



READING RESPONSIBLY

Correctly Handling the Word of Truth

LESSON 10: TIPS FOR RESPONSIBLE READING

I. Introduction

II. Ten Principles

1. The Bible is a book of books.
2. The Bible is not flat.
3. Genre matters.
4. Context matters.
5. Chapters are more important than verses.
6. Interpretation is unavoidable.
7. Everyone has a lens.
8. The Bible doesn't try to answer everything.
9. Wrestling with scripture is ok.
10. Scripture is still living and active.

III. Choosing a Translation

A. What God Said

- Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic

B. Formal vs. Dynamic Equivalence

- Formal: word for word
- Dynamic: thought for thought
 - Compare Jude 1:1 in Interlinear, NASB, and NIV.
- Paraphrase
 - Fine for devotional reading as long as we know that's the purpose of the work (i.e., we know it's supposed to be a paraphrase.)
 - Eugene Peterson, who penned the well-known *Message*, is an expert at the ancient languages and is a master writer. He may take liberties we don't agree with, but he at least has a solid grounding in the text.

C. Translators

- Expert in the original languages; use original languages as basis, not some other translation

- Expert in the receptor language with knowledge of constantly changing idiomatic language
 - "I will accept no bull" changed in NRSV
 - "Booty" will be removed from all future Catholic translations
- Translation done by committee vs. individual – provides checks and balances and helps avoid bias

D. Gender Neutral?

- Buzzword
- Not all are equal
 - God as mother (which is NOT gender neutral, but often assumed to be)
 - "Brothers and sisters..."
 - Philippians clearly focused on two women, but addressed as "brothers" in older translations.
 - Christians naturally adopted biblical language and often refer to each other as "brother ____" or "sister _____," even though the latter phrase never occurs in our English Bibles. We understood what the text meant in practice, so why be upset about translating the text so it reflects the original meaning?
 - It is not enough to say that "We understand it, so why change things?" The focus is getting the Word of God into the hands of those who don't understand it.

E. Choosing

- Many available for **free online**
- Choose one that **sounds natural** to you (i.e., designed for you) and that you will read.
- My recommendations:
 - NIV for everyday reading
 - NRSV for study
 - The Message or the Kingdom New Testament for interesting occasional reading from scholars

IV. Resources

- *Zondervan Handbook to the Bible*
- Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*
- Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*
- Eugene Peterson, *Eat this Book*
- Rachel Held Evans, *Inspired*
- The Bible Project

V. Reading Responsibly: Strategies/Encouragement

- Make a *realistic* plan.
- Read alone and with others.
- Read in multiple translations.
- Print a section of scripture and leave ample margins for notes.
- Read scripture, reflect, and *then* consult resources.
- If your interpretation is unique, reconsider.
- Read *and* put into practice.