

Which Bible Translation For Children?

by Wayne Goff

In our Bible classes for smaller children, and in our home Bible studies, we wish to impart as much Bible knowledge as possible. In order to do that, we must get the lesson down on the children's level. I am always impressed with our teachers and some parents in their ability to do this. It requires them to first digest the Bible for themselves, understand it properly, and then impart at least the basic truths on the child's level. But if you consider Ezra 7:10, this is actually every teacher's duty whatever their level of study. Those who are poor teachers are those who have never learned it for themselves, or else they have learned it but have great difficulty explaining it to others.

But let me add a word of caution to all of us. The so-called New International Version (NIV) is sometimes used because it is quite simple in its wording. But the danger in using it is that it is actually not a version but a commentary in many places. Thus it becomes a perversion, rather than a version of the Bible. If we encourage our children to use this book in their youth, then they stand the chance of wanting to use it as adults. Therein lies the danger! I think one example will suffice to show you the danger of this book.

Twenty-three times in twenty-two verses in the NIV the phrase "sinful nature" appears (Rom. 7:5, 18, 25; 8:3-5, 8-9, 12-14; 1 Cor. 5:5; Gal. 5:13, 16-17, 19, 24; 6:8; Eph. 2:3; Col. 2:11, 13; 2 Pet. 2:10). The original Greek word (sarx) means "flesh" and should be so translated. Thus when the NIV substitutes "sinful nature" it is making a Calvinistic comment which misleads the reader to then believe that the Bible teaches that we have inherited a sinful nature from Adam. Furthermore, this is not the only phrase in the NIV which carries a Calvinistic slant. It is unreliable and should only be used carefully by a knowledgeable Bible student in my opinion.

Parents and teachers need to be careful in their use of Bible versions and translations. The most literal translations include the KJV, NKJV, ASV and NASB. They leave the commentary to the Bible student and give the most accurate rendering in our language. It is safest to stick with one of these. Recently the ESV has come out and to my current knowledge is reliable, too. I grew up on the KJV and while the Old English wording is difficult to understand in many places, I know that a child can read from it, learn the truth and be faithful to God as an adult. But it takes time and effort to study the Bible carefully, period.

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