

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

“...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE...” ~ EPHESIANS 4:12

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CONCERNING BIBLE PARAPHRASES

By Andrew Dow

Picking a Bible translation can be a daunting task. Take a walk down the “Bible aisle” at your local bookstore, and you’ll find an overabundance of options. Some of these translations differ due to the greek texts being translated (although none of these differences affect the doctrine). Most translations differ based on their translating style: word-for-word vs. thought-for-thought. Translations that fit into one of these two categories include the KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, ESV, NIV, CSB, and a host of other translations. Do you see why it can be difficult to choose?

You may, however, encounter some Bibles that fall into another category: paraphrase. Popular examples of Bible paraphrases include *The Living Bible* (1971) and *The Message* (2001). The language used in Bible paraphrases are often unexpected. For instance, look at Genesis 1:1 in *The Message*, “First this: God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don’t see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness.” Is this as strange and irreverent as it sounds? Let me say a few things about Bible paraphrases.

Paraphrases are NOT translations. Translating aims to bring the meaning of one language into another. Paraphrasing is the process of rewording something to make it clearer. To illustrate this difference, consider Psalm

make it clearer. To illustrate this difference, consider Psalm 1:1. First, consider the rendering in a translation (NASB):

**“Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful.”**

Now look at the same verse in a paraphrase (MSG):

“How well God must like you—
you don’t hang out in Sin Saloon,
you don’t slink along Dead-End Road,
you don’t go to Smart-Mouth College.”

The original Hebrew text never said anything about a saloon, dead-end, or college. The paraphrase has reworded the text in an attempt to make the text clearer.

Because paraphrases are not translations, we need to be careful in how we use them. A good translation attempts to transfer meaning from one language to another. The primary goal of paraphrasing is to interpret the text. For this reason, paraphrases are not good for serious Bible study.

However, Paraphrases DO have a proper place.

That paraphrases are not translations does not mean that they have no value. There are many resources outside of translations that are valuable. The key is to understand the value of each individual resource. Just because a screwdriver cannot drive a nail does not mean that you throw out all of your screwdrivers. The same is true of paraphrases. Consider briefly the value of paraphrases.

Paraphrases provide interpretations of passages. In this way, paraphrases can function much like a commentary. After all, do preachers not paraphrase from

time to time when conveying the meaning of a text? Of course, we should approach paraphrases with all the caution we would approach anything produced by men, but there is value in considering these interpretations.

Paraphrases may allow us to look at Scripture in a novel way. Novelty for novelty's sake is not appropriate, but it is valuable to consider God's Word in fresh ways. This is part of the value of hearing different Gospel preachers: each one conveys the meaning of the text in a unique way. Paraphrases can add unique perspectives as we try to understand the meaning of a text.

Conclusion: Understanding the danger and value of paraphrases is important. We should be careful not to mistake a paraphrase for a translation. However, we would do well to supplement our studies with paraphrases (as we would use any other resource).

JOHN'S GOSPEL: "SO THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE"

By Andrew Dow

John's Gospel was written **"so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name"** (John 20:30–31). Its aim is clear: prompt people to have faith and salvation in Jesus. John accomplishes this in a relatively simple way.

John points to seven miracles performed by Jesus: (1) changing water to wine (2:1–11), (2) healing a royal official's son (4:46–54), (3) healing a paralytic (5:1–15), (4) feeding 5000 people (6:5–14), (5) walking on water (6:16–24), (6) healing the blind man (9:1–7), and (7) raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1–45). These miracles emphasize Jesus' power over the natural order. Most

significant, however, is Jesus’ power over life and death.

The Fourth Gospel culminates in one miracle that stands out above the rest: the resurrection of Jesus (20:1–31). In this event Jesus proves that He has the power to give and take life. To be brief, He proves Himself to be God. These miracles show us who Jesus is.

Do you know anyone who needs to grow in their faith? Perhaps a friend, family member, or even yourself? Invite them to sit down with you and read the Gospel of John. **“These [signs] are written that you may believe.”**

NOTES: _____

AM LESSON: Physical Paralysis, Spiritual Healing (Mark 2:1–13)	PM LESSON: The Key to Biblical Leadership (Joshua 1:5–9)
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“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”
(MATTHEW 28:19-20)