



# Finding the Truth

## About the Bible

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Visit any bookstore or search online for a good Bible and your eyes will be flooded with various translations and versions. There's the NIV, the Student Bible, the New Living Translation, the NASB, the Life Application Bible, study Bibles, and of course the King James Version. Each Christian Pastor or denomination seems to have a specific version that is favored above others. Joyce Meyer uses the Amplified Bible and the Southern Baptist Convention has recently printed its own Holman Christian Standard Version. There are even those that proclaim the authority of the 1611 KJV as if God Himself speaks Old English. With so many translations and revisions, it is hard to know for sure, if the Bible you are reading is totally accurate. Do the translations we use give us the best understanding of the holy words found in Genesis to Revelation?

To answer this question, let's first consider the difficulty in communicating with someone who speaks a foreign language. Imagine ordering food at a drive thru window and realizing that the person on the other end of the speaker doesn't speak English. You order a hamburger, but you get a fish sandwich. Much is lost in a translation! The same is true for the words of the Bible. To best understand the messages of the Scriptures, one should study and learn the language, customs and culture of which the Bible was written. This, of course, is Hebrew.

The entire Old Testament was originally written in the Hebrew tongue. We also know that the Savior Himself spoke Hebrew. In Luke 2, He is found at the Temple, teaching the teachers. There is no doubt that He spoke Hebrew to these people. In Luke 4:16, the Gospel records that He stood and read from the scroll, which is always written in Hebrew. The disciples and even, the Apostle Paul spoke and wrote their letters in Hebrew, as well. Today, some of the oldest existing copies of New Testament texts are Greek. But, that doesn't mean these were originally written in Greek. Most scholars would agree that each author of New Testament originally wrote their books in Hebrew texts, from a Hebrew mindset. Thus, these documents must be studied that way.

The Bible was written by approximately 40 people over the course of 1500 years. Despite this huge time frame, the Bible does not contradict itself nor does it contain any errors. 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us that the Bible was "breathed" by the Almighty. Each person used their own writing style, but they recorded exactly what the Creator intended. The Scriptures were copied by hand through an amazing system of scribes who developed an intricate method to ensure that no errors were made.

Most English Bibles are based upon a Greek translation of the Hebrew text. This Greek document is called the Septuagint or LXX. Other English Bibles rely upon the Latin Vulgate which is also a translation from the Hebrew. Error occurs when man translates the Scriptures from one language

to another. The Bibles we have today have mostly been translated from Hebrew to Greek and THEN, to English! Consider trying to get driving directions from a person who speaks Hebrew. That Hebrew speaker gives the directions to a person who speaks Greek. You then are literally lost, as you try to figure out what that Hebrew speaker spoke to the Greek speaker!

The translations sold online or at Wal-mart are works of man that each contains errors and problems. The more times a text is simplified for the masses, the more that text loses its original meaning. Such is the case with numerous new translations or paraphrases that are promoted as "easy to read." The Bible was never meant to be "easy to read." Instead, it was meant to be studied, learned, and applied to life.

So, how does a person come to the most accurate understanding of the Bible? The answer to this question is found in 1 Timothy 3:15. This verse says to, "Study to shew thyself approved, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." This verse is the basis for every true believer who seeks to walk in the truth of the Scriptures. In the next verse, Paul wrote that "All Scripture is inspired and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." Take note that when these verses were originally penned by Paul there was no New Testament. The Apostle was confirming that the Old Testament was to be considered the instruction book for life and faith. Paul was speaking specifically that a person must have a strong foundation in the Old Testament Scriptures. Understandably, this foundation should center on the Hebrew language.

Hebrew is a powerful language that has deep meanings for each and every letter. A good concordance and Hebrew dictionary helps the student discover the original words used in the text, without having to be fluent in Hebrew. Keep in mind that there are certain linguistic nuances that don't translate well into English. Don't depend on the translators for accuracy. The only way to ensure that your Biblical understanding is correct is to go to the source of the original document which is in the Hebrew language and culture. For example, consider the Savior's comments about an evil eye. "The light of the body is the eye; If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness," Matthew 6:22-23a, KJV.

The people who heard the Messiah speak these very words immediately recognized what He meant when he talked of the evil eye. This idea was, and is, common in the Hebraic culture. Yet, just pick up any different Bible translation and in it will be a quagmire of different words used to express this hidden Hebrew idiom. Each translation seems to deal with the issue differently. A few examples include, eye be whole, eye be simple, eye be sound, eye be plain, eye be healthy, sincere, clear, honest, or eye be good. This is very confusing! What did the Messiah really mean? Hebraically and Biblically, what is an evil eye?

First, consider the context. The very next verse after the evil eye quotation, explains exactly why the evil eye squints. "But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! 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 6:23,24 NIV. When the Messiah spoke of the bad eye, He wasn't talking about bad eyesight or the need for lasik surgery! From the context it is easy to grasp that He was using a Hebrew expression to comment on people's greed. Each time Messiah spoke of the eye being good or evil, or "plucking out the eye," he was speaking of the issue of greed. An evil eye is a greedy eye. A person with an evil eye is controlled by the desire to receive for self.

The Bible explains this issue further. "He that has a good eye shall be blessed; for he gives of his bread to the poor," Proverbs 22:9. Again, if your eye is good, then you are not greedy. The opposite is also true. If your eye is evil then you shall not be blessed because you withhold from the poor. Traditional Judaism agrees with this. "A good eye and a humble spirit and a lowly soul, those who have these are disciples of Abraham our father," Mishnah Aboth 5:19.

From a Hebraic viewpoint it is now easy to grasp the difficult words of the book of Matthew. "And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire," Matthew 18:9. The Savior was not literally suggesting his followers mutilate themselves. Such a literal teaching would be a direct contradiction and violation to the Scriptures. "Do not cut yourselves," says Deuteronomy 14:1. The verse in Matthew was suggesting that we run away from greed and idolatry. We should take precautions to guard and protect ourselves from the evil eye of want, to get rid of the evil eye of desire. Such meaning is only discovered when one looks past the English and into the Hebraic history and culture.

The best way to know your Bible is to know your Bible! The New Testament is explained in the Old Testament. Open the Scriptures; pray for understanding; question traditional teachings; and compare the messages you hear from the pulpit to the whole of Scripture. Begin to look past the English words, to view the Hebrew text. Bible translations are great for casual reading but they are far from perfect. To gain the most from your Bible, simply study to prove all things true. As you consider the context and culture of the Scriptures, you may begin to question some of the traditional teachings of the Church. You might also agree with Martin Luther, who once said, "If I were younger I would want to learn Hebrew, for without it one can never properly understand the Holy Scriptures."

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