



# Bible Translations



What makes a good translation and which Bible Translation ought St. Paul use for Public Readings?



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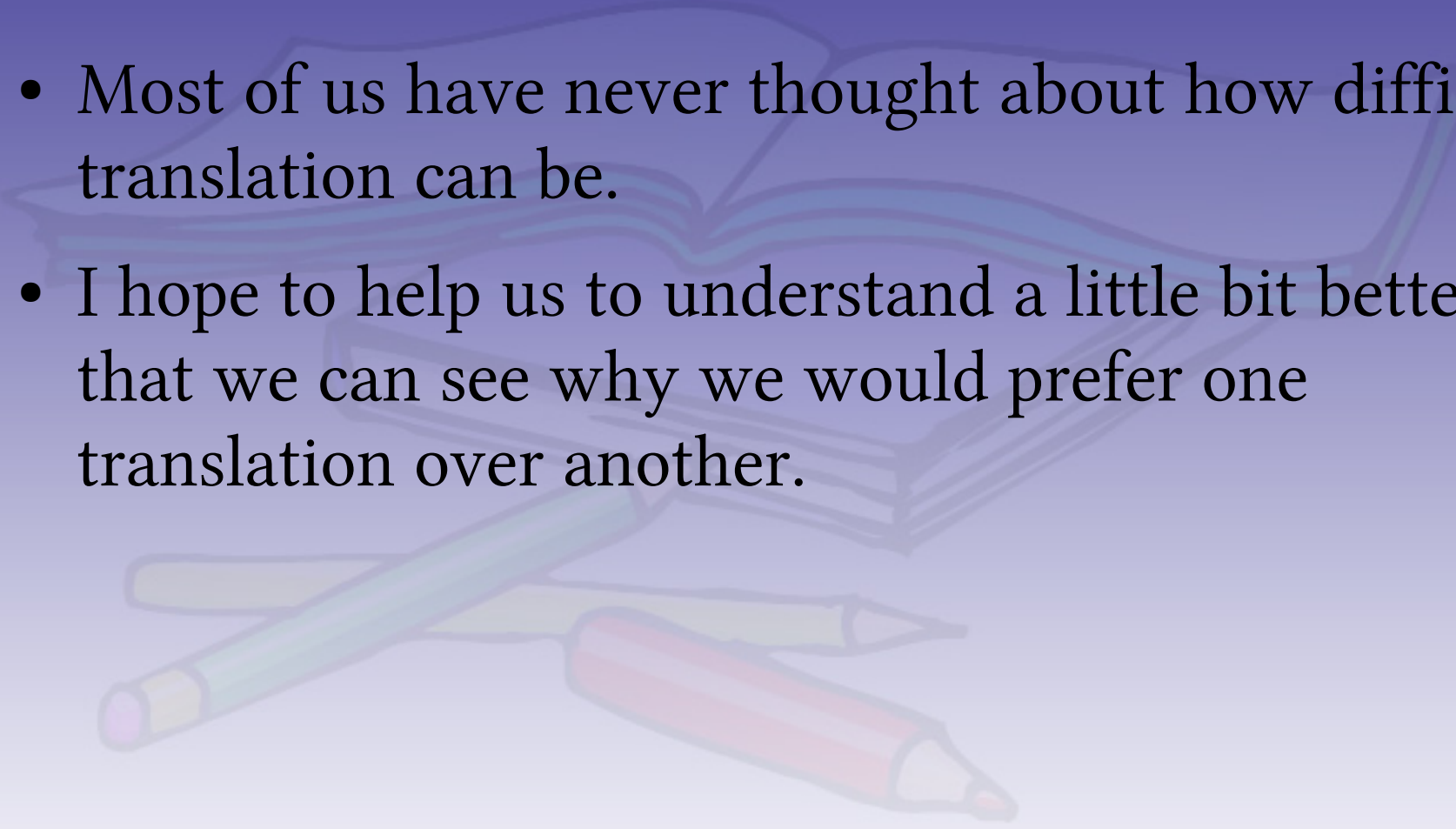


# Why do we care?

- We believe, teach and confess that the original manuscripts of the Bible in Hebrew and Greek are God's living, inerrant Word
- Translations are not inerrant
- Inaccurate translations have been used to fuel heresies in the past; some big some small
- It is the job of the Board of Elders to assist Pastor and Vicar to feed God's people in the best way that we can

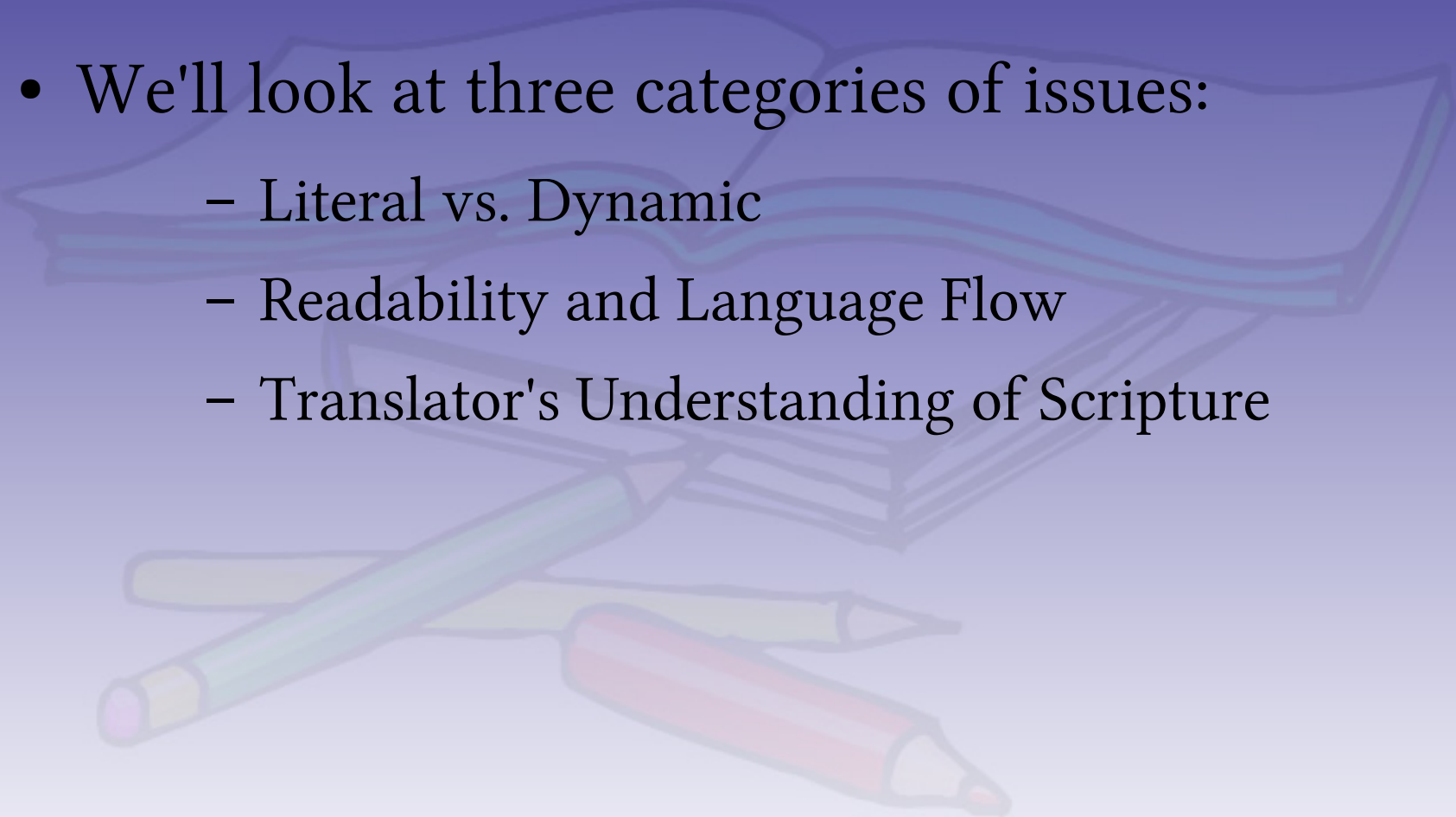


# Translating is tough!

- Most of us have never thought about how difficult translation can be.
  - I hope to help us to understand a little bit better so that we can see why we would prefer one translation over another.
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# Issues for Translating

- We'll look at three categories of issues:
    - Literal vs. Dynamic
    - Readability and Language Flow
    - Translator's Understanding of Scripture
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# Issues: word-for-word is not the same as literal

- Translators need to worry about word choices. The same word can mean different things in different contexts. For instance, in Hebrew, the words “spirit”, “breath”, and “wind” are the same word, “רוח”
- The difference is context. This means that the translator *needs* to understand proper interpretation techniques (known as Hermeneutics).
  - Example: Gen 1:2b
    - And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (ESV)
    - while a mighty wind swept over the waters. (NAB)

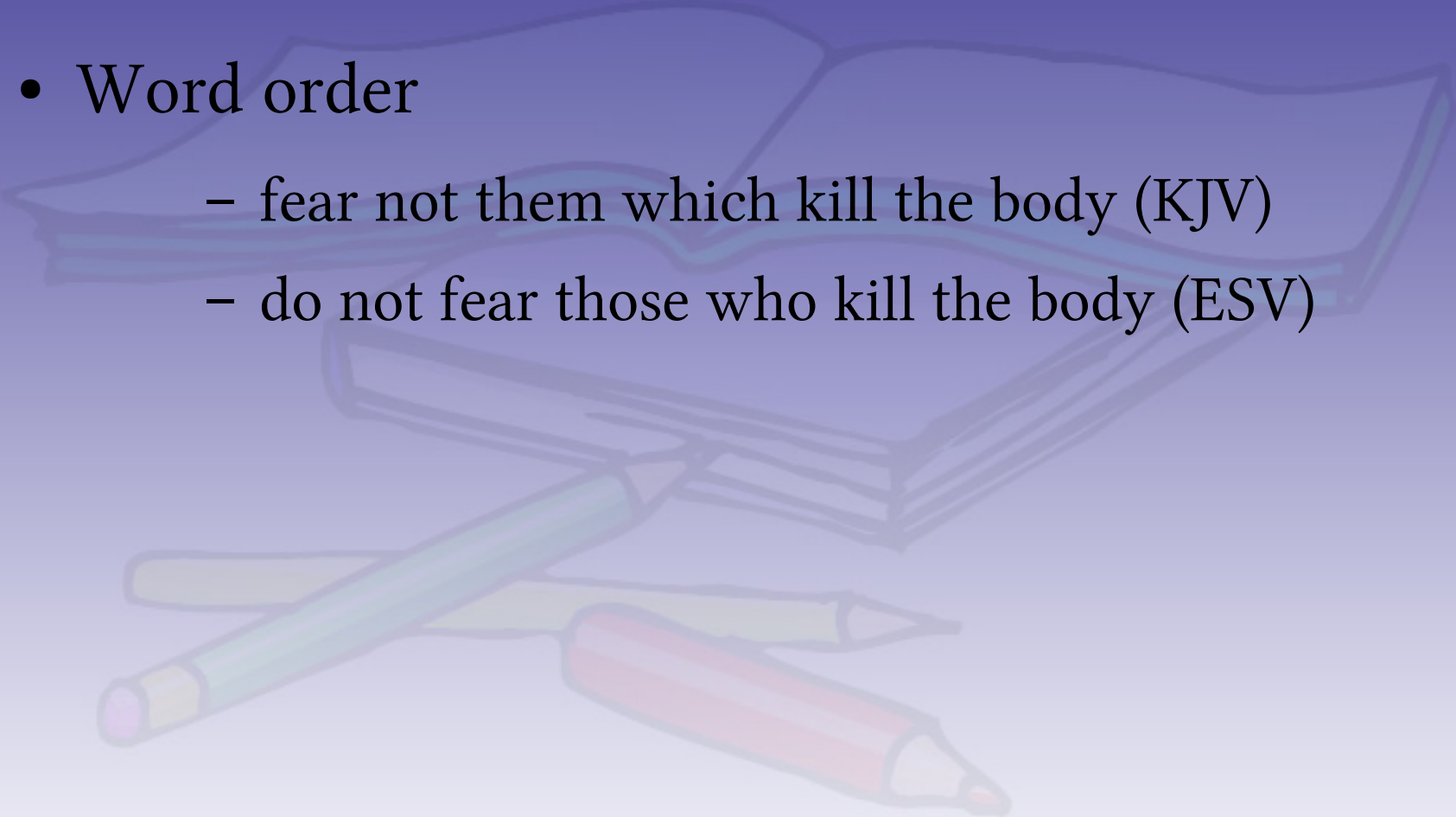


# Issues: How literal can you make it?

- Translators need to worry about required word insertion due to language differences (some of these are shown as italics in many printings of the KJV)
  - Luther's use of “alone” in his German translation of Rom 3:28
    - For we hold that one is justified by faith [ALONE] apart from works of the law.
  - the addition of articles “the” or “a” in English



# Issues: How literal do you want it?

- Word order
    - fear not them which kill the body (KJV)
    - do not fear those who kill the body (ESV)
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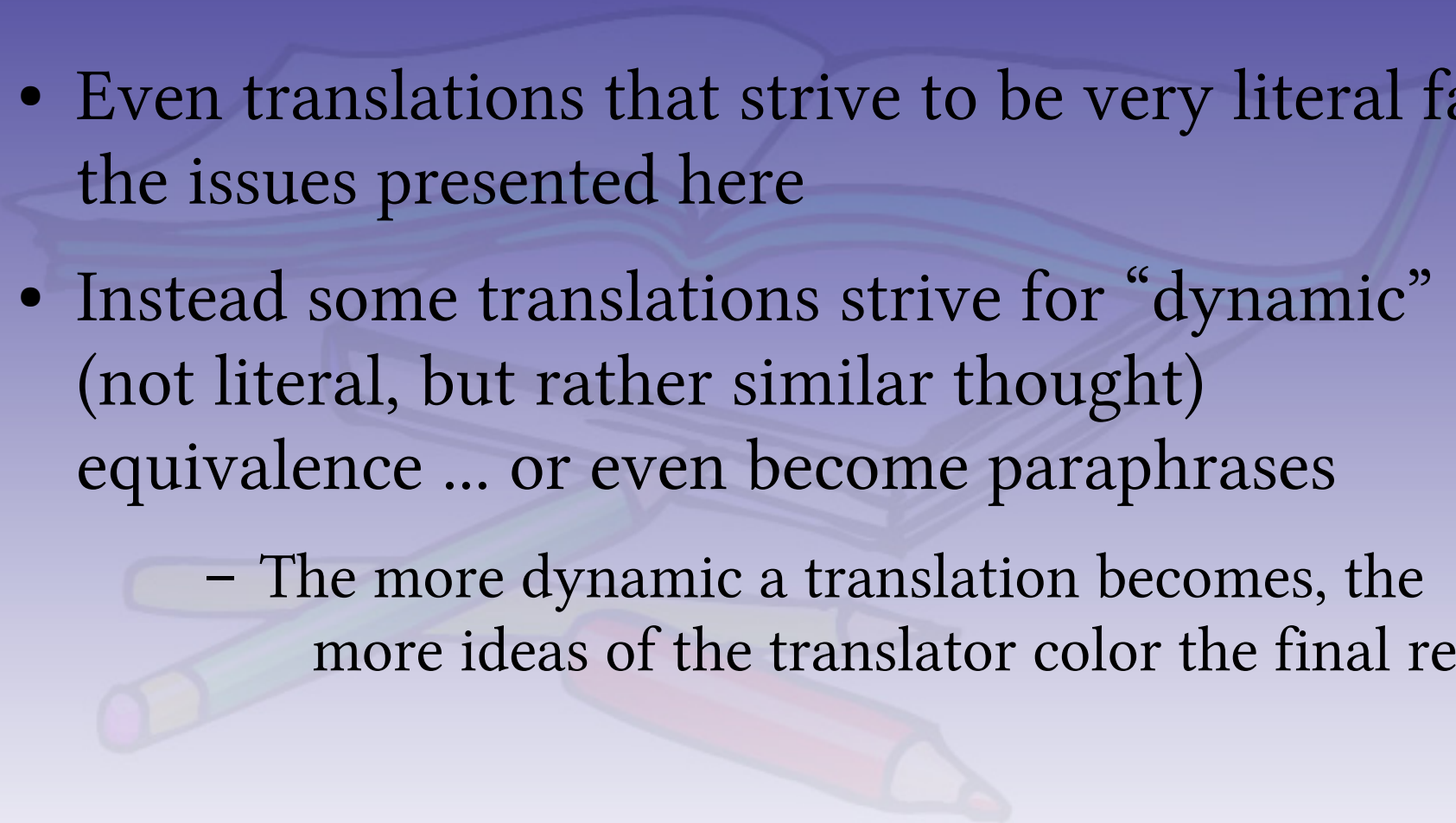


# Issues: How literal do you want it?

- Language-specific idioms
  - In English, we all know what the phrase “you’re pulling my leg” means. How would a translator convert that to another language? Should he translate the words “you’re”, “pulling”, “my” and “leg”? ... it depends!
  - The same thing happens in Greek and Hebrew
  - “cleanness of teeth” in Amos 4:6 means that the people were hungry



# Issues: How literal do you want it?

- Even translations that strive to be very literal face the issues presented here
  - Instead some translations strive for “dynamic” (not literal, but rather similar thought) equivalence ... or even become paraphrases
    - The more dynamic a translation becomes, the more ideas of the translator color the final result
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# Issues: Readability and Language Flow

- A translation can go off the fence on either side
  - Can be unacceptably dumbed-down for educated listeners, taking deep and beautiful passages and making them seem hollow compared to a different translation
  - Can use language unknown to uneducated or younger listeners
  - Can vary so much from normal English sentence structure that it is hard to follow the meaning even when you know the words



# Issues: Understanding of Scripture

- Can a New Testament quotation help us to translate Old Testament verses?
  - If the OT and NT are both inerrant, then the more clear passage interprets the less clear passage
  - Famous example: Isa 7:14b
    - KJV: Behold, a virgin shall conceive
    - RSV: Behold, a young woman shall conceive
    - NRSV: Look, the young woman is with child
    - NIV: The virgin will be with child
    - ESV: Behold, the virgin shall conceive



# Issues: Understanding of Scripture

- Scholars argue whether Hebrew word “עלמה” means virgin or young woman.
- Matt 1:23 quotes Isaiah, and uses the Greek word “παρθένος”, which more clearly means virgin
  - The Church has historically used Matt 1:23 to settle the interpretation of Isaiah, at least as far back as St. Jerome (c.347-420) in his Latin Vulgate
  - Liberal Bible scholars see the Bible as the Word of God in a qualified sense, deny that prophesy really exists, and argue that the proper interpretation of Isaiah is “young woman”




# Quick Guide to Popular Translations

	<b>LITERAL VS. DYNAMIC</b>	<b>LANGUAGE ACCESSIBILITY</b>	<b>SMOOTHNESS OF TEXT FLOW</b>	<b>TRANSLATOR'S UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTURE</b>
<b>KJV (1611)</b>	Essentially literal	low	high	Word of God
<b>RSV (1952)</b>	Moderately literal	moderate	high	Slightly Qualified Word of God
<b>NASB (1971)</b>	Extremely literal	low	low	Word of God
<b>NIV (1978)</b>	Somewhat Dynamic	high	moderate	Word of God
<b>NRSV (1989)</b>	Somewhat literal	high	moderate	Qualified Word of God
<b>ESV (2001)</b>	Essentially literal	moderate	moderate-high	Word of God



# Quick History of LCMS Use

- Most LCMS congregations used the KJV when English Worship services started
  - Many switched to the RSV for language accessibility
  - Interpretation of certain passages pushed most to use the NIV in the 80s and 90s
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# Not second-guessing

- Of the translations available in the 80s and 90s, the NIV was a pretty good choice.
- It does have some underlying troubles
  - Since it is more dynamic, the theology of the translators effects the translation
  - Most translators were Calvinists and Evangelicals
    - We have a lot in common with Calvinists, but differ in very key areas such as the Sacraments and Election



## NIV “hiccups” - Election - Rom 8:28

- ESV: And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who *are called* according to his purpose.
- NIV: And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who *have been called* according to his purpose.
- NIV uses past tense for the call, ESV (also KJV, NASB, etc.) uses present. Calvinists believe that you're predestined from eternity to either salvation or damnation. Lutherans believe that *all continue to be* called to salvation. The NIV splits from nearly every other translation by using past tense here.



## NIV “hiccups” - Baptism - 1Pt 3:21

- ESV: Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you
- NIV: and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also
- The use of the words “symbolizes” and “also” confuses the matter of whether Baptism actually brings us salvation. If you dig into the language of the NIV, it does in fact say that Baptism saves. Calvinists believe that Baptism is symbolic. Lutherans believe that it actually changes us.



## NIV “hiccups” - Word choice - 1Jn 2:2

- ESV: He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.
- NIV: He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.
- This is not a theological difference, but a word choice directed towards simplicity rather than accuracy. Propitiation is more specific and means the appeasement of wrath. Atoning sacrifice is less specific and does not necessarily imply wrath. The Greek word “ἵλασμός” implies the more specific usage.
- This is important because some people deny God's wrath and say that Jesus simply died to show us He loved us.



## NIV “hiccups” - word choice – Gal 4:5

- Gal 4:5b ESV: so that we might receive adoption as sons.
- Gal 4:5b NIV: that we might receive the full rights of sons.
- (see similar Rom 8:15)
- The Greek uses the word “υιοθεσίαν”, or adoption. Adoption is not difficult vocabulary and it is clear in Scripture that it is an important concept which God wishes us to understand. This translation blurs that learning process



## NIV “hiccups” - Lord's Supper - Acts 3:21

- ESV: whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.
- NIV: He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.
- The Calvinist viewpoint is that Jesus can't be in the Lord's Supper because He is in Heaven. The NIV translation strongly pushes that argument. Of major translations, only the NRSV agrees.



# NIV “hiccups” - Eschatology - Matt 26:64

- ESV: from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.
- NIV: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.
- When Jesus utters these words, it is only a few hours until His reign begins with His victory at Calvary (see past tense in Eph 1:20-23). His reign does not begin at some far-off time, and the translation should indicate that the time is almost at hand. The NIV translation feeds an Evangelical misconception that Christ's reign has not begun and that His victory is not yet won.

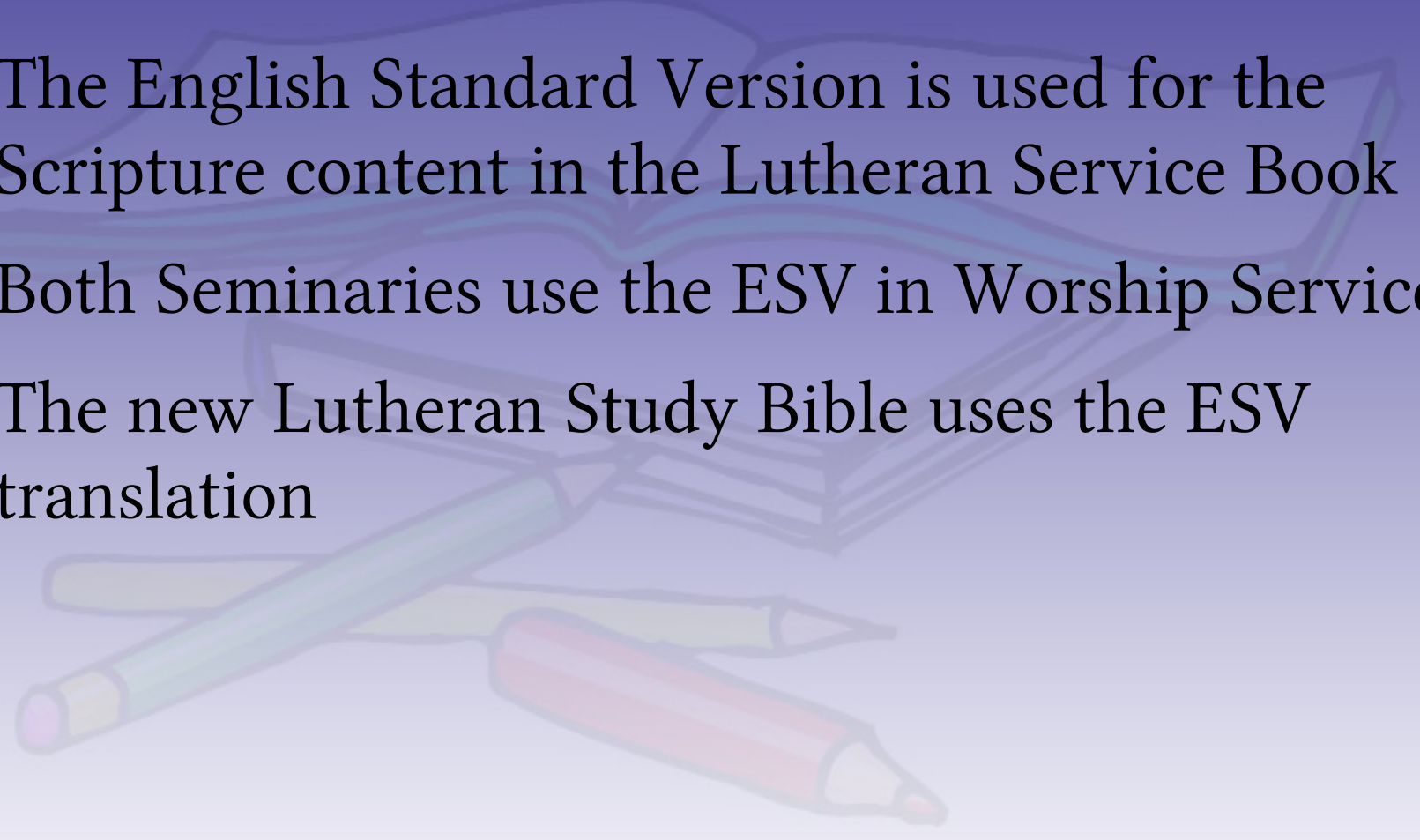


## Is the ESV perfect?

- Sorry, no. Let's look at Gen 2:19
- ESV: So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field
- NIV: Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field
- Gen 1 gives the more specific order of creation: the beasts before man. Gen 2 recounts the process again, and man is created in 2:7-9. The ESV translation of 2:19 implies a contradiction of the order of creation between beasts and man by its translation here ... The NIV avoids the pitfall
- Either translation of Gen 2:19 is equally word-for-word literal, so context should dictate use of the translation consistent with Gen 1 and 2:7-9.



# What about the rest of the LCMS?

- The English Standard Version is used for the Scripture content in the Lutheran Service Book
  - Both Seminaries use the ESV in Worship Services
  - The new Lutheran Study Bible uses the ESV translation
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# Recommendation

- The Board of Elders has recommended to Pastor and Vicar that St. Paul start to use the ESV for public readings
- The pew Bibles would remain NIV
  - We feel that this gives congregants access to both translations, and that this will be educational
  - This is similar to how we handle Bible Studies, where many translations are regularly used simultaneously

Questions?

