

Chances are thou keepest a KJV in thy house

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(RNS) If thou hast a Bible in the house and readeth it at least once a month, chances are strong it's the majestic King James Version of the Bible in Elizabethan English, according to a recent survey.

Of the 89 percent of U.S. adults who own at least one Bible, two-thirds of them own a King James, which marks its 400th anniversary this year, according to LifeWay Research, a Nashville-based Christian research agency.

Although there are two dozen English-language Bibles in many contemporary translations, the King James Version reigns even more supreme among those who actually read their Bibles: 82 percent of those who read the Good Book at least once a month rely on the translation that first brought the Scripture to the English-speaking masses worldwide.

Age makes a difference. Three out of four Bible owners 55 and older have a King James, compared with 56 percent of those under 35, according to the survey of 1,004 adults, conducted March 2-6.

This version's now-archaic phrasing and vocabulary don't seem to be a problem of casting "ye your pearls before swine," as it says in Matthew 7:6.

When LifeWay asked about readers' experience with the language dating back to 1611, many called it "beautiful" (31 percent) or "easy to remember" (23 percent). It is, after all, the book that gave English countless idioms such as "salt of the earth," "an eye for an eye," "at

our wit's end" and "oh ye of little faith."

Some called the KJV hard to understand (27 percent) or outdated (16 percent).

About two in 10 of those under age 35 reported trouble understanding it, compared with about three in 10 of their elders.

"Christians believe that God's Word is truth and that truth is conveyed through language -- thus translations have always been integral to the spread of Christianity," said Scott McConnell, director of LifeWay Research.

"It is hard to overstate the influence of the KJV," he said.