sense of - criticising the text and being mean...

Criticism meaning careful analysis and discussion.

It is carefully analysing the text to try and determine the most likely original wording.

It is both an art and a science:

• There are processes and practices, so there is a scientific method to broadly follow;

• But the rules cannot be rigidly applied in every case, hence the artistic aspect.

### The Process

Obviously, we are only looking superficially at this today.

In general, when comparing manuscripts one would consider these key criteria:

#### Age of Manuscript

How old is the manuscript? Generally speaking, the older it is, the closer in time it is to the source and the more likely it is to be accurate.

#### Location Found

This is especially true for the New Testament and the early Bibles used by Christians, as we know Christianity spread rapidly from Judea. Early manuscripts would have been distributed as the gospel spread.

I’ve mentioned the three primary textual traditions for the NT. So for example, if manuscripts from the Alexandrian and and Western traditions match, but Byzantine is different, even though there are far more Byzantine texts, it is better to go with the minority.

#### Likely Causes and Common Errors

We can consider what could have caused the difference to arise.

The copying was generally done visually, so simple mistakes could arise if the scribe mistook one letter for another.

Also they generally worked alone - they didn’t have someone dictating to them. So their eye was continually skipping from the source material to the page he is writing. In that skipping, the eye may not skip back to the correct place.

Consider the sentence:

"She was walking through the valley and singing through the night."

The underlined section is identical, and the scribe is writing letter by letter. What could happen is you end up with:

"She was walking through the valley and singing through the valley and singing through the night."

Or

"She was walking through the night."

There is a possible example of this in [1 Samuel 14:41](https://ref.ly/1Sa14.41), where some text in the Masoretic appears to have dropped out. The LXX has a much longer reading, and there is a fragment in the Dead Sea Scrolls that sadly can’t be read, but suggests that originally there was a lot text there.

Also there is a somewhat amusing copy of [Matthew 7](https://ref.ly/Mt7) where the scribe accidentally omitted a couple of verses, and ended up writing that the wise man’s house, built on the rock, collapsed!

#### Difficulty of the Text

The more “difficult” version of the text is more likely to be correct.

This is because scribes had a tendency to want to harmonise the text, to smooth out anything was difficult to interpret or understand.

Especially as language developed, spellings may change. Some words may become objectionable.

It appears, for example, that the name of Saul’s son Eshba’al was deliberately changed to Ish-Boshet. Compare [2 Samuel 2:8](https://ref.ly/2Sa2.8) with [1 Chronicles 8:33](https://ref.ly/1Ch8.33) to see this.

Here is another example from the New Testament. This is more challenging one, and there is a huge amount of discussion on it.

#### New Testament Example

Consider this verse, NASB 1995 edition:

**John 1:18 NASB95**

No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him.*

Compare to NKJV

**John 1:18 NKJV**

No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.

So is it the only begotten **God** or only begotten **Son**?

Do we have a very clear and definitive statement of Jesus Christ, the Word, being “the only begotten God” or is it “only begotten Son?”

First, where is the discrepancy?

The Byzantine texts have “only begotten Son” while Alexandrian have “only begotten God.” I checked Codex Benzae of the Western tradition this morning. It says “son” too.

Now the difference in the oldest manuscripts is just one letter: is it a theta or an upsilon??

The Byzantine ones are much more numerous, but the Alexandrian ones are older and more geographically widespread.

In this case, “only begotten God” is more difficult. It is unusual, and scribes may well be motivated to amend to an easier reading, one that matches [John 3:16](https://ref.ly/Jn3.16) in this case. It is very hard to explain how the phrase became “only begotten God” if John originally wrote “only begotten Son.” And it is found in the oldest manuscripts, so a late change for theological reasons is impossible. So, many scholars today consider it to be more likely the original words of John.

## Textual Criticism Output

All of this analysis and consideration ultimately leads to some edition of the Old Testament and New Testament in their original languages.

If you refer back to the NASB Principles of Translation once again, you’ll find:

**New American Standard Bible (2020) Foreword**

HEBREW TEXT: In the present translation BIBLIA HEBRAICA STUTTGARTENSIA and, where available, BIBLIA HEBRAICA QUINTA have been employed, together with the LXX, the Dead Sea Scrolls, ancient versions, and the most recent scholarship from lexicography.

The Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia - which we can just call the BHS from now on.

That is the Masoretic Hebrew text based on the Leningrad Codex. I mentioned this last week - dates to 1008AD. The scholars have analysed it and compared it to the wording in the other manuscripts I’ve mentioned. Generally, it follows the Masoretic Hebrew, adopting readings from LXX or DSS where it was felt best, and providing “apparatuses” - meaning explanatory footnotes and commentary - where there is some doubt on the original.

It’s the most widely used scholarly edition of the Hebrew Bible today, and indeed most Bibles based their OT translation on that.

Another version is the Jewish Publication Society’s Tanakh - a complete, single-volume Hebrew Old Testament. This sticks to the MT more strictly.

### The New Testament

For the New Testament, there is some controversy.

Now I have skipped a lot of the history - there is some 2,000 years of history here! A proper treatment would look at the Latin Vulgate and trace the history.

But, there are a couple of details I feel compelled to include.

#### Textus Receptus

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This is Latin for Received Text.

It was based on the Greek New Testament published by Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam in 1516, which by 1633 was declared to be “the text received by all.” Erasmus worked from 12 manuscripts, mostly from the Byzantine tradition.

You can read the entire 500 year old original online here.

This is the first page of Matthew’s Gospel.

Notice it’s actually bilingual - Greek on the left and Latin on the right.

Being the standard, the King James Bible translators used this as the source for their Bible. Actually, it was the standard NT for the Reformation: Tyndale, Luther, a whole tree of early English Bibles were based on it.

Since Erasmus, various scholars have published updated editions of the Textus Receptus and maintained it as an edition of the NT.

But then these guys came along...

[SLIDE]

### Westcott and Hort

Brook Westcott and Fenton Hort.

Their approach to textual criticism was groundbreaking when they published their Greek New Testament in 1881. They introduced the classifications of Byzantine, Western, Alexandrian and *neutral* as they called it. They also moved away from simply “the most manuscripts wins” to a more nuanced approach that considered source and quality.

They were controversial in their day. They argued that many of the Byzantine manuscripts were corrupted and contained some additional material ([John 5:4](https://ref.ly/Jn5.4), [1 John 5:7-8](https://ref.ly/1Jn5.7-8) being examples).

And of course there was much indignation about deleting portions of cherished scripture that had been in the Latin Vulgate Bible for centuries and in the KJV for generations.

In the end, they introduced a new level of scholarship that continues to this day.

So what did our NASB translators decide to do?

### Back to NASB Foreword

Back to the NASB principles of translation, for the New Testament we read this:

**New American Standard Bible (2020) Foreword**

GREEK TEXT: Consideration was given to the latest available manuscripts with a view to determining the best Greek text. In most instances the 28th edition of the Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece was followed. For Acts and the General Epistles, the Editio Critica Maior (ECM) was followed in most instances. However, the apparatuses provided by both editions are intended to enable scholars to make informed decisions about readings, and sometimes alternate readings with better support to those chosen by the editors were preferred.

The Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament, 28th edition.

NA28 for short!

If you want to read more about that, the who/what/when, you can check it out on this website.

This is the version followed by the majority of translators today. ESV, NIV, etc all say Nestle-Aland 28th edition.

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The New King James Version maintains the tradition of the KJV, being based on the most up-to-date Textus Receptus.

There are those today who would argue for sticking to the Textus Receptus / Byzantine - this website gives a bit of further reading.

## Summary and Accuracy

With all that said, you might think it is hopeless to have any confidence in finding the true, original Bible. So how can we trust it?

Bart Ehrman famously pointed out “there are more variation among our manuscripts than there are words in the New Testament.”

But this is very misleading - there are numerous variations because we have such a wealth of manuscripts!

Actually, we have “just one distinct variant per 434 words copied.”

The *VAST MAJORITY* of these variants have no impact at all - either insignificant spelling mistakes, or obvious copying blunders that are easy to dismiss. Like that house on the rock one.

Yes, there are a few variants that we need to consider carefully, like the one I showed you in [John 1:18](https://ref.ly/Jn1.18).

These exist because God used fallen man to transmit the text through the centuries. But God has put some wonderful safeguards in place - again, that’s next week’s topic.

God has preserved His Word through miraculous means, and yet at the same time granted a depth of study. The Word of God is a deep, deep well that nobody can ever fully explore. Scholarship done to the glory of God and prayerfully by His Spirit will only lead us to even more confidence in the miracle that is God’s Word.

# Ancient to Modern

Let’s talk about the languages themselves.

Our primary languages are Hebrew in the Old Testament and Koine Greek in the New.

## Language and Culture

Hebrew in particular presents challenges to the Bible translator and interpreter. There are several reasons for this, both from the language itself but also because we Westerners are far removed from the culture and thought.

The culture of the ancient Hebrews is gone. The New Testament was written during the time when the Greco-Roman culture was taking over. In [Acts 9:29](https://ref.ly/Ac9.29) it speaks of Paul arguing with some “Hellenistic Jews” - that means Jews who had accepted the Greek culture and language.

So as we read and study the Bible today, we have to keep this in mind that there is a language and a cultural barrier, particularly with the Old Testament.

### Hebrew Language

Focusing on the language first.

As we do, I would remind you of Jeff Benner’s book “The Ancient Hebrew Language.” A very valuable resource if you want to explore the language, the roots, etc.

In English, the letters have no meaning. The meaning comes when the letters are placed in order.

With Hebrew, as we’ve been seeing from [Psalm 119](https://ref.ly/Ps119), the letters have intrinsic meaning. Usually, multiple meanings.

Originally, they were pictographic - i.e. little pictures.

Two letters together would form a parent root. Add a 3rd letter and you have a child root, and these 3-letter roots form the foundation of most other Hebrew word.

What this means is that often the words themselves are descriptive. And I want to show you an example of this:

Aleph - originally a picture of an ox head, it means strength.

Bet - originally a picture of a tent, and the meaning extends to house, household, family.

Put those together to make a parent root:

‘AB

*strength of the family****.***

It means “father.”

Adding one more letter in the middle, the letter Heh

Heh - originally a picture of a man raising his arms going “woah” it means sigh, breath, spirit, essence.

If we add that in the middle to make the 3-letter child root:

‘AHAV

We have a word meaning “the essence of the father”

It is the Hebrew word for love.

The Father is love.

[SLIDE]

### Often descriptive

So from this, you see the inherent descriptive nature of the language. The word for “love” is not a just an arbitrary noise; it is descriptive of the character of The Father.

God is LOVE.

#### Speaks in terms of Relationship

Another interesting one - Hebrew, like many other languages, doesn’t have the concept of “have.” You don’t say “I have a book.”

You would say “Yesh li sepher”

Literally, “there is to me a book.”

Russian, Japanese, Irish Gaelic are all similar.

What it shows is a different way of thinking. Rather than thinking in terms of ownership and control, the thinking is in terms of relationship.

#### Concrete, rather than Abstract

Another difference is that Hebrew thought is based on the concrete - meaning things one can sense: touch, see, hear, etc.

Take a look at [Psalm 1:3-4](https://ref.ly/Ps1.3-4), which considers what the person who trusts and delights in God is like:

**Psalm 1:3–4 NASB 2020**

He will be like a tree planted by streams of water,

Which yields its fruit in its season,

And its leaf does not wither;

And in whatever he does, he prospers.

The wicked are not so,

But they are like chaff which the wind blows away.

It’s very poetic, drawing the mind to real things.

Concepts like “anger” are conceived and then written in concrete terms. An angry person is literally “hot-nosed” with flared nostrils. Whereas, when God is described as “slow to anger” (e.g [Ps 103:8](https://ref.ly/Ps103.8)) it actually says “long of nose.”

So arguably, a literal translation of the Hebrew there would say that God has a long nose.

### Focused on Function, rather than Appearance

Hebrew also uses functional descriptions in general.

How would you describe your car?

• It’s black, has four windows and is made of metal and glass. That’s an appearance-oriented description.

• I get in it and I use it to go places. That’s a function-oriented description.

Here’s an example from the Bible, and why it’s tricky to translate...

**Psalm 29:9 NASB 2020**

The voice of the Lord makes the deer give birth

And strips the forests bare;

And in His temple everything says, “Glory!”

And

**Psalm 29:9 NET 2nd ed.**

The Lord’s shout bends the large trees

and strips the leaves from the forests.

Everyone in his temple says, “Majestic!”

Why does one Bible translator put “deer give birth” and another put “bends large trees”?

Because, the Hebrew text is descriptive of function, not appearance:

“The voice of the LORD makes the strong leaders turn.”

Who are the strong leaders? The Hebrew word ‘ayil - strong leader - is used to refer to oak trees - the trees from which strong wood is harvested - and to the stag deer - seen as one of the strongest animals in the forest.

Related to this, in Hebrew, even the nouns are active.

I mentioned the word for Father - AB or AV

• “The one giving strength to the family”

Another interesting example is the way the words for “knee” and “gift” share a root:

• Knee is Berakh and means “the body part that bends.” - functional

• Gift is Berakah and means “the thing brought with a bent knee.”

[SLIDE]

Summarising:

• Hebrew letters carry meaning so things tend to be described in terms of relationship or action

• The thinking is relational rather than descriptive

• Things are thought of in terms of concrete or tangible descriptions, rather than abstract concepts

• Some surprising shared meanings and ambiguities derive from the function-oriented description

Phew! And that’s why it can be difficult to translate Hebrew!!

Can you see how it’s as much about interpretation as it is translation?

### Greek Language

As you can imagine, the Greek language is part of that Hellenistic cultural shift.

Original, ancient Greek as spoken by Homer, predating Christ by centuries, was super complex.

Koine Greek, the language of New Testament, is the common Greek of the day, and it’s simpler than the OG.

Modern Greek of today is simpler again.

The language is abstract, precise, structured, very rich.

It’s ideal for technical discussion on theology and philosophy.

An example of precision is the two words for “another” - *allos* meaning another that’s the same, *heteros* meaning another that’s different.

There are four different words that mean “love” in Greek.

Very precise.

#### Tense, Mood, Voice

To give you a sense of the complexity, let’s consider Greek verbs for a moment.

When interpreting a verb, you would consider:

1. The person doing the action - is it me, you, or her?

2. The number - is it singular or plural?

3. Tense - Greek has 6 tenses to be aware of, and it’s of particular importance. Rather than expressing only time (past, present, future) it also expresses **aspect**. Is the action of the verb done and complete? Or is it in the process of being done? Or is it done once with ongoing consequences? Or is it continually being done through habitual action?

a. Earlier I said “we have been seeing from [Psalm 119](https://ref.ly/Ps119)” - an example of “continually being done through habitual action”

4. Voice - the voice of the verb expresses who is doing the thing. We have this too: the active voice and passive voice. Greek also has middle voice.

5. Mood - Greek has 4 voices and these express the relationship between the action and reality. Is it factually happening? Is it hoped to happen? Is it a command for it to happen?

If you want to study that more - a couple of links:

• https://www.blueletterbible.org/help/greekverbs.cfm

• https://sgbiblestudies.org/how-study-tips

• https://koine-greek.com/2021/12/15/a-brief-guide-to-aspect-in-greek-part-i/

English has some of these concepts, but they don’t perfectly overlap.

And, English uses a lot of auxiliary words, such as “are, was, will, have, did” etc.

In Koine Greek, all those things: number, person, tense, mood and voice, all of it is in the verb itself.

So what?

What this all means is, one Greek word may need 2, 3, 4 or more English words to express it, and in some cases, there simply is no way to completely express it in English and a closest-approximation is needed.

#### Example!

Check out [1 John 3:6](https://ref.ly/1Jn3.6), in the 1995 edition of NASB

**1 John 3:6 NASB 95**

No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.

Many, I am sure, have read that and thought… Oh no! But I *do* sin! I must not abide in Him!! I don’t even **KNOW** Him!

The Greek word has a present tense and *ongoing* aspect. It’s habitual, ongoing sin.

Hence the 2020 edition of the NASB resolved by adding in italics:

**1 John 3:6 NASB 2020**

No one who remains in Him sins *continually;* no one who sins *continually* has seen Him or knows Him.

The italicised word means it’s not in the original language, but it’s implied.

#### Example Again

Another famous verse, [Ephesians 2:8](https://ref.ly/Eph2.8)

**Ephesians 2:8 NASB 2020**

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this *is* not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

Consider the first part. “For by grace you have been saved through faith.”

The verb for saved is perfect, present tense. In Greek, it is both:

• You HAVE BEEN saved

• You ARE saved

Simultaneously.

Our salvation is a completed, historical event. We have been saved.

And, our salvation is an ongoing, present tense reality. We ARE saved.

**Ephesians 2:8 NET 2nd ed.**

For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God;

Neither translation completely translates the text. So which do you pick?

# Bible Versions

So, we’ve surveyed a couple of areas that go into our English Bibles.

• What manuscript traditions will we follow? Which will we use as the primary source? Which will we consider as secondary, if any?

• What will be our translation approach? Will we try to maximise technical accuracy, even if it’s at the expense of English readability, or will we prioritise English style, even if it means losing some of the precision?

Having done this study, it seems to me that the **translation approach** is actually a much more significant factor in the myriad different English Bibles we have today.

The work on textual criticism over the last few centuries have brought us to a point of *extremely high* confidence in the original language text. We have a few points of doubt, but none with any impact on Christian theology or doctrine.

So now it’s really all about finding the best way to present the text to modern English readers.

Here is a chart that I pinched from Olive Tree Bible Software’s website. It shows a couple of dozen different English Bibles on a spectrum:

**WORD-FOR-WORD** or “Formal Equivalence” (ESV calls it “Essentially literal”)

• The translators try to preserve the original language as much as possible. They’ll try to use the same English word to translate the same Greek and Hebrew word. This is great for word studies.

• Our NASB falls into this category, along with ESV.

**THOUGHT-FOR-THOUGHT** or “Dynamic Equivalence”

• The translators will focus on translating meaning, rather than words.

• The NIV and NLT fit in this category, where the priority is clarity and flow of English, rather than word-perfect faithfulness.

**IDEA-FOR-IDEA** or “Paraphrase”

• The Message is the main example we’re familiar with. In theory, the aim is to get the main point across, which can be helpful to the young - either physically or spiritually young.

• To be fair to Eugene Peterson, he explicitly said he’s not trying to replace your preferred Bible translation. Rather, he wants to give a fresh perspective.

## Why we study the NASB

So why do we study the NASB? Why is that the Bible we teach from on Sundays?

It’s simple:

• The further to the left, you have TRANSLATIONS

• The further to the right, you have INTERPRETATIONS

All translation requires a degree of interpretation, of course. But it needs to be kept to a minimum, because translators have biases. When you focus on translating WORDS, the opportunity for bias to creep in is kept to a minimum. When you start to focus on translating MEANING, then the interpretation and the theology of the translator is going to be much more likely to manifest in the text.

# Conclusion and My Recommendations

God wants to be known. He wants YOU to know Him, and to understanding His revelation.

That’s why He has prepared the text of the Bible through generations of His people, and then preserved the Bible text so carefully through the diligence of the scribes.

## My Recommended English Bibles

The NASB, for all the reasons just stated. The NASB is a continuation of the American Standard Version tradition, which itself traces back to the 1881 English Revised Version.

There are 3 main editions of the NASB.

1. The original version publish in 1971

2. The first major revision in 1995

3. The most recent revision, publish 2020

If you want to know the differences, you can read the “principles of translation!”

It is a highly trustworthy and reliable Bible with the very first principle being that “these publications shall be true to the original Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.”

### English Standard Version

The ESV is like an old friend to me, being the main Bible I studied for a long time. It is a revision of the 1971 Revised Standard Version, and so like the NASB has a rich heritage.

Personally, I find the ESV to have an excellent balance of readibility with scholarly accuracy. The ESV Study Bible also has some excellent notes, maps and commentaries that I find invaluable for study.

### New English Translation

If I had to pick just *one* Bible, and had no others, it would be the New English Translation.

The reason? Ironically, not because I like the text the best. The text is fine, but it would sit in the middle of our chart as a dynamic equivalence translation.

It’s because it has *by far* the most comprehensive translators’ notes. Over 60,000 notes, and some of them are incredibly detailed. Every one of the little nuances I’ve mentioned today, the NET notes are extensively detailed.

You can see in the image the amount of space dedicated to it! It is a bit much, so full disclosure, I only read it in my Logos Bible Software!

Which brings me to my final recommendation:

### Interlinear Study

Interlinear study is where you have the original language and the English translation together, line by line.

Throughout the vast majority of the Church age, this was not possible at all. Now, with the advent of Bible software and the Internet, it’s freely available to everybody.

The Blue Letter Bible is a great way to get started with interlinear study. Visit the website, or perhaps check out some YouTube videos on getting started with interlinear study.

What is the best Bible today? What is the best way for you to hear His voice?

Personally, I recommend owning, reading and studying multiple translations. It perfectly fine, maybe even helpful, to read some of the dynamic equivalence Bibles, such as the NIV or New Living. But for serious study, you want to be focusing on an essentially literal translation.

But, THE MOST PRIMARY POINT IS.

The Word of God is SPIRITUALLY DISCERNED. That’s the focal point of our final study, session 5.

Next week is going to focus on The Nature and Reliability of Scripture. I’ll show you proofs of its supernatural origin, and of its perfect reliability in terms of prophetic witness.