



6901 Summitview Ave. Yakima, WA 98908

## West Side Church Position on Bible Translations

West Side Church was founded on a basic commitment to the trustworthiness of the Bible (II Timothy 3:16). We have always sought to follow the Scriptures as our guidebook for life, and we consider the original writings of the Bible to be inerrant, that is completely true, reliable, and inspired by God. Our Articles of Faith state:

*We believe the sixty-six books of the Holy Bible are verbally inspired and the product of Spirit-controlled men. This Holy Bible is inerrant as originally written, and the complete revelation of God's perfect will, the ultimate truth for salvation, the infallible guide of faith and practice, and the final authority in all matters to which it speaks.*

We remain as steadfast in this commitment today as when the church was founded in 1953.

The Bible was originally written in three distinct languages, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. It was first translated into English many centuries ago. English was quite different then, and most of us would have significant difficulty in understanding the early versions. Languages go through structural, vocabulary, and meaning changes over time. This is a reason why we can benefit from newer translations. We now have dozens of English *translations* and *paraphrases*.

A Bible *translation* is a precise rendering of the original languages by a group of scholars into modern English. Styles of translations range from more wooden transliterations to more dynamic and flowing. Every translation must make some changes to word order and add words to clarify the meaning of the original in our language.

*Paraphrases* are not Bible translations. They tend to be written by one person and give the author's own looser rendering according to their perspective. Paraphrases do not necessarily lack solid scholarship, but are the most fluid (even using modern slang) and further from the original wording. Serious study, teaching, and preaching should never use them except by way of illustrating aspects of the text's meaning in a memorable way.

Choosing the best translation for use by a local church can be a very difficult and complex decision. Since no one person can possess all the skills necessary to accurately translate the Bible, the best Bible translations are those compiled by a combination of experts in the original languages, theology, culture, history, and the principles of linguistics. All of today's major translations that are faithful to the evangelical doctrine in which we believe have been written by such groups.

No translation is perfect. The full meaning of biblical passages written in the original languages simply cannot be exactly communicated in English. Sincere Christian scholars committed to inerrancy do not always agree. Nonetheless, we are blessed to have several excellent translations available to us based on the work of

trained people who hold to a high view of inerrant Scripture. Differences that do exist do not alter the major doctrines of the faith. In fact, comparison between translations can enhance our understanding.

West Side Church has chosen not to endorse any *one* Bible translation. Rather, we recognize value in using several versions. This has long been a solid practice for study of the Bible. We encourage our congregation to have more than one translation to use in personal study of the Scriptures. Paraphrases may be valuable (see previous paragraph about *Paraphrases*) but should be used more like a commentary to enhance study of an actual translation.

From time to time different translations will be used by the pastors and Bible study leaders when preaching and teaching at West Side Church. Generally they will identify what version is being used. Everyone is encouraged to bring their own copy and version of Scripture for use at church.

Some versions are better than others based on their doctrinal foundations and translation philosophies. With this in mind we recommend the following translations (not necessarily in order of preference):

- New American Standard Bible (NASB)
- New International Version (NIV)
- New King James (NKJ)
- English Standard Version (ESV)
- Holman Christian Standard (HCSB)

With the constant change of English over time, the advance of linguistic software, and the occasional discovery of more source data in the original languages, there are bound to be regular updates of these versions and new ones for us to carefully consider in the future.

We believe God understands our struggle with the uncertainties and challenges of different translations. In spite of the differences, we can have confidence and great assurance that even in modern English translations we have God's word preserved for us. Could it be that this challenge, in part, is intended to encourage us to go deeper in the study of His Word?

Approved by the Elder Council 10-28-14

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