

Fourth, there are currently *numerous* versions that are “gender neutral.” This means that in some cases the translators have taken liberties with certain Greek words that are *specifically* male and changed them to either gender neutral or plural so as to avoid any gender reference. John 14:23 in the *New Living Translation* is a good example of this. That verse was changed to plural (taking away the extremely *personal* nature of the verse) because it was too cumbersome to translate it using “he or she” every time the verse called for it. Gender neutral translation “rules” also prohibit the generic use of the masculine pronoun “he” or “him” in referring to persons of *unspecified* gender.

Fifth, avoid using paraphrased Bibles. They are nothing more than a re-statement (in different words) of the text of *another* translation. For example the *New Living Translation* was not translated from the Hebrew and Greek. The author was not proficient in Hebrew or Greek so he used English versions as the basis for his paraphrase. *The New Living Translation* is not much more than a revision of *The Living Bible* (even though the Preface *claims* that it is an “*entirely new translation*.” A good question to ask — why use a translation of a translation of a translation? The chances for errors are greatly increased each time. Use a version that was translated from the *original languages* of Hebrew and Greek.

Sixth, we can not stress *enough* to be *extremely* wary of footnotes in *every* Bible. They are *not* Scripture and therefore reflect the beliefs and ideas of their author — which may or may not be accurate. This also applies to Commentaries one might use. *Many* commentaries are slanted toward the particular beliefs of their authors. Never rely on *one* commentary alone. Use several and compare.

The conclusion to all of this is that no matter whether it’s a version of the Bible, a book off the shelf, or a sermon from the pulpit, there are three things that Christians should do in order to be certain that what they are reading or hearing is in accordance with the Truth of the Word of God and that it is not being corrupted by either an erroneous belief or an agenda of some sort. Those three things are: #1 — study and discern. #2 — study and discern. #3 — study and discern. Train ourselves (and our children) to discern *everything* we read or hear. Measure it against the Truth and perceive if there are differences that should send up “red flags.” The *only* way to accomplish this is to study, study, study. Familiarity with the Word is the only thing that will alert us to trouble.

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” (Acts 17:11 KJV)

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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

A ministry of Dennis and Sherri Owens

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Apples, Bananas and Bibles

Do you recall the assignment that was at the top of the last issue of *Diligence* — the one where a line was to be drawn from the picture to the correct word? In that issue we discussed how parents diligently teach their children to discern the difference between an apple and a banana but may not provide that same level of diligent instruction where religious things are concerned. In this issue, we will again be dealing with the subject of discerning. If you would like to refresh your memory of that April 1st issue you can do so by going to the web address listed at the bottom of page 4.

If you recall, in that previous issue we discussed the fact that one can not *change* the truth by corrupting it. The example used was that even if a child is *taught* that a banana is round and red and an apple is long and yellow, it doesn’t change the apple or the banana. *Both* are still what they *are*. The truth was simply corrupted. We also noted that putting the name “Jaguar” on the front of an old Chevy doesn’t mean it *is* a Jaguar. That’s a pretty basic concept no one would argue. That same concept applies to the *Holy Bible*. Putting the name *Holy Bible* on the front of a book doesn’t necessarily *mean* that it *is* the *uncorrupted* Truth. Yet there are some today doing that very thing. Some books with the name *Holy Bible* on the front of them have had the contents so corrupted that they are hardly worthy of the name *Holy Bible*.

The Word of God is Truth. Corrupting the content of God’s Word doesn’t *change* the Truth anymore than *calling* an apple a banana *changes* that apple into a banana. Yet many constantly argue basic truths of the Scriptures and corrupt the content of the Word in an effort to *change* it to say whatever they want. There are many today re-wording the Scriptures for the purpose of advancing their own agenda or cause. For example — a same sex relationship is *not* a marriage according to God’s Word yet there are those who passionately argue that it is. So there are now some versions of the “Bible” that have removed certain language from their text in order to advance the homosexual agenda. Another example might be that the Word of God clearly designates that only male leadership is authorized for the New Testament Church — yet that is frequently argued and some new “Bible” versions soften (as much as possible) that teaching. The point here is that many versions of the “Bible” have been corrupted to the point that they are no longer what they claim to be. Just because it *says Holy Bible* on the

front of the book doesn't *make* it the *Holy Bible*. *Calling* a banana an apple won't *make* it an apple. If mankind chooses to corrupt truths of the Bible, it doesn't *change* what the Truth is. We can *call* all kinds of books the *Holy Bible* and claim all kinds of things are "according to the Scriptures" — even though they are sin — but it *can not* make it so. An old Chevy will never *be* a Jaguar just because someone calls it by that name. And a book that has been changed for the purpose of advancing an agenda of the individuals who translated or published it, will never be the *Holy Bible* — no matter what it says on the front of it.

A bit earlier in this article we mentioned the web site that could be accessed in order to refresh your memory on the previous issue of *Diligence*. Even if you didn't feel it necessary to do so concerning that issue, it might be a good idea to go there anyway and check the three articles listed below that were published way back in September and October of 2002.

Volume 1 Issue 15 — September 15, 2002 — Bible Version Comparisons

Volume 1 Issue 16 — October 1, 2002 — *The Message* Bible Version

Volume 1 Issue 17 — October 15, 2002 — Gender Neutral Bible

Those three issues closely relate to *this* article and contain much more detail concerning various versions of the Bible. But since that discussion was so lengthy, we won't take space here to repeat that information. If you're interested in further study about different versions we recommend that you visit the web site and read those three issues. (If you don't have computer access, we would be happy to send copies of those issues to you — just call or ask us for them).

There are literally hundreds of Bible versions available today on the bookshelves of retail stores. According to the best research sources we have been able to find, there have been at least 9 new versions introduced between 2001 and the end of 2005 That's almost 2 a year! And that's just the beginning. According to <http://hyperhistory.net> there are over 500 different English translations of the Bible. Another source claims there are over 300. These numbers do not include translations in other languages. One source claims that the Bible has been translated into over 2400 of the 6900 known languages and that overall, there are probably over 3000 translations of the Bible when we include foreign languages. So whatever the count, unless an individual has learned to *discern* when reading or hearing the Word of God, he or she is quite vulnerable to accepting information that *may* actually be something far from the Truth.

These last two issues of *Diligence* (and the three published in 2002) should surely make it evident that as Christians, *it is absolutely necessary* for each of us to —

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.

(II Timothy 2:15 NASB)

It is imperative that Christians know the Word *well enough* that “red flags” will immediately go up in their mind when thumbing through a “Bible” version that is something *other* than the Word of God.

We must make it completely clear here that there is no “perfect” translation of the Bible. There are some who believe (and *teach*) that because the *King James Version* is referred to as the “Authorized *King James Bible*” it is the *only* one “authorized” for Christians to use. That is not accurate! The word “authorized” simply means that King James was the one who “authorized” that the translation be undertaken. When James I came to the throne of England, conflicting parties appealed to him for a new translation and in 1603 the seed was sewn that eventually resulted in the *King James Version* of the Bible. It was actually given to the public in 1611. The translators of that version however were certainly not infallible so errors were made by those who took on the task of completing that translation.

So what are Christians to do when most of us don't have a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew that would allow us to fluently read from copies of the original manuscripts? There *is* no easy and fast solution but may we offer a few suggestions that might be of some help when selecting a translation to use on a daily basis.

First, it's probably a good idea to have on hand and use more than one version for study. This allows comparison of texts and in the event that those versions seem to say something *completely* different from each other, check yet a third or even a fourth version.

Second, it's probably *also* a good idea that the *majority* of those three or four versions in your possession be of the “tried and true” variety. By this we mean translations that have endured the test of time and are *still* considered valid by scholars over a period of many, many years.

In 2004, Ellison Research conducted a survey for *Facts and Trends* magazine and found that the top four versions most ministers would recommend those in their congregations should use were these:

The New International Version (NIV) — Completed in 1978

The King James Version (KJV) — First published in 1611

The New King James Version (NKJV) — Completed in 1982

New American Standard Bible (NASB) — Completed in 1971; Updated 1995

The top three versions those same ministers were most likely to recommend that those in their congregations *should NOT use* were —

The Living Bible — published in 1971 — A Paraphrased Bible

Today's New International Version (TNIV) — Completed in 2005 —
A gender neutral revision of the NIV

The Message — Completed in 2002 — An eccentric paraphrase with many unlikely interpretations, lengthy insertions and omissions, as well as numerous other problems.

Third, be extremely careful of the newer translations since recent years have introduced many versions that have a very strong New Age influence. New Age is a *blend* of Christianity, various Eastern religions and the Occult. *The Message* is especially problematic in this area.