

**Mount Olive Baptist Church**  
**Bible Study Notes**  
**Bible Study Series: *How We Got the Bible***  
**Session 10 – “From Struggle to Clarity — The English Bible & Modern Translations”**  
**Chapters 16 & 17**

## Introduction

Tonight we are looking at how the Bible came into the English language and how it developed into the translations we use today. What we will see is not just history, but sacrifice, struggle, and God’s faithfulness in making His Word available to His people.

Chapters 16 and 17 show us two movements:

- First, the fight to get the Bible into English
- Then, the refinement of that Bible into the translations we use today

God’s Word has not changed — but our ability to access, translate, and understand it has improved over time.

### I. Chapter 16 — The English Bible to 1611 (*pp. 174–184*)

#### 1. The Struggle for an English Bible

- Early Scriptures in England were in **Latin**, not English (*p. 174*)
- Only clergy and educated people could understand them
- The common people were largely without direct access to God’s Word

#### 2. Early Attempts (Limited Access) (*pp. 174–175*)

- Early figures (Caedmon, Aldhelm, Bede, Alfred) worked on portions of Scripture
- These were partial translations or paraphrases, not a complete Bible

**Truth:** The desire for God’s Word in English existed early—but access was still limited

#### 3. John Wycliffe — First Complete English Bible (*pp. 175–176*)

- Translated the Bible into English (c. 1382)
- Based on the **Latin Vulgate**, not original languages
- His followers spread Scripture among the people

**Impact:** Helped prepare the way for the Reformation

#### 4. William Tyndale — The Turning Point (*pp. 176–179*)

- First major English translator to work directly from the Greek New Testament and Hebrew Old Testament texts
- Goal: give Scripture to ordinary people
- First printed English New Testament (1525)
- Faced persecution, exile, and execution (1536)

#### His Lasting Impact:

- Shaped much of the English Bible we still read today
- Introduced key biblical wording still in use

**Truth:** A large portion of our English Bible traces back to Tyndale

#### 5. The Spread of English Bibles (*pp. 180–181*)

After Tyndale, translation efforts multiplied:

- Coverdale Bible (1535)
- Matthew's Bible (1537)
- Great Bible (1539) — first authorized for churches
- Geneva Bible (1560) — popular among the people
- Bishops' Bible (1568)
- Rheims-Douai Bible - Roman Catholic translation from Latin

**Truth:** The Bible was now reaching the people widely

#### 6. The King James Version (1611) (*pp. 182–183*)

- Created to unify translations and remove bias
- ~47 scholars working together
- Built on earlier translations (especially Tyndale)

#### Why It Endured:

- Strong biblical scholarship
- Beautiful and lasting English style
- Produced at the right time
- Not tied to one faction or group

## II. Chapter 17 — Modern English Translations (*pp. 186–198*)

### 1. Why the King James Version Needed Revision (*pp. 186–188*)

#### Key Reasons:

- **Limited manuscripts** available in 1611
- **Outdated language** (words changed meaning)
- **Translation limitations**

### 2. Early Revisions (*pp. 188–190*)

- English Revised Version (ERV)
- American Standard Version (ASV)

**Strength:** More accurate

**Weakness:** Difficult to read

### 3. Revised Standard Version (RSV) (*pp. 191–192*)

- Combined accuracy with readability
- Improved clarity over earlier versions

### 4. New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) (*pp. 192–194*)

- Further refinement of RSV
- Clearer language and updated scholarship

### 5. Two Translation Approaches (*pp. 195–196*)

#### Word-for-Word (Formal)

- Focus: exact wording of original text
- Example: KJV, NASB
- Strength: precision
- Weakness: harder to read

#### Thought-for-Thought (Dynamic)

- Focus: clear meaning
- Example: NIV
- Strength: readability
- Weakness: involves interpretation

## 6. Other Modern Translations (*pp. 195–198*)

- **NEB** — focuses on meaning in modern language
- **NASB** — very literal
- **NIV** — balance of clarity and accuracy

### Chapter 17 Key Takeaway

Modern translations are not changing God's Word — they are helping us understand it more clearly.

### Final Application

- We have access to Scripture like never before
- We should not take it for granted

### This week:

- Read one passage in two different translations
- Notice the differences
- Seek the meaning more deeply

### Final Thought

As we conclude this series, we are reminded that the Bible did not arrive to us by accident. It has been preserved through centuries, carried by faithful hands, defended at great cost, and translated with careful devotion so that we might know God's truth.

From ancient manuscripts to the English Bible we hold today, every step reveals God's providence and faithfulness. The same Word that was inspired, copied, and translated is the Word that now speaks to us.

So the question is not just how we got the Bible, but what we will do with it now that we have it.

Let us read it, trust it, live it, and share it, because it is truly the Word of God.