

A thorough and interesting analysis, Omar – comparing the differences between these translations.

You mention -

“Considering both quantitative and qualitative comparisons, it appears that the meaning of all translations are extremely similar, which is reasonably comforting to know.”

The main difference that stood out to me, was the use of language in the MSG –

*Take care of yourself, **have a good time**, and make the most of whatever job you have for as long as God gives you life. **And that’s about it.***

I think that the expression “have a good time” is different from finding joy in one’s work (that the other translations express) - and the expression “and that’s about it” is not really conveying the inspired message – it is adding to it a subtle thought – even though the theme of the book is that all is transitory and temporary

The important differences in translations might slip through the net of this type of analysis, because most are very subtle – punctuation in the wrong place, the use of definite article, or leaving it out, where it should or should not be, the change of tense – or the clever use of a word, to suit the translator’s thinking or agenda. A very minor change can have a major impact on meaning – on the other hand the same meaning can be conveyed by using very different words. A lot more technically different, but not much change in the message – although it may be understood better by different people.

I think you explain this well in what I’ve copied from your pdf below. I’ll just add a comment to what you’ve written in point 6, at the end.

A Bible translation is the process of converting the original biblical texts (written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) into another language, such as English.

Translating involves more than just changing the words of the language, but also transferring the meaning and intent of the original text into the other language. This often

requires decisions about how to handle language and cultural differences.

Translation is complex for several reasons, including:

1. Differences in Languages

English does not include equivalent words that exist in other languages. Eg English uses

the word “love”, whereas Greek has more specific words, including agape, philia and eros.

2. Context

Words often have multiple meanings depending on their context.

3. Cultural

The Bible was written in cultures very different from modern society, especially western society.

4. Translation Style

Can balance or lean towards formal word-for-word equivalents versus dynamic thought-for-thought meaning explanations.

5. Bias

Regardless of the translation style, an individual translating a version will in no doubt introduce personal bias. A group of diverse translators can minimise bias.

6. Textual Differences

Biblical manuscripts can contain minor differences. Textual criticism is when translators try to determine which manuscript is most reliable.

The differences are not always minor. The translator's job is to choose the text that by analysis comes closest to the original – that no longer exists. How is this achieved? By the principle of "By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established." (Deut19:15, 2Cor 13:1) – and these have to be independent and reliable witnesses (with no collusion or "groupthink"). There can be a lot of manuscripts that say the same thing, but if they can be tracked to one source, they represent one witness. The majority or the oldest are not *necessarily* closest. It takes careful "literary forensics". Also, there are not necessarily good or bad manuscripts – because they all can have errors in different places – so where there are differences, they have to be assessed individually by sound and honest textual criticism. A manuscript with the most corruptions may be the most near the original in one or two places, compared with other texts that have few discrepancies, and are considered to be the most reliable overall. The principle in Deut 19:15-18 has to be applied.

6 Word for word/thought for thought

A thought - if a translator is doing his work on a *thought for thought* basis, will he get the true message conveyed if he is a competent linguist, but not led by the Holy Spirit (and therefore does not really understand what he/she is translating)?

Isaiah 55 ⁸ "For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts,
Nor *are* your ways My ways," says the LORD.

⁹ "For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.

1 Cor 2 ¹¹ For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

¹³ These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the ¹⁴ Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. ¹⁴ But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.

(both NKJV)