

Matthew 6:9 (NIV) "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name..."  
(MSG) "Our Father in heaven, reveal who you are..."

*(The Message deletes the reference to God's holy name and ADDS a request that encourages "enlightenment" not voiced by Jesus in the Greek. )*

John 14:28 (NIV) "...the Father is greater than I."  
(MSG) "...the Father is the goal and purpose of my life."

*(The Message distorts the relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son.)*

John 1:12 (NIV) "...children of God."  
(MSG) "...true selves, child-of-God selves."

*(The Message implies that we ourselves are gods).*

Romans 6:4 (NIV) "...raised from the dead...we too may live a new life."  
(MSG) "...raised into a light-filled world...so we can see where we are going..."

*("...light-filled world..." — Another New Age "enlightened" implication).*

I Tim. 1:9-10 and I Cor. 6:9-10 (NIV) Lists specific sins by name.  
(MSG) (see note below)

*(The Message deletes all words like "adulterers" and "homosexual" throughout the entire translation. In the Corinthian verses, The Message uses the phrase "...use and abuse the earth and everything in it" which has absolutely nothing in the Greek text to support those words. That phrase does however subtly teach the New Age doctrine that all is God and worship of the creation, not the creator — see Romans 1:21-25).*

I Cor. 6:18-20 (NIV) "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body...." (Underline added)  
(MSG) "There's more to sex than mere skin on skin. Sex is as much a spiritual mystery as a physical fact. As written in Scripture, 'The two become one.' Since we want to become spiritually one with the Master, we must not pursue the kind of sex that avoids commitment and intimacy, leaving us more lonely than ever — the kind of sex that can never 'become one.'...In sexual sin we violate the sacredness of our own bodies, these bodies that were made for God-given and God-modeled love, for 'becoming one' with another." (Underline added)

*(The Message implies that "commitment and intimacy" or "becoming one" — not marriage, — sets the boundaries for acceptable sex thus allowing for homosexual or "living together" relationships).*

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# DILIGENCE

*"We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure." — Hebrews 6:11*

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The last issue of *Diligence* was a discussion of various versions of the Bible. We hope that you took the extra sheet and studied some of the differences. If you did, most likely there were some instances that seemed too minor to be of any concern and others that, at the very least stimulated your thinking a bit.

Before moving on to our discussion for this particular issue, we would like to make an important point about modern translations in general. To cast unwarranted suspicion on *all* modern translations has the potential of making the message of the Bible less accessible to those who may not have the language skills to decipher archaic English. Unless one is proficient in Greek and Hebrew (which hardly any of us are) such unwarranted suspicion can cut off one of the avenues for finding answers to some of the seeming discrepancies in a cherished, but imperfect translation. So we're not at all saying that simply because a particular version is more modern than the *King James Version*, that it should automatically be viewed as questionable. What we *are* saying is that Christians *must* study so that they are proficient at making educated judgements as to the accuracy of any verse/s in *any* translation. Christians are clearly told in God's Word that *they have a responsibility* to discern what is acceptable and what is *not* acceptable. (II Tim 2:15; Acts 17:11; I John 4:1; II Peter 2:1-3; II Tim. 3:14-17)

On that chart enclosed with the previous issue, there were six different translations of the Bible listed. One of those was *The Message*. In the first four months following the 1993 release of *The Message*, 70,000 copies were sold and thousands more were donated or distributed at reduced prices to youth leaders and ministers around the United States to share with their "followers." The author of *The Message*, Eugene Peterson states in his introduction that it is "...the New Testament in...the same language in which we do our shopping, talk with our friends, ...and teach our children their table manners." Sounds like a good idea but what if crucial Biblical concepts are not part of our everyday conversation? Do we then have the right to rewrite God's Holy Scriptures to fit today's more shallow and worldly language? The fact that essential Biblical terms are no longer a part of our everyday conversation doesn't give us a license to change God's message. Many churches, influenced by the culture of today, emphasize good feelings and subjective experiences rather than uncompromising faith on God's revealed truth. We should be aware that *truth* is the only foundation that enables

us to have a relationship with God. How do we know that truth? John 17:17 says “...*thy word is truth.*” So let us never forget that we are dealing with God’s *unchanging* Word — not an ordinary book. *We* do not own God’s message, *God* owns it! Throughout both the Old and New Testament we are forbidden to distort His Word. We are forbidden to add to or take away from the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 4:2 and 12:29 thru 13:1-4; Galatians 1:7-9; Proverbs 30:6).

Yet a close study of *The Message* reveals that this is exactly what the author has done. Any Bible student willing to compare Peterson’s *Message* with a Greek/English Interlinear Lexicon and take the time to look up key words in a New Testament Dictionary and Concordance will discover alarming deletions, distortions and additions to the original text. *The Message* is not at all faithful to the Greek. While it *is* very imaginative it is nothing more than a *perversion* — *not* a version of God’s Word! In only a short time of study, a diligent Bible student would have no choice but to come to the conclusion that if Eugene Peterson is *right*, then all other Bibles — the *KJV*, *NASV*, *NIV*, Greek-English Interlinear Bibles, etc. — are all false.

But the problems with *The Message* go *well* past omissions and additions. It has been referred to by some as “The Mystical Bible: The Message of Mysticism.” *The Prophetic Research Group* — a Biblical Ministry to Women— in their “*Defend the Faith Series*” makes this comment about *The Message*:

“*The Message* was ‘crafted’ to present the doctrine of mysticism to the Christian church in order to seduce it into occultism and the New Age Movement. Those readers who recognize mystical/occult terminology, will definitely get ‘the message’ Mr. Peterson is seeking to convey within his Bible version.”

*The Message* has earned similar comments from other Bible researchers as well. So while we do not support the doctrine endorsed by this ministry group, their research into *The Message* is certainly alarming. Especially since there are numerous other scholars who share that same opinion of *The Message*.

To further complicate the dangers of this translation, the publisher of *The Message* (NavPress) advertises it as a “translation from the original languages” that “accurately communicates the original Hebrew and Greek languages.” Such statements by the publisher give an entirely false impression of the work. *The Message* is actually an *extremely* loose, eccentric paraphrase of the text with numerous insertions and omissions. Any reader who mistakes Peterson’s cavalier treatment of the text for a reliable translation is in danger of being seriously misled at many points.

One’s first indication that there are some serious problems in *The Message* is the frequent use of New Age terminology. Words such as “Life-Light,” “child-of-God selves,” “God-Colors” and other similar terms should be recognized as being analogous to those used in New Age and Occult literature. It becomes

evident that Peterson has written *The Message* from the perspective of a Christian mystic. The problem presented by this perspective is that mystics believe we can relate to, or be united with God by meditative or contemplative prayer methods not found in the Bible. These non-Scriptural methods come from non-Christian sources such as Hindu and Buddhist Scriptures which had a profound influence on early “Christian” mystics — many of whom were Roman Catholic monks or nuns who engaged in monastic lifestyles. This should present a problem to Christians who desire to observe only those practices and beliefs which are in the Bible — and the monastic lifestyle *is not* a Scriptural concept by any stretch of His Word. Christians who believe that the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God should not rely on the teachings of the likes of Teresa of Avila (a Carmelite Nun), John of the Cross (a Carmelite Monk), Evelyn Underhill (foundational author of New Age Religion), George Fox (founder of the Quakers), Juliana of Norwich (a Benedictine Nun), Thomas Merton (a Trappist monk), Thomas á Kemper or any *other* mystic writers. We Christians have *God’s own words* from which to learn and study. Why would we want to place faith in the mystical beliefs and practices of nuns and monks promoted by Eugene Peterson in *The Message*? An individual simply does not *change* the Scriptures *unless* he has a hidden agenda that rests upon the foundation of unbelief concerning one or more aspects of God’s Word. Changing the Scriptures in order to advance an agenda can be very successful in changing other things as well. Such a change in Scriptures can also eventually:

- 1) change one’s faith (Romans 10:16-17)
- 2) change one’s doctrine (I Tim. 4:1; II Tim. 4:3-4)
- 3) change one’s behavior (Rom.1:21-32; Genesis 3:1 and 6).

In a 1993 article written by Eugene Peterson entitled “*Spirit Quest*” he states that he looks to mystics for personal spiritual encouragement. He specifically names Juliana of Norwich and Teresa of Avila among others. Why would Christians want to rely on the writing of one who does not even look to God and His Holy Word for their strength, encouragement and wisdom?

We have many hours of research invested in gathering information for this issue of *Diligence*. We would be happy to share additional information with anyone who would wish to know more about the dangers associated with *The Message*. We have numerous examples of passages in the Scriptures that have been distorted in this translation — many of which teach and encourage the mystical beliefs of New Age Religion and the evolution of man into “godhood.” In the bit of space that we have remaining, we want to share just a *very* few examples from *The Message* with a brief comment about them. We pray that you will look *cautiously* at some of the new Bible versions that are appearing in bookstores at an unprecedented rate. God’s Word tells us *clearly* that there *will be* false teachers. Please consider that those teachers *may* come in the form of books that various authors *call* “The Bible.” So let us “...*examine the Scriptures every day to see if what (those books) said was true*” (Acts 17:11 NIV).