# Comparing Bible Translations

Information only: translations are listed in order of first publication, not ranked.

| TRANSLATION | FIRST PUBLISHED | LATEST EDITION | PUBLISHER | APPROACH | OLD TESTAMENT TEXT | NEW TESTAMENT TEXT | READING LEVEL | PRONOUNS FOR GOD | NOTABLE FEATURES |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **KJV** King James Version | 1611 | Standard text 1769 | Commissioned by King James I of England | Word-for-word | Masoretic Text (Hebrew Bible of 1524–25) | Textus Receptus | About grade 12 | Lowercase | Thee and thou for one person, ye for many; words added for sense in italics; majestic, memorable rhythm |
| **NASB** New American Standard Bible | 1971 | 2020 | The Lockman Foundation | Word-for-word | Masoretic Text (Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia) | Critical Text | About grade 11 | Capitalized (He, Him, His) | Known for following the original very closely; italics for added words; pronouns for God capitalized |
| **NIV** New International Version | 1978 | 2011 | Biblica (formerly the International Bible Society); Zondervan in the U.S. | Balanced | Masoretic Text (Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia) | Critical Text | About grade 7–8 | Lowercase | Aims for both accuracy and clear, natural English; one of the best-selling English Bibles since the 1980s |
| **NKJV** New King James Version | 1982 | 1982 (minor corrections since) | Thomas Nelson | Word-for-word | Masoretic Text (Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia) | Textus Receptus (notes show other texts) | About grade 8 | Capitalized (He, Him, His) | Keeps the KJV's structure and Greek text in modern English; footnotes show other Greek readings |
| **NLT** New Living Translation | 1996 | 2015 | Tyndale House Publishers | Thought-for-thought | Masoretic Text (Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia) | Critical Text | About grade 6 | Lowercase | Natural, everyday English; weights, measures and money in modern terms with footnotes |
| **ESV** English Standard Version | 2001 | 2016 | Crossway | Word-for-word | Masoretic Text (Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia) | Critical Text | About grade 10 | Lowercase | "Essentially literal": keeps the original's wording and literary style in readable English |
| **CSB** Christian Standard Bible | 2017 | 2020 (minor update) | Holman Bible Publishers | Balanced | Masoretic Text (Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia) | Critical Text | About grade 7 | Lowercase | "Optimal equivalence": as literal as possible while still clear; replaced the HCSB |

Reading levels are approximate U.S. school grades as commonly published; sources give slightly different figures. Masoretic Text = the Hebrew text preserved by Jewish scribes. Textus Receptus = the Greek text printed in the 1500s. Critical Text = the Nestle-Aland / United Bible Societies Greek text, which weighs the oldest manuscripts more heavily.

*"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."* **Isaiah 40:8 (KJV)**



Scripture quoted from the King James Version

# Approaches, Texts and Other Translations

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## Translation Approaches

FORMAL EQUIVALENCE

### Word-for-Word

Follows the original words, and where possible their order, as closely as English allows. Lets the reader see the structure of the original; some sentences read less smoothly in English.
**On this page: KJV, NASB, NKJV, ESV**

OPTIMAL EQUIVALENCE

### Balanced

Aims to be as literal as possible while still reading clearly. Keeps the original wording where it is plain in English and puts it more freely where a literal rendering would be unclear.
**On this page: CSB, NIV**

DYNAMIC OR FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE

### Thought-for-Thought

Puts the meaning of each sentence into natural, everyday English. Reads easily aloud and for long stretches; the translators decide more of the wording for the reader.
**On this page: NLT**

← MORE WORD-FOR-WORD — MORE THOUGHT-FOR-THOUGHT →

NASB · KJV · NKJV · ESV · CSB · NIV · NLT · The Message

The order is approximate and follows how the publishers describe their own translations. It shows a range of approaches, not a ranking: every point on the line has readers who value it. The Message, at the far end, is a paraphrase (see Other Translations).

## Other Translations You May See

| TRANSLATION | DATE | ABOUT IT |
|---|---|---|
| Geneva Bible | 1560 | Made by English Protestant exiles in Geneva. The first English Bible with numbered verses throughout, with many study notes in the margins. It was the Bible of Shakespeare, John Bunyan and the Pilgrims of the Mayflower. |
| American Standard Version (ASV) | 1901 | The American edition of the English Revised Version (1881–85). Very literal; it uses "Jehovah" for God's name. Public domain, and the basis of the NASB. |
| New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) | 1989; updated 2021 | A revision of the Revised Standard Version (1952), sponsored by the National Council of Churches. Uses inclusive language for people; common in mainline churches and universities. |
| Amplified Bible (AMP) | 1965; updated 2015 | From the Lockman Foundation. Adds words in brackets and parentheses to bring out shades of meaning in the original words; often read alongside another translation. |
| The Message (MSG) | 2002 | A paraphrase in everyday American English by one man, Eugene Peterson, rather than a committee translation. Often read alongside a translation. |
| NET Bible | 2005 | From Biblical Studies Press. Known for its more than 60,000 translators' notes explaining the choices behind the wording. Free to read online. |
| Legacy Standard Bible (LSB) | 2021 | A revision of the NASB 1995 made with the Lockman Foundation's permission. Uses "Yahweh" for God's name and capitalizes pronouns for God. |

## Where the Greek Texts Differ

- **Mark 16:9–20**: In the text of every translation here; the Critical Text translations add brackets or a note about the oldest manuscripts.
- **John 7:53–8:11**: The woman taken in adultery: in the text of all seven; bracketed or noted in the Critical Text translations.
- **Matthew 6:13**: The closing words of the Lord's Prayer, "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen," are in the KJV and NKJV text and in a footnote or brackets in most others.
- **Acts 8:37**: The eunuch's confession of faith is in the KJV and NKJV text and in a footnote or brackets in most others.
- **1 John 5:7–8**: The longer wording about "the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost" is in the KJV and NKJV text and in a footnote in most others.



Scripture quoted from the King James Version