

New English Translation (NET) or NETBible

About this Title

YouVersion Information

The youversion of the NETBible[®] show the different NETBible footnotes as superscripts on the word the note applies to. ie. study note are shown as ^s, translators note is ^t, text critical note is ^{sc} map note ^{map}. The notes in the printed and on line versions of the [NETBible](#) are sn ,tn , tc ,map respectively.

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Version Information- NETBible®

The NET Bible® is a completely new translation of the Bible with 60,932 translators' notes! It was completed by more than 25 scholars – experts in the original biblical languages – who worked directly from the best currently available Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. Turn the pages and see the breadth of the translators' notes, documenting their decisions and choices as they worked. The translators' notes make the original languages far more accessible, allowing you to look over the translator's shoulder at the very process of translation. This level of documentation is a first for a Bible translation, making transparent the textual basis and the rationale for key renderings (including major interpretive options and alternative translations). This unparalleled level of detail helps connect people to the Bible in the original languages in a way never before possible without years of study of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. It unlocks the riches of the Bible's truth from entirely new perspectives.

Accountability, transparency, and feedback

The NET Bible is the first Bible ever to be beta-tested on the Internet. In this beta-testing process all working drafts of the NET Bible were posted on www.bible.org for public review and comment. The significance of this is that the NET Bible team, from day one, has been listening to its readers. The purpose of the public review and comment was not to achieve a consensus translation, but to be accountable, to be transparent, and to request that millions of people provide feedback on the faithfulness and clarity of the translation as well as on the translators' notes. Countless valuable suggestions have been made by scholars, by junior high school students, by college professors, and by lay Christians who speak English as a second language. Because of the open approach of the NET Bible team, the resulting product has been enriched immeasurably. Each one of us comes to the Bible from a different perspective; scholars need to listen to the person in the pew as much as the layperson needs to listen to scholars. The translation reflects the latest scholarship, and the sources are cited in the translators' notes and documented in the appendices. The NET Bible is a truly symbiotic effort between the insights of biblical scholars and the needs of lay Christians. The combined effect of the notes and the nine year public review process has reinforced the translation's primary goal of faithfulness to the original languages. By creating a translation environment that is responsible both to the world's scholars and to lay readers, the NET Bible was read, studied, and checked by more eyes than any Bible translation in history.

The most important translation concept

The most important translation of the Bible is not from the original languages to English, but from the printed page into your life. If you have never read through a complete book of the Bible, we suggest you begin by reading the Gospel of John. We encourage you to recognize that the Bible is not merely a book. It is God's message to us all, and God continues to speak through it today. There is, after all, a reason far more Bibles have been produced than any book in history. *Read it and see for yourself.*

Introduction to the First Edition

Welcome to the First Edition of the NET BIBLE with all 60,932 translators' notes! We want to thank the millions of online NET BIBLE users and the students, teachers, and churches who have made the NET BIBLE a part of their daily Bible study, reading, and worship. Their countless observations have been a valuable addition to the NET BIBLE team's methodical editing of the translation during its 10-year development. More people from more countries have used and reviewed the NET BIBLE during its production than any Bible translation in history – and you are still invited to join that process! The First Edition signifies the transition from development and beta testing to official release of the translation. The NET BIBLE text (notes excluded) has now been frozen for 5 years. The next set of upgrades and improvements is planned for release in 2010. During the initial 10-year translation effort, the final 8 years were primarily spent editing and improving the translation of the biblical text. Consequently, the translators' notes have not been edited to the same degree as the biblical text itself. Improvements and enhancements to the NET BIBLE's notes therefore will be made on a periodic basis.

What you have in your hands – or on your computer monitor, laptop, mobile phone or handheld – represents a new approach to Bible translation and a fresh approach to ministry for the new millennium. The NET BIBLE was planned from the very beginning to be available for free on the Internet. The decision to produce for the first time large quantities of Bibles on Gutenberg's improved press in 1454-1455 sparked a revolution and provided a dramatic increase in the availability of Bibles and biblical study materials in many languages, but over five centuries later many people throughout the world cannot access Bibles and biblical study resources because of their high cost and because some governments attempt to prevent their citizens from ever encountering the Bible. The primary goal of the NET BIBLE project was to leverage the Internet to meet these two critical needs. The Internet represents the single best opportunity for ministry in history because electronic distribution via the Internet allows relatively free delivery of unlimited numbers of Bibles and unlimited amounts of biblical study resources to anyone worldwide who could otherwise not afford them or access them – for zero incremental cost. Organizations willing to share materials on the Internet will accomplish the Great Commission of [Matthew 28:19-20](#) more efficiently than those which follow older ministry models alone. The impact of a publishing ministry can increase by leaps and bounds because it is no longer limited by the number of copies of materials it can afford to print and give away. The NET BIBLE was created to be the first major modern English translation available free on the Internet for download and use in Bible studies and other teaching materials so that the opportunities provided by the Internet could be maximized. Authors, teachers, pastors, and translators are now ensured that their life's work can be offered anywhere – even shared freely on the Internet – using verses quoted from the NET BIBLE. They can now work to create high quality biblical study materials confident in knowing that permission has been granted for works of ministry that will be offered for free to others. We are pleased to be the first to do this, and we hope many others will join with us in this effort to put ministry first.

Translators' Notes – unprecedented transparency for serious Bible students

The 60,932 **translators' notes** included with the NET Bible are another result of our Internet focus. Bible readers are often not aware that every translation makes many interpretive decisions for them. One goal of the NET Bible project was to find a way to help the reader see the decisions and choices that went into the translation. The answer was to include notes produced by the translators while they worked through the issues and options confronting them as they did the work of translation – thus providing an unprecedented level of transparency for users. In fact, the nature of the Internet allows unlimited notes. These notes provide an extended dialogue between translator and reader about the alternatives for translation, options for interpretation, and finer nuances which are usually lost in translation. After the drafts and first rounds of editing were completed, we discovered that the thousands of notes we had accumulated could be made to fit on the printed page in addition to the electronic format. What you are now reading, on printed paper or on a digital screen is the First Edition of the NET Bible complete with all the translators' notes. Never before in the history of the Bible has a translation been published which includes explanatory notes from the translators and editors as to *why* the preferred translation was chosen and what the other alternatives are. Students of the Bible, future Bible translators,¹ and biblical scholars will all benefit from these unparalleled translators' notes.² One of the goals of the NET Bible with the complete set of translators' notes is to allow the general public – as well as Bible students, pastors, missionaries, and Bible translators in the field – to be able to know what the translators of the NET Bible were thinking when a phrase or verse was rendered in a particular way. Many times the translator will have made informed decisions based on facts about grammatical, lexical, historical, and textual data not readily available to English-speaking students of the Bible. This information is now easily accessible through the translators' notes.

In short, the NET Bible that you now hold is different from all the Bible translations that have come before it. It represents a truly new departure in the way Bible translations are presented to the general public. With a translation as revolutionary as the NET Bible, you no doubt have some additional questions. The remainder of this Introduction addresses in question-and-answer format the most frequently asked questions, to help you understand what the NET Bible is about and how it differs from the many other Bible translations available to the English-speaking reader today.

Frequently asked questions

-What is the NET Bible?

The NET Bible is a completely new translation of the Bible, not a revision or an update of a previous English version. It was completed by more than 25 biblical scholars – experts in the original biblical languages – who worked directly from the best currently available Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. Most of these scholars teach Old or New Testament exegesis in seminaries and graduate schools. Furthermore, the translator assigned to prepare the first draft of the translation and notes for each book of the Bible was chosen in every instance because of his or her extensive work in that particular book

– not only involving teaching but writing and research as well, often extending over several decades. Many of the translators and editors have also participated in other translation projects. They have been assisted by doctoral students and advised by style consultants and Wycliffe field translators. Hence, the notes alone are the cumulative result of hundreds of thousands of hours of biblical and linguistic research applied to the particular problems of accurately translating and interpreting the text. The translators’ notes, most of which were created at the same time as the initial drafts of the translation itself, enable the reader of the NET Bible to “look over the shoulders” of the translators as they worked and gain insight into their decisions and choices to an extent never before possible in an English translation.

-Why was the NET Bible Produced?

In 1994 www.bible.org’s ministry objective was to develop biblical studies that could be used by God to bring people into the family of GOD and to mature Christians worldwide. To accomplish this bible.org needed to quote a modern Bible translation in the production of thousands of trustworthy Bible Study resources that could be offered on the Internet for free. We predicted in 1995 that the number of Bible verses quoted in these studies would soon surpass available legal permission limits. We tried for a year to purchase permission, but could not obtain the necessary permissions. In 1995 the lack of a legal ability to quote a modern Bible translation online would make online Bible studies impossible and threatened bible.org’s ministry objective. Quite simply the only way we could secure permission to quote a modern Bible was to sponsor a new translation – the NET Bible. We now want to ensure that other ministries and authors don’t experience the same roadblocks. The NET Bible is not just for bible.org, but for everyone. The NET Bible was produced for ministry and was commissioned in 1995 to create a faithful Bible translation that could be placed on the Internet, downloaded for free, and quoted in a huge collection of online studies by www.bible.org and others around the world for ministry. The Bible is God’s gift to humanity – it should be free. (Go to www.bible.org/downloads and download your free copy.) Permission is available for the NET Bible to be printed royalty-free for organizations like the Gideons International who print and distribute Bibles for charity. The NET Bible (with all the translators’ notes) has also been provided to Wycliffe Bible Translators to assist their field translators. The NET Bible Society is working with other groups and Bible Societies to provide the NET Bible translators’ notes to complement fresh translations in other languages. A Chinese translation team is currently at work on a new translation, which incorporates the NET Bible translators’ notes in Chinese, making them available to an additional 1.5 billion people. Parallel projects involving other languages are also in progress. What is the cornerstone and guiding principle of our ministry?

Bible.org is guided by the principle of “[Ministry First](#).” Our translation team desires to follow the Bible’s teaching with regard to the distribution of God’s word versus the sales of printed Bibles for massive profits. The NET Bible team has reflected on the model described in [Leviticus 23:22](#) and asked how Bible publishers ensure that they “not completely harvest the corner of their field... for the poor and the foreigner.” Our ‘crop’ is a Bible translation. Even though some for-profit Bible publishers have allowed Bible societies to print and give away millions of Bibles, the amount of funds available to all Bible societies and publishers in all of history does not come close to being able to

actually give a free printed Bible to all of the two billion people who have some ability to read English. This is why we feel so strongly that the NET Bible must not only be available for viewing on the Internet, but also for free downloading and use by everyone, worldwide, for free, forever. It is a cornerstone and guiding principle of our ministry. This approach helps us come closer to fulfilling the Great Commission of [Matthew 28:19-20](#) by allowing all people of all nations on earth to learn what God has revealed in his word for them to understand and obey. Learning and following the Bible's instructions must apply to Bible translators and publishers as well as Bible students. This is why we offer the NET Bible for free to the world (all 2 billion people) – because we desire to offer Bibles and Bible study resources for free to those who cannot afford to pay for them. Now you know why the NET Bible is available for download and use in Bible studies free to all people, everywhere. These are exciting times, and while we are honored to have been the first modern English translation to do this, we are pleased to see that many other modern English translations are now posted on the Internet for free use as well. As a pioneer in this space, the NET Bible goes beyond just offering free online use and actually offers people around the world the ability to obtain a free download of the entire NET Bible in a popular word processing format as well as a bible study tools based on electronic NET Bible for free (see www.nextbible.org) so that you can easily study for yourself and then write study materials quoting the NET Bible for use by others. We call this a “[Ministry First](#)” model, where ministry always takes priority.

The NET Bible Society is working with other groups and Bible Societies to provide the NET Bible translators' notes to complement fresh translations in other languages. A Chinese translation team is currently at work on a new translation, which incorporates the NET Bible translators' notes in Chinese, making them available to an additional 1.5 billion people. These notes are even more essential in Chinese (and other languages) because they incorporate citations and applications of critical biblical reference materials that are unlikely to be translated into Chinese (and other languages) in the foreseeable future. These tools are not simply to make the translation better, but also to provide a window into the original languages using resources otherwise unavailable. Refer to the List of Cited Works in the appendices and the translators' notes for examples. Parallel projects involving other languages are also in progress.

-Why do we need yet another translation of the Bible?

With over 25 different English translations of the entire Bible and approximately forty of the New Testament, an obvious question is, why yet another one? As described above, the initial problem was that other modern translations have not been made available for free electronic distribution over the Internet. Electronic searchable versions of contemporary English translations tend to be very expensive. Anyone anywhere in the world with an Internet connection is able to use, [study](#) and print out the NET Bible without cost for personal study, preaching, teaching, and training others. In addition, anyone who wants to give away the Bible can print up to 1,000 copies of the NET Bible and distribute them for free without the need for written permission. Pastors without extensive libraries, missionaries and Bible translators in the field, and people in countries where access to Bible study materials are restricted or prohibited will all benefit from access to a contemporary English translation with extensive notes available on the Internet. (The notes accompanying the NET Bible can even help you understand *other*

translations better.) Ultimately what you have in your hands or on your computer monitor with this copy of the NET Bible is God's word, and we believe it should be available to everyone everywhere to read and study in a version that is accurate, readable, and affordable.

It is not just the new electronic media that justifies this translation, however. A great deal of scholarly literature has been produced on biblical interpretation and translation in the last quarter century. While virtually all other translations produced in the last two decades of the twentieth century were revisions of earlier versions, the NET Bible translators felt that an entirely different kind of translation was needed. In particular, the extensive translators' notes that display for the reader the decisions and choices behind the translation ultimately chosen are virtually unique among Bible translations, in all languages, in the history of translation. The resulting translation itself is intended to capture the best of several worlds: readable *and* accurate *and* elegant all at the same time.

-What is the NET Bible's place in the history of English Bible translation?

The history of the Bible's translation into English is a long and complicated one, and can only be summarized briefly here. Parts of the Bible appear to have been translated into Old English by Alfred the Great (died a.d. 901), including the Ten Commandments, parts of [Exodus 21-23](#) and [Acts 15](#), and a number of Psalms. Later in the tenth century Abbot Aelfric and perhaps others translated significant parts of the Old Testament into English, as well as the Gospels and some other New Testament books.

By around 1300 parts of the Psalms and the New Testament were being translated into Middle English. These were precursors of the famous versions associated with John Wycliffe (died a.d. 1384). The tradition that Wycliffe himself translated the Bible into English is founded on a statement by his follower Jan Hus. Whether he actually did the translation himself or it was carried out by his followers, he doubtless exerted a great influence over it. These translations were based on the Latin Vulgate, originally the work of Jerome, which was finished at the beginning of the fifth century a.d. and which became the standard Bible of the Western church throughout the Middle Ages.

Several other events in Europe had a significant impact on the history of the English Bible at this point. First was the general revival of learning in Europe known as the Renaissance, which brought about renewed interest in Hebrew and Greek, the original languages of the Bible. Second was the construction of an improved printing press with metal moveable type some time prior to 1450 by Johannes Gutenberg (the first volume book printed on this improved press was the Gutenberg Bible printed ca. 1455³). This innovation launched an explosion in the availability of Bibles, which spread to England when the first printing press for English Bibles was established in 1476. The third event occurred when Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg in 1517, setting in motion the Protestant Reformation.⁴ These events combined to give considerable momentum to the translation of the Bible into everyday language. Luther's New Testament, translated from the Greek into German, appeared in 1522, while William Tyndale's, translated from the Greek into English, followed in 1525. Tyndale was arrested in Antwerp in 1535 and executed for translating the Bible into the vernacular, and his translation was vilified by the authorities. Yet almost every English

translation for the next hundred years borrowed heavily from Tyndale's work, including in particular the King James Version of 1611. Before this landmark in the history of English Bibles, however, there were other translations, like Coverdale's in 1535 and the version called Matthew's Bible in 1537. Both these Bibles received the royal license in 1537. The year 1539 saw the appearance of the so-called "Great Bible," actually a revision of Matthew's Bible by Coverdale, which by royal decree of Henry VIII was placed in every church in England.

The reign of Elizabeth I saw the production of two more English Bibles, the Geneva Bible (published in 1560 in Geneva, with a dedication to Elizabeth) and the Bishops' Bible (1568, with a second edition in 1572). The former was the Bible used by Shakespeare, and was thoroughly Calvinistic in its translation and notes. It was so far superior in translation to the Great Bible that it became very popular, although the Anglican authorities were not pleased with its Calvinistic leanings. The Bishops' Bible was prepared as a response, and as a result English-speaking Protestantism was left at the end of the sixteenth century with two competing Bibles. The problem was not resolved until the Hampton Court Conference of 1604, when King James authorized a new translation of the Bible and specifically prohibited the use of marginal notes commenting on doctrine (notes commenting on the sense of words were permitted, and the original King James Version contained thousands of these). Gradually this translation established itself as *the* English Bible par excellence, and the last edition of the Geneva Bible appeared in 1644.

Until 1885, when the Revised Version was published in England, the King James Version (known in England as the Authorized Version) reigned supreme. An American version of the revision, known as the American Standard Version, was published in 1901. The twentieth century saw the publication of a number of Bibles and New Testaments, among them James Moffatt's (NT 1913; OT 1924) and E. J. Goodspeed's (NT 1923), which combined with the Old Testament by A. Gordon, T. Meek, J. M. Powis Smith, and L. Waterman (1935) was published the same year as *The Bible: An American Translation*. One of the most important English translations of the twentieth century was the Revised Standard Version (NT 1946; complete Bible, 1952). This was a thoroughgoing revision of the KJV and ASV which many consider to be the first of the "modern" translations. The publication of the RSV was only the beginning of a flood of translations and paraphrases, including (among others) J. B. Phillips' *The New Testament in Modern English* (1958), the Amplified Bible (1965), the Jerusalem Bible (1966), the New American Bible (1970), the New English Bible (1970), the New American Standard Bible (1971), *The Living Bible* (1971), and the New International Version (1973).

Over thirty years have passed since the release of the NIV New Testament.⁵ This major English translation is taken as a benchmark because (unlike many others) it was not a revision or update of an existing translation or a successor to a previous translation.⁶ During these thirty years neither biblical scholarship nor the English language itself has stood still.⁷ The NET Bible is the first completely new translation of the Bible to be produced in the age of the Internet with full computer networking support involving collaborative file sharing, data storage and retrieval, and the creation of task-specific databases. Biblical scholars exchanged not only e-mail but entire documents over computer networks and the Internet for constant editorial revision and correction.

Electronic versions of standard lexical and grammatical reference works enabled translators and editors to work much more rapidly than if they were dependent on paper copies of these materials. Materials were posted on the Internet at www.bible.org from the very beginning, with seven complete books along with their accompanying translators' notes available online in 1996, less than one full year after the beginning of the project. This allowed literally millions of people to "beta test" the translation and notes, making countless valuable suggestions to the translators and editors. The result was not a consensus translation (since all the comments and suggestions were carefully reviewed by the translators and editors), but a translation produced with an unparalleled level of transparency. This in turn created a high level of accountability, not to a particular group or denomination, but to the Church worldwide. The NET Bible truly is the first English translation for the next millennium, representing a step potentially more significant than the use of Gutenberg's improved printing press for mass producing Bibles in 1455. The original authors of the Bible made the books and letters they had written available to everyone for free. That is what we are now doing electronically, and we believe that use of the Internet to distribute Bibles and Bible study resources globally represents the most efficient publishing and ministry model available in history. To a server on the Internet, distributing 6 billion copies – one for every person on earth! – costs *almost nothing*, unlike all previous methods of distributing Bibles. The Internet represents the single best opportunity for ministry in the history of the world. The mission of bible.org is to leverage the power of the Internet to provide people and ministries worldwide with universal access to the NET Bible and other trustworthy Bible study resources at an affordable cost – free! For a more full treatment of this topic see Dr Daniel Wallace series on www.bible.org titled [The History of the English Bible](#)

-How did the NET Bible project begin?

The project began on a rainy night in November 1995 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature. There a group of Old and New Testament scholars met over dinner at an Italian restaurant with the sponsor of the project. Later that same night in a hotel lobby they were joined by a larger group of scholars – to discuss at greater length a new translation of the Bible. The topic of conversation was the possibility of an English translation for electronic distribution over the Internet. A revision and update of some existing English translation was initially discussed, but in subsequent discussions the biblical scholars themselves insisted that a completely new translation was both possible and indeed preferable. The initial planning group was interdenominational and evangelical, although not made up of official representatives from church groups or denominations. A deliberate decision was made early on to devote special attention to the avoidance of doctrinal peculiarities or sectarian bias in the new translation.

Working with the format of electronic media, it soon became apparent to those of us involved in the translation project that we could do some things that had not been possible before, given the limitations of traditional print media.

- First, the NET Bible includes extensive notes with the translation, notes created by the original translators as they worked through the issues and options concerning the

translation of the original language texts of the Bible. These notes operate on more than one level – a technical level for pastors, teachers, and students of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek who are interested in the grammatical, syntactical, and text-critical details of the translation, and a more popular level comparable to current study Bibles offering explanatory details of interest to lay Bible students. In electronic format the length of these notes, a considerable problem with conventional printed Bibles, is no longer a major limitation.

- Second, within the more technical notes the translation team has taken the opportunity to explain and give the rationale for the translation of a particular phrase or verse.
- Third, the translators and editors used the notes to show major interpretive options and/or textual options for difficult or disputed passages, so that the English reader knows at a glance what the alternatives are.
- Fourth, the translators and editors used the notes to give a translation that was formally equivalent,⁸ while placing a somewhat more functionally equivalent⁹ translation in the text itself to promote better readability and understandability.¹⁰ The longstanding tension between these two different approaches to Bible translation has thus been fundamentally solved.
- Finally, the use of electronic media gives the translators and editors of the NET Bible the possibility of continually updating and improving the translation and notes. The translation itself will be updated in five-year increments, while the notes will undergo a continual process of expansion and refinement.

In short, the notes allow a running commentary on the translators' decisions to a degree never seen before in any translation of the Bible. The NET Bible with the complete set of translators' notes is not just a very readable modern translation, but a copy of the Bible with its own commentary attached containing an average of two notes for each verse. Those who have years of expertise in the study of the original biblical languages can now communicate that information directly to the English-speaking Bible reader in a convenient, compact fashion that does not require the Bible student to read through a shelf of commentaries or spend years learning the original biblical languages.

In addition to format and content, the broad framework of the project is unique among translations. The NET Bible is not funded by any particular denomination, church, or special interest group. This has directly impacted the content: Translators and editors were left free to follow where the text leads and translate as they thought best. There has never been pressure to make sure the text reads a certain way or conforms to a particular doctrinal statement. The NET Bible is responsible and accountable to the universal body of Christ, the church worldwide. Through publication on the Internet and free distribution of the text, the editors and translators have submitted the NET Bible to their brothers and sisters in Christ all over the world. The questions, comments, and feedback received from them are examined very carefully, and the translation and notes have been constantly reevaluated in response. This dynamic process has yielded a Bible that is honest to the original text of the Bible, yet valuable and acceptable to Bible readers everywhere.

-How do you know something isn't "lost in translation"?

How can you know for sure something wasn't "lost in translation" in your Bible? As [Acts 17:11](#) indicates, the Bereans "eagerly received the message, examining the scriptures

carefully every day to see if these things were so.” Without firsthand competence in translating Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek or access to the minds of the translators and their decision-making processes, you can’t “see if these things were so” in order to know how accurate any translation is. The NET Bible assists readers in discerning biblical truth by offering 60,932 notes to explain and document the translators’ reasoning and the decisions they made throughout the lengthy process of translating and editing the NET Bible. The translators’ notes are intended to allow Bible students without extensive training in the original languages to be more confident in the English translation they use and to provide a new level of access and transparency into the text of the Bible.

What is the significance of the NET Bible’s name?

The name that was chosen reflects our goals to provide a “New English Translation Bible” to the Internet audience in electronic form in addition to the more traditional printed media. Users of the Internet can easily relate to the name “NET Bible,” while the Internet itself provides the vehicle for access and distribution to the world.

-How large was the NET Bible Translation Committee?

A major consideration during the initial planning stage was the size of the translation committee. More than one person should do the work of translation, to avoid the unintentional idiosyncrasies that inevitably result from a single individual working in isolation from a community of colleagues. At the same time, it was obvious to all of us that a smaller group of about 25 scholars who shared a number of basic assumptions and followed generally similar approaches to the biblical text in terms of interpretive method and general philosophy of translation would be able to work quickly and efficiently. This proved accurate and valuable and the time from the commencement of the project to the posting of the first complete New Testament on the Internet was a remarkable 32 months. The list of translators is included on page 26* of the print bible and at http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=3351 .

-How was the NET BIBLE actually made?

The procedure followed in the making of the NET BIBLE was to assign each book of the Old or New Testament to an individual scholar who was extremely familiar with the interpretation of that particular book and in most cases had years of experience in research, teaching, and writing about the book. These scholars produced an initial draft translation of the books assigned to them along with the initial set of translators’ notes (including some text-critical notes and study notes as well). This work was then submitted to the New Testament or Old Testament Editorial Committee for extensive editing and/or revision. In some cases revisions in form and content suggested by the respective committee were carried out by the original translator, while in other cases an editor reworked the draft translation as needed. The work was then resubmitted to the appropriate editorial committee for final approval. An English style consultant, working independently of the editorial committees, then reviewed the translation for smoothness, clarity, and elegance of contemporary English style. Changes suggested by the style consultant were checked against the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek before final incorporation into the translation. Generally between three and five different individuals

edited and revised each book of the Bible. In this way the NET BIBLE First Edition was checked and revised repeatedly at many different levels for accuracy, clarity, and English style. Finally it was proofread a number of times and field-tested in various settings. Countless hours of research, translation, revision, and interaction thus went into the production of the NET BIBLE.

The New Testament was released as a first beta version in three separate printings in March, April, and June of 1998. It was then revised and released again in October of 1998, again as a first beta edition. During this time, the Old Testament was edited and released as a first beta version, along with still another revision of the New Testament. This First Beta Edition of the entire NET BIBLE (Old and New Testaments together) was completed and E-mailed to the printer just after 2 a.m. on September 11, 2001 (coincidentally a day many will long remember). The Second Beta Edition was released to the printer on September 2, 2003. After an additional two years of use, extensive comments from users, and ongoing improvements from the NET BIBLE editorial staff, the First Edition of the NET BIBLE was released to the printer on August 30, 2005.

-Who decided what kind of translation the NET Bible was going to be?

No denomination, church, agency, or publisher determined the nature of the NET Bible translation beforehand. It was a translation conceived and designed by biblical scholars themselves who were primarily specialists in the biblical languages and in the exegesis (interpretation) of the biblical text. At the beginning of the project the Executive Steering Committee, composed of members of both the Old and New Testament Editorial Committees plus the Project Director, held extensive discussions before approving the “Guidelines for Translators” (now known as the “NET Bible Principles of Translation” and included in the printed edition as the first item in the Appendices) which set forth the basic character of the NET Bible translation and notes. Faithfulness to the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek in which the biblical documents were originally written was the primary concern. This frequently extended even to the connectives (“for,” “then,” “so,” “now”) used to introduce clauses, sentences, and paragraphs in the original languages. These conjunctions are often omitted in contemporary English translations since current English style does not use them extensively to indicate transitions and argument flow. However, the Executive Steering Committee felt that in many cases it was important to preserve these connections so that the modern reader would understand the argument flow. (In some cases where this would result in awkward English style, these conjunctions have been indicated in the translators’ notes that accompany the text – another example of how the NET Bible text and translators’ notes work together to convey meaning.)

-How would you characterize the NET Bible as a translation?

The ultimate objective of the NET Bible is to be accurate, readable, and elegant. Yet these three principles are all too often in conflict with one another. Even a universal taxonomy will not work, because some passages pose special problems (such as liturgical use, familiarity, connections with the Old Testament, theological richness, and the like) that would override any rigid taxonomy.

As an illustration¹¹ of the complexity of competing principles, consider the Lord’s

declaration in [Mark 1:17](#): “I will make you fishers of men.” This wording, found in the KJV, RSV, NASB, NIV, REB, and ultimately going back to Tyndale, is familiar to churchgoers. But in contemporary English it communicates a meaning that deviates slightly from the point: Jesus did not want his apostles to evangelize only adult males, but all people (the Greek is ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων, *Alie' anqrwpwn*). But there is a second problem with this verse: “*fishers of men*” is archaic. The NRSV opts for “I will make you fish for people.” This resolves the two problems of the older translations, but introduces two others. First, it sounds as if Jesus will *force* (“make”) the disciples to “fish for people”; second, the conversion of the objective genitive (“of men”) to an object of the preposition (“for people”) results in a subtle shift from a focus on a new occupation to a mere activity. The NLT and TEV get past the first problem but not the second (“I will show you how to fish for people”; “I will teach you to catch people”). So, how best to solve the dilemma? The full meaning of Jesus’ declaration includes both nonexclusive evangelism and implications of an occupational shift. It is too cumbersome to express this as “I will make you fishermen of people,” though the archaism is removed. Nor is it correct to translate this as “I will make you fishers of mankind” because that would imply a mission to Gentiles which the disciples could not have conceived of at that time in redemptive history. This text illustrates the clash of the translational objectives of accuracy, readability, and elegance. We believe that the great value of the NET Bible is its extensive translators’ notes that wrestle with such issues, for the notes become a way for us to “have our cake and eat it too.” But on this passage – for now – we have settled on the translation, “I will turn you into fishers of people.” We have retained an archaism both because of its familiarity and because the alternative “fishermen” was too inelegant. The object complement construction was rendered “turn you into fishers” instead of “make you fishers” both because of its clarity and the hint of the disciples’ conversion as a prerequisite to their new occupation. We chose not to go with the more natural but less accurate rendering of “I will teach you to catch people.” In *this* passage, accuracy was more important than readability or elegance. But a decision was not easy; we are still open to suggestions.

-Is a literal translation the best translation?

Although one of the general principles of this translation is to indicate in the notes a more literal rendering, not every departure from such is noted. For one thing, Greek (or Hebrew) and English are sufficiently different that to document every departure would be an exercise in futility. No translation is completely literal, nor should that be a desirable goal. A completely word-for-word literal translation would be unreadable. [John 4:15](#), for example, would be rendered: “Says to him the woman, ‘Sir, give to me this the water that not I thirst nor I come here to draw.’” [Matthew 1:18](#) would say, “Of the but Jesus Christ the birth thus was. Being betrothed the mother of him, Mary, to Joseph, before of to come together them she was found in belly having from Spirit Holy.” Such examples are not isolated, but are the norm. Claims for a literal translation must necessarily have a lot of fine print.

Literal is also not necessarily *faithful*. The word order differences between English and Greek, the use of the article, case, infinitives, participles, voice, mood, and other grammatical features are often so different that gibberish is the result if an absolutely literal translation is attempted (as in the two examples cited above). Not only this, but the

idioms of one language have to be converted into the receptor language. Thus, in [Matthew 1:18](#), no English translation (not even the King James Version) would dare speak of Mary's pregnancy as "she was having [it] in the belly." Yet this is the literal Greek expression for pregnancy. But it is *not* English. Thus the real question in translation is not whether it is literal, but whether it is faithful. And fidelity requires converting the lexical, grammatical, idiomatic, and figurative elements (to mention but a few) of the original language into the corresponding package in the receptor language. At times this can be accomplished by maintaining an *approximately* literal force. At other times, a loose rendering is required if the sentence is to have any meaning in English at all. Of course, this can be overdone. There are two dangers to avoid in translation. First, a translation should not be so literal that it is not good English. The meaning of the original needs to be as faithfully rendered into good English as possible. Second, a translation should not be so loose that it becomes merely an interpretation or allows sectarian interests to overwhelm the resultant text. *All* translation is interpretation; it cannot be otherwise. But the issue is how much interpretation and how idiosyncratic an interpretation is.

Part of the problem is this: the more literal a translation is, the less readable it generally is; the more readable it is, the less faithful it is to the original meaning (at least in many cases). Some modern translations are quite readable but are not very faithful to the biblical author's meaning. A major goal of good translation is of course readability – but not at the expense of the intended meaning. The philosophy of the NET Bible translators was to be interpretive when such an interpretation represents the best thinking of recent scholarship. Thus, for example, in [Romans 6:4](#), the expression "newness of life" is taken to mean "new life" by grammarians and exegetes alike and is thus translated this way. But when an interpretive translation is unnecessary or might suggest sectarian bias, and when a more literal rendering results in good English, we have followed the latter course.

A major category of nonliteral translation involves certain conjunctions. For example, the Greek word *καί* (*kai*), meaning generally "and, even, also, yet, but, indeed," is often left untranslated at the beginning of a sentence. When such is the case, there is usually no note given. However, if the possibility exists that an interpretive issue is involved, a note is given.

An additional consideration of the translation team was faithfulness (as far as possible without violation of current English style) to the *style* of the individual biblical authors. Even within the New Testament, written over a short span of time in comparison with the Old Testament, the authors exhibit their own unique literary styles. Paul's style differs from Peter's, and both differ from John's. The translators and editors attempted to give the modern reader an impression of these stylistic differences where it was possible to do so without sacrificing accuracy, clarity, or readability.

-Is the NET Bible suitable for use as more than a study Bible?

Beyond the primary objective of faithfulness to the original, a second major objective for the NET Bible was the clarity of the translation for the modern reader. This concern for clarity extended to the literary quality and readability of the NET Bible, and individual translators were encouraged to have their translations read aloud so that such factors as assonance and rhythm could be considered. Thus, although originally conceived as a

study Bible, the NET Bible is designed to be useful for reading aloud, memorizing, teaching, and preaching, as well as private reading and study. The NET Bible is now being released as audio files in mp3 format. To find out for yourself how striking it sounds when read aloud, go to www.nextbible.org and click on any chapter in the new testament and listen on your computer. You can also buy the NET New Testament MP3 audio CD or quality leather print versions at <http://store.bible.org/>

-What do you mean when you say the NET Bible was beta-tested?

Since the NET Bible is the first English translation done entirely in digital electronic form, an idea was borrowed from software developers – a beta test. How did we beta-test the Bible? Just like software is beta-tested – we let people try it and tell us where it could be improved.

Every working draft of the NET Bible has been posted on the Internet at www.bible.org from the very beginning of the project. More people have previewed, used and reviewed the working drafts of the NET Bible than any other Bible translation in history.¹² These prepublication reviewers of the NET Bible have logged millions of review sessions and sent the translation committee countless comments. The committee always takes each of these comments from our readers seriously and many have led to substantial improvement in the translation and notes. Now the complete NET Bible is available in both electronic and printed form. You have the opportunity to learn from a truly detailed, totally new Bible translation, plus you have our invitation to help us continue to improve the NET Bible through its planned ongoing development. This is unique in history.

The NET Bible was the first translation to be published in electronic form on the Internet *before* being published in traditional print media. The Old and New Testament Translation Committees have invited and received public comment on the NET Bible from laypersons, clergy, and biblical scholars. That process will continue even after this release of the First Edition. Editorial focus will now be shifted primarily toward the notes. We invite feedback from everyone to help us make the NET Bible even better (go to our online comments database at www.bible.org/comments).

-What improvements were made during the beta process?

A major change introduced with the Second Beta Edition of the NET Bible was a significant update to the text-critical notes for the New Testament. After the printing of the First Beta Edition, it was suggested to the NET Bible team by the German Bible Society (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft) in Stuttgart, Germany, that the information in the New Testament **tc** notes should be standardized to the Nestle-Aland 27th edition text which they publish in conjunction with the Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung in Münster, Germany. (Prior to this point, the textual evidence in the **tc** notes had been drawn from NA²⁷, UBS⁴, and other sources.) Over the course of a year, part of which was spent in residence at the Institut in Münster, the Senior New Testament Editor revised all existing **tc** notes in the NET Bible New Testament and added scores more. In the Second Beta Edition all these **tc** notes were conformed to the Nestle-Aland 27th edition Greek New Testament (*Novum Testamentum Graece*), 8th revised printing including papyri 99–116. The changes to the notes are most noticeable with nomenclature for manuscript witnesses: All **tc** notes in the New Testament now use the same

nomenclature as that used by NA²⁷, including the siglum Ī. The reader should consult NA²⁷ for discussion on this nomenclature. In addition, a double dagger (‡) is used in **tc** notes to indicate the several hundred places where the Greek text underlying the NET Bible differs from NA²⁷; at a glance the reader can now see when the text translated by the NET Bible New Testament differs from that of NA²⁷. This conformity to NA²⁷ increases the quality of the notes tremendously, as it aligns them with the standard critical text of the Greek New Testament used by scholars, pastors, and students all over the world. As a result NET Bible readers will be able to use NA²⁷ more effectively, and readers who use NA²⁷ will see more readily how the process of textual criticism is carried out. In 2004, a joint venture between the German Bible Society and bible.org produced the *New English Translation – Novum Testamentum Graece New Testament* which combines the full NA²⁷ text with apparatus and appendices along with the NET Bible text and a special edition of the translators' notes and text-critical notes optimized to assist students of the original Greek. Additional information on this publication is available from www.bible.org/diglot.

Another significant change to the translators' notes (**tn**) in the Second Beta Edition was the updating of all citations of BAGD to BDAG, thus keeping the NET Bible current with the most up-to-date reference materials.¹³ All of these changes have resulted in a better translation and an increase to 60,932 translators' notes!

All of the biblical text was edited extensively for faithfulness to the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts, as well as for English wording and style. In the final edit between the Second Beta Edition and the First Edition, approximately 1,500 new translators' notes were added. There were also cases in the Second Beta Edition where the same note applied multiple times within a short section of a book. To decrease redundancy, approximately 600 duplicate notes were consolidated and deleted. From the First Beta Edition to the First Edition over 3,500 new notes of various kinds were added. These include translators' notes (**tn**), study notes (**sn**), text-critical notes (**tc**), and map notes (**map**). The "map notes" [**map**] indicate where the particular location can be found in the map sections included in the NET Bible, "The Old Testament," and "The Journeys of Paul." The map coordinates in the notes and index have been used with google maps to show the location of all the places in the NET Bible.

-Can I still submit suggestions for improvements now that the First Edition has been released?

Absolutely. The goal of this translation is to be accurate, readable, and elegant. While we think we've done a good job achieving that, we know we have not yet achieved perfection. If you come across a phrase or verse you feel needs further improvement, you can let us know through our online comments database at www.bible.org/comments. The comments database will remain online and input will be used for the first planned revision of the translated biblical text after 2010 and for the ongoing development of the notes.

You can submit a comment on any aspect of the translation and notes, from the clarity and elegance of the English to specific points of Greek or Hebrew grammar, to

interpretive issues discussed in the notes. We welcome any and all comments which would help us improve the NET Bible. To illustrate that we aren't solely interested in just one type of comment, below is a sampling of the types of comments we welcome. These are by no means exhaustive and you need not reference which category applies to you. These are merely examples to encourage you to participate in the ongoing development process.

I'm not an expert in Hebrew or Greek, but I don't understand the English meaning of this verse. It uses awkward grammar or words that aren't in normal English usage. (Translation reflecting normal English usage was the primary goal of the original King James Bible.)

I'm a scholar in the Bible's original languages, and (a) I really think you could better translate this verse this way...; (b) here's what your translation incorrectly implies in English which was not a nuance of the original; (c) here's why people of my background will interpret the English phrase in a strange fashion.

There is reasonable difference of opinion about this verse's implications among honest Bible students; a more balanced note is needed. (Here you may specify the view you would like to see represented.)

Other comments and endorsements: We would also like to hear of specific passages where you particularly like what we have done, or other features of the NET Bible that impress you. Additionally, we would be very pleased to have your endorsement of the NET Bible. Comments of this type can be sent by E-mail to comments@netbible.com or comments@bible.org.

Have suggestions and comments? Go to www.bible.org/comments

-Will the NET Bible be updated on a regular basis?

Absolutely. No translation can achieve perfection, and even if it could, the English language itself would change and the translation would still become dated. The supplement to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the standard reference source for English vocabulary, contains over 85,000 entries of words that did not exist in the English language when the *OED* was published in 1924. No one has any idea of the number of words and phrases that have dropped out of English usage in the same period. No one reading the KJV who comes across expressions like “meteyard” in [Leviticus 19:35](#), “vain jangling” in [1 Timothy 1:6](#), or the “mean man” in [Isaiah 2:9, 5:15](#), and 31:8 can fail to see how words change in meaning over time. Even terms like “usury” ([Nehemiah 5:10](#); [Ezekiel 18:17](#)) or “she-camel” ([Jeremiah 2:23](#)) – both found in the NIV – are not familiar to many modern readers. Other English words like “thong” have developed new meanings which are problematic for their use in Bible translations (e.g., [Judges 16:7](#) in the NIV).

Additional research, additional discoveries of new manuscripts, and archaeological discoveries that shed additional light on first century history and culture also contribute to the need for revision. Attempts to produce notes better suited to the needs of users will also result in frequent revision of the notes accompanying the NET Bible. Thus the production of the NET Bible is not a one-time undertaking to be completed and put aside,

but an ongoing project with planned improvement and revision. The biblical text of the NET Bible itself will be revised in five-year increments beginning in 2010, while the notes will undergo continual revision, improvement, and expansion.

-What position does the NET Bible take on gender-inclusive language?

Much concern has recently been expressed by people unhappy about modern translations of the Bible which employ “gender-inclusive” language. Some of the changes causing such concern involve the inclusion of references to women in almost all places where the biblical text refers to men, the pluralization of singular references to avoid the use of masculine pronouns like “he” or “him,” and even, in extreme cases, the application of such inclusive language to God himself. (This last idea is one completely foreign to the original authors of the canonical texts in question.)

Having said this, it is also true that many of the ancient texts of the Bible are *less* gender-specific than English translations often suggest. In many cases an ancient reader encountering a masculine noun or pronoun would have recognized it to be generic without having to be told. Modern readers (accustomed to the tendency of current English style to use inclusive language wherever possible) often assume the opposite to be true: if both genders are not *explicitly* mentioned, an assumption of exclusivity is frequently the result.

It is important to distinguish two approaches to gender inclusivity in the history of the Bible’s translation into English. The first approach we might call “Ideological Gender Inclusivity,” since it attempts, on an ideological basis, to remove “objectionable” elements like patriarchalism or even male metaphors for God himself. No such radical approach has been followed with the NET Bible. The other approach could be called “Gender-Accurate Translation,” which simply means translating terms without respect to gender when the intended meaning or application is broad and not gender-specific. This type of translation has been around at least since the publication of William Tyndale’s New Testament in 1526, when he rendered the phrase υἱοὶ θεοῦ (Juioi qeou, “sons of God”) as “children of God,” a gender neutral translation. Along these same lines the KJV of 1611 rendered בן (ben, “son”) or its plural 2,822 times as “son” or “sons” and 1,533 times as “child” or “children,” resulting in a gender-neutral translation 35% of the time. A further example of gender-neutral translation can be found in [Hosea 2:4](#), which refers to Gomer’s three children, two sons and one daughter. The Hebrew text of [Hosea 2:4](#) literally reads “Upon her *sons* also I will have no pity, because they are *sons* of whoredom.” Yet the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX), uses the Greek term for children, τέκνα (tekna, [Hosea 2:6](#) [LXX], which is neuter gender), and among English translations the KJV, ASV, NIV, and NRSV all employ “children.”

With the NET Bible our concern was to be *gender-accurate* rather than gender-inclusive, striving for faithfulness to the original biblical texts while at the same time seeking to attain accuracy in terms of current English style. The English language constantly undergoes change. Acceptable conventions for dealing with gender-related language have undergone a great deal of change in the last few decades, and more change in this area will certainly come in the future. As the conventions of the English language change, new translations and revisions of existing translations will have to take this into account. This is especially important when the goal of the translation (like that of the NET Bible) is

faithfulness to the original.

At the same time, we do not employ “Ideological Gender Inclusivity,” since we do not believe the Bible should be rewritten to incorporate gender-inclusive language foreign to the original. The Bible is a historical document rooted in a particular set of cultures and languages, each with their own conventions in the area of gender-related language. In addition, these languages and cultures are separated from us not by mere decades, but by millennia. In all cases the goal for the NET Bible was to be as accurate as possible with regard to gender-related language, faithfully reproducing the meaning of the original text in clear contemporary English. In some instances this meant allowing gender distinctions found in the original-language texts to stand in the translation, as for example in a historical setting – like Jesus crossing the Sea of Galilee with his disciples in a boat – when it is almost certain that only males were present. In other instances when a group of people are addressed by the Greek term *anqrwpoi* (literally, “men”) and it is clear from context that both men and women are addressed (with the term used in a generic sense), the translation “people” has been used. Here are some of the other typical features of the NET Bible’s handling of gender-related language:

- *Adelfoi* (traditionally “brothers” or “brethren”) has been rendered as “brothers and sisters” in the epistles where the church is addressed at large. Ample evidence for this usage can be found in nonbiblical (secular) documents as mentioned in standard lexical reference tools like BDAG. This evidence is typically mentioned in the notes.
- Participles have been translated “the one who” or (rarely) “the person who” with the following pronoun left as masculine, because English has yet to develop a gender-neutral pronoun for the third person. Only infrequently, when a participle refers to Deity, has it been translated “he who.”
- There are a very few instances where *anhr*, which typically means “man” (i.e., adult male) or “husband” in Greek, has been rendered as “someone” (e.g., [James 1:23](#)) or (very rarely) as a generic (e.g., [Acts 17:34](#), where Damaris, a woman, is explicitly mentioned as a member of the group).
- In some cases in James, 1 John, and a few other places *adelfo* has been rendered as “fellow believer” or “fellow Christian” following usage outlined in standard lexical reference tools.

In most of these instances, further explanation of the way the gender-related language has been handled in the translation is given in a translators’ note.

Considerable time was spent discussing many significant New Testament texts with regard to gender issues. One example of such a text is [1 Timothy 2:5](#), “For there is one God and one mediator between God and *anqrwpoi* (men / mankind / humankind), the *anqrwpos* (man / person / human) Christ Jesus.” The NET Bible New Testament translation team discussed this intriguing example at length. The basic question was, “Is the key to Jesus’ role as mediator that he mediates for males, or for both men and women?” There was also the need to be sensitive to the word play in both halves of the verse involving *anqrwpos*. Typically the objection has been that a rendering like “human” in the second half compromises Jesus’ maleness which is also involved here. But the translators had to ask, “Which rendering might cause more confusion, a use of “men” in a generic sense, or a rendering like “humanity”? Which point is more central to this particular context, the redemption of humanity, or Jesus’ maleness? Everyone knows

Jesus was a male human, so his maleness is not in question here! Deciding that the redemption of humanity was the primary point in the context, and that Jesus' participation in humanity was central to his mediatory role, the translators opted for the rendering, "For there is one God and one intermediary between God and humanity, Christ Jesus, himself human."

Finally, with regard to the issue of translational gender inclusivity it is important to note the flexibility shown by the New Testament authors themselves when citing Old Testament texts. A few examples will suffice: in [Isaiah 52:7](#) the prophet states "how beautiful on the mountains are the feet of *him* who brings good news"; this was incorporated by Paul in [Romans 10:15](#) as "the feet of *those* who proclaim the good news." In [Psalm 36:1](#) the psalmist writes, "There is no fear of God before *his* eyes," while Paul quotes this in [Romans 3:18](#) as "There is no fear of God before *their* eyes." Again, the psalmist writes in [Psalm 32:1](#), "Blessed is *he* whose lawless deeds are forgiven, whose sins are covered," while Paul in [Romans 4:7](#) has "Blessed are *those* whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." Even more striking is the citation by Paul in [2 Corinthians 6:18](#) of [2 Samuel 7:14](#), where God states, "I will be a father to *him* and *he* will be a *son* to me." Paul renders this as "I will be a father to *you*, and *you* will be my *sons and daughters*." Furthermore, it cannot be claimed that Paul is simply following the common version of the Greek Old Testament (the LXX) here, since the LXX follows the Hebrew text closely at this point, literally, "I will be to *him* for a father, and *he* will be to me for a *son*." Although considerable flexibility is shown in Paul's handling of this text, hardly anyone would charge him with capitulating to a feminist agenda!

-What are some of the distinctive characteristics of the NET Bible translation philosophy?

One distinctive characteristic is how the NET Bible strives for accuracy. The NET Bible seeks to be accurate by translating passages consistently and properly within their grammatical, historical, and theological context. The interplay and proper understanding of these three contexts has produced some distinctive translations within the NET Bible. By explaining these here we hope to help the Bible reader understand more fully the translation task undertaken to produce the NET Bible, but even more importantly to understand more fully the Bible itself.

As a translator approaches a passage there are a number of contexts which must be considered. They can be summed up under three broad terms: grammatical, historical, and theological. Grammatical context involves a natural, accurate understanding of the language of the original text which provides parameters for how language functions and which meanings are possible and probable for a given text. This is what most naturally comes to mind when translation work is done. It is the primary work of the translator to determine what meaning is expressed in the original language and how that can best be expressed in the target language. Understanding in this area has improved immensely over the last several years, especially with the advent of computer tools for language study. One of the primary goals of the NET Bible has been to stay abreast of current research in this area. The footnotes in the NET Bible often refer to recent articles, books,

and dissertations which have new data regarding how biblical languages function. As our understanding of these languages improves, naturally it will affect the translation of particular passages.

Historical context involves an understanding of the peoples, cultures, customs, and history of the times in which the Bible was written. As with the grammatical context, the historical context provides parameters for understanding the meaning of passages in the Bible and how they should be translated. It looks at the historical background and events of the text to provide a good balance for possible interpretations and meanings of a text.

Theological context is the understanding of God and his work that a particular author would have at the time he wrote a particular passage of scripture. In a manner similar to historical context, theological context provides parameters for deciding upon the meaning of a text and the best way to translate it. The Bible was written over a period of about 2,500 years. During this time, theological understanding changed dramatically. Moses did not know and understand God the way Paul did. This does not mean that Moses knew God in a wrong way and that Paul knew him the right way; it simply means that God had revealed more about himself over time, so Paul had a fuller understanding of who God was and what he was doing in the world. When translating an earlier passage of scripture, the translator should take into account that the theological understanding of the author will be different from that of a later author.

As implied above, these three concepts form a limited hierarchy. Grammatical context is the most important because it deals with the nuts and bolts of the language which convey meaning which ultimately can be translated. For example, in English one cannot communicate to a reader that the sky is blue by writing “The tree is green.” The words and phrases which make up this sentence can only communicate a limited meaning, and this is defined by the grammar, the syntax of the phrases, the meanings of the individual words, and other similar considerations. Understanding the grammatical context is the most important task of the translator, for the meaning is found in these words and phrases. The translators and editors of the NET Bible translate a passage with precedence given to the grammatical context. The historical and theological context provide a reasonable system of checks and balances; they help the translator decide what is the most probable meaning of the original text and how that meaning should be translated. They do not drive the translation; instead they guide it so that the most probable meaning is conveyed.

A very important concept for understanding the translation philosophy of the NET Bible and how these three contexts work together is *progressive revelation*. Simply put, progressive revelation recognizes that God reveals himself – his nature as well as his word, plans, and purposes – over time. He did not reveal everything about himself and what he was doing in the world all at once; instead he graciously revealed more and more as time went on. Later revelation serves to complement and supplement what has come before. The relation of this reality to translation work creates a great deal of tension, especially as it relates to the theological context, because certain earlier passages are clarified by later ones. Does the translator translate the older passage with a view to the clarification that the later passage brings, or does the translator concentrate solely on the native context of the older passage? The translators and editors for the NET Bible have generally chosen to do the latter for a variety of reasons. A translation which takes into

account the progress of revelation will be true to the three contexts discussed above. It is also very beneficial to the Bible reader to have the progress of revelation accurately represented in the translation of particular texts. This helps the reader see how God has worked through the centuries, and it helps the reader to stand more accurately in the place of the original recipients of the text. Both of these are very instructive and inspirational, and they help the reader to connect with the text in a more fulfilling way.

A discussion of particular passages in the NET Bible – how they have been translated and why – will illuminate these concepts. Explaining these examples will show how the translators and editors have put the aspects of the translation theory discussed above into practice. The translators and editors believe these issues are important for readers of the Bible to grasp, so all these passages have extensive notes regarding these issues. An example from both the Old and New Testaments will be given.

[Isaiah 7:14](#). This verse has seen a great deal of discussion in the history of interpretation. The text of the verse from the NET Bible is as follows:

Look, this young woman is about to conceive and will give birth to a son. You, young woman, will name him Immanuel.

The most visible issue surrounding this verse is the translation of the Hebrew word אִמְהָ ('almah). The NET Bible uses the phrase “young woman,” while many translations use the word “virgin.” The arguments center upon two main points: the actual meaning of the term as it is used in Hebrew, and the use of this verse in the New Testament. There is a great deal of debate about the actual meaning of the Hebrew word. However, in the New Testament when this verse is cited in [Matthew 1:23](#) the Greek word παρθένος (parthenos) is used, and this word can mean nothing but “virgin.” Therefore, many people see [Isaiah 7:14](#) as a prophecy about the virgin birth with [Matthew 1:23](#) serving as a “divine commentary” on the Isaiah passage which establishes its meaning. The interplay of these issues makes a resolution quite complex. It is the opinion of the translators and editors that the Hebrew word used in [Isaiah 7:14](#) means “young woman” and actually carries no connotations of sexual experience, so the grammatical context of the verse in the Old Testament is in our opinion fairly straightforward. Neither does the historical context of [Isaiah 7:14](#) point to any connection with the birth of the Messiah: in its original historical context, this verse was pointing to a sign for King Ahaz that the alliance between Syria and Israel which was threatening the land of Judah would come to nothing. The theological context of [Isaiah 7:14](#) is also limited: it is a presentation of God’s divine power to show himself strong on behalf of his people. The role or birth of the Messiah does not come into view here. So the historical and theological contexts of the verse support the grammatical: the word אִמְהָ ('almah) means “young woman” and should be translated as such. Within the book of Isaiah itself, however, the author begins to develop the theological context of this verse, and this provides a connection to the use of the passage in Matthew. In [Isaiah 8:9-10](#) the prophet delivers an announcement of future victory over Israel’s enemies; the special child Immanuel, alluded to in the last line of v. 10, is a guarantee that the covenant promises of God will result in future greatness. The child mentioned in [Isaiah 7:14](#) is a pledge of God’s presence during the time of Ahaz, but he also is a promise of God’s presence in the future when he gives his people victory over all their enemies. This theological development progresses even further when another child is promised in [Isaiah 9:6-7](#) who will be a perfect ruler over

Israel, manifesting God's presence perfectly and ultimately among his people. The New Testament author draws from this development and uses the original passage in Isaiah to make the connection between the child originally promised and the child who would be the ultimate fulfillment of that initial promise. The use of [Isaiah 7:14](#) in [Matthew 1:23](#) draws upon the theological development present in the book of Isaiah, but it does not change the meaning of [Isaiah 7:14](#) in its original context.

Passages Involving πίστις Χριστοῦ and Similar Expressions in Paul. The phrase πίστις Χριστοῦ (pisti" Cristou) is a difficult one to translate. The issue centers on the relationship of the genitive noun Χριστοῦ to the head noun πίστις: is the genitive subjective or objective? That is, is the emphasis of this phrase on Christ as the one who exercises faith (subjective) or on Christ as the one in whom others have faith (objective)? Traditionally these phrases have been interpreted emphasizing Christ as the object of faith; "faith in Jesus Christ" is the traditional translation. However, in recent years an increasing number of New Testament scholars are arguing from both the grammatical and theological contexts that πίστις Χριστοῦ and similar phrases in Paul ([Rom 3:22, 26](#); [Gal 2:16, 20](#); [3:22](#); [Eph 3:12](#); [Phil 3:9](#)) involve a subjective genitive and emphasize Christ as the one who exercises faith: "the faithfulness of Christ." A wider glance at the use of the noun πίστις in the rest of the New Testament shows that when it takes a personal genitive that genitive is almost never objective. Certainly faith in Christ is a Pauline concept, but Bible scholars have begun to see that in Paul's theological thought there is also an emphasis on Christ as one who is faithful and therefore worthy of our faith. The grammatical and theological contexts are not decisive, and either translation is acceptable. The editors decided to follow the subjective genitive view because a decision had to be made – "faith of Christ," a literal translation, communicates very little to the average reader in the context – and because scholarship in this area is now leaning toward this view. The question is certainly not closed, however, and if further research indicates that the grammatical or theological context proves decisive for the other view, the translation will be modified to reflect that.

In short, the translators and editors of the NET Bible are committed to following the text where it leads and translating it honestly. The translation philosophy leaves no other options: For the sake of Christ and the truth, the translators and editors are compelled to translate as they have done in the examples above and throughout the NET Bible. The 19th century conservative Christian scholar Henry Alford stated it best: "a translator of Holy Scripture must be...ready to sacrifice the choicest text, and the plainest proof of doctrine, if the words are not those of what he is constrained in his conscience to receive as God's testimony."

For the specific guidelines employed by the translators and editors of the NET Bible, see "NET Bible Principles of Translation" included as the first item in the Appendices.

-What is the Hebrew text behind the NET Bible Old Testament?

The starting point for the Hebrew text¹⁴ translated to produce the NET Bible Old Testament was the standard edition known as *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS), which represents the text of the Leningrad Codex B19^A (L), still the oldest dated manuscript of the complete Hebrew Bible. Thus the Hebrew text on which the present

translation of the Old Testament is based does not represent a critical, or reconstructed, text in the same way the standard critical editions of the Greek New Testament do. It is generally recognized that the Hebrew text represented by the Leningrad Codex occasionally needs to be corrected based on other Hebrew manuscripts, early versions, and the biblical manuscripts found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the case of the Old Testament such decisions were left up to the individual translators who prepared the initial drafts for consideration by the Old Testament Editorial Committee. The textual decisions made by the translators were then reviewed by the editors and a textual consultant, and in some cases were revised. Conjectural emendation was employed only where necessary to make sense of the Hebrew text in order to be able to translate it. Significant textual variants or emendations are noted in a text-critical note [tc]. These notes frequently include references to principal versional evidence where relevant. The text-critical notes on the Old Testament are not intended to be exhaustive, but to provide the reader with basic information about the major textual issues affecting the translation.

-How are the verses in the Old Testament arranged?

Some of the divisions found in copies of the Hebrew Bible were already established by the end of the Masoretic era (ca. a.d. 900). While it is generally understood that the division of the Old Testament text into verses goes back to the early centuries of the Christian era, the standard verse division which has continued in use up to the present was fixed by the Ben Asher family around a.d. 900.

In the places where the Hebrew versification differs from that of the English Bible, the NET Bible follows standard English practice, but a study note [sn] gives the corresponding Hebrew versification. Unlike the Hebrew text, which treats the superscriptions to individual psalms as the first verse, the NET Bible follows most English Bibles¹⁵ in leaving the superscriptions unnumbered, and they are set in a slightly smaller font size to distinguish them from the text of the Psalm proper.

-How is the Divine Name translated in the Old Testament?

The translation of the Divine Name represents special problems for all English Bibles. The most difficult issue is the handling of the so-called tetragrammaton, the four consonants which represent the name of God in the Old Testament. This was rendered traditionally as “Jehovah” in the King James Version, but it is generally recognized that this represents a combination of the consonants of the tetragrammaton, יהוה (YHWH), and the vowels from a completely different Hebrew word, יהוה (’adonai, “master”), which were substituted by the Masoretes so that pronunciation of the Divine Name could be avoided: Whenever יהוה (YHWH), appeared in the text, the presence of the vowels from the word יהוה (’adonai) signaled to the reader that the word יהוה (’adonai) was to be pronounced instead.

Today most Old Testament scholars agree that the vocalization of the Divine Name would originally have been something like *Yahweh*, and this has become the generally accepted rendering. The Executive Steering Committee of the NET Bible spent considerable time discussing whether or not to employ *Yahweh* in the translation. Several Old Testament editors and translators favored its use, reasoning that because of its use in the lyrics of contemporary Christian songs and its appearance in Bible study materials,

the name *Yahweh* had gained more general acceptance. In spite of this, however, the Committee eventually decided to follow the usage of most English translations and render the Divine Name as “Lord” in small caps. Thus the frequent combination יהוה יהוה (Yahweh ’elohim) is rendered as Lord God.

Other combinations like יהוה צבאות (Yahweh Tséva’ot), traditionally rendered “Lord of hosts,” have been translated either as “the Lord who rules over all” or “the Lord who commands armies” depending on the context. Such instances are typically indicated by a translators’ note [tn].

-What is the Greek text behind the NET Bible New Testament?

As for the Greek text used in the NET Bible New Testament, an eclectic text was followed, differing in several hundred places from the standard critical text as represented by the Nestle-Aland 27th edition (each of these differences are indicated by a double dagger [‡] preceding the text-critical note). The translators who prepared the initial drafts of individual New Testament books made preliminary decisions regarding textual variants, and these were then checked and discussed by editors and a textual consultant. Where there are significant variant readings, these are normally indicated in a text-critical note [tc], along with a few of the principal witnesses (Greek manuscripts, ancient versions, and patristic writers) supporting the variants. While this listing of manuscript evidence is not intended to be exhaustive, readers familiar with the major witnesses will find this feature useful in making brief evaluations for themselves, sometimes with the aid of the textual apparatus in Nestle-Aland 27th edition of the Greek New Testament.

-How is the New Testament text arranged?

Divisions in the New Testament text like chapters, paragraphs, and verses were added later in the process of handing the text down from one generation to the next. ¹⁶ Verse divisions were added to the New Testament, for example, in 1551. They are not part of the original documents, and in many cases give the appearance of being rather arbitrary. However, they have become accepted over time, and are useful to students of the Bible as “aids to navigation” when reading through or referring to the text. The text of the NET Bible itself has been arranged in paragraphs determined by the translators and editors. In almost all cases the verse divisions follow standard English practice. In the few instances where there is a difference between the versification of the standard critical editions of the Greek New Testament and most English versions, ¹⁷ this is indicated by a translators’ note [tn].

New Testament quotations from the Old Testament are indicated by a combination of ***boldface and italic*** type. Less direct allusions to Old Testament passages are indicated by *italic* type only. In both cases a study note [sn] gives the Old Testament reference.

-What are the sectional headings in the Old and New Testaments?

As a further aid to readers and students of the Bible, descriptive sectional headings are given in italics. These were determined by the translators and editors in an attempt to be as helpful as possible, but should not be viewed as an integral part of the NET Bible text. They were not part of the original Hebrew and Greek texts that formed the basis for the

translation.

-How are quotation marks used?

Earlier printed editions of the Bible (the King James Version of 1611, for example) did not make use of quotation marks. Modern readers have come to expect them, however, so the NET Bible follows standard conventions of setting direct quotations with various combinations of single and double quotation marks. In cases where embedded quotations would require the use of more than three layers of quotation marks (instances are found in many of the Old Testament prophetic books which could run to five or more layers of embedded quotation), a more streamlined approach has been followed to eliminate excess layers of quotation marks by the use of colons and commas.

-What types of notes are included in the NET Bible?

There are four basic kinds of notes employed in the NET Bible, “**text-critical notes**” [tc], “**translators’ notes**” [tn], “**study notes**” [sn], and “**map notes**” [map]. In the First Edition of the NET Bible the “translators’ notes” are generally more numerous and considerably more technical in nature than the “study notes” (although the latter will continue to be expanded and developed in future editions of the NET Bible).

The “text-critical notes” [tc] discuss alternate (variant) readings found in the various manuscripts and groups of manuscripts of the Hebrew Old Testament and the Greek New Testament. These notes can indicate historically important readings, exegetically significant readings, or readings accepted by the translation that are different from standard critical editions. The basic Hebrew text followed by the translators of the NET Bible is that of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS). For the New Testament, in cases where the translation follows a different reading than that found in NA²⁷, a text-critical note [tc] preceded by a double dagger (§) explains the major options and defends the reading followed in the translation.

The “translators’ notes” [tn] are the most numerous. They explain the rationale for the translation and give alternative translations, interpretive options, and other technical information. “Translators’ notes” generally fall into the following categories:

- Notes introduced by “Or” need no further explanation. They introduce alternative translations that (unless accompanied by additional discussion in the note) are regarded by the translators and editors as more or less equally viable alternatives to the translation used in the text, with the choice between them made for reasons of style, euphony, other characteristics of contemporary English usage, or slight exegetical preference.
- Notes introduced by “*Heb*,” “*Aram*,” or “*Grk*” give a gloss that approximates formal equivalence to the Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek text. This gloss was not employed in the translation, however, because it was inconsistent with English style or could possibly be misunderstood by the modern reader. Such glosses do *not* represent the “core” meaning of the word(s).
- Translators’ notes are also used to indicate major lexical, syntactical, and exegetical options for a given passage. In such cases the form of the note may vary, but in general the major options will be listed and in most cases a brief evaluation is

included in the note. Standard reference materials and, on occasion, relevant periodical literature are frequently mentioned in the notes. Abbreviations for these materials, as well as abbreviations for both biblical books and nonbiblical literature, generally follow the standard abbreviations established by Patrick H. Alexander et al., eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999). Full bibliographic citations are given for periodical literature. Standard reference works and special studies, such as commentaries and monographs, are referenced by abbreviations or shortened citations; full bibliographic citations are given in the List of Cited Works.

- In some cases where a rather lengthy note occurs on multiple occasions within the same book, the note will be given in full only on its first occurrence in the book, while succeeding repetitions of the note will refer back to the first occurrence by phrase and verse. This is intended to conserve space by avoiding excessive repetition of identical notes within the same book.

The “study notes” [sn] are explanatory notes intended for the nonspecialist engaged in the reading or study of the Bible. This category includes comments about historical or cultural background, explanation of obscure phrases or brief discussions of context, discussions of the theological point made by the biblical author, cross-references and references to Old Testament quotations or allusions in the New Testament, or other miscellaneous information helpful to the modern reader.

The “map notes” [map] indicate for the reader where the particular location can be found in the map sections included in the NET Bible. Preceding the maps is an index which contains every site on the maps, although the maps do not include every biblical site. The map coordinates in the notes and index first indicate the larger map and then the individual grid location; if a site is shown on more than one map, multiple sets of coordinates will be listed. For example, one of the coordinates for the city of Jerusalem is Map5-B1; this should be read as “The Holy Land from the Heavens” – map 5 – grid B1. Another coordinate for Jerusalem is JP1-F4; this should be read as “The Journeys of Paul” – map 1 – grid F4.

-What is the NET Bible team’s request?

No matter how bad or good a translation may be, it will do you no good at all unless you read and study it! The words of the Prologue to Ecclesiasticus¹⁸ (also known as Sirach) are appropriate here: “You are therefore urged to read with good will and attention, and to be indulgent in cases where, in spite of our diligent labor in translating, we may appear to have rendered some phrases imperfectly.” As the NET Bible team it is our desire and earnest prayer that the Lord add his blessing to our endeavor at the translation of his word.

-Listen to the Audio NETBible [New Testament](#).

Go to <http://net.bible.org/bible.php?book=Mat&chapter=1>

NET Bible site <http://www.netbible.com>