

The Word of God

Long Beach Alliance Church December 29, 2014 • Pastor Chris Lankford

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

~2 Timothy 3:16-4:2 (ESV)

1) ***The Extraordinary Composition Of The Bible***

- A) The Bible is amazing. Its words reveal God's majestic story. The whole Bible is the revelation of God. The Bible reveals God and His purposes, detailing thousands of years of human history, hundreds of stories, dozens of significant people, and centers on a singular powerful theme.
- B) The Bible contains 66 different books organized into 2 sections, the Old Testament (39 books) and the New Testament (27 books). "Testament" means "covenant" or "promise." The Old Testament reveals the promise of salvation God makes with mankind. The New Testament reveals the fulfillment of God's salvation promise with mankind.
- C) The Bible was written by God (2 Timothy 3:16-17) through 40 different authors over about 1,600 years. Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament close to 1500 BC and Malachi pens the closing book of the Old Testament around 450 BC. Matthew writes his opening New Testament Gospel around 40 BC, which separates the Old & New Testaments by about 500 years. John writes his Gospel, his three short letters, and his apocalyptic Revelation around roughly 100 AD. The Bible was written by 39 Jews, and 1 non-Jew (Luke), and was probably (consistent with the ancient world) written exclusively by men.

- D) The Old Testament was primarily written in Hebrew, with a few short sections (Daniel 2:4b-7:28 and Ezra 4:8-6:18, 7:12-26) written in a language very similar to Hebrew, called Aramaic. Aramaic was the common language of the ancient world, much like English is the common language of our modern world. The Aramaic sections of the Old Testament are associated with Israel's exile and post-exile, when Aramaic use was rising (cf. Nehemiah 13:24).
- E) The New Testament is written primarily in Greek, although you will find a few phrases written in Aramaic. Despite Greek being the language of the larger New Testament world, Aramaic was the common language of Israel, and was the language which Jesus and His disciples spoke (Matthew 5:22, 6:24, 27:46; Mark 5:41, 7:34, 14:36, 15:34; John 20:16; 1 Corinthians 16:22). While Hebrew and Aramaic are very poetic languages (very flexible), Greek is a very particular language (very precise).
- F) The textual evidence for the accuracy and authenticity of the Bible is of the highest quality and quantity of any other in the ancient world. The authenticity of the translation of the Bible which we have (and most of us own) is the most accurate and dependable of any book in history.
- E) The “complete canon” (rule or standard) of the 66 books of the Bible was recognized by the church as early as the 4th Century (397 AD). The 66 books of the Bible are the recognized “rule or standard” of life, belief, and practice for God’s people in all places and at all times.

2) Facing Some Tough Questions About Reading The Bible

- A) Let's face it, reading the Bible is difficult. The Bible is filled with different kinds of writing (poetry, history, prophecy, etc.) and there are lots of people (Abraham, Moses, David, Mephibosheth, Daniel, Jesus, Saul/Paul, Peter, etc.). Keeping track of all of it is very difficult.
- B) Let's face it, reading the Bible is also confusing. Is it a book of morals? Are some parts more important than others? Can you still be a Christian if you don't believe all of it? Does the Bible have to mean the same thing to me as it does to you? Why don't I feel different when I read the Bible? What does the Bible answer, because I don't even know the questions?
- C) Let's face it, for most of us, the stories of the Bible are nice and all, but what do I do with them? It's like having a bunch of loose pearls... You know they are all valuable and each has its own beauty, but everything is disconnected and they're tough to carry around. Is there something I am missing, a connection, some sort of secret handshake...?

3) 66 Books, 40 Authors, 1 Powerful Theme

- A) One of the top discouragements in reading the Bible is picking it up to read it and not really understanding what in the world it means. Perhaps even worse, is understanding the meaning of an individual stories, but not understanding bigger themes or purposes.
- B) Despite the breadth of history, numbers of book in the Bible, and various human authors; knowing there is one unifying author of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16) should provide hope for a unified theme which God is communicating to His people (Romans 15:4).
- C) This powerful central theme of the Bible is called the “Good News” or “Gospel.” Reading the Bible through the lens of the Gospel is critical for understanding and for growth as a follower of Christ.
- D) Unfortunately, the Gospel has often been reduced to “accept Jesus Christ into your heart by asking Him to forgive your sins, and you will be saved.” While this is a part of the Gospel, it is not the whole story.
- E) In fact, the Gospel has been in the works from before the beginning (Ephesians 1:4-5), a redemption plan rooted in grace (1:7-8, 2:14-16) with the purpose of uniting all things together under Jesus Christ (1:10, 22-23), and then given to God for His glory (2:22; 1 Corinthians 15:28).
- F) Even as God judged Adam & Eve, casting them out of the paradise of the Garden of Eden, He also included Gospel hope (Genesis 3:15). In the Old Testament God promises His purposes will always be realized (Genesis 12:1-3; Isaiah 46:8-10); and in the New Testament He fulfills His Gospel promises through Jesus Christ (Galatians 4:4-7).

4) The Adventure Of Reading Scripture

- A) Will you begin this upcoming 2015 year with a new resolve for reading the Word of God through the lens of the Gospel? This is not a mindless reading a page or series of verses each day. Rather, I am inviting you into a mindful reading, searching God’s Word for His Gospel.
- B) This kind of reading is adventurous because you are reading to discover God’s voice. You are listening, seeking an increasingly familiar voice of God. Things about the Bible which were once difficult will be much easier, because you are able to see them in light of the Gospel. Things which used to be confusing will make more sense, and the questions which we have will come from a mindful awareness of God’s purposes.

- C) The different people, stories, and history of the Bible will no longer be “loose pearls” but will be strung together with the “scarlet thread” of God’s redemption story, His Gospel. The Gospel is God’s great story of redemption, it is Jesus Christ, from the beginning to the end.
- D) When we mindfully read (study) the Bible through a Gospel lens (see following chart) we get to the heart of God’s great purposes, discovering our place in His plan, thriving under Christ’s leadership in our lives (salvation), all for the glory of God’s great purposes in the universe (redemption). All things under Christ who abides in God.
soli Deo gloria!

the GOSPEL GOD'S PLAN

gos·pel – noun. good news. the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation.

GOD RULES.



The Bible tells us God created everything, including you and me, and He is in charge of everything. *Genesis 1:1; Revelation 4:11; Colossians 1:16-17*



WE SINNED.

We all choose to disobey God. The Bible calls this sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God’s punishment of death. *Romans 3:23; 6:23*



GOD PROVIDED.

God sent Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It’s something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. *John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9*



JESUS GIVES.

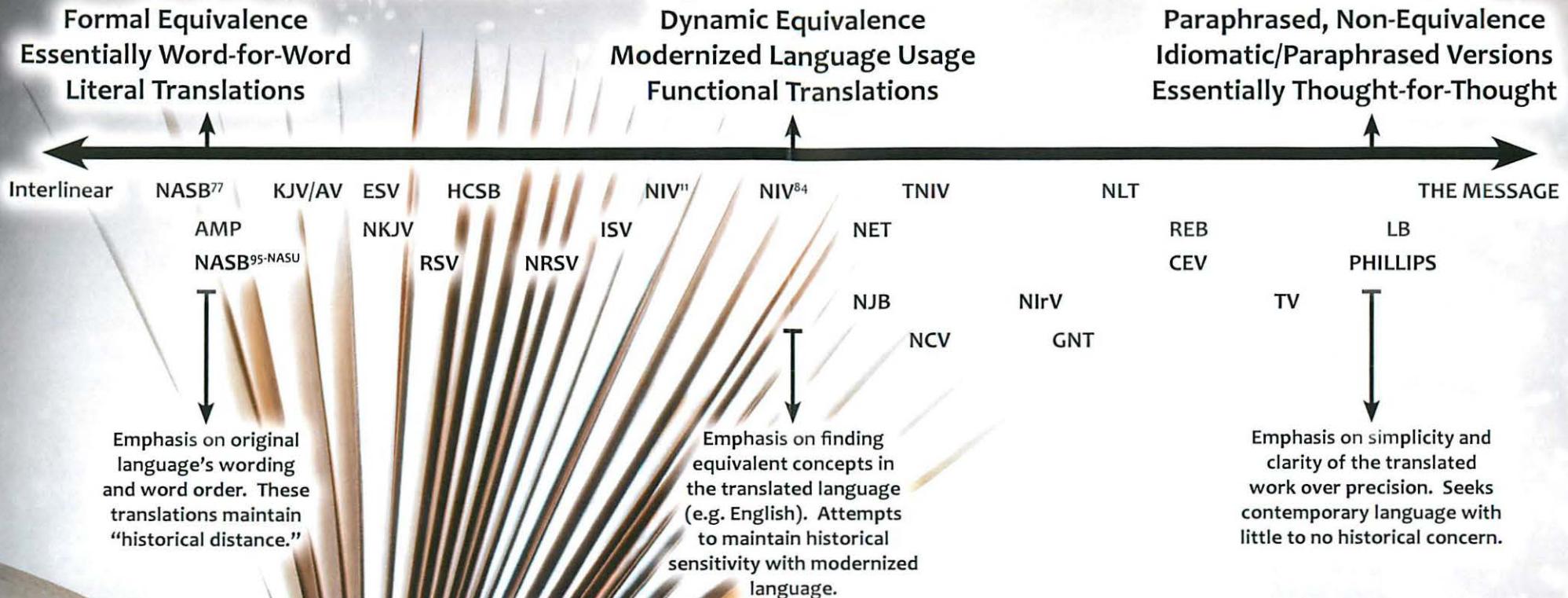
He lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God’s family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! *Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 2:8-9*



WE RESPOND.

Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He’s already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus. *John 14:6; Romans 10:9-10,13*

Bible Translation Spectrum & Version Notes



Abbreviation Key & Publication Dates

Interlinear = Hebrew & Greek Word-for-Word Translation

NASB⁷⁷ (11-12) = New American Standard Version, 1977

AMP (11-12) = Amplified Version, 1965

NASB^{95-NASU} (10-11) = New American Standard Version/Updated, 1995

KJV/AV (12+) = King James Version, 1769 (Also called Authorized Version, AV)

ESV (8-9) = English Standard Version, 2011

NKJV (10-11) = New King James Version, 1982

RSV (10-11) = Revised Standard Version, 1952

HCSB (6-8) = Holman Christian Standard Bible, 2003

NRSV (8-9) = New Revised Standard Version, 1989†

ISV (6-7) = International Standard Version, 2011*

NIV¹¹ (4-5) = New International Version, 2011*

NIV⁸⁴ (6) = New International Version, 1984

NET (6-7) = On-line Translation, Ongoing*

NJB (6-7) = New Jerusalem Bible, 1985

TNIV (6) = Today's New International Version, 2005†

NCV (3-4) = New Century Version, 1991†

NIV^V (2-3) = New International Reader's Version, 1996

GNT (4-5) = Good News Translation, 1976

NLT (6-7) = New Living Translation, 2nd Edition, 2004†

REB (6-7) = Revised English Bible, 1989†

CEV (4-5) = Contemporary English Version, 1995†

TV (3-4) = The Voice, 2012

PHILLIPS (3-4) = Phillips New Testament In Modern English, by JB Phillips, 1958

LB (3-4) = The Living Bible, by Kenneth Taylor, 1971

THE MESSAGE (6-7) = The Message Bible, by Eugene Peterson, 2002

(#')s = Estimated Reading Comprehension Grade Level

* No Gender Neutral Language for God; appropriate Gender Inclusive Language

† Gender Neutral Language

I am indebted to Dr. Walt Russell, NT Professor @ Talbot School of Theology, as the original source for the layout and content of this chart; Dr. David Croteau, Associate Professor of Biblical Studies @ Liberty University; and Brent MacDonald @ notjustanotherbook.com for refinements to this chart.

This chart created for Long Beach Alliance Church, Pastor Chris Lankford, December 28, 2014

Matthew 16:24-26 In Parallel Versions

Formal Equivalence

New American Standard
Bible, 1995 Edition (NASB⁹⁵)

Matthew 16:24-26

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Dynamic Equivalence

English Standard Version,
2011 Edition (ESV)

Matthew 16:24-26

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

New International Version,
2011 Edition (NIV¹¹)

Matthew 16:24-26

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

Paraphrased, Non-Equivalence

New Living Translation,
2nd Edition, 2004 (NLT)

Matthew 16:24-26

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?

The Message, 2002 (by Eugene Peterson) ~ Paraphrased Version

Matthew 16:24-26

Then Jesus went to work on his disciples. “Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You’re not in the driver’s seat; I am. Don’t run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I’ll show you how. Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self. What kind of deal is it to get everything you want but lose yourself? What could you ever trade your soul for?