

# Which English language Bible should I use?

The question as to the best Bible translation to use sometimes arises with people who have just become Christians, as well as those whose first language is not English.

First, we must understand that there is not a single 'correct' translation of the Bible. We simply cannot say 'This is the only version you should use.' or even 'This is the best version to use.'

All translations have their strengths and weaknesses, and, yes, their flaws as well; which is why it is best to have a range of translations available when possible.

However, whilst we do not wish to be prescriptive, it is part of our duties to give people the best advice that we can, based on our researches.

## Bibles that we recommend.

For **general** purposes, the **New International Version (NIV)** is widely recognized as the modern standard Bible for the English speaking world.

It has had some revisions since its first publication and also has the advantage of having an Anglicised version (one adapted to British English spelling and usage) available.

This is the translation that we use in Faros Christian Fellowship as our primary Bible, and we especially urge people to use this version in the meetings to ensure commonality.

Another version that may be helpful is the **New Living Translation (NLT)**.

This is a paraphrase that can help people to get a basic understanding of the Bible's teaching, and is very easy to read.

It must be noted, however, that a paraphrase is not a direct translation, and so this version should not be used as a study Bible.

Like the NIV, it is also available in an Anglicised version.

For **study** purposes, there are two translations that we regard as especially useful.

- **New English Translation (NET)**

This was designed from the outset as an online Bible, freely available to all; although it is also available as a printed book.

Its great strength is the inclusion of critical notes, which helps readers to understand why a phrase was translated in a particular way, and why some words were excluded or included.

- **New American Standard Bible (NASB)**

A version that sticks close to the original languages. However, this results in a style that makes it rather unnatural to read at times.

There are many more translations available in English, many of them good ones, but these are four that we would recommend, bearing in mind the limitations of each.

The NET Bible is available in print and online at [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org)

Other translations are available by mail order from Christian bookshops or Amazon, and are also available to read online at [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

## **Bibles that we do not recommend**

### **Roman Catholic Translations (e.g. Jerusalem Bible).**

These, whilst they can be quite good, have two problems associated with them.

- One is that they can distort what the Bible says in order to support Roman Catholic doctrine.
- The second is that they usually include the Apocrypha (or deuterocanonical books). These are books additional to the 66 canonical books of the Bible. As Evangelicals, we do not accept the Apocrypha as being part of Scripture, and regard their inclusion with Scripture as confusing.

### **New World Translation.**

This is a version produced by the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Although they claim to be Christians, they are actually heretical, and the New World Translation twists Scripture in order to support their heresies.

It is therefore unsuitable for use by true Christians, except as a source of information concerning their heresies.

### **King James Version / Authorised Version**

Although this is regarded as the standard Bible by many people, and is often praised for the beauty of its language, it has a number of serious problems that mitigate against its use.

There are too many to go into in a short guide such as this, but they include:-

- the generally acknowledged weakness of the various versions of the *Textus Receptus* (on which this translation it is based)
- the lack of original language documents available when the translation was carried out
- the lack of knowledge about how to translate some of the original languages at that time
- the lack of historical and archaeological knowledge at the time
- the bias towards the state Anglican church
- known uncorrected errors
- the simple fact that the English language has itself changed since 1611, which means that many words no longer mean what they used to mean, or have dropped out of current usage altogether.

Information on all these problems is freely available on the Internet; for example a straightforward description on some (but not all) of them can be found at [http://journalofbiblicalstudies.org/Issue1/Articles/Translation\\_Problems\\_in\\_the\\_KJV\\_New\\_Testament.doc](http://journalofbiblicalstudies.org/Issue1/Articles/Translation_Problems_in_the_KJV_New_Testament.doc)

(Note that at the time of writing, this website is unavailable, however I have a copy of the article stored locally)

We recognize that this is an emotive subject for many people, but in the light of these shortcomings, we regard the KJV as unsuitable for use in the twenty first century church, as there are several better translations available.

We completely reject the teachings of the **King James Only** heresy.