

Dr. Gary Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 2, Orientation, Part 2 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 2, Orientation, Part 2, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Gary Meadors' lecture explores the complexities of English Bible translations. He highlights the difference between **formal equivalence**, which aims for literal accuracy, and **dynamic equivalence**, which prioritizes conveying meaning. Meadors uses biblical examples to illustrate how these translation philosophies can lead to varying interpretations and emphasizes the importance of **using multiple translations** for deeper understanding. He advises readers to be aware of the translation theory behind their chosen Bible and to approach study Bibles and paraphrases with caution, advocating for diligent personal study of Scripture.

**2. 24 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 2 – Double click icon to
play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (New Testament → Pauline Epistles → 1 Corinthians).**



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3. Briefing Document: Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 2, Orientation, Part 2

Briefing Document: Review of Dr. Gary Meadors' Lecture on Bible Translations

Overview:

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Gary Meadors in the second lecture of his series on 1 Corinthians, titled "Orientation, So Many Bibles, So Little Time, Part 2." The lecture focuses on the proliferation of English Bible translations and the critical importance of understanding the different translation philosophies that underpin them. Dr. Meadors emphasizes the need for careful Bible selection, comparison, and study to avoid misinterpretations and to effectively minister to others who may use different translations.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. **The Proliferation of English Bible Translations:** Dr. Meadors begins by acknowledging the vast number of English Bible translations available and highlights the implications this has for personal interpretation and interaction with other Christians. He uses an anecdote about a conversation with Dukonchenko of the Union of Russian Baptists to illustrate how different translations can lead to varying understandings of the same biblical text.
2. *"The purpose of this particular section has to do with dealing with the proliferation of English translations, what that means for interpreting the Bible, and even what it means for interacting with other Christians who use a different Bible than you do."*
3. **Formal Equivalence vs. Dynamic/Functional Equivalence:** The lecture's core focuses on the two primary philosophies of translation:
 - **Formal Equivalence:** This approach aims to be as literal as possible to the original languages (Greek, Hebrew), while still being readable. Dr. Meadors describes it as "as literal as possible, as free as necessary." He notes that while more formal translations like the King James Version (KJV), Revised Standard Version (RSV), English Standard Version (ESV), and New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) can be more theologically precise, they may also require more explanation for readers to fully understand.

- *"The philosophy of translation of the formal equivalence has to do with being as literal as possible, as free as necessary. And applying that principle through centuries, even of English Bibles, to be able to put the Bible into the language of the people, but not deviate so far from the original documents from which the Bible is being translated that the meaning is skewed in any way." "There's one advantage if you use a King James Bible is it gives you a whole lot more to explain to people than if you use something like an NIV."*
- **Dynamic/Functional Equivalence:** This approach prioritizes conveying the meaning of the original text in a way that is easily understandable in contemporary language. Dr. Meadors refers to translations like the New International Version (NIV) and the New Living Translation (NLT) as examples. He cites the NLT's introduction:
 - *"a dynamic equivalence translation requires that the text be interpreted accurately and then rendered into an understandable idiom."*
 - Dr. Meadors often calls these "interpretive translations" because the translators make more decisions about the meaning to ensure clarity. While this can be advantageous for immediate understanding, it also carries the risk of the translator's interpretation influencing the text.
 - *"It's not that they're bad translations. It's that the translator is making more decisions about the meaning of the text as they render that text in a readable form than what formal equivalent translations do."*
- 1. **Paraphrases and Amplified Bibles:** Dr. Meadors cautions against using paraphrased Bibles and Bibles by media personalities that are not true translations. He also discusses the Amplified Bible, noting its use of numerous synonyms, which can sometimes obscure the precise meaning of words in context. He suggests focusing on having a few solid formal and functional translations.
- 2. **Recommendations for Choosing and Using Bibles:** Dr. Meadors provides several practical recommendations:
 - **Choose Bibles with a paragraph format and that render poetry appropriately.** He prefers Bibles that maintain larger units of thought within paragraphs, citing the 1901 American Standard Version (ASV) as an excellent example. He notes that some modern translations break paragraphs into shorter segments, potentially obscuring the flow of thought.

- **Be mindful of gender inclusiveness in translations but not overly concerned.** He suggests that while functional translations tend to be more gender-sensitive (e.g., using "people" instead of "men" where the original Greek likely implied a general term), this usually doesn't significantly alter the core meaning.
 - **Choose several Bibles for comparison (2 formal, 2 functional).** He emphasizes the importance of using multiple translations to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the original text and to be aware of interpretive choices made by translators.
 - *"The challenge is not to find the only Bible to read. The challenge is to use all of the Bibles you have but understand what kinds of Bibles they are."*
 - **Be careful when studying Study Bibles.** While helpful, they can reflect a particular theological viewpoint in their notes and outlines. He advises using them like commentaries rather than treating them as the definitive interpretation.
 - *"Don't let it be your little G God."*
 - **Avoid expanded paraphrase Bibles.**
 - **Be a student of the Bible, not just a reader.** He stresses the importance of studying Scripture to understand its intended meaning, rather than simply reading it for personal application or to impose one's own ideas onto the text.
 - *"I don't really care what it means to you. I care what it means so that I can know what it means or ought to mean to you and to me. We've got to get to the Scriptures for Scripture, not for our own personal use of the Scriptures."*
1. **Illustrative Examples from Scripture:** Dr. Meadors uses several key passages to demonstrate the differences between translation philosophies and the interpretive choices involved:
 - **John 3:16 ("only begotten Son"):** He explains the Greek word *monogenēs* means "unique" rather than directly implying the issue of generation or deity. He shows how different translations (KJV, RSV/NRSV, NIV, NLT) render this phrase and notes that the NIV's "one and only son" effectively conveys the sense of uniqueness.
 - **Acts 26:28 ("Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian"):** He highlights how the KJV's literal rendering can be interpreted differently than more functional translations (NRSV, NIV, NLT) that convey the sarcasm likely intended by Agrippa.

- **Galatians 5:4 ("Whosoever of you are justified by the law you are fallen from grace"):** He points out how formal translations can be confusing for new believers and how more functional translations (NRSV, NIV, NLT) often add words to clarify the intended meaning (e.g., "You who want to be justified by the law"). He mentions the grammatical concept of conative/tendential voice to justify these additions.
 - **Philippians 3:6 ("legalistic righteousness" - 1978 NIV):** He criticizes the 1978 NIV's addition of "legalistic" as an overly interpretive and potentially inaccurate rendering, noting its correction in the 2011 NIV to "righteousness based on the law."
 - **Matthew 19:9 (exception clause for divorce):** He shows how different translations (NRSV, NIV, NLT) interpret the exception clause (fornication/unchastity/marital unfaithfulness), highlighting the interpretive choices that can influence understanding, particularly noting the 1978 NIV's "marital unfaithfulness" and its subsequent revision.
 - **1 Corinthians 5:5 ("destruction of the flesh" vs. "sinful nature"):** He discusses the two main interpretations of "flesh" in this context and how the NIV (originally and NLT) opted for "sinful nature," a more interpretive rendering, while the 2011 NIV reverted to the more literal "destruction of the flesh."
 - **1 Corinthians 7:1 ("it is good for a man not to touch a woman"):** He uses this example to illustrate significant interpretive differences, criticizing the 1978 NIV's "not to marry" and the NLT's "live a celibate life" as inaccurate interpretations of Paul's intended meaning, while noting the more literal rendering in the KJV and NRSV requires scholarly explanation.
 - **1 Thessalonians 1:3 ("work of faith, labor of love, patience of hope"):** He analyzes how the NIV expands this phrase using synonyms to reflect the grammatical concept of subjective genitives, while the NLT uses an adjectival category and offers a more dynamically equivalent interpretation of "hope."
 - **1 Timothy 3:11 (qualifications of deacons/wives of deacons):** He highlights how even the KJV can be dynamic, interpreting the Greek word *gune* as "wives," a theological interpretation, while the NRSV and the 2011 NIV use the more literal "women," leaving the interpretation open.
1. **Importance for Ministry Professionals:** Dr. Meadors emphasizes that those in ministry have a professional responsibility to understand Bible translations to

effectively teach and guide others, especially when encountering individuals using different or questionable translations.

2. *"We are. We are supposed to know what we're talking about. We're supposed to be able to illustrate our Bibles to people and help them understand them. Otherwise, you're going to have a problem on your hands. When someone comes into your office with a different Bible than yours and maybe even a really way out Bible, a paraphrased Bible of some kind, and they're basing their life on how that verse is rendered, and you're going to have to explain to them that's not really a good rendering."*
3. **Call to Diligent Study:** The lecture concludes with a call for serious and disciplined study of the Bible, including its history and the nuances of translation. He provides a brief bibliography of resources for further study on Bible translations.

Key Takeaways:

- Be aware of the different philosophies behind English Bible translations (formal vs. dynamic/functional equivalence).
- Understand that all translations involve some level of interpretation.
- Avoid relying solely on one translation. Use multiple versions for comparison.
- Exercise caution with Study Bibles and paraphrase translations.
- Prioritize diligent study of the Bible to understand its intended meaning in context.
- Ministry professionals have a crucial responsibility to be knowledgeable about Bible translations to effectively serve their congregations and communities.

This briefing document provides a comprehensive overview of Dr. Meadors' key points. For a deeper understanding, it is recommended to engage with the original lecture material and the suggested resources.

4. Study Guide: Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 2, Orientation, Part 2

Study Guide: Understanding English Bible Translations

Key Concepts:

- **Proliferation of English Translations:** The existence of numerous English Bible versions and the implications for interpretation and inter-Christian dialogue.
- **Formal Equivalence:** A translation philosophy aiming to be as literal as possible to the original languages (Greek, Hebrew), while still being readable. It prioritizes word-for-word correspondence where feasible.
- **Dynamic Equivalence (or Functional Equivalence):** A translation philosophy that focuses on conveying the meaning and intent of the original text in a way that is easily understandable to the modern reader. It prioritizes conveying the thought rather than strict word-for-word translation.
- **Interpretive Translation:** Translations, particularly those leaning towards dynamic equivalence, where the translator makes more decisions about the meaning of the text to aid reader comprehension.
- **Paraphrasing/Amplifying:** Translation procedures that involve restating or expanding on the original text, often with significant interpretation or the inclusion of synonyms. These are generally not considered direct translations.
- **Paragraph Format:** The organization of biblical text into paragraphs based on units of thought, which aids in understanding the flow and context of passages.
- **Literary Genre:** Recognizing that the Bible contains various literary styles (narrative, poetry, etc.) and that translations should ideally reflect these forms.
- **Gender Inclusivity:** The varying degrees to which modern translations address gendered language in the original texts, aiming for more inclusive language where the original intent is believed to encompass both men and women.
- **Study Bibles:** Bibles that include supplementary materials like notes, outlines, and cross-references to aid in study and understanding. While helpful, their interpretations should be considered alongside the biblical text itself.

- **Importance of Studying Scripture:** The necessity of engaging with the Bible through careful study and interpretation, rather than just reading it for personal feelings or superficial understanding.
- **Avoiding Personal Bias:** The challenge of interpreters reading their own ideas and assumptions into the biblical text and the need for disciplined study to mitigate this.
- **Comparison of Translations:** The value of using multiple Bible translations (both formal and dynamic) to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the original text and different interpretative possibilities.

Quiz:

1. Explain the difference between formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence in Bible translation, providing a key characteristic of each approach.
2. According to the lecture, what is a potential advantage and a potential disadvantage of using a very formal equivalent translation like the King James Bible?
3. What does Dr. Meadors mean when he refers to translations like the NIV and NLT as "interpretive translations"? What is one advantage and one potential concern associated with this type of translation?
4. Describe the translation procedure of paraphrasing. Why does Dr. Meadors suggest caution or avoidance of heavily paraphrased Bibles for serious Bible study?
5. Why does Dr. Meadors advocate for choosing a Bible with a paragraph format and the rendering of poetry in a poetic style? What is the significance of a paragraph in biblical text?
6. Discuss the issue of gender inclusivity in Bible translations as presented in the lecture. Provide an example of how a dynamic equivalent translation might handle a potentially non-inclusive original term.
7. What is Dr. Meadors' advice regarding the use of Study Bibles? What role should they play in your Bible study, and what caution should you exercise?
8. Why does Dr. Meadors emphasize the importance of studying the Bible rather than just reading it? What can be gained through careful study that might be missed through casual reading?

9. Explain why comparing multiple Bible translations (both formal and dynamic) can be a valuable practice for understanding a particular verse or passage.
10. Briefly describe the example from 1 Corinthians 7:1 regarding the translation of "not to touch a woman." How did different translation philosophies impact the rendering of this phrase and what was the significance of these differences?

Answer Key:

1. Formal equivalence aims for a close word-for-word rendering of the original languages, prioritizing literal accuracy. Dynamic equivalence focuses on conveying the meaning and intent of the original text in a way that resonates with modern readers, sometimes prioritizing clarity over strict literalism.
2. A potential advantage of the KJV is its close connection to the original wording, offering more raw material for in-depth study. A potential disadvantage is that its more literal approach can sometimes make the text less immediately understandable to modern readers, requiring more explanation.
3. "Interpretive translations" are those where the translators make more choices about how to render the text in a readable form, often interpreting the meaning to make it clearer for the reader. An advantage is increased readability, but a concern is that the translator's interpretation might inadvertently shape or skew the original meaning.
4. Paraphrasing involves restating the biblical text in one's own words, often expanding on the concepts or using more contemporary language. Dr. Meadors cautions against heavily paraphrased Bibles for serious study because they are not direct translations and can inject significant personal interpretation, potentially moving away from the original meaning.
5. Dr. Meadors advocates for paragraph format because paragraphs are intended to represent units of thought, aiding in understanding the logical flow and context of ideas. Rendering poetry in poetic style helps the reader recognize and appreciate the literary genre, which can impact interpretation.
6. Gender inclusivity in translation involves addressing potentially gendered terms in the original languages when the underlying meaning is believed to be broader. For example, the King James might say "two men" in a parable, while a dynamic equivalent like the NIV might translate it as "two people" if the context suggests a general human scenario rather than specifically males.

7. Dr. Meadors advises using Study Bibles as helpful resources, similar to commentaries, for understanding context, structure, and potential issues. However, he cautions against treating them as the ultimate authority, emphasizing the need to engage with the clean biblical text directly and form one's own interpretations.
8. Studying the Bible goes beyond simply reading the words; it involves careful analysis, consideration of context, historical background, and original language nuances to understand the intended meaning. This deeper engagement helps avoid misinterpretations and the imposition of personal biases onto the text.
9. Comparing multiple translations, especially those employing different translation philosophies, can reveal various ways the original text can be understood and rendered in English. This practice can highlight nuances, potential ambiguities, and different interpretative choices made by translators, leading to a richer understanding of the passage.
10. The King James Version translates 1 Corinthians 7:1 as "it is good for a man not to touch a woman," which is very literal. Some dynamic equivalent translations, like an older NIV, interpreted this as "it is good for a man not to marry," reflecting an interpretation of the underlying meaning. This difference illustrates how dynamic equivalence can lead to more significant interpretive choices that can sometimes be contested or even contradict other passages.

Essay Format Questions:

1. Discuss the challenges and benefits that arise from the existence of numerous English translations of the Bible. How should a careful reader navigate this landscape to enhance their understanding of Scripture?
2. Compare and contrast the translation philosophies of formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Using specific examples from the lecture, illustrate how these different approaches can impact the reader's understanding of key biblical passages.
3. Evaluate the role of the translator in the process of conveying the meaning of the biblical text. To what extent is interpretation an inherent part of translation, and what are the potential implications of this for the reader?

4. Dr. Meadors emphasizes the importance of being a "student of the Bible." Elaborate on what this entails, drawing from various points in the lecture. How does this approach to Scripture differ from casual reading, and why is it crucial for accurate understanding?
5. Consider the various factors that can influence a Bible translation, such as theological perspectives, concerns about readability, and approaches to gendered language. Discuss how these factors can shape the final English text and why readers should be aware of these influences.

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Formal Equivalence:** A translation philosophy that aims for a close word-for-word correspondence between the original languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek) and the target language (English), prioritizing literal accuracy.
- **Dynamic Equivalence (or Functional Equivalence):** A translation philosophy that prioritizes conveying the meaning and intent of the original text in a way that is easily understood by contemporary readers, even if it means departing from a strict word-for-word translation.
- **Interpretive Translation:** A translation where the translator makes more decisions about the intended meaning of the text to enhance clarity and understanding for the reader. This is often a characteristic of dynamic equivalent translations.
- **Paraphrase:** A restatement of the biblical text in one's own words, often involving significant interpretation or expansion of the original meaning. It is not considered a direct translation.
- **Amplification:** A translation technique that expands on the original text by using numerous synonyms and descriptive phrases to try to convey a fuller sense of meaning.
- **Liturgical Language:** Language commonly used in religious services or rituals, often characterized by a more formal or traditional style (e.g., "only begotten Son").
- **Monogenēs (Greek):** A Greek word often translated as "only begotten" but whose primary meaning relates to being unique, one-of-a-kind, or the only one of its kind.

- **Ontological:** Relating to the nature of being or existence. Dr. Meadors clarifies that "monogenēs" is not primarily an ontological term in the context of Jesus' sonship.
- **Functional:** Relating to the purpose or role of something. Dr. Meadors suggests "monogenēs" is more of a functional term, describing Jesus' unique role.
- **Conative/Tendential (Grammar):** A grammatical category in Greek indicating an attempted or desired action that may not have been realized. This is illustrated in the discussion of Galatians 5:4.
- **Subjective Genitive (Grammar):** A grammatical construction where the noun in the genitive case performs the action of the main noun (e.g., "work of faith" where faith produces the work).
- **Eschatological:** Relating to the end times or the final destiny of humanity and the world. Dr. Meadors points out the NLT's specific eschatological interpretation of "hope" in 1 Thessalonians 1:3.
- **Gune (Greek):** The Greek word for "woman." Context determines whether it should be translated as "woman" or "wife."

5. FAQs on Meadors, 1 Corinthians, Session 2, Orientation, Part 2, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on English Bible Translations

1. Why are there so many different English translations of the Bible? The proliferation of English Bible translations stems from different philosophies of translation and a desire to make the Bible accessible to contemporary readers. Translators aim to render the original Hebrew and Greek texts into English, but they approach this task with varying levels of emphasis on literalness versus readability. Furthermore, different translations may be produced by various groups or denominations, sometimes reflecting specific theological perspectives or addressing contemporary linguistic sensitivities.

2. What is the difference between formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence in Bible translation? Formal equivalence (also known as word-for-word or literal translation) aims to stay as close as possible to the original language's words and grammatical structures, being "as literal as possible, as free as necessary." This approach may result in a translation that is less immediately understandable to modern readers but preserves more of the original form. Dynamic equivalence (also known as thought-for-thought or functional equivalence) prioritizes conveying the meaning and intent of the original text in a way that is easily understood by contemporary readers, even if it means using different words or sentence structures. Translations using dynamic equivalence focus on communicating the message effectively in modern idioms.

3. What are some examples of formal equivalent translations and dynamic equivalent translations? Examples of formal equivalent translations mentioned in the source include the King James Version (KJV), Revised Standard Version (RSV), and English Standard Version (ESV). These translations tend to maintain a closer adherence to the original text's structure and wording. Examples of dynamic equivalent translations discussed are the New International Version (NIV) and the New Living Translation (NLT). These translations prioritize readability and aim to convey the meaning of the original text in contemporary English.

4. What are the potential advantages and disadvantages of using formal equivalent translations? An advantage of formal equivalent translations is that they often provide a closer representation of the original text's structure, which can be helpful for in-depth study and linguistic analysis. However, a disadvantage is that they can sometimes be more difficult for modern readers to understand without additional study, as they may retain archaic language or sentence structures that are not common today. As the source

notes, a more formal translation like the KJV can require more explanation for contemporary readers.

5. What are the potential advantages and disadvantages of using dynamic equivalent translations? The primary advantage of dynamic equivalent translations is their readability and clarity for contemporary audiences. They aim to communicate the meaning of the text in a way that is easily accessible. However, a potential disadvantage is that in the process of interpreting and rephrasing the original text for clarity, translators may inadvertently introduce their own interpretations or nuances, potentially obscuring some of the original text's subtleties. The source refers to dynamic equivalent translations as sometimes being "interpretive translations."

6. Besides formal and dynamic equivalence, what other approaches to Bible translation exist, and what are some concerns associated with them? The source mentions paraphrasing or amplifying as another approach. Paraphrased Bibles are not direct translations but rather a restatement of the English text in someone's own words. While they might offer a fresh perspective, they are furthest removed from the original text and can be highly subjective. The source expresses concern about paraphrased Bibles by media personalities that might reflect personal readings rather than accurate translations. Amplified Bibles use numerous synonyms to explain a single word, which can be helpful but might also misrepresent the precise meaning of words within their specific context.

7. What advice does the source offer for choosing and using Bible translations? The source recommends several key practices:

- **Choose Bibles with paragraph format and poetic rendering:** This helps in understanding units of thought and appreciating the literary genre.
- **Use several Bibles for comparison:** Comparing formal and dynamic equivalent translations can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the original text.
- **Be careful with Study Bibles:** Use them as commentaries to gain insights but avoid treating their notes and outlines as the definitive interpretation.
- **Avoid expanded paraphrase Bibles:** Focus on translations that directly engage with the original languages.
- **Be a student of the Bible:** Engage in disciplined study to understand the meaning of the text, rather than just reading for personal application.

8. How can understanding translation philosophies help in interacting with other Christians who use different Bible versions? Recognizing that different Bible translations operate under different principles (formal vs. dynamic equivalence) can foster greater understanding and avoid unnecessary debates about which version is "better." It helps to appreciate that each translation aims to serve a particular purpose and may highlight different aspects of the original text. When discussing biblical passages with someone using a different translation, understanding the translation philosophy behind each version can illuminate why the wording might differ and facilitate a more productive conversation focused on the underlying meaning.