

What is *The Passion Translation* and who is behind it?

The Passion Translation brings God's fiery heart of love and truth to this generation using Aramaic, Greek, and Hebrew manuscripts, merging them together with the emotion and truth of God's Word in a way that's accurate and faithful, yet clear and readable.

BroadStreet Publishing is the publisher of *The Passion Translation*. It represents their passion for creating meaningful, inspirational products that share God's truth to the world with beauty, quality, and creativity. They are thrilled to partner with Dr. Brian Simmons in this groundbreaking attempt to re-introduce the passion and fire of the Bible to English readers.

Brian is a former missionary, linguist, minister, and Bible teacher. As a missionary, he and his wife, Candice, pioneered church plants in Central America. As a linguist, Brian co-translated the Paya-Kuna New Testament for the Kuna people of Panama. He and his wife have started numerous ministries, including a dynamic church, *Gateway Christian Fellowship*, in West Haven, Connecticut. He is also a gifted teacher of the Bible who has authored several books and serves churches worldwide through his teaching ministry.

What kind of translation is *The Passion Translation*? How does it compare with other translations?

You may have heard about two kinds of Bible translations: *formal* equivalence and *functional* equivalence. These are fancy words for Bibles that are either literal word-for-word versions (formal) or thought-for-thought versions (functional or dynamic).

Some versions, like the New King James Version and English Standard Version, seek to make a comparable one-to-one connection between the original *form* of words in the biblical languages to their new form in English. It's why we call them word-for-word translations. These versions believe the literal meaning should have priority, that the Hebrew and Greek words should equal English ones.

Other versions, like the New Century Version, New Living Translation, and Good News Bible seek to make a corresponding connection between the *function* of the original biblical words in English. These are called thought-for-thought translations. They believe the original message should have priority, that what God was trying to communicate through Hebrew and Greek should be communicated in English.

OK, so which of these two sides does *The Passion Translation* take? In many ways, both!

While we've worked hard to express the original biblical languages in modern English, we believe there really is no such thing as a consistent word-for-word translation. Yes literal meaning matters, but the full meaning of a passage doesn't transfer from word-to-word. Our translation philosophy is that the meaning of God's original message to the world has priority over its exact form, which is why our goal is to communicate the meaning of Scripture as clearly and naturally as possible in modern English.

Brian and other reviewers have sought to remain faithful to the original biblical languages by preserving their literal meaning, yet flexible enough to convey God's original message in a way modern English speakers can understand. It is a balanced translation that tries to hold both the Word's literal meaning and original message in proper tension, resulting in an entirely new, fresh, fiery translation of God's Word.

Why another Bible translation? What makes *The Passion Translation* different than other translations?

Many wonderful versions of the Bible grace our bookshelves, bookstores, software programs, even apps on our phones. In fact 88 percent of households own an average of nearly five Bibles! So why add one more?

The reason is simple: God wants His message of love to be received in every culture, every community, and every language.

About every hundred years or so the vocabulary of people undergoes a dramatic change. In this era of modern technology we find an even more rapid shift. Therefore, it is important to keep translations of the Bible in step with changes in the English language.

That's where *The Passion Translation* comes in.

The Passion Translation is an attempt to bring God's fiery heart of love and truth to this generation using Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic manuscripts, bringing them together with the emotion and truth of God's Word, resulting in a clear, accurate, readable translation for modern English readers.

In past translations wonderfully gifted scholars were trained to focus on other factors besides the emotion of the text. As Brian has studied the original biblical manuscripts, he has uncovered what he believes is the love language of God that has been missing from other translations.

God refuses to meet us only in an intellectual way. God also wants to meet us heart level, so we must let the words go heart deep—which is what we’re trying to do with this project. To bring words that go right through the human soul, past the defenses of our mind, and go right into our spirit. There is a language of the heart that must express the passion of this love-theology. That’s why *The Passion Translation* is an important addition to peoples’ devotional and spiritual life with Christ.

I hear Aramaic manuscripts of the Bible were included in the composition of *The Passion Translation*. How does it enhance this English version of the Bible compared with others?

In recent years we have made many new discoveries regarding the original documents and manuscripts that have been compiled to form our Bible, especially the Aramaic manuscripts of the New Testament. One of the unique benefits of *The Passion Translation* is that it has recovered this often-neglected language by consulting these ancient biblical manuscripts—all so people can better encounter the fiery, passionate heart of God.

Most Christians outside the Middle East are unaware of the significance Aramaic has played in the development of the Holy Scriptures. For instance, did you know that the books of Ezra and Daniel were originally written in this language? And did you also know it was the language Jesus, the disciples, and the earliest Christians spoke?

In Jesus’ day, Aramaic was the common language of the common people, which means he probably taught most using this language throughout Galilee and Judea. In fact, many of Jesus’ most famous teachings and sayings—like the Lord’s prayer and his “Son of Man” reference—can be traced to the Aramaic language.

To bring the full texture of God’s Word to the surface and recapture the original essence of the teachings of Jesus and His disciples, Brian has compared the Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic translations throughout this monumental project. You may consider *The Passion Translation* as a blending of these.

We believe it’s time to recover this important original language of the Bible. The Aramaic texts are an important, added “lens” through which to view God’s original Word to us, a word of truth and love.

Does *The Passion Translation* represent any particular tradition or denomination?

Throughout history, many Bible translations have been tied to particular traditions or denominations. *The Passion Translation*, however, is a fresh approach to translating the original Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic manuscripts that intentionally transcends denominational barriers. It is not rooted in any one tradition or denomination, but desires help the wider Body of Christ encounter the heart of God anew in the language of today.

Who is behind the *The Passion Translation*, and what are their credentials?

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Dr. Simmons is a former missionary, linguist, minister, and Bible teacher. As a missionary, he and his wife, Candice, pioneered church plants in Central America. As a linguist, Brian co-translated the Paya-Kuna New Testament for the Paya-Kuna people of Panama. He and his wife have birthed numerous ministries, including a dynamic church, *Gateway Christian Fellowship*, in West Haven, Connecticut. He is also a gifted teacher of the Bible who has authored several books and serves churches worldwide through his teaching ministry.

Brian began his biblical studies with The New Tribes Bible Institute and continued on to earn his doctorate with Wagner Leadership Institute, with a specialization on prayer. His doctoral thesis is now published, *Prayer Partners with Jesus*, available on Amazon.com.

What is the translation philosophy behind *The Passion Translation*?

Bible translations are both a gift and a problem. They give us the words God spoke through his servants, but words can become very poor containers for revelation—they leak! Over time the words change from one generation to the next. Meaning is influenced by culture, background, and a thousand other details. You can imagine how differently the Hebrew authors of the Old Testament saw the world from three thousand years ago!

There is no such thing as a truly literal translation of the Bible, for there is not an equivalent language that perfectly conveys the meaning of the biblical text except as it is understood in its original cultural and linguistic setting. Therefore, a translation can be a problem. The problem,

however, is solved when we seek to transfer meaning, and not merely words, from the original text to the receptor language.

That's the governing philosophy behind *The Passion Translation*: to transfer the meaning of God's original message found in the biblical languages to modern-day English. We believe that the meaning of a passage should take priority over the form of the original words, so that every English speaker can clearly, naturally encounter the heart of God through his message of truth and love.

To transfer the meaning of the biblical narrative from one language to another requires interpretation. Undoubtedly, the process of Bible translation cannot be considered a perfect science, but more of an artistic, Spirit-led production. Dr. Simmons has sought to faithfully carry over the meaning of the Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic into modern English along with the nuances of the Scripture's poetry and prose to make it sparkle and come alive to the reader.

What process was used to translate *The Passion Translation* from the original biblical languages?

Every translation—regardless of the language—rests on a set of standards and embraces a certain process for expressing God's originally inspired texts in another language. The NIV, ESV, or NLT—even the King James Bible all used a translation philosophy and process for giving the English-speaking world a new version of the Holy Scriptures.

Several years ago, when Dr. Simmons translated the New Testament into the language of the Paya-Kuna people, he used a translation process and standard widely used among translators of God's Word. Those same standards and processes were used to form *The Passion Translation*, too.

Dr. Simmons engaged a three-stage process for bringing the original languages into modern English. First, he analyzed the passage in the original biblical language to establish its meaning. Next, he conveyed the meaning of the original words in English. Finally, he converted the meaning in a way that expressed the language of the English world, just as he had done in the Paya-Kuna world.

Furthermore, every Bible translator uses a set of four criteria when translating passages of Scripture. Dr. Simmons used the same widely-used standards to make *The Passion Translation* an accurate, faithful, clear, and readable translation for twenty-first century English readers. A

passage was adjusted if required by grammar, correct meaning, clarity, or readability. [See David Brunn, *One Bible, Many Versions* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013) 85-87.]

First, grammatical correctness had priority over literalness of form, given the differences between Hebrew and Greek and English grammar.

Second, the meaning of a passage took priority over the form of the original words. Sometimes in order to communicate the correct intended meaning, words needed to be changed.

Third, while correct meaning is important, so is clarity. Every translation makes frequent adjustments to not only ensure a passage's meaning is correct, but that it is also clearly understood. Dr. Simmons made the same adjustments in favor of clarity.

Fourth, adjustments were often necessary for the sake of readability, or naturalness. Like other translators, Dr. Simmons made adjustments to make a passage or verse reflect more of the way we speak modern English.

These four criteria are standard for the process of converting the meaning of God's original words so that people can understand God's original message—whether in English or not.

What textual source materials were used in composing *The Passion Translation*?

The Passion Translation is not a revision or paraphrase of another existing version. It is an entirely new, fresh translation from the original Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic documents. For the Old Testament, Dr. Simmons consulted the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible and Aramaic texts, in conjunction with the Septuagint. A number of Hebrew texts were used, especially the edition known as *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977). For the New Testament, he used *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by Nestle and Aland (twenty-seventh edition, 1993) as his Greek base text from which to work, while incorporating insights from the Syriac (Aramaic) Peshitta, as well as the Roth text.

Why were Aramaic texts used as supplemental source material throughout *The Passion Translation*, rather than only for Daniel, Ezra, and a few other places in the Hebrew Bible?

Over the past several decades there have been many new discoveries regarding the original documents and manuscripts that have been compiled to form our Bible, especially the Aramaic manuscripts of the New Testament. Aramaic and Hebrew are related linguistically and both are

considered to be emotional and poetic. Greek speaks to the mind while Aramaic and Hebrew speak powerfully to the heart.

It is widely known that Aramaic was the language Jesus, the apostles, and the earliest Christians spoke. It was the dominant language in most settings Jesus taught, probably the first language of most Galileans outside urban areas and the common tongue of most Judeans. It was the *lingua franca* of the Middle East until around the third century. Recent biblical scholarship has begun tracing many of Jesus' teachings back to an original Aramaic source. Some even argue the original Greek manuscripts were translations of even more original Aramaic sources.

For instance, Jesus' famous "Son of Man" reference doesn't make sense in the Greek; it's a downright Semitic, non-Hellenized, Aramaic figure of speech if there ever was one. And an ironic wordplay can be discerned in Matthew 23:24, where "gnat" (*qamla*) and "camel" (*gamla*) are in obvious parallelism, signifying an Aramaic layer beneath the Bible.

In order to fully utilize this layer and the recent developments in biblical textual and source criticism, Dr. Simmons compared both Greek and Aramaic translations throughout this monumental project. You may consider *The Passion Translation* as a synthesis of the two. When he has resorted to using the alternative Aramaic text, which may vary minimally from the Greek, you will notice an explanatory footnote to let you know.

We believe using the original ancient Aramaic sources in addition to the original Greek ones adds an important lens through which to read God's Word and understand His revelation of truth and love. We trust you will find the nuance added by the Aramaic to bring a greater clarity to the inspired text.

Why is there sometimes a preference for the Aramaic over the original Greek?

While it is generally agreed upon that Greek was the language in which the New Testament was written, for several decades there has been a debate surrounding the primacy of Greek versus Aramaic as original texts for the New Testament. There is a growing interest in an apparent Aramaic layer undergirding much of the New Testament, particularly the Gospels. Some believe Aramaic Christian texts may have circulated in the years leading up to the transmission of the Gospels.

Craig Keener notes, "the bilingual milieu of the Syrian and Palestinian churches undoubtedly facilitated the ready translation on a popular level of Jesus' sayings from Aramaic to Greek..."

[Craig Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2009), 159] Likewise, Michael Bird argues that large sections of the Gospels “are capable of being retroverted back into Aramaic,” suggesting Aramaic sources have a place in the Jesus tradition. [Michael Bird, *The Gospel of the Lord: How the Early Church Wrote the Story of Jesus* (Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 44].

Given these recent advances in textual criticism in regards to the Aramaic of the Bible, Dr. Simmons believes it’s time to bring this forgotten, neglected language into the translation equation because of how influential the language was during the first and second centuries on the biblical world and the Bible itself.

A growing chorus of scholars is recognizing certain idioms and phrases are better understood by referring to the Aramaic behind them. Therefore, where appropriate, Dr. Simmons has applied the lens of this language to better capture the original cultural and historical context of God’s Word. It is also meant to act as sort of a prism through which to further illuminate the meaning of God’s original message, acting as an alternative perspective to the typical Greek-centric one.

What is the approach to gender usage in *The Passion Translation*?

Throughout the process of writing the *The Passion Translation*, we took great pains to faithfully express God’s message from the original Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic manuscripts into modern English. We wanted to hold both the literal meaning and original message in proper tension.

One area that challenged us was translating the original male-oriented pronouns and terms from the ancient biblical text in away that was clear and readable in our twenty-first century context. Our translation philosophy is to transfer meaning, and not merely words, from the original biblical text to English. We believe that the meaning of a passage takes priority over the form of the original words. Therefore, where appropriate, we translated male-oriented pronouns and terms in a gender-neutral way when it was clear God’s message applied not merely to men, but to men and women collectively.

For example, in Galatians 4:12, Paul pleads with the church of Galatia to become like him. It is clear in the context that his message is to both brothers and sisters in the faith, to the “beloved ones,” as *The Passion Translation* says. Therefore, the passage is translated like this: “Beloved ones, I plead with you, follow my example and become free from the bondage of religion...”

This example represents several instances where it was clear God’s original message wasn’t merely for men, but for every person—every “beloved one.”

Where we didn’t convert male-oriented pronouns and terms, however, is when they referred to God. So when Jesus said, “I am the Way, I am the Truth, and I am the Life. No one comes next to the Father except through union with me. To know me is to know my Father too. And from now on you will realize that you have seen him and experienced him,” we clearly maintained the proper terms to refer to God in the masculine—just as God’s original message communicates.

What makes *The Passion Translation* good for use from the pulpit?

The Word of God was never meant to be studied in personal isolation, but proclaimed and preached in community. From Israel to the Church, God’s people have read aloud the Holy Scriptures, a tradition that Jesus mirrored and modeled in the temple (See Luke 4:16–20). Given that it was meant to be read aloud, it is vital that the Bible is clearly spoken when read and easily understood when listened to.

The Passion Translation has been crafted with modern English readers and listeners in mind, which is why it is ideal for modern English churches. The cadence and word choices, sentence structure and emotive language all lend a hand in helping readers easily proclaim passages, pastors clearly communicate God’s Word, and listeners understand the specific message God wants them to hear.

Whatever your role in the church today, *The Passion Translation* will help your messages come alive with the fiery passion of God and help your listeners encounter the heart of God.

How does the TPT compare to the NIV?

Both the *New International Version* and *The Passion Translation* have the goal of accurately and clearly conveying God’s Word in contemporary language. The two also seek to balance the original meaning of words and God’s original message; yet *The Passion Translation* is more in favor of prioritizing God’s original message over the words’ literal meaning. Where the NIV often favors a word-for-word rendition of the text, *The Passion Translation* consistently favors a more expansive, natural thought-for-thought expression of God’s Word.

Consider this example from Galatians 2:15–21, in which you’ll notice the difference between the two:

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. —NIV

Although we’re Jews by birth and not non-Jewish “sinners,” we know full well that we don’t receive God’s perfect righteousness as a reward for keeping the law, but by the faith of Jesus the Messiah! His faithfulness, not ours, has saved us, and we have received God’s perfect righteousness. Now we know that God accepts no one by the keeping of religious laws, but by the gift of grace!

If we are those who desire to be saved from our sins through our union with Christ, does that mean Christ promotes our sins if we still acknowledge that we are sinners? How absurd! For if I start over and reconstruct the old religious system that I have torn down with the message of grace, I will appear to be one who turns his back on the truth.

It was when I tried to obey the law that I was condemned with a curse, because I’m not able to fulfill every single detail of it. But because Christ lives in me, I’ve now died to the law’s dominion over me so that I can live for God in heaven’s freedom!

My old identity has been crucified with Christ and no longer lives; for the nails of his cross crucified me with him. And now the essence of this new life is no longer mine, for Christ lives his life through me—we live in union as one! My new life is empowered by the

faith of the Son of God who loves me so much that he gave himself for me, and dispenses his life into mine!

So that is why I don't view God's grace as something minor or peripheral. For if keeping the law could release God's righteousness to us, the Anointed One would have died for nothing. —TPT

You can see how *The Passion Translation* takes this complicated passage and enhances its meaning by going beyond a literal translation to magnifying God's original message. The section of Galatians from the TPT Bible brings greater clarity and understanding by translating the original Greek in a way that's faithful *and* fresh, reliable *and* readable. That's why this section from Paul's letter in the TPT Bible reads as if he wrote it to contemporary English readers!

What are some of the differences between the KJV and modern translations, like *The Passion Translation*?

The King James Version of the Bible has been the most well-known, well-loved Bible translation in the English-speaking world for centuries. In fact, for 55 percent of Americans—and perhaps for you—it's their translation of choice. While the legacy and impact of the KJV is rich and deep, many do not see it as an ideal translation for your personal devotional life for two important reasons, both having to do with *language*.

First, the forty-seven scribes who translated the King James Bible didn't know all we know today about the Bible's original languages. While the original Hebrew text was adequate, their understanding of it wasn't. They also relied upon what we now know to be inferior original texts, particularly the Greek one of the New Testament known as *Textus Receptus*. Originally created by Erasmus of Rotterdam and updated by French scholar Stephanus, it was an improvement over previous New Testament Greek sources, but marked by several problems. It was based upon few Greek manuscripts largely representing the Byzantine type of text dating from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which most scholars believe was a revision, even expansion, of the originals. And in places where no Greek text was available, the Latin *Vulgate* was translated back into Greek.

Since then, we've discovered many earlier Greek manuscripts dating far closer to the original transcription of the New Testament than those composing *Textus Receptus*. The most significant

and accurate of these include Codex Alexandrinus (dated AD 400), Codex Sinaiticus (AD 350), and Codex Vaticanus (AD 325)—all found after the composition and publication of the KJV. Now most modern translations use the *Nestle-Aland Greek New Testament* as a translation source, which incorporates these and other important manuscripts, and which *The Passion Translation* references.

To accompany original language concerns with the KJV, it also does not reflect our modern language. Words such as “thou art,” “ye shall,” “thus saith,” or “thou knowest not” are not commonly used today. If we don’t speak like English speakers from the days of Shakespeare, why read or preach from God’s Word in a language from the seventeenth century? While there are undoubted literary qualities of the KJV that marvelously express the English language, it is no longer a living language. It’s a language that spoke God’s message of love to people *then* in the language of their day; we need that same message *right now* in today’s language.

Aside from the language difference, another difference between the KJV and TPT is the absence of several verses. The KJV includes several passages most Bible scholars believe were not in the original text, reflecting the inferior manuscript *Textus Receptus*. Those extra verses include the following: Matthew 17:21; 18:11; 23:14; 27:35b; Mark 7:16; 9:44, 46; 11:26; 15:28; Luke 9:55b–56a; 17:36; 23:17; John 5:3b–4; Acts 8:37; 15:34; 24:6b–8a; 28:29; Romans 16:24; 1 John 5:7b–8a. Most modern versions exclude these verses, while including a note of explanation in deference to the KJV tradition. *The Passion Translation* also follows this practice.

The Passion Translation is designed to help you encounter the heart of God in your day, just like the KJV did in its day. We respect the legacy of the KJV and are indebted to its impact and influence. We also appreciate that it has been a trusted, cherished source of spiritual encouragement for many, nourishing their faith for years. Yet, because of the language issues of the KJV, we encourage people to find a translation based on the latest manuscript scholarship and one that communicates God’s original message in contemporary English.

Is the TPT considered a good translation for serious study?

The Passion Translation is an excellent translation you can use as your primary text to seriously study God’s Word because it combines the best aspects of what is called *formal* and *functional equivalence* Bibles. It is a balanced translation that tries to hold both the Word’s literal meaning and original message in proper tension, resulting in an entirely new, fresh, fiery

translation of God's Word. Furthermore, this is the first modern English translation to use Aramaic, the language of Jesus and the disciples, as a lens through which to view God's original Word to us, a word of truth and love.

This translation philosophy will benefit your serious study of Scripture in several ways:

- The text has been interpreted from the original language, carrying its original meaning and giving you an accurate, reliable expression of God's original message;
- The meaning of a passage takes priority over the form of the original words, so that every English speaker can encounter the heart of God through His Word in a way that's natural and readable.
- This translation keeps the Bible in step with changes in modern English, helping you clearly understand God's original message and how it applies to your life in the twenty-first century;
- Reclaiming lost Aramaic texts brings the full texture of God's Word to the surface, helping you recapture the original essence of the teachings of Jesus and His disciples;
- This version taps into the love language of God, letting the words of Scripture go through the human soul, past the defenses of our mind, and into our spirit.

Countless people have told us how *The Passion Translation* has helped them freshly discover intimacy with Christ in their journey through Scripture, and that it has rapidly become their favorite translation of choice for Bible study. We are thrilled to offer this accurate, faithful, clear, and readable translation for your serious study of God's Word, and look forward to hearing how it helps you encounter the heart of God anew.

What is included in the footnotes of the TPT?

One of the benefits of *The Passion Translation* is the generous notes, which further highlight and explain key verses and passages. To aid you in your study of God's Word, Brian made several kinds of footnote comments: cultural and historical aspects lost to modern readers; important readings of Old Testament verses in light of Jesus Christ; variations in ancient manuscripts; alternative translations; renderings which depart from traditional expressions; contextual implications; and verses which use the lens of Aramaic for greater insight.

I would like to use TPT in writing, speaking, or in another project. What is the copyright policy regarding its use?

The copyright policy can be found on the copyright page inside each book. You may also view www.broadstreetpublishing.com/permissions to find out more information about how you can use *The Passion Translation* for your kingdom projects.

I have a question that isn't answered here. Whom can I ask?

If you have comments about the text of *The Passion Translation* you may contact office@passiontranslation.com.

For all other questions, including pricing and availability, please contact info@broadstreetpublishing.com.