

How to Study the Bible

Week One

January 25, 2009

Introduction & Observation

*Elisha prayed, and said,
"LORD, I pray, open his
eyes that he may see."
(2 Ki 6:17)*



his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper. (Ps 1:2-3)


Calvary Chapel
O F R O S W E L L

Preface

When you hear the words “Bible Study”, I wonder what comes to mind. For some, thoughts of delight and discovery with excitement appear. For others thoughts of frustration, fear, guilt, and failure come to mind. To both of these types of feelings and all those in between—our longing is that this course would be a blessing. It will be our aim to help everyone be able to confidently approach the Bible with both expectation and excitement at learning what God has.

How can this study help you? This study will teach a simple, proven and effective process for studying the Bible. It will be a basic approach touching several of the fundamentals of Bible study. How it helps you will be different for each student. I do believe it can and will be valuable for everyone. But the truth is that every student is coming from a different place, so what you get from it will be different.



Some of you are avid students of the Bible and you may find yourself wondering if this will be helpful to you or if it will be too basic. The truth is that it is in the basics that we often need to improve. I have full confidence that if you will approach this study with a fresh openness, that God will show you and help you even more.



Some are scared and question if they can study the Bible. Yet for many, the opposite will be true. As you approach this study you may be feeling overwhelmed and even fearful. You honestly wonder if you can study the Bible yourself and really understand it. I want to encourage you, it is possible! That is what God wants – He wants us to understand His word. I want to encourage you to venture into this study and seek to establish some patterns and habits that will bear more fruit than you can imagine. Please don't let fear hold you back.





I want to give you a promise. If you will honestly work through this course, attempting to grow in what is taught and apply it – then you will find a growing confidence in your own ability to handle the scripture. I believe that you will find that this discovery and the ongoing discovery of God’s word will be such a joy! But best of all, I believe this growth will deepen your relationship with God – which is the best of all.

I suppose it is true to any realm of study, but I want to encourage you that the strength of this course will be equivalent to your application. I think of Jesus words about this very thing, when He said:

*Then He said to them, “Take heed what you hear.
With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you;
and to you who hear, more will be given. (Mk 4:24)*

May God help me to equip you as He has called me to do (Eph 4:12). May Jesus open up the scriptures to you!

And He opened their understanding,
that they might comprehend the Scriptures.
(Lk 24:45)

Who Can Study the Bible?

There are probably many areas that can be touched under such a thought, but I want to simply touch four key issues.



One – You must be a Christian!

The key issue to understand is that a person who is not a Christian, cannot comprehend the Bible.

These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

(1 Co 2:13-14)

A person who seeks to approach the Bible, in an unsaved condition, will never get out of the Bible what God has for us in it. It is not because it is written in code, but because of the lack of the Spirit and lack of spiritual life in us.

My simple question for you as we begin is, are you saved?

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified. (2 Co 13:5)



Two—You need the help of the Holy Spirit.

Because the Bible is a spiritual book, one of the key things we need is the help of the Spirit. Jesus gave us the promise of the help of the Spirit for specifically this reason.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. (Jn 14:26)

The key here is to make sure that you know you need His help. The need is that as you approach His word that you seek His help.



Three—you can understand the Bible.

Consider these facts: The Bible is written not in academic prose. It is not written as many Bible theology books. Instead it is written in simple language.

In Jesus day, the Bible was written in Koiné Greek – which was the common language of the people. The Bible was not written in scholarly Greek but language of the common man.

The Bible is written largely in story form – easy to follow and read. Through the ages, God has caused it so that His Word is being translated into all the languages of the peoples.

All these things together show us – that it is God’s aim that the Bible be understood by all who read it, all who are His kids.



Four-Know that the Bible is the Word of God.

Many have struggled with the question of the accuracy of the Bible and if it is all really from God. If you are there, don’t feel bad – you are not alone. Yet, also understand what a key issue this is for you to settle. Till you settle this –the Bible can be little to you than a collection of nice sayings, but its authority will be in doubt. (it becomes an odd position where man is the authority...not God, or the Bible)

I will tell you this, there are abundant reasons for us to trust the Bible. We see proofs in its unity, its history, its archeology, its fulfilled prophesies and more. If you will honestly search these questions out, you will find all your questions will be answered, and you will be able to have confidence in the Bible. Hundreds of thousands have done the same.

One challenge I do have for you though is this – your acceptance of the Bible being the Word of God becomes an all or nothing acceptance of the Bible. Those who only accept some or parts of the Bible – are untrue in honesty, integrity and reasonability.

Now, this study is not one where we will take the time to go into all the details that back this up. But if this is a real concern for you – then this is where you need to begin. There are numbers of great

resources available for you to consider, which we would be happy to find for you. Further, outside class – the leaders and teachers of this church would be thrilled to sit down and go over this.

Some good resources on this:

The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict By: Josh McDowell

Evidence for Jesus: Discover the Facts That Prove the Truth of the Bible

By: Ralph O. Muncaster

When Skeptics Ask: A Handbook of Christian Evidences By: Norman Geisler ; Ron Brooks

So all said and done—if you are a Christian, then you have the Spirit, and God has given you the Bible for you to understand. My hope and prayer is that you do and will understand His Word!

*And He opened their understanding,
that they might comprehend the Scriptures.
(Lk 24:45)*

Introduction

How do we study the Bible? By definition, the method of Bible Study I am teaching you is called an “Inductive Bible Study”. Perhaps the simplest way to understand that is to see its contrast. A deductive approach would mean we begin with a set of premises and seek to see those in the text. An inductive approach means that we seek to get our premises from the text itself. Simply, that means that we study in such a way as to allow the Bible to speak for itself.



The difference is not actually a minor thing. I believe satan’s way, the world’s way and thus the way in cults is a deductive approach to truth. They tell you what to believe, and you are not allowed to approach truth inductively. Yet God wants us to approach His truth honestly, inductively and openly.

In fact, the more you understand this method, you will see that this approach to understanding is the way that we are all wired. God has designed us naturally to think inductively. The world and satan will seek to dumb us down and cause us not to think. Yet, it is not how we are designed. The better you get at approaching this method—you will discover that it is natural, and flows with the way that you think.

To define this approach, I challenge you to see the basic three step process of **Observation**, **Interpretation** and **Application**. In many ways, the concepts are not hard to understand.

First we must observe. The idea is that we will attempt to discover what a text means through careful observation of the facts presented in a text. The goal is to see what God put there—nothing added, but nothing subtracted.

Second we take those observations and interpret them. We seek to understand what the things we have observed mean. Our goal is to understand what it is that God is saying in the passage.

Third—we take our interpretations and look for applications. What is it that God wants for us to know, do and live from this passage.

One of the verses that lays out this three step process to me as clearly as any other, is Nehemiah 8:8.

So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading.

Notice—they read distinctly—emphasizing a clear reading or observation of the passage. Second they gave the sense, or interpreted the passage for them. Lastly, they helped them understand. The word for understand there has the idea of figuring out what it meant for them—or application. There you have it, in Neh 8:8—Observation, Interpretation, and Application.

All Bible study, done rightly will ultimately fall into exactly these steps—in one way or another. If you go into a Christian book store you will find quite a variety of books that aim to help you study the Bible. Many of them will have some quite different techniques in doing their study. Yet most of them, or at least the good ones, will follow this three step process. The techniques they use to follow this process may vary quite a bit in some of the details – but the fundamental aim will be the same.



Having said that, I also recognize that with so many different techniques out there, you may find yourself asking – which is the right approach? To answer that simply – it is the approach that helps you rightly understand and apply the Bible! Lets take that a step further. In this class and booklet – we are going to seek to equip you with a basic form of Bible study – and some simple techniques.

Yet, if you will apply yourself to this process, you will begin to discover techniques and habits that will better help you to study. That is exactly the goal. Every serious student of the Bible will eventually have their own approach – that fits them, their temperament and reasoning style. I am excited about this aspect of your studies and can only challenge you to seek to implement these steps exactly according to your personality. For some you will use a computer, other a pencil and paper. Some may be going to utilize a fancy color coding system or more. I want to encourage you to follow the steps in this class...and yet begin to learn how you think and develop your own personal style.

Let's Begin with Observation



This week, I want you to concentrate on the first step in Bible study—the key of observation.

Webster's dictionary defines observation as “*the act or instance of noticing or perceiving.*” Simply, it is how we pay attention to the details in front of us. Paying good attention!

Observations become the building blocks of our whole study. Your Bible study will never rise above your ability to observe. Think of it this way, Imagine that you were seeking to build a house. Observation is like gathering the materials for the house. Your house will be no bigger or better than the materials you gather.



Or let's change the illustration. Imagine you are a detective studying a crime scene. Observations will be the keys to your investigation – picking up as many clues as you can. If you miss the clues before you, your investigation will not be complete or even can come to the wrong conclusion. Being a good observer is paramount to a detective.

Thus, in our observation – the goal is to gather as much information as we can. It does not mean that all of our observations will necessarily be valid or helpful. But we want to gather as many details as we possibly can.

A very important point is that our observations need to come only from the text we are studying. We are only interested in what the text says! The great danger is that for most of us—we bring baggage into the text before us. Assumptions, other teachers, movies we have seen and more all play a part of giving us things that we often think are in the text, but really are not.

For example, we have occasionally done what we call a “Christmas Quiz” here at Calvary Chapel. We test people to see what their

accurate knowledge is about what the Bible says about Jesus' birth. One of the questions that catches a lot of people is what did Mary ride on in her journey to Bethlehem. Most will answer that she rode a donkey. But here is the reality—it never tells us what or if Mary rode anything to Bethlehem. (if you doubt me, look it up in Luke 2!) The problem is, because of movies, cards, plays and more—we think there is a donkey but there is not.



So, the aim for us now as we learn to observe is, to only observe what is actually in the text—nothing more.

Understand that to be a good observer it takes time and commitment. Many people lose it right here. Many are so ready to get to the interpretation of a passage. The immediately want to dive into look at the meaning of the words, or cross references or more. They are quick to look at their study notes in there Bible and even to open up commentaries and see what they have to say. Others are ready immediately to begin making applications to their lives. I want to encourage you NOT to do this when you are seeking to seriously study a passage. Those things will come...but the breadth, depth and strength of your study will often lie right here—in your observation of a passage.

So, now the question: How do we observe a passage?

The simple means—is to pay attention to the passage and notice all the details you can. Beyond that, there are not magic steps or any such thing. The goal is just to grow in your ability to pay attention.

In order to do that, I want to give you several tools in the next number of pages that will help you learn to observe. This is not something that you have to do each and every time, in every passage. Nor are these in some specific order that you need to follow. Yet, these are helpful things—and worthy of bringing into your habits of Observation in the Bible.



1) Read the Passage. Perhaps this sounds basic, but it is not. This is often not an easy matter, so seek to read

and re-read the text several times. In fact, I would suggest you always seek to read the text you are going to study at least three times before seeking to find specific observations. I know of people who have committed to simply reading the passage a dozen times before studying it.



2) Read it Out Loud. It is amazing how at times we can skim over passages and miss some of the details. When you read out loud, you force yourself to read the whole passage. Further, reading out loud often keeps our minds from wandering – which is very helpful!

3) Read it specifically. Some might even call this meditatively. The idea is read the passage again, and out loud if possible. Put emphasis on different words in the text, to see the focus of this. For example: try it with this familiar passage – putting the emphasis on the bold words:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...”
“For **God** so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...”
“For God **so** loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...”
“For God so **loved** the world that He gave His only begotten Son...”
“For God so loved **the** world that He gave His only begotten Son...”
“For God so loved the **world** that He gave His only begotten Son...”
“For God so loved the world **that** He gave His only begotten Son...”
“For God so loved the world that **He** gave His only begotten Son...”
“For God so loved the world that He **gave** His only begotten Son...”
“For God so loved the world that He gave **His** only begotten Son...”
“For God so loved the world that He gave His **only** begotten Son...”
“For God so loved the world that He gave His only **begotten** Son...”
“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten **Son**...”

One of the key ideas is to try to see and catch every word in the passage—noticing it and where it falls.

4) Ask Questions of the Passage. The easiest way to start is to ask the basic questions we all have been taught: *Who, What, When,*

Where, Why and How.

Who: Who are the people mentioned in our text? What does it tell us about them?

What: What is the event that is happening? What are the key truths being presented?

Where: Look for details about location and surroundings.

When: Look for time words, things that will help set the sequence of events.

Why: Look for words that point to why things are being said or things are happening.

How: How did these things happen, what was happening.

5) Read it inquisitively. I suppose the word inquisitive covers all that we are saying. Yet, what I mean here—is ask questions about the words used, and the details given. Look for things that you would have expected it to say that it does not. Look for things that seem added, words, phrases that at first glance appear unnecessary or redundant. (They never really are!)

6) Read it grammatically. We will go into this in greater detail in the Interpretation phase—but here in the observation phase, begin looking for details. Look for where the sentence begins and ends. (Sentences rarely cover only one verse!) Look for the basic sentence parts—the noun(s), verb(s), adjective(s) and object(s). It is amazing how just seeing this clearly will open up things in a passage.

5) Read it imaginatively. If the passage is a story, imagine what it looked like, what you would see if you were there. Picture the passage – then and what it might look like today. If it is a letter, imagine writing it or reading it in that day for the first time.

Again – the goal – is to notice as many details that are actually in the text as possible. At this point in the study, you may not know

what they mean – but you are just seeking to notice them, to pick up on all the details that you can.

As we do all this – a very important technique is this – Think through the end of a pencil! In other words – write as much of this out as you can. Writing is a key in crystallizing thoughts and ideas. It is vital in Bible study. Now, in our modern age – you may do this on a computer, and that is fine...but the idea is to record it – get it on paper or its equivalent.



Write everything down you can! Everything you notice. It does not mean your observations are going to be right, or even something you follow up on later. Right now, you just want to record all the thoughts you can on the passage, all that you see. Truly – you will be amazed at how much this simple technique helps.



Review

A good Bible Study is based on three things. Good Observations, skill at interpreting the passage and practically applying it. Observation, Interpretation, Application.

This week, I want to one more time emphasize that I want to challenge you to grow in your ability to observe a passage of Scripture. Again, I want to emphasize that your depth of Bible study will never grow beyond your ability to Observe. I want to challenge you to grow in your observation skills and practices.

Homework

For homework this next week, I want to challenge you go over these two passages. Seek to spend time making as many observations as you can. Again, don't get ahead of yourself and try to figure it all out. Just make as many observations as you can.

- 1) Take Mark 4:1-20 and make as many observations as you can.
- 2) Take Romans 12:1-2 and make as many observations as you can
- 3) Further, I challenge you to just do this in your daily Bible study. I hope you're spending time daily in the Word, I honestly believe God calls us to that. Like Manna for the Children of Israel, I believe God calls us to gather our spiritual bread daily—each and every day.

In each day's reading—I challenge you to pick one sentence out, or even one verse. Then make as many observations of that section that you can.

The following pages have several key things for you to think through.

First—just an illustration of good observation techniques from a Sherlock Holm book.

Second—a brief article on Bible translations, discussing different ones.

Third—a brief history of Bible translations

The Watch

Source: From Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of the Four*
This is a good example of the power of being a good observer

We join the story with Dr Watson approaching Sherlock Holmes with a question:

"I have heard you say that it is difficult for a man to have individuality upon it in such a way that a trained observer might read it. Now, I have here a watch which has recently come into my possession. Would you have the kindness to let me have an opinion upon the character or habits of the late owner?"

I handed him over the watch with some slight feeling of amusement in my heart, for the test was, as I thought, an impossible one, and I intended it as a lesson against the somewhat dogmatic tone which he occasionally assumed. He balanced the watch in his hand, gazed hard at the dial, opened the back, and examined the works, first with his naked eyes and then with a powerful convex lens. I could hardly keep from smiling at his crestfallen face when he finally snapped the case to and handed it back.

"There are hardly any data," he remarked. "The watch has been recently cleaned, which robs me of my most suggestive facts."

"You are right," I answered. "It was cleaned before being sent to me." In my heart I accused my companion of putting forward a most lame and impotent excuse to cover his failure. What data could he expect from an uncleaned watch?

"Though unsatisfactory, my research has not been entirely barren," he observed, staring up at the ceiling with dreamy, lackluster eyes. "Subject to your correction, I should judge that the watch belonged to your elder brother, who inherited it from your father."

"That you gather, no doubt, from the H. W. upon the back?"

"Quite so. The W. suggests your own name. The date of the watch is nearly fifty years back, and the initials are as old as the watch: so it was made for the last generation. Jewelry usually descends to the eldest son, and he is most likely to have the same name as the father. Your father has, if I remember right, been dead many years. It has, therefore, been in the hands of your eldest brother."

"Right, so far," said I. "Anything else?"

"He was a man of untidy habits,—very untidy and careless. He was left with good prospects, but he threw away his chances, lived for some time in poverty with occasional short intervals of prosperity, and finally, taking to drink, he died. That is all I can gather."

I sprang from my chair and limped impatiently about the room with considerable bitterness in my heart. "This is unworthy of you, Holmes," I said. "I could not have believed that you would have descended to this. You have made inquiries into the history of my unhappy brother, and you now pretend to deduce this knowledge in some fanciful way. You cannot expect me to believe that you have read all this from his old watch! It is unkind, and, to speak plainly, has a touch of charlatanism in it."

"My dear doctor," said he, kindly, "pray accept my apologies. Viewing the matter as an abstract problem, I had forgotten how personal and painful a thing it might be to you. I assure you, however, that I never even knew that you had a brother until you handed me the watch."

"Then how in the name of all that is wonderful did you get these facts? They are absolutely correct in every particular."

"Ah, that is good luck. I could only say what was the balance of probability. I did not at all expect to be so accurate."

"But it was not mere guesswork?"

"No, no: I never guess. It is a shocking habit,—destructive to the logical faculty. What seems strange to you is only so because you do not follow my train of thought or observe the small facts upon which large inferences may depend. For example, I began by stating that your brother was careless. When you observe the lower part of that watch-case you notice that it is not only dented in two places, but it is cut and marked all over from the habit of keeping other hard objects, such as coins or keys, in the same pocket. Surely it is no great feat to assume that a man who treats a fifty-guinea watch so cavalierly must be a careless man. Neither is it a very far-fetched inference that a man who inherits one article of such value is pretty well provided for in other respects." I nodded, to show that I followed his reasoning.

"It is very customary for pawnbrokers in England, when they take a watch, to scratch the number of the ticket with a pinpoint upon the inside of the case. It is more handy than a label, as there is no risk of the number being lost or transposed. There are no less than four such numbers visible to my lens on the inside of this case. Inference,—that your brother was often at low water. Secondary inference,—that he had occasional bursts of prosperity, or he could not have redeemed the pledge.

Finally, I ask you to look at the inner plate, which contains the keyhole. Look at the thousands of scratches all round the hole,—marks where the key has slipped. What sober man's key could have scored those grooves? But you will never see a drunkard's watch without them. He winds it at night, and he leaves these traces of his unsteady hand. Where is the mystery in all this?"

Which Bible?

As we approach studying the Bible, one of the questions that comes up is what kind of Bible should we have?

Today we have more choices when it comes to picking a Bible than ever before in history! You have choices in every color, shape, style and form. It can almost be overwhelming to pick a Bible.

Versions

There are hundreds of Bible versions, but there are basically three main types of translations. There are Word-for-Word translations, Dynamic Equivalent translations and Paraphrase translations.

The Word-for-Word translation is an approach that aims to interpret the Greek or Hebrew text in a word for word way. This type of translation will sacrifice smooth English reading for a more literal translation. It attempts to give a word-for-word, clause-for-clause and sentence-for-sentence rendering of the original text. Popular translations that use this method are the *New American Standard* (NASB), the *English Standard Version* (ESV), the *King James Version* (KJV) and the *New King James Version* (NKJV). The literalness of these translations make them good sources for Bible study and these better ensure we are really reading what God wrote. The downside of these translations is that they miss some of the impact the original words would have had on their hearers. Further there are phrases that don't mean the same thing in our language.

Yet, even though that is so, I personally believe that it is best to choose a literal translation for your main Bible. It is helpful to have a dynamic equivalent translation or two to help make sure you get the feel of the text. But to me – literalness is far more important.

The Dynamic Equivalent translations aim to make the passage as clear in today's language as possible. These translations will add words and change sentence structure in order to seek to make the

passage as current and understandable as possible. These translations make for easy reading and impact. The aim is again to make the same impact that the translators feel the original versions would have made on the original hearers. The chief and best translation in this category is the New International Version (NIV). The downside of this type of translation is it is more open to the bias of the translators. Since they are sacrificing word-for-word translation and seeking to interpret the passages for impact – it can be a more inaccurate translation according to their bias. Yet – again, the benefit is that it is everyday language and sentence structure, which helps the Bible’s impact into our culture.

The Paraphrase is the third type of translation we want to consider. The aim of the paraphrase is almost primarily on impact. Unlike the dynamic equivalent that still aims at an accurate translation – these aim more for impact or feel. These are helpful to read. However I would not recommend this type as a regular Bible. They end up being more like a commentary on a passage. Examples of this type of translation include the Living Bible, the Message and Amplified Bible. Again, I would highly suggest that you do not use this type of Bible for your main translation.

So your first goal is to select a version of the Bible to use as your main Bible. I suggest that you choose a Word-for-word equivalent translation. But again – it is helpful to have in your home library other translations – including a Dynamic equivalent and even a paraphrase translation to help you in your study.

Having said all this, I want to express my confidence in the Word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to communicate His word accurately – even in translations like a dynamic equivalent. God is able!

Study Bibles

There are several good study Bibles out on the market – including: the *Scofield Reference Bible*, the *Ryrie Study Bible*, the *Thompson Chain Reference Study Bible*, The *NIV Study Bible*, the *Open Bible*, and the *Life Application Study Bible*. All of these are good study Bibles and helpful to have. Many of the resources are wonderful!

For me personally, I prefer not use a study Bible as my main Bible. The danger of a study Bible is we are tempted to look at the notes in the Bible before we study the passage for ourselves. Further, there is something about reading notes in our Bible that almost carries an authority. We need to understand that the Bible is perfect and inspired – but the notes in study Bibles are not.

Other suggestions

You might also want to make sure that your main Bible has a sturdy binding. You want your Bible to last a long time.

Also, you might want to consider having wide margins if you want to make notes in your Bible.

Then you might also want to look and see if the Bible you are looking at has references – either in the similar column or at the bottom of the passage.

To me, the choice of a Bible is no minor matter and it will be a personal decision that will differ with each of us. I challenge you to consider clearly your choices and be willing to pay the price for a Bible that will be very helpful for you.

Review of Bible translations

The literal (word-for-word) versions are the most accurate renditions of God's Word and include the least amount of translational bias.

Since the literal versions are the most accurate, they are usually the best for Bible study.

Because of their literary style, many of the less literal versions (such as the NIV) make good versions for personal reading.

It is helpful to include both literal and less literal translations on your bookshelf.

It is best to stay with a single version for most of your reading and studies (this aids in memorization).

When choosing your main Bible, look for durable binding, cross-references and perhaps wide margins (for your personal notes).

Study Bibles, since they do not encourage personal study, are best used as bookshelf references – but not as your main Bible.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE

The Old Testament was originally written in the Hebrew language, and a few passages in Aramaic. The New Testament was written in the Greek language.

By the early Middle Ages the Bible had been completely translated into Latin and this became the primary language and resource for the Bible. In fact, until the Reformation of the sixteenth century, the Latin Vulgate was the official Bible of the Church. This was unfortunate, since only a few educated people could read Latin. Thus the Bible was a closed book to the majority of people.

The later Medieval period, however, saw the production of several partial translations into Old English (Anglo-Saxon). The first full translation of the Bible in our language was the Middle English translation of John Wycliffe in 1382.

Still, it was not until the time of William Tyndale in the Reformation that the Bible was translated into English from the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. From Tyndale's translation work at the beginning of the sixteenth century to the translation of the King James Version early in the seventeenth century, several English versions were produced:

1525 Tyndale's Bible	1560 The Geneva Bible
1535 The Coverdale Bible	1568 The Bishop's Bible
1539 The Great Bible	1611 The King James Version

The King James Version reigned dominant until well into the twentieth century, and still remains popular. Whereas almost all English translations from Tyndale to the American Standard Version tended to be literal, the twentieth century saw the rise of other less literal forms of translation, such as the dynamic

equivalent and paraphrase Bibles.

Below are some of the most common translations and the categories they fall into:

Word for Word Translations - Literal

1611 The King James or Authorized Version (KJV or AV)

1881-5 The Revised Version (RV)

1901 The American Standard Version (ASV)

1946-52 The Revised Standard Version (RSV)

1971 The New American Standard Bible (NASB)

A conservative literal revision of the ASV

1982 The New King James Version (NKJV)

The NT appeared in 1979. A considerable revision of the language of the KJV, but based upon the same Greek and Hebrew texts that were the basis of the KJV.

1989 The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

1995 New American Standard Bible (NASB95)

2001 English Standard Bible (ESV)

Dynamic Equivalent Translations

1978 The New International Version (NIV)

This is not a revision of any previously existing version, but an entirely new translation in idiomatic twentieth-century English.

The Jerusalem Bible (JB) The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)

The Revised English Bible (REB)

Today's English Version (TEV)

The New English Bible (NEB)

1996 New Living Translation

Paraphrase Translations

J.B. Phillips

The Living Bible

The Message

The Good News Bible

1993. The Message.

An informal paraphrase of the New Testament. One example: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" is changed to "Enjoy the best of Jesus!"

Here is an example of 2 Timothy 3:16 in many of the common translations:

American Standard Version (ASV)

16 Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness.

Amplified Bible (AMP)

16 Every Scripture is God-breathed (given by His inspiration) and profitable for instruction, for reproof and conviction of sin, for correction of error and discipline in obedience, [and] for training in righteousness (in holy living, in conformity to God's will in thought, purpose, and action),

Bible in Basic English (BBE)

16 Every holy Writing which comes from God is of profit for teaching, for training, for guiding, for education in righteousness:

English Standard Version (ESV)

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

King James Version (KJV)

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

The Message

16 Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way.

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

New Century Version (NCV)

16 All Scripture is given by God and is useful for teaching, for showing people what is wrong in their lives, for correcting faults, and for teaching how to live right.

New International Version (NIV)

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

New King James Version (NKJV)

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

New Living Translation (NLT)

16 All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right.

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

16 All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

Wuest NT

Every scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for teaching, for conviction, for improvement, for training with respect to righteousness, in order that the man of God may be complete, fitted out for every good work.

