

## Aim of lesson

To let the students know something about the variety of English versions of the Bible available, and to furnish them with objective criteria with which to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each, so that they may be equipped to make their own personal choice.

## Bible background

John 20:31.

## Preparation required

It will be useful to assemble as many different versions as possible for the students to examine and refer to.

## Suggested outline of lesson

Talk through with the class the problems facing Bible translators as set out under the headings in the students' notes, and seek their opinions as to the most appropriate solutions in each case.

Help the students to see that if a translator sticks rigidly to translating accurately, word for word, the result may be difficult to understand. (sometimes found in the Authorised Version) whereas attempting to provide meaning in a translation could sacrifice accuracy (as in the Good News Bible). We have to have a good balance and to achieve this there is value in using different versions.

The most serious aspect of interpretation is when the translator has his own doctrinal views and perhaps without realising it mistranslates.

## Conclusions

It is important that the young people should arrive at sound conclusions as a result of these considerations. Try to guide them towards the following:

- There is no one ideal translation, and so whichever version we may find most helpful, we should have ready access to others. This is especially true if we are reading a version which provides an interpretation rather than a translation.
- We should recognise that our aim has to be to understand what God originally caused to be written, so that it can change our lives. Our aims, therefore, have to be firstly accuracy; secondly ease of understanding.

## Using Bible versions in the Study Class

You may like to take the opportunity to have a discussion of the versions you should normally use in the group. This may of course be constrained by the wishes of the parents of the young people, and you will need to be sensitive to this.

There is much to be said, however, for the young people (and you) using the same version for normal purposes. Even very intelligent young people do not find it easy to sum up a paragraph of text at a glance, and the difficulty of following the text of one version while someone else is reading aloud from another can be considerable.

If you can decide on one version which you will all use, while having others available for comparison, you may find that the benefit of Bible reading in the class is improved considerably.

## Relevance to our lives

Many will have and even know of only the version chosen for them by their parents. Choosing the right Bible is an important matter as it may be a companion for many years. In making an informed choice, it will be helpful for them to have an understanding of how and why the versions differ.

## **Prayer**

Lord, we thank you that we have your word preserved in so many different translations. Help us to use them in the best way to find out what you truly want for us. Amen.

## **Other suggestions for activities**

The young people might like to find out about the British and Foreign Bible Society and other Bible Societies - the Gideons - who are dedicated to making the Bible available to all.