

Which Bible Translation(s) Should I Use?

July 23, 2023

Some of the changes in the 2011 NIV were not good.
Here are some examples:

- “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers” (Psalm 1:1 NIV 1984).
- “Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers” (Psalm 1:1 NIV 2011).

Some of the changes in the 2011 NIV were not good.

Here are some examples:

- “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money” (Matthew 6:24 NIV 1984).
- “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money” (Matthew 6:24 NIV 2011).

Some of the changes in the 2011 NIV were not good.

Here are some examples:

- “Jesus replied, ‘If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him’” (John 14:23 NIV 1984).
- “Jesus replied, ‘Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them’” (John 14:23 NIV 2011).

Some of the changes in the 2011 NIV were not good.

Here are some examples:

- “The Jews insisted, ‘We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God’” (John 19:7 NIV 1984).
- “The Jewish leaders insisted, ‘We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God’” (John 19:7 NIV 2011).
- “And you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross” (Acts 2:23b NIV 2011).

Some of the changes in the 2011 NIV were not good.

Here are some examples:

- “At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for in his father’s house” (Acts 7:20 NIV 1984).
- “At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for by his family” (Acts 7:20 NIV 2011).

Some of the changes in the 2011 NIV were not good.

Here are some examples:

- “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea” (Romans 16:1 NIV 1984).
- “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae” (Romans 16:1 NIV 2011).
- “A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well” (1 Timothy 3:12 NIV 2011).

Some of the changes in the 2011 NIV were not good.

Here are some examples:

- “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent” (1 Timothy 2:12 NIV 1984).
- “I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet” (1 Timothy 2:12 NIV 2011).

So I cannot recommend the 2011 NIV. The problem is not that it leans toward dynamic equivalence but that it's drifting toward feminism.

The New International Reader's Version (NIRV) was designed to be even easier to read than the NIV. It was published in 1995 (New Testament) and 1996 (whole Bible). Then a minor revision was done in 1998. This edition was based on the 1984 NIV. But then it was revised again in 2014, and this revision brought it into conformity with the 2011 NIV.

Here are some of the differences between the 1998 NIRV and the 2014 NIRV:

- “No one can serve two masters at the same time. He will hate one of them and love the other. Or he will be faithful to one and dislike the other. You can’t serve God and Money at the same time” (Matthew 6:24 NIRV 1998).
- “No one can serve two masters at the same time. You will hate one of them and love the other. Or you will be faithful to one and dislike the other. You can’t serve God and money at the same time” (Matthew 6:24 NIRV 2014).

Here are some of the differences between the 1998 NIRV and the 2014 NIRV:

- “The Jews replied, ‘We have a law. That law says he must die. He claimed to be the Son of God’” (John 19:7 NIRV 1998).
- “The Jewish leaders replied, ‘We have a law. That law says he must die. He claimed to be the Son of God’” (John 19:7 NIRV 2014).

Here are some of the differences between the 1998 NIRV and the 2014 NIRV:

- “I do not let women teach. I do not let them have authority over men. They must be quiet” (1 Timothy 2:12 NIRV 1998).
- “I do not let women teach or take authority over a man. They must be quiet” (1 Timothy 2:12 NIRV 2014).

So I cannot recommend the 2014 NIRV. It has the same problems as the 2011 NIV. But thankfully there's another English translation that's very easy to read. It's called the International Children's Bible (ICB). It began as a New Testament for deaf people in 1978, but eventually it was marketed as a children's version, and the whole Bible was published in 1986. Then there were revisions done in 1988, 1999, and 2015. It was the first translation to have a lot of gender-neutral language, but the latest edition is much better in this area.

Here are some of the differences between the 2014 NIRV and the 2015 ICB:

- “No one can serve two masters at the same time. You will hate one of them and love the other. Or you will be faithful to one and dislike the other. You can’t serve God and money at the same time” (Matthew 6:24 NIRV 2014).
- “No one can be a slave to two masters. He will hate one master and love the other. Or he will follow one master and refuse to follow the other. So you cannot serve God and money at the same time” (Matthew 6:24 ICB 2015).

Here are some of the differences between the 2014 NIRV and the 2015 ICB:

- “The Jewish leaders replied, ‘We have a law. That law says he must die. He claimed to be the Son of God’” (John 19:7 NIRV 2014).
- “The Jews answered, ‘We have a law that says he should die, because he said he is the Son of God’” (John 19:7 ICB 2015).

Here are some of the differences between the 2014 NIRV and the 2015 ICB:

- “I do not let women teach or take authority over a man. They must be quiet” (1 Timothy 2:12 NIRV 2014).
- “I do not allow a woman to teach a man or to have authority over a man. She must remain silent” (1 Timothy 2:12 ICB 2015).

But the ICB is not a perfect translation. Here are a few places where the ICB isn't as good as the NIRV:

- “He said to me, ‘Son of man, stand up on your feet. I will speak to you’” (Ezekiel 2:1 NIRV 2014).
- “He said to me, ‘Human being, stand up on your feet. Then I will speak with you’” (Ezekiel 2:1 ICB 2015).

But the ICB is not a perfect translation. Here are a few places where the ICB isn't as good as the NIRV:

- "In my vision I saw one who looked like a son of man. He was coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Eternal God. He was led right up to him" (Daniel 7:13 NIRV 2014).
- "In my vision at night I looked. There in front of me was someone who looked like a human being. He was coming with clouds in the sky. He came near God, who has been alive forever. And he was led to God" (Daniel 7:13 ICB 2015).

So I can recommend the 2015 ICB, especially for young children and people who are learning English as a second language. Here's where I would put the ICB, the NIRV, and the NIV on our spectrum between 1 and 100, with 1 representing perfect formal equivalence and 100 representing perfect dynamic equivalence:

- International Children's Bible (ICB): 70 (3rd grade)
- New International Reader's Version (NIRV): 80 (3rd grade)
- New International Version (NIV): 50 (8th grade)