

Baffled Buying a Bible

December 25, 2022

It's that time of year, and a new Bible is an excellent gift! With a broad smile, he walked into the Bible bookstore and announced, "I'd like to buy a Bible!"

The clerk looked at him, and smugly asked, "ESV, NIV, NASB, RSV, NRS, TLV, KJV, American, Contemporary, Philip's, Living, Williams, NEB...?"

Bewildered, he asked, "Excuse me?"

"What version? What translation?" she replied slowly as if he was hard of hearing.

"Well, what do you recommend?"

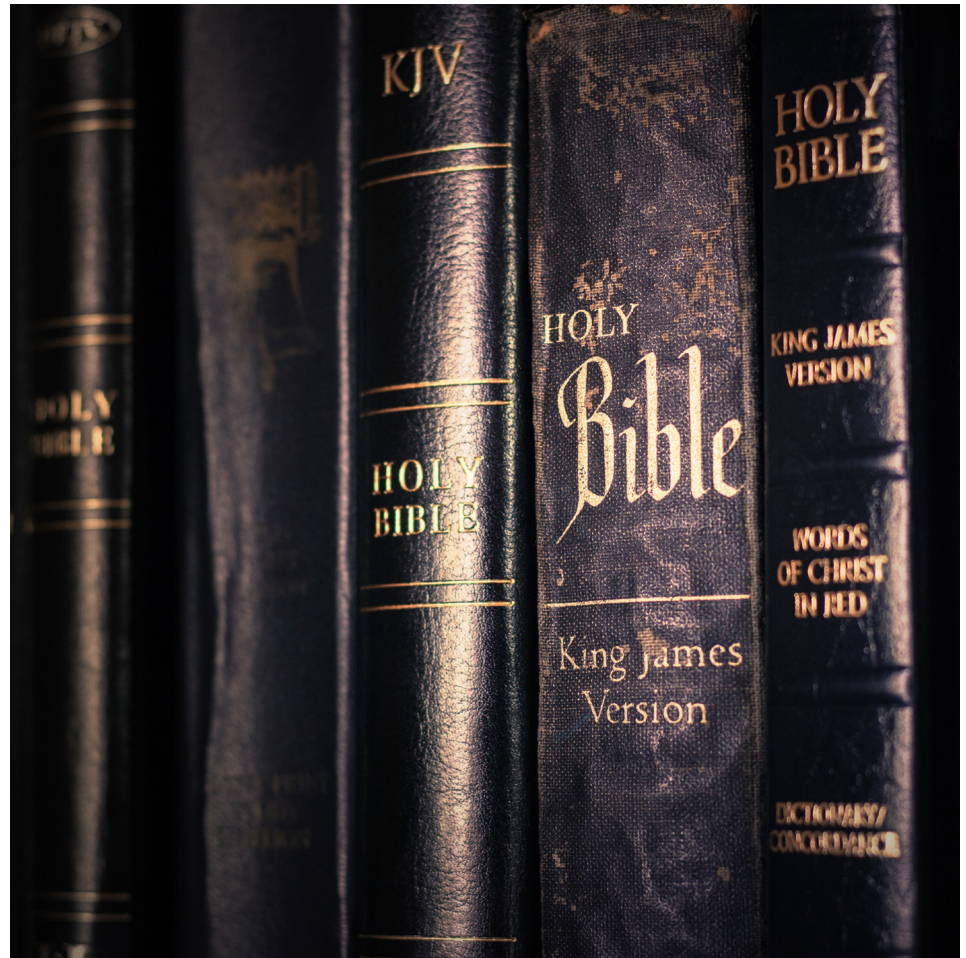
"It depends. Do you want a translation based on a critical text or the majority text? Do you want a literal translation or one that translates the sense? How about a committee version or one that has been translated by a single person?" she continued with her nose in the air as she dusted some fish license plate frames.

He stared for a moment and then picked up a black leather Bible. "This is nice."

"Yeah. Do you want it in imitation leather, calfskin, paper, or cowhide? Pocket-sized, display, study, large print, or giant print? Notes or not? Single column, double column, study margins, words of Jesus in red, maps, dictionary, self-pronouncing..." She straightened a set of Apostolic Bobble-head dolls.

"I give up. Just give me something for a 24" by 48" coffee table!"

The choices can be bewildering! So what would I recommend? First,



ask yourself what you are going to do with your new Bible. If you are looking for something to read through quickly to get the overall sense of a passage, I like a simple translation like one by J.B. Phillips or Williams. For an in-depth study, the new English Standard Version or the New American Standard version are good choices. Because they are translated by committees, they tend not to be biased towards any particular denomination or viewpoint. If I only had one choice, I would probably use the New International Version (or the English Standard Version. I know I said one, but...)

Once you have decided on a version, you have many choices of

format from electronic versions (including apps for your cell phones!) to traditional leather and paper editions. Just be sure to choose one that is easy on the eyes (I recently had to move up to a "giant" print version) and one you won't be afraid to mark up. Yes, I believe you should mark all over your Bible. It is a tool to be used. Circle words, highlight passages and take notes in the margin. Wear it out!

Remember: the only Bible that will help you grow in Christ is the one you will read!

