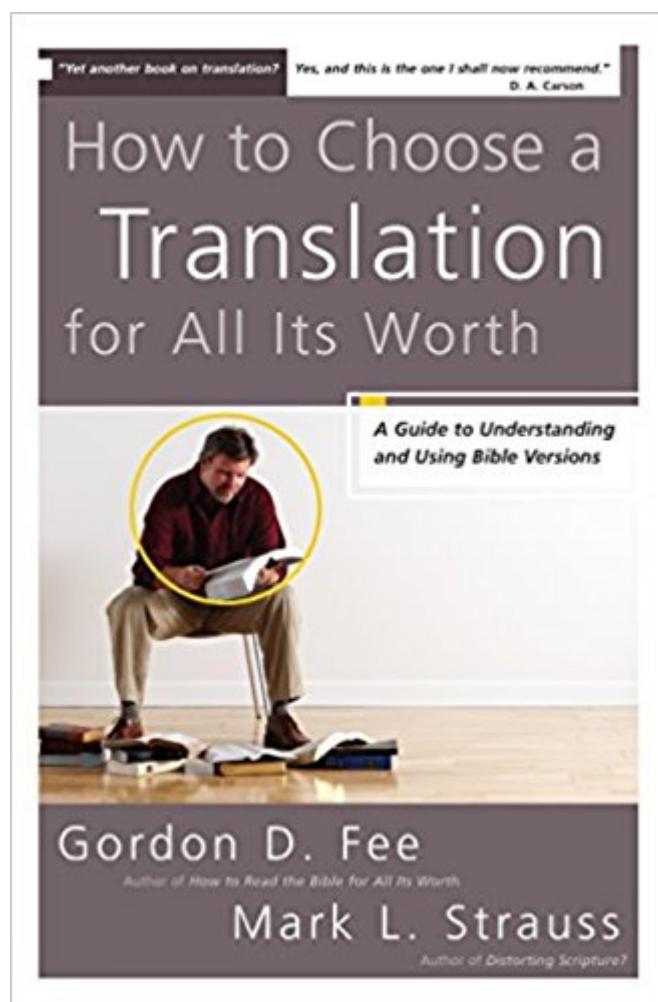


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# How To Choose A Translation For All Its Worth: A Guide To Understanding And Using Bible Versions



## **Synopsis**

With so many Bible translations available today, how can you find those that will be most useful to you? What is the difference between a translation that calls itself *literal* • and one that is more *meaning-based* •? And what difference does it make for you as a reader of Godâ™s Word? How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth brings clarity and insight to the current debate over translations and translation theories. Written by two seasoned Bible translators, here is an authoritative guide through the maze of translations issues, written in language that everyday Bible readers can understand. Learn the truth about both the word-for-word and meaning-for-meaning translations approaches. Find out what goes into the whole process of translation, and what makes a translation accurate and reliable. Discover the strengths and potential weaknesses of different contemporary English Bible versions. In the midst of the present confusion over translations, this authoritative book speaks with an objective, fair-minded, and reassuring voice to help pastors, everyday Bible readers, and students make wise, well-informed choices about which Bible translations they can depend on and which will best meet their needs.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

'This book is crammed with material that's understandable, theologically sound, generationally balanced, and practical. I wish I had read one like it 50 years ago. It's a must not only for Christian pastors and teachers but for the everyday Bible reader who wants to be better equipped to understand Godâ™s Word and share it's a classic.' -- Warren W. Wiersbe "Something gets lost in

translation' is a common enough phrase, reflecting the difficulties of conveying what is said in one language in a very different one. With clarity and care Gordon Fee and Mark Strauss help us understand how translations of the Bible are done, what the difficulties are, and how the whole process is more of an art than a science. On top of all this they give us something of a history of English translations of the Bible including a review of contemporary ones. This is the perfect little book to help the student of the Bible understand why different translations of the same verses look so different, and how to decide which Bible translation is right for the student in question. As a companion to Fee's earlier *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, or on its own, it deserves to receive a wide readership.' -- Dr. Ben Witherington III'One of the most common questions directed at biblical scholars is 'Which Bible translation is the best?' These scholars are then faced with the challenge of summarizing a very complex issue in a brief response. With the publication of Fee and Strauss' work, the scholar may simply respond, 'I would suggest that you read this book.' *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth* is the most reliable guide available to understanding the process of Bible translation and choosing one that is appropriate.' -- Stan Duvall'There are so many translations out thereâ |which one should we choose? Fee and Strauss do a marvelous job of explaining how translations come about, giving us the basis to make an intelligent decision. Everyone should read this book, but I particularly recommend it for seminary students, ministers, and anyone who teaches the Bible in schools and churches.' -- Tremper Longman III'What a helpful guide to the numerous translations and new versions of the Bible available today. Gordon Fee and Mark Strauss are superb scholars and translators themselves and they have brought together a wealth of wisdom in this little book. A blessing for the church!' -- Timothy George'This book is comprehensive, fair, and accessible. Particularly helpful are quick explanations of specific translations and a glossary of terms. This thorough and engaging book will be helpful to pastors, teachers, Bible students, and anyone serious about understanding and choosing among Bible translations.' -- Amy Simpson, Executive Editor'This book delivers exactly what its title promises. It is not a sales pitch for any particular translation. Rather, it's a crash course that helps people understand why different translations are different. It teaches a lot about Scripture itself, so it's interesting and enjoyable to read. I highly recommend it, especially to church elders and church staff.' -- Sarah Sumner, Professor'What a blessing to us all! That's what *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth* is to Christians everywhere. Gordon Fee and Mark Strauss have written a masterpiece on a much debated and important subject. This book is unbiased, thought-provoking, and even inspirational as it creates a fresh appetite for understanding God's Word.' -- Jim Cymbala, Senior Pastor'It seems like new Bibles come out every week, and the overload can be

overwhelming. Gordon and Mark are wise and trustworthy guides!' -- John Ortberg, Pastor and Author'Fee and Strauss each have strong careers relating to English Bible translation issues which have prepared them to write this book. At a time when fairness in debates about English Bible translation has suffered, Fee and Strauss restore fairness, along with scholarly substance, as they discuss important qualities to consider when choosing a Bible version. A strength of their book is the large number of examples used to illustrate translation points.' -- Wayne Leman, Translation Consultant'Yet another book on translation? Yes, and this is the one I shall now recommend to concerned Christians who want to understand what the perpetual flap over Bible translation is all about. Few will agree with every judgment in its pages, but for courtesy to all sides, accuracy in technical matters, clarity of writing, a deep commitment to faithful rendering of the original, and an abundant supply of that least common gift, 'common sense,' this is the book on translation that deserves widest circulation.' -- D. A. Carson, Research Professor of the New Testament

With so many Bible translations available today, how can you find those that will be most useful to you? What is the difference between a translation that calls itself 'literal' and one that is more 'meaning-based'? And what difference does it make for you as a reader of God's Word? How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth brings clarity and insight to the current debate over translations and translation theories. Written by two seasoned Bible translators, here is an authoritative guide through the maze of translations issues, written in language that everyday Bible readers can understand. Learn the truth about both the word-for-word and meaning-for-meaning translations approaches. Find out what goes into the whole process of translation, and what makes a translation accurate and reliable. Discover the strengths and potential weaknesses of different contemporary English Bible versions. In the midst of the present confusion over translations, this authoritative book speaks with an objective, fair-minded, and reassuring voice to help pastors, everyday Bible readers, and students make wise, well-informed choices about which Bible translations they can depend on and which will best meet their needs.

After reading some negative reviews of this work, I couldn't help but add my own comments. At first I couldn't understand what some of them were complaining about. Then it dawned on me that they had one thing in common: a dislike of dynamic equivalence, thought for thought, translations. As such I felt these negative reviewers missed the point Fee and Strauss are trying to make. First of all, of course they like dynamic equivalence translating. After all they worked on the NIV and TNIV. However, the point of their book is not that dynamic equivalence translations are the only ones to

read. Read what they say carefully and you will see that they find fault with both word for word and thought for thought methods of translation. (See their chart on page 34.) One reviewer even commented that their preference for thought for thought was in error and cited an example from Romans. He or she got that from a book by Leland Ryken. The example is based on a metaphor where in that culture a sword stood for the power and authority of the political office. One reference that I found even stated that a sword or dagger could be presented to the "governor" when he was officially assigned his office. Given that fact I suspect there is room to translate the thought here. It should also be pointed out that a literal translation could be either sword or dagger. Therefore, I'm not sure you could argue that "sword" is the only translation that should be used in this case. After all Trajan presented a dagger to his appointees, according the source I have. Fee and Strauss are recommending that one not rely on only one translation or type of translation. Their book provides excellent insight into what problems exist for the translator as he or she attempt to convert Hebrew and Greek into understandable English, and the key word is understandable. In the example above, it is perfectly adequate to translate that word as sword. However, would some miss the point and think Paul is referring to his own pending death sentence? Is Paul even under arrest at the time he wrote Romans? Some scholars think this letter represents an earlier desire to go there that was, ironically, filled when he was arrested and taken before the Emperor. There is even debate about whether or not he was released after the events detailed in Acts. Besides the point of "How to Choose a Translation...." is that one method is not the only one to use. All translations have their weaknesses. I read Ryken's book too and the striking difference between it and this work is that Fee and Strauss present examples of poor translating from both word for word and thought for thought works. Read carefully and you will find that they even present examples of thought for thought translating in those word for word works, while Ryken can only praise word for word translating and criticize thought for thought work. Martin Luther once wrote that: The words of the Hebrew tongue have a peculiar energy. It is impossible to convey so much so briefly in any other language. To render them intelligibly we must not attempt to give word for word, but only aim at the sense and the idea. Luther would have loved what Fee and Strauss are saying in this book. Translating the Bible is a challenge and they have given us insight into that challenge. I have read this book three times and will probably read it again. It is the best work I have read on selecting a translation. It doesn't answer the question about which one is the best one or which one is the word of God. However, it clearly agrees with the translators of the KJV who state in the preface to the 1611 edition: Now to the latter we answer; that we do not deny, nay we affirm and avow, that the very meanest translation of the Bible in English, set forth by men of our profession, (for we have seen none of theirs of the

whole Bible as yet) containeth the word of God, nay, is the word of God. They are all the word of God, even the "meanest" according to the KJV preface. Which is the best to read? All of them. In fact, I remember reading a quote from Billy Graham somewhere. Asked which one is the best to read, Graham is said to have replied that the one you can understand was the best translation to read. Fee and Strauss do a great job of defining the kinds of problems translators encounter as they try to convert Hebrew and Greek into understandable English. They explain the problem of deciding which words to pick in converting original words into English, problems faced as translators try to deal with figures of speech and problems in what to do in order to convey culturally bound terms into modern English that will give the reader an idea about what the original authors were talking about. I highly recommend this book. I am sure some will not appreciate what Fee and Strauss have done here. After all, it is like learning what actually goes into a hot dog. Some never want to eat one again. Others will be delighted to know what they are eating. However, if you want to understand why translation is such a complex process that calls for decision making and interpretation on the part of the translator, you will love this book.

This book explains very clearly why so many different translations are necessary and desirable, predominantly because readers have different needs and understanding. Owning several translations makes eminent sense because as explained in the book Functional Equivalent versions such as NLT (New Living Translation) are easier to follow, Mediating versions such as NIV (New International Version), NET, and NAB are good for reading and study and formal equivalent versions such as ESV (English Standard Version) and RSV (Revised Standard Version) help relate to Hebrew and Greek. The book gives many more examples of each type and I only included those which I own or use, because I find it enlightening to read or study an RSV bible and then read a JB (Jerusalem Bible) or NLT for a different understanding. Together the meaning becomes clearer. A particular Church denomination or tradition may favour just one translation, but that limits one's understanding. Meeting weekly with friends, of different church traditions and their favourite (study) Bibles, reading from each and exploring our understanding helps us draw closer to Christ.

Very much worth the read, the author lays out the strengths and weaknesses of Literal, and more thought for thought translations. He also goes on to demonstrate how the common view that "the most literal is also the most accurate with bible translation" is flawed. He gave the example of the French Phrase, "La Pomme de terre." Literal Translation- "The Apple of the Earth." What it actually means- Potato. Also he shows that literal translation is usually comprehensible, but not very natural

english. He shows the difference between translating the meaning (thought for thought), and translating the words (Literal). You get some history behind how many translations came to be what we have today and you get the authors advice to have 1 main translation for reading from, and then others as helpful study tools. Also be aware of bias toward the NIV, one of the authors Mark L. Strauss admits his bias toward the TNIV since he is on the Committee for Bible Translation that is responsible for updating the NIV. You can find his profile and more details at Biblica.com. This book was written before the NIV 2011 was released, so you will see the author using examples with the TNIV from 2005. Well worth the read if you want to learn some history behind Bible translations, and also learn the strengths and weaknesses of Literal, and more thought for thought translation.

I had previously read their other two companion books in this series, "How to read the Bible for all its worth" and "How to read the Bible book by book." Both of those were excellent helps. As a seminary student, I needed to know more about the process of translation and versions. So when I noticed this third book on "Translations" I was eager to see how complete it would be. I was very happy with the content and simplicity of the text. All three of these books are a great place for the non-scholar to obtain deeper understanding of the biblical text and understand the process that scholars must painstakingly go through to bring us the translations that we so depend upon. I highly recommend them all. But this book on choosing translations is a must read for anyone who is a student of scripture. There are differing philosophies of translation that impact the end product. Not all translations are equal. They all serve their own purpose though. If you need a quick reading version for a youth, that is a different version from what an adult should be using for in-depth study. This book will give you what you need to know. Excellent.

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