



January 9, 2023

What Condition Is Your Bible In?

A recent article in *The Christian Century*, “An Even Better Bible,”^[i] discusses the latest rendition of the *New Revised Standard Version Bible* which has been the preferred English Bible used by mainline churches, scholars, and seminaries since its debut in 1989. This new Bible is aptly (but boringly!) titled the *New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition* and abbreviated *NRSVue*. Published in 2021, it isn’t a new translation from the original languages but rather a scholarly revision that reflects new information gleaned from manuscripts like the Dead Sea Scrolls along with new understandings of ancient languages and the use of up-to-date interpretative methods. In fact, *NRSVue* includes 12,000 substantive changes to the text or the notes.

Why this update? According to the publisher, “Motivated by love and respect for Scripture, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, hopes that you will find this...suitable to inspire, inform, and guide daily living. The goal of the *NRSVue* is to offer a readable and accurate version of the Holy Bible...for public worship and personal study, for scholarship and study in classrooms, and for informing faith and action in response to God. Together with religious leaders from diverse communities of faith, we join in the conviction that the Scriptures offer good news of God’s love – wisdom to guide, hope to sustain, truth to empower, forgiveness to change, and peace to bless all of creation.”^[ii]

How true! Indeed, every Bible offers us wisdom, hope, truth, forgiveness, and peace which can lead us to faith and action. There’s only one caveat: we have to read it! Thus, the title of this article.

“What Condition Is Your Bible In?” is the approximate title of one of the most memorable sermons I ever heard. I was about 12 years old when the preacher asked that question. It was not lost on me that there was one Bible in our home – the *Revised Standard Version* – which was a gift to my father from my Great Grandmother. She wrote, “A Book to Live with every day.” Sadly, it sat pristine on a bookshelf relegated to holding family newspaper clippings.

In contrast, one of my Presbyterian pastor friends still uses the Bible he received at confirmation. It's literally held together with duct tape.

Now I have a lot of Bibles. Most have underlining and notes in the margins; some have wobbly spines. None rely on duct-tape for their survival but all are well-read. I believe God used that sermon sixty years ago to motivate me to start reading the Bible. It changed my life. It still does.

I haven't purchased the *NRSVue Bible* yet, but I will. I'm eager to read the familiar stories and see what, if any, changes are made in the language and what new insights are offered into the historical context. The New Year is the perfect time to take our Bibles off the shelf and see what fresh wisdom, hope, truth, forgiveness, and peace God has for us. Happy reading!

~Written by Rev. Margie Osborn

[i] www.christiancentury.org/article/interview/even-better-Bible. December 19, 2022.

[ii] *NRSV Updated Edition Sampler*, The Holy Bible Ó2021 Friendship Press, 10. (Free download: www.friendshippress.org)



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