EXPERTS

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Categories: Bible Translation, Observations

As I was driving home yesterday there was an advertisement on BBC radio for a forthcoming BBC TV show. Apparently they are going to broadcast a series on food, which will tell us everything we need to know about the stuff we eat. To make sure that the broadcast is of high quality, there will be a team of celebrity presenters. After the advert, the dj asked why they were using celebrity presenters, why not have some experts - people who actually know about food.

I love the way that the BBC staff will point out stupidities in the way the BBC works, but there is a serious point here. Just because you are well known and very good in one field it doesn't mean that you are automatically an authority on everything else. There is an excellent example of this in the Bible Translation world at the moment.

Mark Driscoll, the Pastor of Mars Hill Church has just written an article on why he preaches from the ESV. Mark is generally an excellent writer and thinker and has a lot of good things to say, but I'm not convinced that he understands Bible translation very well. I've come to this debate late and others have responded before me, so I'll point you to them, rather than add words of my own. Wayne Leman has responded to Mark Driscoll's article and makes the following point:

> *Pastor Driscoll noted:*
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> *â€œFurthermore, even the greatest of communicators were known to be hard to understand when they spoke Godâ€™s truth. For example, some of Jesusâ€™ teaching was declared to be a â€œhard sayingâ€ by His hearers (John 6:60). Jesus also taught in parables, knowing that His teaching would not be readily understood by all his hearers, but only those with â€œears to hearâ€ (Mark 4:10â€“23).â€*
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> *Very true, but Pastor Driscoll has confused two different matters. Jesus did not speak in technical religious jargon which we find in the ESV and similar English Bibles. Instead, Jesus used plain-speak, everyday language, the language of the field and fishing. It was not Jesusâ€™ words that were hard to understand. It was the thoughts he was conveying with those words that threw his listeners. Jesus didnâ€™t use complicated, rare words when he told the parable of the sower and the seeds. But even Jesusâ€™ disciples often didnâ€™t catch Jesusâ€™ meaning. It wasnâ€™t a problem of vocabulary, as Pastor Driscoll seems to be saying in his article, but, rather, lack of ability to understand the application to peopleâ€™s lives.*

There are other comments on this article at BBB and also at Speaker of Truth and Henry's Web.

Though I don't particularly like the ESV, it does have a very valid philosophy of translation and it deserves a place on the bookshelves alongside other translations. But is it the best translation to work with? Who do we trust when looking at this sort of issue? The well known international preacher, or the much less well known scholars and linguists who work with Biblical languages and

translation every day? The answer would seem plain, but in our celebrity obsessed world, I suspect it isn't.