

# Which Bible Translation(s) Should I Use?

September 10, 2023

Here are some verses where the NET Bible is not very good:

- “What is man that You think of him, And a son of man that You are concerned about him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty! You have him rule over the works of Your hands; You have put everything under his feet” (Psalm 8:4–6 NASB).

Here are some verses where the NET Bible is not very good:

- “Of what importance is the human race, that you should notice them? Of what importance is mankind, that you should pay attention to them? You made them a little less than the heavenly beings. You crowned mankind with honor and majesty. You appoint them to rule over your creation; you have placed everything under their authority” (Psalm 8:4–6 NET).

Here are some verses where the NET Bible is not very good:

- “Instead someone testified somewhere: ‘*What is man that you think of him or the son of man that you care for him? You made him lower than the angels for a little while. You crowned him with glory and honor. You put all things under his control.*’ For when he *put all things under his control*, he left nothing outside of his control (Hebrews 2:6–8a NET).

Here are some verses where the NET Bible is not very good:

- “At present we do not yet see *all things under his control*, but we see Jesus, who was made *lower than the angels for a little while*, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by God’s grace he would experience death on behalf of everyone” (Hebrews 2:8b–9 NET).

Here are some verses where the NET Bible is not very good:

- “For this reason the Lord himself will give you a confirming sign. Look, this young woman is about to conceive and will give birth to a son. You, young woman, will name him Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14 NET).

- “*Look! The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will name him Emmanuel,*’ which means ‘*God with us*’” (Matthew 1:23 NET).

Here are some verses where the NET Bible is not very good:

- “The Jewish leaders replied, ‘We have a law, and according to our law he ought to die, because he claimed to be the Son of God!’” (John 19:7 NET).
- NET Footnote: “Or ‘the Jewish authorities’; *Grk* ‘the Jews.’ In NT usage the term Ἰουδαῖοι (*Ioudaioi*) may refer to the entire Jewish people, the residents of Jerusalem and surrounding territory, the authorities in Jerusalem, or merely those who were hostile to Jesus.”

Here are some verses where the NET Bible is not very good:

- NET Footnote: “(For further information see R. G. Bratcher, “The Jews” in the Gospel of John,’ *BT* 26 [1975]: 401-9.) Here the phrase refers to the Jewish leaders, especially members of the Sanhedrin, and their servants (mentioned specifically as ‘the chief priests and their servants’ in John 19:6).”

Here are some verses where the NET Bible is not very good:

- “This man, who was handed over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you executed by nailing him to a cross at the hands of Gentiles” (Acts 2:23 NET).

Here are some verses where the NET Bible is not very good:

- “And he himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:2 NET).

- NET Footnote: “The Greek word (ἱλασμός, *hilasmos*) behind the phrase *atoning sacrifice* conveys both the idea of ‘turning aside divine wrath’ and the idea of ‘cleansing from sin.’”

So I cannot recommend the NET Bible as a primary translation. But I can recommend it as a helpful Bible study tool.

The English Standard Version (ESV) was a reaction to the news in 1997 that the NIV was moving in a more liberal direction. The RSV was used as a starting point. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) had already been published in 1989 as an extensive revision of the RSV. Then the ESV was published in 2001, and it was later revised in 2007, 2011, and 2016.

The NRSV was revised in 2021, and it's even worse than the RSV. Here are some examples:

- "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:1–2 RSV).
- "When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:1–2 NRSV).

The NRSV was revised in 2021, and it's even worse than the RSV. Here are some examples:

- "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Imman'u-el" (Isaiah 7:14 RSV).
- "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14 NRSV).

The NRSV was revised in 2021, and it's even worse than the RSV. Here are some examples:

- "Jesus answered him, 'If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him'" (John 14:23 RSV).
- "Jesus answered him, 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them'" (John 14:23 NRSV).

The NRSV was revised in 2021, and it's even worse than the RSV. Here are some examples:

- "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cen'chre-ae" (Romans 16:1 RSV).
- "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae" (Romans 16:1 NRSV).



The NRSV was revised in 2021, and it's even worse than the RSV. Here are some examples:

- "Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher" (1 Timothy 3:2 RSV).
- "Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher" (1 Timothy 3:2 NRSV).

The NRSV was revised in 2021, and it's even worse than the RSV. Here are some examples:

- "And he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2 RSV).
- "And he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2 NRSV).

So I cannot recommend the NRSV. It's been rejected by most conservative Bible-believing Christians.

Here's where I would put the RSV, the NRSV, and the NET Bible on our spectrum between 1 and 100, with 1 representing perfect formal equivalence and 100 representing perfect dynamic equivalence:

- Revised Standard Version (RSV): 22 (11th grade)
- New Revised Standard Version (NRSV): 35 (9th grade)
- New English Translation (NET): 40 (8th grade)