



The Prayer Room

Brought to you by the Good News Bearers
March 16 - 22, 2008

Listening to God in the Bible

So, We've decided to read the Bible as God's diary to see what God has to say there. What's our first step? One thing is sure, each of us needs a Bible. If you already have a Bible you are comfortable with, then you're all set. For those who don't have one, or want a different one, here are some things to consider

Step 1 - Choosing a Bible Type

Text Bible - Contains only the text of the Bible. No cross-references to other relevant parts of scripture; either without footnotes or only essential footnotes. No maps, charts, or other study helps. Our pew Bibles are of the text type.

Reference Bible - Contains cross-references to other parts of scripture that relate to the part being read. Few, if any, other study helps.

Devotional Bible - Designed for specific audiences, e.g. women, men, couples, etc. Notes, readings for meditation and reflection are targeted to the particular audience.

Study Bible - Good ones include variety of study helps: introductions to the Bible's books; cross-references; both technical and commentary footnotes; maps; charts; and concordance (word index). A study Bible is like water to the person with a thirst for God.

Life Application Bible - This is a particular kind of study Bible. It contains commentary and thought-provoking questions that deal with how the Biblical text and ideas apply to one's life. This one is available only in the NIV (New International Version) translation.

The Access Bible - This is not a Bible type. It is a specific study Bible that contains some life application commentary and is available in the NRSV (New Revised Standard Version). This is the same translation as our pew Bibles and is the one we commonly use in our worship. It has many study helps and a very easy Bible to use, especially for those with little or no experience at Bible study.

Though they are not Bible types, you will find **red-letter Bibles** in which Jesus' words are all printed in red, and **thumb-indexed** Bibles with labeled page cut-outs that pinpoint each of the Bible's books. Bibles come in paperback, hard-cover and even leather bindings, from slim-line text Bibles you can carry in your pocket to huge lectern copies for use in worship.

Step 2 – Choosing a Bible Translation

Most of us don't read ancient Hebrew or Greek, the original languages of the Bible, and so need an English Language Bible. There are a bewildering number of these available, so we will look at only a few.

KJV – King James (or Authorized) Version – First OK'd by England's King James VI and published almost 400 years ago. Its English is so out of date and out of use that it needs its own translator! Not at all a good one for regular use. Newer translations have the advantage of many more ancient Bible manuscripts from which to translate than were available in the 1600's and so are more accurate.

NRSV – New Revised Standard Version – 1989. Probably the most accurate recent translation. Has the advantage of using gender-inclusive terms where the original meaning would have included both men and women. This is the version we use in worship at St. John's. Increasingly popular in many U.S. churches. The English is fairly natural.

NIV – New International Version – A fairly literal 1978 translation by evangelical scholars. A shade more readable and a little less formal than the NRSV. Many mainline scholars think the NRSV is more accurate.

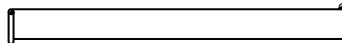
GNT – Good News Translation – This is the newer edition of what was called 'The Good News Bible' or TEV (Today's English Version, by the American Bible Society. Very readable, in everyday English. Reasonably accurate, phrase for phrase, even if not word for word. Good choice for those new to the Bible.

CEV – Contemporary English Version – Simpler reading than even the Good News Translation, said to be a 'thought for thought' translation, but not a paraphrase. Good for devotional reading but not the best for deeper study.

The Message – Paraphrase, not a translation. But it's a **good** paraphrase that makes for fluid smooth reading. **Do not try to make this your only Bible**; this is another one for devotional use or to use along with a good study Bible in a trustworthy version.

There is no **best** translation of the Bible. Even New Testament writers used **several different** Greek translations of the Old Testament! (Personal note: None of them was the King James Version).

Having trouble choosing a Bible? I'll go out on a limb and guess that the Pastor would be overjoyed if you sought his help. P.S. So would God.



Please Join us in prayer this week.

Father, You are the source of all that is good and true. Continue to build within me a hunger and thirst for your Word. Help me to choose wisely in picking a Bible. Grant me the strength to persevere in reading it. May it be ever dust-free and shiny, dog-eared and duct-taped from use. "Lord, speak to me that I may speak, in living echoes of thy tone." Amen.