

Which Bible Translation(s) Should I Use?

August 27, 2023

Here are some problems in the Living Bible that were not fixed in the New Living Translation:

- “In everything you do, put God first, and he will direct you and crown your efforts with success” (Proverbs 3:6 TLB).
- “Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take” (Proverbs 3:6 NLT).
- “In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:6 NASB).

Here are some problems in the Living Bible that were not fixed in the New Living Translation:

- “Then Pilate tried to release him, but the Jewish leaders told him, ‘If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar’s. Anyone who declares himself a king is a rebel against Caesar’” (John 19:12 TLB).
- “Then Pilate tried to release him, but the Jewish leaders shouted, ‘If you release this man, you are no “friend of Caesar.” Anyone who declares himself a king is a rebel against Caesar’” (John 19:12 NLT).

Here are some problems in the Living Bible that were not fixed in the New Living Translation:

- “As a result of this, Pilate made efforts to release Him; but the Jews shouted, saying, ‘If you release this Man, you are not a friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself *out to be* a king opposes Caesar!’” (John 19:12 NASB).

Here are some problems in the Living Bible that were not fixed in the New Living Translation:

- “About that time Moses was born—a child of divine beauty. His parents hid him at home for three months” (Acts 7:20 TLB).

- “At that time Moses was born—a beautiful child in God’s eyes. His parents cared for him at home for three months” (Acts 7:20 NLT).

Here are some problems in the Living Bible that were not fixed in the New Living Translation:

- “At this time Moses was born; and he was beautiful to God. He was nurtured for three months in his father’s home” (Acts 7:20 NASB).

Here are some verses where the New Living Translation is worse than the Living Bible:

- “Phoebe, a dear Christian woman from the town of Cenchreae, will be coming to see you soon. She has worked hard in the church there” (Romans 16:1 TLB).
- “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deacon in the church in Cenchrea” (Romans 16:1 NLT).
- “I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly” (1 Timothy 2:12 NLT).

Here are some verses where the New Living Translation is worse than the Living Bible:

- “He is the one who took God’s wrath against our sins upon himself and brought us into fellowship with God; and he is the forgiveness for our sins, and not only ours but all the world’s” (1 John 2:2 TLB).
- “He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world” (1 John 2:2 NLT).

Here are some verses where the New Living Translation is worse than the Living Bible:

- “Look! I have been standing at the door, and I am constantly knocking. If anyone hears me calling him and opens the door, I will come in and fellowship with him and he with me” (Revelation 3:20 TLB).
- “Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends” (Revelation 3:20 NLT).

So there are just too many problems in both the Living Bible and the New Living Translation for me to recommend them. I do like the NLT more than the Living Bible because it's generally more literal and more accurate as well. But in my opinion it's not accurate enough to be a reliable translation.

The Message (MSG) was published in 1993 (New Testament) and 2002 (whole Bible). It's a popular paraphrase that was written by Eugene Peterson, who was a Presbyterian pastor. It was revised in 2018 right before his death.

Here are some verses that show just how terrible the Message is:

- "Blessed is the person who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!" (Psalm 1:1 NASB).
- "How well God must like you—you don't walk in the ruts of those blind-as-bats, you don't stand with the good-for-nothings, you don't take your seat among the know-it-alls" (Psalm 1:1 MSG).

Here are some verses that show just how terrible the Message is:

- “And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, he is to be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Matthew 18:17 NASB).
- “If he still won’t listen, tell the church. If he won’t listen to the church, you’ll have to start over from scratch, confront him with the need for repentance, and offer again God’s forgiving love” (Matthew 18:17 MSG).

Here are some verses that show just how terrible the Message is:

- “At this time Moses was born; and he was beautiful to God. He was nurtured for three months in his father’s home” (Acts 7:20 NASB).
- “In just such a time Moses was born, a most beautiful baby. He was hidden at home for three months” (Acts 7:20 MSG).

Here are some verses that show just how terrible the Message is:

- “Submit therefore to God. But resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7 NASB).
- “So let God work his will in you. Yell a loud *no* to the Devil and watch him make himself scarce” (James 4:7 MSG).

Here are some verses that show just how terrible the Message is:

- “In the same way, you wives, be subject to your own husbands” (1 Peter 3:1a NASB).
- “The same goes for you wives: Be good wives to your husbands, responsive to their needs” (1 Peter 3:1a MSG).

So I definitely can't recommend the Message. It's basically a commentary, and it's not a very good one.

Here's where I would put the TLB, the NLT, and the MSG on our spectrum between 1 and 100, with 1 representing perfect formal equivalence and 100 representing perfect dynamic equivalence:

- Living Bible (TLB): 75 (7th grade)
- New Living Translation (NLT): 60 (6th grade)
- Message (MSG): 90 (7th grade)