



HOW TO USE THE BIBLE SERIES

VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE

AN ENRICH YOUR STUDY TOOL



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WHY CAN I TRUST THE BIBLE?

If you've never read the Bible before, you're probably asking yourself, how do I know I can trust the Bible?

We've listed a few key facts to help you see the accuracy of scripture, and we hope it will give you some encouragement as you begin to engage with the sacred book.

The truth is, even with these facts, you may still feel unsure - and that is OK!

Over time, we grow in our trust of scripture because over time we see that it is alive and active, it's relevant, and always points to Jesus and the character and nature of God.



TRANSCRIPTION LAWS

Strict laws governed how the Bible was transcribed, making it a meticulous process aimed at absolute accuracy.

Scribes used specially prepared animal-skin scrolls and ink, worked alone while ceremonially dressed, and copied the text letter by letter rather than from memory.

Each manuscript was checked repeatedly, and any copy containing more than three errors was discarded.

These practices ensured the text was faithfully preserved each time it was copied.

NUMBER OF MANUSCRIPTS

The New Testament is supported by more manuscripts than almost any other ancient work. Over 5,000 handwritten Greek manuscripts exist today, and more than 24,000 when other languages are included. By comparison, we have only 7 copies of Plato, 49 of Aristotle, and 643 of Homer's Iliad — yet all are considered reliable.

TEDIOUS COMILATION

The Bible was put together slowly and carefully. Books were included if they were written by an apostle or someone close to one, accepted by the wider Christian community, consistent with Christian teaching, and showed strong moral and spiritual value that reflected the work of the Holy Spirit.

WHY ARE THERE SO MANY VERSIONS?

LANGUAGE

The Bible is originally written in Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. When translating any text to another language, translators have to consider if they should translate word-for-word, thought-for-thought, or to paraphrase the text.

COMMON-TONGUE

'Common tongue' changes over time and more versions are made to keep up with it. For example, the KJV was written in a way that was common at the time, but is now sometimes considered hard to read.

STUDY MATERIAL

Many scholars, pastors, and organizations have developed their own translation of the Bible, which usually include additional commentary, charts, and study materials in their texts.

PROTESTANT VS CATHOLIC

There are both Protestant and Catholic canons of the Bible. The main difference between these is that Protestant Bibles have 66 books while Catholic Bibles have 73.

The Gathering Well resources reference the Protestant canon.

word-for-word
AMP | ESV | KJV

These tend to have richer individual-word meanings, but literal cultural metaphors and significance can be misunderstood.

thought-for-thought
CSB | NIV | NLT

These help translate complex ideas into simple terms, but tend to lose poetic significance and word-play from the original language.

paraphrased
CEV | MSG

Similar to thought-for-thought, paraphrased versions help translate complex ideas into very 'common-tongue,' but can lose meaning from the original language.



VERSIONS FOR BEGINNERS

Which versions are recommended for beginners and why?

Any version that you can read comfortably is a good version to start with.

common
recommendations
CSB | ESV | NIV |
NLT

As you become more familiar with navigating the Bible, it's a good practice to read and compare multiple versions as you are studying to get a more complete understanding of the text and increase your confidence.



THE YOU-VERSION BIBLE APP

Having your own physical copy of the Bible is recommended, however, the YouVersion Bible App is free and a great place to start. The app allows you to reference multiple versions without having them physically. It's easy to use for new readers and has simple navigation tools.

Features of the app include but are not limited to:

- Thousands of versions of the Bible including in other languages, some available with audio
- A Verse of the Day with paired videos and devotionals
- Bible study plans on various topics made by many individuals and organizations
- Community options where friends can complete plans together and see each others' progress
- Badges commemorating your achievements in the app

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