unfoldingWord® Translation Academy

v91

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unfoldingWord® Translation Academy

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Introduction to unfoldingWord® Translation Academy

Welcome to unfoldingWord® Translation Academy

unfoldingWord® Translation Academy is a collection of information and instruction on the topic of Bible translation. The primary users that we have in mind are church-based mother-tongue translators. It is written in simple language wherever possible and is intended to enable anyone, anywhere to equip themselves so that they will be able to make high-quality translations of biblical content into their own language.

unfoldingWord® Translation Academy is designed to be highly flexible. It is modular in structure, making possible many pathways through the material, depending on the needs and interests of the user. Although it does recommend certain steps and procedures, it seeks to be paradigm-neutral, so that it can be used in a variety of settings and processes. It can be used in systematic, in-advance approaches, or it can be used for just-in-time learning (or both, as needed).

unfoldingWord® Translation Academy is organized into the following sections:

- Introduction — introduces this resource, the Gateway Languages strategy, and translation
- Process Manual — answers the question “what next?”
- Translation Manual — explains the basics of translation theory and offers practical Bible translation helps
- Checking Manual — explains the basics of checking theory and best practices for checking translations

Why We Translate the Bible

The purpose of unfoldingWord® Translation Academy is to train you to become a Bible translator. Translating God's Word into your language to help your people grow as disciples of Jesus is an important task. You must be committed to this task, take your responsibility seriously, and pray that the Lord will help you.

God has spoken to us in the Bible. He inspired the writers of the Bible to write his Word using the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek languages. There were about 40 different authors writing from around 1400 B.C. to A.D. 100. These documents were written in the Middle East, North Africa and Europe. By recording his Word in those languages, God ensured that the people at those times and in those places could understand it.

Today, people in your country do not understand Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. But translating God's Word into their language will enable them to understand it!

Someone's "mother tongue" or "heart language" means the language they first spoke as a child and the one which they use at home. This is the language in which they are most comfortable and which they use to express their deepest thoughts. We want everyone to be able to read God's Word in their heart language, even if you speak a language that has not been written down yet!

Every language is important and valuable. Small languages are just as important as the national languages spoken in your country, and they can express meaning just as well. No one should be ashamed to speak their dialect. Sometimes, those in minority groups feel ashamed of their language and try not to use it around the people who are in the majority in their nation. But there is nothing inherently more important, more prestigious, or more educated about a national language than there is about local languages. Each language has nuances and shades of meaning that are unique. We should use the language we are most comfortable with and with which we best communicate with others.

The unfoldingWord Project

The vision of unfoldingWord is **the church in every people group and the Bible in every language**.

Jesus commanded his disciples to make disciples of EVERY people group:

> Jesus came to them and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on the earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey all the things that I have commanded you. See, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20 ULT)

We have the promise that people from EVERY language will be in heaven:

> "After these things I looked, and there was a huge multitude that no one could count—from every nation, tribe, people, and language—standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb." (Revelation 7:9 ULT)

Understanding the Word of God in one's heart language is important:

> "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Romans 10:17 ULT)

How Do We Do This?

How do we accomplish the goal of **the church in every people group and the Bible in every language**?

- Church-Centric Bible Translation — By working with other like-minded churches and organizations
- Statement of Faith — By working with those who have the same beliefs
- Translation Guidelines — By using a common translation theory
- Open License — By releasing everything we create under an open license
- Gateway Languages Strategy — By making biblical content available to translate from a known language

What Do We Do?

Content

We create and make available for translation free and unrestricted biblical content. See https://www.unfoldingword.org/content for a complete list of resources and translations. Here are a few samples:

- **unfoldingWord® Open Bible Stories** — unrestricted visual Bible stories comprising 50 key stories of the Bible, from Creation to Revelation, for evangelism and discipleship, in print, audio, and video (see https://www.openbiblestories.org/).

- **unfoldingWord® Literal Text** — a 'form-centric' translation of the Bible *for translators*. It increases the translator's understanding of the lexical and grammatical composition of the underlying text by adhering closely to the word order and structure of the originals (see https://www.unfoldingword.org/ult).
- **unfoldingWord® Simplified Text** — a 'functional' translation of the Bible *for translators*. It increases the translator's understanding of the text by simplifying grammar, adding implied information, and translating theological terms as descriptive phrases (see https://www.unfoldingword.org/ust).
- **unfoldingWord® Translation Notes** — linguistic, cultural, and exegetical helps for translators. They exist for Open Bible Stories and the Bible (see https://www.unfoldingword.org/utn).
- **unfoldingWord® Translation Questions** — questions for each chunk of text that translators and checkers can ask to help ensure that their translation is understood correctly. Available for Open Bible Stories and the Bible (see https://www.unfoldingword.org/utq).
- **unfoldingWord® Translation Words** — a list of important biblical terms with a short explanation, cross references, and translation aids. Useful for Open Bible Stories and the Bible (see https://www.unfoldingword.org/utw).

Tools

We create translation, checking, and distribution tools that are free and open-licensed. See https://www.unfoldingword.org/tools for a complete list of tools. Here are a few samples:

- **Door43** — an online translation platform where people can collaborate on translation and checking, also the content and translation management system (see https://door43.org/).
- **translationStudio** — a mobile app and a desktop app where translators can do offline translating (see https://ufw.io/ts/).
- **unfoldingWord app** — a mobile app where Open Bible Stories and Bible translations can be distributed (see https://ufw.io/uw/).
- **translationCore** — a program that enables comprehensive checking of Bible translations (see https://translationcore.com).

Training

We create resources to train mother tongue translation teams. unfoldingWord® Translation Academy (this resource) is our primary training tool. We also have audio recording and training resources. See https://www.unfoldingword.org/training for a complete list of training materials.

Statement of Faith

The official version of this document is found at https://ufw.io/faith.

The following statement of faith is in agreement with these historical creeds: Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, and Athanasian Creed; and also the Lausanne Covenant.

We believe that Christian belief can and should be divided into **essential beliefs** and **peripheral beliefs** (Romans 14).

Essential beliefs

Essential beliefs are the beliefs that define a follower of Jesus Christ and can never be compromised or ignored.

- We believe the Bible to be the only inspired, inerrant, sufficient, authoritative Word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; John 10:30).
- We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ (John 1:1-4; Philippians 2:5-11; 2 Peter 1:1).
- We believe in the humanity of Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, and in His ascension to the right hand of the Father (Matthew 1:18,25; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8; Hebrews 4:15; Acts 1:9-11; Acts 2:22-24).
- We believe that every person is inherently sinful and so is deserving of eternal hell (Romans 3:23; Isaiah 64:6-7).
- We believe that salvation from sin is a gift of God, provided through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, attained by grace through faith, not by works (John 3:16; John 14:6; Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 3:3-7).
- We believe that true faith is always accompanied by repentance and regeneration by the Holy Spirit (James 2:14-26; John 16:5-16; Romans 8:9).
- We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the follower of Jesus Christ is enabled to live a godly life (John 14:15-26; Ephesians 2:10; Galatians 5:16-18).
- We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, from all nations and languages and people groups (Philippians 2:1-4; Ephesians 1:22-23; 1 Corinthians 12:12,27).
- We believe in the personal and physical return of Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:30; Acts 1:10-11).

- We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; the unsaved will be resurrected to eternal damnation in hell and the saved will be resurrected to eternal blessing in heaven with God (Hebrews 9:27-28; Matthew 16:27; John 14:1-3; Matthew 25:31-46).

Peripheral beliefs

Peripheral beliefs are all other beliefs in Scripture about which sincere followers of Christ may disagree (e.g. Baptism, Lord's Supper, the Rapture, etc.). We choose to agree to disagree agreeably on these topics and press on together toward a common goal of making disciples of every people group (Matthew 28:18-20).

Translation Guidelines

The official version of this document is found at https://ufw.io/guidelines/.

The following statement on the principles and procedures used in translation is subscribed to by unfoldingWord and its contributors. All translation activities are carried out according to these common guidelines.

1. **Accurate** — Translate accurately, without detracting from, changing, or adding to the meaning of the original text. Translated content should faithfully communicate as precisely as possible the meaning of the original text as it would have been understood by the original audience. (see Create Accurate Translations)
2. **Clear** — Use whatever language structures are necessary to achieve the highest level of comprehension. This includes rearranging the form of a text and using as many or as few terms as necessary to communicate the original meaning as clearly as possible. (see Create Clear Translations)
3. **Natural** — Use language forms that are effective and that reflect the way your language is used in corresponding contexts. (see Create Natural Translations)
4. **Faithful** — Avoid any political, denominational, ideological, social, cultural, or theological bias in your translation. Use key terms that are faithful to the vocabulary of the original biblical languages. Use equivalent common language terms for the biblical words that describe the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. These may be clarified, as needed, in footnotes or other supplemental resources. (see Create Faithful Translations)
5. **Authoritative** — Use the original language biblical texts as the highest authority for translation of biblical content. Reliable biblical content in other languages may be used for clarification and as intermediary source texts. (see Create Authoritative Translations)
6. **Historical** — Communicate historical events and facts accurately, providing additional information as needed in order to accurately communicate the intended message to people who do not share the same context and culture as the original recipients of the original content. (see Create Historical Translations)
7. **Equal** — Communicate the same intent as the source text, including expressions of feeling and attitudes. As much as possible, maintain the different kinds of literature in the original text, including narrative, poetry, exhortation, and prophecy, representing them with corresponding forms that communicate in a similar way in your language. (see Create Equal Translations)

Identifying and Managing Translation Quality

The quality of a translation generally refers to the fidelity of the translation to the meaning of the original, and the degree to which the translation is understandable and effective for the speakers of the receptor language. The strategy we suggest involves checking the forms and communicative quality of the translation with the language community, and checking the fidelity of the translation with the Church in that people group.

The specific steps involved may vary significantly, depending on the language and context of the translation project. Generally, we consider a good translation to be one that has been

reviewed by the speakers of the language community and also by the leadership of the church in the language group so that it is:

1. **Accurate, Clear, Natural, and Equal** — Faithful to the intended meaning of the original, as determined by the Church in that people group and in alignment with the Church global and historical, and consequently:
2. **Affirmed by the Church** — Endorsed and used by the Church. (see Create Church-Approved Translations)

We also recommend that the translation work be:

1. **Collaborative** — Where possible, work together with other believers who speak your language to translate, check, and distribute the translated content, ensuring that it is of the highest quality and available to as many people as possible. (see Create Collaborative Translations)
2. **Ongoing** — Translation work is never completely finished. Encourage those who are skilled with the language to suggest better ways to say things when they notice that improvements can be made. Any errors in the translation should also be corrected as soon as they are discovered. Also encourage the periodic review of translations to ascertain when revision or a new translation is needed. We recommend that each language community form a translation committee to oversee this ongoing work. Using the unfoldingWord® online tools, these changes to the translation can be made quickly and easily. (see Create Ongoing Translations)

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- **Free Translate License**

See Copyrights, Licensing, and Source Texts for more information.

Gateway Languages Strategy

The official version of this document is found at https://ufw.io/gl/.

Explanation

The objective of the Gateway Languages strategy is to equip 100% of the people groups that comprise the global Church with biblical content that is released from copyright restrictions and made available in a language they understand well (a language of wider communication, also known as a "gateway language") together with unrestricted translation training and tools that enable them to translate it into a language they understand fully (their own language). A Gateway Language is a language of wider communication through which second-language speakers of that language can gain access to content and translate it into their own language.

The Gateway Languages at the world level comprise the smallest number of languages through which content can be delivered to every Other Language via translation by bilingual speakers. For example, French is a Gateway Language for minority languages in francophone Africa since content available in French can be translated by bilingual speakers from French into their own languages.

At the country level, the gateway languages of a given country are the fewest languages of wider communication required for bilingual speakers in every minority language native to the country (not located there due to immigration) to gain access to content. For example, English is the Gateway Language for North Korea, because all people groups native to North Korea can be reached by translation of content into their language from English.

Effects

This model has two basic effects: First, it empowers all languages to "pull" content to their language once the content and helps have been "pushed" into a Gateway Language, thereby making that content accessible to every language of the world. Second, it limits the amount of translation that needs to be done as the translation helps only have to be translated into the Gateway Language. All Other Languages can translate only the biblical content, since no language will be dependent upon them for understanding the translation helps.

Finding Answers

How to Get Answers

There are several resources available for finding answers to questions:

- **unfoldingWord® Translation Academy** — This training manual is available at https://ufw.io/ta and has much information including:
  - Introduction — introduces this resource, the Gateway Languages strategy, and translation
  - Process Manual — answers the question "what next?"
  - Translation Manual — explains the basics of translation theory and provides practical translation helps
  - Checking Manual — explains the basics of checking theory and best practices
- **Door43 Forum** — A place to ask questions and get answers to technical, strategic, translation, and checking issues, https://forum.door43.org/
- **Helpdesk** — email help@door43.org with your questions

Process Manual

Step 1: Getting Started

Introduction to the Process Manual

Welcome

Welcome to Bible translation! We are pleased that you desire to translate God's message into the language of your people, whether this is through translaton of Bible stories or books of Scripture. This Process Manual is a step-by-step guide to help translation teams know what they need to do from the start of a project to its completion. This guide will help a translation team from the initial setup to the final publishing of translated and checked content.

Getting Started

Translation is a very complex task that takes commitment, organization, and planning. There are many required steps to take a translation from an idea to a completed, checked, distributed, and in-use translation. The information in this Process Manual will help you to know all of the necessary steps in the translation process.

Translating the Bible requires many skills, so one of the first things that you need to think about is how to choose a team that can do this work.

Step 2: Setting Up a Translation Team

Setting Up A Translation Team

Choosing a Team

As you begin selecting a translation and checking team, there are many different types of people and roles that are needed. There are also specific qualifications that are needed for each team.

- Choosing a Translation Team — Describes many of the roles that are needed
- Translator Qualifications — Describes some of the skills needed by the translators
- Remember that everyone on the team needs to sign a statement that they agree with (forms are available at https://ufw.io/forms)
    - Statement of Faith
    - Translation Guidelines
    - Open License
- Everyone on the team also needs to know the qualities of a good translation (see The Qualities of a Good Translation).
- The team also needs to know where they can find answers (see Finding Answers).

Translation Decisions

There are many decisions the translation team will need to make, many of them right at the beginning of the project. Included are the following:

- Choosing a Source Text — Choosing a good source text is very important
    - Copyrights, Licensing, and Source Texts — Copyright issues must be considered when choosing a source text
    - Source Texts and Version Numbers — Translating from the latest version of a source text is best
- Alphabet/Orthography — Many languages have alphabet decisions that need to be made
- Decisions for Writing Your Language — Writing style, punctuation, translating names, spelling, and other decisions have to be made
- Translation Style — The translation committee needs to agree on the style of the translation in the sense of how much they want it to imitate the form of the source, how much borrowing of words is allowed, and other topics. See also this section on making the translation Acceptable.
- Choosing What to Translate — Books should be chosen based on the needs of the church and the difficulty of translation

After the translation committee makes these decisions, it is good to write them down in a document that everyone involved in the translation can read. This will help everyone to make similar translation decisions and will avoid further arguments about these things.

After choosing the translation team, it will be time to start giving them Translation Training.

Step 3: Translating

Training Before Translation Begins

What to Know Before Translation

It is recommended that you consult the Translation Manual frequently as you translate. Before you start translating, we recommend that you start working your way through the Translation Manual at least until you know the difference between a literal translation and a meaning-based translation. Much of the rest of the Translation Manual can be used as a "just-in-time" learning resource.

Some important subjects that everyone on the translation team must learn before starting a translation project include:

- The Qualities of a Good Translation — The definition of a good translation
- The Translation Process — How a good translation is made
    - Form and Meaning — The difference between form and meaning
    - Meaning-Based Translations — How to make a meaning-based translation

Some other important topics as you get started also include:

- Choose a Translation Style — Important decisions that must be made that will guide the translation process
- Choosing What to Translate — Suggestions for where to start translating
- First Draft — How to make a first draft
- Help with Translating — Using translation helps

When you have Set Up a Translation Team and want to make a First Draft of your translation, use translationStudio. We recommend that you follow this Translation Process.

Choosing a Translation Platform

Recommended Platform

The recommended platform for drafting Bible translations in the Door43 online community is translationStudio (https://ufw.io/ts/). The recommended platform for checking Bible translations is translationCore (https://ufw.io/tc/). You may set up translationStudio on Android, Windows, Mac, or Linux devices (see Setting up translationStudio for more information). You may set up translationCore on Windows, Mac, or Linux devices. These platforms are free to download and use. They import and export Bible books in USFM format.

Other Options

If using translationStudio is not an option for your team, then you may consider using other online or offline tools. Please note: if you do not use translationStudio but do want to use other Bible translation software, then it will be your responsibility to ensure that your translated content is in USFM format (see File Formats for more information).

Setting Up translationStudio

Installing tS for Mobile

The mobile (Android) edition of translationStudio is available from the Google Play Store or via direct download from https://ufw.io/ts/. If you install from the Play Store, then you will be notified by the Play Store when a new version is available. Note that you may also copy the installation file (apk) to other devices to share translationStudio with others without using the internet.

Installing tS for Desktop

The latest version of translationStudio for desktop or laptop computers (Windows, Mac, or Linux) is available from https://ufw.io/ts/. To install the program, navigate to the "Desktop" section and download the latest release. Note that you may also copy the installation file to other computers to share translationStudio with others without using the internet.

Using tS

Once installed, both editions of translationStudio are designed to work similarly. You *do not* need an internet connection to use translationStudio! When using translationStudio for the first time, the software will take you to a screen where you must sign an agreement to the Statement of Faith, the Translation Guidelines, and the Open License.

After this first-use screen, the software will then take you to the Home screen where you can create a new project. You will need to give the project a name (usually a book of the Bible), identify the project type (usually Bible or Open Bible Stories), and identify the target language. Once your project is created, you can start translating. Make sure that you understand the Principles of Good Translation and know how to use the Translation Helps that are built into translationStudio. These will help you to gain a better understanding of the source text and how to translate it. Note that your work is automatically saved. You may also choose to back up, share, or upload your work at various intervals (use the menu to access these functions). For guidelines on how to start translating, see Translation Overview and Making a First Draft.

For more information on how to use translationStudio, please see the documentation at https://ts-info.readthedocs.io/.

After Using tS

1. Make sure that you have a translation team that can help you check your work (see Training Before Checking Begins).
2. At any point, you may upload your work to Door43 by clicking on the three-dot menu and choosing Upload/Export. You will need to create a user name on Door43.
3. Once uploaded, Door43 will keep your work in a repository under your user name and you can access your work there (see Publishing).

Translation Overview

OL Translation Process

For “Other Languages” (OLs, languages other than Gateway Languages), which are most of the languages of the world, the following is the process of translation that unfoldingWord recommends and supports with translation resources and tools.

After Setting up a Translation Committee and training translators in Translation Principles and how to use translationStudio, we recommend that you follow this process:

1. Using translationStudio, make a First Draft translation of a story from Open Bible Stories (OBS).
2. Check the translation with a Partner on your translation team.
3. Check the translation with the Full Translation Team.
4. Check the translation using the translationNotes and translationWords.
5. Check the translation with the Language Community.
6. Check the translation with Pastors from the Language Community.
7. Check the translation with Leaders of Church Networks.
8. Publish the translation on Door43, in print, and in audio, as desired.

Repeat these steps with each story of Open Bible Stories, until you have finished all fifty.

After finishing Open Bible Stories, you will have gained enough skill and experience to start translating the Bible. We recommend that you start with a book that is Difficulty Level 2. Then follow this process:

1. Using translationStudio, make a First Draft translation of a book of the Bible.
2. Check the translation with a Partner on your translation team.
3. Check the translation with the Full Translation Team.
4. Check the translation using the translationNotes and translationWords tools in translationCore.
5. Check the translation with the Language Community.
6. Check the translation with Pastors from the Language Community.
7. Align the translation with the original languages using the Aligning Tool in translationCore.
8. Check the translation with Leaders of Church Networks.
9. Publish the translation on Door43, in print, and in audio, as desired.

Repeat these steps with each Bible book.

Plan to have someone from the translation team continue to maintain the translation on Door43, editing it to correct errors and improve it according to suggestions from the church community. The translation can easily be downloaded and reprinted as often as desired.

Step 4: Checking

Training Before Checking Begins

Before Checking

It is recommended that you consult the Checking Manual frequently as you check your translation. Before you start checking, we recommend that you start working your way through the Checking Manual until you understand what is required for each check. As you work through the checking process, you will need to consult the Checking Manual frequently.

Some information that the translation team should know before you start checking:

- Goal of Checking — What is the purpose of checking?
- Introduction to Translation Checking — Why do we need a team to check the translation?

Setting Up translationCore®

How to Get translationCore®

translationCore® is an open-source and open-licensed software program for checking Bible translations. It is completely free to use. The latest version of translationCore for desktop or laptop computers (Windows, Mac, or Linux) is available from https://translationcore.com/. To install the program, click on "Download" to get the latest release. Note that you may also copy the installation file to other computers to share translationCore with others without using the internet.

How to Set Up translationCore®

For documentation on how to use translationCore, please see https://tc-documentation.readthedocs.io/. The following is an overview.

Log In

To start, you will need to log in with a user name. If your translation is on Door43, use your Door43 user name. If you do not want to use the internet, then you can enter any name that you want to use, either real or a pseudonym.

Choose a Project

If you logged in with your Door43 user name, translationCore will know which translations belong to you and will make them available to download into translationCore. You can choose from the list of your projects in Door43 which translation project you want to check. You may also load translations that are already saved on your computer without using the internet.

Choose a Tool

translationCore currently contains three checking tools:

- translationWords Tool
- translationNotes Tool
- Word Alignment Tool

Instructions for using each tool can be found by clicking on the name of the tool above.

After Using translationCore®

At any point, you may upload your work to Door43 by returning to the project list and clicking on the three-dot menu next to the project that you want to upload and choosing "Upload to Door43." You can also save your project to a file on your computer. Once uploaded, Door43 will keep your work in a repository under your user name and you can access your work there (see Publishing).

Step 5: Publishing

Introduction to Publishing

Publishing Overview

Once a work has been uploaded to Door43, it is automatically available online under your user account. This is referred to as self-publishing. You will have access to a web version of your project at https://door43.org/u/user_name/project_name (where user_name is your username and project_name is your translation project). Both translationStudio and translationCore will give you the correct link when you upload. You can also browse all works on https://door43.org.

From your Door43 project page you can:

- See the web version of your project with default formatting
- Download documents of your project (like a PDF)
- Get the links to the source files (USFM or Markdown) for your project
- Interact with others about your project
- Continue to edit and improve your project and keep track of all changes

For more about distributing your project to others, see Distribution.

Step 6: Distributing

Introduction to Distribution

Distribution Overview

Biblical content is worthless unless it is distributed and used. One advantage of using the Door43 translation and publishing platform is that it provides multiple, simple ways of distributing content. On Door43:

- You can safely store your translation
- People can see your translation
- People can leave comments and suggestions to improve your translation
- People can download your translation to read, print, and share with others

Open License

The biggest factor that enables distribution of content is the Open License that is used for all content on Door43. This license gives everybody the freedom they need to:

- **Share** — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format
- **Adapt** — remix, transform, and build upon the material

for any purpose, even commercial, without cost. “Freely you have received; freely give.” (Matthew 10:8b)

For ways to share your translations both online and offline, see Sharing Content.

How to Share Content

Sharing Content from tS and tC

Sharing content that is in translationStudio is easy. For offine sharing, use the Backup feature from the tS menu. For online sharing, use the Upload feature from the tS menu. In translationCore, use the three-dot menu on the Projects page. For offline sharing, use either Export to USFM or Export to CSV. For online sharing, use Upload to Door43.

Sharing Content on Door43

If you upload your work from translationStudio or translationCore, then it will automatically appear online on Door43. All of your uploaded content will appear under your user account. For example, if your username is *test_user* then you may find all your work at https://git.door43.org/test_user/. You can share your work with others online by giving them the link to the projects you have uploaded.

Sharing Content Offline

You can also generate and download documents from your project pages on Door43. Once you have downloaded these, you can transfer them to others however you would like, including printing and distributing paper copies.

Translation Manual

Introduction

Introduction to the Translation Manual

What Does the Translation Manual Teach?

This manual teaches translation theory and how to make a good translation for Other Languages (OLs). Some of the principles of translation in this manual also apply to Gateway Language translation. For specific instruction on how to translate the set of translation tools for Gateway Languages, however, please see the Gateway Language Manual. It will be very helpful to study many of these modules before starting any type of translation project. Other modules, such as the ones about grammar, are only needed for "just-in-time" learning.

Some highlights in the Translation Manual:

- The Qualities of a Good Translation — defining a good translation
- The Translation Process — how to achieve a good translation
- Choosing a Translation Team — some items to consider before starting a translation project
- Choosing What to Translate — what to start translating

Terms to Know

Important Words to Know

Note: These terms are used in this manual. The translator will need to understand these terms in order to use the Translation Manual.

Term — A word or phrase that refers to one thing, idea, or action. For example, the term in English for pouring liquid into one's mouth is "drink." The term for a ceremony that marks an important transition in someone's life is "rite of passage." The difference between a term and a word is that a term can contain several words.

Text — A text is something that a speaker or writer is communicating to a hearer or reader by means of language. The speaker or writer has a certain meaning in mind, and so he or she chooses a form of the language to express that meaning.

Context — The words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs surrounding the word, phrase, or sentence in question. The context is the text that surrounds the part of the text that you are examining. The meaning of individual words and phrases can change when they are in different contexts.

Form — The structure of the language as it appears on the page or as it is spoken. Form refers to the way that the language is arranged, including the words, the word order, the grammar, idioms, and any other features of the structure of the text.

Grammar — The way that sentences are put together in a language. This has to do with the order of the various parts, such as whether the verb goes first or last or in the middle.

Noun — A kind of word that refers to a person, place, or thing. A proper noun is the name of a person or place. An abstract noun is a thing that we cannot see or touch, like "peace" or "unity." It refers to an idea or a state of being. Some languages do not use abstract nouns.

Verb — A kind of word that refers to an action, such as "walk" or "arrive."

Modifier — A kind of word that says something about another word. Adjectives and adverbs are modifiers.

Adjective — A kind of word that says something about a noun. For example, the word "tall" says something about the noun "man" in the sentence "I see a tall man."

Adverb — A kind of word that says something about a verb. For example, the word "loudly" says something about the verb "spoke" in the sentence "The man spoke loudly to the crowd of people."

Idiom — An expression that uses several words and that means something different as a whole than it would if the words were understood with the meanings that they have when they are used separately. Idioms cannot be translated literally, that is, based on the meanings of the separate words. For example, "he kicked the bucket" is an idiom in English that means "he died."

Meaning — The underlying idea or concept that the text is trying to communicate to the reader or hearer. A speaker or writer can communicate the same meaning by using different forms of the language, and different people can understand different meanings from hearing or reading the same language form. In this way, you can see that form and meaning are not the same thing.

Translation — The process of expressing in the form of a target language the same meaning that a writer or speaker expressed in the form of a source language.

Source Language — The language from which the translation is being made.

Source Text — The text from which the translation is being made.

Target Language — The language into which a translation is being made.

Target Text — The text being made by the translator as he or she translates the meaning from the source text.

Original Language — The language in which a Bible text was initially written. The original language of the New Testament is Greek. The original language of most of the Old Testament is Hebrew. However, the original language of some parts of Daniel and Ezra is Aramaic. The original language is always the most accurate language from which to translate a passage.

Language of Wider Communication — A language that is spoken over a broad area and by many people. For most people, this is not their first language, but is the language that they use to speak to people outside of their language community. Some people call this a trade language. Most Bibles will be translated using a language of wider communication as the source language.

Literal Translation — A translation that focuses on reproducing the form of the source text in the target text, even if the meaning changes as a result.

Meaning-based Translation (or Dynamic Translation) — A translation that focuses on reproducing the meaning of the source text in the target text, even if the form changes as a result.

Passage — A section of the Bible text that is being talked about. This can be as small as one verse, but it is usually several verses that together have one topic or tell one story.

Gateway Language — A Gateway Language (GL) is a language of wider communication that we have identified as being one of the languages into which we will translate all of our translation tools. The set of Gateway Languages is the smallest number of languages through which content can be delivered to every Other Language of the world through translation by bilingual speakers.

Other Language — The Other Languages (OLs) are all of the languages of the world that are not Gateway Languages. The unfoldingWord strategy is to translate our Bible translation tools into the Gateway Languages so that people can use those tools to translate the Bible into the Other Languages.

End-user Bible — This is a Bible that people have translated so that it speaks in a natural way in the target language. It is meant to be used in churches and homes. In contrast, the ULT and

UST are Bibles that are translation tools. They do not speak naturally in any language because the ULT is a literal translation and the UST avoids using idioms and figures of speech which a natural translation would use. Using these translation tools, a translator can produce an end-user Bible.

Participant — A participant is one of the actors in a sentence. This could be a person doing the action, or a person that is receiving the action, or a person mentioned as participating in some way. A participant could even be an object that is stated as participating in the action of the sentence. For example, in the following sentence, the participants are bolded: **John** and **Mary** sent **a letter** to **Andrew**. Sometimes participants are left unstated, but they are still part of the action. In these cases, the participant is implied. For example, in the following sentence, there are only two participants stated: **Andrew** received **a letter**. The senders, John and Mary, are implied. In some languages, the implied participants must be stated.

What is Translation

Definition

Translation is a process performed between different languages. The process requires a person (the translator) to understand the meaning that a writer or speaker intended to communicate to an original audience in the source language. Then the translator must express that same meaning to a different audience in the target language.

This is how translation is supposed to work most of the time, but sometimes certain translations have other goals, such as to reproduce the form of a source language, as we will see below.

There are basically two kinds of translations: literal and dynamic (or meaning-based).

- Literal translations focus on representing words in the source language with words in the target language that have similar basic meanings. They also use phrases that have similar structures to the phrases in the source language. This kind of translation allows the reader to see the structure of the source text, but it can make it difficult or impossible for the reader to understand the meaning of the source text.
- Dynamic, meaning-based translations focus on representing the meaning of the source language sentence in its context, and will use whatever words and phrase structures are most appropriate to convey that meaning in the target language. The goal of this kind of translation is to make it easy for the reader to understand the meaning of the source text. This is the kind of translation recommended in this Translation Manual for Other Language (OL) translations.

The ULT is designed to be a literal translation, so that the OL translator can see the forms of the original biblical languages. The UST is designed to be a dynamic translation, so that the OL translator can understand the meaning of these forms in the Bible. When translating these resources, please translate the ULT in a literal way and translate the UST in a dynamic way. For more information about these resources, see the Gateway Language Manual.

More about Translation

Translation is a process performed between different languages that requires a person (the translator) to understand the meaning that a writer or speaker intended to communicate to an original audience in the source language, and then to express that same meaning to a different audience in the target language.

Why do people translate texts?

Translators in general have different reasons for doing their work. Their reasons depend on the kind of document they are translating, and on the needs of the person who has asked them to translate it. In the case of Bible translation, people usually do their work because they want the Bible's ideas to affect the Target Language readers in the same way that the original readers and hearers of the biblical texts were affected. Because God's ideas in the Bible lead us to eternal life with him through Jesus Christ, translators also want the Target Language readers to know his ideas.

How do we as Bible translators usually expect to represent the biblical ideas?

There are various ways in which we can represent the ideas in a source text: we can put them into a list; we can summarize them using far less space on the written page; we can simplify them (as we often do in children's Bible story books and in other kinds of Bible helps); or we can even put them into diagrams or charts. However, Bible translators usually try to present the biblical ideas as completely as possible. This also means that they try to produce in their translation the same kinds of documents as the original documents (a prophecy for a prophecy, a letter for a letter, a book of history for a book of history, etc.) Also, they try to recreate the same **tensions** in the translation that exist in the source texts.

What do we mean by "tension" in texts?

Examples of tension occur when a reader wonders what will happen next to the participants in a story, or when a reader follows the argument, encouragement, and warnings of an epistle writer or of a conversation that is reported in the text. A reader can feel tension when reading a psalm because the psalmists sometimes express a wide variety of emotions (both positive and negative) when singing praise to God. When reading an Old Testament prophetic book, the reader can feel tension rise as the prophet condemns people for their sin or as he warns them to turn back to God. Tension may also be felt when reading about God's promises for the future, as one considers when God fulfilled those promises or when he will fulfill them. Good translators study the kinds of tension in the source documents, and they try to recreate those tensions in the target language.

Another way to talk about recreating the tensions in the source text is to say that the translation should have the same effect on the target audience that the source text had on the original audience. For example, if the source text is a rebuke to the original audience, the target audience should also feel the translation as a rebuke. A translator will need to think about how the target language expresses rebukes and other types of communication so that the translation will have the right kind of effect on the target audience.

How to Aim Your Bible Translation

A translator is like a hunter

A translator is like a hunter. He must aim his weapon at an animal if he wants to hit it. He must know the kind of animal he is hunting because a hunter does not always use the same kind of weapon for every animal. For example, a hunter will use a very different kind of spear when hunting fish than when hunting a very large animal such as a tiger or an elephant.

It is the same when we speak to other people. We do not speak to young children with exactly the same words that we would say to an adult. Neither do we speak to our friends in exactly the same way we would speak to the president or ruler of our country.

In all these cases, we decide to use different words and expressions. For example, if I am sharing the gospel with a young child, I should not say to him, “Repent, and the Lord will give you his grace.” Instead, I should say something like, “Be sorry for the wrong things you have done, and tell Jesus that you are sorry. Then he will welcome you, because he loves you.”

In every language, there are words that only adults use, words that children have not yet learned. Of course, children will eventually learn to use many of these words. But if you say too many of these words to children at the same time, they will find it very difficult to understand you.

In addition, languages are like trees that grow new leaves and lose old ones: new words are always forming in languages, and some words are always dropping out of use. These words die and drop like leaves; they are words that the old people know but that the younger people never learn to use. After the older generation is gone, these old words will no longer be used in the language. Even if they are written down (in a dictionary, for example) as they should be, the younger people will probably not use them again.

For these reasons, Bible translators must decide toward which people they will aim their translation. There are choices to consider.

Aim to the Future

Translators can aim their translation at young mothers and their children who speak the target language, because these people represent the future of their language. If translators work in this way, they will avoid using old words that the younger people are not learning. Instead, they will use ordinary, everyday words as much as possible. In addition, such translators will follow these guidelines:

1. They do not try to transliterate common Bible words from Gateway Languages into the target language. For example, this means that they will not try to transform the Bible word “synagogue” into something like “sinagog” and then try to teach its meaning to the people. They will not try to transform the Bible word “angel” into something like “enjel” and then try to teach its meaning to the target language readers.
2. They do not try to invent new words to signal ideas that they find in the Bible. For example, if the target language has no word that signals all the aspects included in “grace” or “sanctify,” translators do not make up new words for them. Instead, they will

find phrases suitable for expressing the main part of the word's meaning in the Bible passage that they are working on.
3. They do not take known words in the target language and give new meaning(s) to them. They know that if they try this, the people will simply ignore the new meaning. As a result, the people will misunderstand the meaning that they want the text to communicate.
4. They express the biblical ideas in ways that are clear and natural in the target language. (See Create Clear Translations and Create Natural Translations.)

When translators follow these guidelines, we call the result a common language version. If you are working to provide a language with its first Bible, then we recommend that you follow these guidelines. Common language versions in English include Today's English Version and The Common English Bible. But remember that your target language will probably want to express many ideas in ways that are very different from what you find in these English versions.

Aim for a Bible Study Translation

Translators can aim their translation at Christians who want to study the Bible in a way that is deeper than the way it is read by new Christians. Translators may decide to do this if the target language already has a good Bible that speaks well to unbelievers and new believers. If translators work in this way, they may decide to:

1. Try to imitate more of the grammatical structures they find in the biblical languages. For example, when the Bible says, "The love of God," translators might decide to leave the expression ambiguous. If they do this, they will not decide whether it means "the love that people have for God" or "the love that God has for people." When the Bible says, "the love that we have in Christ Jesus," translators might decide not to say that it means "because of Christ Jesus" or "united to Christ Jesus."
2. Try to say what Greek or Hebrew words "stand behind" various expressions in translation. For example, they can do this with footnotes.
3. Try to invent new expressions in the target language that signal more of the meaning carried by biblical words. If translators do this, they must become creative with the target language.

We do not recommend that you follow this second path unless the target language already has a Bible translation that communicates in a clear and natural way.

Defining a Good Translation

The Qualities of a Good Translation

Four Main Qualities

There are four main qualities of a good translation. It must be:

- clear — see Create Clear Translations
- natural — see Create Natural Translations
- accurate — see Create Accurate Translations
- church-approved — see Create Church-Approved Translations

We can think of each of these qualities as a leg of a four-legged stool. Each one is necessary. If one is missing, the stool will not stand. Likewise, each of these qualities must be present in a translation in order for it to be faithful to God's Word and useful to the church.

Clear

Use whatever language structures are necessary to achieve the highest level of understanding. This includes simplifying concepts, rearranging the form of a text, and using as many or as few terms as necessary to communicate the original meaning as accurately as possible. To learn how to make clear translations, see Create Clear Translations.

Natural

Use language forms that are effective and that reflect the way your language is used in corresponding contexts. To learn how to make natural translations, see Create Natural Translations.

Accurate

Translate accurately, without detracting from, changing, or adding to the meaning of the original text as it would have been understood by the original audience. Translate with the meaning of the text in mind and communicate accurately the implicit information, unknown concepts, and figures of speech. To learn how to make accurate translations, see Create Accurate Translations.

Church-Approved

If a translation is clear, natural and accurate, but the church does not approve of it or accept it, then it will not achieve the final goal of edifying the church. It is important that the church be involved in the translation, checking, and distribution of the translation. To learn how to make church-approved translations, see Create Church-Approved Translations.

Six Other Qualities

In addition to being clear, natural, accurate, and church-approved, great translations should also be:

- faithful — see Create Faithful Translations
- authoritative — see Create Authoritative Translations
- historical — see Create Historical Translations
- equal — see Create Equal Translations
- collaborative — see Create Collaborative Translations
- ongoing — see Create Ongoing Translations

The Qualities of a Good Translation

Create Clear Translations

Clear Translations

A clear translation will use whatever language structures are needed to help readers easily read and understand it. This includes putting the text into a different form or arrangement and using as many or as few terms as necessary to communicate the original meaning as clearly as possible.

These guidelines are for Other Language translations, not for Gateway Language translations. When translating the ULT into a Gateway Language, you should not make these changes. It is not necessary to make these changes when translating the UST into a Gateway Language, because they have already been done. Here are some ideas to create a clear translation from the source text:

Check Pronouns

You will need to check the pronouns in the source text and make it clear to whom or what each pronoun refers. Pronouns are words that stand in the place of a noun or a noun phrase. They refer to something that has already been mentioned.

Always check carefully that it is clear to whom or what each pronoun refers. If it is not clear, it may be necessary to put in the name of a person or thing instead of using a pronoun. See Pronouns.

Identify Participants

Next you need to understand who is doing the action. A clear translation will identify the participants. The participants in an event are the people or things that take part in that event. The subject that is doing the action and the object that has the action done to it are the main participants. When re-expressing an event idea as a verb, it is often necessary to state who or what are the participants in that event. Usually this will be clear from the context. See Participants.

Clearly Express Event Ideas

An event idea is an action most clearly expressed by a verb. Many event ideas may occur as nouns in the Gateway Language. A clear translation may need to express these event ideas as verbs. For example, “the wrath of God appeared” is clearer as “God was angry.” Instead of “Jesus is my Savior,” translate the event idea as “Jesus is the one who saves me.”

When preparing to translate, it is helpful to look for any event ideas in the passage, especially those which are expressed by some form other than a verb. See if you can re-express the meaning using a verb to express the event idea. If, however, your language also uses nouns to express event ideas and the event or action sounds more natural as a noun, then use the noun form. See Abstract Nouns.

You may also need to change each event idea into an active clause to be sure it is understood. See the next section.

Passive Verbs

A clear translation may need to change any passive verbs to the active form. In the active form, the subject of the sentence is the person who does the action. In the passive form, the subject of the sentence is the person or thing to which the action is done. For example, “John hit Bill” is an active sentence. “Bill was hit by John” is a passive sentence.

Many languages do not have a passive form; only the active form exists. In this case, it would be necessary to turn a sentence from the passive form into the active form. Some languages, however, prefer to use passive forms. Translators should use the forms that are most natural in the target language. See Active or Passive.

Look at Each ‘Possession’ Phrase

In the original languages of the Bible, there are many phrases that connect one noun to another noun, but only in a very general way. It is left to the reader to determine what the specific relationship is between the nouns. These are the phrases such as “the grace of God,” “the hope of eternal life,” “the message of truth,” etc. In English, this general relationship is indicated by connecting the nouns with the word “of,” which gives the idea that one noun possesses the other in some way. Your language may do it differently.

Many languages do not use these possessive constructions in the same way as the original languages of the Bible do. So to make a clear translation for your readers, you will need to look at each of these phrases to identify the meaning of the relationship between the two nouns. Study the meaning of each one and re-express the phrase in a way that makes the relationship between the parts clear.

So, for “the grace of God,” you could say “the grace that comes from God” or “the grace that God gives.” For “the hope of eternal life,” you could translate it to say “the expectation that God will give us eternal life.” For “the message of truth,” you could say “the true message.” See Possession.

After you have checked these things and made your translation as clear as possible, you will need to read it to other people who speak your language to see if it is clear to them. If there are parts that they do not understand, it may be because that part is not clear. Together, you can think of a clearer way to say that part. Keep checking the translation with many people until all of it is clear.

Remember: Translation is re-telling, as exactly as possible, the meaning of the original message in a way that is clear and natural in the target language.

Writing Clearly

Asking yourself these questions can also help you to create a translation that communicates clearly:

- Have I used punctuation to help a reader know when to pause or breathe? See Punctuation.
- Have I indicated which parts are direct speech? See Quote marks.
- Have I separated paragraphs?
- Have I considered adding section headings? See Headings.

Create Natural Translations

Natural Translations

To translate the Bible so that it is natural means that the translation sounds like it was written by a member of the target group—not by a foreigner. Here are some ideas for making a natural translation.

Use Short Sentences

In order for a translation to sound natural, sometimes it is necessary to create shorter, simpler sentences from longer, complex ones. The Greek language often has long, grammatically complicated sentences. Some Bible translations follow the Greek structure closely and keep these long sentences in their translation, even when this does not sound natural or is confusing in the target language.

When preparing to translate, it is often helpful to rewrite the passage, breaking long sentences up into shorter sentences. This can help you to see the meaning more clearly and translate it better. In many languages, it is good style to have shorter sentences, or, when sentences are longer, to avoid having complicated sentences. So in re-expressing the meaning in the Target Language, it is sometimes necessary to break up some of the original long sentences into several shorter sentences. Because many languages use sentences with only one or two clause groupings, the shorter sentences will give a sense of naturalness. The shorter sentences will also give readers a better understanding, because the meaning will be clearer. Be sure to include clear connection words between the new, shorter clauses and sentences.

To make shorter sentences from longer, more complex sentences, identify the words in the sentence that relate directly to each other, that is, that belong together to form a clause. Generally, each verb or action word has words on either side of it that point backward or forward to the action of the verb. A grouping of words like this that can stand on its own may be written as an independent clause or a simple sentence. Keep each of those groups of words together and, in that way, divide the sentence into its separate ideas or parts. Read the new sentences to make sure they still make sense. If there is a problem, you may need to divide the long sentence in a different way. When you understand the message of the new sentences, translate them into the target language, making sentences that are a natural length and connect them in a natural way. Then test your translation by reading it to a member of the language community to see if it sounds natural.

Write the Way Your People Talk

Read the passage or chapter of the Bible and ask yourself, “What kind of message is this?” Then translate that passage or chapter in the way that your language would communicate that kind of message.

For example, if the passage is a poem, such as in the Psalms, then translate it in the form that your people will recognize as a poem. Or if the passage is an exhortation about the right way to live, such as in the New Testament letters, then translate it in a form that people in your language exhort each other. Or if the passage is a story about what someone did, translate it in the form of a story (that really happened). The Bible has a lot of these kinds of stories, and as

part of these stories people say things to each other that also have their own form. For example, people make threats, give warnings, and praise or rebuke each other. To make your translation natural, you should translate each of these things in the way that people in your language make threats, give warnings, praise or rebuke each other, etc.

In order to know how to write these different things, you may have to listen to what people say around you, and practice writing down different things that people say and do, so that you become familiar with the form and words that people use for these different purposes.

A good translation will use the same vocabulary and expressions as the people of the target group normally use. It should be easy for them to read it or listen to it. There should not be any awkward or strange phrases. The translation should read as easily as a letter from a close friend.

Not for Gateway Language Translations

This section is not for Gateway Language translations of the ULT and UST. These are Bibles that are designed to have characteristics that keep them from being natural in a target language. They are Bible translation tools, not end-user Bibles. For more information about this, see “Translating the ULT” and “Translating the UST” in the Gateway Languages Manual.

Create Accurate Translations

Accurate Translations

To create an **accurate** translation of the Bible means that the translation communicates the same message as the source. Here are some steps to follow:

- Discover the meaning of a passage.
- Identify the main idea.
- Translate with the author's message in mind.

Discover the Meaning

First, read each passage a few times to discover the meaning. Use the two versions of the Bible available in translationStudio: the unfoldingWord® Simplified Text and the unfoldingWord® Literal Text. Also read the definitions of the unfoldingWord® Translation Words and the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes.

First read the unfoldingWord® Literal Text:

> And whatever city you enter into, and they receive you, eat what is served to you, and heal the sick in it, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come close to you.' (Luke 10:8-9 ULT)

Look at the unfoldingWord® Simplified Text in the translation helps:

> If you enter any town and the people there welcome you, eat whatever food they provide for you. Heal the people in that town who are sick. Tell the people there, 'You are seeing close up what it will be like when God rules everywhere as king.' (Luke 10:8-9 UST)

Do you notice the differences? There are some differences in the words each Bible version uses.

Did you discover the meaning is the same? In both versions Jesus is giving specific instructions, and they are the same instructions. Both versions are accurate translations.

Identify the Main Idea

Then, after discovering the meaning of the passage, you should identify the main idea.

Ask yourself, "Why is the author writing this, and how does he feel about these things?"

Look at the Luke 10 passage again. Why do you think the author is writing this? What do you think the author feels about what he wrote? What do you think? After you have read the passage several times, answer these questions:

- What is happening? Jesus is giving instructions.

- When and where did these things take place? To answer this question, you would need to remember what happened earlier. Earlier, Luke writes that Jesus and the disciples are on the way to Jerusalem, and chapter 10 starts with Jesus sending out 72 people to preach.
- Who is involved in this passage? Jesus and the 72 people he sent out.
- Why were the 72 sent out? To heal the sick and to tell everyone that the kingdom of God is near.

The Message of the Writer

Finally, part of translating the source text accurately is to think of the original audience and the message of the writer.

Do you think the author had specific things for the reader to know? Remember what we thought the author's main ideas were? The main ideas were:

- the instructions that Jesus gave
- that the 72 people whom Jesus sent out would have power to heal sick people
- that they would tell others that the kingdom of God was near

This is the message to the original audience. Allow the same message to come clearly into your mind in the target language.

Look at the passage and think how you would retell it in your own language. Keep this initial translation by writing it down. Use an alphabet that suits your language.

Remember: Translation is re-telling, as exactly as possible, the meaning of the original message in a way that is clear and natural in the target language.

Create Church-Approved Translations

Church-Approved Translations

A good translation must be **clear** (see Create Clear Translations), **natural** (see Create Natural Translations), and **accurate** (see Create Accurate Translations). All three of these qualities directly affect the words and phrases that are used in the translation. If a translation lacks one of these three qualities, simply changing or reordering the words that were used can often fix the problem. The fourth quality, **church-approved**, has less to do with the words used and more to do with the process that is used.

The Goal of Translation

The goal of the translation of biblical content is not only to produce a high-quality translation, but to produce a high-quality translation that is used and loved by the church. High-quality translations must be clear, natural, and accurate. But for a translation to be used and loved by the church, it must be church-approved.

How to Create a Church-Approved Translation

Creating a church-approved translation is all about the process of translation, checking, and distribution. The more church networks that are involved in these processes, the more likely they will approve of the translation.

Before starting a translation project, as many church networks as possible should be contacted and encouraged to get involved in the translation process and even to send some of their people to be a part of the translation team. Church networks should be consulted and asked for their input into the translation project, its goals, and its process.

It is not necessary that the church actively lead the translation and coordinate all the efforts, but it is necessary that church networks approve whoever is leading the translation, preferably before they even start.

Church Approval and the Checking Levels

The need for church-approval of a translation is clearly reflected in the Checking Levels. In fact, the Checking Levels are largely a measurement of how broadly the church approves of the translation.

- Level 1 states that the church-approved translation team has approved the translation.
- Level 2 states that the pastors and leaders of local churches approve the translation.
- Level 3 states that leaders of multiple church networks approve of the translation.

At each level, the people leading the translation should encourage participation and input from the church networks. By using this process, we hope to encourage church ownership of the translation among as many church networks as possible. With this approval, there should be nothing hindering the translation from being used to strengthen and encourage the church.

Create Faithful Translations

Faithful Translations

To make a translation that is **faithful** to the Bible, you must avoid any political, denominational, ideological, social, cultural, or theological bias in your translation. Use key terms that are faithful to the vocabulary of the original biblical languages. Use equivalent common language terms for the biblical words that describe the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. These may be clarified, as needed, in footnotes or other supplemental resources.

Your goal as a Bible translator is to communicate the same message that the original writer of the Bible intended to communicate. This means that you should not try to communicate your own message, or the message that you think the Bible should say, or that your church thinks the Bible should say. For any Bible passage, you must communicate what it says, all of what it says, and only what it says. You must resist the temptation to put any of your own interpretations or messages into the Bible. Do not add any meaning to the message that is not already there in the Bible passage. (The message of a Bible passage includes the implied information. See Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information.)

You must also use key terms that are faithful to the vocabulary of the original biblical languages. Read the definitions of the unfoldingWord® Translation Words to make sure that you understand the meanings of these words. Translate so that these key terms have these same meanings, and do not translate them in different ways just to please your pastor, your village leaders, or yourself.

Always translating faithfully can be difficult for several reasons:

1. You might be used to the way that your church interprets some Bible passages, and you might not know that there are other interpretations.
    - Example: When you are translating the word “baptize,” you might want to translate it with a word that means “sprinkle” because that is what your church does. But after reading unfoldingWord® Translation Words, you learn that the word has a meaning in the range of “plunge,” “dip,” “wash,” or “purify.”
2. You might want to translate a Bible passage in a way that accords with your culture rather than according with what it meant when it was written.
    - Example: It is common in North American culture for women to speak and preach in churches. A translator from that culture might be tempted to translate the words of 1 Corinthians 14:34a in a way that is not as strict as the Apostle Paul wrote them: “Let the women be silent in the churches.” But a faithful translator will translate the meaning of the Bible passage just the way it is.
3. You might not like something that the Bible says, and you might be tempted to change it.
    - Example: You might not like what Jesus says in John 6:53, “Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in yourselves.” This may seem disgusting to you, but you must translate

it faithfully so that your people can read it and contemplate what Jesus meant by it.

4. You might be afraid of what others in your village will think or do if they read a faithful translation of what the Bible says.

    ◦ Example: You might be tempted to translate God's words in Matthew 3:17, "This is my beloved Son. I am very pleased with him," with a word that does not mean "son." But you must remember that you do not have the right to change the meaning of what the Bible says.

5. You might know something extra about the Bible passage that you are translating, and you might want to add that to your translation.

    ◦ Example: When you are translating Mark 10:11, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her," you might know that in Matthew 19:9 there is also the phrase, "… except for sexual immorality …." Even so, do not add this phrase into Mark 10:11 because that would not be translating faithfully. Also, do not add any of your own ideas or any teachings from your church. Only translate the meaning that is there in the Bible passage.

In order to avoid these biases, especially the ones that you might not be aware of, you must study the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes (see https://ufw.io/tn/), unfoldingWord® Translation Words (see https://ufw.io/tw/) and the *unfoldingWord® Simplified Text* (see https://ufw.io/ust/), as well as any other translation helps that you have. That way you will know what the meaning of the Bible passage is, and you will be less likely to translate in a biased, unfaithful way.

(You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/guidelines_faithful.)

Create Faithful Translations

Son of God and God the Father

God is one being, and he exists as the Holy Trinity, that is, as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

The Bible teaches that there is only one God.

In the Old Testament:

> Yahweh, he is God; there is **no other God**! (1 Kings 8:60b ULT)

In the New Testament:

> This is eternal life: that they know you, **the only true God**. (John 17:3a ULT)

(See also: Deuteronomy 4:35, Ephesians 4:5-6, 1 Timothy 2:5, James 2:19)

The Old Testament begins to reveal God's three persons.

> … **God** created the heavens …**The Spirit of God** was moving …"Let **us** make man in **our** image."(from Genesis 1:1b,2b, 26b ULT)

> God has spoken to us through a **Son** … through him, he also made the universe. He is the brightness of God's glory and the exact representation of his being. But to the Son he says, "Your throne, God, is forever and ever. In the beginning, Lord, you laid earth's foundation. The heavens are the work of your hands." (Hebrews 1:2-3a, 8a,10 (ULT) quoting Psalm 102:25)

The Church has always found it necessary to state what the New Testament says about God by affirming that he exists in three distinct persons: The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

> Jesus came to them and spoke to them, saying, "Baptize them into the name of **the Father**, of **the Son**, and of **the Holy Spirit**." (Matthew 28:18a,19b ULT)

> God sent forth his **Son**, born of a woman … God sent the **Spirit** of his **Son** into our hearts, who calls, "Abba, **Father**." (Galatians 4:4b, 6b ULT)

> See also: John 14:16-17, 1 Peter 1:2

Each person of God is fully God and is called "God" in the Bible.

> Yet for us there is only one **God the Father …** (1 Corinthians 8:6a ULT)

> Thomas answered and said to him, “My Lord and **my God**.” **Jesus** said to him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen, and believed.” (John 20:28-29 ULT)

> But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to **the Holy Spirit** and to keep back from the price of the land? … You have not lied to men, but to **God**.” (Acts 5:3, 4b ULT)

Each person is also distinct from the other two persons. All three persons can appear separately at the same time. In the verses below, God the Son is baptized while God the Spirit comes down and God the Father speaks from heaven.

> After he was baptized, **Jesus** came up … from the water … He saw the **Spirit** of God coming down … and a **voice** { of the Father} came out of the heavens saying, “This is my beloved **Son** …” (Matthew 3:16-17 ULT)

> As Christians, we must always remember that, since we are humans and do not have the mind of God, we cannot fully understand how all three persons of the Holy Trinity are fully God, and yet God is only one being. The Holy Trinity is a divine mystery that we confess by faith, based on the witness of God’s inspired Word.

Translating Son and Father

Door43 supports Bible translations that represent these concepts when they refer to God.

Biblical Witness

"Father" and "Son" are names that God calls himself in the Bible.

The Bible shows that God called Jesus his Son:

> After he was baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water, and … a voice came out of the heavens saying, "**This is my beloved Son**. I am very pleased with him." (Matthew 3:16-17 ULT)

The Bible shows that Jesus called God his Father:

> Jesus … said, "I praise you **Father**, Lord of heaven and earth … no one knows the **Son** except the **Father**, and no one knows the **Father** except the **Son**." (Matthew 11:25a, 27b ULT) (See also: John 6:26-57)

Christians have found that "Father" and "Son" are the ideas that most essentially describe the eternal relationship of the First and Second Persons of the Trinity to each other. The Bible indeed refers to them in various ways, but no other terms reflect the eternal love and intimacy between these Persons, nor the interdependent eternal relationship between them.

Jesus referred to God in the following terms:

> Baptize them into **the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit**. (Matthew 28:19b ULT)

The intimate, loving relationship between the Father and the Son is eternal, just as they are eternal. The Father **loves** the Son. (See John 3:35-36; 5:19-20 ULT)

> I **love** the Father, and just as the Father commanded me, thus I do. (John 14:31 ULT)

> **No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son**. (Luke 10:22b ULT)

The terms "Father" and "Son" also communicate that the Father and the Son are of the same essence; they are both eternal God.

> Jesus said, "Father, … glorify your Son so that the Son will glorify you … I glorified you on the earth … Now Father, glorify me … with the glory that **I had with you before the world was made**." (John 17:1, 4a, 5 ULT)

> But in these last days, {God the Father} has spoken to us through a Son, whom he appointed to be the heir of all things. Through him, he also made the universe. He is the brightness of God's glory and **the very exact representation of his being**. He holds everything together by the word of his power. (Hebrews 1:2-3a ULT)

> Jesus said to him, “I have been with you for so long and you still do not know me, Philip? **Whoever has seen me has seen the Father**. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?” (John 14:9 ULT)

Human Relationships

Human fathers and sons are not perfect, but the Bible still uses those terms for the Father and Son, who are perfect.

Just as today, human father-son relationships during Bible times were never as loving or perfect as the relationship between Jesus and his Father. But this does not mean that the translator should avoid the concepts of father and son. The Scriptures use these terms to refer to God, the perfect Father and Son, as well as to sinful human fathers and sons. In referring to God as Father and Son, choose words in your language that are widely used to refer to a human “father” and “son.” In this way you will communicate that God the Father and God the Son are of the same divine essence (they are both God), just as a human father and son are of the same human essence (they are both human and share the same human characteristics).

Translation Strategies

(1) Think through all the possibilities within your language to translate the words “son” and “father.” Determine which words in your language best represent the divine “Son” and “Father.”
(2) If your language has more than one word for “son,” use the word that has the closest meaning to “only son” (or “first son” if necessary).
(3) If your language has more than one word for “father,” use the word that has the closest meaning to “birth father,” rather than “adoptive father.”

(See *God the Father* and *Son of God* pages in unfoldingWord® Translation Words for help translating “Father” and “Son.”)

Create Authoritative Translations

An **authoritative** Bible translation is one that is based on the biblical texts in the original languages as the highest authority for the meaning of biblical content. Whenever two or more translations of the Bible disagree about the meaning of a Bible passage, it is the original languages that have the final authority for deciding the meaning. Sometimes people are very loyal to certain Bible translations that they are accustomed to reading, and they might argue with other people who are loyal to a different Bible translation. But neither of those Bible translations are the highest authority, because they are only translations of the original. All translations are secondary in authority to the original languages. That is why we must always refer to the original biblical languages when deciding how to translate the Bible.

Since not all translation teams have a member who can read the original languages of the Bible, it is not always possible to refer to the biblical languages when translating the Bible. Instead, the translation team has to rely on translations that they are able to read that have, in turn, been based on the biblical languages. Many of the translations in the Gateway Languages were translated from the biblical languages, including the ULT, but some are translations of translations. It is easy for errors to be introduced when a translation is two or three steps removed from the original.

To help with this problem, the translation team can do three things:

1. The translation team must use unfoldingWord® Translation Notes, unfoldingWord® Translation Words, and any other translation helps they have to help them translate in the best way. These translation helps were written by Bible scholars who know the original biblical languages.
2. They should compare their translation with as many other reliable translations as they can, to make sure that it is communicating the same message as the others.
3. Someone who has studied the biblical languages should review the translation to make sure that it is accurate. This person could be a church leader, pastor, seminary professor, or Bible translation professional.

Sometimes Bible translations differ because some passages in the Bible are unclear or ambiguous in the original biblical languages. In that case, the translation team must choose between them based on what Bible scholars say in unfoldingWord® Translation Notes, unfoldingWord® Translation Words, the UST, and other translation helps.

Create Historical Translations

(See the video "Translating the Scriptures — Culture" at https://ufw.io/trans_culture.)

A historical translation communicates historical events and facts accurately. It provides additional information as needed to accurately communicate the intended message to people who do not share the context and culture of the original recipients of the original content.

To communicate well with historical accuracy, you need to remember two things:

1. The Bible is a historical document. The events of the Bible happened at different times in history in the way that the Bible describes. Therefore, when you translate the Bible, you need to communicate that these events happened, and do not change any of the details of what happened.
2. The books of the Bible were written down at specific times in history for people of a certain culture. This means that some things in the Bible that were very clear to the original hearers and readers will not be clear to those who read the Bible in different times and in different cultures. This is because both the writer and the readers were familiar with many of the practices that the writer wrote about, so the writer did not need to explain them. We, from other times and cultures, are not familiar with these things, so we need someone to explain them to us. This kind of information is called "implicit (or implied) information." (See Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information.)

As translators, we need to translate the historical details accurately, but also provide some explanation when we think that our readers will need it so that they can understand what the translation is about.

- For example, Genesis 12:16 refers to camels. For readers in parts of the world where this animal is unknown, it might be good to provide a description. The best way to do this is in a footnote or in a glossary entry such as the one in unfoldingWord® Translation Words.

Some explanation can be included in the text, as long as it is brief and does not distract the reader from the main point of the text.

- For example, the New Testament writers often referred to events in the Old Testament, but without explaining what they were referring to. They knew that their readers were very familiar with the Old Testament and did not need any explanation. But it is possible that readers from other times and places will need some explanation.

Let us compare 1 Corinthians 10:1 from the ULT and UST.

> "For I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea." (ULT)
>
> "I want you to remember, brothers and sisters, that our Jewish ancestors were following God, who led them out of Egypt by means of a cloud during the day, and that they passed through the Sea of Reeds on dry land." (UST)

Notice that the UST makes several points explicit: the ‘fathers were all under the cloud’ tells of the time that God led the Jewish ancestors as a cloud. The statement that ‘our fathers passed through the sea’ is also about the ‘passing through the Sea of Reeds on dry land.’ The UST translator decided to explicitly describe the historical events. This is a way to translate historical events that is more meaningful for those who have little knowledge of Old Testament history.

Include or refer to the needed implicit information intended by the original writer that will be necessary for your community to understand what is written.

Maintain the historical accuracy of the message. Avoid referring to items and events that were not present in the Bible times. Do not make your translation sound like it is a modern-day event.

Remember:

- Keep true to the historical text. The original message, historical events, and cultural background information should all be the same as it was written in the source text. For example, the translation must not have the message rewritten so that events happened at a different place or time.
- Communicate clearly by expressing the message in such a way that people in the target language culture will be able to understand the meaning that the original author intended to communicate.
- Only provide additional information as needed to accurately communicate the intended message to people who do not share the same context and culture as the recipients of the original content.

Create Equal Translations

An equal translation communicates any expressive meaning from the source language in an equal way in the target language. Especially notice the forms in the source text that communicate certain kinds of emotions and choose forms in the target language that communicate the same emotions. Examples of some of these forms follow.

Idioms

Description — An idiom is a group of words that has a meaning that is different from what one would understand from the meanings of the individual words. Determine the meaning of idioms, proverbs, and figures of speech and translate them with expressions in your language that have the same meaning. Usually idioms cannot be translated literally into another language. The meaning of the idiom has to be expressed in a way that is natural in the Other Language.

For example, these three translations all have the same meaning. See Acts 18:6:

- "Your blood be upon your heads! I am innocent." (RSV)
- "If you are lost, you yourselves must take the blame for it! I am not responsible." (GNB)
- "If God punishes you, it is because of you, not me!" (TFT)

These are all accusations of guilt. Some are using idioms with the word "blood" or "lost," while the third is more direct using the word "punishes." In order for your translation to be equal, it must also express an accusation in an emotional way, and may use an idiom, as long as both the form of the accusation and the idiom are appropriate for the target language and culture.

Figures of Speech

Description — A figure of speech is a special way of saying something in order to catch attention or express an emotion about what is said. The meaning of a figure of speech as a whole is different from the normal meaning of the individual words.

Here are some examples:

- **I was shattered**! The speaker was not literally broken, but he felt very bad.
- **He closed his ears to what I was saying.** Meaning, "he chose to not listen to what I was saying."
- **The wind moaned in the trees**. This means that the wind blowing through the trees sounded like a person moaning.
- **The whole world came to the meeting**. Everyone in the world did not attend the meeting. Most likely there were many people at the meeting.

Each language uses different figures of speech. Make sure you can:

- recognize that a figure of speech is being used
- recognize the purpose of the figure of speech
- recognize the real meaning of the figure of speech

It is the real meaning of the whole figure of speech that should be translated into your language, not the meaning of the individual words. Once you understand the real meaning, you can choose an expression in the target language that communicates that same meaning and emotion.

(For more information, see the Figures of Speech information.)

Rhetorical Questions

Description — Rhetorical questions are another way that the speaker captures the attention of the reader. Rhetorical questions are a type of question that does not expect an answer or ask for information. They usually express some kind of emotion and can be intended as a rebuke, a warning, and expression of surprise, or something else.

For example, see Matthew 3:7: “You offspring of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath that is coming?” (ULT)

Here, no answer is expected. The speaker is not asking for information; he is rebuking his hearers. It does no good to warn these people of God’s wrath because they refuse the only way to escape it: to repent of their sins.

You may need to restate this rhetorical question as a statement when you translate if your language does not use rhetorical questions in this way. But remember, be sure to keep the same purpose and meaning, and communicate the same emotion as the original rhetorical question had. If your language communicates the purpose, meaning, and emotion of a rhetorical question with a different kind of figure of speech, then use that figure of speech.

(see Rhetorical Questions)

Exclamations

Description — Languages use exclamations to communicate emotion. Sometimes the exclamation word or words do not have meaning other than the expression of emotion, such as the words “alas” or “wow” in English.

For example, see 1 Samuel 4:8a: **Woe to us**! Who will protect us from the strength of these mighty gods? (ULT)

The Hebrew word translated as “woe” here expresses strong emotion about something bad that happened. If possible, try to find an exclamation in your language that communicates this same emotion.

Poetry

Description — One of the purposes of poetry is to express emotion about something. Poetry expresses emotion through a variety of ways that can differ from one language to another. These ways can include everything discussed so far, such as figures of speech and exclamations. Poetry might also use grammar differently than ordinary speech, or use wordplays or words with similar sounds or certain rhythms to convey emotion.

For example, see Psalm 36:5: **5** Your covenant faithfulness, Yahweh, reaches to the heavens; your loyalty reaches to the clouds. (ULT)

This verse of poetry repeats a similar idea in two lines, which is good Hebrew poetic style. Also, there are no verbs in the Hebrew original, which is a different use of grammar than ordinary speech would use. Poetry in your language may have different things that mark it as poetry. When you are translating poetry, try to use the forms of your language that communicate to the reader that this is poetry, and that communicate the same emotions that the source poem is trying to communicate.

Remember: Communicate the feelings and attitudes of the original text. Translate them into forms that communicate in a similar way in your language. Consider how that meaning can best be accurately, clearly, equally, and naturally expressed in the target language.

Create Collaborative Translations

Bible translations that are collaborative are those that have been translated by a group of speakers of the same language. To ensure that your translation is of the highest quality, work together with other believers who speak your language to translate, check, and distribute the translated content.

Here are some ways to include others that can help improve the quality of the translation.

- Read the translation out loud to someone. Have him notice if the sentences connect well. Ask that person to point out words or phrases that do not sound right or are unclear. Make changes so that it sounds as if someone from your community is speaking.
- Ask someone to read your translation to check your spelling. You may have spelled a word differently when a different spelling was not necessary. Some words change in different situations, but some words can stay the same in every situation. Take note of these changes, so others can know what decisions you have made on the spelling of your language.
- Ask yourself if the way you wrote can be recognized easily by speakers of different dialects in your language community. If there is something that is not clear in your translation, ask others how they would say it.

Make changes to the translation before you distribute it to a wider audience.

Remember: if possible, work together with other believers who speak your language to translate, check, and distribute the translated content, ensuring that it is of the highest quality and that as many people as possible can read and understand it.

(You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/guidelines_collab.)

Create Ongoing Translations

Bible translations should be ongoing. Share the translation with others to see if they understand the meaning of the message. Improve your translation with their input. Revising a translation to increase understanding and accuracy is always a good idea. Whenever someone has a good idea for making the translation better, you should edit the translation to incorporate that change. When you use translationStudio or other electronic text editors, you can keep this process of revision and improvement ongoing.

- Find reviewers who can read the translation and point to text that needs revision.
- Ask others to read the translation or listen to a recording of the translation. This will help you know if the translation has the same impact in your community that it had among the original audience (for example: giving comfort, encouragement, or guidance).
- Continue to make corrections to the translation that will make it more accurate, more clear, and more natural. The goal is always to make it communicate the same meaning as the source text.

Remember: encourage people to review the translation and give you ideas for making it better. Talk to other people about these ideas. When several people agree that these are good ideas, then make these changes in the translation. In this way, the translation will get better and better.

(You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/guidelines_ongoing.)

Meaning-Based Translation

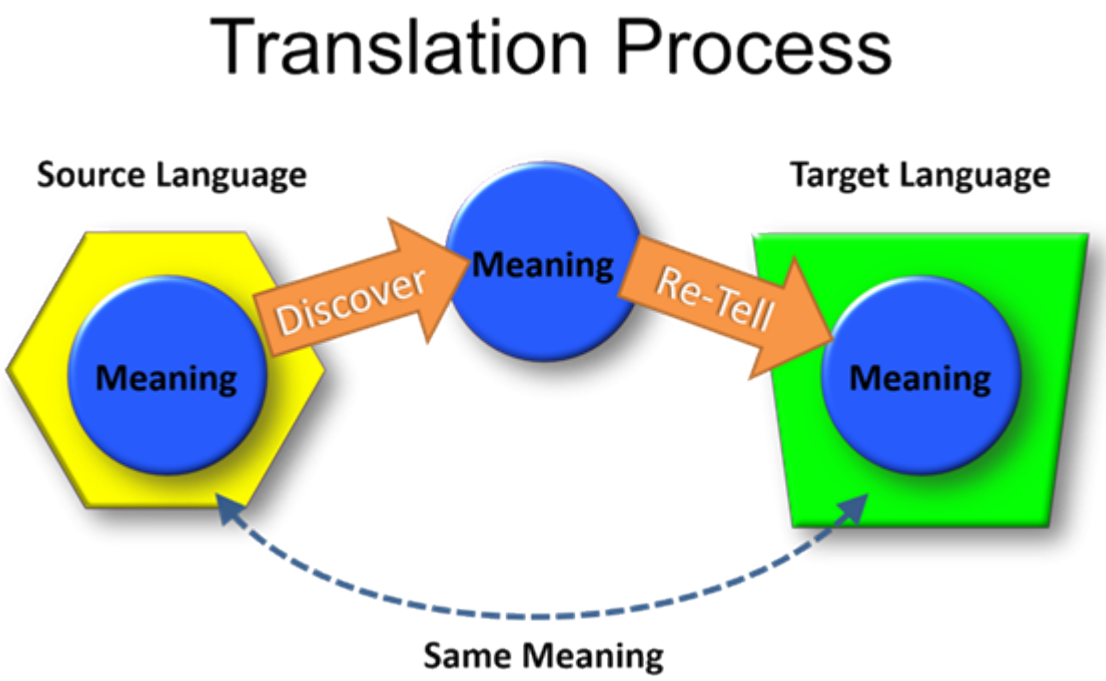
The Translation Process

How to Translate

There are two things to do in translation:

1. Discover the meaning in the source language text (See Discover the Meaning of the Text.)
2. Re-tell the meaning in the target language translation (See Re-telling the Meaning.)

Instructions for translation sometimes divide these two things into smaller steps. The graphic below shows how these two fit into the translation process.



The Translation Process

Discover the Meaning of the Text

How to Discover the Meaning

There are many different things that we can do to help us to discover the meaning of the text, that is, to make sure that we understand what the text is trying to say. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Read the whole passage through before you translate it. Understand the main point of the whole passage before you begin to translate it. If it is a narrative passage, such as a story of one of Jesus' miracles, picture the original situation. Imagine you were there. Imagine how people felt.

2. When translating the Bible, always use at least two versions of the Bible together as your source text. Comparing two versions will help you to think about the meaning, so that you do not just follow the words of one version literally. The two versions should be:

    - One version that follows the form of the original language fairly closely, such as the unfoldingWord® Literal Text (ULT).
    - One meaning-based version, such as the unfoldingWord® Simplified Text (UST).

3. Use the unfoldingWord® Translation Words resource to learn about terms that you are not familiar with. Words sometimes have more than one meaning. Make sure that you have understood the right meaning of the word in the passage.

4. Also use the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes that are with the ULT. These are available in the translationStudio program and the Door43 website. These will explain things about the passage that may not be clear. If possible, also use other reference books, such as other versions of the Bible, a Bible dictionary, or Bible commentaries.

Re-telling the Meaning

How to Re-tell the Meaning

A list of ordered steps is shown below. The purpose of these steps is to help the translator produce a translation that is natural, understandable, and accurate. One of the most common mistakes that translators make is failing to use the natural forms in the target language for developing a coherent text. By following these steps, the translator will produce a more natural and more understandable translation.

1. Read the entire chosen passage in the source language. The passage could be a paragraph or one thing that happened in a story, or even a whole section (in some Bibles, everything from one heading to the next heading). In a difficult text, a passage might be only one or two verses.
2. Without looking at the text in the source language, verbally tell it in the target language. Although you might forget some parts, continue telling what you remember right to the end.
3. Again, look at the source language text. Now tell everything again in the target language.
4. Looking again at the source language text, focus only on the parts you forgot, and then re-tell it all in the target language by memory.
5. After remembering the entire passage, write it exactly as it you re-told it by memory.
6. Once written, look at the source language to see if you have overlooked some detail. Insert any such detail in the most natural place.
7. If you do not understand something in the source text, write into the translation '[not understood]' and continue writing the rest of the passage.
8. Now, read what you wrote. Assess whether you understand it or not. Fix the parts that should be improved.
9. Go on to the next section. Read it in the source language. Strictly follow steps 2 through 8.

Credits: Used by permission, © 2013, Juan Tuggy P., Victor Raúl Paredes E., Sharing Our Native Culture, p. 59.

Form and Meaning

Defining Form and Meaning

Two of the major terms used in translating text are “form” and “meaning.” These terms are used in special ways in Bible translation. They have the following definitions:

- **Form** — The structure of the language as it appears on the page or as it is spoken. Form refers to the way that the language is arranged, including the words, the word order, the grammar, idioms, and any other features of the structure of the text.
- **Meaning** — The underlying idea or concept that the text is trying to communicate to the reader or hearer. A speaker or writer can communicate the same meaning by using different forms of the language, and different people can understand different meanings from hearing or reading the same language form. In this way you can see that form and meaning are not the same thing.

An Example

Let’s consider an example from normal life. Suppose a friend sent you the note below:

- “I am having a very difficult week. My mother was sick and I spent all of my money to take her to the doctor and to buy medicine for her. I do not have anything left. My employer will not pay me until next weekend. I do not know how I am going to make it through the week. I do not even have money to buy food.”

The Meaning

Why do you think the friend sent this note? Just to tell you about his week? Probably not. His true intention was more likely to tell you: “I would like you to give me money.”

That is the primary **meaning** of the note that the sender wanted to communicate to you. It is not a report but a request. However, it would be rude in some cultures to ask for money so directly, even from a friend. Therefore, he adjusted the **form** of the note to fill out the request and help you to understand his need. He wrote in a culturally acceptable way that presented his need for money but did not obligate you to respond. He explained why he had no money (his sick mother), that his need was only temporary (until he is paid), and that his situation was desperate (no food). In other cultures, a more direct form of request might be more appropriate to communicate this meaning.

The Form

In this example, the form is the entire text of the note. The meaning is “I would like you to give me money!”

We use these terms in a similar way. Form will refer to the entire text of the verses that we are translating. Meaning will refer to the idea or ideas that the text is trying to communicate. The best form for communicating a certain meaning will be different in different languages and cultures.

Form and Meaning

The Importance of Form

Why Form is Important

The meaning of a text is the most crucial element. This is the idea or message that the text conveys. However, the form of the text can also be important. In some cases, such as in poetry, it becomes more than just a container for the meaning, and will also affect the way that the meaning is understood and received. Sometimes the form of a text is part of its meaning. The naturalness of a text also depends largely on its form. So the form itself can also contribute to the meaning.

For example, look at the differences in form between two translations of Psalm 9:1-2.

From the New Life Version:

> I will give thanks to the Lord with all my heart. I will tell of all the great things
> You have done. I will be glad and full of joy because of You. I will sing praise to
> Your name, O Most High.

From the New Revised Standard Version

> I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart;
>
> I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.
>
> I will be glad and exult in you;
>
> I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

The first version puts the text into a form that is no different than the form it uses for telling stories. Each line of the Psalm is stated as a separate sentence.

In the second version, the text is arranged as lines of poetry are arranged in the target culture, with each line of the poem on a separate line of the page. Also, the first two lines are joined with a semi-colon, with the second line indented. These things indicate that the two lines are related. They say very similar things. The third and fourth lines also have the same arrangement.

A reader of the second version will know that this Psalm is a poem or a song because of its form, while the reader of the first version may not get that understanding, because it was not communicated through the form of the text. The reader of the first version might be confused, because the Psalm seems to be a song, but it is not presented as one. The words are expressing a joyful emotion. As a translator, you should use the form for expressing a joyful song in your language.

Look also at the form of 2 Samuel 18:33b in the New International Version.

> "O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you —O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Someone might say that the meaning contained in this part of the verse is, "I wish that I had died instead of my son Absalom." This does summarize the meaning contained in the words. But the form communicates much more than just that content. The repetition of "my son" so many times, the repetition of the name "Absalom," the expression "O," the wish form "If only …" all communicate a strong emotion of deep anguish on the part of a father who has lost a son. As a translator, you need to translate not just the meaning of the words, but also the meaning of the form. For 2 Samuel 18:33b, it is important that you use a form that communicates the same emotion as contained in the original language.

So when you translate, you need to examine the form of the biblical text and ask yourself why it has that form and not some other one. What attitude or emotion is it communicating? Consider these questions that might help you to understand the meaning of the form.

- Who wrote it?
- Who received it?
- In what situation was it written?
- Which words and phrases were chosen and why?
- Are the words very emotional words, or is there anything special about the order of the words?

When you understand the meaning of the form, then you can choose a form that has that same meaning in the target language and culture.

Culture Affects Meaning

The meaning of forms is determined by culture. The same form might have different meanings in different cultures. In translation, the meaning must remain the same, including the meaning of the form. To achieve this, sometimes the form of the text must change to fit the culture of the target language. The form includes the language of the text, its arrangement, any repetitions, or any expressions that imitate sounds like "O." You must examine all of these things, decide what they mean, and then decide which form will express that meaning in the best way for the target language and culture.

Levels of Meaning

Levels of Meaning

A good translation requires that the meaning be the same in the target language as in the source language.

There are many different levels of meaning in any text, including the Bible. These levels include:

- meaning of words
- meaning of phrases
- meaning of sentences
- meaning of paragraphs
- meaning of chapters
- meaning of books

Words Have Meaning

We are used to thinking that the meaning of a text is in the words. But this meaning is controlled by the context that each word is in. That is, the meaning of the individual words is controlled by the levels above it, including the phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. For example, a single word like “give” may have the following possible meanings, depending on the context (the higher levels):

- to grant a gift
- to collapse or break
- to surrender
- to quit
- to concede
- to supply
- and others…

Building the Larger Meaning

The translator must determine what each word means in each context, and then reproduce that same meaning in the translated text. This means that words cannot be translated individually, but only with the meaning that they have when they are combined together with the other words in the phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and chapters of which they form a part. That is why the translator must read the whole paragraph, chapter, or book that he is translating before starting to translate it. By reading the larger levels, he will understand how each of the lower levels fits into the whole, and will translate each part so that it communicates the meaning in a way that makes the most sense with the higher levels.

Literal Translations

Description

Literal translations try to reproduce the form of the source text as much as possible.

Other Names

Literal translations are also called:

- form-based
- word-for-word
- modified literal

Form Over Meaning

A literal translation is one that focuses on reproducing the form of the source text in the target text, even if the meaning changes or is hard to understand as a result. An extreme version of a literal translation would not be a translation at all. Rather, it would be a copy. It would have the same characters and words as the source language. The next closest step would be to replace each word in the source language with an equivalent word from the target language. Because of differences in grammar between languages, the target language audience would probably not understand this kind of translation. Some translators of the Bible wrongly believe that they should keep the word order of the source text in the target text and only substitute target language words for source language words. They wrongly believe that this shows respect for the source text as God's Word. But in fact this kind of translation keeps people from understanding God's Word. God wants people to understand his Word. Therefore, translating the Bible so that people can understand it shows the greatest respect for the Bible and for God.

Weaknesses of Literal Translation

Literal translations usually contain the following problems:

- foreign words that are not understood by the target audience
- word order that is strange or awkward in the target language
- idioms that are not used or understood in the target language
- names of objects that do not exist in the target culture
- descriptions of customs that are not understood in the target culture
- paragraphs that have no logical connections in the target language
- stories and explanations that do not make sense in the target language
- implied information that is left out but that is necessary for understanding the intended meaning

When to Translate Literally

The only time to translate literally is when translating Gateway Language materials (such as the ULT) that will be used by Other Language translators. The purpose of the ULT is to show the translator what is in the original. Even so, the ULT is not strictly literal. It is a modified

literal translation that uses the target language grammar so that readers can understand it. For the places where the ULT uses the original expressions in the Bible that may be difficult to understand, we have provided the translationNotes to explain them.

Literal Translations

Word for Word Substitution

Description

A word-for-word substitution is the most literal form of translation. It is not the best choice for doing good translations. A word-for-word translation simply substitutes an equivalent word in the target language for each word in the source language.

In Word-For-Word Translations

- The focus is on one word at a time.
- The natural sentence structure, phrase structures and figures of speech of the target language are ignored.
- The process of word-for-word translation is very simple.
- The first word in the source text is translated by an equivalent word.
- Then the next word is done. This continues until the verse is translated.
- The word-for-word approach is attractive because it is so simple. However, it results in a poor quality translation.

Word-for-word substitution results in translations that are awkward to read. They are often confusing and give the wrong meaning or even no meaning at all. You should avoid doing this type of translation. Here are some examples:

Word Order

Here is an example from Luke 3:16 in the ULT:

> John answered, saying to them all, “I indeed baptize you with water, but more powerful than I is coming, of whom I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

That translation is clear and easy to understand. But suppose the translators had used the word-for-word method. What would the translation be like?

Here, translated in English, are the words in the same order as the original Greek.

> answered saying to all the John I indeed with water baptize you he comes but who mightier than I of whom not I am worthy untie the strap of the sandals of him he you will baptize with spirit holy and fire

This translation is awkward and does not make sense in English.

Look again at the ULT version above. The English ULT translators did not keep the original Greek word order. They moved words around in the sentence to fit the rules of English grammar. They also changed some of the phrasing. For example, the English ULT says, “John answered by saying to them all,” rather than “John answered to all saying.” They used different

words in a different order to make the text sound natural so that it could successfully communicate the original meaning.

The translation must communicate the same meaning as the Greek text. In this example, the ULT is a much better English translation than the awkward word-for-word version.

Range of Word Meanings

In addition, word-for-word substitution usually does not take into account that most words in all languages have a range of meanings. In any one passage, usually the writer had only one of those meanings in mind. In a different passage, he may have had a different meaning in mind. But in word-for-word translations, usually only one meaning is chosen and used throughout the translation.

For example, the Greek word “aggelos” can refer to a human messenger or to an angel.

> This is he concerning whom it is written, ‘Behold, I am sending my **messenger** before your face, who will prepare your way before you.’ (Luke 7:27)

Here the word “aggelos” refers to a human messenger. Jesus was talking about John the Baptist.

> … the **angels** had gone away from them into heaven … (Luke 2:15)

Here the word “aggelos” refers to angels from heaven.

A word-for-word translation process might use the same word in both verses, even though it is used to refer to two different kinds of beings. This would be confusing to the reader.

Figures of Speech

Finally, figures of speech are not conveyed correctly in a word-for-word translation. As a whole expression, a figure of speech has a meaning that is different from the individual words. When they are translated word-for-word, the meaning of the figure of speech is lost. Even if they are translated so that they follow the normal word order of the target language, readers will not understand their meaning. See the Figures of Speech page to learn how to correctly translate them.

Problems with Literal Translations

Changing form to protect meaning

Literal translations keep the form of the source text in the target text. As you saw in the teaching module “The Importance of Form,” some translators might want to do this because the form of a text affects the meaning of the text. However, you must remember that people from different cultures understand the meaning of forms differently. In different cultures, the same form may be understood in very different ways. Therefore, it is not possible to protect the meaning from change by keeping the original forms. The only way to protect the meaning is to change the original form to a new form that communicates the same meaning in the new culture as the old form did in the old culture.

Different languages use different orders of words and phrases

If you keep the word order of the source text in your translation, it will be very difficult for the people who speak your language to understand it. Sometimes it will be impossible to understand. You must use the natural word order of the Target Language so that people can understand the meaning of the text.

Different languages use different idioms and expressions

Each language has its own idioms and other expressions, such as words that represent sounds or emotions. In order to express the meaning of these things, you must choose an idiom or expression that has that same meaning in the target language, rather than simply translating each word. If you just translate each word, the idiom or expression will have the wrong meaning.

Some terms do not have equivalents in other cultures

The Bible contains many terms for things that no longer exist, such as ancient weights (stadia, cubit), money (denarius, stater) and measures (hin, ephah). Animals in Scripture may not exist in some parts of the world (fox, camel). Other words may be unknown in some cultures (snow, circumcision). It is not possible to simply substitute equivalent words for these terms in those situations. The translator must find another way to communicate the original meaning.

The Bible was intended to be understood

The Scriptures themselves show that they were meant to be understood. The Bible is written in three languages because the language that God’s people used was different in different times. When the Jews returned from exile and no longer remembered Hebrew, the priests translated the Old Testament readings into Aramaic so they could understand (Neh 8:8). Later, when the New Testament was written, it was written in the common Koiné Greek, which was the language that most people spoke at that time. The New Testament was not written in Hebrew, Aramaic or even classical Greek, which would have been harder for common people to understand.

These and other reasons demonstrate that God wants people to understand his word. So we know that he wants us to translate the meaning of the Bible, not reproduce the form. The meaning of the Scriptures is more important than the form.

Meaning-Based Translations

Introduction

We have looked closely at literal translations. Now, we will look at meaning-based translations. These translations are also called:

- meaning-equivalent
- idiomatic
- dynamic

Key Characteristic

The key characteristic of meaning-based translations is that they give priority to translating the meaning over reproducing the form of the source text. That is, they **change the form of the text as needed in order to make the meaning clear.** The most common types of changes that meaning-based translations make are:

- change word order to match the grammar of the target language
- replace foreign grammatical structures with natural ones
- change order of reasons or results to match the normal order of the flow of logic in the target language
- substitute or explain idioms
- explain or translate terms from other languages ("Golgotha" = "place of the skull")
- use phrases with simpler words instead of trying to find single word equivalents for difficult or uncommon words in the source text
- replace terms that are unknown in the target culture with equivalent terms or descriptions
- replace connecting words that the target language does not use with connecting words that the target language needs
- substitute target language figures of speech that have the same meaning as the original figures of speech
- include implied information that is necessary to understand the meaning of the text
- explain unclear phrases or constructions

Examples of Meaning-Based Translations

What does a meaning-based translation look like? We will look at how different versions translate the same verse.

In Luke 3:8, John the Baptist rebukes the self-righteous people who came to be baptized.

The **Greek** text of the first half of the verse is shown below.

> Ποιήσατε οὖν καρποὺς ἀξίους τῆς μετανοίας

The **English** translation, in the same order as each Greek word, and with some alternative English words to choose from, is below.

> Do/make/produce therefore fruits fit/appropriate of the repentance

Literal

A literal translation would usually follow the words and order of the Greek text as closely as possible, such as the following.

> Therefore, produce fruits that are worthy of repentance (Luke 3:8a ULT)

Note that this modified-literal translation retains the words "fruits" and "repentance." The word order is also very similar to the Greek text. This is because the ULT is designed to show translators what is in the original text. But it may not be the natural or clear way to communicate this meaning in your language.

Meaning-Based

Meaning-based translations, on the other hand, are more likely to change the words and order if the translators think it will help to clarify the meaning. Consider these three meaning-based translations.

From the Living Bible:

> … prove that you have turned from sin by doing worthy deeds.

From the New Living Translation:

> Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God.

From the unfoldingWord® Simplified Text:

> Do the things that show that you have truly rejected your previous sinful way of living!

Notice that these translations have changed the word order to be more natural in English. Also, the word "fruits" no longer appears. In fact, the Living Bible translation uses almost none of the words in the ULT translation. Instead, rather than "fruits," the meaning-based translations refer to "deeds" or to "the way you live." "Fruits" in this verse is used as part of a metaphor. The meaning of "fruits" in this metaphor is "the things that a person does." (See Metaphor.)

So in these versions, the translators translated the meaning in context, rather than just the words. They also used more understandable phrases such as "turned from sin" or "turned away from your sinful behavior" rather than the single difficult word "repentance," or they explained the word by saying, "repented of your sins and turned to God." The meaning in all of them is the same, but the form is very different. In the meaning-based translations, the meaning is much clearer.

Meaning-Based Translations

Translate for Meaning

The Importance of Meaning

The people who wrote the Bible had messages from God that God wanted people to understand. These original writers used the language that their people spoke so that they and their people could understand God's messages. God wants people today to understand those same messages. But people today do not speak those languages that the Bible was written in long ago. So God has given us the task of translating the Bible into the languages that people speak today.

The particular language that people use to communicate God's messages is not important. The specific words that are used are not important. What is important is the meaning that those words communicate. The meaning is the message, not the words or the language. What we must translate, then, is not the words or the forms of the sentences of the source languages, but the meaning.

Look at the pairs of sentences below.

- It rained all night. / Rain fell all night.
- John was very surprised when he heard the news. / The news very much amazed John when he heard it.
- It was a hot day. / The day was hot.
- Peter's house / The house that belongs to Peter

You can see that the meaning of each pair of sentences is the same, even though they use different words. This is the way it is in a good translation. We will use different words than the source text, but we will keep the meaning the same. We will use words that our people understand and use them in a way that is natural for our language. Communicating the same meaning as the source text in a clear and natural way is the goal of translation.

Credits: Example sentences from Barnwell, pp. 19-20, © SIL International 1986, used by permission.

Before Translating

Choosing a Translation Team

Importance of a Translation Team

Translating the Bible is a very large and difficult task that may take many people to accomplish. This module will discuss the skills that will be needed by members of the Bible translation team, and the responsibilities that these people will have. Some people will have many skills and responsibilities, and other people will have only a few. But it is important that every Bible translation team includes enough people to make sure that all of these skills are represented on the team.

Church Leaders

Before starting a translation project, as many church networks as possible should be contacted and encouraged to become a part of the translation and even to send some of their people to be a part of the translation team. They should be consulted and asked for their input into the translation project, its goals, and its process.

In most successful projects, a strategic leader (or team of leaders) with a desire to serve and equip the church that speaks the language is a catalyzing and motivating force to unite the churches, inaugurate the project, and move the project forward. These leaders are often the drivers that form the translation committee and help to oversee from the beginning the efforts of the larger translation effort and its integration into the formation and growth of the church in the people group.

Translation Committee

It is good if the leaders of these churches and church networks can form a committee to guide the work, choose the translators, resolve problems that arise, and encourage the churches to pray for the work and to support the work financially.

This committee can also choose the pastors and other leaders who will check the translation at the Accuracy and Validation stages.

When it comes time, committee members can make decisions about the format of the translation and how it will be distributed. They can also encourage the churches to use the translated Scriptures.

This committee should also plan for the maintenance of the translation after it has been translated and distributed. The committee may want to appoint someone to review the comments and suggestions for improvement that will come from the churches that use the translation. Door43 provides a place for people to access the translation and also to leave these kinds of comments.

Translators

These are the people who will do the work of making the translation drafts. They will be appointed by the Translation Committee. They need to be people who are native speakers of the target language, who can read the source language (the Gateway Language) very well, and who are respected in the community for their Christian character. For more details about these things, see Translator Qualifications.

Besides making the first drafts, these people will form the core of the translation team that will check each other's work, check the translation with the language community, and perform the Translation Words and Translation Notes checks. After each review or checking session, these translators will be responsible to make the changes to the translation that are necessary so that it communicates what it should in the best way. So they will revise the translation many, many times.

Typists

If the translators themselves are not typing the translation draft into a computer or tablet, then someone else on the team must do this. This needs to be someone who can type without making a lot of errors. This person also needs to know how to use punctuation marks correctly and consistently. This person may also need to type the revisions and corrections to the translation after each round of checking.

Translation Testers

Some people need to test the translation with members of the language community to make sure that the translation is clear and sounds natural in the target language. Usually these are the translators, but they could be other people. These testers need to read the translation to people and then ask them questions to see how they are understanding it. For a description of this task, see Other Methods.

Accuracy Checkers

The people who are selected to check the translation for accuracy should be people who already know the Bible well in the source language. They should be able to read well in the source language. They will be comparing the translation to the source Bible, to make sure that the translation communicates everything that is in the source Bible. They should be people who are interested in the translation work and who have time to do a good job of checking. It is best for accuracy checkers to include members of the different church groups who speak the target language and who will use the translation.

Validation Checkers

Those who do Validation Checking should be leaders of groups of churches or people who are very widely respected in the language area. It is important that these people approve of the translation so that it will be accepted and used in the churches. Since many of these people are very busy, they may choose to appoint others whom they trust to check the translation for them. Also, it may work best to send different books or chapters to different people, and not burden one or two people with checking the whole translation.

Tech Support

These people must have experience (or aptitude) with technology and computers for all things pertaining to file management, as well as training and use of software and hardware.

Project Management

These people must have skills in organization, planning, and management of the translation team's time, effort and workload.

Process Management

These people have skills in teaching, leading, and coaching in workshops, as well as ongoing assessment and improvement of team methodology and application of translation principles.

Mapping Skills to Roles

The combined skills that are needed in a Church-Centric Bible Translation team can be configured into a team of many different roles. The best composition of any given team cannot be prescribed in advance. It might even change over time, but the team must account for all the essential skills. We accomplish this as follows:

1. We work with the leaders of the church networks to ensure that they understand the skills and functions needed on their translation team, as described in unfoldingWord® Translation Academy.

2. We help them to identify an initial team composition based on the skills and contextual reality of their team (e.g., size of the team, theological ability, translation experience, language skill, geographic distribution, relationship dynamics, etc.). Their team may be small, with several skills being provided by the same person. Or the team may be large (in some cases as many as 25 full-time translators and hundreds of volunteers), with many people providing the same skill in an overlapping and intentionally redundant manner. Regardless of the structure and size of the team that is needed in a given context, the combined roles on any team must provide the combination of skills needed to achieve excellence in Bible translation.

3. The team begins working together on an initial translation project (we recommend Open Bible Stories) and observes the effectiveness of their team's configuration. As needed, adjustments to the team structure are made to improve efficiency, and training is provided to increase skill and effectiveness.

Choosing a Translation Team

Translator Qualifications

Qualifications of the Translator or Translation Team

The leaders of the church networks that will be involved in the translation should consider the following questions when choosing the people who will be members of the translation team. These questions will help the church and community leaders know if the people that they choose will be able to successfully translate the Bible or the Open Bible Stories.

1. Is the person known to be a very good speaker of the target language? It is important that the person speak the target language very well.

    - Can this person read and write the target language well?
    - Has the person been living in the language community for much of his or her life? Someone who has lived away from the language area for a very long period of time might have difficulty making a natural translation.
    - Do people respect the way this person speaks their own language?
    - What is the age and local language background of each translator? It is usually good to have people from different places in the language area and of different ages, because people of different places and ages might use the language differently. The various translators must agree on how to say things in a way that everyone can understand clearly.

2. Does the person have a very good understanding of the source language?

    - What level of education have they received, and how have they obtained skills in the source language?
    - Does the Christian community recognize that this person has adequate skills to speak the source language and an education sufficient to use the Notes or other exegetical helps provided?
    - Can the person read and write the source language with fluency and understanding?

3. Is the person respected in the community as a follower of Christ? The person must be humble and willing to listen to suggestions or corrections from others concerning his or her translation work. The person must be always willing to learn from others.

    - How long have they been a Christian, and are they in good standing with their Christian community?
    - How has this person shown himself to be committed to Christ as a disciple? Bible translation is difficult, involves many revisions, and requires dedication to the task.

After the translators have been working for a while, the translation committee will need to make sure that they are working well. They may ask: Has the translator been willing to work with others in testing and checking their translation? Does their work meet the expectations of their fellow translators and local church leaders?

Choosing a Translation Style

Choose the Translation Style

Before beginning a translation of the Bible, the translation committee needs to discuss and agree on the style that they want the translation to have. The following topics should be included in the discussion.

1. **Form** — Should the translation follow the form of the source language so that people who are used to hearing and reading the Bible in the source language will feel more comfortable with it, or should the translation follow the form of the target language, and be easier to understand? In most cases we recommend that it is better if the translation follows the form of the target language so that people can understand it better. This means that it will be harder to compare with the source language Bible because it will put things in a different order and use different kinds of expressions that are clear and natural in the target language. But when a Bible is clear and natural, many people will want to read it and hear it, not just the people who have been part of the church for many years.

2. **Format** — Is this a written translation to be read from a book, or a translation to be recorded and listened to? If it is a written translation to be used in church, the people may prefer a more formal style. If it is for a recording, the people may prefer a style that is more like people talking informally.

3. **Borrowing** — Should the translation borrow many words from the source language, or should the translators find ways to express these things using target language words? People who have been part of the church for many years may be used to hearing many biblical concepts expressed with source language words. If these words are widely understood outside of the church, then it may be fine to use them in the translation. But if people outside of the church do not understand these words, it would be better to find ways to express these things using target language words.

4. **Old Words** — Should the translation use words that only the old people know, or should it use words that everyone knows? Sometimes there is a good target language word for something, but the young people do not use it or know it. The translation committee can decide if they should use this word and teach it to the young people, or use a word borrowed from the source language, or express the same concept using a phrase or description using target language words that everyone knows.

5. **Register** — If the target language has different registers or levels of the language, which one should the translation use? For example, if people of high status use one form of the target language and people of low status use a different form, which one should the translation use? Or if the target language has different words for “you” or uses different words to address a government official in contrast with someone who is a close family member, which should the translation use to address God? Thinking about the topic of **Audience** may also help to decide these questions.

6. **Audience** — The translation committee should discuss who is the audience for this translation. Is it primarily educated people, so they should use a style that uses long sentences and many borrowed words? Is it primarily for young people, or old people, for

men or women? Or is it for everyone? In that case, it should use simple language so that everyone can understand it. For more on this topic, see also Aim.

7. **Footnotes** — Should the translation put explanations of difficult things in footnotes? If so, should it use many footnotes, or only for certain topics or especially difficult things? Will people understand what footnotes are and how they work, or will they be confused by them? Instead of footnotes, would it be better to put short explanations in the text of the Bible translation? Or should the translation not include any extra explanations at all? To help in making this decision, consider how well your people understand biblical culture and such things as shepherds, fishing with nets, sailing boats, kings, ancient warfare with chariots, etc., and how much of this might need to be explained.

8. **Pictures** — Will pictures be used in the Bible translation? If so, how many? Pictures can be very useful for showing things that are unknown in the target culture, such as certain animals or tools or clothing. Using pictures for these things can reduce the need to explain them in footnotes.

9. **Headings** — Should the translation use section headings that summarize what each section is talking about? If so, what style of headings should be used? These can be very helpful for finding different topics. See Headings for examples.

Choosing What to Translate

What Should I Translate First?

At some point, the translation team will have to figure out what they should translate first, or, if they have already done some translation, what they should translate next. There are several factors that need to be considered:

- What does the church want to be translated?
- How experienced is the translation team?
- How much biblical content has been translated into this language?

The answers to these questions are all important. But remember this:

Translation is a skill that grows with experience.

Because translation is a skill that grows, it is wise to start translating content that is less complicated than Scripture. That way, translators can learn the skill while translating material that is less difficult.

Translation Difficulty

Wycliffe Bible Translators has rated the difficulty of translating the different books of the Bible. In their rating system, the most complicated books to translate receive a level 5 difficulty. The easiest books to translate are a level 1.

In general, books that have more abstract, poetic, and theologically complex terms and ideas are more difficult to translate. Books that are more narrative and that state information in a straightforward manner are generally easier to translate.

Difficulty Level 5 (Most Difficult to Translate)

- Old Testament
    - Job, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel
- New Testament
    - Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Hebrews

Difficulty Level 4

- Old Testament
    - Leviticus, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
- New Testament
    - John, 1-2 Corinthians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Peter, 1 John, Jude

Difficulty Level 3

- Old Testament
    - Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- New Testament
    - Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, James, 2-3 John, Revelation

Difficulty Level 2

- Old Testament
    - Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Jonah
- New Testament
    - (none)

Difficulty Level 1 (Easiest to Translate)

- (none)

Open Bible Stories

unfoldingWord has developed a set of 50 Bible stories assembled in a collection called Open Bible Stories. Though Open Bible Stories was not assessed according to this rating system, it should fall under Difficulty Level 1. We recommend that you begin by translating Open Bible Stories. There are many good reasons to start by translating Open Bible Stories:

- Open Bible Stories was designed to be easily translated.
    - Most of it is simple narrative.
    - Many difficult phrases and words have been simplified.
    - It has many pictures to help the translator understand the text.
- Open Bible Stories is much shorter than the Bible or even the New Testament, so it can be quickly completed and distributed to the Church.
- Since it is not Scripture, Open Bible Stories removes the fear that many translators have of translating the Word of God.
- Translating Open Bible Stories before translating the Bible gives the translators experience and training in translation, so that when they translate the Bible, they will do it well. By translating Open Bible Stories, the translation team will gain:

    - experience in creating a translation and checking team
    - experience in doing the translation and checking process
    - experience in using the Door43 translation tools
    - experience in resolving translation conflicts
    - experience in getting church and community participation
    - experience in publishing and distributing content

- Open Bible Stories is a great tool to teach the church, evangelize the lost, and train the translators in what the Bible is all about.

You can work your way through the stories in whatever order that you want, but we have found that story number 31 is a good first story to translate since it is short and easy to understand.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the church needs to decide what they want to translate, and in what order. But we highly recommend starting your translation project with Open Bible Stories, for three reasons:

- because translation is a skill that improves with use
- because the translation and checking teams can learn so much about translating the Bible by translating Open Bible Stories
- because of the immense value that the translated Open Bible Stories gives to the local church.

After translating Open Bible Stories, the church will need to decide if it would be more beneficial to start with how everything began (Genesis, Exodus) or with Jesus (New Testament gospels). In either case, we recommend starting Bible translation with some of the Difficulty Level 2 and 3 books (like Genesis, Ruth, and Mark). Finally, after the translation team has a lot of experience, then they can start translating Difficulty Level 4 and 5 books (like John, Hebrews, and Psalms). If the translation team follows this schedule, they will make better translations with far fewer mistakes.

Choosing a Source Text

Factors to Consider for a Source Text

Many translation teams will want to use a Bible translation in their Gateway Language as an additional source text, alongside the Literal and Simplified texts from unfoldingWord. This third text can serve as a model for how things can be said in a natural way for the Gateway Language. Another good possibility for this third (or fourth) source text is to choose a translation that exists in a language related to the target language. This can be especially helpful to see how those translators expressed the meaning in a clear and natural way for the related language. When choosing this source text, there are a number of factors that must be considered:

- **Statement of Faith** — Does the text agree with the Statement of Faith?
- **Translation Guidelines** — Does the text agree with the Translation Guidelines?
- **Language** — Is the text in a suitable language that translators and checkers understand well?
- **Copyrights, Licensing, and Source Texts** — Is the text released under a license that gives sufficient legal freedom?
- **Source Texts and Version Numbers** — Is the text the latest, most updated version?
- **The Original and Source Languages** — Does the translation team understand the difference between source languages and original languages?
- **Original Manuscripts** — Does the translation team understand about Original Manuscripts and Textual Variants?

It is important that the leaders of the churches in the language group agree that the source text is a good one. They should agree that it is an accurate translation of the original language texts and conveys the meaning in a clear and natural way for speakers of the Gateway Language or of a related language.

Choosing a Source Text

Copyrights, Licensing, and Source Texts

Why Is It Important?

When choosing a source text from which to do a translation, there are two reasons why it is important to consider the copyright and licensing issues. First, if you translate from a copyrighted work without prior permission, you are breaking the law because translation is a right reserved for the owner of the content. In some places, copyright infringement is a criminal offense and may be prosecuted by the government without the copyright holder's consent! Second, when a translation is done from a copyrighted work, the translation is the intellectual property of the copyright holder of the source text. They maintain all the rights of the translation just as they do with the source text. For these and other reasons, unfoldingWord will only distribute translations that are not in violation of copyright law.

What License Do We Use?

Content created by unfoldingWord® is released under a **Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 License (CC BY-SA)** (see https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/). We believe this license is the greatest help to the church because it is permissive enough to allow translation and other derivatives to be made from it, but not so permissive that those derivatives can be locked up under restrictive licenses. For a complete discussion on this issue, read The Christian Commons (see https://www.unfoldingword.org/tcc/) or Letting Go (see https://www.unfoldingword.org/letting-go).

What Source Texts Can Be Used?

Source texts can be used if they are in the public domain or are available under one of the following licenses, which permit translated work to be released under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License:

- **CC0 Public Domain Dedication (CC0)** (see https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/)
- **CC Attribution (CC BY)** (see https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/)
- **CC Attribution-ShareAlike (CC BY-SA)** (see https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)
- Works released under the **Free Translate License** (see https://www.unfoldingword.org/freetranslate/)

For all other works in question, please contact help@door43.org .

Note:

- All source texts that appear as source texts in translationStudio or translationCore have been reviewed and are legal for use by anyone as a source text.
- Before anything is published by unfoldingWord, the source text must be reviewed and available under one of the licenses listed above.
- Please check your source text before you start translating to avoid being unable to have your translation published.

Source Texts and Version Numbers

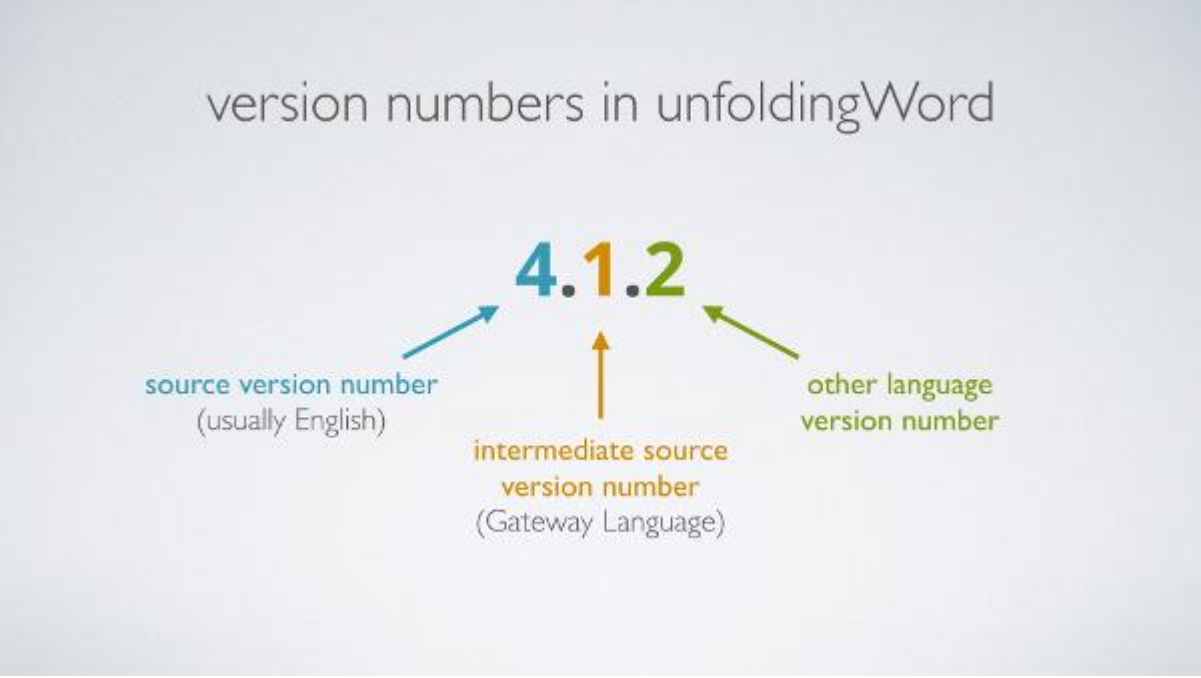
Importance of Version Numbers

Especially in an open project like unfoldingWord, it is important to keep track of published versions. It is important because translations (and source texts) can change frequently. Being able to identify each version helps bring clarity about which text is actually being talked about. Version numbers are also important because all translations should be based on the latest source text. If the source text changes, the translation should eventually be updated to match the latest version.

Before starting a translation project, please ensure that you have the latest version of the source text.

How Versioning Works

Version numbers are only given when a work is released, not when they are edited. Revision history is kept in Door43, but this is different than a work being given a version number.



Each source text is given a whole number for each release (version 1, 2, 3, etc). Any translations based on that source text will take the version number of the source text and add .1 (thus, a translation from English OBS version 4 would become version 4.1). Any further translation based on the intermediate translation would add another .1 to the version number it was created from (for example 4.1.1). New releases of any of these texts increment their "decimal place" by 1.

Please see https://ufw.io/versioning for more details.

Where to Find the Latest Version

The latest published versions of resources in the Door43 Catalog may be seen online at https://door43.org/en/?user=Door43-Catalog. The unfoldingWord® English source content is also available in various formats from https://www.unfoldingword.org/content/.

Note: translationCore, translationStudio and the unfoldingWord® app do not always have the latest versions since updating content does not happen automatically (you may use the source content update feature in each of these apps to get the latest versions).

Decisions for Writing Your Language

Important Questions to Answer About Writing

When a language is first written, the translator must decide how to indicate certain features of all written languages.

These questions will give the wider community an understanding of some of the preliminary decisions made by the translator for writing the local language in the areas of punctuation, spelling, and the writing of names in the Bible. The translation team and the community should agree on how to do this.

- Does your language have a way of indicating direct or quoted speech? How do you show it?
- What guidelines have you followed for indicating verse numbering, quoted speech and Old Testament quotations? (Are you following the style of the national language? What variations have you decided to use to suit your language?)
- What guidelines have you followed in writing names in the Bible? Do you use the names written in the national language Bible? Do you have guidelines from your own language as to how names are pronounced and if they need added titles? Has this decision been acceptable to the community?
- Have you taken note of any spelling rules for your language that you would like to share with others, such as where a word changes its form or two words combine? Are these rules acceptable to the community?

Decisions for Writing Your Language

Alphabet/Orthography

Creating an Alphabet

If your language has not been written down before, then you will need to create an alphabet so that you can write it. There are many things to think about when creating an alphabet, and creating a good one can be very difficult. If this seems to be too difficult, you could do an audio translation instead of a written one.

The goal of a good alphabet is to use one letter to represent each different sound of your language.

If a neighboring language already has an alphabet, and if that language has similar sounds to your language, it might work well to simply borrow their alphabet. If not, then the next best thing is to borrow the alphabet from the national language that you learned in school. However, it is likely that your language has sounds that the national language does not have, so it will be difficult to use this alphabet to represent all of the sounds of your language. In that case, it is good to think about each sound in your language. Write out the national language alphabet on a piece of paper from top to bottom. Then write a word from your language next to each letter that either starts with that sound or has that sound in it. Underline the letter that makes that sound in each of the words.

There may be letters in the national alphabet that your language does not use. That is fine. Now think about the sounds from these words that you had a hard time writing, or sounds that you could not find a letter for. If the sound is similar to a sound that you did find a letter for, then maybe you can modify that letter to represent the other sound. For example, if you have a sound represented by “s,” and a similar sound that there was no letter for, you could add a mark to the letter for the similar sound, such as putting ‘ or ^ or ~ on top of it. If you find that there is a group of sounds that seem to all have the same kind of difference from the national language sounds, then it is good to modify that group of letters in the same way.

Once you have finished this exercise and cannot think of any more sounds in your language, try writing a story or write down something that happened recently. As you write, you will probably discover sounds that you had not thought of earlier. Continue to modify letters so that you can write these sounds. Add these sounds to the list you made earlier.

Take your list of sounds to other speakers of your language who also read the national language and see what they think about it. Maybe they can suggest a different way to modify some letters that is simpler or easier to read. Also show these other people the story you wrote and teach them to read it by referring to your list of words and letter-sounds. If they can learn to read it easily, then your alphabet is good. If it is difficult, then there might be parts of the alphabet that still need work to make it simpler, or there may be different sounds that are being represented by the same letter, or there may be some sounds that you still need to find letters for.

It is good to continue to work on this alphabet together with other speakers of your language who are good readers in the national language. You can discuss the different sounds and decide together on the best way to represent them.

If the national language uses a writing system other than the Roman alphabet, then think about the different marks that you could use to modify the symbols so that they can represent the sounds of your language. It is best if you can mark the symbols in ways that can be reproduced on a computer. You can experiment with the writing systems in a word processor. If you need help creating a keyboard, send an email request to help@door43.org . When you use symbols that can be typed on a computer keyboard, then your translation can be stored, copied, and distributed electronically. Then people can get it for no cost and read it on tablets or cell phones.

Alphabet Development

Definitions

These are definitions of words that we use to talk about how people make the sounds that form into words, and also definitions of words that refer to the parts of words.

Consonant

These are the sounds that people make when the air flow from their lungs is interrupted or limited by the position of the tongue, teeth or lips. The majority of letters in the alphabet are consonant letters. Most consonant letters have only one sound.

Vowel

These sounds are made by the mouth when the breath flows out through the mouth without being blocked by the teeth, tongue, or lips. (In English, vowels are a, e, i, o, u and sometimes y.)

Syllable (syl-ab-al)

A part of a word that has only one vowel sound, with or without surrounding consonants. Some words have only one syllable.

Affix

Something that is added to a word that changes its meaning. This could be at the beginning, or the end, or in the body of a word.

Root

The most basic part of a word. The root is what is left when all the affixes are removed.

Morpheme

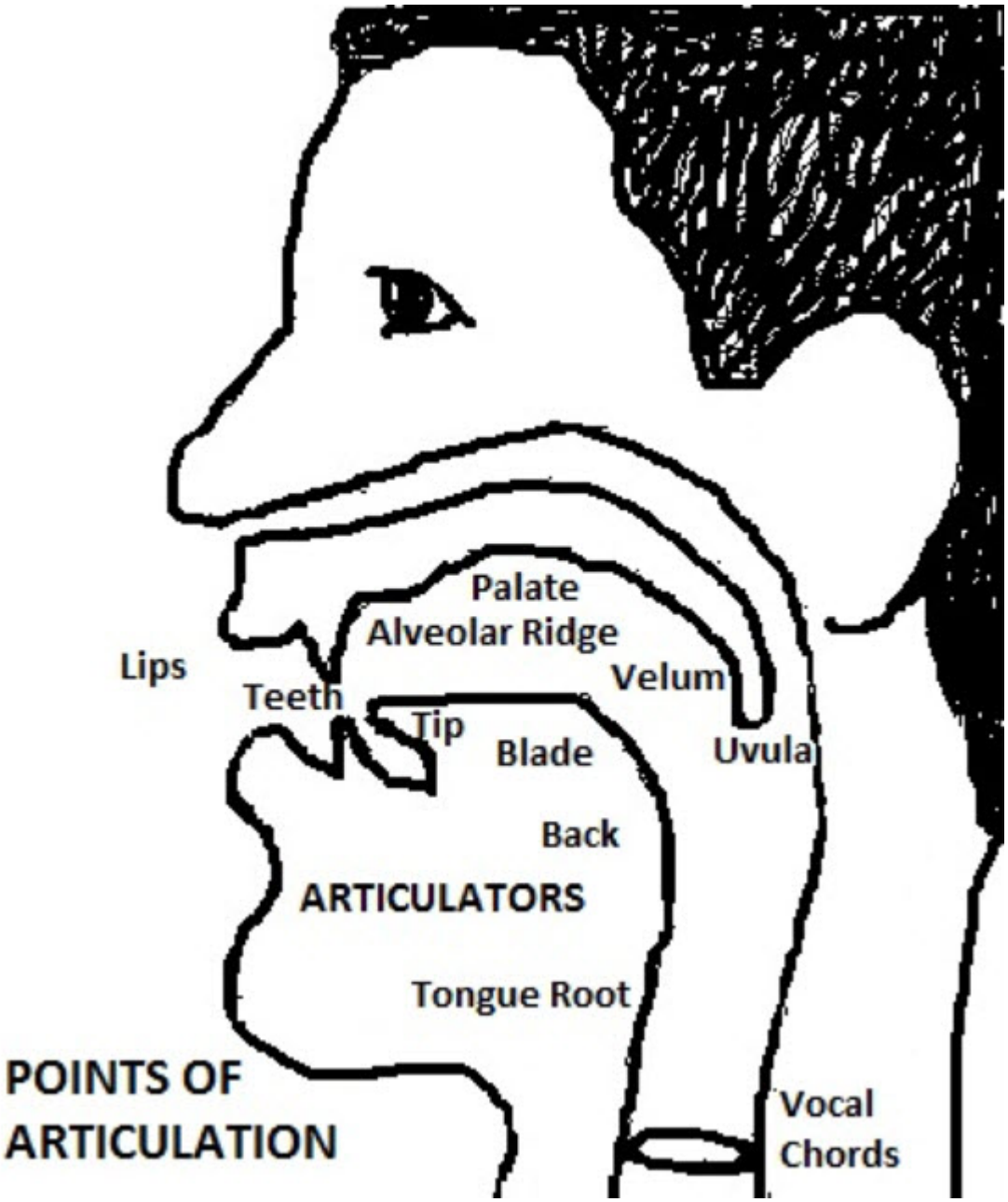
A word or a part of a word that has a meaning and that contains no smaller part that has a meaning. (For example, “syllable” has 3 syllables, but only 1 morpheme, while “syllables” has 3 syllables and two morphemes (syl-lab-le**s**). (The final “s” is a morpheme that means “plural.”))

How Syllables Make Words

Every language has sounds which combine to form syllables. An affix of a word or the root of a word may have a single syllable, or it may have a number of syllables. Sounds combine to make syllables which also join together to make morphemes. Morphemes work together to make meaningful words. It is important to understand the way syllables are formed in your

language and how those syllables influence one another so that spelling rules can be written and people can more easily learn to read your language.

Vowel sounds are the basic part of syllables. English has only five vowel symbols, “a, e, i, o, u.” But English has up to 11 vowel sounds that are written with vowel combinations and many other ways. The sounds of individual English vowels can be found in words such as, “beat, bit, bait, bet, bat, but, body, bought, boat, book, boot.”



The Vowels of English

Position in the Mouth	**Front**	**Mid**	**Back**
ROUNDING	(unrounded)	(unrounded)	(rounded)

Position in the Mouth	Front	Mid	Back
Tongue High	I “beat”		U “boot”
Tongue Mid-High	I “bit”		U “book”
Tongue Middle	E “bait”	U “but”	O “boat”
Tongue Mid-Low		E “bet”	O “bought”
Tongue Low	A “bat”		A “body”

(Each of these vowels has its own symbol in the International Phonetic Alphabet.)

The vowel sounds form the middle of each syllable, and the consonant sounds come before and after the vowels.

Articulation is the description of how air comes through the mouth or nose to produce the sounds that we can recognize as speech.

Points of articulation are those places along the throat or mouth where air is constricted or its flow is stopped. Common points of articulation include the lips, the teeth, the dental (alveolar) ridge, the palate (hard roof of the mouth), the velum (soft roof of the mouth), uvula, and the vocal cords (or glottis).

Articulators are the moving parts of the mouth, particularly the parts of the tongue that slow the flow of air. The parts of the tongue that can do this include the tongue root, the back, the blade, and the tip. The lips can also slow the air flow through the mouth without the use of the tongue. Sounds made with the lips include consonants such as “b,” “v,” and “m.”

The **manner of articulation** describes how the airflow is slowed. It can come to a complete stop (as with “p” or “b,” which are called stop consonants or stops), have heavy friction (like “f” or “v,” called fricatives), or be only slightly restricted (like “w” or “y,” called semi-vowels, because they are almost as free as vowels.)

Voicing shows whether or not the vocal chords are vibrating when the air passes through them. Most vowels, such as “a, e, i, u, o” are voiced sounds. Consonants can be voiced (+v), like “b, d, g, v,” or voiceless (-v) such as “p, t, k, f.” These are made at the same point of articulation and with the same articulators as the voiced consonants first mentioned. The only difference between “b, d, g, v” and “p, t, k, f” is voicing (+v and –v).

The Consonants of English

Points of Articulation	Lips	Teeth	Ridge	Palate	Velum	Uvula	Glottis
VOICING	-v / +v	-v / +v	-v / +v	-v / +v	-v / +v	-v / +v	-v / +v
ARTICULATOR (manner)							
Lips (stop)	“p” / “b”						
Lip (fricative)		“f” / “v”					
Tongue Tip (stop)			“t” / “d”				
Tongue Tip (liquid)			– / “l”	– / “r”			
Tongue Blade (fricative)			“s” / “z”	“sh” / “zh”			
Tongue Back (stop)					“k” / “g”		

Points of Articulation	Lips	Teeth	Ridge	Palate	Velum	Uvula	Glottis
Tongue Root (semi-vowel)	– / “w”			– / “y”		“h” / –	
Nose (continuant)	– / “m”		– / “n”		“ng”		

Naming the sounds can be done by calling their features. The sound of “b” is called a Voiced Bilabial (meaning “two lips”) Stop. The sound of “f” is known as a Voiceless Labio-dental (meaning “lip-teeth”) Fricative. The sound of “n” is called a Voiced Alveolar (meaning “ridge”) Nasal.

Symbolizing the sounds can be done one of two ways. Either you can use the symbol for that sound found in the International Phonetic Alphabet, or you can use well-known symbols from an alphabet known by the reader.

Consonant Chart – a consonant symbol chart is offered here without mentioning the Articulators. As you explore the sounds of your language, listening for voicing and feeling the position of your tongue and lips when you make the sound, you can fill out the charts in this article with symbols to represent those sounds.

Points of Articulation	Lips	Teeth	Ridge	Palate	Velum	Uvula	Glottis
VOICING	-v / +v	-v / +v	-v / +v	-v / +v	-v / +v	-v / +v	-v / +v
MANNER							
Stop	“p” / “b”		“t” / “d”		“k” / “g”		
Fricative		“f” / “v”	“s” / “z”	“sh” / “zg”			
Liquid			– / “l”	– / “r”			
Semi-vowel	– / “w”			– / “y”		“h” / –	
Nasals	– / “m”		– / “n”		“ng”		

File Formats

The Technical Nature of Translation

While a large part of translation has to do with language, words, and sentences, it is also true that a major aspect of translation is technical in nature. From creating alphabets, typing, typesetting, formatting, publishing, and distributing, there are many technical aspects to translation. In order to make all this possible, there are some standards that have been adopted.

We will refer to "markup language," which is a system of marking the formatting of a text that won't show when it is published, like putting asterisks or underline symbols around words that then are interpreted by the word processor as formatting.

USFM: Bible Translation Format

For many years, the standard format for Bible translation has been USFM (which stands for Unified Standard Format Markers). We have adopted this standard as well.

USFM is a type of markup language that tells a computer program how to format the text. For instance, each chapter is marked like this "\c 1" or "\c 33". Verse markers might look like "\v 8" or "\v 14". Paragraphs are marked "\p". There are many other markers like this that have specific meaning. So a passage like John 1:1-2 in USFM will look like this:

```
\c 1
\p
\v 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Wor
\v 2 This one, the Word, was in the beginning with God.
```

When a computer program that can read USFM sees this, it is able to format all of the chapter markers the same way (for instance, with a larger number) and all the verse numbers the same way (for instance, with a small superscript number).

Bible translations must be in USFM for us to be able to use it!

To read more about USFM notation, please read https://paratext.org/about/usfm .

How To Do a Bible Translation in USFM

Most people do not know how to write in USFM. This is one of the reasons why we created translationStudio (https://ufw.io/ts/). When you do a translation in translationStudio, what you see looks very similar to a normal word processor document without any markup language. However, translationStudio is formatting the Bible translation in USFM underneath what you see. This way, when you upload your translation from translationStudio, what is being uploaded is already formatted in USFM and can be immediately published in a variety of formats.

Converting a Translation to USFM

Though it is strongly encouraged to only do a translation using USFM notation, sometimes a translation is done without using USFM markup. This type of translation still can be used, but first the USFM markers must be added. One way to do this is to copy and paste it into translationStudio, then place the verse markers in the correct place. When this is done, the translation will be able to be exported as USFM. This is a very arduous task, so we strongly recommend doing your Bible translation work from the beginning in translationStudio or some other program that uses USFM.

Markdown for Other Content

Markdown is a very common markup language that is used in many places on the Internet. Using Markdown makes it very easy for the same text to be used in a variety of formats (such as webpage, mobile app, PDF, etc).

Markdown supports **bold** and *italic*, written like this:

```
Markdown supports **bold** and *italic*.
```

Markdown also supports headings like this:

```
# Heading 1

## Heading 2

### Heading 3
```

Markdown also supports links. Links display like this https://www.unfoldingword.org/ and are written like this:

```
https://www.unfoldingword.org
```

Customized wording for links is also supported, like this:

```
[uW Website](https://www.unfoldingword.org)
```

Note that HTML is also valid Markdown. For a complete listing of Markdown syntax, please visit https://ufw.io/md.

Conclusion

The easiest way to get content marked up with USFM or Markdown is by using an editor that is specifically designed to do that. If a word processor or a text editor is used, these markings must be manually entered.

Note: Making text bold, italic, or underlined in a word processor does not make it bold, italic, or underlined in a markup language. This type of formatting must be done by writing the designated symbols.

When contemplating which software to use, please keep in mind that translation is not just about words; there are a lot of technical aspects that need to be taken into consideration.

Whatever software is used, just remember that Bible translations need to be put into USFM, and everything else needs to be put into Markdown.

How to Start Translating

First Draft

How do I start?

Follow these steps in order to get started:

1. **Organize.** Talk with the pastors and other believers from your language group and form a committee of people who can oversee the translation work. The Translation Committee finds and oversees the translators, to whom the rest of this list applies.
2. **Contact.** Make contact with at least one person in the unfoldingWord network, notifying unfoldingWord that you intend to begin translation. To obtain information about how to do that, see Finding Answers
3. **Review.** Review the Translation Guidelines.
4. **Agree.** Agree that the Statement of Faith is an accurate reflection of your own beliefs and that you intend to translate the content in harmony with it and also in accordance with the Translation Guidelines. Do this by signing the form that is provided. (see https://ufw.io/forms/)
5. **Pray.** Pray that God would help the translators to understand the passage that you are translating and that he would help you to find the best way to communicate that passage in your language.
6. **Read.**
    - If you are translating Open Bible Stories, read each individual story entirely before starting to translate it. If you are translating the Bible, read each entire chapter before you start to translate any part of it. That way you will understand how the part you are translating fits into the larger context, and you will translate it better.
    - Read the passage that you plan to translate in as many different translations as you have. In translationStudio, the first mode is the reading mode. Access this mode by clicking on the top symbol on the left side. You can choose up to three translations to show in this mode. We recommend that two of these be the unfoldingWord® Literal Text (ULT) and the unfoldingWord® Simplified Text (UST). The ULT will help you to see the form of the original text, and the UST will help you to understand the meaning of the original text. Think about how to communicate the meaning in the form that people would use in your language.
    - Read any Bible helps or commentaries which you have that talk about that passage.
    - Read the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes for the passage that you plan to translate. To do this, click on the third icon down on the left side of translationStudio. Click on the tab that says “Notes.” Then click on each of the phrases in blue and read the explanation for each phrase.
    - Read the definitions of the unfoldingWord® Translation Words (the important words) in the passage. To do this, click on the tab that says, “Words.” Then click on each of the words in blue and read the explanation for each of these important words. Under each explanation there is also a section called “Translation Suggestions.” Here you will find ideas for how to translate these words.
7. **Talk.** Discuss the passage, the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes, and the unfoldingWord® Translation Words with others on the translation team. Help each other

to understand what they mean. If there are parts that you still do not understand, ask pastors or other church leaders for help.

8. **Translate.** When you understand well what the passage is saying, say the first chunk (1-3 verses) out loud in your language in the way that someone from your language community would say it. If possible, say it to another member of the translation team. Let the translation team member correct it until it sounds good in your language. Use the different expressions in the ULT, UST, and Translation Notes to give you ideas for how to say the same things in different ways. Do not follow the order of words from either the ULT or the UST if it is more natural for your language to use a different order. To help with this, say the whole chunk of text without looking at the source texts. This will help you to say these things in a way that is natural for your language, rather than in a way that was natural for the source language but might not be the best way to say it in your language. Still without looking at the source texts, type your translation of the chunk into translationStudio (or record it). To do this, click on the second icon down on the left side. The chunk that you are working on will appear in the ULT, covering the space where you will type the translation. When you are ready to type, click on the right edge of the space that is mostly covered by the ULT of that chunk. The blank space will then cover the ULT. Type your translation of the chunk here in this space from your memory. When you type (or write) from your memory without looking at the ULT, your translation will be more natural. Now repeat this step for the rest of the chunks of this passage.
9. **Check**. Since you typed or recorded your translation of these chunks without looking at the source texts, you might have left out some things. Now is the time to add those things to your translation. Click on the third icon down on the left side of translationStudio again. In that mode:
    - Look again at the source texts, including the ULT and UST, and carefully compare them to your translation. Make sure that your translation says all of the parts of the message of the ULT and does not leave out anything. You may choose to say some parts in a way that is different than the ULT, such as more like the UST or the Translation Note or another Bible or using an expression that is natural in your language. That is fine, as long as the meaning is the same. If some part of the message is missing, put it in your translation at the point where it fits best in your language. It does not need to be in the same order as the source as long as it sounds natural and gives the same meaning. To do this in translationStudio, click on the pencil icon on the top right above your translation.
    - If you are translating the Bible, compare your translation with other translations of the same Bible passage. If one of those makes you think of a better way to say something, then revise your translation in that way. If one of those helps you to understand something better than you did before, then change your translation so that it communicates the meaning better.
    - After these steps, read your translation out loud to yourself. Fix anything that does not sound like it is the way that someone from your community would say it. Sometimes parts of sentences need to be put in a different order.
    - In translationStudio, exit editing mode by clicking the check mark icon at the top right of your translation. Now it is time to move the verse numbers where they should be in your translation. Drag each number onto the word that will begin that verse. If your translation has reordered the parts of the chunk or combined verses, you can leave some verse numbers together to indicate that what follows includes content from both of those verses.

When you finish the passage or chapter, it is ready for the Oral Partner Check. To translate the next passage or chapter, start again at step 5.

Help with Translating

Using Translation Helps

To help translators make the best translation possible, **unfoldingWord® Translation Notes**, **unfoldingWord® Translation Words**, and **unfoldingWord® Translation Questions** have been created.

unfoldingWord® Translation Notes are cultural, linguistic, and exegetical notes that help to describe and explain some of the Bible background that the translator needs to know to translate accurately. The unfoldingWord® Translation Notes also inform translators about different ways that they might express the same meaning. See https://ufw.io/tn/.

The **unfoldingWord® Translation Words** are key terms found in Open Bible Stories and the Bible. It is very important to translate key terms correctly. Each of these words or phrases has a small article written about it as well as cross-references to other places where that term is used in either Open Bible Stories or the Bible. This is to show the translator other ways that the unfoldingWord® Translation Words term is used and to ensure that it has been translated correctly in those places, too. See https://ufw.io/tw/.

The **unfoldingWord® Translation Questions** are comprehension questions that can be used to self-check your translation. If you can correctly answer the unfoldingWord® Translation Questions using only the Target Language translation, then it is an accurate translation. The unfoldingWord® Translation Questions are also a good tool to use for checking with the target language community. See https://ufw.io/tq/.

Once you have consulted the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes, unfoldingWord® Translation Words and unfoldingWord® Translation Questions, then you are ready to make the best translation.

Please consult the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes and unfoldingWord® Translation Words when doing your translation!

Making a Key Terms Spreadsheet

Making a Key Terms Spreadsheet

- Make a list of the key terms in the story or Bible passage that you translate, along with the term that you choose for each of them in the target language. It is best if you can do this on a spreadsheet so that you can list the source word or phrase in one column and the target word or phrase in another column. Further columns could list equivalent terms in other languages and the references where these terms occur in the Bible. Make sure that everyone translating Bible books that use these terms has access to the spreadsheet, or a chart on paper, so that you can all use the same words or phrases in your translation.
- Use the list of words and definitions in the unfoldingWord® translation Words resource to help you to make a list of these words and to understand what they mean. The translationStudio tool will show you these words and their definitions as you encounter them in the source text, and the translationWords tool in translationCore will give you a list of all of the key terms in each book of the Bible.
- Each time the key word occurs in the source text, make sure that the term you have chosen for the translation still makes sense in that context. If it does not, discuss the problem with others on the translation team and try to find a solution together. You may need to use a different term, or you may need to use more than one term for the different contexts, or you may need to find another way to communicate the term that includes all of the meanings, such as using a longer phrase.
- When you have decided that you need to use different target language words or phrases to translate one source language word in different contexts, then make a new line on the spreadsheet for each different way that you are translating the source word. Repeat the source term in the source column, and put the new translation in the next column, under the first translation. Share this spreadsheet with everyone on the translation team so that they can choose the right translation for the key term in the context that they are translating.

The Bible Text

The Original and Source Languages

The Text In the Original Language Is the Most Accurate

Description — The original language is the language in which a Bible text was first written. The original language of the New Testament is Greek. The original language of most of the Old Testament is Hebrew. However, Aramaic is the original language of some parts of the books of Daniel and Ezra. The original language is always the most accurate language from which to translate a passage.

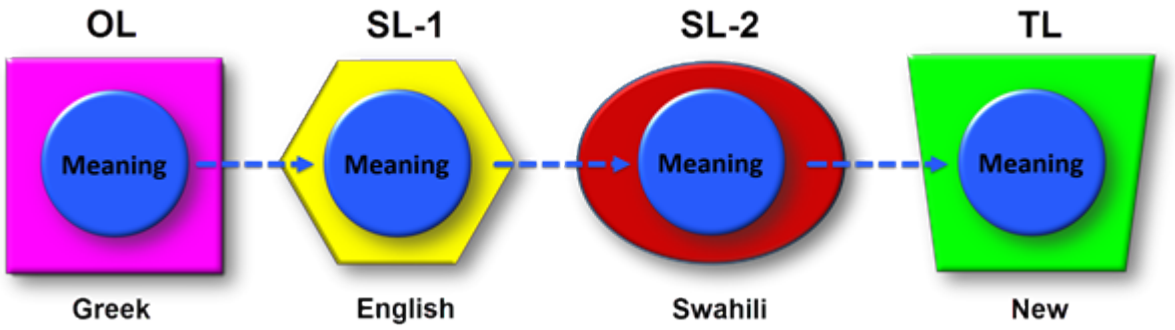
The source language is the language from which the translation is being made. If a translator is translating the Bible from the original languages, then the original language and the source language for his translation are the same. However, only people who have spent many years studying the original languages understand them and can use them as a source language. For that reason, most translators use Bibles that have been translated into a language of wider communication as their source language text.

If you are translating from a language of wider communication, it is a good idea to have someone who has studied the original languages compare the meaning in the target language translation with the meaning in the original language to make sure that the meaning is the same. Another way to make sure that the meaning of the target language translation is accurate is to check the translation with translation helps that have been written by people who know the original languages. These would include Bible commentaries and dictionaries, as well as the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes, unfoldingWord® Translation Words definitions, and unfoldingWord® Translation Questions with their answers.

The Text In the Source Language May Not Be Accurate

If the translator does not understand the original language, he will have to use a language of wider communication as a source language. The meaning in the source may be correct, depending on how carefully it was translated from the original. But it is still a translation, so it is a step away from the original and is not quite the same. In some cases, the source may have actually been translated from another source, rather than from the original, putting it two steps away from the original.

Consider the example below. A translator uses a Swahili New Testament as the source for a new Target Language translation. However, the particular Swahili Bible version he is using was actually translated from English — not directly from the Greek (the original language of the NT). So it is possible that some of the meaning has changed in the chain of translation from the original to the target languages.



The only way to make sure the translation is as accurate as possible is to compare the new translation with the original languages. Where this is not possible, use the ULT as the source text, along with other Bible translations that were translated from the original languages.

Original Manuscripts

The Writing of the Original Manuscripts

The Bible was written many hundreds of years ago by God's prophets and apostles as God directed them to write it. The people of Israel spoke Hebrew, so most of the Old Testament books were written in Hebrew. When they lived as strangers in Assyria and Babylon, they learned to speak Aramaic, so some later parts of the Old Testament were written in Aramaic.

About 300 years before Christ was born, Greek became the language of wider communication. Many people in Europe and the Middle East spoke Greek as a second language. So the Old Testament was translated into Greek. When Christ was born, many people in those areas of the world still spoke Greek as a second language, and the New Testament books were all written in Greek.

Back then there were no printers, so the authors wrote these books by hand. These were the original manuscripts. The scribes who copied these manuscripts also did so by hand. These were also manuscripts. These books are extremely important, so the scribes got special training and were very careful to try to copy them accurately.

Over hundreds of years, scribes (and other people as well) made thousands of copies of the Bible books. The manuscripts that the authors originally wrote have all been lost or have fallen apart, so we do not have them. But we do have many of the copies that were written by hand long ago. Some of these copies have survived for many hundreds and even thousands of years.

Structure of the Bible

The Bible is made up of 66 “books.” Although they are called “books,” they vary greatly in length; the shortest ones are only a page or two long. The Bible has two main parts. The first part was written first and is called the Old Testament. The second part was written later and is called the New Testament. The Old Testament has 39 books and the New Testament has 27 books. (Some of the books in the New Testament are letters to people.)

Each book is divided into chapters. Most books have more than one chapter, but Obadiah, Philemon, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude each have only one chapter. All the chapters are divided into verses.

When we want to refer to a verse, we first write the name of the book, then the chapter, and then the verse. For example, “John 3:16” means the book of John, chapter 3, verse 16.

When we refer to two or more verses that are next to each other, we put a line between them. “John 3:16-18” means the book of John, chapter 3, verses 16, 17, and 18.

When we refer to verses that are not next to each other, we use commas to separate them. “John 3:2, 6, 9” means the book of John, chapter 3, verses 2, 6, and 9.

After the chapter and verse numbers, we put the abbreviation for the translation of the Bible that we used. In the example below, “ULT” stands for the *unfoldingWord® Literal Text*.

In unfoldingWord® Translation Academy, we use this system to tell where portions of Scripture come from. If the whole verse or set of verses is not shown, we indicate that with letter “a” or “b” after the verse number. A letter “a” indicates that the beginning is shown but the ending of the verse is not shown. A letter “b” indicates that the beginning of the verse is not shown. The letter “b” means that the Scripture quotation starts somewhere after the beginning of the verse. It may or may not include all of the rest of the verse.

The text below comes from the book of Judges chapter 6 verse 28, but it is not the entire verse. The verse has more at the end. In unfoldingWord® Translation Academy, we only show the part of the verse that we want to talk about.

> When the men of the city arose early in the morning, and see, the altar of Baal was torn down. (Judges 6:28a ULT)

Chapter and Verse Numbers

Description

When the books of the Bible were first written, there were no breaks for chapters and verses. People added these later, and then others numbered the chapters and verses to make it easier to find particular parts of the Bible. Since more than one person did this, there are different numbering systems used in different translations. If the numbering system in the ULT is different from the numbering system in another Bible that you use, you will probably want to use the system from that Bible.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

People who speak your language may also use a Bible written in another language. If that Bible and your translation use different chapter and verse numbers, it will be hard for people to know which verse someone is talking about when they say a chapter and verse number.

Examples From the Bible

> 14 But I expect to see you soon, and we will speak mouth to mouth. 15 Peace to
> you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name. (3 John 1:14-15 ULT)

Since 3 John has only one chapter, some versions do not mark the chapter number. In the ULT and UST it is marked as chapter 1. Also, some versions do not divide verses 14 and 15 into two verses. Instead they mark it all as verse 14.

> A psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.
>
> 1 Yahweh, how many are my enemies! (Psalm 3:1a ULT)

Some of the psalms have an explanation at the beginning. In some versions the explanation is not given a verse number, as in the ULT and UST. In other versions the explanation is verse 1, and the actual psalm starts with verse 2.

> … and Darius the Mede received the kingdom when he was about 62 years old.
> (Daniel 5:31 ULT)

In some versions this is the last verse of Daniel 5. In other versions this is the first verse of Daniel 6.

Translation Strategies

If the people who speak your language have another Bible that they use, number the chapters and verses the way that Bible does. Read the instructions on how to mark verses in translationStudio.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

If the people who speak your language have another Bible that they use, number the chapters and verses the way that Bible does.

The example below is from 3 John 1. Some Bibles mark this text as verses 14 and 15, and some mark it all as verse 14. You may mark the verse numbers as your other Bible does.

> [14] But I expect to see you soon, and we will speak face to face. [15] Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name. (3 John 1:14-15 ULT)

> [14] But I expect to see you soon, and we will speak mouth to mouth. Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name. (3 John 14)

Next is an example from Psalm 3. Some Bibles do not mark the explanation at the beginning of the psalm as a verse, and others mark it as verse 1. You may mark the verse numbers as your other Bible does.

> **A psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.** [1] Yahweh, how many are my enemies! Many have risen against me. [2] Many say about me, “There is no help for him from God.” Selah

> [1] A psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son.
> [2] Yahweh, how many are my enemies!
> Many have turned away and attacked me.
> [3] Many say about me,
> “There is no help for him from God.” Selah

unfoldingWord® Literal Text (ULT) and unfoldingWord® Simplified Text (UST) Formatting Signals

Description

The unfoldingWord® Literal Text (ULT) and unfoldingWord® Simplified Text (UST) use ellipsis marks, long dashes, parentheses, and indentation to show how information in the text is related to what is around it.

Ellipsis marks

Ellipsis marks (…) are used to show that either someone did not finish a sentence he started or that the author did not quote all of what someone said.

In Matthew 9:3-6, the ellipsis mark shows that Jesus did not finish his sentence to the scribes when he turned his attention to the paralyzed man and spoke to him:

> Then behold, some of the scribes said among themselves, “This man is blaspheming.” But Jesus knew their thoughts and said, “For what reason are you thinking evil in your hearts? For which is easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on the earth to forgive sins **…**” he then said to the paralytic, “Get up, pick up your mat, and go to your house.” (ULT)

In Mark 11:31-33, the ellipsis mark shows that either the religious leaders did not finish their sentence, or Mark did not finish writing what they said.

> They discussed between themselves, saying, “What should we say? If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ But if we say, ‘From men,’ **…**” They were afraid of the people, for everyone considered that John really was a prophet. Then they answered Jesus and said, “We do not know.” Then Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.” (ULT)

Long Dashes

Long dashes (—) introduce information that is immediately relevant to what came before it. For example:

> Then two men will be in a field**—**one will be taken, and one will be left behind. Two women will be grinding with a mill**—**one will be taken, and one will be left. Therefore be on your guard, for you do not know on what day your Lord will come. (Matthew 24:40-42 ULT)

Parentheses

Parentheses “( )” show that some information either is an explanation or is background information that the writer put in that place to help the reader understand the material around it.

In John 6:6, John interrupted the story he was writing to explain that Jesus already knew what he was going to do. This is put in parentheses.

> 5 When Jesus lifted up his eyes and saw that a great crowd was coming to him, he said to Philip, “Where are we going to buy bread so that these may eat?” 6 (Now Jesus said this to test Philip, for he himself knew what he was going to do.) 7 Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread would not be sufficient for them, that each one might have a little.” (John 6:5-7 ULT)

The words in the parentheses below are not what Jesus was saying, but what Matthew was saying to the reader, to alert the reader that Jesus was using words that they would need to think about and interpret.

> “Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” **(let the reader understand)**, “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house, and let him who is in the field not return to take his cloak.” (Matthew 24:15-18 ULT)

Indentation

When text is indented, it means that the line of text starts further to the right than the lines of text above and below it that are not indented.

This is done for poetry and some lists, to show that the indented lines form a part of the non-indented line above them. For example:

> 5 These are the names of the leaders who must fight with you:
>
> > From the tribe of Reuben, Elizur son of Shedeur; 6 from the tribe of Simeon, Shelumiel son of Zurishaddai; 7 from the tribe of Judah, Nahshon son of Amminadab; (Numbers 1:5-7 ULT)

How to Use the ULT and UST when Translating the Bible

As a translator, you can best use the ULT and UST if you remember the following differences between the ULT and UST, and if you learn how the target language can best deal with the issues that these differences represent.

Order of Ideas

The ULT tries to present ideas **in the same order** as they appear in the source text.

The UST tries to present ideas in an order that is more natural in English, or that follows the order of logic or the order of sequence in time.

When you translate, you should put ideas into an order that is natural in the target language. (See Order of Events.)

> 1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God … 7 This letter is to all who are in Rome, the beloved of God. (Romans 1:1,7a ULT)
>
> 1 I, Paul, who serve the Messiah Jesus, am writing this letter to all of you believers in the city of Rome. (Romans 1:1a UST)

The ULT shows Paul's style of beginning his letters. He does not say who his audience is until verse 7. However, the UST follows a style that is much more natural in English and many other languages today.

Implied Information

The ULT often presents ideas that **imply** or **assume** other ideas that are important for the reader to understand.

The UST often makes those other ideas explicit. The UST does this in order to remind you that you should perhaps do the same in your translation if you think that your audience will need to know this information in order to understand the text.

When you translate, you should decide which of these implied ideas would be understood by your audience without being explicitly stated. If your audience understands these ideas without including them in the text, then you do not need to make those ideas explicit. Remember also that you might even offend your audience if you needlessly present implied ideas that they would understand anyway. (See Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information.)

> And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; **from now on you will be catching men**." (Luke 5:10b ULT)
>
> But Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid! Until now you gathered in fish, but from now on you will gather in people to become my disciples." (Luke 5:10b UST)

Here the UST reminds the reader that Simon was a fisherman by trade. It also makes clear the similarity that Jesus was drawing between Simon's previous work and his future work. In

addition, the UST makes it clear why Jesus wanted Simon to "catch men" (ULT), that is, to lead them "to become my disciples" (UST).

> And he saw Jesus, **fell on his face,** and begged him, saying, "Lord, if you are willing, you can **make me clean**." (Luke 5:12b ULT)
>
> When he saw Jesus he **bowed down to the ground** in front of him and pleaded with him, "Lord, **please heal me**, because you are able to heal me if you are willing!" (Luke 5:12b UST)

Here the UST makes it clear that the man who had leprosy did not fall to the ground by accident. Instead, he deliberately bowed down to the ground. Also, the UST makes it clear that he is asking Jesus to heal him. In the ULT, he only implies this request.

Symbolic Actions

Definition — A symbolic action is something that someone does in order to express a certain idea.

The ULT often simply presents the symbolic action with no explanation of what it means. The UST often presents the meaning expressed by the symbolic action as well.

When you translate, you should decide whether your audience will correctly understand a symbolic action. If your audience will not understand, then you should do as the UST does. (See Symbolic Action.)

> Then the high priest **tore his** garments. (Mark 14:63a ULT)
>
> When Jesus said this, the high priest tore his own outer garment **in protest**. (Mark 14:63a UST)

Here the UST makes it clear that it was not by accident that the high priest tore his garment. It also makes clear that it was probably only his outer garment that he tore, and that he did so because he wanted to show that he was sad or angry or both.

Because the high priest actually tore his garment, the UST must, of course, say that he did. However, if a symbolic action never actually took place, you do not have to state that action. Here is such an example:

> Present that to your governor! Will he accept you or will he **lift up your face**? (Malachi 1:8b ULT)
>
> You would not dare to offer such gifts to your own governor! You know that he would not take them. You know that he would be **displeased with you and would not welcome you**! (Malachi 1:8 USTb)

Here the symbolic action "lift up someone's face," represented in this way in the ULT, is presented only as its meaning in the UST: "he would be displeased with you and would not welcome you." It can be presented in this way because Malachi is not referring to an actual event that took place. He is only referring to the idea represented by that event.

Passive Verb Forms

Both biblical Hebrew and Greek often use passive verb forms, while many Other Languages do not have that possibility. The ULT tries to use passive verb forms when the original languages use them. However, the UST usually does not use these passive verb forms. As a result, the UST **restructures** many phrases.

When you translate, you must decide whether the target language can present events or states using a passive expression, as in the following examples. If you cannot use a passive verb form in a particular context, then you may find in the UST one possible way to restructure the phrase. (See Active or Passive.)

Examples from the Bible

> For **amazement had seized him** and all those with him, at the catch of fish that they had taken. (Luke 5:9 ULT)
>
> For amazement had seized him, and all those with him, at the catch of fish that they had taken,
>
> He said this because **he marveled** at the huge number of fish that they had caught. All the men who were with him also marveled. (Luke 5:9 UST)

Here the UST uses a verb in the active voice, “he marveled,” instead of the ULT’s verb in the passive voice, “was amazed.”

> Large crowds came together to hear him and to be healed from their sicknesses. (Luke 5:15b ULT)
>
> The result was that large crowds came to Jesus to hear him teach and **to have him heal them from their sicknesses**. (Luke 5:15b UST)

Here the UST avoids the ULT’s passive verb form “to be healed.” It does this by restructuring the phrase. It says who the healer is: “to have him [Jesus] heal them.”

Metaphors and Other Figures of Speech

Definition — The ULT tries to represent the figures of speech found in the biblical texts as closely as possible.

The UST often presents the meaning of these ideas in other ways.

When you translate, you will need to decide whether the target language readers will understand a figure of speech with little effort, with some effort, or not at all. If they must make a great effort to understand, or if they do not understand at all, you will need to present the essential meaning of the figure of speech using other words.

> For **in everything you have been made rich** in him, in all speech and all knowledge. (1 Corinthians 1:5 ULT)
>
> For example, the Messiah has **given you so many things**. He has helped you with all you say and all you know. (1 Corinthians 1:5 UST)

Paul uses a metaphor of material wealth, expressed in the word "rich." Even though he immediately explains what he means—"in all speech and with all knowledge"—some readers might not understand. The UST presents the idea in a different way, without using the metaphor of material wealth. (See Metaphor.)

> See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**, (Matthew 10:16a ULT)
>
> Take note: When I send you out, you will be **as defenseless as sheep, among people who are as dangerous as wolves**. (Matthew 10:16a UST)

Jesus uses a simile that compares his apostles going to others as sheep going out among wolves. Some readers might not understand how the apostles would be like sheep while the other people would be like wolves. The UST clarifies that the apostles would be defenseless, and that their enemies would be dangerous. (See Simile.)

> You are cut off from Christ, **whoever is justified by the law**; you have fallen from grace. (Galatians 5:4 ULT)
>
> **If you expect God to declare you good in his sight because you try to keep the law**, you have separated yourself from the Messiah; God will no longer act kindly toward you. (Galatians 5:4 UST)

Paul uses irony when he refers to them as being justified by the law. He had already taught them that no one can be justified by the law. The ULT uses quote marks around "justified" to show that Paul did not really believe that they were justified by the law. The UST translates the same idea by making it clear that it was what the other people believed. (See Irony.)

Abstract Expressions

The ULT often uses abstract nouns, adjectives, and other parts of speech because it tries to closely resemble the biblical texts. The UST tries not to use such abstract expressions because many languages do not use abstract expressions.

When you translate, you will have to decide how the target language prefers to present these ideas. (See Abstract Nouns.)

> For in everything you have been made rich in him, in **all speech** and **all knowledge**. (1 Corinthians 1:5 ULT)
>
> For example, the Messiah has given you so many things. He has **helped you with all you say** and **all you know**. (1 Corinthians 1:5 UST)

Here the ULT expressions "all speech" and "all knowledge" are abstract noun expressions. One problem with them is that readers might not know who is supposed to do the speaking and what they are to speak, or who is doing the knowing and what it is that they know. The UST answers these questions.

Conclusion

In summary, the ULT will help you translate because it can help you understand to a great degree what form the original biblical texts have. The UST can help you translate because it

can help make the ULT text's meaning clear, and also because it can give you various possible ways to make the ideas in the biblical text clear in your own translation and cultural setting.

Use the Translation Helps when Translating

Notes with Links

There are two types of links in the translationNotes: links to an unfoldingWord® Translation Academy topic page and links for repeated words or phrases within the same book.

unfoldingWord® Translation Academy Topics

The unfoldingWord® Translation Academy topics are intended to enable anyone, anywhere to learn the basics of how to translate the Bible into their own language. They are intended to be highly flexible for just-in-time learning in either online or offline mobile video formats.

Each translationNote follows a phrase from the ULT and will provide immediate help on how to translate that phrase. Sometimes there will be a statement in parentheses at the end of the suggested translation that may look like this: (See: *Metaphor*). The word or words in blue or green are a link to an unfoldingWord® Translation Academy topic. In the translationNote, you can click on the link to learn more about the topic.

There are several reasons to read the unfoldingWord® Translation Academy topic information:

- Learning about the topic will help the translator to translate more accurately.
- The topics have been chosen to provide a basic understanding of the principles and strategies of translation.

Examples

- **evening and morning** — This refers to the whole day. Two parts of the day are used to refer to the whole day. In the Jewish culture, a day begins when the sun sets. (See: *Merism*)
- **walking** — “obeying” (See: *Metaphor*)
- **made it known** — “communicated it” (See: *Idiom*)

Repeated Phrases in a Book

Sometimes a phrase is used multiple times in one book. When this happens, there will be a link in the translationNotes (the blue or green chapter and verse numbers that you can click on) that will take you back to where you have translated that phrase before. There are several reasons why you will want to go to the place where the word or phrase was translated before:

- This will make it easier for you to translate this phrase by reminding you of how you have already translated it.
- This will make your translation faster and more consistent because you will be reminded to translate that phrase in the same way each time.

If a translation that you have used before for the same phrase does not fit a new context, then you will need to think of a new way to translate it. In this case, you should make a note of it and discuss it with others on the translation team.

These links will only take you back to Notes in the same book that you are working on, not to Notes in other books. (The links in the examples below are not functional).

Examples

- **be fruitful and multiply** — See how you translated these commands in Genesis 1:28.
- **everything that creeps along the ground** — This includes all types of small animals. See how you translated this in Genesis 1:25.
- **will be blessed in him** — Alternate Translation: “will be blessed because of Abraham” or “will be blessed because I have blessed Abraham.” For translating “in him,” see how you translated “through you” in Genesis 12:3.

Using the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes

Translation Notes

Translation Notes are short explanations of words or phrases from the ULT. These notes are designed to help a translator to know what the text means, and to give ideas for how to express that meaning in the target language. In our software tools, the current verse of the ULT is visible to the translator and the part of the verse that the Note addresses is highlighted in yellow. Since we cannot reproduce highlighting in this resource, we will represent the highlighting with *italics*. Any part of the verse that is quoted in the note is in bold. Below is a verse of the ULT, followed by a typical note.

> For I am already being poured out, and *the time of my departure is here*. (2 Timothy 4:6 ULT)

Paul is referring to his death as a **departure**. This is a delicate way of referring to something unpleasant. Alternate translation: “soon I will die and leave this world” (See: euphemism)

Most notes are written in sentence style. After a short explanation, most notes also offer one or more alternate translations. These are suggestions for how the translator might express the same meaning as that of the highlighted word or phrase in the ULT, in case the expression in the ULT is not clear. After the alternate translation, most notes include a link to an article in Translation Academy that explains the translation issue in more detail.

Types of Notes

There are many different types of notes in the Translation Notes. Each type of Note gives the explanation in a different way. Knowing the type of note will help you (the translator) make decisions on the best way to translate the Bible text into your language.

- **Notes with Definitions** — Sometimes you may not know what a word in the ULT means. Simple definitions of words or phrases are added without quotes or sentence format.
- **Notes that Explain** — Simple explanations about words or phrases are in sentence format.
- **Notes that suggest other ways to translate** — Because there are many different kinds of these Notes, they are explained in more detail below.

Suggested Translations

There are several types of suggested translations.

- **Notes with Synonyms and Equivalent Phrases** — Sometimes the Notes provide a translation suggestion that can replace the word or phrase in the ULT. These replacements can fit into the sentence without changing the meaning of the sentence. These are synonyms and equivalent phrases and are written in double quotes. These mean the same as the text in the ULT.

- **Notes with Alternate Translations** — An Alternate translation is a suggested change to the form or content of the ULT because the target language may prefer a different form. The Alternate translation should only be used when the ULT form or content is not accurate or natural in your language.

- **Notes that Clarify the UST Translation** — When the UST provides a good Alternate translation for the ULT, then there may be no Note providing an Alternate translation. However, on occasion, a Note will provide Alternate translations in addition to the text from the UST, and sometimes it will quote the text from the UST as an Alternate translation. In that case, the Note will say "(UST)" after the text from the UST.

- **Notes that have Alternate Meanings** — Some Notes provide Alternate Meanings when a word or phrase can be understood in more than one way. When this happens, the Note will put the most probable meaning first.

- **Notes with Probable or Possible Meanings** — Sometimes Bible scholars do not know for sure, or do not agree on, what a particular phrase or sentence in the Bible means. Some reasons for this include: there are minor differences in the ancient Bible texts, or a word may have more than one meaning or use, or it may not be clear what a word (such as a pronoun) refers to in a particular phrase. In this case, the Note will give the most probable meaning or will list several possible meanings with the most probable meaning first.

- **Notes that Identify Figures of Speech** — When there is a Figure of Speech in the ULT text, then the notes will provide an explanation of how to translate that Figure of Speech. Sometimes an Alternate Translation is provided. There will also be a link to the unfoldingWord® Translation Academy page for additional information and translation strategies to help the translator accurately translate the meaning of that type of Figure of Speech.

- **Notes that Identify Indirect and Direct Quotes** — There are two kinds of quotations: direct quotation and indirect quotation. When translating a quotation, translators need to decide whether to translate it as a direct quotation or an indirect quotation. These Notes will alert the translator to the choice that needs to be made.

- **Notes for Long ULT Phrases** — Sometimes there is a Note which refers to a phrase and then other Notes which refer to portions of that phrase. In that case, the Note for the longer phrase is first, and the Notes for its smaller parts follow afterward. In that way, the Notes can give translation suggestions or explanations for the whole as well as each part.

Using the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes

Connecting Statement and General Information in the Notes

Description

Sometimes, at the top of the list of Notes, there are Notes that start with "Connecting Statement" or "General Information."

A Connecting Statement tells how a chunk of text is related to the chunk(s) that came before it. Here are some of the kinds of information that may be revealed in the connecting statements:

- whether this chunk is at the beginning, middle, or end of a passage
- who is speaking
- to whom the speaker is speaking

A General Information Note tells about issues in the chunk that cover more than one phrase. The following are some of the kinds of information that appear in a general information statement:

- the person or thing that a pronoun refers to
- important background or implied information that is needed to understand the text in the chunk
- logical arguments and conclusions

Both types of Notes are to help you understand the passage better and be aware of issues that you might need to address in translation.

Examples

Whether this chunk is at the beginning, continuation, or end of a passage

> 1 It came about that when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he departed from there to teach and preach in their cities. 2 Now when John heard in the prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent a message by his disciples 3 and said to him, "Are you the one who is coming, or should we look for another?" (Matthew 11:1-3 ULT)

> 1 It came about that when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he departed from there to teach and preach in their cities. 2 Now when John heard in the prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent a message by his disciples 3 and said to him, "Are you the Coming One, or is there another person we should be looking for?" (Matthew 11:1-3 ULT)

- **General Information**: — This is the beginning of a new part of the story where the writer tells of how Jesus responded to disciples of John the Baptist. (See: *Introduction of New Event*)

This Note alerts you to the beginning of a new part of a story and gives you a link to a page that tells more about new events and issues concerning translating them.

Who is speaking

> [17] For he was numbered with us and received his share of this ministry. [18] (Now indeed this man bought a field with the earnings from his wickedness, and he fell headfirst, and his belly burst open, and all his inward parts poured out. [19] It became known to all those living in Jerusalem, so they called that field in their own language "Akeldama," that is, "Field of Blood.") (Acts 1:17-19 ULT)
>
> - **Connecting Statement:** — Peter continues his speech to the believers that he began in Acts 1:16.

This Note tells you that it is still Peter speaking in verse 17 so you can mark that correctly in your language.

The person or thing that pronouns refer to

> [20] Then Isaiah is very bold when he says,
> "I was found by those who did not seek me.
> I appeared to those who did not ask for me."
> [21] But to Israel he says, "All the day long I reached out my hands
> to a disobedient and stubborn people." (Romans 10:20-21 ULT)

- **General Information:** — Here the words "I," "me," and "my" refer to God.

This Note lets you know who the pronouns refer to. You may need to add something so that readers will know that Isaiah is not speaking for himself, but is quoting what God said.

Important background or implied information

> [26] Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is in a desert.) [27] So he arose and went. Now there was a man from Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. He was over all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship. [28] He was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah. (Acts 8:26-28 ULT)

- **General Information:** — This is the beginning of the part of the story about Philip and the man from Ethiopia. Verse 27 gives background information about the man from Ethiopia. (See: _Background_s)

This Note alerts you to the beginning of a new part of a story and to some background information so you can be aware of these things and use your language's ways of showing these things. The Note includes a link to the page about background information so you can learn more about how to translate that kind of information.

Notes with Definitions

Description

Sometimes you may not know what a word in the ULT means. The Notes may have a definition or a description of the word or phrase to help you understand what it means.

Translation Notes Examples

Simple definitions of words or phrases are added without quotes or sentence format. Here are examples:

> It is like children sitting the marketplace, who call out to one another and say, “We played a **flute** for you.” (Matthew 11:16b-17a ULT)

- **marketplace** — a large, open-air area where people would come to sell their goods
- **flute** — a long, hollow musical instrument which is played by blowing air in or over one end

> Behold, those in expensive clothing and living in luxury are in **kings’ palaces.** (Luke 7:25b ULT)

- **kings’ palaces** — the large, expensive houses that kings live in

Translation Principles

- Use words that are already part of your language if possible.
- Keep expressions short if possible.
- Represent God’s commands and historical facts accurately.

Translation Strategies

See Translate Unknowns for more information on translating words or phrases that are not known in your language.

Notes that Explain

Description

Sometimes you may not know what a word or phrase means in the ULT, and it may also be used in the UST. In this case, it will be explained in the Notes. These explanations are meant to help you understand the word or phrase. Do not translate the explanations into your Bible. Use them to help you understand the meaning so you can translate the Bible text correctly.

Translation Notes Examples

Simple explanations about words or phrases are written as full sentences. They begin with a capital letter and end with a period (“.”).

> The fishermen had gotten out of them and were **washing their nets**. (Luke 5:2b ULT)

- **washing their nets** — They were cleaning their fishing nets in order to use them again to catch fish.

If you did not know that fishermen used nets to catch fish, you might wonder why the fishermen were cleaning their nets. This explanation can help you choose good words for “were washing” and “nets.”

> And they **signaled** to their partners in the other boat (Luke 5:7a ULT)

- **signaled** — They were too far from shore to call so they made gestures, probably waving their arms.

This Note can help you understand what kind of signal the people made. It was an action that people would be able to see from a distance. This will help you choose a good word or phrase for “signaled.”

> He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, **even from his mother’s womb**. (Luke 1:15b ULT)

- **even from his mother’s womb** — The word “even” here indicates that this is especially surprising news. People had been filled with the Holy Spirit before, but no one had heard of an unborn baby being filled with the Holy Spirit.

This Note can help you understand what the word “even” means in this sentence so that you can find a way of showing how surprising this was.

Notes with Synonyms and Equivalent Phrases

Description

Some Notes provide a translation suggestion ("Alternate translation") that can replace the word or phrase that they quote from the ULT. These replacements can fit into the sentence without changing the meaning of the sentence. These synonyms and equivalent phrases are enclosed in double-quotes. They mean the same as the text in the ULT. This kind of Note can help you to think of other ways to say the same thing in case the word or phrase in the ULT does not seem to have a natural equivalent in your language.

Translation Notes Examples

> Make ready **the way** of the Lord, (Luke 3:4b ULT)

- **the way** — "the path" or "the road"

In this example, the words "the path" or the words "the road" can replace the words "the way" found in the ULT. You can decide whether it is natural to say "way," "path," or "road" in your language.

> **Likewise, deacons** must be dignified, not double-talkers. (1 Timothy 3:8a ULT)

- **Deacons, likewise** — "In the same way, deacons" or "Deacons, like overseers"

In this example, the words "In the same way, deacons" or "Deacons, like overseers" can replace the words "Likewise, deacons" in the ULT. You, as the translator, can decide what is natural for your language.

Notes with Alternate Translations

Description

An Alternate translation is a possible way to change the form of the ULT in case the target language either prefers or needs a different form. The Alternate translation should be used when the ULT form or content would give a wrong meaning, or would be unclear or unnatural.

For example, the alternate translation suggestion may involve stating implicit information clearly, changing passive voice to active, or rewording rhetorical questions as statements. The Notes often explain why there is an Alternate translation and have a link to a page that explains the topic.

Translation Notes Examples

Some purposes and examples of Alternate translations are:

Making Implicit Information Clear

> It is the law of the Medes and Persians, that **no decree or statute that the king issues can be changed**. (Daniel 6:15b ULT)

- **no decree … can be changed** — An additional sentence may be added here to aid in understanding. Alternate translation: "no decree … can be changed. So they must throw Daniel into the pit of lions." (See: *Explicit*)

The additional sentence shows what the speaker wanted the king to understand from his reminder that the king's decrees and statues cannot be changed. In the translation, you (the translator) may need to state clearly some things that the original speaker or writer left unstated or implicit.

Passive to Active

> To the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, **it will not be forgiven**. (Luke 12:10b ULT)

- **it will not be forgiven** — This can be expressed with an active verb. Alternate translation: God will not forgive him. This can also be expressed in a positive way using a verb that means the opposite of "forgive." Alternate translation: "God will consider him guilty forever" (See: *Active Passive*)

This Note provides an example of how translators can translate this passive sentence if their languages do not use passive sentences.

Rhetorical Question

> Saul, Saul, **why are you persecuting me?** (Acts 9:4b ULT)

- **why are you persecuting me?** — This rhetorical question communicates a rebuke to Saul. In some languages, a statement would be more natural (Alternate Translation):

> "You are persecuting me!" or a command might be more natural (Alternate translation): "Stop persecuting me!" (See: *Rhetorical Questions*)

The translation suggestion here provides an alternate way to translate the rhetorical question if your language does not use that form of rhetorical question to rebuke someone.

Notes that Clarify the UST Translation

Description

Sometimes a Note suggests a translation from the UST. In that case the text from the UST will be followed by "(UST)."

Translation Notes Examples

> He who **sits in the heavens** will sneer at them. (Psalms 2:4a **ULT**)
>
> But the one who **sits on his throne in heaven** laughs at them. (Psalms 2:4a **UST**)

The Note for this verse says:

- **sits in the heavens** — Here, **sitting** represents ruling. What he sits on can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "rules in the heavens" or "sits on his throne in heaven" (UST) (See Metonymy)

Here there are two suggested translations for the phrase "sits in the heavens." The first expresses clearly what "sits in the heavens" represents. The second gives a hint about the idea of ruling by stated clearly that he sits on his "throne." This suggestion is from the UST.

> And he saw Jesus, **fell on his face**, and begged him. (Luke 5:12b **ULT**)
>
> When he saw Jesus, **he bowed down to the ground**. (Luke 5:12b **UST**)

The Note for this verse says:

- **he fell on his face** — "he knelt and touched the ground with his face" or "he bowed down to the ground" (UST)

Here the words from the UST are provided as another translation suggestion.

Notes that have Alternate Meanings

Description

Alternate meanings refer to situations where Bible scholars have different understandings of what a word or phrase means.

The note will have the ULT text followed by an explanation starting with the words "Possible meanings are." The meanings are numbered, and the first one is the one that Bible scholars consider the most likely to be correct. If a meaning is given in a way that it can be used as a translation, it will have quote marks around it.

In these cases, you (the translator) need to decide which meaning to translate. Translators may choose the first meaning, or they may choose one of the other meanings if the people in their community use and respect another Bible version that has one of those other meanings.

Translation Notes Examples

> But take a small number of hairs from them and tie them into **the folds of your robe**. (Ezekiel 5:3 ULT)

- **the folds of your robe** — Possible meanings are: (1) "the cloth on your arms" ("your sleeves") (UST) or (2) "the end of the cloth on your robe" ("your hem") or (3) the fold in the garment where it is tucked into the belt.

This note has the ULT text followed by three possible meanings. The word translated as "the folds of your robe" refers to the loose parts of the robe. Most scholars believe it refers here to the sleeves, but it could also refer to the loose part at the bottom or also to the folds in the middle, around the belt.

> But when Simon Peter saw it, he **fell down at the knees of Jesus.** (Luke 5:8a ULT)

- **fell down at Jesus' knees** — Possible meanings are (1) "knelt down before Jesus" or (2) "bowed down at Jesus' feet" or (3) "lay down on the ground at Jesus' feet." Peter did not fall accidentally. He did this as a sign of humility and respect for Jesus.

This note explains what "fell down at Jesus' knees" might mean. The first meaning is most likely correct, but the other meanings are also possible. If your language does not have a general expression that could include various actions like these, you may need to choose one of these possibilities that describe more specifically what Simon Peter did. It is also helpful to think about why Simon Peter did this, and what kind of action would communicate the same attitude of humility and respect in your culture.

Notes with Probable or Possible Meanings

Description

Sometimes Bible scholars do not know for sure, or do not agree on, what a particular phrase or sentence in the Bible means. Some reasons for this include:

- there are minor differences in the ancient Bible texts
- a word may have more than one meaning or use
- it may not be clear what a word (such as a pronoun) refers to in a particular phrase

Translation Notes Examples

When many scholars say that a word or phrase means one thing, and many others say that it means other things, we show the most common meanings that they give. Our notes for these situations begin with "Possible meanings are" and then give a **numbered list**. We recommend that you use the first meaning given. However, if people in your community have access to another Bible that uses one of the other possible meanings, you may decide that it is better to use that meaning.

> But when Simon Peter saw it, he **fell down at the knees of Jesus**, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord." (Luke 5:8 ULT)

- **fell down at the knees of Jesus** — Possible meanings are: (1) "knelt down before Jesus" or (2) "bowed down at Jesus feet" or (3) "lay down on the ground at Jesus feet." Peter did not fall accidentally. He did this as a sign of humility and respect for Jesus.

Translation Strategies

(1) Translate it in such a way that the reader could understand either meaning as a possibility.
(2) If it is not possible to do that in your language, then choose a meaning and translate it with that meaning.
(3) If not choosing a meaning would make it hard for the readers to understand the passage in general, then choose a meaning and translate it with that meaning.

Notes that Identify Figures of Speech

Description

Figures of speech are ways of saying things that use words in non-literal ways. That is, the meaning of a figure of speech is not the same as the more direct meaning of its words. There are many different types of figures of speech.

In the translationNotes there will be an explanation about the meaning of a figure of speech that is in the passage. Sometimes an alternate translation is provided. This is marked as "Alternate Translation:". There will also be a link to an unfoldingWord® Translation Academy (UTA) page that gives additional information and translation strategies for that kind of figure of speech.

In order to translate the meaning, you need to be able to recognize the figure of speech and know what it means in the source language. Then you can choose either a figure of speech or a direct way to communicate that same meaning in the target language.

Translation Notes Examples

Note: When you are viewing the actual translationNote, you can click on the link to learn about figures of speech and general strategies for translating them. However, the links to UTA articles in the examples below are not functional.

> Many will come **in my name** and say, 'I am he,' and they will lead many astray. (Mark 13:6 ULT)

- **in my name** — Possible meanings are (Alternate translation:) (1) "claiming my authority" or (2) "claiming that God sent them." (See: *Metonymy* and *Idiom*)

The figure of speech in this Note is called a metonymy. The phrase "in my name" does not refer to the speaker's name (Jesus), but to his person and authority. (Thus, in this context, the word "name" is a *metonym* for the ideas of "person/authority.") The Note explains the metonymy in this passage by giving two alternate translations. After that, there is a link to the UTA page about metonymy. Click on the link to learn about metonymy and general strategies for translating metonyms. Because this phrase is also a common idiom, the Note includes a link to the UTA page that explains idioms.

> "**You offspring of vipers**! Who warned you to flee from the wrath that is coming?" (Luke 3:7b ULT)

- **You offspring of vipers** — In this metaphor, John compares the crowd to vipers, which were deadly or dangerous snakes that represent evil. Alternate translation: "you evil poisonous snakes" or "people should stay away from you just like they avoid poisonous snakes" (See: *Metaphor*)

The figure of speech in this Note is called a metaphor. The Note explains the metaphor and gives two alternate translations. After that, there is a link to the UTA page about metaphors.

Notes that Identify Indirect and Direct Quotes

Description

There are two kinds of quotations: direct quotation and indirect quotation. When translating a quotation, translators need to decide whether to translate it as a direct quotation or an indirect quotation. (See Direct and Indirect Quotations.)

When there is a direct or indirect quote in the ULT, the Notes may have an option for translating it as the other kind of quote. The translation suggestion may start with "It can be translated as a direct quote:" or "It can be translated as an indirect quote:" and it will be followed by that kind of quote. This will be followed by a link to the information page called "Direct and Indirect Quotations" that explains both kinds of quotations.

There may be a Note about direct and indirect quotes when a quote has another quote inside of it, because these can be confusing. In some languages it may be more natural to translate one of these quotes with a direct quote and the other quote with an indirect quote. The note will end with a link to the information page called "Quotes within Quotes."

Translation Notes Examples

> He commanded him **to tell no one**. (Luke 5:14a ULT)

- **to tell no one** — This can be translated as a direct quote: "Do not tell anyone" There is implied information that can also be stated explicitly (Alternate translation): "do not tell anyone that you have been healed" (See: *Direct and Indirect Quotations* and *Ellipsis*)

Here the translationNote shows how to change the indirect quote to a direct quote, in case that would be clearer or more natural in the target language.

> At the time of the harvest **I will say to the reapers, "First pull out the weeds and tie them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn**." (Matthew 13:30 ULT)

- **I will say to the reapers, "First pull out the weeds and tie them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn"** — You can translate this as an indirect quote: "I will tell the reapers to first gather up the weeds and tie them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn." (See: *Direct and Indirect Quotations*)

Here the translationNote shows how to change the direct quote to an indirect quote, in case that would be clearer or more natural in the target language. Do not use quotation marks around Indirect quotes. They were used here only to make it clear what you could say as an indirect quote.

Notes for Long ULT Phrases

Description

Sometimes there are notes for a phrase and separate notes for portions of that phrase. In that case, the larger phrase is explained first, and its parts afterward.

Translation Notes Examples

> **But it is to the extent of your hardness and unrepentant heart** that you are storing up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath. (Romans 2:5a ULT)

- **But it is to the extent of your hardness and unrepentant heart** — Paul uses a metaphor to compare a person who refuses to obey God to something hard, like a stone. He also uses the metonym "heart" to represent the whole person. Alternate translation: "it is because you refuse to listen and repent" (See: *Metaphor* and *Metonymy*)
- **hardness and unrepentant heart** — The phrase "unrepentant heart" explains the word "hardness" (See: *Doublet*)

In this example the first note explains the metaphor and the metonym in the longer phrase as a whole, and the second note explains the doublet within the longer phrase.

Using unfoldingWord® Translation Words

unfoldingWord® Translation Words

As a translator, it is your duty to do your best to make sure that each Bible passage you translate has the meaning that the writer of that Bible passage intended it to communicate. In order to do this, you will need to study translation helps prepared by Bible scholars, including the unfoldingWord® Translation Words resource.

In order to use unfoldingWord® Translation Words, follow these steps:

1. Identify the important words and any words in the source text that are difficult to understand or have an uncertain meaning.
2. Look in translationStudio at the section called "unfoldingWord® Translation Words."
3. Find the words that you identified as important or difficult, and click on the first one.
4. Read the unfoldingWord® Translation Words entry for that word.
5. After reading the definition, read the Bible passage again, thinking about the definition that you read in unfoldingWord® Translation Words.
6. Think of possible ways to translate the word in your language that fit the Bible context and the definition. It can be helpful to compare words and phrases in your language that have similar meaning, and try each one.
7. Choose the one that you think is best and write it down.
8. Repeat the above steps for other unfoldingWord® Translation Words that you identified.
9. When you have thought of a good translation for each of the unfoldingWord® Translation Words, then translate the whole passage.
10. Test your translated passage by reading it to others. Change to a different word or phrase in places where others do not understand the meaning.

Once you have found a good translation for a term, you should use it consistently throughout the translation. If you find a place where that translation does not fit, then think through the process again. It could be that a word with similar meaning will fit better in the new context. Keep track of which word or words you are using to translate each term and make this information available to everyone on the translation team. This will help everyone on the translation team to know which words they should be using.

Unknown Ideas

Sometimes a word refers to a thing or custom that is unknown in the target language. Possible solutions are to use a descriptive phrase, substitute something similar, use a foreign word from another language, use a more general word, or use more specific words. See the lesson on Translate Unknowns for more information.

One kind of 'unknown idea' are words that refer to Jewish and Christian religious customs and beliefs. Some common unknown ideas are:

Names of places, such as:

- temple (a building where the Israelites offered sacrifices to God)
- synagogue (a building where Jewish people assemble to worship God)

- sacrificial altar (a raised structure on which sacrifices were burned as gifts, or offerings, to God.)

Titles of people who hold an office, such as:

- priest (someone who is chosen to offer sacrifices to God on behalf of his people)
- pharisee (important group of Israel's religious leaders in Jesus' time)
- prophet (person who delivers messages that come directly from God)
- Son of Man
- Son of God
- king (ruler of an independent city, state or country).

Key Biblical Concepts, such as:

- forgiveness (to not resent that person and not be angry at him for doing something hurtful)
- salvation (being saved or rescued from evil, enemies, or from danger)
- redemption (the act of buying back something that was previously owned or that was held captive)
- mercy (helping people who are in need)
- grace (help or regard that is given to someone who has not earned it)

Notice that all of these are nouns, but they represent events, so they may need to be translated by verb (action) clauses.

You may need to discuss the definitions of these unfoldingWord® Translation Words with other members of the translation team or people from your church or village in order to discover the best way to translate them.

Using unfoldingWord® Translation Questions

As a translator, it is your duty to do your best to make sure that each Bible passage you translate has the meaning that the writer of that Bible passage intended it to communicate. In order to do this, you will need to study translation helps prepared by Bible scholars, including the translationQuestions.

The translationQuestions (tQ) are based on the text of the ULT, but they can be used to check any Bible translation. They ask questions about the content of the Bible. This content should not change as it is translated into different languages. Along with each question, tQ provides a suggested answer for that question. You can use these sets of questions and answers as a way to check the accuracy of your translation, and you can also use them with members of the language community.

Using tQ during community checks will help the translator to know if the target language translation is clearly communicating the right thing. If the community member cannot correctly answer the questions after hearing the translation of the Bible chapter, then the translation is not clear or not accurate at those places and probably needs to be improved.

Checking Translations with tQ

In order to use tQ when doing a self-check, follow these steps:

1. Translate a passage, or chapter, of the Bible.
2. Look at the section called “Questions.”
3. Read the question entry for that passage.
4. Think of the answer from the translation. Try to not answer from what you know from other Bible translations.
5. Click on the question to have the answer displayed.
6. If your answer is correct, you may have done a good translation. But remember, you still need to test the translation with the language community to see if it communicates that same meaning to others.

In order to use tQ for a community check, follow these steps:

1. Read the newly-completed translation of a Bible chapter or passage to one or more community members.
2. Tell the listeners to only answer the questions from this translation and to not answer using what they know from other translations of the Bible. This is a test of the translation, not of the people. Because of this, testing the translation with people who do not know the Bible well is very useful.
3. Look at the section called “Questions.”
4. Read the first question entry for that chapter.
5. Ask the community members to answer the question. Remind them to think of the answer only from the translation.
6. Click on the question to have the answer displayed. If the community member’s answer is very similar to the answer displayed, then the translation is clearly communicating the right thing. If the person cannot answer the question or answers the question incorrectly, that part of the translation may not be communicating well and may need to be changed.

7. Continue with the rest of the questions for the chapter.

Just-in-Time Learning Modules

Translation Issues

Alternative Readings

Description

In some places in the traditional Hebrew text of the Bible as we have it today, there are words or phrases that some scribes or translators have thought to be incorrect or unacceptable in some way. Their proposals for what the text was originally can be put into three groups.

1. Corrections of the scribes

Sometimes it seems that the earlier scribe made an error while copying the text, and so a later scribe recommended a correction. In other cases, a later scribe wanted to update the spelling, grammar, or vocabulary, or he wanted to replace objectionable words with something more acceptable. In many cases, the later scribes put notes in the margin that tell people who are reading the Scriptures out loud to say something different from what is in the written text. Scribes developed this system both to preserve wording that they thought might be original and to encourage readers to speak a more acceptable or understandable word or phrase.

1. Readings from ancient translations

Sometimes there are words or phrases in the Hebrew text that do not seem to make sense or it seems that there are words missing. In these cases, we can look to ancient translations of the Hebrew that may have been made before the problem entered the Hebrew text, such as the ancient Greek and Syriac translations. It may be that these translations preserve the original reading in these places.

1. Proposals of modern scholars

Some of the words or phrases that do not seem to make sense in the Hebrew text as we have it today are equally problematic in the ancient translations. This may mean that the problem entered the Hebrew text before the ancient translation was made. In some of these cases, scholars have proposed that the scribe mistook one word for a different word that has a very similar spelling. Also, the original Hebrew text contained only the consonants of the words and the vowels were added hundreds of years later. In some cases, it seems that the later scribe divided the consonants incorrectly or added the vowels of the wrong word. In these cases, scholars have proposed that a simple correction would be to group the consonants differently or to change the vowels.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

In order to make the best translation possible, translators need to know what is the best source text for their translation. Wherever there may be errors or problems in the source text, they need to know what both ancient scribes and modern scholars consider to be the most likely solution to that problem that best represents what the original text said.

Examples from the Bible

> **when** they spoke to him day after day, he did not listen to them. (Esther 3:4 text)

In the margin of the Hebrew text, a scribe has suggested a different word:

> **as** they spoke to him day after day, he did not listen to them. (Esther 3:4 margin)

In the following examples of the Hebrew text from Ruth, Naomi is speaking to Ruth about visiting Boaz at the threshing floor. In the Hebrew text, Naomi speaks as though she were doing these actions herself. This may be because the child that will be born to Ruth and Boaz will be considered to belong to Naomi (Ruth 4:16-17). But to avoid confusion, a scribe made a note in the margin to read the text as instructions to Ruth:

> **I will go down** to the threshing floor (Ruth 3:3 text)
>
> **go down** to the threshing floor (Ruth 3:3 margin)
>
> Then go and uncover his feet **and I will lie down** (Ruth 3:4 text)
>
> Then go and uncover his feet **and lie down** (Ruth 3:4 margin)

In the following examples, it seems that the Hebrew scribe skipped over the numbers. They can be supplied, however, from some manuscripts of the ancient Greek translation:

> Saul {was} a son of **a year** in his becoming king, and he reigned over Israel **two years**. (1 Sam 13:1 ULT)
>
> Saul {was} a son of **thirty years** in his becoming king, and he reigned over Israel **forty-two years**. (ancient Greek translation)

In Psalm 103:5, the word “ornaments” does not seem to make any sense. It seems that the scribe mistook it for a similar word that means “existence.” Modern scholars propose using that other word instead:

> The one satisfying your **ornaments** with good; (Psalm 103:5 ULT)
>
> The one satisfying your **existence** with good; (proposed alternate reading)

Translation Strategies

• Decide which reading to follow: Discuss as a team whether you will translate the written text or translate the reading that marginal notes or modern scholars suggest. It may be best to decide this on a case-by-case basis. If a translation of the Bible already exists in your region and the readers of your translation will be familiar with it, consider using the readings that it translates.

• Use footnotes for significant differences: If the written text and the marginal or suggested text have different meanings or implications that could affect readers’ understanding of the text, provide a footnote to explain both readings.

• Consider how your translation will sound when read aloud: Even if you decide generally to translate the written text, you may wish to follow the marginal instructions and substitute different language when the written text uses words that might not be appropriate for public reading. You can put the reading of the written text in a footnote.

• Consult church communities and leaders for difficult cases: For readings that may be controversial or theologically sensitive, discuss options with church communities and leaders as part of the translation-checking process.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(Ruth 3:4) Then go and uncover his feet and lie down^1^

^1^From the marginal reading. The Hebrew says, "…and I will lie down."

(1 Samuel 13:1) Saul {was} a son of thirty years in his becoming king, and he reigned over Israel forty-two years.^2^

^2^From the ancient Greek translation. The Hebrew says, "Saul {was} a son of a year in his becoming king, and he reigned over Israel two years."

(Psalm 103:5) The one satisfying your ornaments with good;^3^

^3^The original reading may have been, "The one satisfying your existence with good;"

This page answers the question:

Why does the ULT have some different readings from other Bible translations?

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

• Textual Variants (How to handle differences between manuscripts)

• Create Accurate Translations (Ensuring the meaning is faithfully communicated)

• Create Church-Approved Translations (Involving church networks in the translation process)

Next we recommend you learn about:

• Create Authoritative Translations

Textual Variants

Description

Thousands of years ago, people wrote the books of the Bible. Other people then copied them by hand and translated them. They did this work very carefully, and over the years many people made thousands of copies. However, people who looked at them later saw that there were small differences between them. Some copiers accidentally left out some words, or some mistook one word for another that looked like it. Occasionally, they added words or even whole sentences, either by accident or because they wanted to explain something. Modern Bibles are translations of the old copies. Some modern Bibles include some of these sentences that were added. In the ULT, these added sentences are usually written in footnotes.

Bible scholars have read many old copies and compared them with each other. For each place in the Bible where there was a difference, they have figured out which wordings are most likely correct. The translators of the ULT based the ULT New Testament on wordings that scholars say are most likely correct. The ULT Old Testament is based on the Westminster Leningrad Codex, which is considered to be the best representative of the ancient copies. Because people who use the ULT may have access to Bibles that are based on other copies, the ULT translators have sometimes included information about some of the differences between them, either in the ULT footnotes or in the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes.

Translators are encouraged to translate the text in the ULT and to write about added sentences in footnotes, as is done in the ULT. However, if the local church really wants those sentences to be included in the main text, translators may put them in the text and include a footnote about them.

Examples From the Bible

Matthew 18:10-11 ULT has a footnote about verse 11.

> 10 See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I say to you that in heaven their angels always look on the face of my Father who is in heaven. 11 [1]
>
> [1] Many authorities, some ancient, insert v. 11: **For the Son of Man came to save that which was lost.**

John 7:53-8:11 is not in the best earliest copies. It has been included in the ULT, but it is marked off with square brackets ([ ]) at the beginning and end, and there is a footnote after verse 11.

> 53 [Then everyone went to his own house … 11 She said, “No one, Lord.” Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.”] [2]
>
> [2] Some ancient manuscripts include John 7:53-8:11

Psalm 100:3 ULT follows the Westminster Leningrad Codex. It says:

> Know that Yahweh, he {is} God; he, he made us, **and not we**,

There are some other ancient copies that say:

> Know that Yahweh, he {is} God; he, he made us, **and we are his**,

There is an unfoldingWord® Translation Note at that place to tell the translator about this other reading and that either one is an acceptable choice.

Translation Strategies

When there is a textual variant, you may choose to follow the ULT or another version that you have access to.

(1) Translate the verses as they are in the ULT and include a footnote about the alternate reading such as the one that the ULT provides or one in the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes.

(2) Translate the verses as another version has them, and change the footnote so that it fits this situation.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

The translation strategies are applied to Mark 7:14-16 ULT, which has a footnote about verse 16.

> 14 He called the crowd again and said to them, “Listen to me, all of you, and
> understand. 15 There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it
> enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile
> the man.” 16 [1]
>
> [1] Some ancient manuscripts include verse 16: **If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.**

(1) Translate the verses as they are in the ULT and include the footnote that the ULT provides.

> 14 He called the crowd again and said to them, “Listen to me, all of you, and
> understand. 15 There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it
> enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile
> the man.” 16 [1]
>
> [1] Some ancient manuscripts include verse 16: **If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.**

(2) Translate the verses as another version has them, and change the footnote so that it fits this situation.

> 14 He called the crowd again and said to them, “Listen to me, all of you, and
> understand. 15There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it
> enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile
> the man. 16 If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.” [1]

[1] Some ancient manuscripts do not include verse 16.

Verse Bridges

Description

In some cases, you will see in the unfoldingWord® Simplified Text (UST) that two or more verse numbers are combined, such as 17-18. This is called a verse bridge. This means that the information in the verses was rearranged so that the story or message could be more easily understood.

> 29 These were the clans of the Horites: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, and Anah, 30 Dishon, Ezer, Dishan: these are clans of the Horites, according to their clan lists in the land of Seir. (Genesis 36:29-30 ULT)

> 29-30 The people groups who were descendants of Hor lived in Seir land. The names of the people groups are Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. (Genesis 36:29-30 UST)

In the ULT text, verses 29 and 30 are separate, and the information about the people living in Seir is at the end of verse 30. In the UST text, the verses are joined, and the information about them living in Seir is at the beginning. For many languages, this is a more logical order of information.

Examples From the Bible

Where the UST has a verse bridge, the ULT will have separate verses.

> 4-5 Yahweh our God will bless you in the land that he is giving to you. If you obey Yahweh our God and obey all the commandments that I am giving to you today, there will not be any poor people among you. (Deuteronomy 15:4-5 UST)

> 4 However, there should be no poor among you (for Yahweh will surely bless you in the land that he gives you as an inheritance to possess), 5 if only you diligently listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, to keep all these commandments that I am commanding you today. (Deuteronomy 15:4-5 ULT)

> 16-17 But Yahweh said to him, “I will not permit you to eat the fruit of the tree that will enable you to know what actions are good to do and what actions are evil to do. If you eat any fruit from that tree, on the day you eat it you will surely die. But I will permit you to eat the fruit of any of the other trees in the park.” (Genesis 2:16-17 UST)

> 16 Yahweh God commanded the man, saying, “From every tree in the garden you may freely eat. 17 But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you may not eat, for on the day that you eat from it, you will surely die.” (Genesis 2:16-17 ULT)

Translation Strategies

Order the information in a way that will be clear to your readers. If the order of information is clear as it is in the ULT, then use that order. But if the order is confusing or gives the wrong meaning, then change the order so that it is more clear.

(1) If you put information from one verse before information from an earlier verse, then combine the verses and put a hyphen between the two verse numbers.

See how to mark verses in translationStudio.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If information from one verse is put before information from an earlier verse, then combine the verses and put the verse numbers before the first verse with a hyphen between them.

> 2 You must select three cities for yourself in the middle of your land that Yahweh your God is giving you to possess. 3 You must build a road and divide the borders of your land into three parts, the land that Yahweh your God is causing you to inherit, so that everyone who kills another person may flee there. (Deuteronomy 19:2-3 ULT)
>
> 2-3 You must divide into three parts the land that he is giving to you. Then select a city in each part. You must make good roads in order that people can get to those cities easily. Someone who kills another person can escape to one of those cities to be safe. (Deuteronomy 19:2-3 UST)

Writing Styles (Discourse)

Writing Styles

Description

There are different kinds or types of writing, and each type of writing has its own purpose. Because these purposes are different, the different kinds of writing are organized in different ways. They use different verbs, different kinds of sentences, and refer to the people and things that they write about in different ways. These differences help the reader to quickly know the purpose of the writing, and they work to communicate the author's meaning in the best way.

Types of Writing

These four basic types of writing exist in every language. Each of them has a different purpose:

- **Narrative** or **Parable** — tells a story or event
- **Explanatory** — explains facts or teaches principles
- **Procedural** — tells how to do something
- **Argumentative** — tries to persuade someone to do something

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Every language has its own way of organizing these different types of writing. You (the translator) must understand the type of writing that you are translating, understand how it is organized in the source language, and also know how your language organizes this kind of writing. You must put the writing into the form that your language uses for that type of writing so that people will understand it correctly. In every translation, the way that words, sentences, and paragraphs are arranged will affect how people will understand the message.

Writing Styles

The following are ways of writing that may combine with the four basic types above. These writing styles often present challenges in translation.

- **Poetry** — expresses ideas and feelings in a beautiful way
- **Proverbs** — briefly teaches a truth or gives wise advice
- **Symbolic Language** — uses symbols to represent things and events
- **Symbolic Prophecy** — uses symbolic language to show what will happen in the future
- **Hypothetical Situations** — tells about what would happen if something were real or expresses an emotion about something that is not real

Discourse Features

The differences between the different types of writing in a language can be called their discourse features. The purpose of a particular text will influence what kinds of discourse features are used. For example, in a narrative, discourse features would include:

- telling about events that happen before and after other events
- introducing people in the story

- introducing new events in the story
- conversation and the use of quotes
- referring to people and things with nouns or pronouns

Languages have different ways of using these different discourse features. The translator will need to study the way his language does each of these things, so that his translation communicates the right message in a clear and natural way. Other types of writing have other discourse features.

Specific Discourse Topics

1. **Introduction of a New Event** — Phrases like “One day” or “It came about that” or “This is how it happened” or “Sometime after that” signal to the reader that a new event is about to be told.
2. **Introduction of New and Old Participants** — Languages have ways of introducing new people and of referring to those people again.
3. **Background Information** — An author may use background information for several reasons: (1) to add interest to the story, (2) to provide information that is important for understanding the story or (3) to explain why something in the story is important.
4. **Pronouns — When to Use Them** — Languages have patterns for how frequently to use pronouns. If that pattern is not followed, wrong meaning can result.
5. **End of Story** — Stories can end with various kinds of information. Languages have different ways of showing how that information is related to the story.
6. **Quotations and Quote Margins** — Languages have different ways of reporting what someone said.
7. **Connecting Words** — Languages have patterns for how to use connecting words (such as “and,” “but,” or “then”).

Background Information

Description

When people tell a story, they normally tell the events in the order that they happened. This sequence of events makes up the storyline. The storyline is full of action verbs that move the story along in time. But sometimes a writer may take a break from the storyline and give some information to help his listeners understand the story better. This type of information is called background information. The background information might be about things that happened before the events he has already told about, or it might explain something in the story, or it might be about something that would happen much later in the story.

Example — The bolded phrases in the story below are all background information.

Peter and John went on a hunting trip because **their village was going to have a feast the next day**. **Peter was the best hunter in the village. He once killed three wild pigs in one day!** They walked for hours through low bushes until they heard a wild pig. The pig ran, but they managed to shoot the pig and kill it. Then they tied up its legs with some rope **they had brought with them** and carried it home on a pole. When they brought it to the village, Peter's cousin saw the pig and realized that it was his own pig. Peter had mistakenly killed his cousin's pig.

Background information often tells about something that had happened earlier or something that would happen much later. Examples of these are: "their village was going to have a feast the next day," "He once killed three wild pigs in one day," and "that they had brought with them."

Often background information uses "be" verbs like "was" and "were," rather than action verbs. Examples of these are "their village was going to have a feast the next day," and "Peter **was** the best hunter in the village."

Background information can also be marked with words that tell the reader that this information is not part of the event line of the story. In this story, some of these words are "because," "once," and "had."

A writer may use background information:

- to help their listeners be interested in the story
- to help their listeners understand something in the story
- to help the listeners understand why something is important in the story
- to tell the setting of a story

    - Setting includes:
    - where the story takes place
    - when the story takes place
    - who is present when the story begins
    - what is happening when the story begins

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Languages have different ways of marking background information and storyline information.
- You (the translator) need to know the order of the events in the Bible, which information is background information, and which is storyline information.
- You will need to translate the story in a way that marks the background information in a way that your own readers will understand the order of events, which information is background information, and which is storyline information.

Examples From the Bible

> Hagar gave birth to Abram's son, and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram **was 86 years old** when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram. (Genesis 16:15-16 ULT)

The first sentence tells about two events. Hagar gave birth and Abraham named his son. The second sentence is background information about how old Abram was when those things happened.

> And Jesus himself **was beginning about 30 years old**. He **was the son (as it was assumed)** of Joseph, of Heli, (Luke 3:23 ULT)

The verses before this tell about when Jesus was baptized. This sentence introduces a section of background information about Jesus' age and ancestors (Luke 3:23-38). The story resumes in chapter 4 where it tells about Jesus going to the wilderness.

> Then **it happened on a Sabbath** that he **was going through the grain fields**, and his disciples **were picking and eating the heads of grain**, **rubbing them in their hands**. But some of the Pharisees said … (Luke 6:1-2a ULT)

These verses give the setting of the story. The events took place in a grain field on the Sabbath day. Jesus, his disciples, and some Pharisees were there, and Jesus' disciples were picking heads of grain and eating them. The main action in the story starts with the phrase, "But some of the Pharisees said …."

Translation Strategies

To keep translations clear and natural you will need to study how people tell stories in your language. Observe how your language marks background information. You may need to write down some stories in order to study this. Observe what kinds of verbs your language uses for background information and what kinds of words or other markers signal that something is background information. Do these same things when you translate, so that your translation is clear and natural and people can understand it easily.

(1) Use your language's way of showing that certain information is background information.
(2) Reorder the information so that earlier events are mentioned first. (This is not always possible when the background information is very long.)

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use your language's way of showing that certain information is background information. The examples below explain how this was done in the ULT English translations.

> **And** Jesus himself **was** beginning about 30 years old. He **was** the son **(as it was assumed)** of Joseph, of Heli. (Luke 3:23 ULT)

As here, English sometimes uses the word "and" to show that there is some kind of change in the story. The verb "was" shows that it is background information. A set of parentheses is also a way to mark background information. Here, "as it was assumed" gives background information to the phrase, "He was the son." People assumed that Joseph was Jesus' father, although his true father was God.

> Therefore, also exhorting many other things, he preached the good news to the people. But Herod the tetrarch, having been rebuked by him concerning Herodias, the wife of his brother, and **concerning all the evil things that Herod had done**, added even this to them all: He locked John up in prison. (Luke 3:18-20 ULT)

The bolded phrase happened before John rebuked Herod. In English, the helping verb "had" in "had done" shows that Herod did those things before John rebuked him.

(2) Reorder the information so that earlier events are mentioned first.

> Hagar gave birth to Abram's son, and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. **Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram**. (Genesis 16:16 ULT)

> "**When Abram was 86 years old**, Hagar gave birth to his son, and Abram named his son Ishmael."

> Therefore, also exhorting many other things, he preached the good news to the people. But Herod the tetrarch, having been rebuked by him concerning Herodias, the wife of his brother, and **concerning all the evil things that Herod had done**, added even this to them all: He locked John up in prison. (Luke 3:18-20 ULT)

The translation below reorders John's rebuke and Herod's actions.

> "Now Herod the tetrarch married his brother's wife, Herodias, and **he did many other evil things**, so John rebuked him. But then Herod did another very evil thing. He had John locked up in prison."

Blessings

Description

Blessings are short sayings that people use to ask God to do something good for another person. In the Bible, the person saying the blessing speaks or writes directly to the person who will receive the blessing. The person who says the blessing does not directly speak to God, but it is understood that God is the one who will do the good thing mentioned. It is also understood that God hears the blessing, whether he is mentioned by name or not.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Each language has its own ways of saying blessings. There are many blessings in the Bible. They need to be translated in the way that people say blessings in your language, so that people recognize them as blessings and understand what one person wants God to do for another.

Examples From the Bible

In the Bible, people often said a blessing when they met someone or when they were leaving someone or sending someone off.

In the book of Ruth, when Boaz meets his workers in the fields, he greets them with a blessing:

> Then behold, Boaz coming from Bethlehem! And he said to the reapers, “Yahweh be with you.” And they said to him, “May Yahweh bless you.” (Ruth 2:4 ULT)

Similarly, when Rebekah leaves her family, they say farewell with a blessing:

> They blessed Rebekah, and said to her, “Our sister, may you be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them.” (Genesis 24:60 ULT)

In a similar way, the writers of letters in the New Testament often wrote a blessing at the beginning of their letters as well as at the end. Here are examples from the beginning and end of Paul’s second letter to Timothy:

> Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. (2 Tim 1:2 ULT)
> The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you. (2 Tim 4:22 ULT)

Translation Strategies

Find out how people say blessings in your language. Collect a list of common blessings, noting the form of the verb, the use of certain words, and the words that are not used in a blessing but would normally be in a sentence. Also find out what differences there might be between blessings that people use when they are speaking to each other and when they are writing to each other.

If translating a blessing literally would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider doing that. If not, here are some options:

1. Add a verb if that is natural in your language.
2. Mention God as the subject of a blessing if that is natural in your language.
3. Translate the blessing in a form that is natural and clear in your language.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Add a verb if that is natural in your language.

> The Lord with your spirit. The grace with you. (2 Tim 4:22, literal from the Greek)

In the Greek of this verse, there is no verb 'be.' However, in blessings in English, it is natural to use a verb. The idea that the 'grace' from God will be or remain with the person is implied in Greek.

The Lord **be** with your spirit. Grace **be** with you. (2 Tim 4:22 ULT)

(2) Mention God as the subject of a blessing if that is natural in your language.

If people expect a blessing to refer to God in your language, you might have to provide 'God' as the subject or as the source of the blessing. In Greek and Hebrew, usually God is not explicitly mentioned in the blessing, but it is implied that God is the one acting to show his kindness to the person being addressed.

> The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you. (2 Tim 4:22 ULT)

The Lord be with your spirit. **May God give** grace to you.

> They blessed Rebekah, and said to her, "Our sister, may you be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them." (Genesis 24:60 ULT)

They blessed Rebekah, and said to her, "Our sister, may **God grant that** you be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and may **God empower** your descendants **to** possess the gate of those who hate them."

(3) Translate the blessing in a form that is natural and clear in your language.

Here are some ideas for ways that people might say a blessing in their language.

> The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you. (2 Tim 4:22 ULT)

May the Lord be with your spirit. May God cause his grace to be with you.

May you have God's presence with you. May you experience grace from God.

> "Our sister, may you be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them." (Genesis 24:60 ULT)

“Our sister, we pray to God that you may be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and appeal to him that your descendants may possess the gate of those who hate them.”

“Our sister, by God’s power you will be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and your descendants will possess the gate of those who hate them.”

End of Story

Description

There are different types of information that may be given at the end of a story. Often this is background information. This background information is different from the actions that make up the main part of the story. A book of the Bible is often made up of many smaller stories that are part of the larger story of the book itself. For example, the story of Jesus' birth is a smaller story in the larger story of the book of Luke. Each of these stories, whether large or small, can have background information at the end of it.

The following are purposes for end of story information:

- to summarize the story
- to give a conclusion about what the story means or what is important about it
- to connect a smaller story to the larger story it is a part of
- to tell the reader what happens to a specific character after the main part of the story ends
- to tell on-going action that continues after the main part of the story ends
- to tell what happens after the story as a result of the events that happened in the story itself

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages have different ways of presenting these kinds of information. If you (the translator) do not use your language's ways of doing this, readers may not know:

- that this information is ending the story
- what the purpose of the information is
- how the information is related to the story

Translation Strategies

- Translate the particular kind of information at the end of a story the way your language expresses that kind of information.
- Translate it so that people will understand how it relates to the story it is part of.
- If possible, translate the end of the story in a way that people will know where that story ends and the next begins.

Examples From the Bible

- To summarize the story

  Then the rest of the men should follow, some on planks, and some on other things from the ship. **In this way it happened that all of us were brought safely to the land.** (Acts 27:44 ULT)

- To give a conclusion about what the story means or what is important about it

Many of those who practiced magical arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of everyone. Then they counted the value of them, and found it was 50,000 pieces of silver. **So the word of the Lord was spreading and prevailing with power.** (Acts 19:19-20 ULT)

- To tell the reader what happens to a specific character after the main part of the story ends

  And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoiced in God my savior.” **And Mary stayed with her about three months and then returned to her house.** (Luke 1:46-47, 56 ULT)

- To tell on-going action that continues after the main part of the story ends

  All who those who heard it were amazed concerning the things that were spoken to them by the shepherds. **But Mary kept all the things, pondering them in her heart.** (Luke 2:18-19 ULT)

- To tell what happens after the story as a result of the events that happened in the story itself

  “Woe to you, experts in the Jewish law, because you have taken away the key of knowledge; you do not enter in yourselves, and you hinder those who are entering.” **After he went from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to fiercely oppose him and argued against him about many things, lying in wait to trap him in something from his mouth.** (Luke 11:52-54 ULT)

Hypothetical Situations

Consider these phrases: “If the sun stopped shining …” “What if the sun stopped shining …” “Suppose the sun stopped shining …” and “If only the sun had not stopped shining.” We use such expressions to set up hypothetical situations, imagining what might have happened or what could happen in the future but probably will not. We also use them to express regret or wishes. Hypothetical expressions occur often in the Bible. You (the translator) need to translate them in a way that people will know that the event did not actually happen and so that they will understand why the event was imagined.

Description

Hypothetical situations are situations that are not real. They can be in the past, present, or future. Hypothetical situations in the past and present have not happened, are not happening now, and ones in the future are not expected to happen.

People sometimes tell about conditions and what would happen if those conditions were met, but they know that these things have not happened or probably will not happen. (The conditions comprise a phrase that starts with “if.”)

- If he had lived to be 100 years old, he would have seen his grandson’s grandson. (But he did not.)
- If he lived to be 100 years old, he would still be alive today. (But he is not.)
- If he lives to be 100 years old, he will see his grandson’s grandson. (But he probably will not.)

People sometimes express wishes about things that have not happened or that are not expected to happen.

- I wish he had come.
- I wish he were here.
- I wish he would come.

People sometimes express regrets about things that have not happened or that are not expected to happen.

- If only he had come.
- If only he were here.
- If only he would come.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Translators need to recognize the different kinds of hypothetical situations in the Bible and understand that they are unreal.
- Translators need to know their own language’s ways of talking about different kinds of hypothetical situations.

Examples From the Bible

Hypothetical Situations in the Past

> "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! **If the mighty deeds had been done** in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, **they would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes." (Matthew 11:21 ULT)

Here in Matthew 11:21, Jesus said that **if** the people living in the ancient cities of Tyre and Sidon had been able to see the miracles that he performed, they would have repented long ago. The people of Tyre and Sidon did not actually see his miracles, and they did not repent. He said this to rebuke the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida who had seen his miracles and yet did not repent.

> Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, **if you had been here, my brother would not have died**." (John 11:21 ULT)

Martha said this to express her wish that Jesus would have come sooner so that her brother would not have died. But Jesus did not come sooner and her brother did die.

Hypothetical Situations in the Present

> And no man puts new wine into old wineskins. **But if he did do that, the new wine would burst the wineskins, and it would be spilled out, and the wineskins would be destroyed**. (Luke 5:37 ULT)

Jesus told about what would happen if a person were to put new wine into old wineskins. But no one would do that. He used this imaginary situation as an example to show that there are times when it is unwise to mix new things with old things. He did this so that people could understand why his disciples were not fasting as people traditionally did.

> Jesus said to them, "What man would there be among you, who, **if he had just one sheep, and if this sheep fell into a deep hole on the Sabbath, would not grasp hold of it and lift it out**?" (Matthew 12:11 ULT)

Jesus asked the religious leaders what they would do on the Sabbath if one of their sheep fell into a hole. He was not saying that their sheep would fall into a hole. He used this imaginary situation to show them that they were wrong to judge him for healing people on the Sabbath.

Hypothetical Situation in the Future

> **Unless those days are shortened, no flesh would be saved**. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened. (Matthew 24:22 ULT)

Jesus was talking about a future time when very bad things would happen. He told what would happen if those days of trouble were to last a long time. He did this to show how bad those days will be—so bad that if they lasted a long time, no one would be saved. But then he clarified that God will shorten those days of trouble so that the elect (those he has chosen) will be saved.

Expressing Emotion About a Hypothetical Situation

People sometimes talk about hypothetical situations in order to express regrets and wishes. Regrets are about the past and wishes are about the present and future.

> The Israelites said to them, "**If only we had died by Yahweh's hand in the land of Egypt when we were sitting by the pots of meat and were eating bread to the full.** For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill our whole community with hunger." (Exodus 16:3 ULT)

Here the Israelites were afraid that they would have to suffer and die of hunger in the wilderness, and so they wished that they had stayed in Egypt and died there with full stomachs. They were complaining, expressing regret that this had not happened.

> I know what you have done, and that you are neither cold nor hot. **I wish that you were either cold or hot!** (Revelation 3:15 ULT)

Jesus wished that the people were either hot or cold, but they are neither. He was rebuking them, expressing anger at this.

Translation Strategies

Find out how people speaking your language show:

- that something could have happened, but did not.
- that something could be true now, but is not.
- that something could happen in the future, but will not unless something changes.
- that they wish for something, but it does not happen.
- that they regret that something did not happen.

Use your language's ways of showing these kinds of things.

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_hypo.

Introduction of a New Event

Description

When people tell a story, they tell about an event or a series of events. Often they put certain information at the beginning of the story, such as who the story is about, when it happened, and where it happened. This information that the writer gives before the events of the story begin is called the setting of the story. Some new events in a story also have a setting because they might involve new people, new times, and new places. In some languages, people also tell if they saw the event or heard about it from someone else.

When your people tell about events, what information do they give at the beginning? Is there a certain order that they put it in? In your translation, you will need to follow the way your language introduces new information at the beginning of a story or a new event rather than the way the source language did that. In this way your translation will sound natural and communicate clearly in your language.

Examples From the Bible

> **In the days of Herod**, king of Judea, **there was a certain priest named Zechariah**, from the division of Abijah. And **his wife was** from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. (Luke 1:5 ULT)

The verses above introduce a story about Zechariah. The first bolded phrase tells when it happened, and the next two bolded phrases introduce the main people. The next two verses go on to explain that Zechariah and Elizabeth were old and did not have any children. All of this is the setting. Then the phrase “And it happened that” in Luke 1:8 helps to introduce the first event in this story:

> **And it happened that** in his performing as priest before God, in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, he came up by lot to enter into the temple of the Lord to burn incense. (Luke 1:8-9 ULT)

> **The birth of Jesus Christ happened in the following way.** His mother, Mary, was engaged to marry Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant by the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:18 ULT)

The bolded sentence above makes it explicit that a story about Jesus is being introduced. The story will tell about how the birth of Jesus happened.

> **Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king**, behold, learned men from the east arrived in Jerusalem. (Matthew 2:1 ULT)

The bolded phrase above shows that the events concerning the learned men happened **after** Jesus was born.

> **Now in those days** John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea. (Matthew 3:1-22 ULT)

The bolded phrase above shows that John the Baptist came preaching around the time of the previous events. It is probably very general and refers to when Jesus lived in Nazareth.

> **Then** Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan River to John, to be baptized by him. (Matthew 3:13 ULT)

The word "then" shows that Jesus came to the Jordan River some time after the events in the previous verses.

> Now there was **a man from the Pharisees whose name was Nicodemus, a Jewish leader**. This man came to Jesus at night. (John 3:1-2a ULT)

The author first introduced the new person and then told about what he did and when he did it. In some languages, it might be more natural to tell about the time first.

> 6 Noah was 600 years old when the flood came upon the earth. 7 Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives went into the ark together because of the waters of the flood. (Genesis 7:6-7 ULT)

Verse 6 is a statement of the events that happen in the rest of chapter 7. Chapter 6 already told about how God told Noah that there would be a flood, and how Noah prepared for it. Chapter 7 verse 6 introduces the part of the story that tells about Noah and his family and the animals going into the ship, the rain starting, and the rain flooding the earth. Some languages might need to make it clear that this verse simply introduces the event, or move this verse after verse 7. Verse 6 is not one of the events of the story. The people went into the ship before the flood came.

Translation Strategies

If the information given at the beginning of a new event is clear and natural to your readers, consider translating it as it is in the ULT or UST. If not, consider one of these strategies:

(1) Put the information that introduces the event in the order that your people put it.
(2) If readers would expect certain information but it is not in the Bible, consider using an indefinite word or phrase to fill in that information, such as: "another time" or "someone."
(3) If the introduction is a summary of the whole event, use your language's way of showing that it is a summary.
(4) If it would be strange in the target language to give a summary of the event at the beginning, indicate that the event would actually happen later in the story.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Put the information that introduces the event in the order that your people put it.

> Now there was **a man from the Pharisees whose name was Nicodemus, a Jewish leader**. This man came to Jesus at night. (John 3:1-2a ULT)
>
> > There was a **man whose name was Nicodemus. He was a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish Council**. One night he came to Jesus.
> >
> > One night **a man named Nicodemus, who was a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish Council**, came to Jesus.

> As he passed by, **he saw Levi the son of Alpheus, sitting** at the tax collector's tent, and he said to him … (Mark 2:14a ULT)
>
> > As he passed by, **Levi the son of Alpheus was sitting** at the tax collector's tent. Jesus saw him and and said to him …
> >
> > As he passed by, **there was a man sitting** at the tax collector's tent. His name was Levi, and he was the son of Alpheus. Jesus saw him and said to him …
> >
> > As he passed by, **there was a tax collector** sitting at the tax collector's tent. His name was Levi, and he was the son of Alpheus. Jesus saw him and said to him …

(2) If readers would expect certain information, but it is not in the Bible, consider using an indefinite word or phrase such as "another time," or "someone."

> Noah was 600 years old when the flood came upon the earth. (Genesis 7:6 ULT) — If people expect to be told something about when the new event happened, the phrase "after that" can help them see that it happened after the events already mentioned.
>
> > **After that**, when Noah was 600 years old, the flood came upon the earth.
>
> **Again he began** to teach beside the sea. (Mark 4:1a ULT) — In chapter 3 Jesus was teaching at someone's house. Readers may need to be told that this new event happened at another time, or that Jesus actually went to the sea.
>
> > **Another time** Jesus began to teach people again beside the sea.
> >
> > Jesus went to the sea and **began to teach people again** there.

(3) If the introduction is a summary of the whole event, use your language's way of showing that it is a summary.

> Noah was 600 years old when the flood came upon the earth. (Genesis 7:6 ULT)
>
> > **Now this is what happened when** Noah was 600 years old and the flood came upon the earth.
> >
> > **This part tells about what happened when** the flood came upon the earth. It happened when Noah was 600 years old.

(4) If it would be strange in the target language to give a summary of the event at the beginning, show that the event will actually happen later in the story.

> Noah was 600 years old when the flood came upon the earth. Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives went into the ark together because of the waters of the flood. (Genesis 7:6-7 ULT)

Now this is what happened when Noah was 600 years old. Noah, his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives went into the ark together because **God had said that the waters of the flood would come**.

Introduction of New and Old Participants

Description

The first time that people or things are mentioned in a story, they are **new participants**. After that, whenever they are mentioned, they are **old participants**.

> Now **there was a man from the Pharisees whose name was Nicodemus** … **This man** came to Jesus at night … Jesus replied and said to **him** … (John 3:1, 2a, 3a)

The first bolded phrase introduces Nicodemus as a new participant. After being introduced, he is then referred to as "This man" and "him" when he has become an old participant.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

In order to make your translation clear and natural, it is necessary to refer to the participants in such a way that people will know if they are new participants or participants that they have already read about. Different languages have different ways of doing this. You must follow the way that your language does this, not the way that the source language does this.

Examples From the Bible

New Participants

Often the most important new participant is introduced with a phrase that says that he existed, such as "There was a man," as in the example below. The phrase "There was" tells us that this man existed. The word "a" in "a man" tells us that the author is speaking about him for the first time. The rest of the sentence tells where this man was from, who is family was, and what his name was.

> **Now there was a man** from Zorah, of the families of the Danites, and his name was Manoah. (Judges 13:2a ULT)

A new participant who is not the most important participant is often introduced in relation to the more important person who was already introduced. In the example below, Manoah's wife is simply referred to as "his wife." This phrase shows her relationship to him.

> Now there was one man from Zorah, of the families of the Danites, and his name was Manoah. **His wife** was barren and she had never given birth. (Judges 13:2 ULT)

Sometimes a new participant is introduced simply by name because the author assumes that the readers know who the person is. In the first verse of 1 Kings, the author assumes that his readers know who King David is, so there is no need to explain who he is.

> Now King David was old, he had advanced in the days, and they covered him with the garments, but it was not warm enough for him. (1 Kings 1:1 ULT)

Old Participants

A person who has already been brought into the story can be referred to with a pronoun after that. In the example below, Manoah is referred to with the pronoun "his," and his wife is referred to with the pronoun "she."

> **His wife** was barren and **she** had never given birth. (Judges 13:2 ULT)

Old participants can also be referred to in other ways, depending on what is happening in the story. In the example below, the story is about bearing a son, and Manoah's wife is referred to by the noun phrase "the wife."

> The angel of Yahweh appeared to **the wife** and he said to her … (Judges 13:3a ULT)

If the old participant has not been mentioned for a while, or if there could be confusion between participants, the author may use the participant's name again. In the example below, Manoah is referred to by his name, which the author has not used since verse 2.

> Then **Manoah** prayed to Yahweh. (Judges 13:8a ULT)

Some languages place an affix on the verb that tells something about the subject. In some of those languages, people do not always use noun phrases or pronouns for old participants when they are the subject of the sentence. The marker on the verb gives enough information for the listener to understand who the subject is. (See Verbs.)

Translation Strategies

(1) If the participant is new, use one of your language's ways of introducing new participants.
(2) If it is not clear to whom a pronoun refers, use a noun phrase or name.
(3) If an old participant is referred to by name or a noun phrase, and people wonder if this is another new participant, try using a pronoun instead. If a pronoun is not needed because people would understand it clearly from the context, then leave out the pronoun.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the participant is new, use one of your language's ways of introducing new participants.

> Then Joseph, who was called Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated as Son of Encouragement), a Levite from Cyprus by birth … (Acts 4:36-37 ULT) — Starting the sentence with Joseph's name when he has not been introduced yet might be confusing in some languages.
>
> > There was a man from Cyprus who was a Levite. His name was Joseph, and he was given the name Barnabas by the apostles (that is, being interpreted, Son of Encouragement). There was a Levite from Cyprus whose name was Joseph. The apostles gave him the name Barnabas, which means Son of encouragement.

(2) If it is not clear who a pronoun refers to, use a noun phrase or name.

> And it happened that when he was praying in a certain place, when he stopped, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.” (Luke 11:1 ULT) — Since this is the first verse in a chapter, readers might wonder who “he” refers to.
>
> > It happened when **Jesus** finished praying in a certain place, that one of his disciples said, “Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples.”

(3) If an old participant is referred to by name or a noun phrase, and people wonder if this is another new participant, try using a pronoun instead. If a pronoun is not needed because people would understand it clearly from the context, then leave out the pronoun.

> Joseph’s master took Joseph and put him in prison, in the place where all the king’s prisoners were put, and Joseph stayed there. (Genesis 39:20) — Since Joseph is the main person in the story, some languages might prefer the pronoun.
>
> > Joseph’s master took **him** and put **him** in prison, in the place where all the king’s prisoners were put, and **he** stayed there in the prison.

Oath Formulas

An oath is a solemn promise that someone makes to another person to do something or to solemnly testify that something is true. The oath includes the idea that a bad thing will happen if the person making the oath does not do the thing promised or if what the person says is not true.

Description

There are two types of oath in the Bible. We can call the first type a “Promise” oath, and the second type a “Truth” oath.

Promise Oath

In this type of oath, the person saying it is promising to do something. As a guarantee that the person taking the oath will do what he promises, the person calls on God to witness the oath and to punish him severely if he does not do the thing promised. A complete Promise oath has four parts, but some of them are often left unspoken and only implied:

1. Calling on God to witness the oath and judge the person making it
2. Making the promise (may be implied as the opposite of the violation)
3. Telling what would be a violation of the oath (may be implied as the opposite of the promise)
4. Saying what punishment God would do if the person violates the oath (often implied)

Truth Oath

In this type of oath, the person saying it is affirming that what he is saying is true, and he guarantees that it is true by naming the life of God. Sometimes the person will not name God directly but will instead name something holy that is associated with God, such as the temple. In some situations, a person might name a revered person, such as a king. The implication is that if the person’s statement proves to be false, that person will lose any relationship to God or to the revered person. These oaths have three parts, but the third part is implied and not stated:

1. Naming something holy, usually the life of God or of someone who is revered.
2. Making the statement.
3. Implied: The speaker and hearers of the oath understand that the speaker forfeits his relationship to God or to the revered person if his statement is false.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue:

People in some cultures may not be familiar with the practice of taking oaths, and so they may not understand what the people in the Bible are doing. In many languages, people would not take an oath the way that people did in the Bible, and so they might not recognize that the person is taking an oath. In the Old Testament, people often did not speak one or more parts of the oath, leaving those parts implied. The part that was most often left unspoken was the part that would tell what would happen if they break the oath. People believed that spoken words have power, and that speaking the part about punishment might cause the punishment to

happen, so they often left that part to be understood silently. Because of these things, people might think that the person in the Bible is not making a real oath or they may not understand what the verse is talking about at all.

Examples From the Bible

Promise Oath

> "I raise my hand to Yahweh, God Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth, if from a thread even to the strap of a sandal, or if I take from anything that {belongs} to you, so that you will not say, 'I made Abram rich.' (Genesis 14:22-23 ULT)

In the verse above, Abram describes a symbolic action (raising his hand to Yahweh) to signal that he is taking an oath and calling on Yahweh as witness and judge. He says what would violate his oath (thus promising to do the opposite). Then he leaves out the part that would describe how Yahweh would punish him if he fails to do what he is promising.

> May Yahweh do thus to me, and thus may he add, if death separates between me and between you. (Ruth 1:17 ULT)

Ruth calls on Yahweh and includes the part about Yahweh punishing her, says what the violation would be (thus promising to do the opposite), but does not say what the punishment would be.

> And Saul said, "Thus may God do and thus may he add, for dying you will die, Jonathan." (1 Samuel 14:44 ULT)

Saul takes an oath that Jonathan will die, but does not specifically say whom God would punish, what the punishment would be, or what the person would do that would violate the oath and bring about God's punishment.

Truth Oath

> But indeed, the life of Yahweh and the life of yourself, that between me and between death is like a step!" (1 Samuel 20:3)

Here David uses a truth oath to convince Jonathan that Saul does indeed want to kill David. David says this because Jonathan had been trying to assure David that he had nothing to fear from Saul. But Jonathan knows that David holds both Yahweh's and Jonathan's life as sacred, and so this oath convinces Jonathan that David truly believes what he is saying.

> The life of your soul, my lord, I {am} the woman having stationed herself with you in this {place} to pray to Yahweh. (1 Samuel 1:26 ULT)

Hannah is speaking to the priest Eli. She demonstrates that she holds the priest's life as sacred by swearing by it that what she is saying is true.

And Elijah said, "The life of Yahweh of armies, before whom I stand, that I will appear before him today." (1 Kings 18:15 ULT)

Elijah uses this oath to convince Obadiah to announce his arrival to Ahab. Obadiah knows that Elijah would never break his relationship to Yahweh.

Combination oath

> The life of Pharaoh, if you leave from this {place} without your youngest brother coming here. (Genesis 42:15)

Joseph is speaking to his brothers as an Egyptian official, and so he swears by the life of Pharaoh rather than by the life of the God of the Hebrews. Joseph combines the two types of oaths here by using a conditional "if" statement (part 3 of the "Promise" oath). He leaves unstated the "then" part of the oath which would be either a punishment from Pharoah (as with a Promise oath) or a breaking of relationship with Pharaoh (as with a "Truth" oath) if this conditional statement proves true.

Translation Strategies

If people who speak your language would recognize the oath as it is in the ULT, consider translating it in its current form. If not, consider using the following strategies.

(1) Add in the missing parts so that people recognize it as an oath.
(2) If oaths are unfamiliar, add a short explanation of what an oath is.
(3) Put the oath into a form that would be natural in your language.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Add in the missing parts so that people recognize it as an oath.

> "I raise my hand to Yahweh, God Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth, if from a thread even to the strap of a sandal, or if I take from anything that {belongs} to you, so that you will not say, 'I made Abram rich.' (Genesis 14:22-23 ULT)

"I raise my hand to Yahweh, God Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth, **and ask him to punish me severely** if from a thread even to the strap of a sandal, or if I take from anything that {belongs} to you, so that you will not say, 'I made Abram rich.'

> And Saul said, "Thus may God do and thus may he add, for dying you will die, Jonathan." (1 Samuel 14:44 ULT)

And Saul said, "May God **punish me severely** and may he add **even more punishment if I do not kill you**, for dying you will die, Jonathan."

> But indeed, the life of Yahweh and the life of yourself, that between me and between death is like a step! (1 Samuel 20:3)

But indeed, **I swear by** Yahweh's life and **by** the life of yourself that **it is true that** between me and death is like a step!

> The life of Pharaoh, if you leave from this {place} without your youngest brother coming here. (Genesis 42:15)

I swear by the life of Pharaoh, if you leave from this {place} without your youngest brother coming here, **may Pharaoh punish me severely**.

(2) If oaths are unfamiliar, add a short explanation of what an oath is.

> May Yahweh do thus to me, and thus may he add, if death separates between me and between you. (Ruth 1:17 ULT)

Then Ruth called on Yahweh to enforce her promise: "May Yahweh do thus to me, and thus may he add, if death separates between me and between you."

> But indeed, the life of Yahweh and the life of yourself, that between me and between death is like a step! (1 Samuel 20:3)

Then David made a statement to Jonathan to convince him that he truly believed that he was in danger: "But indeed, **I forfeit my relationship to** Yahweh and **to you** yourself **if it is not true** that between me and death is like a step!"

(3) Put the oath into a form that would be natural in your language.

> "I raise my hand to Yahweh, God Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth, if from a thread even to the strap of a sandal, or if I take from anything that {belongs} to you, so that you will not say, 'I made Abram rich.' (Genesis 14:22-23 ULT)

"**I solemnly swear before** Yahweh, God Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth, **that I will not take** from a thread even to the strap of a sandal, or from anything that {belongs} to you, **so help me God**, so that you will not say, 'I made Abram rich.'

> May Yahweh do thus to me, and thus may he add, if death separates between me and between you. (Ruth 1:17 ULT)

May Yahweh **strike me dead right where I stand** if death separates between me and between you.

> But indeed, the life of Yahweh and the life of yourself, that between me and between death is like a step! (1 Samuel 20:3)

But indeed, **before** Yahweh and **before you** yourself, **I swear** that between me and death is like a step!

Parables

A parable is a short story that teaches something(s) that is true, and delivers the lesson in a way that is easy to understand and hard to forget.

Description

A parable is a short story that is told to teach something that is true. The events in a parable are usually things that could or often do happen, but they are not specific events that actually did happen. They are told only to teach the lesson that the listener is meant to learn. Parables rarely contain the names of specific people. (This may help you to identify what is a parable and what is an account of a real event.) Parables often use figures of speech such as simile and metaphor. Sometimes the person telling the parable explains the lesson afterward, but often the person does not.

> Then he also told them a parable. “A blind man is not able to guide a blind man, is he? Would not both fall into a pit?” (Luke 6:39 ULT)

This parable teaches that if a person does not have spiritual understanding, he cannot help someone else to understand spiritual things.

Examples From the Bible

> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket but, rather, on the lampstand, and it shines for everyone in the house. Let your light shine before people in such a way that they see your good deeds and praise your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:15-16 ULT)

This parable teaches us not to hide the way we live for God from other people.

> Then Jesus presented another parable to them. He said, “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. This seed is indeed the smallest of all other seeds. But when it has grown, it is greater than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.” (Matthew 13:31-32 ULT)

This parable teaches that the kingdom of God may seem small at first, but it will grow and spread throughout the world.

Translation Strategies

(1) If a parable is hard to understand because it has unknown objects in it, you can replace the unknown objects with objects that people in your culture know. However, be careful to keep the lesson the same.
(2) If the teaching of the parable is unclear, consider telling a little about what it teaches in the introduction, such as “Jesus told this story about being generous.”

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If a parable is hard to understand because it has unknown objects in it, you can replace the unknown objects with objects that people in your culture know. However, be careful to keep the lesson the same.

> Jesus also said to them, "The lamp is not brought in order to put it under a basket, or under the bed, is it? Is it not so that it might be put on the **lampstand**?" (Mark 4:21 ULT)

If people do not know what a lampstand is, you could substitute something else that people put a light on so it can give light to the house.

> Jesus also said to them, "The lamp is not brought in order to put it under a basket, or under the bed, is it? Is it not so that it might be put on **a high shelf?**"

> Then Jesus presented another parable to them. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and **sowed** in his field. It is indeed the smallest of all the seeds. But when it has grown, it is greater than the garden plants. It becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches." (Matthew 13:31-32 ULT)

To sow seeds means to toss them so that they scatter on the ground. If people are not familiar with sowing, you can substitute planting.

> Then Jesus presented another parable to them. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and **planted** in his field. This seed is indeed the smallest of all the seeds. But when it has grown, it is greater than the garden plants. It becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

(2) If the teaching of the parable is unclear, consider telling a little about what it teaches in the introduction, such as "Jesus told this story about being generous."

> **Jesus also said to them**, "The lamp is not brought in order to put it under a basket, or under the bed, is it? Is it not so that it might be put on the lampstand?" (Mark 4:21 ULT)

> **Jesus told them a parable about why they should witness openly.** Jesus also said to them, "The lamp is not brought in order to put it under a basket, or under the bed, is it? Is it not so that it might be put on the lampstand?" (Mark 4:21 ULT)

> **Then Jesus presented another parable to them.** He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. It is indeed the smallest of all the seeds. But when it has grown, it is greater than the garden plants. It becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches." (Matthew 13:31-32 ULT)

> **Then Jesus presented another parable to them about how the kingdom of God grows**. He said, "The kingdom of heaven is like a

mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. This seed is indeed the smallest of all the seeds. But when it has grown, it is greater than the garden plants. It becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

Poetry

Description

Poetry is one of the ways that people use the words and sounds of their language to make their speech and writing more beautiful and to express strong emotion. Through poetry, people can communicate deeper emotion than they can through simple non-poetic forms. Poetry gives more weight and elegance to statements of truth, such as proverbs, and is also easier to remember than ordinary speech.

In poetry we commonly find:

- many figures of speech such as Apostrophe
- arrangements of clauses into particular patterns such as:
    - parallel lines (See Parallelism)
    - acrostics (beginning lines with successive letters of the alphabet)
    - chiasms (in which the first line relates to the last line, the second to the next-to-last line, etc.):

You should not give what is holy to the dogs,

and should not throw your pearls in front of the pigs.

Otherwise they will trample them under their feet,

and having turned, they might tear you to pieces. (Matt 7:6 ULT)

- repetition of some or all of a line:

Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts. Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars. (Psalm 148:2-3 ULT)

- lines of similar length:

Listen to my call to you,

Yahweh; think about my groanings.

Listen to the sound of my call, my King and my God,

for it is to you that I pray. (Psalm 5:1-2 ULT)

- the same sound used at the end or at the beginning of two or more lines:

“Twinkle, twinkle little **star**. How I wonder what you **are**.” (from an English rhyme)

- the same sound repeated many times:

"Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater" (from an English rhyme)

- The same root word used as both a verb and as a noun:

  Your old men will **dream dreams** (Joel 2:28 ULT)

  Yahweh,…**light lightning** and scatter them (Psalm 144:5-6 ULT)

We also find:

- old words and expressions
- dramatic imagery
- different use of grammar — including:
  - incomplete sentences
  - lack of connective words

Some places to look for poetry in your language

1. Songs, particularly old songs or songs used in children's games
2. Religious ceremony or chants of priests or witch doctors
3. Prayers, blessings, and curses
4. Old legends

Elegant or fancy speech

Elegant or fancy speech is similar to poetry in that it uses beautiful language, but it does not use all of the language's features of poetry, and it does not use them as much as poetry does. Popular speakers in the language often use elegant speech, and this is probably the easiest source of text to study to find out what makes speech elegant in your language.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue:

- Different languages use poetry for different things. If a poetic form would not communicate the same meaning in your language, you may need to write it without the poetry.
- Different languages use different poetic devices. A poetic device that conveys elegance or emotion in a biblical language may be confusing or misunderstood in another language.
- In some languages, using poetry for a particular part of the Bible would make it much more powerful.

Examples From the Bible

The Bible uses poetry for songs, teaching, and prophecy. Almost all of the books of the Old Testament have poetry in them and many of the books are completely made up of poetry.

> … for you saw my affliction; you knew the distress of my soul. (Psalm 31:7b ULT)

This example of Parallelism has two lines that mean the same thing.

> Yahweh, judge the nations; vindicate me, Yahweh, because I am righteous and innocent, Most High. (Psalm 7:8 ULT)

This example of parallelism shows the contrast between what David wants God to do to him and what he wants God to do to the unrighteous nations. (See Parallelism.)

> Keep your servant also from arrogant sins; let them not rule over me. (Psalm 19:13a ULT)

This example of personification speaks of sins as if they could rule over a person. (See Personification.)

> Oh, give thanks to Yahweh; for he is good,
>
> ```
> for his covenant faithfulness endures forever.
>
> Oh, give thanks to the God of gods,
>
> for his covenant faithfulness endures forever.
>
> Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords,
>
> for his covenant faithfulness endures forever.
> ```
>
> (Psalm 136:1-3 ULT)

This example repeats the phrases “give thanks” and “his covenant faithfulness endures forever.”

Translation Strategies

If the style of poetry that is used in the source text would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other ways of translating it.

(1) Translate the poetry using one of your styles of poetry.
(2) Translate the poetry using your style of elegant speech.
(3) Translate the poetry using your style of ordinary speech.

If you use poetry it may be more beautiful.

If you use ordinary speech it may be more clear.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

> Blessed is the man who does not walk in the advice of the wicked, or stand in the pathway with sinners, or sit in the assembly of mockers. But his delight is in the law of Yahweh, and on his law he meditates day and night. (Psalm 1:1-2 ULT)

The following are examples of how people might translate Psalm 1:1-2.

(1) Translate the poetry using one of your styles of poetry. (The style in this example has words that sound similar at the end of each line.)

> "Happy is the person not encouraged **to sin**, Disrespect for God he will not **begin**, To those who laugh at God he is **no kin.** God is his constant **delight**, He does what God says **is right**, He thinks of it all day **and night**."

(2) Translate the poetry using your style of elegant speech.

> This is the kind of person who is truly blessed: the one who does not follow the advice of wicked people nor stop along the road to speak with sinners nor join the gathering of those who mock God. Rather, he takes great joy in Yahweh's law, and he meditates on it day and night.

(3) Translate the poetry using your style of ordinary speech.

> The people who do not listen to the advice of bad people are really happy. They do not spend time with people who continually do evil things or join with those who do not respect God. Instead, they love to obey Yahweh's law, and they think about it all the time.

Proverbs

Description

Proverbs are short sayings that give wise advice or teach something that is generally true about life. People enjoy proverbs because they give a lot of wisdom in few words. Proverbs in the Bible often use metaphor and parallelism. Proverbs should not be understood as absolute and unchangeable laws. Rather, proverbs offer general advice to a person about how to live his life.

> Hatred stirs up conflicts, but love covers over all offenses. (Proverbs 10:12 ULT)

Here is another example from the book of Proverbs.

> Look at the ant, you lazy person, consider her ways, and be wise. It has no commander, officer, or ruler, yet it prepares its food in the summer, and during the harvest it stores up what it will eat. (Proverbs 6:6-8 ULT)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Each language has its own ways of saying proverbs. There are many proverbs in the Bible. They need to be translated in the way that people say proverbs in your language so that people recognize them as proverbs and understand what they teach.

Examples From the Bible

> A good name is to be chosen over great riches,
>
> and favor is better than silver and gold. (Proverbs 22:1 ULT)

This means that it is better to be a good person and to have a good reputation than it is to have a lot of money.

> Like vinegar on the teeth and smoke in the eyes,
>
> so is the sluggard to those who send him. (Proverbs 10:26 ULT)

This means that a lazy person is very annoying to those who send him to do something.

> The way of Yahweh protects those who have integrity,
>
> but it is destruction for the wicked. (Proverbs 10:29 ULT)

This means that Yahweh protects people who do what is right, but he destroys those who are wicked.

Translation Strategies

If translating a proverb literally would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider doing that. If not, here are some options:

(1) Find out how people say proverbs in your language, and use one of those ways.
(2) If certain objects in the proverb are not known to many people in your language group, consider replacing them with objects that people know and that function in the same way in your language.
(3) Substitute a proverb in your language that has the same teaching as the proverb in the Bible.
(4) Give the same teaching but not in a form of a proverb.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Find out how people say proverbs in your language, and use one of those ways.

> A good name is to be chosen over great riches,
>
> and favor is better than silver and gold. (Proverbs 22:1 ULT)

Here are some ideas for ways that people might say a proverb in their language.

> It is better to have a good name than to have great riches,
>
> and to be favored by people than to have silver and gold.
>
> Wise people choose a good name over great riches,
>
> and favor over silver and gold.
>
> Try to have a good reputation rather than great riches.
>
> Will riches really help you?
>
> I would rather have a good reputation.

(2) If certain objects in the proverb are not known to many people in your language group, consider replacing them with objects that people know and that function in the same way in your language.

> Like **snow in summer** or rain in harvest,
>
> so a fool does not deserve honor. (Proverbs 26:1 ULT)

> It is not natural for **a cold wind to blow in the hot season** or for it to rain in the harvest season;
>
> And it is not natural to honor a foolish person.

(3) Substitute a proverb in your language that has the same teaching as the proverb in the Bible.

> Do not boast about tomorrow,
>
> for you do not know what a day may bring. (Proverbs 27:1a ULT)

Do not count your chickens before they hatch.

(4) Give the same teaching but not in a form of a proverb.

There is a generation that curses their father

and does not bless their mother.

There is a generation that is pure in their own eyes,

and yet they are not washed of their filth. (Proverbs 30:11-12 ULT)

People who do not respect their parents think that they are righteous,

and they do not turn away from their sin.

Symbolic Language

Description

Symbolic language in speech and writing is the use of symbols to represent other things, other events, etc. In the Bible it occurs most in prophecy and poetry, especially in visions and dreams about things that will happen in the future. Though people may not immediately know the meaning of a symbol, it is important to keep the symbol in the translation.

> Eat this scroll; then go speak to the house of Israel. (Ezekiel 3:1 ULT)

This was in a dream. Eating the scroll is a symbol of Ezekiel reading and understanding well what was written on the scroll, and accepting these words from God into himself.

Purposes of Symbolism

- One purpose of symbolism is to help people understand the importance or severity of an event by putting it in other, very dramatic terms.
- Another purpose of symbolism is to tell some people about something while hiding the true meaning from others who do not understand the symbolism.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

People who read the Bible today may find it hard to recognize that the language is symbolic, and they may not know what the symbol stands for.

Translation Principles

- When symbolic language is used, it is important to keep the symbol in the translation.
- It is also important not to explain the symbol more than the original speaker or writer did, since he may not have wanted everyone living then to be able to understand it easily.

Examples From the Bible

> After this I saw in my visions of the night **a fourth animal**, terrifying, frightening, and very strong. It had **large iron teeth**; it devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled underfoot what was left. It was different from the other animals, and it had **ten horns**. (Daniel 7:7 ULT)

The meaning of the bolded symbols is explained in Daniel 7:23-24 as shown below. The animals represent kingdoms, iron teeth represent a powerful army, and the horns represent powerful leaders.

> This is what that person said, ‘As for the fourth animal, it will be **a fourth kingdom** on earth that will be different from all the other kingdoms. It will devour the whole earth, and it will trample it down and break it into pieces. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom **ten kings** will arise, and another will arise after them. He will be different from the previous ones, and he will conquer the three kings.’ (Daniel 7:23-24 ULT)

> I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me, and as I turned I saw **seven golden lampstands**. In the middle of the lampstands there was one like a son of man … He had **seven stars** in his right hand and **a sword with two sharp edges** was coming out of his mouth. As for the hidden meaning about the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: **The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches**, and **the seven lampstands are the seven churches**. (Revelation 1:12-13a, 16a, 20 ULT)

This passage explains the meaning of the seven lampstands and the seven stars. The two-edged sword represents God's word and judgment.

Translation Strategies

(1) Translate the text with the symbols. Often the speaker or author explains the meaning later in the passage.
(2) Translate the text with the symbols. Then explain the symbols in footnotes.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Translate the text with the symbols. Often the speaker or author explains the meaning later in the passage.

> This is what that person said, 'As for the fourth animal, it will be **a fourth kingdom** on earth that will be different from all the other kingdoms. It will devour the whole earth, and it will trample it down and break it into pieces. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom **ten kings** will arise, and another will arise after them. He will be different from the previous ones, and he will conquer the three kings.' (Daniel 7:23-24 ULT)

(2) Translate the text with the symbols. Then explain the symbols in footnotes.

> After this I saw in my visions of the night **a fourth animal**, terrifying, frightening, and very strong. It had **large iron teeth**; it devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled underfoot what was left. It was different from the other animals, and it had **ten horns**. (Daniel 7:7 ULT)

> After this I saw in my dream at night a fourth animal, [1] terrifying, frightening, and very strong. It had large iron teeth; [2] it devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled underfoot what was left. It was different from the other animals, and it had ten horns. [3]

The footnotes would look like:

> [1] The animal is a symbol for a kingdom.
> [2] The iron teeth is a symbol for the kingdom's powerful army.
> [3] The horns are a symbol of powerful kings.

Sentences

Sentence Structure

Description

The simplest sentence structure in English includes a **subject** and an **action** word (a verb):

- The boy ran.

Subject

The **subject** is who or what the sentence is about. In these examples, the subject is bolded:

- **John** ran.
- **The boy** ran.
- **He** ran.

Subjects are typically noun phrases or pronouns. (See Parts of Speech.) In the examples above, "the boy" is a noun phrase that contains the noun "boy," and "he" is a pronoun.

When the sentence is a command, in many languages it does not have a subject pronoun. People understand that the subject is "you."

- Close the door.

Predicate

In English, we refer to the part of the sentence that is not the subject as the predicate. This is the part of the sentence that tells something about the subject. In English, it contains a verb and usually also an object. (See Verbs.) (In some languages, the predicate refers only to the object and does not contain a verb.) In the sentences below, the subjects are "the man" and "he." The predicates are in bold.

- The man **is strong**.
- He **worked hard**.
- He **made a garden**.

Compound Sentences

A sentence can be made up of more than one sentence. Each of the two lines below has a subject and a predicate (containing a verb and an object) and is a full sentence.

- He planted the yams.
- His wife planted the maize.

The compound sentence below contains the two sentences above. In English, compound sentences are joined with a conjunction such as “and,” “but,” or “or.”

- He planted the yams **and** his wife planted the maize.

Clauses

Sentences can also have clauses and other phrases. Clauses are like sentences because they have a subject and a predicate, but usually they cannot occur by themselves. Here are some examples of clauses. They cannot occur by themselves because they each start with a word that makes them **dependent** on another sentence. The words that turn the following sentences into **dependent clauses** are in bold.

- **when** the maize was ready
- **after** she picked it
- **because** it tasted so good

Sentences can have many clauses, and so they can become long and complex. But each sentence has to have at least one **independent clause**, that is, a clause that can be a sentence all by itself. The other clauses that cannot be sentences by themselves are called the **dependent clauses**. Dependent clauses depend on the independent clause to complete their meaning. The dependent clauses are bolded in the sentences below.

- **When the maize was ready**, she picked it.
- **After she picked it**, she carried it home and cooked it.
- Then she and her husband ate it all, **because it tasted so good**.

The following phrases can each be a whole sentence. They are the independent clauses from the sentences above.

- She picked it.
- She carried it home and cooked it.
- Then she and her husband ate it all.

Relative Clauses

In some languages, clauses can be used to say something about a noun that is part of a sentence. These are called **relative clauses** because they relate only to the noun that is only a part of the sentence.

In the sentence below, “the maize that was ready” is the object of the sentence. The relative clause “that was ready” relates to the noun “maize” to tell more about it, that is, which maize she picked.

- His wife picked the maize **that was ready**.

In the sentence below, the relative clause “who picked the maize” is part of the subject, and tells more about “the woman.” The relative clause “who was very annoyed” is part of the

(indirect) object, and relates to the noun “mother” to tell how her mother felt when she did not get any maize.

- The woman **who picked the maize** did not give any of the maize to her mother, **who was very annoyed**.

Translation Issues

- Languages have different orders for the parts of a sentence. (See Information Structure.)
- Some languages do not have relative clauses, or they use them in a limited way. (See Distinguishing versus Informing or Reminding.)

Information Structure

Description

Different languages arrange the parts of the sentence in different ways. In English, a sentence normally has the subject first, then the verb, then the object, then other modifiers, like this: Peter painted his house yesterday.

Many other languages normally put these things in a different order such as: Painted yesterday Peter his house.

Although all languages have a normal order for parts of a sentence, this order can change depending on what information the speaker or writer considers to be the most important.

Suppose that someone is answering the question, “What did Peter paint yesterday?” The person asking the question already knows all of the information in our sentence above except for the object, “his house.” Therefore, that becomes the most important part of the information, and a person answering in English might say “His house is what Peter painted (yesterday).”

This puts the most important information first, which is normal for English. Many Other Languages would normally put the most important information last. In the flow of a text, the most important information is usually what the writer considers to be new information for the reader. In some languages the new information comes first, and in others it comes last.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Different languages arrange the parts of a sentence in different ways. If you (the translator) copy the order of the parts of a sentence from the source, it may not make sense in your language.
- Different languages put important or new information in different places in the sentence. If you keep the important or new information in the same place that it had in the source language, it may be confusing or give the wrong message in your language.

Examples From the Bible

> They all ate until they were satisfied. (Mark 6:42 ULT)

The parts of this sentence were in a different order in the original Greek source language. They were like this: And they ate all and they were satisfied.

In English, this means that the people ate everything. But the next verse says that they took up twelve baskets full of leftover pieces of food. In order for this to not be so confusing, the translators of the ULT put the parts of the sentence in the right order for English.

> And the day began to end, and the twelve came to him and said, “Send the crowd away so that, going into the surrounding villages and countryside, they may find lodging and food, because we are here in an desolate place.” (Luke 9:12 ULT)

In this verse, what the disciples say to Jesus puts the important information first, that he should send the crowd away. In languages that put the important information last, people would

understand that the reason that they gave, being in an isolated place, is the most important part of their message to Jesus. They might then think that the disciples are afraid of the spirits in that place, and that sending the people to buy food is a way to protect them from the spirits. That is the wrong message.

> Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers treated the false prophets in the same way. (Luke 6:26 ULT)

In this verse, the most important part of the information is first, that "woe" is coming on the people for what they are doing. The reason that supports that warning comes last. This could be confusing for people who expect the important information to come last.

Translation Strategies

(1) Study how your language arranges the parts of a sentence, and use that order in your translation.
(2) Study where your language puts the new or important information, and rearrange the order of information so that it follows the way it is done in your language.

Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Study how your language arranges the parts of a sentence, and use that order in your translation.

This is the verse in the original Greek order:

> And he went out from there and came to the hometown his, and they followed him the disciples his. (Mark 6:1)

The ULT has put this into the normal order for English:

> Now Jesus went out from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. (Mark 6:1 ULT)

(2) Study where your language puts the new or important information and rearrange the order of information so that it follows the way it is done in your language.

> And the day began to end, and the twelve came and said to him, "Send the crowd away so that, going into the surrounding villages and countryside, they may find lodging and food, because we are here in a desolate place." (Luke 9:12 ULT)

If your language puts the important information last, you can change the order of the verse.

> Now the day was about to come to an end, and the twelve came to him and said, "Because we are here in an desolate place, send the crowd away that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and food."

> Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets. (Luke 6:26 ULT)

If your language puts the important information last, you can change the order of the verse.

When all men speak well of you, which is just as people's ancestors treated the false prophets, then woe to you!

Sentence Types

Description

A **sentence** is a group of words that expresses a complete thought. The basic types of sentences are listed below with the functions they are mainly used for.

- **Statements** — These are mainly used to give information. 'This is a fact.'
- **Questions** — These are mainly used to ask for information. 'Do you know him?'
- **Imperative Sentences** — These are mainly used to express a desire or requirement that someone do something. 'Pick that up.'
- **Exclamations** — These are mainly used to express a strong feeling. 'Ouch, that hurt!'

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Languages have different ways of using sentence types to express particular functions.
- Most languages use these sentence types for more than one function.
- Each sentence in the Bible belongs to a certain sentence type and has a certain function, but some languages would not use that type of sentence for that function.

Examples From the Bible

The examples below show each of these types used for their main functions.

Statements

> In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1 ULT)

Statements can also have other functions. (See Statements — Other Uses.)

Questions

The speakers below used these questions to get information, and the people they were speaking to answered their questions.

> Jesus said to them, "**Do you believe that I can do this?**" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." (Matthew 9:28b ULT)

> He … said, "Sirs, **what must I do to be saved?**" They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:29-31 ULT)

Questions can also have other functions. (See Rhetorical Question.)

Imperative Sentences

There are different kinds of imperative sentences: commands, instructions, suggestions, invitations, requests, and wishes.

With a command, the speaker uses his authority and tells someone to do something.

> **Rise up**, Balak, and **hear**. **Listen** to me, you son of Zippor. (Numbers 23:1b8 ULT)

With an instruction, the speaker tells someone how to do something.

> … but if you want to enter into life, **keep the commandments**. … if you wish to be perfect, **go**, **sell** what you have, and **give** to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven … (Matthew 19:17b, 21b ULT)

With a suggestion, the speaker tells someone something to do or not do that he thinks might help that person. In the example below, it is best for both blind men if they do not try to lead each other.

> A blind man is not able to guide a blind man, is he? Would not both fall into a pit? (Luke 6:39b UST)

Speakers may intend to be part of the group that does what is suggested. In Genesis 11, the people were saying that it would be good for them all to make bricks together.

> They said to one another, "Come, **let us** make bricks and bake them thoroughly." (Genesis 11:3a ULT)

With an invitation, the speaker uses politeness or friendliness to suggest that someone do something if he wants. This is usually something that the speaker thinks the listener will enjoy.

> **Come** with us and we will do you good. (Numbers 10:29b)

With a request, the speaker uses politeness to say that he wants someone to do something. This may include the word 'please' to make it clear that it is a request and not a command. This is usually something that would benefit the speaker.

> **Give us** today our daily bread. (Matthew 6:11 ULT)

> **I ask you** to consider me excused. (Luke 14:18 ULT)

With a wish, a person expresses what they want to happen. In English they often start with the word "may" or "let."

In Genesis 28, Isaac told Jacob what he wanted God to do for him.

> **May God Almighty bless** you, make you fruitful and multiply you. (Genesis 28:3a ULT)

In Genesis 9, Noah said what he wanted to happen to Canaan.

> **Cursed be** Canaan. **May he be** a servant to his brothers' servants. (Genesis 9:25b ULT)

In Genesis 21, Hagar expressed her strong desire not to see her son die, and then she moved away so that she would not see him die.

Let me not look upon the death of the child. (Genesis 21:16b ULT)

Imperative sentences can have other functions also. (See Imperatives — Other Uses.)

Exclamations

Exclamations express strong feeling. In the ULT and UST, they usually have an exclamation mark (!) at the end.

Save us, Lord; we are about to die! (Matthew 8:25b ULT)

(See Exclamations for other ways that exclamations are shown and ways to translate them.)

Translation Strategies

(1) Use your language's ways of showing that a sentence has a particular function.
(2) When a sentence in the Bible has a sentence type that your language would not use for the sentence's function, see the pages below for translation strategies.

- Statements — Other Uses
- Rhetorical Question
- Imperatives — Other Uses
- Exclamations

Sentence Types

Statements — Other Uses

Description

Normally statements are used to give information. Sometimes they are used in the Bible for other functions.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages would not use a statement for some of the functions that statements are used for in the Bible.

Examples From the Bible

Statements are normally used to give **information**. All of the sentences in John 1:6-8 below are statements, and their function is to give information.

> There was a man who was sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness in order to testify about the light, that all might believe through him. John was not the light, but came that he might testify about the light. (John 1:6-8 ULT)

A statement can also be used as a **command** to tell someone what to do. In the examples below, the high priest used statements with the verb "will" to tell people what to do.

> He commanded them, saying, "This is what you **must** do. A third of you who come on the Sabbath **will** keep watch over the king's house, and a third **will** be at the Sur Gate, and a third at the gate behind the guardhouse." (2 Kings 11:5 ULT)

A statement can also be used to give **instructions**. The speaker below was not just telling Joseph about something Joseph would do in the future; he was telling Joseph what he needed to do.

> She will give birth to a son, and **you will call his name Jesus**, for he will save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21 ULT)

A statement can also be used to make a **request**. The man with leprosy was not just saying what Jesus was able to do. He was also asking Jesus to heal him.

> Behold, a leper came to him and bowed before him, saying, "Lord, if you are willing, **you are able to make me clean**." (Matthew 8:2 ULT)

A statement can also be used to **perform** something. By telling Adam that the ground was cursed because of him, God actually cursed it.

> … **cursed is the ground** because of you; (Genesis 3:17b ULT)

By telling a man that his sins were forgiven, **Jesus forgave** the man's sins.

> When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "**Son, your sins are forgiven**." (Mark 2:5 ULT)

Translation Strategies

(1) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, **use a sentence type** that would express that function.
(2) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, **add a sentence type** that would express that function.
(3) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, **use a verb form** that would express that function.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, use a sentence type that would express that function.

> She will give birth to a son, and **you will call his name Jesus**, for he will save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21 ULT)

The phrase "you will call his name Jesus" is an instruction. It can be translated using the sentence type of a normal instruction.

> She will give birth to a son. **Name him Jesus**, because he will save his people from their sins.

(2) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, add a sentence type that would express that function.

> Lord, if you are willing, **you are able to make me clean**. (Matthew 8:2 ULT)

The function of "you are able" is to make a request. In addition to the statement, a request can be added.

> Lord, you are able to make me clean. If you are willing, **please do so**.
> OR:
> Lord, if you are willing, **please heal me**. I know that you are able to do so.

(3) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, use a verb form that would express that function.

> She will give birth to a son, and **you will call his name Jesus**, for he will save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21 ULT)

> She will give birth to a son, and **you must call his name Jesus**, for he will save his people from their sins.

> Son, your sins are forgiven. (Mark 2:5 ULT)

Son, I forgive your sins.
OR:
Son, God hereby forgives your sins.

Imperatives — Other Uses

Description

Imperative sentences are mainly used to express a desire or requirement that someone do something. In the Bible, sometimes imperative sentences have other uses.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages would not use an imperative sentence for some of the functions that they are used for in the Bible.

Examples From the Bible

Speakers often use imperative sentences to tell or ask their listeners to do something. In Genesis 26, God spoke to Isaac and told him not to go to Egypt but to live where God would tell him to live.

> Now Yahweh appeared to him and said, "**Do not go down** to Egypt; **live** in the land that I tell you to live in." (Genesis 26:2 ULT)

Sometimes imperative sentences in the Bible have other uses.

Imperatives that make things happen

God can make things happen by commanding that they happen. Jesus healed a man by commanding that the man be healed. The man could not do anything to obey the command, but Jesus caused him to be healed by commanding it. (In this context, the command "Be clean" means to "be healed" so that others around would know that it was safe to touch the man again.)

> "I am willing. **Be clean**." Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. (Matthew 8:3b ULT)

In Genesis 1, God commanded that there should be light, and by commanding it, he caused it to exist. Some languages, such as the Hebrew of the Bible, have commands that are in the third person. English does not do that, and so it must turn the third-person command into a general, second-person command, as in the ULT:

> God said, "**Let there be** light," and there was light. (Genesis 1:3 ULT)

Languages that have third-person commands can follow the original Hebrew, which translates into English as something like "light must be."

Imperatives that function as blessings

In the Bible, God blesses people by using imperatives. This indicates what his will is for them.

> God blessed them and said to them, "**Be fruitful**, and **multiply**. **Fill** the earth, and **subdue** it. **Have dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." (Genesis 1:28 ULT)

Imperatives that function as conditions

An imperative sentence can also be used to tell the **condition** under which something will happen. The proverbs mainly tell about life and things that often happen. The purpose of Proverbs 4:6 below is not primarily to give a command, but to teach what people can expect to happen **if** they love wisdom.

> **Do not abandon** wisdom and she will watch over you;
> **love** her and she will keep you safe. (Proverbs 4:6 ULT)

The purpose of Proverbs 22:6, below, is to teach what people can expect to happen if they teach their children the way they should go.

> **Teach** a child the way he should go,
> and when he is old he will not turn away from that instruction. (Proverbs 22:6 ULT)

Imperatives that function as good results

An imperative sentence can also describe a desirable result. In Proverbs 3:3-4, several imperatives give instructions, then the final imperative describes the good outcome of following those instructions.

> Do not let covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness leave you;
> tie them on your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart,
> and **find favor** and good insight in the eyes of God and man! (Proverbs 3:3-4 ULT)

Translation Strategies

(1) If people would not use an imperative sentence for one of the functions in the Bible, try using a statement instead.
(2) If people would not understand that a sentence is used to cause something to happen, add a connecting word like "so" to show that what happened was a result of what was said.
(3) If people would not use a command as a condition, translate it as a statement with the words "if" and "then."

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If people would not use an imperative sentence for one of the functions in the Bible, try using a statement instead.

> **Be clean**. (Matthew 8:3b ULT)
>
> > **You are now clean.**
> > **I now cleanse you.**

> God said, "**Let there be** light," and there was light. (Genesis 1:3 ULT)
>
> > God said, "**There is now** light" and there was light.
>
> God blessed them and said to them, "**Be fruitful**, and **multiply**. **Fill** the earth, and **subdue** it. **Have dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." (Genesis 1:28 ULT)
>
> > God blessed them and said to them, "**My will for you is that you be fruitful**, and **multiply**. **Fill** the earth, and **subdue** it. **I want you to have dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."
>
> Do not let covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness leave you;
> tie them on your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart,
> **and find favor** and good insight in the eyes of God and man! (Proverbs 3:3-4 ULT)
>
> > Do not let covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness leave you;
> > tie them on your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart,
> > **then you will find favor** and good insight in the eyes of God and man!

(2) If people would not understand that a sentence is used to cause something to happen, add a connecting word like "so" to show that what happened was a result of what was said.

> God said, "**Let there be** light," and there was light. (Genesis 1:3 ULT)
>
> > God said, 'Let there be light,' **so** there was light.
> > God said, "Light must be;" **as a result**, there was light.

(3) If people would not use a command as a condition, translate it as a statement with the words "if" and "then."

> Teach a child the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn away from that instruction. (Proverbs 22:6 ULT)

Translated as:

> "**If** you teach a child the way he should go,
> **then** when he is old he will not turn away from that instruction."

Exclamations

Description

Exclamations are words or sentences that show strong feeling such as surprise, joy, fear, or anger. In the ULT and UST, they usually have an exclamation mark (!) at the end. The mark shows that it is an exclamation. The situation and the meaning of what the people said helps us understand what feelings they were expressing. In the example below from Matthew 8, the speakers were terribly afraid. In the example from Matthew 9, the speakers were amazed, because something happened that they had never seen before.

> Save us, Lord; we are about to die! (Matthew 8:25b ULT)

> When the demon had been driven out, the mute man spoke. The crowds were astonished and said, “This has never been seen before in Israel!” (Matthew 9:33 ULT)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Languages have different ways of showing that a sentence communicates strong emotion.

Examples From the Bible

Some exclamations have a word that shows feeling. The sentences below have “Oh” and “Ah.” The word “oh” here shows the speaker’s amazement.

> **Oh**, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! (Romans 11:33 ULT)

The word “Alas” below shows that Gideon was very frightened.

> When Gideon saw that he was the angel of Yahweh, Gideon lamented, “**Alas**, O my Lord Yahweh, for because of this I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!” (Judges 6:22 ULT)

> Some exclamations start with a question word such as “how” or “why,” even though they are not questions. The sentence below shows that the speaker is amazed at how unsearchable God’s judgments are.

> **How** unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways beyond discovering! (Romans 11:33b ULT)

Some exclamations in the Bible do not have a main verb. The exclamation below shows that the speaker is disgusted with the person he is speaking to.

> You worthless person! (Matthew 5:22b ULT)

Translation Strategies

(1) If an exclamation in your language needs a verb, add one. Often a good verb is “is” or “are.”
(2) Use an exclamation word from your language that shows the strong feeling.
(3) Translate the exclamation word with a sentence that shows the feeling.
(4) Use a word that emphasizes the part of the sentence that brings about the strong feeling.
(5) If the strong feeling is not clear in the target language, then tell how the person felt.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If an exclamation in your language needs a verb, add one. Often a good verb is “is” or “are.”

> You worthless person! (Matthew 5:22b ULT)
>
> > “You **are** such a worthless person!”
>
> Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! (Romans 11:33b ULT)
>
> > “Oh, the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God **are** so deep!”

(2) Use an exclamation word from your language that shows the strong feeling. In the first suggested translation below, the word “wow” shows that they were astonished. In the second suggested translation, the expression “Oh no” shows that something terrible or frightening has happened.

> They were extremely astonished, saying, “He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.” (Mark 7:37 ULT)
>
> > “They were extremely astonished, saying, ‘**Wow**! He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.’”
>
> Alas, oh my Lord Yahweh! For because of this I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face! (Judges 6:22b ULT)
>
> > “**Oh no**, Lord Yahweh! I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!”

(3) Translate the exclamation word with a sentence that shows the feeling.

> “**Alas,** O my Lord Yahweh, for because of this I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!” (Judges 6:22 ULT)
>
> > “Lord Yahweh, **what will happen to me**? For I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!”
> > “**Help**, Lord Yahweh! For I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!”

(4) Use a word that emphasizes the part of the sentence that brings about the strong feeling.

> How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways beyond discovering! (Romans 11:33b ULT)
>
> > "His judgments are **so** unsearchable and his ways are **far** beyond discovering!"

(5) If the strong feeling is not clear in the target language, then tell how the person felt.

> When Gideon saw that he was the angel of Yahweh, Gideon lamented, "**Alas,** O my Lord Yahweh, for because of this I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!" (Judges 6:22 ULT)
>
> > Gideon understood that this was the angel of Yahweh. **He was terrified** and said, "**Alas**, Lord Yahweh! I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!"

Connecting Words and Phrases

Description

As humans, we write our thoughts in phrases and sentences. We usually want to communicate a series of thoughts that are connected to each other in different ways. **Connecting words and phrases** show how these thoughts are related to each other. For example, we can show how the following thoughts are related by using the Connecting Words in bold type:

- It was raining, **so** I opened my umbrella.
- It was raining, **but** I did not have an umbrella. **So** I got very wet.

Connecting words or phrases can connect phrases or clauses within a sentence. They can connect sentences to each other. They can also connect entire chunks to one another in order to show how the chunk before relates to the chunk after the connecting word. Very often, the connecting words that connect entire chunks to one another are either conjunctions or adverbs.

> It was raining, but I did not have an umbrella, so I got very wet.
>
> **Now** I must change my clothes. Then I will drink a cup of hot tea and warm myself by the fire.

In the above example, the word **now** connects the two short chunks of text, showing the relationship between them. The speaker must change his clothes, drink hot tea, and warm himself because of something that happened earlier (that is, he got wet in the rain).

Sometimes people might not use a connecting word because they expect the context to help the readers understand the relationship between the thoughts. Some languages do not use connecting words as much as other languages do. They might say:

- It was raining. I did not have an umbrella. I got very wet.

You (the translator) will need to use the method that is most natural and clear in the target language. But in general, using connecting words whenever possible helps the reader to understand the ideas in the Bible most clearly.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- You need to understand the relationship between paragraphs, between sentences, and between parts of sentences in the Bible, and how connecting words and phrases can help you to understand the relationship between the thoughts that they are connecting.
- Each language has its own ways of showing how thoughts are related.
- You need to know how to help readers understand the relationship between the thoughts in a way that is natural in your language.

Translation Principles

- You need to translate in a way that readers can understand the same relationship between thoughts that the original readers would have understood.

- Whether or not a connecting word is used is not as important as readers being able to understand the relationship between the ideas.

The Different Types of Connections

Listed below are different types of connections between ideas or events. These different types of connections can be indicated by using different connecting words. When we write or translate something, it is important to use the right connecting word so that these connections are clear for the reader. If you would like additional information, simply click the colored, hyperlinked word to be directed to a page containing definitions and examples for each type of connection.

- Sequential Clause — a time relationship between two events in which one happens and then the other happens.
- Simultaneous Clause — a time relationship between two or more events that occur at the same time.
- Background Clause — a time relationship in which the first clause describes a long event that is happening at the time when the beginning of the second event happens, which is described in the second clause.
- Exceptional Relationship — one clause describes a group of people or items, and the other clause excludes one or more items or people from the group.
- Hypothetical Condition — the second event will only take place if the first one takes place. Sometimes what takes place is dependent on the actions of other people.
- Factual Condition — a connection that sounds hypothetical but is already certain or true, so that the condition is guaranteed to happen.
- Contrary-to-Fact Condition — a connection that sounds hypothetical but is already certain that it is not true. See also: Hypothetical Statements.
- Goal Relationship — a logical relationship in which the second event is the purpose or goal of the first.
- Reason and Result Relationship — a logical relationship in which one event is the reason for the other event, the result.
- Contrast Relationship — one item is being described as different or in opposition to another.

Examples from the Bible

> I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood. I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me. **Instead**, I went to Arabia and then returned to Damascus. **Then** after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and I stayed with him 15 days. (Galatians 1:16b-18 ULT)

The word “instead” introduces something that contrasts with what was said before. The contrast here is between what Paul did not do and what he did do. The word “then” introduces a sequence of events. It introduces something that Paul did after he returned to Damascus.

> **Therefore,** whoever breaks the least one of these commandments **and** teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. **But** whoever keeps them and teaches them, that one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19 ULT)

The word “therefore” links this section with the section before it, signaling that the section that came before gave the reason for this section. “Therefore” usually links sections larger than one sentence. The word “and” links only two actions within the same sentence, that of breaking commandments and teaching others. In this verse the word “but” contrasts what one group of people will be called in God’s kingdom with what another group of people will be called.

> We place nothing as a stumbling block in front of anyone, **so that** our ministry might not be discredited. **Instead**, we commend ourselves in everything as God’s servants. (2 Corinthians 6:3-4 ULT)

Here the words “so that” connect what follows as the reason for what came before; the reason that Paul does not place stumbling blocks is that he does not want his ministry brought into disrepute. “Instead” contrasts what Paul does (prove by his actions that he is God’s servant) with what he said he does not do (place stumbling blocks).

General Translation Strategies

See each type of Connecting Word above for specific strategies

If the way the relationship between thoughts is shown in the ULT would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, then consider using it. If not, here are some other options.

(1) Use a connecting word (even if the ULT does not use one).
(2) Do not use a connecting word if it would be strange to use one and people would understand the right relationship between the thoughts without it.
(3) Use a different connecting word.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use a connecting word (even if the ULT does not use one).

> Jesus said to them, “Come follow me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.” Then immediately they left the nets and followed him. (Mark 1:17-18 ULT)

They followed Jesus because he told them to. Some translators may want to mark this clause with the connecting word “so.”

> Jesus said to them, “Come follow me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.” **So**, immediately they left the nets and followed him.

(2) Do not use a connecting word if it would be odd to use one, and if people would understand the right relationship between the thoughts without it.

> Therefore, whoever breaks the least one of these commandments **and** teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. **But** whoever keeps them and teaches them, that one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19 ULT)

Some languages would prefer not to use connecting words here because the meaning is clear without them and using them would be unnatural. They might translate like this:

> Therefore, whoever breaks the least one of these commandments, teaching others to do so as well, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever keeps them and teaches them, that one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

> I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood. I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me. **Instead**, I went to Arabia and then returned to Damascus. **Then** after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and I stayed with him 15 days. (Galatians 1:16b-18 ULT) (Galatians 1:16-18 ULT)

Some languages might not need the words "instead" or "then" here. They might translate like this:

> I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who had become apostles before me. I went to Arabia and then returned to Damascus. After three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and I stayed with him 15 days.

(3) Use a different connecting word.

> Therefore, whoever breaks the least one of these commandments **and** teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. **But** whoever keeps them and teaches them, that one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19 ULT)

Instead of a word like "therefore," a language might need a phrase to indicate that there was a section before it that gave the reason for the section that follows. Also, the word "but" is used here because of the contrast between the two groups of people. But in some languages, the word "but" would show that what comes after it is surprising because of what came before it. So "and" might be clearer for those languages. They might translate like this:

> **Because of that**, whoever breaks the least one of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. **And** whoever keeps them and teaches them, that one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Connecting Words and Phrases

Connect — Sequential Time Relationship

Time Relationships

Some connectors establish time relationships between two phrases, clauses, sentences, or chunks of text.

Sequential Clause

Description

A sequential clause is a time relation that connects two events in which one happens and then the other happens.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Languages indicate sequences of events in different ways; some use ordering, some use connecting words, some even use relative tense (Relative tense is a tense that refers to a time in relation to a reference point in the context.) Connecting words that may indicate sequence are words such as “then,” “later,” “after,” “afterward,” “before,” “first,” and “when.” Translators need to be certain that they communicate the order of the events in a way that is natural in their language. This may require ordering clauses differently than in the original languages.

Examples From OBS and the Bible

> **When** Joseph came to his brothers, they kidnapped him and sold him to some slave traders. (OBS Story 8 Frame 2)

First Joseph came to his brothers, and then they kidnapped and sold him. We know this because of the connecting word “**when**.” The translator needs to decide the best way to communicate this sequence clearly and correctly.

> It was as sweet as honey in my mouth, but **after** I ate it, my stomach became bitter. (Revelation 10:10b ULT)

The event of the first clause occurs first, and the event of the last clause occurs later. We know this because of the connecting word “**after**.” The translator needs to decide the best way to communicate this sequence clearly and correctly.

> For **before** the child knows to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be desolate (Isaiah 7:16 ULT)

The event of the first clause occurs after the event of the second clause. First the land they dread will be desolate, and then the child will know to refuse evil and choose good. We know this because of the connecting word “**before**.” However, stating the clauses in this order may communicate the wrong order of events in your language. The translator may have to change

the order so that the clauses come in the order that they happen. Or it may be possible to keep the order of the original language text and mark the ordering of sequence so that it is clear to the readers. You (the translator) need to decide the best way to communicate this sequence clearly and correctly.

> Then Mary arose in those days **and** quickly went into the hill country, to a city of Judah, **and** she entered into the house of Zechariah **and** greeted Elizabeth. (Luke 1:39-40 ULT)

Here the general connector "**and**" connects four events. These are sequential events—each happens after the one before it. We know this because that is the only way that these events would happen. So in English, the general connector "and" is enough to make the sequence clear for events such as these. You will need to decide if this also communicates this sequence clearly and correctly in your language.

Translation Strategies

If the sequence of events is clear in your language, then translate the sequence as it is.

(1) If the connecting word is not clear, use a connecting word that communicates the sequence more clearly.
(2) If the clauses are in an order that makes the sequence unclear, put the clauses in an order that is more clear.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the connecting word is not clear, use a connecting word that communicates the sequence more clearly.

> Then Mary arose in those days **and** quickly went into the hill country, to a city of Judah, **and** she entered into the house of Zechariah **and** greeted Elizabeth. (Luke 1:39-40 ULT)
>
> > Then Mary arose in those days. **Then** she quickly went into the hill country, to a city of Judah. **Then** she entered into the house of Zechariah, **and then** she greeted Elizabeth.
>
> For **before** the child knows to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be desolate (Isaiah 7:16 ULT)
>
> > For the time will come when the child knows to refuse the evil and choose the good, **but even before that time**, the land whose two kings you dread will be desolate.

(2) If the clauses are in an order that makes the sequence unclear, put the clauses in an order that is more clear.

> For the land whose two kings you dread will be desolate **before** the child knows to refuse the evil and choose the good.

For more about sequences of events, see Sequence of Events.

Connect — Simultaneous Time Relationship

Time Relationships

Some connectors establish time relationships between two phrases, clauses, sentences, or chunks of text.

Simultaneous Clause

Description

A simultaneous clause is a time relationship that connects two or more events that occur at the same time.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Languages indicate in many different ways that events occur simultaneously. These ways may vary based on whether or not something is causing the events to occur simultaneously. Connecting words that may indicate simultaneous events are words such as “while,” “as,” and “during.” Often the Bible does not state a relationship between the events but simply says they occurred at the same time. It is important that you (the translator) know when a time relationship is implied and when it is not implied so that you can communicate it clearly. A simultaneous clause communicates that events happened at the same time but it does not indicate that one event caused the other. That would be a reason-and-result relationship.

Examples From OBS and the Bible

> Joseph served his master well, **and** God blessed Joseph. (OBS Story 8 Frame 4)

Two events happened while Joseph was a slave to a wealthy government official: Joseph served well, and God blessed Joseph. There is no indication of a reason-and-result (cause and effect) relationship between the two, or that the first event happened, and then the second event happened.

> But in truth I say to you that there were many widows in Israel **during** the days of Elijah. (Luke 4:25b ULT)

The connecting word “**during**” tells us clearly that two things happened at the same time, but one event did not cause the other.

> And the people were waiting for Zechariah, **and** they were wondering at his delaying in the temple. (Luke 1:21 ULT)

The people were both waiting and wondering at the same time. The general connector “**and**” indicates this.

> **While** they were looking intensely into heaven **as** he was going up, suddenly, two men stood by them in white clothing. (Acts 1:10 ULT)

Three events happened at the same time — the disciples looking, Jesus going up, and two men standing. The connector words "**while**" and "**as**" tell us this.

Translation Strategies

If the way that the simultaneous clauses are marked also is clear in your language, then translate the simultaneous clauses as they are.

(1) If the connecting word does not make it clear that the simultaneous clauses are happening at the same time, use a connecting word that communicates this more clearly.
(2) If it is not clear which clause the simultaneous clause is connected to, and that they are happening at the same time, mark all of the clauses with a connecting word.
(3) If your language marks events as simultaneous in a different way than using connecting words, then use that way.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

Below, each Bible verse will be restated in three different ways, according to the translation strategies in the list above. Each restatement will have the same number as the translation strategy that it is using.

> And the people were waiting for Zechariah, **and** they were wondering at his delaying in the temple. (Luke 1:21 ULT)

(1) Now **while** the people were waiting for Zechariah, they were wondering at his delaying in the temple.

(2) Now **while** the people were waiting for Zechariah, they were **also** wondering at his delaying in the temple.

(3) Now the people were waiting for Zechariah, wondering at his delaying in the temple.

> **While** they were looking intently into heaven **as** he was going up, suddenly, two men stood by them in white clothing. (Acts 1:10 ULT)

(1) And **during the time** they were looking intently into heaven **while** he was going up, suddenly, two men stood by them in white clothing.

(2) And **while** they were looking intently into heaven **as** he was going up, suddenly, **at that same time** two men stood by them in white clothing.

(3) They were looking intently into heaven; he was going up **when** they saw two men standing by them in white clothing.

Connect — Background Information

Time Relationship

Some connectors establish time relationships between two phrases, clauses, sentences, or chunks of text.

Background Clause

Description

A background clause is one that describes something that is ongoing. Then, in the same sentence, another clause indicates an event that begins to happen during that time. These events are also simultaneous events, but they have the further relationship of background event and main event because the event that is already happening serves as the background for the other event, the one that is in focus. The background event simply provides the time frame or other context for the main event or events.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Languages indicate a shift in time in different ways. You (the translator) need to understand how these shifts in time are indicated in the original languages in order to communicate them clearly in your own language. Background clauses often indicate a time that began long before the event that is in focus. Translators need to understand how both the source language and the target language communicate background events. Some English words that indicate background events are “now,” “when,” “while,” and “during.” Those words can also indicate simultaneous events. To tell the difference, ask yourself if all of the events seem to be equal in importance and started at about the same time. If so, they are probably simultaneous events. But if an event(s) is ongoing and another event(s) just started, then the ongoing event(s) is probably background to the other event(s). Some common phrases that indicate background events are “in those days” and “at that time.”

Examples From OBS and the Bible

> **When** Solomon was old, he also worshiped their gods. (OBS Story 18 Frame 3)

Solomon began to worship foreign gods at a time when he was old. Being old is the background event. Worshiping other gods is the main event.

> And his parents went **every year** to Jerusalem to the Feast of the Passover. And when he was 12 years old, they went up according to the custom of the feast. (Luke 2:41-42 ULT)

The first event—going to Jerusalem—is ongoing and started long ago. We know this because of the words “every year.” Going to Jerusalem is the background event. Then an event begins that started during the time “when he was twelve years old.” So the main event is the specific time Jesus and his family traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover festival **when he was twelve years old.**

> And it came about that, **while** they were there, the days were fulfilled for her to give birth. (Luke 2:6 ULT)

Being in Bethlehem is the background event. The birth of the baby is the main event.

> And in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—**while** Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, **during** the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas—the word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. (Luke 3:1-2 ULT)

This example begins with five background clauses (marked by commas), signalled as background by the words “while” and “during.” Then the main event happens: “the word of God came to John.”

Translation Strategies

If the way that the Background Clauses are marked is also clear in your language, then translate the Background Clauses as they are.

(1) If the connecting word does not make it clear that what follows is a Background Clause, use a connecting word that communicates this more clearly.
(2) If your language marks Background Clauses in a different way than using connecting words (such as by using different verb forms), then use that way.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

> And in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—**while** Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, **during** the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas—the word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. (Luke 3:1-2 ULT)

(1) If the connecting word does not make it clear that what follows is a background clause, use a connecting word that communicates this more clearly.

> **It happened during the time that** Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, **and during the time that** Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, **and during the time that** his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, **and during the time that** Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, **and also during the time that** Annas and Caiaphas were high priests—**that** the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

(2) If your language marks background clauses in a different way than using connecting words, such as with different verb forms, then use that way.

> Pontius Pilate **was governing** Judea, and Herod **was ruling over** Galilee, and his brother Philip **was ruling over** the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias **was ruling over** Abilene, and Annas and Caiaphas **were being** high priests—the word of God **came** to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

Example of Differences in Time Relationship Connecting Words:

Category	Example
Background setting	Yahweh's word was rare **in those days**;
Background repeated	there was no frequent prophetic vision.
Introduction of main event	**At that time**, **when** Eli
Background	**whose** eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see well,
Simultaneous background	was lying down in his own bed.
Simultaneous background	The lamp of God **had not yet** gone out,
Simultaneous background	**and** Samuel was lying down to sleep in the temple of Yahweh,
Simultaneous background	where the ark of God was.
Main event	**Yahweh called to Samuel**,
Sequential event	who said, "Here I am." (1 Sam 3:1-4 ULT)

In the above example, the first two lines talk about a condition that was going on for a long time. This is the general, long-term background. We know this from the phrase "in those days." After the introduction of the main event ("At that time,"), there are several lines of simultaneous background. The first one is introduced by "when," and then three more follow, with the last connected by "and." The background clause introduced by "where" explains a little more about the background clause before it. Then the main event happens, followed by more events. Translators will need to think about the best way to show these relationships in their language.

Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship

Logical Relationships

Some connectors establish logical relationships between two phrases, clauses, sentences, or chunks of text.

Goal (or Purpose) Relationship

Description

A Goal Relationship is a logical relationship in which the second event is the purpose or goal of the first event. In order for something to be a goal relationship, someone must do the first event with the intention that it will cause the second event.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

In Scripture, the goal or purpose may be stated either first or second. But in some languages, the goal or purpose must always occur in the same position (either first or second) in order for that logical relationship to be understood. You (the translator) need to understand the relationship between the two parts and communicate those accurately in your language. This may require changing the order of the two events. It may also require specific words to indicate that one is the goal or purpose of the other. Words commonly used to indicate a goal relationship in English are “in order to,” “in order that” or “so that.” It is important that the translator recognize the words that signal a goal relationship and translate that relationship in a natural way.

Examples From OBS and the Bible

> She became angry and falsely accused Joseph **so that he was arrested and sent to prison**. (Story 8 Frame 5 OBS)

The goal or purpose of the woman’s false accusation was to get Joseph arrested and sent to prison.

> Meanwhile Gideon, his son, was threshing out wheat at the winepress **in order to hide from the presence of Midian**. (Judges 6:11b ULT)

Here the prepositional phrase begins with “in order to.”

> Now if I have found favor in your eyes, show me your ways **so that I may know you and continue to find favor in your eyes**. Remember that this nation is your people. (Exodus 33:13 ULT)

Moses wants God to show him God’s ways for the goal or purpose of Moses knowing God and continuing to find favor with God.

> Even be sure to pull some out from the bundles for her and leave it **for her to glean**, and do not rebuke her! (Ruth 2:16 ULT)

The goal or purpose of Boaz instructing the men to pull out the grain from their bundles and leave it was for Ruth to gather (glean) it.

> The shepherds said to each other, "Let us indeed go over as far as Bethlehem, **and let us see this thing that has happened**, which the Lord has made known to us." (Luke 2:15 ULT)

The purpose of going to Bethlehem was to see the thing that had happened. Here the purpose is not marked and might be misunderstood.

> "… if you want **to enter into life**, keep the commandments." (Matthew 19:17b ULT)

The goal of keeping the commandments is to enter into life.

> Do not turn from it to the right or to the left **so that you may be wise** in everything in which you walk. (Joshua 1:7c ULT)

The purpose of not turning away from the instructions that Moses gave to the Israelites was so that they would be wise.

> But when the vine growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him **and take over his inheritance**.' So they took him, threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. (Matt 21:38-39 ULT)

The purpose of the vine growers killing the heir was so they could take his inheritance. They state both events as a plan, joining them only with "and." Then the word "so" marks the reporting of the first event, but the second event (the goal or purpose) is not stated.

Translation Strategies

If your language uses Goal or Purpose relationships in the same way as in the text, then use them as they are.

(1) If the construction of the Goal statement is unclear, change it to one that is more clear.
(2) If the order of the statements makes the Goal statement unclear or confusing for the reader, then change the order.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the construction of the goal statement is unclear, change it to one that is more clear.

> "Even be sure to pull some out from the bundles for her and leave it **for her to glean**, and do not rebuke her!" (Ruth 2:16 ULT)

> > "Even be sure to pull some out from the bundles for her and leave it **so that she can glean it**, and do not rebuke her!"

> The shepherds said to each other, "Let us indeed go over as far as Bethlehem, **and let us see this thing that has happened**, which the Lord has made known to us." (Luke 2:15 ULT)
>
> > The shepherds said to each other, "Let us indeed go over as far as Bethlehem **so that we can see this thing that has happened**, which the Lord has made known to us."

(2) If the order of the statements makes the goal statement unclear or confusing for the reader, then change the order.

> "… if you want **to enter into life**, keep the commandments." (Matthew 19:17bULT)
>
> > "… keep the commandments if you want **to enter into life**." or: "… keep the commandments **so that you can enter into life**."

> But when the vine growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him **and take over his inheritance**.' So they took him, threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. (Matt 21:38-39 ULT)

(1) and (2)

> But when the vine growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him **and take over his inheritance**.' So they took him, threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. (Matt 21:38-39 ULT)
>
> > But when the vine growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him **so that we can take over his inheritance**.' So they took him, threw him out of the vineyard and killed him **so that they could take over his inheritance**.

Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship

Logical Relationships

Some connectors establish logical relationships between two phrases, clauses, sentences, or chunks of text.

Reason-and-Result Relationships

Description

A reason-and-result relationship is a logical relationship in which one event is the **reason** or cause for another event. The second event, then, is the **result** of the first event.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

A reason-and-result relationship can look forward — "I did Y because I wanted X to happen." But usually it is looking backward — "X happened, and so I did Y." Also, it is possible to state the reason either before or after the result. Many languages have a preferred order for the reason and the result, and it will be confusing for the reader if they are in the opposite order. Common words used to indicate a reason-and-result relationship in English are "because," "so," "therefore," and "for." Some of these words can also be used to indicate a goal relationship, so translators need to be aware of the difference between a goal relationship and a reason-and-result relationship. It is necessary for translators to understand how the two events are connected, and then communicate them clearly in their language.

If the reason and result are stated in different verses, it is still possible to put them in a different order. If you change the order of the verses, then put the verse numbers together at the beginning of the group of verses that were rearranged like this: 1-2. This is called a Verse Bridge.

Examples From OBS and the Bible

> The Jews were amazed, **because** Saul had tried to kill believers, and now he believed in Jesus! (Story 46 Frame 6 OBS)

The **reason** is the change in Saul — that he had tried to kill people who believed in Jesus, and now he himself believed in Jesus. The **result** is that the Jews were amazed. "Because" connects the two ideas and indicates that what follows it is a reason.

> Behold, a great storm arose on the sea, **so that** the boat was covered with the waves. (Matthew 8:24a ULT)

The **reason** is the great storm, and the **result** is that the boat was covered with the waves. The two events are connected by "so that." Notice that the term "so that" often indicates a goal relationship, but here the relationship is reason-and-result. This is because the sea cannot think and therefore does not have a goal.

> God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, **because** in it he rested from all his work which he had done in his creation. (Genesis 2:3 ULT)

The **result** is that God blessed and sanctified the seventh day. The **reason** is because he rested on the seventh day from his work.

> “Blessed are the poor, **for** yours is the kingdom of God.” (Luke 6:20b ULT)

The **result** is that the poor are blessed. The **reason** is that the kingdom of God is theirs.

> But he raised up in their place their sons that Joshua circumcised, being uncircumcised, **because** they had not been circumcised on the way. (Joshua 5:7 ULT)

The **result** is that Joshua circumcised the boys and men who had been born in the wilderness. The **reason** was that they had not been circumcised while they were journeying.

Translation Strategies

If your language uses reason-and-result relationships in the same way as in the text, then use them as they are.

(1) If the order of the clauses is confusing for the reader, then change the order.

(2) If the relationship between the clauses is not clear, then use a more clear connecting word.

(3) If it is more clear to put a connecting word in the clause that does not have one, then do so.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

> God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, **because** in it he rested from all his work which he had done in his creation. (Genesis 2:3 ULT)

(1) God rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done in his creation. **That is why** he blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.

> Blessed are the poor, **for** yours is the kingdom of God. (Luke 6:20 ULT)

(1) The kingdom of God belongs to you who are poor. **Therefore**, the poor are blessed.

(2) Blessed are the poor, **because** yours is the kingdom of God.

(3) **The reason that** the poor are blessed **is because** yours is the kingdom of God.

> Behold, a great storm arose on the sea, **so that** the boat was covered with the waves. (Matthew 8:24a ULT)

(1) Behold, the boat was covered with the waves **because** a great storm arose on the sea.

(2) Behold, a great storm arose on the sea, **with the result that** the boat was covered with the waves.

(3) Behold, **because** a great storm arose on the sea, the boat was covered with the waves.

> **Since** he was not able to find out anything for certain because of the noise, he ordered that he be brought into the fortress. (Acts 21:34b ULT)

(1) The captain ordered that Paul be brought into the fortress, **because** he could not tell anything because of all the noise.

(2) **Because** the captain could not tell anything because of all the noise, he ordered that Paul be brought into the fortress.

(3) The captain could not tell anything because of all the noise, **so** he ordered that Paul be brought into the fortress.

Connect — Contrast Relationship

Logical Relationships

Some connectors establish logical relationships between two phrases, clauses, sentences, or chunks of text.

Contrast Relationship

Description

A contrast relationship is a logical relationship in which one event or item is in contrast or opposition to another.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

In Scripture, many events did not happen as the people involved intended or expected them to happen. Sometimes people acted in ways that were not expected, whether good or bad. Often it was God at work, changing the events. These events were often pivotal. It is important that translators understand and communicate these contrasts. In English, contrast relationships are often indicated by the words “but,” “although,” “even though,” “though,” “yet,” or “however.”

Examples From OBS and the Bible

> You tried to do evil when you sold me as a slave, **but** God used the evil for good! (Story 8 Frame 12 OBS)

Joseph’s brothers’ evil plan to sell Joseph is contrasted with God’s good plan to save many people. The word “but” marks the contrast.

> For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? **Yet** I am among you as one who serves. (Luke 22:27 ULT)

Jesus contrasts the proud way that human leaders behave with the humble way that he behaves. The contrast is marked by the word “yet.”

> The hill country will also be yours. **Though** it is a forest, you will clear it and it will become yours to its farthest borders, for you will drive out the Canaanites, even **though** they have chariots of iron, and even **though** they are strong. (Joshua 17:18 ULT)

It was unexpected that the Israelites, who had been slaves in Egypt, would be able to conquer and lay claim to the promised land.

Translation Strategies

If your language uses contrast relationships in the same way as in the text, then use them as they are.

(1) If the contrast relationship between the clauses is not clear, then use a connecting word or phrase that is more specific or more clear.
(2) If it is more clear in your language to mark the other clause of the contrast relationship, then use a connecting word on the other clause.
(3) If your language shows a contrast relationship in a different way, then use that way.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the contrast relationship between the clauses is not clear, then use a connecting word or phrase that is more specific or more clear.

> For who is greater, the one who reclines at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? **Yet** I am among you as one who serves. (Luke 22:27 ULT)
>
> > For who is greater, the one who reclines at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? **Unlike that person**, I am among you as one who serves.

(2) If it is more clear in your language to mark the other clause of the contrast relationship, then use a connecting word on the other clause.

> The hill country will also be yours. **Though** it is a forest, you will clear it and it will become yours to its farthest borders, for you will drive out the Canaanites, even **though** they have chariots of iron, and even **though** they are strong. (Joshua 17:18 ULT)
>
> > The hill country will also be yours. It is a forest, **but** you will clear it and it will become yours to its farthest borders. They have chariots of iron, and they are strong, **but** you will drive out the Canaanites.

(3) If your language shows a contrast relationship in a different way, then use that way.

> {David} found favor in the sight of God, and he asked if he might find a dwelling place for the house of Jacob. **However**, Solomon built the house for him. **But** the Most High does not live in houses made with hands. (Acts 7:46-48a ULT)
>
> > [David] found favor in the sight of God, and he asked if he might find a dwelling place for the house of Jacob. **But** it was, Solomon, **not David**, who built the house for God. **Even though Solomon built him a house**, the Most High does not live in houses made with hands.

Connect — Factual Conditions

Conditional Relationships

Conditional connectors connect two clauses to indicate that one of them will happen when the other one happens. In English, the most common way to connect conditional clauses is with the words, "if … then." Often, however, the word "then" is not stated.

Factual Conditions

Description

A Factual Condition is a condition that sounds hypothetical but is already certain or true in the speaker's mind. In English, a sentence containing a Factual Condition can use the words "even though," "since," or "this being the case" to indicate that it is a factual condition and not a hypothetical condition.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages do not state something as a condition if it is certain or true. Translators from these languages may misunderstand the original languages and think that the condition is uncertain. This would lead to mistakes in their translations. Even if the translators understand that the condition is certain or true, the readers may misunderstand it. In this case, it would be best to translate it as a statement of fact rather than as a conditional statement.

Examples From OBS and the Bible

> "**If** Yahweh is God, worship him!" (Story 19 Frame 6 OBS)

> Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you keep changing your mind? **If Yahweh is God**, follow him. But if Baal is God, then follow him." Yet the people did not answer him a word. (1 Kings 18:21 ULT)

This sentence has the same construction as a hypothetical condition. The condition is "if Yahweh is God." If that is true, then the Israelites should worship Yahweh. But the prophet Elijah does not question whether or not Yahweh is God. In fact, he is so certain that Yahweh is God that later in the passage he pours water all over his sacrifice. He is confident that God is real and that he will burn even an offering that is completely wet. Over and over again, the prophets taught that Yahweh is God, so the people should worship him. The people did not worship Yahweh, however, even though He is God. By putting the statement or instruction into the form of a Factual Condition, Elijah is trying to get the Israelites to understand more clearly what they should do.

> "A son honors his father, and a servant honors his master. **If** I, then, am a father, where is my honor? **If** I am a master, where is the reverence for me?" says Yahweh of hosts to you priests, who despise my name. (Malachi 1:6 ULT)

Yahweh has said that he is a father and a master to Israel, so even though this sounds like a hypothetical condition because it begins with "if," it is not hypothetical. This verse begins with the proverb that a son honors his father. Everyone knows that is right. But the Israelites are not honoring Yahweh. The other proverb in the verse says that a servant honors his master. Everyone knows that is right. But the Israelites are not honoring Yahweh, so it seems that he is not their master. But Yahweh is the master. Yahweh uses the form of a hypothetical condition to demonstrate that the Israelites are wrong. The second part of the condition that should occur naturally is not happening, even though the conditional statement is true.

Translation Strategies

If using the form of a hypothetical condition is confusing or would make the reader think that the speaker doubts what he is saying in the first part of the sentence, then use a statement instead. Words such as "since" or "you know that …" or "it is true that …" can be helpful to make the meaning clear.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

"**If** Yahweh is God, worship him!" (Story 19 Frame 6 OBS)

> "**It is true that** Yahweh is God, so worship him!"

"A son honors his father, and a servant honors his master. **If** I, then, am a father, where is my honor? **If** I am a master, where is the reverence for me?" says Yahweh of hosts to you priests, who despise my name. (Malachi 1:6 ULT)

> "A son honors his father, and a servant honors his master. **Since** I, then, am a father, where is my honor? **Since** I am a master, where is the reverence for me?"

Connect — Contrary to Fact Conditions

Conditional Relationships

Conditional connectors connect two clauses to indicate that one of them will happen when the other one happens. In English, the most common way to connect conditional clauses is with the words, "if … then." Often, however, the word "then" is not stated.

Contrary-to-Fact Conditions

Description

A Contrary-to-Fact Condition is a condition that sounds hypothetical, but the speaker is already certain that it is NOT true.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Usually there are no special words that indicate a Contrary-to-Fact Condition. The writer assumes that the reader knows that it is NOT a true condition. For this reason it often requires knowledge of implied information to know that it is not true. If this kind of condition is difficult for translators to communicate, they may want to consider using the same strategies that they used for Rhetorical Questions or Implied Information.

Examples From OBS and the Bible

> But **if Baal is God**, worship him! (Story 19 Frame 6 OBS)

> Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you keep changing your mind? If Yahweh is God, follow him. But **if Baal is God**, then follow him." Yet the people did not answer him a word. (1 Kings 18:21 ULT)

Baal is not God. Elijah is not suggesting that Baal might be God, and he does not want the people to follow Baal. But Elijah used a conditional statement to show them that what they were doing was wrong. In the example above, we see two conditions that have the same construction. The first one, "If Yahweh is God," is a Factual Condition because Elijah is certain that it is true. The second one, "if Baal is God," is a Contrary-to-Fact Condition because Elijah is certain that it is not true. You will need to consider if people would say both of these in the same way in your language or if they would say them in different ways.

> But his wife replied to him, "**If Yahweh had desired to kill us**, he would not have taken from our hand the whole burnt offering and the offering. He would not have shown us all these things, and at this time would he have not allowed us to hear about this." (Judges 13:23 ULT)

Manoah's wife thinks that the second part of her conditional statement is not true, therefore the first part is also not true. God received their burnt offering; therefore, He does not want to kill them.

> "**If only we had died** by Yahweh's hand in the land of Egypt, sitting by a pot of meat and eating bread to the full." (Exodus 16b:3 ULT)

Of course the people speaking here did not die in Egypt, and so this is a Contrary-to-Fact condition that is used to express a wish.

> "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! **If the mighty deeds had been done** in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, **they would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes." (Matthew 11:21 ULT)

The English reader knows that these last two examples are Contrary-to-Fact conditions because of the past-tense verbs used in the first part (they are not things that might happen). The last example also has a second part that uses "would have." These words also signal something that did not happen.

Translation Strategies

If Contrary-to-Fact conditions are clear in your language, then use them as they are.

(1) If the condition leads the reader to think that the speaker believes something that is false, then restate the condition as something that others believe.
(2) If the condition leads the reader to think that the speaker is suggesting that the first part is true, then restate it as a statement that it is not true.
(3) If the condition is expressing something that did not happen but the speaker wanted it to happen, restate it as a wish.
(4) If the condition is expressing something that did not happen, restate it as a negative statement.
(5) Often Factual and Contrary-to-Fact conditions are used to make reasoned arguments for a change in behavior. If translators are struggling to know the best way to translate them, it could be helpful to discuss how this is done in their language community. If someone is trying to convince people to change their behavior, how do they do that? It may be possible to adapt similar strategies when translating these conditions.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the condition leads the reader to think that the speaker believes something that is false, then restate the condition as something that others believe.

> But **if Baal is God**, worship him! (Story 19 Frame 6 OBS)
>
> > If you believe that Baal is God, then worship him!

(2) If the condition leads the reader to think that the speaker is suggesting that the first part is true, then restate it as a statement that it is not true.

> > If Baal is not God, then you should not worship him!

> But his wife replied to him, "**If Yahweh had desired to kill us**, he would not have taken from our hand the whole burnt offering and the offering. He would not have shown us all these things, and at this time would he have not allowed us to hear about this." (Judges 13:23 ULT)

> "**Yahweh does not want to kill us**, or he would not have received the burnt offering and the offering we gave him."

(3) If the condition is expressing something that did not happen but the speaker wanted it to happen, restate it as a wish.

> "**If only we had died** by Yahweh's hand in the land of Egypt, sitting by a pot of meat and eating bread to the full." (Exodus 16b:3 ULT)

> "**I wish we had died** by Yahweh's hand in the land of Egypt…"

(4) If the condition is expressing something that did not happen, restate it as a negative statement.

> "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! **If the mighty deeds had been done** in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, **they would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes." (Matthew 11:21 ULT)

> "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! The mighty deeds which were done in you **were not done** in Tyre and Sidon. But **if they had been done there, those people would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

(5) Often Factual and Contrary-to-Fact Conditions are used to make reasoned arguments for a change in behavior. If translators are struggling to know the best way to translate them, it could be helpful to discuss how this is done in their language community. If someone is trying to convince people to change their behavior, how do they do that? It may be possible to adapt similar strategies when translating these conditions.

> But **if Baal is God**, worship him! (Story 19 Frame 6 OBS)

> Is Baal the one who is truly God? Should you worship him?

> "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! **If the mighty deeds had been done** in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, **they would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes." (Matthew 11:21 ULT)

> "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! You think that you are better than Tyre and Sidon, but you are not! **They would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes at seeing the mighty deeds that you have seen! **You should be like them**!"

Connect — Hypothetical Conditions

Conditional Relationships

Conditional connectors connect two clauses to indicate that one of them will happen when the other one happens. In English, the most common way to connect conditional clauses is with the words "if … then." Often, however, the word "then" is not stated.

Hypothetical Condition

Description

A Hypothetical Condition is a condition in which the second event (the "then" clause) will only take place if the first event (the "if" clause) takes place or is fulfilled in some way. Sometimes what takes place is dependent on the actions of other people.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

It is important that translators understand whether or not something is a Hypothetical Condition so that they translate it in the correct way. For example, some of God's promises to Israel were conditional, based on whether or not Israel obeyed God. However, many of God's promises to Israel were not conditional; God would keep these promises whether or not the Israelites obeyed. It is important that you (the translator) know the difference between these two types of promises and communicate each one accurately in your own language. Also, sometimes conditions are stated in an order different than the order in which they would happen. If the target language would state the clauses in a different order, then you will need to make that adjustment.

Examples From OBS and the Bible

> God promised to bless the people and protect them, **if** they obeyed these laws. But he said he would punish them **if** they did not obey them (Story 13 Frame 7 OBS)

There are two hypothetical conditions in this frame. In both of these conditions, the first event (the "if clause") is stated after the "then" clause. If this is unnatural or confusing, the clauses can be restated in the more natural order. The first hypothetical condition is: if the Israelites obeyed God, then God would bless and protect them. The second hypothetical condition is: if the Israelites did not obey God, then God would punish them.

> If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? (Genesis 4:7a ULT)

If Cain does what is right, then he will be accepted. The only way for Cain to be accepted is by doing what is right.

> … **if** this plan or this work is of men, it will be overthrown. But **if** it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. (Acts 5:38b-39aULT)

There are two hypothetical conditions here: (1) If it is true that this plan is of men, then it will be overthrown; (2) If it is true that this plan is of God, then it cannot be overthrown.

Translation Strategies

(1) If the order of clauses makes the hypothetical condition confusing, then change the order of the clauses.

(2) If it is not clear where the second event is, mark that part with a word like "then."

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the order of clauses makes the hypothetical condition confusing, then change the order of the clauses.

> God promised to bless the people and protect them **if** they obeyed these laws. But he said he would punish them **if** they did not obey them. (Story 13 Frame 7 OBS)
>
> > If the people obeyed these laws, God promised he would bless them and protect them. But **if** they did not obey these laws, God said that he would punish them.

(2) If it is not clear where the second event is, mark that part with a word like "then."

> God promised to bless the people and protect them, **if** they obeyed these laws. But he said he would punish them **if** they did not obey them. (Story 13 Frame 7 OBS)
>
> > If the people obeyed these laws, **then** God promised he would bless them and protect them. But **if** they did not obey these laws, **then** God said that he would punish them.
>
> … **if** this plan or this work is of men, it will be overthrown. But **if** it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; (Acts 5:38b-39a ULT)
>
> > … **if** this plan or this work is of men, **then** it will be overthrown. But **if** it is of God, **then** you will not be able to overthrow them;

Connect — Exception Clauses

Exceptional Relationship

Description

Exceptional relationship connectors exclude one or more items or people from a group.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

English indicates exceptional relationships by first describing a group (Part 1) and then stating what is not in that group by using words like “except,” “but not,” “other than,” “besides,” “unless,” “however … not,” and “only” (Part 2). Some languages do not indicate in this way that one or more items or people are excluded from a group. Instead, they have other ways of doing this. In some languages this type of construction does not make sense because the exception in Part 2 seems to contradict the statement in Part 1. Translators need to understand who (or what) is in the group and who (or what) is excluded in order to be able to accurately communicate this in their language.

Examples From OBS and the Bible

> God told Adam that he could eat from **any** tree in the garden **except** from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (OBS Story 1 Frame 11)
>
> But if you will not redeem it, then tell me so that I may know, for there is **no one** to redeem it **besides** you, and I am after you. (Ruth 4:4b ULT)
>
> David attacked them from the twilight to the evening of the next day. **Not** a man escaped **except for** 400 young men, who rode on camels and fled. (1 Samuel 30:17 ULT)
>
> The man said, “Let me go, for the dawn is breaking.” Jacob said, “I will **not** let you go **unless** you bless me.” (Genesis 32:26 ULT)

Translation Strategies

If the way that Exceptional Clauses are marked in the source language is also clear in your language, then translate the Exceptional Clauses in the same way.

(1) Very often, the exception in Part 2 contradicts something that was negated in Part 1. In this case, the translator can phrase the same idea without the contradiction by deleting the negative and using a word like “**only**.”
(2) Reverse the order of the clauses so that the exception is stated first, and then the larger group is named second.

Examples of Translation Strategy Applied

(1) Very often, the exception in Part 2 contradicts something that was negated in Part 1. In this case, the translator can phrase the same idea without the contradiction by deleting the negative and using a word like "**only**."

> David attacked them from the twilight to the evening of the next day. **Not a man escaped except for 400 young men**, who rode on camels and fled. (1 Samuel 30:17 ULT)

- Part 1: (**Not** a man escaped)
- Part 2: (**except for** 400 young men)

> > David attacked them from the twilight to the evening of the next day. **Only** 400 young men escaped; they rode on camels and fled.

> But if you will not redeem it, then tell me so that I may know, for there is **no one** to redeem it **besides** you, and I am after you. (Ruth 4:4 ULT)

> > But if you will not redeem it, then tell me so that I may know, for **you are first in line to redeem it {only you can redeem it}**, and I am after you.

> The man said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." Jacob said, "I will **not** let you go **unless** you bless me." (Genesis 32:26 ULT)

> > The man said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." Jacob said, "I will let you go **only if** you bless me."

(2) Reverse the order of the clauses, so that the exception is stated first, and then the larger group is named second.

> God told Adam that he could eat from **any** tree in the garden **except** from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (OBS Story 1 Frame 11)

> > God told Adam that he could **not** eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but he could eat from **any other** tree in the garden.

Grammar

Grammar Topics

Grammar has two main parts: words and structure. Structure involves how we put words together to form phrases, clauses, and sentences. Here is a brief overview of Grammar Topics we will deal with in detail.

Parts of Speech — Every word in a language belongs to a category called a part of speech. (See Parts of Speech.)

Sentences — When we speak, we organize our thoughts in sentences. A sentence usually has a complete thought about an event or a situation or state of being. (See Sentence Structure.)

- Sentences can be statements, questions, commands, or exclamations. (See Exclamations.)
- Sentences can have more than one clause. (See Sentence Structure.)
- Some languages have both active and passive sentences. (See Active or Passive.)

Possession — This shows that there is a relationship between two nouns. In English it is marked with "of" as in "the love of God," or with "'s" as in "God's love," or with a possessive pronoun as in "his love." (See Possession.)

Quotations — A quotation is a report of what someone else has said.

- Quotations normally have two parts: Information about who said something and what the person said. (See Quotations and Quote Margins.)
- Quotations can be either direct quotes or indirect quotes. (See Direct and Indirect Quotations.)
- Quotes can have quotes within them. (See Quotes within Quotes.)
- Quotes can be marked to make it easy for readers to understand who said what. (See Quote Markings.)

Abstract Nouns

Description

Abstract nouns are nouns that refer to attitudes, qualities, events, or situations. These are things that cannot be seen or touched in a physical sense, such as happiness, weight, unity, friendship, health, and reason. This is a translation issue because some languages may express a certain idea with an abstract noun, while others would need a different way to express it.

Remember that nouns are words that refer to a person, place, thing, or idea. Abstract nouns are the nouns that refer to ideas. These can be attitudes, qualities, events, situations, or even relationships between those ideas. These are things that cannot be seen or touched in a physical sense, such as joy, peace, creation, goodness, contentment, justice, truth, freedom, vengeance, slowness, length, weight, and many, many more.

Some languages, such as Biblical Greek and English, use abstract nouns a lot. They provide a way of giving names to actions or qualities. With names, people who speak these languages can talk about the concepts as though they were things. For example, in languages that use abstract nouns, people can say, “I believe in the forgiveness of sin.” But some languages do not use abstract nouns very much. In these languages, speakers may not have the two abstract nouns “forgiveness” and “sin,” but they would express the same meaning in other ways. For example, they would express, “I believe that God is willing to forgive people after they have sinned,” by using verb phrases instead of nouns for those ideas.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

The Bible that you translate from may use abstract nouns to express certain ideas. Your language might not use abstract nouns for some of those ideas. Instead, it might use phrases to express those ideas. Those phrases will use other kinds of words such as adjectives, verbs, or adverbs to express the meaning of the abstract noun. For example, “What is its **weight**?” could be expressed as “How much does it **weigh**?” or “How **heavy** is it?”

Examples From the Bible

> From **childhood** you have known the sacred writings … (2 Timothy 3:15a ULT)

The abstract noun “childhood” refers to when someone was a child.

> But **godliness** with **contentment** is great **gain**. (1 Timothy 6:6 ULT)

The abstract nouns “godliness” and “contentment” refer to being godly and content. The abstract noun “gain” refers to something that benefits or helps someone.

> Today **salvation** has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. (Luke 19:9 ULT)

The abstract noun “salvation” here refers to being saved.

> The Lord does not move slowly concerning his promises, as some consider **slowness** to be (2 Peter 3:9a ULT)

The abstract noun “slowness” refers to the lack of speed with which something is done.

> He will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the **purposes** of the heart. (1 Corinthians 4:5b ULT)

The abstract noun “purposes” refers to the things that people want to do and the reasons they want to do them.

Translation Strategies

If an abstract noun would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here is another option:

(1) Reword the sentence with a phrase that expresses the meaning of the abstract noun. Instead of a noun, the new phrase will use a verb, an adverb, or an adjective to express the idea of the abstract noun.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Reword the sentence with a phrase that expresses the meaning of the abstract noun. Instead of a noun, the new phrase will use a verb, an adverb, or an adjective to express the idea of the abstract noun. Alternative translations are indented below the Scripture example.

> … from **childhood** you have known the sacred writings … (2 Timothy 3:15a ULT)
>
> > Ever since **you were a child** you have known the sacred writings.
>
> But **godliness** with **contentment** is great **gain**. (1 Timothy 6:6 ULT)
>
> > But **being godly** and **content** is very **beneficial**. But we **benefit** greatly when we **are godly** and **content**. But we **benefit** greatly when we **honor and obey God** and when we are **happy with what we have**.
>
> Today **salvation** has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. (Luke 19:9 ULT)
>
> > Today the people in this house **have been saved** … Today God **has saved** the people in this house …
>
> The Lord does not move slowly concerning his promises, as some consider **slowness** to be. (2 Peter 3:9a ULT)
>
> > The Lord does not move slowly concerning his promises, as some consider **moving slowly** to be.
>
> He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the **purposes** of the heart. (1 Corinthians 4:5b ULT)

He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal **the things that people want to do and the reasons that they want to do them**.

Active or Passive

Some languages use both active and passive sentences. In active sentences, the subject does the action. In passive sentences, the subject is the one that receives the action. Here are some examples with their subjects bolded:

- Active: **My father** built the house in 2010.
- Passive: **The house** was built in 2010.

Translators whose languages do not use passive sentences will need to know how they can translate passive sentences that they find in the Bible. Other translators will need to decide when to use a passive sentence and when to use the active form.

Description

Some languages have both active and passive forms of sentences.

- In the active form, the subject does the action and is always mentioned.
- In the passive form, the action is done to the subject, and the one who does the action is not always mentioned.

In the examples of active and passive sentences below, we have bolded the subject.

- active: **My father** built the house in 2010.
- passive: **The house** was built by my father in 2010.
- passive: **The house** was built in 2010. (This does not tell who did the action.)

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

All languages use active forms. Some languages use passive forms, and some do not. Some languages use passive forms only for certain purposes, and the passive form is not used for the same purposes in all of the languages that use it.

Purposes for the Passive

- The speaker is talking about the person or thing the action was done to, not about the person who did the action.
- The speaker does not want to tell who did the action.
- The speaker does not know who did the action.

Translation Principles Regarding the Passive

- Translators whose language does not use passive forms will need to find another way to express the idea.
- Translators whose language has passive forms will need to understand why the passive is used in a particular sentence in the Bible and decide whether or not to use a passive form for that purpose in his translation of the sentence.

Examples From the Bible

> Then their shooters shot at your soldiers from off the wall, and some of the king's servants **were killed**, and your servant Uriah the Hittite **was killed** too. (2 Samuel 11:24 ULT)

This means that the enemy's shooters shot and killed some of the king's servants, including Uriah. The point is what happened to the king's servants and Uriah, not who shot them. The purpose of the passive form here is to keep the focus on the king's servants and Uriah.

> When the men of the city arose early in the morning, and see, the altar of Baal **was torn down**. (Judges 6:28a ULT)

The men of the town saw what had happened to the altar of Baal, but they did not know who broke it down. The purpose of the passive form here is to communicate this event from the perspective of the men of the town.

> It would be better for him if a millstone **were put** around his neck and he **were thrown** into the sea. (Luke 17:2a ULT)

This describes a situation in which a person ends up in the sea with a millstone around his neck. The purpose of the passive form here is to keep the focus on what happens to this person. Who does these things to the person is not important.

Translation Strategies

If your language would use a passive form for the same purpose as in the passage that you are translating, then use a passive form. If you decide that it is better to translate without a passive form, here are some strategies that you might consider.

(1) Use the same verb in an active sentence and tell who or what did the action. If you do this, try to keep the focus on the person receiving the action.
(2) Use the same verb in an active sentence, and do not tell who or what did the action. Instead, use a generic expression like "they" or "people" or "someone."
(3) Use a different verb.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use the same verb in an active sentence and tell who did the action. If you do this, try to keep the focus on the person receiving the action.

> A loaf of bread **was given** him every day from the street of the bakers. (Jeremiah 37:21b ULT)
>
> > **The king's servants gave** Jeremiah a loaf of bread every day from the street of the bakers.

(2) Use the same verb in an active sentence, and do not tell who did the action. Instead, use a generic expression like "they" or "people" or "someone."

> It would be better for him if a millstone **were put** around his neck and he **were thrown** into the sea. (Luke 17:2a ULT)

> It would be better for him if **they were to put** a millstone around his neck and **throw** him into the sea.
> It would be better for him if **someone were to put** a heavy stone around his neck and **throw** him into the sea.

(3) Use a different verb in an active sentence.

> A loaf of bread **was given** him every day from the street of the bakers. (Jeremiah 37:21 ULT)
>
> He **received** a loaf of bread every day from the street of the bakers.

Collective Nouns

Description

A collective noun is a singular noun that refers to a group of something. Examples: a **family, clan,** or **tribe** is a group of people who are related to each other; a **flock** is a group of birds or sheep; a **fleet** is a group of ships; and an **army** is a group of soldiers.

Many collective nouns are used exclusively as a singular replacement for a group as in the examples above. Frequently in the Bible the name of an ancestor is used, through a process of metonymy, as a collective noun referencing the group of his descendants. In the Bible, sometimes the singular noun will take a singular verb form, other times it will take a plural verb form. This may depend on how the author is thinking about the group, or whether the action is being done as a group or as individuals.

Reason This is a Translation Issue

There are several issues that require care when translating collective nouns. Further care is needed because the language you are translating into may not use collective nouns in the same way as the language you are translating from. Issues include:

1. The source language may have a collective noun for a group that the target language does not and vice-versa. You may have to translate a collective noun with a plural noun in your language, or you may need to translate a plural noun with a collective noun in your language.
2. Subject-verb agreement. Different languages or dialects may have different rules about using singular or plural verbs with collective nouns. Examples (from Wikipedia):
    - a singular noun with a singular verb: The team *is* in the dressing room.
    - a singular noun with a plural verb which is correct in British, but not American, English: The team *are* fighting among themselves. The team *have* finished the project.
3. Pronoun agreement. Similar to the previous, care needs to be taken to use the correct pronoun plurality and possibly gender or noun class to agree with the number/gender/class of the noun used. See the biblical examples below.
4. Clarity of referent. Especially if there is a mismatch in your translation between the verb and noun or pronoun concerning any of the factors above, readers may be confused about who or what is being referenced.

Examples from the Bible

> And Joab and all the **army** which was with him arrived (2 Samuel 3:23a ULT)

The word in bold is written in singular form in both Hebrew and English, but it refers to a group of warriors that fight together.

> and though the **flock** is cut off from the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls. (Habakkuk 3:17b ULT)

The word in bold is singular and refers to a group of sheep.

> And he went out again beside the sea, and all the **crowd** was coming to him, and he was teaching **them**. (Mark 2:13 ULT)

Note in this example that the noun is singular but the pronoun is plural. This may or may not be allowed or natural in your language.

> Do not let **your heart** be troubled. **You** believe in God; believe also in me. (John 14:1 ULT)

In this verse, the words translated "your" and "you" are plural, referring to many people. The word "heart" is singular in form, but it refers to all of their hearts as a group.

> And he shall take the **hair** of the head of his separation. And he shall put **it** on the fire that is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings. (Num 6:18b ULT)

The word **hair** is singular, but it refers to many hairs, not just one.

> And Pharaoh said, "Who is Yahweh that I should listen to his voice to let **Israel** go? I do not know Yahweh; and moreover, I will not let **Israel** go." (Exodus 5:2 ULT)

Here, "Israel" is singular, but means "the Israelites" by metonymy.

Translation Strategies

If your language has a collective (singular) noun that refers to the same group as referenced by the collective noun in the source text, then translate the word using that term. If not, here are some strategies to consider:

(1) Translate the collective noun with a plural noun.
(2) Add a plural word to the collective noun so that you can use a plural verb and pronouns.
(3) Use a phrase to describe the group that the collective noun references. A useful strategy here can be to use a general collective noun that refers to a group of people or things.
(4) If your language uses a collective noun for something that is a plural noun in the source language, you can translate the plural noun as a collective noun and, if necessary, change the form of the verb and any pronouns so that they agree with the singular noun.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Translate the collective noun with a plural noun.

> And Pharaoh said, "Who is Yahweh that I should listen to his voice to let **Israel** go? I do not know Yahweh; and moreover, I will not let **Israel** go." (Exodus 5:2 ULT)

And Pharaoh said, "Who is Yahweh that I should listen to his voice to let **the Israelites** go? I do not know Yahweh; and moreover, I will not let **the Israelites** go."

> And he shall take the **hair** of the head of his separation. And he shall put **it** on the fire that is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings. (Num 6:18b ULT)

And he shall take the **hairs** of the head of his separation. And he shall put **them** on the fire that is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings.

(2) Add a plural word to the collective noun so that you can use a plural verb and pronouns.

> And Joab and all the **army** which was with him arrived (2 Samuel 3:23a ULT)

And Joab and all the **army men who were** with him arrived

> And he went out again beside the sea, and all the **crowd** was coming to him, and he was teaching **them**. (Mark 2:13 ULT)

And he went out again beside the sea, and all the **people of the crowd were** coming to him, and he was teaching **them**.

(3) Use a phrase to describe the group that the collective noun references. A useful strategy here can be to use a general collective noun that refers to a group of people or things.

> and though the **flock** is cut off from the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls. (Habakkuk 3:17b ULT)

and though the **group of sheep** is cut off from the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls.

> And Pharaoh said, “Who is Yahweh that I should listen to his voice to let **Israel** go? I do not know Yahweh; and moreover, I will not let **Israel** go.” (Exodus 5:2 ULT)

And Pharaoh said, “Who is Yahweh that I should listen to his voice to let **the people of Israel** go? I do not know Yahweh; and moreover, I will not let **the people of Israel** go.”

(4) If your language uses a collective noun for something that is a plural noun in the source language, you can translate the plural noun as a collective noun and, if necessary, change the form of the verb and any pronouns so that they agree with the singular noun.

> Now this John had his clothing from the **hairs** of a camel and a leather belt around his waist (Matthew 3:4a ULT)

Now this John had his clothing from the **hair** of a camel and a leather belt around his waist

> You shall not make for yourself a carved figure nor any likeness that {is} in **the heavens** above, or that {is} in the earth beneath, or that {is} in **the waters** under the earth. (Deuteronomy 5:8 ULT)

You shall not make for yourself a carved figure nor any likeness that is in **heaven** above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in **the water** under the earth.

Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding

Description

In some languages, phrases that modify a noun can be used with the noun for two different purposes. They can either (1) distinguish the noun from other similar items, or (2) they can give more information about the noun. That information could be new to the reader, or a reminder about something the reader might already know. Other languages use modifying phrases with a noun only for distinguishing the noun from other similar things. When people who speak these languages hear a modifying phrase along with a noun, they assume that its function is to distinguish one item from another similar item.

When the phrase that modifies a noun is a relative clause (a phrase that starts with a word such as “who” or“which”), some languages use a comma to mark the difference between (1) making a distinction between similar items and (2) giving more information about an item. Without the comma, the sentence below communicates that the added phrase is making a distinction:

- Mary gave some of the food to **her sister who was very thankful**.
    - If her sister was usually thankful, the phrase “who was thankful” could distinguish this sister of Mary’s from another sister who was not usually thankful.

With the comma, the phrase is giving more information:

- Mary gave some of the food to **her sister, who was very thankful**.
    - This same phrase can be used to give us more information about Mary’s sister. It tells us about how Mary’s sister responded when Mary gave her the food. In this case it does not distinguish one sister from another sister.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Many source languages of the Bible use phrases that modify a noun both for distinguishing the noun from another similar item and also for giving more information about the noun. You (the translator) must be careful to understand which meaning the author intended in each case.
- Some languages use phrases that modify a noun only for distinguishing the noun from another similar item. When translating a phrase that is used for giving more information, translators who speak these languages will need to separate the phrase from the noun. Otherwise, people who read it or hear it will think that the phrase is meant to distinguish the noun from other similar items.

Examples From the Bible

Examples of words and phrases that are used to distinguish one item from other possible items:

(These usually do not cause any problem in translation.)

> The curtain is to separate **the holy place** from **the most holy place**. (Exodus 26:33b ULT)

The words “holy” and “most holy” distinguish two different places from each other and from any other place.

> A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to **the woman who bore him**. (Proverbs 17:25 ULT)

The phrase “who bore him” distinguishes which woman the son is bitterness to. He is not bitterness to all women, but to his mother.

Examples of words and phrases that are used to give added information or a reminder about an item:

(These are a translation issue for languages that do not use these.)

> … for **your righteous judgments** are good. (Psalm 119:39b ULT)

The word “righteous” simply reminds us that God’s judgments are righteous. It does not distinguish his righteous judgments from his unrighteous judgments, because all of his judgments are righteous.

> You must surely open your hand to your brother, **to your needy and to your poor** in your land. (Deuteronomy 15:11 ULT)

The phrases “to your needy and to your poor” give further information about “your brother.” They do not refer to a separate group of people.

> How can Sarah, **who is 90 years old**, bear a son? (Genesis 17:17b ULT)

The phrase “who is 90 years old” is a reminder of Sarah’s age. It tells why Abraham was asking the question. He did not expect that a woman who was that old could bear a child. He was not distinguishing one woman named Sarah from another woman named Sarah who was a different age.

> I will wipe away mankind **whom I have created** from the surface of the earth. (Genesis 6:7 ULT)

The phrase “whom I have created” is a reminder of the relationship between God and mankind. It is the reason God had the right to wipe away mankind. There is not another mankind that God did not create.

> I hate those who serve **worthless** idols (Psalm 31:6 ULT)

By saying “worthless idols,” David was commenting about all idols and giving his reason for hating those who serve them. He was not distinguishing worthless idols from valuable idols.

Translation Strategies

If readers would understand the purpose of a phrase with a noun, then consider keeping the phrase and the noun together. For languages that use words or phrases with a noun only to distinguish one item from another, here are some strategies for translating phrases that are used to inform or remind.

(1) Put the information in another part of the sentence and add words that show its purpose.
(2) Use one of your language's ways for expressing that this is just added information. It may be by adding a small word, or by changing the way the voice sounds. Sometimes changes in the voice can be shown with punctuation marks, such as parentheses or commas.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Put the information in another part of the sentence and add words that show its purpose.

I hate those who serve **worthless** idols (Psalm 31:6 ULT)

Because idols are worthless, I hate those who serve them.

… for your **righteous** judgments are good. (Psalm 119:39b ULT)

… for your judgments are good **because they are righteous**.

Can Sarah, **who is 90 years old**, bear a son? (Genesis 17:17b ULT)

Can Sarah bear a son **even when she is 90 years old**?

You must surely open your hand to your brother, **to your needy and to your poor** in your land. (Deuteronomy 15:11 ULT)

You must surely open your hand to any of **your needy and poor brothers** in your land.

(2) Use one of your language's ways for expressing that this is just added information.

You are my Son, **whom I love**. I am pleased with you. (Luke 3:22 ULT)

You are my Son. **I love you** and I am pleased with you.

Receiving my love, you are my Son. I am pleased with you.

You must surely open your hand to your brother, **to your needy and to your poor** in your land. (Deuteronomy 15:11 ULT)

You must surely open your hand to your brother **who is needy and poor** in your land.

Double Negatives

A double negative occurs when a clause has two words that each express the meaning of "not." Double negatives mean very different things in different languages. To translate sentences that have double negatives accurately and clearly, you need to know what a double negative means in the Bible and how to express this idea in your language.

Description

Negative words are words that have in them the meaning "not." Examples in English are "no," "not," "none," "no one," "nothing," "nowhere," "never," "nor," "neither," and "without." Also, some words have prefixes or suffixes that mean "not," such as the bolded parts of these words: "**un**happy," "**im**possible," and "use**less**." Some other kinds of words also have a negative meaning, such as "lack" or "reject," or even "fight" or "evil."

A double negative occurs when a clause has two words that each have a negative meaning.

> We did this **not** because we have **no** authority … (2 Thessalonians 3:9a ULT)
>
> And this was **not** done **without** an oath! (Hebrews 7:20a ULT)
>
> Be sure of this—the wicked person will **not** go **un**punished. (Proverbs 11:21a ULT)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Double negatives mean very different things in different languages.

- In some languages, such as English, a second negative in a clause cancels the first one, creating a positive sentence. So, "He is not unintelligent" means "He is intelligent."
- In some languages, such as French and Spanish, two negative words in a clause do not cancel each other to become a positive. The Spanish sentence, "No vi a nadie," literally says "I did not see no one." It has both the word 'no' next to the verb and 'nadie,' which means "no one." The two negatives are seen as in agreement with each other, and the sentence means, "I did not see anyone."
- In some languages, a double negative creates a stronger negative statement.
- In some languages, a double negative creates a positive sentence, but it is a weak statement. So, "He is not unintelligent" means, "He is somewhat intelligent."
- In some languages, including the languages of the Bible, a double negative can produce a stronger positive meaning than a simple positive statement. So, "He is not unintelligent" can mean "He is very intelligent." In this case, the double negative is actually the figure of speech called litotes.

Biblical Greek can do all of the above. So to translate sentences with double negatives accurately and clearly in your language, you need to know what each double negative means in the Bible and how to express the same idea in your language.

Examples From the Bible

The Greek of John 15:5 says:

> χωρὶς ἐμοῦ **οὐ** δύνασθε ποιεῖν **οὐδέν**
>
> Without me **not** you can do **nothing**

We cannot reproduce this double negative in the English ULT because in English, a second negative in a clause cancels the first one. In English, and perhaps in your language, we need to choose only one of the negatives and say either:

Without me, you can do **nothing**.
or:
Without me, you **cannot** do anything.

> … in order **not** to be **unfruitful**. (Titus 3:14b ULT)

This means "in order to be fruitful."

> A prophet is **not without** honor (Mark 6:4 ULT)

This means "a prophet is honored."

> I do **not** want you to be **ignorant**. (1 Corinthians 12:1)

This means "I want you to be knowledgeable."

Translation Strategies

If the way that the double negative is used in the Bible is natural and has the same meaning as in your language, consider using it in the same way. Otherwise, you could consider these strategies:

(1) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a positive statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove the two negatives so that it is positive.
(2) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a negative statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove one of the two negatives.
(3) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a stronger negative statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove one of the two negatives and add a strengthening word.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a positive statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove the two negatives so that it is positive.

> For we do **not** have a high priest who **cannot** feel sympathy for our weaknesses. (Hebrews 4:15a ULT)
>
> > "For we have a high priest who can feel sympathy for our weaknesses."
>
> … in order **not** to be **unfruitful**. (Titus 3:14b ULT)
>
> > "… so that they may be fruitful."

(2) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a negative statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove one of the two negatives.

χωρὶς ἐμοῦ **οὐ** δύνασθε ποιεῖν **οὐδέν**

Without me **not** you can do **nothing** (John 15:5)

Without me, you can do **nothing**.

or:
Without me, you **cannot** do anything.

(3) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a stronger negative statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove one of the two negatives and add a strengthening word.

…ἰῶτα ἓν ἢ μία κεραία **οὐ μὴ** παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου (Matthew 5:18)

…iota one or one serif **not not** may pass away from the law

…**not even** one iota or one serif may pass away from the law

or:
…**certainly no** iota or serif may pass away from the law

Ellipsis

Description

An ellipsis[^1] occurs when a speaker or writer leaves out one or more words that normally should be in the sentence. The speaker or writer does this because he knows that the hearer or reader will understand the meaning of the sentence and supply the words in his mind when he hears or reads the words that are there. For example:

> So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, **nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous**. (Psalm 1:5 ULT)

There is ellipsis in the second part because "nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous" is not a complete sentence. The speaker assumes that the hearer will understand what it is that sinners will not do in the assembly of the righteous by filling in the action from the previous clause. With the action filled in, the complete sentence would read:

> So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor **will** sinners **stand**
> in the assembly of the righteous.

[^1]: English has a punctuation symbol which is also called an ellipsis. It is a series of three dots (…) used to indicate an intentional omission of a word, phrase, sentence or more from text without altering its original meaning. This translationAcademy article is not about the punctuation mark, but about the concept of omission of words that normally should be in the sentence.

Two Types of Ellipsis

1. A Relative Ellipsis happens when the reader has to supply the omitted word or words from the context. Usually the word is in the previous sentence, as in the example above.
2. An Absolute Ellipsis happens when the omitted word or words are not in the context, but the phrases are common enough in the language that the reader is expected to supply what is missing from this common usage or from the nature of the situation.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Readers who see incomplete sentences or phrases may not know that there is information missing that the writer expects them to fill in. Or readers may understand that there is information missing, but they may not know what information is missing because they do not know the original biblical language, culture, or situation as the original readers did. In this case, they may fill in the wrong information. Or readers may misunderstand the ellipsis if they do not use ellipsis in the same way in their language.

Examples From the Bible

Relative Ellipsis

> He makes Lebanon skip like a calf **and Sirion like a young ox**. (Psalm 29:6 ULT)

The writer wants his words to be few and to make good poetry. The full sentence with the information filled in would be:

> He makes Lebanon skip like a calf and **he makes** Sirion **skip** like a young ox.

> Watch carefully, therefore, how you walk—**not as unwise but as wise**. (Ephesians 5:15b ULT)

The information that the reader must understand in the second parts of these sentences can be filled in from the first parts:

> Watch carefully, therefore, how you walk—**walk** not as unwise but **walk** as wise,

Absolute Ellipsis

> Then when he had come near, he asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And so he said, "Lord, **that I might recover my sight**." (Luke 18:40b-41 ULT)

It seems that the man answered in an incomplete sentence because he wanted to be polite and not directly ask Jesus for healing. He knew that Jesus would understand that the only way he could receive his sight would be for Jesus to heal him. The complete sentence would be:

> "Lord, **I want you to heal me so** that I might receive my sight."

> To Titus, a true son in our common faith. Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. (Titus 1:4 ULT)

The writer assumes that the reader will recognize this common form of a blessing or wish, so he does not need to include the full sentence, which would be:

> To Titus, a true son in our common faith. **May you receive** grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Translation Strategies

If ellipsis would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here is another option:

(1) Add the missing words to the incomplete phrase or sentence.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Add the missing words to the incomplete phrase or sentence.

> So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor **sinners in the assembly** of the righteous. (Psalm 1:5 ULT)

> So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, and **sinners will not stand in the assembly** of the righteous.

Then when he had come near, he asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And so he said, “Lord, **that I might recover my sight**.” (Luke 18:40b-41 ULT)

> Then when the man was near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, **I want you to heal me** that I might receive my sight.”

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf **and Sirion like a young ox**. (Psalm 29:6 ULT)

> He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and **he makes** Sirion **skip** like a young ox.

Forms of You

Singular, Dual, and Plural

Some languages have more than one word for "you" based on how many people the word "you" refers to. The **singular** form refers to one person, and the **plural** form refers to more than one person. Some languages also have a **dual** form which refers to two people, and some languages have other forms that refer to three or four people.

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_younum.

Sometimes in the Bible a speaker uses a singular form of "you" even though he is speaking to a crowd. For help with translating these, we suggest you read:

- Singular Pronouns that Refer to Groups

Formal and Informal

Some languages have more than one form of "you" based on the relationship between the speaker and the person he or she is talking to. People use the **formal** form of "you" when speaking to someone who is older, or has higher authority, or is someone they do not know very well. People use the **informal** form when speaking to someone who is not older, or does not have higher authority, or is a family member or close friend.

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_youform.

For help with translating these, we suggest you read:

- Forms of "You" — Formal or Informal

Masculine and Feminine

Some languages have a **masculine** form and a **feminine** form of the word for "you." People use the **masculine** form when speaking to a man or boy and the **feminine** form when speaking to a woman or girl.

English does not make any of the above distinctions, so they are absent in the ULT. Please be aware of this and use the appropriate forms of "you" if your language does make any of these distinctions.

Forms of 'You' — Dual/Plural

Description

Some languages have a singular form of "you" for when the word "you" refers to just one person, and a plural form for when the word "you" refers to more than one person. Some languages also have a dual form of "you" for when the word "you" refers to only two people. Translators who speak one of these languages will always need to know what the speaker meant so they can choose the right word for "you" in their language. Other languages, such as English, have only one form, which people use regardless of how many people it refers to.

The Bible was first written in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages. These languages all have a singular form of "you" and a plural form of "you." When we read the Bible in those languages, the pronouns and verb forms show us whether the word "you" refers to one person or more than one person. However, they do not show us whether it refers to only two people or more than two people. When the pronouns do not show us how many people the word "you" refers to, we need to look at the context to see how many people the speaker was speaking to.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Translators who speak a language that has distinct singular, dual, and plural forms of "you" will always need to know what the speaker meant so they can choose the right word for "you" in their language.
- Many languages also have different forms of the verb depending on whether the subject is singular or plural. So even if there is no pronoun meaning "you," translators of these languages will need to know if the speaker was referring to one person or more than one.

Often the context will make it clear whether the word "you" refers to one person or more than one. If you look at the other pronouns in the sentence, they will help you know how many people the speaker was addressing.

Examples From the Bible

> Then **James and John**, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him, saying to him, "Teacher, we desire that you to do for us whatever we ask you." 36 So he said to them, "What do **you** want me to do for **you**?" (Mark 10:35-36 ULT)

Jesus is asking the two, James and John, what they want him to do for them. If the target language has a dual form of "you," use that. If the target language does not have a dual form, then the plural form would be appropriate.

> Jesus sent out two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village opposite us. As soon as **you** enter it, **you** will find a colt tied there, on which no one has yet sat. Untie it and bring it to me." (Mark 11:1b-2 ULT)

The context makes it clear that Jesus is addressing two people. If the target language has a dual form of "you," use that. If the target language does not have a dual form, then the plural form would be appropriate.

> James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are in the dispersion: Greetings. Consider it all joy, my brothers, when **you** experience various troubles. You know that the testing of **your** faith produces endurance. (James 1:1-3 ULT)

James wrote this letter to many people, so the word "you" refers to many people. If the target language has a plural form of "you," it would be best to use it here.

Strategies for finding out how many people "you" refers to

(1) Look at the translationNotes to see if they tell whether "you" refers to one person or more than one person.
(2) Look at the UST to see if it says anything that would show you whether the word "you" refers to one person or more than one person.
(3) If you have a Bible that is written in a language that distinguishes "you" singular from "you" plural, see which form of "you" that Bible has in that sentence.
(4) Look at the context to see who the speaker was talking to and who responded.

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_youdual.

Forms of 'You' — Singular

Description

Some languages have a **singular** form of "you" for when the word "you" refers to just one person, and a **plural** form for when the word "you" refers to more than one person. Translators who speak one of these languages will always need to know what the speaker meant so they can choose the right word for "you" in their language. Other languages, such as English, have only one form, which people use regardless of how many people it refers to.

The Bible was first written in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages. These languages all have both a singular form of "you" and a plural form of "you." When we read the Bible in those languages, the pronouns and verb forms show us whether the word "you" refers to one person or more than one. When we read the Bible in a language that does not have different forms of you, we need to look at the context to see how many people the speaker was speaking to.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Translators who speak a language that has distinct singular and plural forms of "you" will always need to know what the speaker meant so they can choose the right word for "you" in their language.
- Many languages also have different forms of the verb depending on whether the subject is singular or plural. So even if there is no pronoun meaning "you," translators of these languages will need to know if the speaker was referring to one person or more than one.

Often the context will make it clear whether the word "you" refers to one person or more than one. If you look at the other pronouns in the sentence, they will help you know the number of people the speaker was speaking to. Sometimes Greek and Hebrew speakers used the singular form of "you" even though they were speaking to a group of people. (See Forms of 'You' — Singular to a Crowd.)

Examples From the Bible

> But he said, "All these things **I** have kept from my youth." But when he heard this, Jesus said to him, "One thing is still lacking to **you**. All things, as much as **you** have, **sell** all and **distribute** to the poor, and **you** will have treasure in heaven— and **come**, **follow** me." (Luke 18:21-22 ULT)

The ruler was speaking about just himself when he said "I." This shows us that when Jesus said "you" he was referring only to the ruler and he used the singular form. So languages that have singular and plural forms of "you" need the singular form here, as well as for the verbs "sell," distribute," "come," and "follow."

> The angel said to him, "**Dress yourself** and **put on your** sandals." So he did that. He said to him, "**Put on your** outer garment and **follow** me." (Acts 12:8 ULT)

The angel used singular forms here and the context makes it clear that he was speaking to one person and that only one person did what the the angel commanded. So languages that have singular and plural forms of "you" would need the singular form here for "yourself" and

"your." Also, if verbs have different forms for singular and plural subjects, then the verbs "dress," "put on," and "follow" need the form that indicates a singular subject.

> All the ones {who are} with me greet **you**. **Greet** the ones loving us in faith.
> Grace {be} with all of **you**. (Titus 3:15 ULT)

Paul wrote this letter to one person, Titus, so most of the time the word "you" in this letter is singular and refers only to Titus. In this verse, the first "you" is singular, so the greeting is for Titus, as well as the instruction to greet the others there. The second "you," however, is plural, so the blessing is for Titus and for all of the believers there in Crete.

> "Having gone, **search** carefully for the young child, and after **you** have found him,
> **report** to me so that I also, having come, might worship him." (Matthew 2:8 ULT)

Since Herod is speaking to all of the learned men, the word "you" and the commands "search" and "report" are plural.

Strategies for finding out how many people "you" refers to

(1) Look at the notes to see if they tell whether "you" refers to one person or more than one person.
(2) Look at the UST to see if it says anything that would show you whether the word "you" refers to one person or more than one person.
(3) If you have a Bible that is written in a language that distinguishes "you" singular from "you" plural, see which form of "you" that Bible has in that sentence.
(4) Look at the context to see how many people the speaker was talking to and who responded.

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_younum.

Generic Noun Phrases

Description

Generic noun phrases refer to people or things in general rather than to specific individuals or things. This happens frequently in proverbs, because proverbs tell about things that are true about people in general.

> Can **a man** walk on hot coals without scorching his feet?
> So is **the man who goes in to his neighbor's wife**;
> **the one who touches her** will not go unpunished. (Proverbs 6:28-29 ULT)

The phrases in bold above do not refer to a specific man. They refer to any man who does these things.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages have different ways of showing that noun phrases refer to something in general. You (the translator) should refer to these general ideas in ways that are natural in your language.

Examples From the Bible

> The **righteous person** is kept away from trouble and it comes upon **the wicked** instead. (Proverbs 11:8 ULT)

The bold phrases above do not refer to a specific person but to anyone who does what is right or anyone who is wicked.

> People curse **the man who refuses to sell grain**. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)

This does not refer to a particular man, but to any person who refuses to sell grain.

> Yahweh gives favor to **a good man**, but he condemns **a man who makes evil plans**. (Proverbs 12:2 ULT)

The phrase "a good man" does not refer to a particular man, but to any person who is good. The phrase "a man who makes evil plans" does not refer to a particular man, but to any person who makes evil plans.

Translation Strategies

If your language can use the same wording as in the ULT to refer to people or things in general rather than to specific individuals or things, consider using the same wording. If not, here are some strategies you might use.

(1) Use the word "the" in the noun phrase.
(2) Use the word "a" in the noun phrase.
(3) Use the word "any," as in "any person" or "anyone."

(4) Use the plural form, as in “people.”
(5) Use any other way that is natural in your language.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use the word “the” in the noun phrase.

> Yahweh gives favor to **a good man**, but he condemns **a man who makes evil plans**. (Proverbs 12:2 ULT)
>
> > “Yahweh gives favor to **the good man**, but he condemns **the man who makes evil plans**.” (Proverbs 12:2)

(2) Use the word “a” in the noun phrase.

> People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)
>
> > “People curse **a man** who refuses to sell grain.”

(3) Use the word “any,” as in “any person” or “anyone.”

> People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)
>
> > “People curse **any man** who refuses to sell grain.”

(4) Use the plural form, as in “people” (or in this sentence, “men”).

> People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)
>
> > “People curse **men** who refuse to sell grain”

(5) Use any other way that is natural in your language.

> People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)
>
> > “People curse **whoever** refuses to sell grain.”

Go and Come

Description

Different languages have different ways of determining whether to use the words “go” or “come” and whether to use the words “take” or “bring” when talking about motion. For example, when saying that they are approaching a person who has called them, English speakers say “I am coming,” while Spanish speakers say “I am going.” You will need to study the context in order to understand what is meant by the words “go” and “come” (and also “take” and “bring”), and then translate those words in a way that your readers will understand which direction people are moving in.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages have different ways of talking about motion. The biblical languages or your source language may use the words “go” and “come” or “take” and “bring” differently than your language uses them. If these words are not translated in the way that is natural in your language, your readers may be confused about which direction people are moving.

Examples From the Bible

> Yahweh said to Noah, “**Come**, you and all your household, into the ark.” (Genesis 7:1 ULT)

In some languages, this would lead people to think that Yahweh was in the ark.

> But you will be free from my oath if you **come** to my relatives and they will not give her to you. Then you will be free from my oath. (Genesis 24:41 ULT)

Abraham was speaking to his servant. Abraham’s relatives lived far away from where he and his servant were standing and he wanted his servant to **go** to them, not **come** toward Abraham.

> When you have **come** to the land that Yahweh your God gives you, and when you take possession of it and begin to live in it … (Deuteronomy 17:14a ULT)

Moses is speaking to the people in the wilderness. They had not yet gone into the land that God was giving them. In some languages, it would make more sense to say, “When you have **gone** into the land …”

> They **brought** him up to the temple in Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. (Luke 2:22b ULT)

In some languages, it might make more sense to say that they **took** or **carried** Jesus to the temple.

> Then see, there was a man whose name was Jairus, and he was a leader of the synagogue. And falling at the feet of Jesus, he begged him to come to his house. (Luke 8:41 ULT)

The man was not at his house when he spoke to Jesus. He wanted Jesus to **go** with him to his house.

> What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? (Luke 7:24b ULT)

In some languages, it might make more sense to ask what did you come out to see.

Translation Strategies

If the word used in the ULT would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are other strategies.

(1) Use the word "go," "come," "take," or "bring" that would be natural in your language.
(2) Use another word that expresses the right meaning.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use the word "go," "come," "take," or "bring" that would be natural in your language.

> But you will be free from my oath if you **come** to my relatives and they will not give her to you. (Genesis 24:41 ULT)
>
> > But you will be free from my oath if you **go** to my relatives and they will not give her to you.
>
> What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? (Luke 7:24b ULT)
>
> > What did you come out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

(2) Use another word that expresses the right meaning.

> When you have **come** to the land that Yahweh your God gives you, and when you take possession of it and begin to live in it … (Deuteronomy 17:14 ULT)
>
> > "When you have **arrived** in the land that Yahweh your God gives you, and when you take possession of it and begin to live in it …"
>
> Yahweh said to Noah, "**Come**, you and all your household, into the ark …" (Genesis 7:1 ULT)
>
> > Yahweh said to Noah, "**Enter**, you and all your household, into the ark …"
>
> What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? (Luke 7:24b ULT)
>
> > What did you travel out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

Nominal Adjectives

Description

In some languages an adjective can be used to refer to a class of things that the adjective describes. When it does, it acts like a noun. For example, the word "rich" is an adjective. Here are two sentences that show that "rich" is an adjective.

> **The rich man** had huge numbers of flocks and herds. (2 Samuel 12:2 ULT)

The adjective "rich" comes before the word "man" and describes "man."

> **He will not be rich**; his wealth will not last. (Job 15:29a ULT)

The adjective "rich" comes after the verb "be" and describes "He."

Here is a sentence that shows that "rich" can also function as a noun.

> **The rich** must not give more than the half shekel, and **the poor** must not give less. (Exodus 30:15b ULT)

In Exodus 30:15, the word "rich" acts as a noun in the phrase "the rich," and it refers to rich people. The word "poor" also acts as a noun and refers to poor people.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Many times in the Bible adjectives are used as nouns to describe a group of people.
- Some languages do not use adjectives in this way.
- Readers of these languages may think that the text is talking about one particular person when it is really talking about the group of people whom the adjective describes.

Examples From the Bible

> The scepter of wickedness must not rule in the land of **the righteous**. (Psalms 125:3a ULT)

"The righteous" here are people who are righteous, not one particular righteous person.

> Blessed are **the meek**. (Matthew 5:5a ULT)

"The meek" here are all people who are meek, not one particular meek person.

Translation Strategies

If your language uses adjectives as nouns to refer to a class of people, consider using the adjectives in this way. If it would sound strange, or if the meaning would be unclear or wrong, here is another option:

(1) Use the adjective with a plural form of the noun that the adjective describes.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use the adjective with a plural form of the noun that the adjective describes.

> The scepter of wickedness must not rule in the land of **the righteous**. (Psalms 125:3a ULT)
>
> > The scepter of wickedness must not rule in the land of **righteous people**.
>
> Blessed are **the meek**. (Matthew 5:5a ULT)
>
> > Blessed are **people who are meek**.

Order of Events

Description

In the Bible, events are not always told in the order in which they occurred. Sometimes the author wanted to discuss something that happened at an earlier time than the event that he just talked about. This can be confusing to the reader.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Readers might think that the events happened in the order that they are told. It is important to help them understand the correct order of events.

Examples From the Bible

> He even added this to them all: he locked John up in prison. Now it came about, when all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized. (Luke 3:20-21 ULT)

This could sound like John baptized Jesus after John was locked up in prison, but John baptized Jesus before John was locked up in prison.

> Just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carrying seven trumpets of rams' horns before Yahweh went forward and blew the trumpets, and the ark of the covenant of Yahweh followed after them. But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout nor let your voice be heard, nor let any word leave your mouth until the day I tell you to shout. Then you must shout." (Joshua 6:8,10 ULT)

This could sound like Joshua gave the order not to shout after the army had already started their march, but he had given that order before they started marching.

> Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? (Revelation 5:2b ULT)

This sounds like a person must first open the scroll and then break its seals, but the seals that lock the scroll must be broken before the scroll can be unrolled.

Translation Strategies

(1) If your language uses phrases or time words to show that an event happened before one that was already mentioned, consider using one of them.
(2) If your language uses verb tense or aspect to show that an event happened before one that was already mentioned, consider using that. (See the section on "Aspect" of Verbs.)
(3) If your language prefers to tell events in the order that they occurred, consider reordering the events so they they are in that order. This may require putting two or more verses together (like 5-6). (See Verse Bridges.)

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If your language uses phrases, time words or tenses to show that an event happened before the one just mentioned, consider using one of them.

> 20 he even added this to them all: he locked John up in prison. Now it came about, when all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized. (Luke 3:20-21 ULT)
>
> > 20 But then Herod … had John locked up in prison. 21 **Before John was put in prison,** while all the people were being baptized by John, Jesus also was baptized.
>
> Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? (Revelation 5:2b ULT)
>
> > Who is worthy to open the scroll **after** breaking its seals?

(2) If your language uses verb tense or aspect to show that an event happened before one that was already mentioned, consider using that.

> Just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carrying seven trumpets of rams' horns before Yahweh went forward and blew the trumpets, But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout nor let your voice be heard, nor let any word leave your mouth until the day I tell you to shout. Then you must shout." (Joshua 6:8,10 ULT)
>
> > 8 Just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carried the seven trumpets of rams' horns before Yahweh, as they advanced, they gave a blast on the trumpets 10 But Joshua **had commanded** the people, saying, "Do not shout. No sound must leave your mouths until the day I tell you to shout. Only then must you shout."

(3) If your language prefers to tell events in the order that they occur, consider reordering the events. This may require putting two or more verses together (like 5-6).

> 8 Just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carrying seven trumpets of rams' horns before Yahweh went forward and blew the trumpets, But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout nor let your voice be heard, nor let any word leave your mouth until the day I tell you to shout. Then you must shout." (Joshua 6:8,10 ULT)
>
> > 8,10 Joshua commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout. No sound must leave your mouths until the day I tell you to shout. Only then must you shout." Then just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carried the seven trumpets of rams horns before Yahweh, as they advanced, they gave a blast on the trumpets…
>
> Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? (Revelation 5:2b ULT)
>
> > Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_events.

Parts of Speech

Description

Parts of speech are categories of words. The different categories of words have different functions in a sentence. All languages have parts of speech, and all words in a language belong to a part of speech. Most languages have these basic parts of speech, with some variations, and some languages have more categories than this. This is not a completely universal list of parts of speech, but it covers the basic categories.

VERBS are words that express either an action (such as "come," "go," "eat") or a state-of-being (such as "is," "are," "was"). More detailed information can be found on Verbs.

NOUNS are words that refer to a person, place, thing, or idea. Common nouns are generic, that is, they do not refer to any specific entity ("man," "city," "country"). Names, or proper nouns, refer to a specific entity ("Peter," "Jerusalem," "Egypt"). (For more information, see How to Translate Names).

PRONOUNS take the place of nouns and include such words as "he," "she," "it," "you," "they," and "we," and others. More detailed pages on pronouns can be found on Pronouns.

CONJUNCTIONS are words that join phrases or sentences. Examples include "and," "or," "but," "for," "yet," "nor," and others. Some conjunctions are used in pairs: both/and; either/or; neither/nor; not only/but also. More information about these can be found on Connecting Words.

PREPOSITIONS are words that begin phrases which connect a noun or verb with something else in the sentence that gives more detail about that noun or verb. For example, "The girl ran **to her father**." Here the phrase with the preposition "to" tells the direction of the girl's running (the action) in relation to her father. Another example is, "The crowd **around Jesus** grew in numbers." The phrase with the preposition **around** tells the location of the crowd in relation to Jesus. Some examples of prepositions are "to," "from," "in," "out," "on," "off," "with," "without," "above," "below," "before," "after," "behind," "in front of," "among," "through," "beyond," "among."

ARTICLES are words that are used with nouns to show whether or not the speaker is referring to something that his listener should be able to identify. In English these words are: "a," "an," and "the." The words **a** and **an** mean the same thing. If a speaker says "**a dog,**" he does not expect his listener to know which dog he is talking about; this might be the first time he says anything about a dog. If a speaker says **the** dog, he is usually referring to a specific dog, and he expects his listener to know which dog he is talking about. English speakers also use the article **the** to show that they are talking about something in general. For example, they can say "**The** elephant is a large animal" and refer to elephants in general, not a specific elephant. *NOTE: Not all languages use articles in exactly the same way.* For example, articles can mean different things in Greek than in Hebrew. More information about this can be found on Generic Noun Phrases.

ADJECTIVES are words that describe nouns and express such things as quantity, size, color, and age. Some examples are: "many," "big," "blue," "old," "smart," "tired," and many, many others. Sometimes people use adjectives to give some information about something, and

sometimes people use them to distinguish one item from another. For example, in the phrase **my elderly father** the adjective **elderly** simply tells something about my father. But in the phrase **my eldest sister** the word **eldest** distinguishes that sister from any other older sisters I might have. More information about this can be found on Distinguishing versus Informing or Reminding.

ADVERBS are words that describe verbs or adjectives and tell such things as how something happens, when it happens, where it happens, why it happens, or to what extent it happens. Many English adverbs end in **ly**. Some examples of adverbs include the words “slowly,” “later,” “far,” “intentionally,” “very,” and many others.

Possession

Description

In English, the grammatical form that commonly indicates possession is also used to indicate a variety of relationships between people and objects or people and other people. In English, that grammatical relationship is shown by using the word "**of**," by using **an apostrophe and the letter "s"**, or by using a **possessive pronoun**. The following examples are different ways to indicate that my grandfather owns a house.

- the house **of** my grandfather
- my **grandfather's** house
- **his** house

Possession is used in Hebrew, Greek, and English for a variety of situations. Here are a few common situations that it is used for.

- Ownership — Someone owns something.

  The clothes of me - my clothes — The clothes that I own

- Social Relationship — Someone has some kind of social relationship with another.

  The mother of John — John's mother - the woman who gave birth to John, or the woman who cared for John

  A teacher of Israel - Israel's teacher — a person who teaches Israel

- Association — A particular thing is associated with a particular person, place, or thing.

  The sickness of David - David's sickness — the sickness that David is experiencing

  the fear of the Lord — the fear that is appropriate for a human being to have when relating to the Lord

- Contents — Something has something in it.

  a bag of clothes — a bag that has clothes in it, or a bag that is full of clothes

- Part and whole: One thing is part of another.

  my head — the head that is part of my body

  the roof of a house — the roof that is part of a house

In some languages there is a special form of possession, termed **inalienable possession.** This form of possession is used for things that cannot be removed from you, as opposed to things you could lose. In the examples above, *my head* and *my mother* are examples of inalienable possession (at least in some languages), while *my clothes* or *my teacher* would be alienably possessed. What may be considered alienable vs. inalienable may differ by language. In

languages that mark the difference, the expression of inalienable possession and alienable possession will be different.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- You (the translator) need to understand the relationship between two ideas represented by the two nouns when one is in the grammatical relationship of possessing the other.
- Some languages do not use grammatical possession for all of the situations that your source text Bible might use it for.

Examples From the Bible

Ownership — In the example below, the son owned the money.

> The younger son … wasted his wealth by living recklessly. (Luke 15:13b)

Social Relationship — In the example below, the disciples were people who learned from John.

> Then **the disciples of John** came to him. (Matthew 9:14a ULT)

Association — In the example below, the gospel is the message associated with Paul because he preaches it.

> Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, from the seed of David, according to **my gospel**, (2 Timothy 2:8 ULT)

Material — In the example below, the material used for making the crowns was gold.

> On their heads were something like **crowns of gold.** (Revelation 9:7b)

Contents — In the example below, the cup has water in it.

> For whoever gives you **a cup of water** to drink … will not lose his reward. (Mark 9:41 ULT)

Part of a whole — In the example below, the door was a part of the palace.

> But Uriah slept at **the door of the king's palace.** (2 Samuel 11:9a ULT)

Part of a group — In the example below, "us" refers to the whole group and "each one" refers to the individual members.

> Now to **each one of us** grace has been given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (Ephesians 4:7 ULT)

Events and Possession

Sometimes one or both of the nouns is an abstract noun that refers to an event or action. In the examples below, the abstract nouns are in **bold** print. These are just some of the relationships that are possible between two nouns when one of them refers to an event.

Subject — Sometimes the word after "of" tells who would do the action named by the first noun. In the example below, **John baptized people**.

> The **baptism of John**, was it from heaven or from men? Answer me. (Mark 11:30)

In the example below, **Christ loves us**.

> Who will separate us from the **love of Christ**? (Romans 8:35)

Object — Sometimes the word after "of" tells who or what something would happen to. In the example below, **people love money**.

> For the **love of money** is a root of all kinds of evil. (1 Timothy 6:10a ULT)

Instrument — Sometimes the word after "of" tells how something would happen. In the example below, God would **punish people by sending enemies to attack them with swords**.

> Then be afraid of the sword, because wrath brings **the punishment of the sword**. (Job 19:29a ULT)

Representation — In the example below, John was baptizing people who were repenting of their sins. They were being baptized to show that they were repenting. Their **baptism represented their repentance**.

> John came, baptizing in the wilderness and preaching **a baptism of repentance** for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 1:4 ULT)

Strategies for learning what the relationship is between the two nouns

(1) Read the surrounding verses to see if they help you to understand the relationship between the two nouns.
(2) Read the verse in the UST. Sometimes it shows the relationship clearly.
(3) See what the notes say about it.

Translation Strategies

If possession would be a natural way to show a particular relationship between two nouns, consider using it. If it would be strange or hard to understand, consider these.

(1) Use an adjective to show that one noun describes the other.
(2) Use a verb to show how the two are related.
(3) If one of the nouns refers to an event, translate it as a verb.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use an adjective to show that one noun describes the other.

> On their heads were something like **crowns of gold.** (Revelation 9:7b)
>
> > "On their heads were **gold crowns**"

(2) Use a verb to show how the two are related.

Whoever gives you **a cup of water** to drink … will not lose his reward. (Mark 9:41 ULT)

> Whoever gives you a **cup that has water in it** to drink … will not lose his reward.

Wealth is worthless on **the day of wrath.** (Proverbs 11:4a ULT)

> Wealth is worthless on **the day when God shows his wrath**.
> or:
> Wealth is worthless on the **day when God punishes people because of his wrath**.

(3) If one of the nouns refers to an event, translate it as a verb. (In the example below, there are two possession relationships, "punishment of Yahweh" and "your God.")

Notice that I am not speaking to your children, who have not known or seen **the punishment of Yahweh your God.** (Deuteronomy 11:2a ULT)

> Notice that I am not speaking to your children who have not known or seen **how Yahweh, the God whom you worship, punished the people of Egypt**.

You will only observe and see the **punishment of the wicked**. (Psalms 91:8 ULT)

> You will only observe and see **how Yahweh punishes the wicked**.

You will receive **the gift of the Holy Spirit**. (Acts 2:38b ULT)

> You will receive the **Holy Spirit, whom God will give to you**.

Verbs

Description

Verbs are words that refer to an action or event or that is used in describing or identifying things. An “action” is something you do. “Event” is more general than “action.” “Events” are things that happen, such as death. A linking verb (“is”) describes a condition of being.

Examples The verbs in the examples below are bolded.

- John **ran**. (“Run” is an action.)
- John **ate** a banana. (“Eat” is an action.)
- John **saw** Mark. (“See” is an event.)
- John **died.** (“Die” is an event.)
- John **is** tall. (The phrase “is tall” describes John. The word “is” is a verb that links “John” with “tall.”)
- John **looks** handsome. (The phrase “is handsome” describes John. The word “looks” here is a verb that links “John” with “handsome.”)
- John **is** my brother. (The phrase “is my brother” identifies John.)

People or Things Associated With a Verb

A verb usually says something about someone or something. All of the example sentences above say something about John. “John” is the **subject** of those sentences. In English the subject usually comes before the verb.

Sometimes there is another person or thing associated with the verb. In the examples below, the bolded word is the verb, and the quoted phrase is the **object**. In English the object usually comes after the verb.

- He **ate** “lunch.”
- He **sang** “a song.”
- He **read** “a book.”
- **He saw** “the book.”

Some verbs never have an object.

- The sun **rose** at six o’clock.
- John **slept** well.
- John **fell** yesterday.

For many verbs in English, where the object is not important in the sentence, the object may not be stated.

- He never **eats** at night.
- He **sings** all the time.
- He **reads** well.
- He cannot **see**.

In some languages, a verb that needs an object must always take one, even if the object is not very important. People who speak those languages might restate the sentences above like this.

- He never **eats food** at night.
- He **sings songs** all the time.
- He **reads words** well.
- He cannot **see anything**.

Subject and Object Marking on Verbs

In some languages, the form of the verb may vary depending on the persons or things associated with it. For example, English speakers sometimes put "s" at the end of the verb when the subject is just one person. In other languages, marking on the verb may show whether the subject is "I," "you," or "he"; singular, dual, or plural; male or female, or human or non-human.

- They **eat** bananas every day. (The subject "they" is more than one person.)
- John **eats** bananas every day. (The subject "John" is one person.)

Time and Tense

When we tell about an event, we usually tell whether it is in the past, the present, or the future. Sometimes we do this with words like "yesterday," "now," or "tomorrow."

In some languages the verb may be a little bit different depending on the time associated with it. This kind of marking on a verb is called "tense." English speakers sometimes put "ed" at the end of the verb when the event happened in the past.

- Sometimes Mary **cooks** meat.
- Yesterday Mary **cooked** meat. (She did this in the past.)

In some languages speakers might add a word to tell something about the time. English speakers use the word "will" when the verb refers to something in the future.

- Tomorrow Mary **will cook** meat.

Aspect

When we tell about an event, sometimes we want to show how the event progressed over a period of time or how the event relates to another event. This is called "aspect." English speakers sometimes use the verbs "is" or "has" then add "s," "ing," or "ed" to the end of the verb in order to show how the event relates to another event or to the present time.

- Mary **cooks** meat every day. (This tells about something Mary often does.)
- Mary **is cooking** the meat. (This tells about something Mary is in the process of doing right now.)
- Mary **cooked** the meat, and John **came** home. (This simply tells about things that Mary and John did.)
- While Mary **was cooking** the meat, John came home. (This tells about something Mary was in the process of doing when John came home)
- Mary **has cooked** the meat, and she wants us to come eat it. (This tells about something Mary did that is still relevant now.)

- Mary **had cooked** the meat by the time John came home. (This tells about something that Mary completed in the past before something else happened.)

When Masculine Words Include Women

In the Bible, sometimes the words “men,” “brothers,” and “sons” refer only to men. At other times, those words include both men and women. In those places where the writer meant both men and women, you (the translator) need to translate it in a way that does not limit the meaning to men.

Description

In some languages a word that normally refers to men can also be used in a more general way to refer to both men and women. For example, the Bible sometimes says “brothers” when it refers to both brothers and sisters.

Also in some languages, the masculine pronouns “he” and “him” can be used in a more general way for any person if it is not important whether the person is a man or a woman. In the example below, the pronoun is “his,” but it is not limited to males.

> A wise son makes **his** father rejoice
> but a foolish son brings grief to **his** mother. (Proverbs 10:1 ULT)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- In some cultures words like “man,” “brother,” and “son” can only be used to refer to men. If those words are used in a translation in a more general way, people will think that what is being said does not apply to women.
- In some cultures, the masculine pronouns “he” and “him” can only refer to men. If a masculine pronoun is used, people will think that what is said does not apply to women.

Translation Principles

When a statement applies to both men and women, translate it in such a way that people will be able to understand that it applies to both.

Examples From the Bible

> Now we want you to know, **brothers**, the grace of God that has been given to the churches of Macedonia. (2 Corinthians 8:1 ULT)

This verse is addressing the believers in Corinth, not only men, but **men and women**.

> Then said Jesus to his disciples, “If anyone wants to follow me, **he** must deny **himself**, take up **his** cross, and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24 ULT)

Jesus was not speaking only of men, but of **men and women**.

Caution: Sometimes masculine words are used specifically to refer to men. Do not use words that would lead people to think that they include women. The words below are specifically about men.

> Moses said, 'If **someone** dies, not having children, **his brother** must marry **his** wife and have children for **his brother**.' (Matthew 22:24 ULT)

Translation Strategies

If people would understand that that masculine words like "man," "brother," and "he" can include women, then consider using them. Otherwise, here are some ways for translating those words when they include women.

(1) Use a noun that can be used for both men and women.
(2) Use a word that refers to men and a word that refers to women.
(3) Use pronouns that can be used for both men and women.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use nouns that can be used for both men and women.

> The wise **man** dies just like the fool dies. (Ecclesiastes 2:16b ULT)
>
> > "The wise **person** dies just like the fool dies."
> > "Wise **people** die just like fools die."

(2) Use a word that refers to men and a word that refers to women.

> For we do not want you to be uninformed, **brothers**, about the troubles that happened to us in Asia. (2 Corinthians 1:8) — Paul was writing this letter to both men and women.
>
> > "For we do not want you to be uninformed, **brothers and sisters**, about the troubles that happened to us in Asia."

(3) Use pronouns that can be used for both men and women.

> "If anyone wants to follow me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." (Matthew 16:24 ULT)

English speakers can change the masculine singular pronouns, "he," "himself," and "his" to plural pronouns that do not mark gender, "they," "themselves," and "their" in order to show that it applies to all people, not just men.

> > "If **people** want to follow me, **they** must deny **themselves**, take up **their** cross, and follow me."

Word Order

Word Order

Description

Most languages have a normal way of ordering the parts of a sentence. It is not the same in all languages. You (the translator) need to know what the normal word order is in your language.

The Main Parts of a Sentence

Most sentences have three basic important parts: subject, object, and verb. Subjects and objects are usually nouns (i.e., a person, place, thing, or idea) or pronouns. Verbs show action or a state of being.

Subject

The subject is usually what the sentence is about. It usually performs some action or is being described. A subject may be **active**, meaning that it does something, such as sing, work, or teach.

- **Peter** sings the song well.

A subject may have something done to it.

- **Peter** was fed good food.

A subject can be described as being in a **state**, such as being happy, sad, or angry.

- **He** is tall.
- **The boy** is happy.

Object

The **object** is often the thing that the subject does something to.

- Peter hit **the ball**.
- Peter read **a book**.
- Peter sang **the song** well.
- Peter ate **good food**.

Verb

The verb shows an action or a state of being.

- Peter **sings** the song well.
- Peter **is singing**.
- Peter **is** tall.

Preferred Word Order

All languages have a preferred word order. However, word order is more important in some languages than in others. The examples below show the order of the subject, object, and verb in “Peter hit the ball” for some languages.

In some languages the order is Subject-Verb-Object. This is normal word order for English.

- Peter hit the ball.

In some languages the order is Subject-Object-Verb.

- Peter the ball hit.

In some languages the order is Verb-Subject-Object. This is normal word order for Biblical Hebrew.

- Hit Peter the ball.

In some languages the order is not important for the meaning of the sentence because the language uses other ways to indicate whether a word is the subject, the verb, or the object. Both Biblical Aramaic and Koiné Greek are languages like this.

Changes in Word Order

Word order can change if the sentence:

- is a question or command
- describes a state of being (He is happy. He is tall.)
- expresses a condition, such as with the the word “if”
- has a location
- has a time element
- is in a poem

Word order can also change

- if there is some kind of emphasis on a certain part of the sentence
- if the sentence is really about something other than the subject

Translation Principles

- Know which word order is preferred in your language.
- Use your language’s preferred word order unless there is some reason in your language to change it.
- Translate the sentence so that the meaning is accurate and clear and so that it sounds natural.

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_order.

Word Order

The normal word order for Biblical Hebrew is: **Conjunction–Verb–Subject–Object**.

However, there are many different reasons why a writer/speaker of Biblical Hebrew might choose a different word order. Some of the variations are important for understanding and translating the Hebrew text, and some are not. This module will briefly explain some of the most important variations in Hebrew word order and how those variations affect the meaning of the text.

Particle – Verb–Subject–Object

A particle is a word that has a grammatical function but does not fit into the main parts of speech (i.e. noun, verb, adverb). Particles do not change. Sometimes a particle takes the place of the conjunction. Often (but not always) in these cases, the particle is functioning as a connecting word that expresses a specific kind of logical relationship between the chunk before the particle and the chunk after the particle. NOTE: this rule does not apply to negative particles or temporal particles.

Conjunction – Subject–Verb–Object

Often the subject of a sentence appears before the verb instead of after it. Many of these instances have very little impact on the meaning of a sentence or paragraph. However, sometimes a writer/speaker puts the subject first in order to begin a new story or event, to give background information, to introduce a new participant (or re-introduce an old participant), or to end a story.

Conjunction – Temporal phrase–Verb–Subject–Object

A temporal phrase is made of words that tell when something happens, how long it happens or how often it happens. When a temporal phrase appears before the verb, often (but not always) the temporal phrase introduces a new story or event within the narrative. Sometimes a conjunction appears before the temporal phrase, and sometimes not.

Conjunction – any other part of speech–Verb–Subject–Object

When another part of speech (other than a temporal phrase or negative particle) appears before the verb, usually (but not always) it is because the writer/speaker is emphasizing that particular item as the most important information in the sentence.

Word Order in Biblical Aramaic

Most scholars agree that word order is so free in Biblical Aramaic that no distinct patterns of standard word order can be observed. Therefore, it is best to assume that word order has no affect on the meaning of a sentence in Aramaic.

Word Order

There is no general agreement among scholars concerning standard word order for Koiné Greek as a language. It has been suggested that the normal word order in the New Testament is: **Conjunction-Verb-Subject-Object-Modifiers.** However, most scholars agree that word order is very free in the New Testament (and in Koiné Greek as a whole) and does not greatly impact the meaning of a sentence or paragraph.

However, the Greek language operates according to two general principles in regard to emphasizing a part(s) of speech within a sentence.

Emphasis is shown by moving a word(s) toward the beginning of the sentence.

In other words, a writer/speaker does not emphasize words in Greek by moving them toward the end of the sentence, but by moving them toward the beginning of the sentence.

A word moved to the first position of a sentence is emphasized as the most important.

In other words, a writer/speaker shows that one particular word is the most important information in the sentence by positioning it first in the sentence.

Quotes

Quotations and Quote Margins

Description

When saying that someone said something, we often tell who spoke, whom they spoke to, and what they said. The information about who spoke and whom they spoke to is called the quote margin. What the person said is the quotation. (This is also called a quote.) In some languages the quote margin may come first, last, or even in between two parts of the quotation.

The quote margins are bolded below.

- **She said**, "The food is ready. Come and eat."
- "The food is ready. Come and eat," **she said**.
- "The food is ready," **she said.** "Come and eat."

Also in some languages, the quote margin may have more than one verb meaning "said."

> But his mother **answered** and **said**, "No. Rather, he will be called John." (Luke 1:60 ULT)

When writing that someone said something, some languages put the quote (what was said) in quotation marks called inverted commas (" "). Some languages use other symbols around the quotation, such as these angle quote marks (« »), or something else.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Translators need to put the quote margin where it is most clear and natural in their language.
- Translators need to decide whether they want the quote margin to have one or two verbs meaning "said."
- Translators need to decide which marks to use around the quotation.

Examples From the Bible

Quote margin before the quote

> **Then Zechariah said to the angel**, "How will I know this? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in her days." (Luke 1:18 ULT)
>
> Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and **they said to him**, "Teacher, what should we do?" (Luke 3:12 ULT)
>
> So **he said to them**, "Collect nothing more than what you have been ordered." (Luke 3:13 ULT)

Quote margin after the quote

> Yahweh relented concerning this. “It will not happen,” **he said**. (Amos 7:3 ULT)

Quote margin between two parts of the quote

> “I will hide my face from them,” **he said,** “and I will see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful.” (Deuteronomy 32:20 ULT)
>
> For look, days are coming—**this is Yahweh’s declaration**—when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah. (Jeremiah 30:3a ULT)

Translation Strategies

(1) Decide where to put the quote margin.
(2) Decide whether to use one or two words meaning “said.”

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Decide where to put the quote margin.

> **He said**, “Therefore, those among you who are leaders should go down with us. If there is something wrong with the man, let them accuse him.” (Acts 25:5 ULT)
>
> > “Therefore, those who can should go there with us,” **he said**. “If there is something wrong with the man, you should accuse him.”
> >
> > “Therefore, those who can should go there with us. If there is something wrong with the man, you should accuse him,” **he said**.
> >
> > “Therefore, those who can,” **he said**, “should go there with us. If there is something wrong with the man, you should accuse him.”

(2) Decide whether to use one or two words meaning “said.”

> But his mother **answered and said**, “No. Rather, he will be called John.” (Luke 1:60 ULT)
>
> > But his mother **replied**, “No. Rather, he will be called John.”
> >
> > But his mother **said**, “No. Rather, he will be called John.”
> >
> > But his mother **answered** like this. “No. Rather, he will be called John,” she **said**.

Direct and Indirect Quotations

Description

There are two kinds of quotations: direct quotations and indirect quotations.

A direct quotation occurs when someone reports what another person said from the viewpoint of that original speaker. People usually expect that this kind of quotation will represent the original speaker's exact words. In the example below, John would have said "I" when referring to himself, so the narrator, who is reporting John's words, uses the word "I" in the quotation to refer to John. To show that these are John's exact words, many languages put the words between quotation marks: "".

- John said, "**I** do not know at what time **I** will arrive."

An indirect quotation occurs when a speaker reports what someone else said, but in this case, the speaker is reporting it from his own point of view instead and not from the original person's point of view. This kind of quotation usually contains changes in pronouns, and it often includes changes in time, in word choices, and in length. In the example below, the narrator refers to John as "he" in the quotation and uses the word "would" to replace the future tense, indicated by "will."

- John said that **he** did not know at what time **he** would arrive.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

In some languages, reported speech can be expressed by either direct or indirect quotations. In other languages, it is more natural to use one than the other. There may be a certain meaning implied by using one rather than the other. So for each quotation, translators need to decide whether it is best to translate it as a direct quotation or as an indirect quotation.

Examples From the Bible

The verses in the examples below contain both direct and indirect quotations. In the explanation below the verse, we have marked in bold the words that are quoted.

> And he commanded him to tell no one, but, "Go, show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing, according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them." (Luke 5:14 ULT)

- Indirect quote: He commanded him **to tell no one**,
- Direct quote: but told him, "**Go, show yourself to the priest …**"

> And being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with careful observation. Neither will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is among you." (Luke 17:20-21 ULT)

- Indirect quote: Being asked by the Pharisees **when the kingdom of God was coming,**

- Direct quote: he answered them and said, "**The kingdom of God is not coming with careful observation. Neither will they say, 'Look. here it is!' or 'There it is!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is among you.**"
- Direct quotes: Neither will they say, '**Look, here it is!**' or, '**There it is!**'

Translation Strategies

If the kind of quote used in the source text would work well in your language, consider using it. If the kind of quote used in that context is not natural for your language, follow these strategies.

(1) If a direct quote would not work well in your language, change it to an indirect quote.
(2) If an indirect quote would not work well in your language, change it to a direct quote.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If a direct quote would not work well in your language, change it to an indirect quote.

> And he commanded him to tell no one, but, "**Go, show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing, according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.**" (Luke 5:14 ULT)
>
> > He commanded him to tell no one, but **to go and show himself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for his cleansing according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them**.

(2) If an indirect quote would not work well in your language, change it to a direct quote.

> And he commanded him **to tell no one,** but, "Go, show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing, according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them." (Luke 5:14 ULT)
>
> > He commanded him, "**Tell no one**. But go and show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them."

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_quotations.

Quote Markings

Description

Some languages use quotation marks to mark off direct quotes from the rest of the text. English uses the mark “ immediately before a quote and ” immediately after it.

- John said, “I do not know when I will arrive.”

Quotation marks are not used with indirect quotes.

- John said that he did not know when he would arrive.

When there are several layers of quotations inside of other quotations, it might be hard for readers to understand who is saying what. Alternating two kinds of quotation marks can help careful readers to keep track of them. In English, the outermost quotation has double quote marks, and the next quotation within it has single marks. If there is a third embedded quote, that quotation again has double quotation marks.

- Mary said, “John said, ‘I do not know when I will arrive.’ ”
- Bob said, “Mary told me, ‘John said, “I do not know when I will arrive.” ’ ”

Some languages use other kinds of quotation marks: Here are some examples: , ‘ ’ „ “ ” ‹ › « » ⸗ — .

Examples From the Bible

The examples below show the kind of quotation markings used in the ULT.

A quotation with only one layer

A first layer direct quote has double quotation marks around it.

> So the king replied, “That is Elijah the Tishbite.” (2 Kings 1:8b ULT)

Quotations with two layers

A second layer direct quote has single quotation marks around it. We have printed it and the phrase in bold type for you to see them clearly.

> They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, **‘Pick it up and walk’**?” (John 5:12 ULT)

> He sent two of the disciples, saying, “Go into the village ahead of you. As you enter, you will find a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it to me. If any one asks you, **‘Why are you untying it?’** you will say thus, **‘The Lord has need of it.’**” (Luke 19:29b-31 ULT)

A quotation with three layers

A third layer direct quote has double quotation marks around it. We have printed it in bold type for you to see them clearly.

> Abraham said, “Because I thought, ‘Surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’ Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. When God caused me to leave my father’s house and travel from place to place, I said to her, ‘You must show me this faithfulness as my wife: At every place where we go, say about me, “**He is my brother**.”’” (Genesis 20:11-13 ULT)

A quotation with four layers

A fourth layer direct quote has single quotation marks around it. We have printed it in bold for you to see it clearly.

> They said to him, “A man came to meet us who said to us, ‘Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, “Yahweh says this: **‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.’** ” ’ ” (2 Kings 1:6 ULT)

Quote Marking Strategies

Here are some ways you may be able to help readers see where each quote starts and ends so they can more easily know who said what.

(1) Alternate two kinds of quote marks to show layers of direct quotation. English alternates double quote marks and single quote marks.
(2) Translate one or some of the quotes as indirect quotes in order to use fewer quote marks, since indirect quotes do not need them. (See Direct and Indirect Quotations.)
(3) If a quotation is very long and has many layers of quotation in it, indent the main overall quote, and use quote marks only for the direct quotes inside of it.

Examples of Quote Marking Strategies Applied

(1) Alternate two kinds of quotation marks to show layers of direct quotation as shown in the ULT text below.

> They said to him, “A man came to meet us who said to us, ‘Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, “Yahweh says this: ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.’”’” (2 Kings 1:6 ULT)

(2) Translate one or more of the quotes as indirect quotes in order to use fewer quotation marks, since indirect quotes do not need them. In English, the word “that” can introduce an indirect quote. In the example below, everything after the word “that” is an indirect quote of what the messengers said to the king. Within that indirect quote, there are some direct quotes marked with double and single quotation marks.

> They said to him, “A man came to meet us who said to us, ‘Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, “Yahweh says this: ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.’”’” (2 Kings 1:6 ULT)

> > They told him **that** a man came to meet them who said to them, “Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, ‘Yahweh says this: “Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.”’”

(3) If a quotation is very long and has many layers of quotation in it, indent the main overall quote, and use quote marks only for the direct quotes inside of it.

> They said to him, “A man came to meet us who said to us, ‘Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, “Yahweh says this: ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.’”’” (2 Kings 1:6 ULT)

> > They said to him,
> >
> > > A man came to meet us who said to us, “Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, ‘Yahweh says this: “Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.”’”

Quotes within Quotes

Description

A quotation may have a quote within it, and quotes that are inside of other quotes can also have quotes within them. When a quote has quotes within it, we say there are "layers" of quotation, and each of the quotes is a layer. When there are many layers of quotes inside of quotes, it can be hard for listeners and readers to know who is saying what. Some languages use a combination of direct quotes and indirect quotes to make it easier.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

1. When there is a quote within a quote, the listener needs to know who the pronouns refer to. For example: if a quote that is inside a quote has the word "I," the listener needs to know whether "I" refers to the speaker of the inner quote or the outer quote.
2. Some languages make this clear by using different kinds of quotes when there are quotes within quotes. They may use direct quotes for some and indirect quotes for others.
3. Some languages do not use indirect quotes.

Examples From the Bible

A quotation with only one layer

> But Paul said, "I, however, was indeed born a citizen." (Acts 22:28b ULT)

Quotations with two layers

> Jesus answered and said to them, "Be careful that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name. They will say, 'I am the Christ,' and will lead many astray." (Matthew 24:4-5 ULT)

The outermost layer is what Jesus said to his disciples. The second layer is what other people will say.

> Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king." (John 18:37b ULT)

The outermost layer is what Jesus said to Pilate. The second layer is what Pilate said about Jesus.

A quotation with three layers

> Abraham said, "… I said to her, 'You must show me this faithfulness as my wife: At every place where we go, say about me, **"He is my brother."**'" (Genesis 20:11a, 13 ULT)

The outermost layer is what Abraham responded to Abimelech. The second layer is what Abraham had told his wife. The third layer is what he wanted his wife to say. (We have bolded the third layer.)

A quotation with four layers

> They said to him, "A man came to meet us who said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, "Yahweh says this: **'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal- Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.'**"'" (2 Kings 1:6 ULT)

The outermost layer is what the messengers said to the king. The second layer is what the man who had met the messengers told them. The third is what that man wanted the messengers to say to the king. The fourth is what Yahweh said. (We have bolded the fourth layer.)

Translation Strategies

Some languages use only direct quotes. Other languages use a combination of direct quotes and indirect quotes. In those languages it might sound strange and perhaps even be confusing if there are many layers of direct quotes.

(1) Translate all of the quotes as direct quotes.
(2) Translate one or some of the quotes as indirect quotes. (See Direct and Indirect Quotations.)

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Translate all of the quotes as direct quotes. In the example below we have bolded the indirect quotes in the ULT and the quotes that we have changed to direct quotes below it.

> Festus presented to the king the things concerning Paul, saying, "There is a certain man was left here as a prisoner by Felix. So I am uncertain about the things concerning this matter. I asked **if he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there to be judged concerning these things**. But when Paul appealed **to keep him in custody for the decision of the emperor**, I ordered him **to be held in custody until when I could send him to Caesar**." (Acts 25:14b, 20-21 ULT)

> > Festus presented Paul's case to the king. He said, "A certain man was left behind here by Felix as a prisoner. I was uncertain about the things concerning this matter. I asked him, **'Will you go to Jerusalem to be judged there concerning these things?'** But when Paul said, **'I want to be kept in custody for the emperor's decision,'** I told the guard, **'Keep him in custody until when I can send him to Caesar.'**"

(2) Translate one or some of the quotes as indirect quotes. In English the word "that" can come before indirect quotes. It is bolded in the examples below. The pronouns that changed because of the indirect quote are also bolded.

> And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, "I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel. Speak to them and say, 'During the evenings you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be satisfied with bread. And you will know that I am Yahweh your God.'" (Exodus 16:11-12 ULT)

> And Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, “I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel. Tell them **that** during the evenings **they** will eat meat, and in the morning **they** will be satisfied with bread. And **they** will know that I am Yahweh **their** God.’”

They said to him, “A man came to meet us who said to us, ‘Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, “Yahweh says this: ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.’”””” (2 Kings 1:6 ULT)

> They told him **that** a man had come to meet **them** who said to **them**, “Go back to the king who sent you, and tell him **that** Yahweh says this: ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.’”

Pronouns

Pronouns

Description

Pronouns are words that people might use instead of using a noun when referring to someone or something. Some examples are “I,” “you,” “he,” “it,” “this,” “that,” “himself,” “someone,” and others. The personal pronoun is the most common type of pronoun.

Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns refer to people or things and show whether the speaker is referring to himself, the person he is speaking to, or someone or something else. The following are kinds of information that personal pronouns may provide. Other types of pronouns may give some of this information, as well.

Person

- First Person — The speaker and possibly others (I, me, we, us)
    - Exclusive and Inclusive “We”
- Second Person — The person or people that the speaker is talking to and possibly others (you)
    - Forms of You
- Third Person — Someone or something other than the speaker and those he is talking to (he, she, it, they)

Number

- Singular — one (I, you, he, she, it)
- Plural — more than one (we, you, they)
    - Singular Pronouns that Refer to Groups
- Dual — two (Some languages have pronouns specifically for two people or two things.)

Gender

- Masculine — he
- Feminine — she
- Neuter — it

Relationship to other words in the sentence

- Subject of the verb: I, you, he, she, it, we, they
- Object of the verb or preposition: me, you, him, her, it, us, them
- Possessor with a noun: my, your, his, her, its, our, their
- Possessor without a noun: mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, theirs

Other Types of pronouns

Reflexive Pronouns refer to another noun or pronoun in the same sentence: myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves.

- John saw **himself** in the mirror. The word "himself" refers to John.

Interrogative Pronouns are used to make a question that needs more than just a yes or no for an answer: what, which, who, whom, whose.

- **Who** built the house?

Relative Pronouns mark a relative clause. The relative pronouns, who, whom, whose, which and that give more information about a noun in the main part of the sentence. Sometimes, the relative adverbs when and where can also be used as relative pronouns.

- I saw the house **that John built**. The clause "that John built" tells which house I saw.
- I saw the man **who built the house**. The clause "who built the house" tells which man I saw.

Demonstrative Pronouns are used to draw attention to someone or something and to show distance from the speaker or something else. The demonstrative pronouns are: this, these, that, and those.

- Have you seen **this** here?
- Who is **that** over there?

Indefinite pronouns are used when no particular noun is being referred to. The indefinite pronouns are: any, anyone, someone, anything, something, and some. Sometimes a personal pronoun is used in a generic way to do this: you, they, he or it.

- He does not want to talk to **anyone**.
- **Someone** fixed it, but I do not know who.
- **They** say that **you** should not wake a sleeping dog.

In the last example, "they" and "you" just refer to people in general.

First, Second or Third Person

Normally a speaker refers to himself as "I" and the person he is speaking to as "you." Sometimes in the Bible a speaker refers to himself or to the person he is speaking to with terms other than "I" or "you."

Description

- First person — This is how a speaker normally refers to himself. English uses the pronouns "I" and "we." (Also: me, my, mine; us, our, ours)
- Second person — This is how a speaker normally refers to the person or people he is speaking to. English uses the pronoun "you." (Also: your, yours)
- Third person — This is how a speaker refers to someone else. English uses the pronouns "he," "she," "it," and "they." (Also: him, his, her, hers, its; them, their, theirs) Noun phrases like "the man" or "the woman" are also third person.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Sometimes in the Bible a speaker uses the third person to refer to himself or to the people he is speaking to. Readers might think that the speaker was referring to someone else. They might not understand that he meant "I" or "you."

Examples From the Bible

Sometimes people used the third person instead of "I" or "me" to refer to themselves.

> But David said to Saul, "**Your servant** used to keep **his** father's sheep." (1 Samuel 17:34 ULT)

David referred to himself in the third person as "your servant" and used "his." He was calling himself Saul's servant in order to show his humility before Saul.

> Then Yahweh answered Job out of a fierce storm and said,
> "… Do you have an arm like **God's**? Can you thunder with a voice like **his**?" (Job 40:6, 9 ULT)

God referred to himself in the third person with the words "God's" and "his." He did this to emphasize that he is God, and he is powerful.

Sometimes people use the third person instead of "you" or "your" to refer to the person or people they are speaking to.

> Abraham answered and said, "Look, I have undertaken to speak to my Lord, even though I am only dust and ashes!" (Genesis 18:27 ULT)

Abraham was speaking to the Lord, and referred to the Lord as "My Lord" rather than as "you." He did this to show his humility before God.

> So also my heavenly Father will do to you, if **each of you** does not forgive **his** brother from your heart. (Matthew 18:35 ULT)

After saying “each of you,” Jesus used the third person “his” instead of “your.”

Translation Strategies

If using the third person to mean “I” or “you” would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other options.

(1) Use the third person phrase along with the pronoun “I” or “you.”
(2) Simply use the first person (“I”) or second person (“you”) instead of the third person.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use the third person phrase along with the pronoun “I” or “you.”

> But David said to Saul, “**Your servant** used to keep **his** father’s sheep.” (1 Samuel 17:34)
>
> > But David said to Saul, “**I, your servant**, used to keep **my** father’s sheep.”

(2) Simply use the first person (“I”) or second person (“you”) instead of the third person.

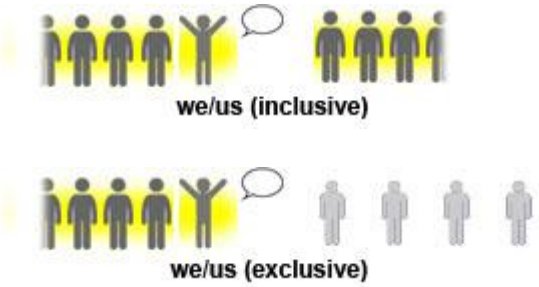
> Then Yahweh answered Job out of a fierce storm and said, “… Do you have an arm like **God’s**? Can you thunder with a voice like **his**?” (Job 40:6, 9 ULT)
>
> > Then Yahweh answered Job out of a fierce storm and said, “… Do you have an arm like **mine**? Can you thunder with a voice like **mine**?”
>
> So also my heavenly Father will do to you if **each of you** does not forgive **his** brother from your heart. (Matthew 18:35 ULT)
>
> > So also my heavenly Father will do to you if **each of you** does not forgive **your** brother from your heart.

Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'

Description

Some languages have more than one form of "we": an inclusive form that means "I and you" and an exclusive form that means "I and someone else but not you." The exclusive form excludes the person being spoken to. The inclusive form includes the person being spoken to and possibly others. This is also true for "us," "our," "ours," and "ourselves." Some languages have inclusive forms and exclusive forms for each of these. Translators whose language has separate exclusive and inclusive forms for these words will need to understand what the speaker meant so that they can decide which form to use.

See the pictures. The people on the right are the people that the speaker is talking to. The yellow highlight shows who the inclusive "we" and the exclusive "we" refer to.



Reason This Is a Translation Issue

The Bible was first written in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages. Like English, these languages do not have separate exclusive and inclusive forms for "we." If your language has separate exclusive and inclusive forms of "we," then you will need to understand what the speaker meant so that you can decide which form of "we" to use.

Examples From the Bible

Exclusive

> They said, "There are not more than five loaves of bread and two fish with us—unless **we** go and buy food for all these people." (Luke 9:13 ULT)

In the second clause, the disciples are talking about some of them going to buy food. They were speaking to Jesus, but Jesus was not going to buy food. So languages that have inclusive and exclusive forms of "we" would use the **exclusive** form there.

> **We** have seen it, and **we** bear witness to it. **We** are announcing to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and which has been made known to **us**. (1 John 1:2 ULT)

John is telling people who have not seen Jesus what he and the other apostles have seen. So languages that have inclusive and exclusive forms of "we" and "us" would use the **exclusive** forms in this verse.

Inclusive

> The shepherds said one to each other, “Let **us** now go to Bethlehem, and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to **us**.” (Luke 2:15b ULT)

The shepherds were speaking to one another. When they said “us,” they were including the people they were speaking to, so languages that have inclusive and exclusive forms of “we” and “us” would use the **inclusive** form in this verse.

> Now it happened that on one of those days, he indeed got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, “Let **us** go over to the other side of the lake.” So they set sail. (Luke 8:22 ULT)

When Jesus said “us,” he was referring to himself and to the disciples he was speaking to, so languages that have inclusive and exclusive forms of “we” and “us” would use the **inclusive** form in this verse.

Forms of 'You' — Formal or Informal

(You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_youform.)

Description

Some languages make a distinction between the formal form of "you" and the informal form of "you." This page is primarily for people whose language makes this distinction.

In some cultures people use the formal "you" when speaking to someone who is older or in authority, and they use the informal "you" when speaking to someone who is their own age or younger or who has less authority. In other cultures, people use the formal "you" when speaking to strangers or people they do not know well, and the informal "you" when speaking with family members and close friends.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- The Bible was written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. These languages do not have formal and informal forms of "you."
- English and many other source languages do not have formal and informal forms of "you."
- Translators who use a source text in a language that does have formal and informal forms of "you" will need to understand how those forms are used in that language. The rules in that language may not be exactly the same as the rules in the translator's language.
- Translators will need to understand the relationship between two speakers in order to choose the appropriate form in their language.
- Use of "you" by people speaking to Jesus is sometimes particularly difficult for translators. Because Jesus is God, some will want to always use the formal form when people are speaking to him, but it is important to recognize the actual relationship and feelings towards Jesus. Pharisees and Sadduces became Jesus' enemies early on and would have been unlikely to have spoken with particular respect to him. Also, when Jesus was with Pilate, he was treated as a criminal, not with respect.

Translation Principles

- Understand the relationship between a speaker and the person or people he is speaking to.
- Understand the speaker's attitude toward the person he is speaking to.
- Choose the form in your language that is appropriate for that relationship and attitude.

Examples From the Bible

> Yahweh God called to the man and said to him, "Where are **you**?" (Genesis 3:9 ULT)

God is in authority over the man, so languages that have formal and informal forms of "you" would probably use the informal form here.

> It seemed good to me also, having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, to write for **you** an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, so that **you** might know the certainty concerning the things that **you** have been taught. (Luke 1:3-4 ULT)

Luke called Theophilus "most excellent." This shows us that Theophilus was probably a high official to whom Luke was showing great respect. Speakers of languages that have a formal form of "you" would probably use that form here.

> 'Our Father who is in heaven, may **your** name be honored as holy.' (Matthew 6:9b ULT)

This is part of a prayer that Jesus taught his disciples. Some cultures would use the formal "you" because God is in authority. Other cultures would use the informal "you" because God is our Father.

Translation Strategies

Translators whose language has formal and informal forms of "you" will need to understand the relationship between two speakers in order to choose the appropriate form of "you" in their language.

Deciding whether to use the formal or informal "You"

1. Pay attention to the relationships between the speakers.
    - Is one speaker in authority over the other?
    - Is one speaker older than the other?
    - Are the speakers family members, relatives, friends, strangers, or enemies?
2. If you have a Bible in a language that has formal and informal forms of "you," see what forms it uses. Remember, though, that the rules in that language might be different than the rules in your language.

Translation Strategies Applied

English does not have formal and informal forms of "you," so we cannot show in English how to translate using formal and informal forms of "you." Please see the examples and discussion above.

Singular Pronouns that refer to Groups

Description

The Bible was written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. These languages have a singular form of "you" for when the word "you" refers to just one person, and a plural form for when the word "you" refers to more than one person. However, sometimes speakers in the Bible used the singular form of "you" even though they were speaking to a group of people. This is not obvious when you read the Bible in English because English does not have different forms that indicate where "you" is singular and where "you" is plural. But you may see this if you read a Bible in a language that does have distinct forms.

Also, speakers and writers of the Old Testament often referred to groups of people with the singular pronoun "he," rather than with the plural pronoun "they."

Finally, Old Testament speakers and writers sometimes referred to actions that they performed as part of a group by saying 'I' did it when, really, the whole group was involved.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- For many languages, a translator who reads a Bible with a general form of "you" will need to know whether the speaker was speaking to one person or to more than one.
- In some languages, it might be confusing if a speaker uses a singular pronoun when speaking to or about more than one person.

Examples From the Bible

> 1 Now take heed that **you** do not do **your** acts of righteousness before people to be seen by them, otherwise **you** will not have a reward with **your** Father who is in heaven. 2 So when **you** give alms, do not sound a trumpet before **yourself** as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may have the praise of people. Truly I say to **you**, they have received their reward. (Matthew 6:1-2 ULT)

Jesus said this to a crowd. He used "you" plural in verse 1, and "you" singular in the first sentence of verse 2. Then, in the last sentence, he used the plural again.

> God spoke all these words: "I am Yahweh, **your** God, who brought **you** out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. **You** must have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:1-3 ULT)

God said this to all the people of Israel. He had taken them all out of Egypt and he wanted them all to obey him, but he used the singular form of you here when speaking to them.

> This is what Yahweh says,
> "For three sins of Edom,
> even for four,
> I will not turn away punishment,
> because **he** pursued **his** brother with the sword
> and cast off all pity.

> **His** anger raged continually,
> and **his** wrath lasted forever." (Amos 1:11 ULT)

Yahweh said these things about the nation of Edom, not about only one person.

> And I arose in the night, myself and a few men with me. And I was going up by the wadi at night, and I was looking intently at the wall. And I turned back, and I entered by the gate of the valley, and I returned. (Nehemiah 2:12a,15 ULT)

Nehemiah makes clear that he brought other people with him on his inspection tour of the wall of Jerusalem. But as he describes the tour, he just says "I" did this and that.

Translation Strategies

If the singular form of the pronoun would be natural when referring to a group of people, consider using it.

(1) If using the singular form of the pronoun when referring to a group of people would not be natural in your language, use the plural form of the pronoun.

- Whether you can use use the singular form of the pronoun may depend on who the speaker is and who the people are that he is talking about or talking to.
- It may also depend on what the speaker is saying.

Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If using the singular form of the pronoun when referring to a group of people would not be natural in your language, use the plural form of the pronoun.

> This is what Yahweh says,
> "For three sins of Edom,
> even for four,
> I will not turn away punishment,
> because **he** pursued **his** brother with the sword
> and cast off all pity.
> **His** anger raged continually,
> and **his** wrath lasted forever." (Amos 1:11 ULT)

> > This is what Yahweh says,
> > "For three sins of Edom,
> > even for four,
> > I will not turn away punishment,
> > because **they** pursued **their brothers** with the sword
> > and cast off all pity.
> > **Their** anger raged continually,
> > and **their** wrath lasted forever."

> And I arose in the night, myself and a few men with me. And **I** was going up by the wadi at night, and **I** was looking intently at the wall. And **I** turned back, and **I** entered by the gate of the valley, and **I** returned. (Nehemiah 2:12a,15 ULT)

And I arose in the night, myself and a few men with me. … And **we** were going up by the wadi at night and **we** were looking intently at the wall. And **we** turned back and **we** entered by the gate of the valley, and **we** returned.

Reflexive Pronouns

Description

All languages have ways of showing that the same person fills two different roles in a sentence. English does this by using reflexive pronouns. These are pronouns that refer to someone or something that has already been mentioned in a sentence. In English the reflexive pronouns are: “myself,” “yourself,” “himself,” “herself,” “itself,” “ourselves,” “yourselves,” and “themselves.” In English, these pronouns can also be used to emphasize the person to whom they refer. Other languages may have other ways to do both of these things.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Languages have different ways of showing that the same person fills two different roles in a sentence. For those languages, translators will need to know how to translate the English reflexive pronouns.
- The reflexive pronouns in English also have other functions.

Uses of Reflexive Pronouns

- To show that the same person or things fills two different roles in a sentence
- To emphasize a person or thing in the sentence
- To show that someone or something did something alone or was alone

Examples From the Bible

To show that the same person or thing fills two different roles in a sentence

> If **I** testify about **myself**, my testimony is not true. (John 5:31 ULT)
>
> Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and **many** went up to Jerusalem from the country before the Passover in order to purify **themselves**. (John 11:55 ULT)

To emphasize a person or thing in the sentence

> **Jesus himself** was not baptizing, but his disciples were. (John 4:2 ULT)
>
> So they left the crowd, taking Jesus with them, just as he was, in the boat. There also were other boats with him. Then a violent windstorm arose and the waves were breaking into the boat so that the boat was already full of water. But **Jesus himself** was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. (Mark 4:36-38a ULT)
>
> Then Festus answered that Paul was being held at Caesarea but that **he himself** was about to depart soon. (Acts 25:4 ULT)

To show that someone did something alone, or that something was alone

> When Jesus realized that they were about to come and seize him by force to make him king, he withdrew again up the mountain **by himself**. (John 6:15 ULT)

> He saw the linen cloths lying there and the cloth that had been on his head. **It** was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a place **by itself**. (John 20:6b-7 ULT)

Translation Strategies

If a reflexive pronoun would have the same function in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other strategies.

(1) In some languages people put something on the verb to show that the object of the verb is the same as the subject.
(2) In some languages people emphasize a certain person or thing by referring to it in a special place in the sentence.
(3) In some languages people emphasize a certain person or thing by adding something to that word or putting another word with it.
(4) In some languages people show that someone did something alone by using a word like "alone."
(5) In some languages people show that something was alone by using a phrase that tells about where it was.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) In some languages people modify the verb to show that the object of the verb is the same as the subject.

> If I testify about **myself**, my testimony is not true. (John 5:31)
>
> > "If I **self-testify**, my testimony is not true."
>
> Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem from the country before the Passover in order to **purify themselves**. (John 11:55)
>
> > "Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out from country before the Passover in order to **self-purify**."

(2) In some languages people emphasize a certain person or thing by referring to it in a special place in the sentence.

> **He himself** took our sickness and bore our diseases. (Matthew 8:17 ULT)
>
> > "**The one who** took our sickness and bore our diseases **was Jesus**."
>
> **Jesus himself** was not baptizing, but his disciples were. (John 4:2)
>
> > "**It was not Jesus who** was baptizing, but his disciples."

(3) In some languages people emphasize a certain person or thing by adding something to that word or putting another word with it.

> But Jesus said this to test Philip, for he **himself** knew what he was going to do. (John 6:6)

> But Jesus said this to test Philip, for, **as for him, he** knew what he was going to do.

Then Festus answered that Paul was being held at Caesarea but that **he himself** was about to depart soon. (Acts 25:4 ULT)

> Then Festus answered that Paul was being held at Caesarea but that, **for his part, he** was about to depart soon.

(4) In some languages people show that someone did something alone by using a word like "alone."

When Jesus realized that they were about to come and seize him by force to make him king, he withdrew again up the mountain **by himself**. (John 6:15)

> "When Jesus realized that they were about to come and seize him by force to make him king, he withdrew again **alone** up the mountain."

(5) In some languages people show that something was alone by using a phrase that tells about where it was.

He saw the linen cloths lying there and the cloth that had been on his head. It was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a place **by itself**. (John 20:6b-7 ULT)

> "He saw the linen cloths lying there and the cloth that had been on his head. It was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up and lying **in it's own place**."

Pronouns — When to Use Them

Description

When we talk or write, we use pronouns to refer to people or things without always having to repeat the noun or name. Usually, the first time we refer to someone in a story, we use a descriptive phrase or a name. The next time we might refer to that person with a simple noun or by name. After that we might refer to him simply with a pronoun as long as we think that our listeners will be able to understand easily to whom the pronoun refers.

> Now there was **a man from the Pharisees whose name was Nicodemus, a Jewish leader**. **This man** came to Jesus at night. Jesus replied and said to **him** … (John 3:1, 2a, 3a ULT)

In John 3, Nicodemus is first referred to with noun phrases and his name. Then he is referred to with the noun phrase "this man." Then he is referred to with the pronoun "him."

Each language has its rules and exceptions to this usual way of referring to people and things.

- In some languages, the first time something is referred to in a paragraph or chapter, it is referred to with a noun rather than a pronoun.
- The main character is the person whom a story is about. In some languages, after a main character is introduced in a story, he is usually referred to with a pronoun. Some languages have special pronouns that refer only to the main character.
- In some languages, marking on the verb helps people know who the subject is. (See Verbs.) In some of these languages, listeners rely on this marking to help them understand who the subject is. Speakers will use a pronoun, noun phrase, or proper name only when they want either to emphasize or to clarify who the subject is.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- If translators use a pronoun at the wrong time for their language, readers might not know about whom the writer is talking.
- If translators too frequently refer to a main character by name, listeners of some languages might not realize that the person is a main character, or they might think that there is a new character with the same name.
- If translators use pronouns, nouns, or names at the wrong time, people might think that there is some special emphasis on the person or thing to which it refers.

Examples From the Bible

The example below occurs at the beginning of a chapter. In some languages it might not be clear to whom the pronouns refer.

> Then Jesus entered into the synagogue again, and there was a man who had a withered hand. Some people watched **him** closely to see if **he** would heal **him** on the Sabbath so that they might accuse **him**. (Mark 3:1-2 ULT)

In the example below, two men are named in the first sentence. It might not be clear whom "he" in the second sentence refers to.

> Now after some days had passed, **King Agrippa** and Bernice came down to Caesarea to pay their respects to **Festus**. After **he** had been there for many days, Festus presented to the king the things concerning Paul. (Acts 25:13-14)

Jesus is the main character of the book of Matthew, but in the verses below he is referred to four times by name. This may lead speakers of some languages to think that Jesus is not the main character. Or it might lead them to think that there is more than one person named Jesus in this story. Or it might lead them to think that there is some kind of emphasis on him, even though there is no emphasis.

> At that time **Jesus** went on the Sabbath day through the grainfields. **His** disciples were hungry and began to pluck heads of grain and eat them. But when the Pharisees saw that, they said to **Jesus**, "See, your disciples do what is unlawful to do on the Sabbath." But **Jesus** said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was hungry, and the men who were with him?" Then **Jesus** left from there and went into their synagogue. (Matthew 12:1-3,9 ULT)

Translation Strategies

(1) If it would not be clear to your readers to whom or to what a pronoun refers, use a name or a noun.
(2) If repeating a noun or name would lead people to think that a main character is not a main character, or that the writer is talking about more than one person with that name, or that there is some kind of emphasis on someone when there is no emphasis, use a pronoun instead.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If it would not be clear to your readers to whom or to what a pronoun refers, use a name or a noun.

> Again **he** walked into the synagogue, and a man with a withered hand was there. Some Pharisees watched **him** to see if **he** would heal the man on the Sabbath. (Mark 3:1-2)

> > Again **Jesus** walked into the synagogue, and a man with a withered hand was there. Some Pharisees watched **Jesus** to see if **he** would heal the man on the Sabbath.

(2) If repeating a noun or name would lead people to think that a main character is not a main character, or that the writer is talking about more than one person with that name, or that there is some kind of emphasis on someone when there is no emphasis, use a pronoun instead.

> At that time **Jesus** went on the Sabbath day through the grainfields. **His** disciples were hungry and began to pluck heads of grain and eat them. But when the Pharisees saw that, they said to **Jesus**, "See, your disciples do what is unlawful to do on the Sabbath." But **Jesus** said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was hungry, and the men who were with him?" Then **Jesus** left from there and went into their synagogue. (Matthew 12:1-3,9 ULT)

This may be translated as:

At that time **Jesus** went on the Sabbath day through the grainfields. **His** disciples were hungry and began to pluck heads of grain and eat them. But when the Pharisees saw that, they said to **him**, “See, your disciples do what is unlawful to do on the Sabbath.” But **he** said to them, “Have you never read what David did, when he was hungry, and the men who were with him?” Then **he** left from there and went into their synagogue.

Unknowns

Translate Unknowns

While working to translate the Bible, you (the translator) might find yourself asking: "How do I translate words like lion, fig tree, mountain, priest, or temple when people in my culture have never seen these things and we do not have a word for them?"

Description

Unknowns are things that occur in the source text that are not known to the people of your culture. The unfoldingWord® Translation Words pages and the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes will help you understand what they are. After you understand them, you will need to find ways to refer to those things so that people who read your translation will understand what they are.

> They said to him, "We have nothing here except five loaves of **bread** and two fish." (Matthew 14:17 ULT)

Bread is a particular food made by mixing finely crushed grains with oil, and then cooking the mixture so that it is dry. (Grains are the seeds of a kind of grass.) In some cultures people do not have bread and do not know what it is.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Readers may not know some of the things that are in the Bible because those things are not part of their own culture.
- Readers may have difficulty understanding a text if they do not know some of the things that are mentioned in it.

Translation Principles

- Use words that are already part of your language if possible.
- Keep expressions short if possible.
- Represent God's commands and historical facts accurately.

Examples From the Bible

> So I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **jackals**. (Jeremiah 9:11a ULT)

Jackals are wild animals like dogs that live in only a few parts of the world. So they are not known in many places.

> Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous **wolves**. (Matthew 7:15 ULT)

If wolves do not live where the translation will be read, the readers may not understand that they are fierce, wild animals like dogs that attack and eat sheep.

> They offered him wine mixed with **myrrh**, but he did not drink it. (Mark 15:23 ULT)

People may not know what myrrh is and that it was used as a medicine.

> … to him who made **great lights** … (Psalm 136:7a ULT)

Some languages have terms for things that give light, like the sun and fire, but they have no general term for lights.

> Your sins … will be white like **snow**. (Isaiah 1:18b ULT)

People in many parts of the world have not seen snow, but they may have seen it in pictures.

Translation Strategies

Here are ways you might translate a term that is not known in your language:

(1) Use a phrase that describes what the unknown item is, or what is important about the unknown item for the verse being translated.
(2) Substitute something similar from your language if doing so does not falsely represent a historical fact.
(3) Copy the word from another language, and add a general word or descriptive phrase to help people understand it.
(4) Use a word that is more general in meaning.
(5) Use a word or phrase that is more specific in meaning.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use a phrase that describes what the unknown item is, or what is important about the unknown item for the verse being translated.

> Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but are inwardly they are **ravenous wolves**. (Matthew 7:15 ULT)
>
> > Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but **inwardly they are very hungry and dangerous animals**.

"Ravenous wolves" is part of a metaphor here, so the reader needs to know that they are very dangerous to sheep in order to understand this metaphor. (If sheep are also unknown, then you will need to also use one of the translation strategies to translate sheep, or change the metaphor to something else, using a translation strategy for metaphors. See Translating Metaphors.)

> "We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish." (Matthew 14:17 ULT)
>
> > We have nothing here except five **loaves of baked grain seeds** and two fish.

(2) Substitute something similar from your language if doing so does not falsely represent a historical fact.

> Your sins … will be white like **snow.** (Isaiah 1:18b ULT) This verse is not about snow. It uses snow in a figure of speech to help people understand how white something will be.
>
> > Your sins … will be white like **milk**.
> >
> > Your sins … will be white like **the moon**.

(3) Copy the word from another language, and add a general word or descriptive phrase to help people understand it.

> Then they tried to give Jesus wine that was mixed with **myrrh**. But he refused to drink it. (Mark 15:23 ULT) — People may understand better what myrrh is if it is used with the general word "medicine."
>
> > Then they tried to give Jesus wine that was mixed with **a medicine called myrrh**. But he refused to drink it.
>
> "We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish." (Matthew 14:17 ULT) — People may understand better what bread is if it is used with a phrase that tells what it is made of (seeds) and how it is prepared (crushed and baked).
>
> > We have nothing here except five loaves of **baked crushed seed bread** and two fish.

(4) Use a word that is more general in meaning.

> I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **jackals** (Jeremiah 9:11a ULT)
>
> > I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **wild dogs**
>
> "We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish." (Matthew 14:17 ULT)
>
> > We have nothing here except five **loaves of baked food** and two fish.

(5) Use a word or phrase that is more specific in meaning.

> … to him who made **great lights** … (Psalm 136:7a ULT)
>
> > to him who made **the sun and the moon**

Copy or Borrow Words

Description

Sometimes the Bible includes things that are not part of your culture and for which your language may not have a word. The Bible also includes people and places for which you may not have names.

When that happens you can "borrow" the word from the Bible in a familiar language and use it in your translation in your own language. This means that you basically copy it from the other language. This page tells how to "borrow" words. (There are also other ways to translate words for things that are not in your language. See Translate Unknowns.)

Examples From the Bible

> Seeing one fig tree along the roadside, he went to it. (Matthew 21:19a ULT)

If there are no fig trees where your language is spoken, there might not be a name for this kind of tree in your language.

> Above him were the **seraphim**; each one had six wings; with two each covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. (Isaiah 6:2 ULT)

Your language might not have a name for this kind of creature.

> The declaration of the word of Yahweh to Israel by the hand of **Malachi**. (Malachi 1:1 ULT)

Malachi might not be a name that people who speak your language use.

Translation Strategies

There are several things to be aware of when borrowing words from another language.

- Different languages use different scripts, such as the Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Cyrillic, Devanagari, and Korean scripts. These scripts use different shapes to represent the letters in their alphabets.
- Languages that use the same script might pronounce the letters in that script differently. For example, when speaking German, people pronounce the letter "j" the same way that people pronounce the letter "y" when speaking English.
- Languages do not all have the same sounds or combinations of sounds. For example, many languages do not have the soft "th" sound in the English word "think," and some languages cannot start a word with a combination of sounds like "st" as in "stop."

There are several ways to borrow a word.

(1) If your language uses a different script from the language you are translating from, you can simply substitute each letter shape with the corresponding letter shape of the script of your language.

(2) You can spell the word as the Other Language spells it, and pronounce it the way your language normally pronounces those letters.
(3) You can pronounce the word similarly to the way the Other Language does, and adjust the spelling to fit the rules of your language.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If your language uses a different script from the language you are translating from, you can simply substitute each letter shape with the corresponding letter shape of the script of your language.

צְפַנְיָה — A man's name in Hebrew letters.

"Zephaniah" — The same name in Roman letters

(2) You can spell the word as the Other Language spells it, and pronounce it the way your language normally pronounces those letters.

Zephaniah — This is a man's name.

"Zephaniah" — The name as it is spelled in English, but you can pronounce it according to the rules of your language.

(3) You can pronounce the word similarly to the way the Other Language does, and adjust the spelling to fit the rules of your language.

Zephaniah — If your language does not have the "z," you could use "s." If your writing system does not use "ph" you could use "f." Depending on how you pronounce the "i" you could spell it with "i" or "ai" or "ay."

"Sefania"

"Sefanaia"

"Sefanaya"

How to Translate Names

Description

The Bible contains the names of many people, groups of people, and places. Some of these names may sound strange and be hard to say. Sometimes readers may not know what a name refers to, and sometimes they may need to understand what a name means. This page will help you see how you can translate these names and how you can help people understand what they need to know about them.

Meaning of names

Most names in the Bible have meaning. Most of the time, names in the Bible are used simply to identify the people and places they refer to, but sometimes the meaning of a name is especially important.

> For this **Melchizedek**, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, was the one who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him. (Hebrews 7:1 ULT)

Here the writer uses the name "Melchizedek" primarily to refer to a man who had that name, and the title "king of Salem" tells us that he ruled over a certain city.

> His name first indeed means "king of righteousness," and then also "king of Salem," that is, "king of peace." (Hebrews 7:2b ULT)

Here the writer explains the meanings of Melchizedek's name and title because those things tell us more about the person. Other times, the writer does not explain the meaning of a name because he expects the reader to already know the meaning. If the meaning of the name is important to understand the passage, you can include the meaning in the text or in a footnote.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Readers may not know some of the names in the Bible. They may not know whether a name refers to a person or place or something else.
- Readers may need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand the passage.
- Some names may have different sounds or combinations of sounds that are not used in your language or are unpleasant to say in your language. For strategies to address this problem, see Borrow Words.
- Some people and places in the Bible have two names. Readers may not realize that two names refer to the same person or place.

Examples From the Bible

> Then you crossed over the **Jordan** and came to **Jericho**, and the men of Jericho, and the **Amorites** … fought against you, but I gave them into your hand. (Joshua 24:11 ULT)

Readers might not know that “Jordan” is the name of a river, “Jericho” is the name of a city, and “Amorites” is the name of a group of people.

> She said, “Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?” Therefore, the well was called **Beer Lahai Roi**. (Genesis 16:13b-14a ULT)

Readers may not understand the second sentence if they do not know that “Beer Lahai Roi” means “Well of the Living One who sees me.”

> And she called his name **Moses** and she said, “For out of the water I drew him.” (Exodus 2:10b ULT)

Readers may not understand why she said this if they do not know that the name Moses sounds like the Hebrew words “pull out.”

> **Saul** was in agreement with his execution. (Acts 8:1a ULT)

> But when the apostles, Barnabas and **Paul**, heard of it, they tore their clothing. (Acts 14:14a ULT)

Readers may not know that the names Saul and Paul refer to the same person.

Translation Strategies

(1) If readers cannot easily understand from the context what kind of a thing a name refers to, you can add a word to clarify it.
(2) If readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, copy the name and tell about its meaning either in the text or in a footnote.
(3) Or if readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, and that name is used only once, translate the meaning of the name instead of copying the name.
(4) If a person or place has two different names, use one name most of the time and the other name only when the text tells about the person or place having more than one name or when it says something about why the person or place was given that name. Write a footnote when the source text uses the name that is used less frequently.
(5) Or if a person or place has two different names, then use whatever name is given in the source text, and add a footnote that gives the other name.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If readers cannot easily understand from the context what kind of a thing a name refers to, you can add a word to clarify it.

> Then you crossed over the **Jordan** and came to **Jericho**, and the men of Jericho, and the **Amorites** … fought against you, but I gave them into your hand. (Joshua 24:11 ULT)

> > You went over the **Jordan River** and came to the **city of Jericho**. The men of Jericho fought against you, along with **the tribe of the Amorites.**

> At that hour, certain Pharisees approached, saying to him, “Leave and go away from here, because **Herod** wants to kill you.” (Luke 13:31 ULT)
>
> > At that hour, certain Pharisees approached, saying to him, “Go and leave here, because **King Herod** wants to kill you.”

(2) If readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, copy the name and tell about its meaning either in the text or in a footnote.

> And she called his name **Moses** and she said, “For out of the water I drew him.” (Exodus 2:10b ULT)
>
> > She called his name **Moses (which sounds like ‘drawn out’),** and she said, “For out of the water I drew him.”

(3) Or if readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, and that name is used only once, translate the meaning of the name instead of copying the name.

> She said, “Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?” Therefore, the well was called **Beer Lahai Roi**. (Genesis 16:13b-14a ULT)
>
> > She said, “Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?” Therefore, the well was called **Well of the Living One who sees me**.

(4) If a person or place has two different names, use one name most of the time and the other name only when the text tells about the person or place having more than one name or when it says something about why the person or place was given that name. Write a footnote when the source text uses the name that is used less frequently. For example, Paul is called “Saul” before Acts 13 and “Paul” after Acts 13. You could translate his name as “Paul” all of the time, except in Acts 13:9 where it talks about him having both names.

> … a young man named **Saul**. (Acts 7:58b ULT)
>
> > … a young man named **Paul** 1

The footnote would look like:

> > [1] Most versions say “Saul” here, but most of the time in the Bible he is called “Paul.”

Then later in the story, you could translate this way:

> But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit; (Acts 13:9)
>
> > But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit;

(5) Or if a person or place has two names, use whatever name is given in the source text, and add a footnote that gives the other name. For example, you could write “Saul” where the source text has “Saul” and “Paul” where the source text has “Paul.”

> a young man named **Saul** (Acts 7:58 ULT)

> a young man named **Saul**

The footnote would look like:

> [1] This is the same man who is called Paul beginning in Acts 13.

Then later in the story, you could translate this way:

> But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit; (Acts 13:9)

> But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit;

Then after the story has explained the name change, you could translate this way.

> It came about in Iconium that **Paul** and Barnabas entered together into the synagogue (Acts 14:1 ULT)

> It came about in Iconium that **Paul**[1] and Barnabas entered together into the synagogue

The footnote would look like:

> [1] This is the same man who was called Saul before Acts 13.

Kinship

Description

Kinship terms refer to those words used to describe people related to one another in familial relationships. These terms vary widely in their specificity from language to language. They range from the (Western) nuclear or immediate family (father-son, husband-wife) out to broad clan relationships in other cultures.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Depending on the language translators may need to use specific terms to designate the accurate kinship relationship. In some languages a different term may be used based on siblings' birth order. In others, the side of the family (father's or mother's), age, marital status, etc. may determine the term used. Different terms may be used based on the gender of the speaker and/or addressee. Translators may need to make sure they know the exact relationship between two related people in the Bible to find the correct term. Sometimes these terms are difficult even for native speakers to remember and translators may need to seek community help in finding the correct term. Another complicating issue is that the Bible may not give enough information about the relationship for translators to determine the correct term in the language being translated into. In this case, translators will have to use a more general term or simply pick a satisfactory term based on the limited information available.

Sometimes terms that seem like kinship terms are used for people who are not necessarily related. For instance, an older person may refer to a younger man or woman as "my son" or "my daughter."

Examples from the Bible

> Then Yahweh said to Cain, "Where is Abel **your brother**?" He said, "I do not know. Am I **my brother's** keeper?" (Genesis 4:9 ULT)

Abel was Cain's younger brother.

> Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field to his flock and said to them, "I see **your father's** attitude toward me has changed, but the God of my father has been with me." (Genesis 31:4-5 ULT)

Jacob is referring here to his father-in-law. In some languages there may be a specific term for a man's father-in-law, however, in this case it is better to retain the form **your father** as Jacob may be using it to distance himself from Laban.

> And Moses was shepherding the flock of Jethro **his father-in-law**, the priest of Midian. (Exodus3:1a ULT)

Unlike the previous instance, if your language has a term for a man's father-in-law this is a good place to use it.

> And **his sister** stationed herself at a distance to know what would be done to him. (Exodus 2:4 ULT)

From context we know that this was Miriam, Moses's older sister. In some languages this may require a specific term. In others, the term for older sister may be only used when the younger sibling is addressing and/or referring to his or her sister.

> Then she and **her daughters-in-law** arose to return from the fields of Moab (Ruth 1:6a ULT)

Ruth & Orpah are Naomi's daughters-in-law.

> Then she said, "Look, your sister-in-law has turned back to her people and to her gods." (Ruth 1:15 ULT)

Orpah had been the wife of Ruth's husband's brother. This may be a different term in your language than if she had been Ruth's husband's sister.

> Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Will you not listen to me, **my daughter**?" (Ruth 2:8a ULT)

Boaz is not Ruth's father; he is simply using the term to address a younger woman.

> And behold, **your relative** Elizabeth—she also has conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren. (Luke 1:36 ULT)

While the KJV translated this as **cousin**, the term simply means a related woman.

Translation Strategies

(1) Find out the exact relationship specified and translate using the term your language uses.

(2) If the text does not specify the relationship as clearly as your language would, either:

(a) settle on a more general term.

(b) use a specific term if required by your language, choosing the one that is most likely to be correct.

Translation Strategies Applied

This is not an issue in English, so the following illustrations draw on other languages.

In Korean, there are several terms for brother and sister, the use of them depends on the speaker's (or referent's) sex and birth order. Examples are from the Korean Living Bible, found on biblegateway.com

> Genesis 30:1 Rachel is jealous of her "eonni," which is the term a woman uses for her older sister.

> Genesis 34:31 Simeon and Levi refer to Dinah as "nui," a general term for sister.

> Genesis 37:16 Joseph refers to his brothers as "hyeong," which is the term a man uses for his older brother(s).

> Genesis 45:12 Joseph refers to Benjamin as “dongsaeng,” which roughly means sibling, usually younger.

In Russian, in-law terms are complex. For instance, “nevéstka” is the term for a brother’s (or brother-in-law’s) wife; a woman uses the same term for her daughter-in-law but her husband would call the same daughter-in-law “snoxá.” Examples from the Russian Synodal Version.

> Genesis 38:25 Tamar sends a message to her father-in-law, Judah. The term used is “svekor.” This is used for a woman’s husband’s father.

> Exodus 3:1 Moses is watching his father-in-law’s herd. The term used is “test’.” This is used for a man’s wife’s father.

Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

Assumed knowledge is whatever a speaker assumes his audience knows before he speaks and gives them some kind of information. The speaker does not give the audience this information because he believes that they already know it.

When the speaker does give the audience information, he can do so in two ways. The speaker gives explicit information in what he states directly. Implicit Information is what the speaker does not state directly because he expects his audience to be able to learn it from other things he says.

Description

When someone speaks or writes, he has something specific that he wants people to know or do or think about. He normally states this directly. This is explicit information.

The speaker assumes that his audience already knows certain things that they will need to think about in order to understand this information. Normally he does not tell people these things, because they already know them. This is called assumed knowledge.

The speaker does not always directly state everything that he expects his audience to learn from what he says. Implicit information is information that he expects people to learn from what he says even though he does not state it directly.

Often, the audience understands this implicit information by combining what they already know (assumed knowledge) with the explicit information that the speaker tells them directly.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

All three kinds of information are part of the speaker's message. If one of these kinds of information is missing, then the audience will not understand the message. Because the target translation is in a language that is very different from the biblical languages and is made for an audience that lives in a very different time and place than the people in the Bible, many times the assumed knowledge or the implicit information is missing from the message. In other words, modern readers do not know everything that the original speakers and hearers in the Bible knew. When these things are important for understanding the message, it is helpful if you include this information in the text or in a footnote.

Examples From the Bible

> Then a scribe came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus said to him, "Foxes **have holes**, and the birds of the sky **have nests**, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:19-20 ULT)

Jesus did not say what foxes and birds use holes and nests for, because he assumed that the scribe would have known that foxes sleep in holes in the ground and birds sleep in their nests. This is **assumed knowledge**.

Jesus did not directly say here "I am the Son of Man" but, if the scribe did not already know it, then that fact would be **implicit information** that he could learn because Jesus referred to

himself that way. Also, Jesus did not state explicitly that he travelled a lot and did not have a house that he slept in every night. That is **implicit information** that the scribe could learn when Jesus said that he had nowhere to lay his head.

> Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the mighty deeds had been done in **Tyre and Sidon** which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the **day of judgment** than for you. (Matthew 11:21-22 ULT)

Jesus assumed that the people he was speaking to knew that Tyre and Sidon were very wicked, and that the day of judgment is a time when God will judge every person. Jesus also knew that the people he was talking to believed that they were good and did not need to repent. Jesus did not need to tell them these things. This is all **assumed knowledge**.

An important piece of **implicit information** here is that the people he was speaking to would be judged more severely than the people of Tyre and Sidon would be judged **because** they did not repent.

> Why do your disciples violate the traditions of the elders? For **they do not wash their hands when they eat bread**. (Matthew 15:2 ULT)

One of the traditions of the elders was a ceremony in which people would wash their hands in order to be ritually clean before eating. People thought that in order to be righteous, they had to follow all the traditions of the elders. This was **assumed knowledge** that the Pharisees who were speaking to Jesus expected him to know. By saying this, they were accusing his disciples of not following the traditions, and thus not being righteous. This is **implicit information** that they wanted him to understand from what they said.

Translation Strategies

If readers have enough assumed knowledge to be able to understand the message, along with any important implicit information that goes with the explicit information, then it is good to leave that knowledge unstated and leave the implicit information implicit. If the readers do not understand the message because one of these is missing for them, then follow these strategies:

(1) If readers cannot understand the message because they do not have certain assumed knowledge, then provide that knowledge as explicit information.
(2) If readers cannot understand the message because they do not know certain implicit information, then state that information clearly, but try to do it in a way that does not imply that the information was new to the original audience.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If readers cannot understand the message because they do not have certain assumed knowledge, then provide that knowledge as explicit information.

> Jesus said to him, “Foxes **have holes**, and the birds of the sky **have nests**, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” (Matthew 8:20 ULT)

The assumed knowledge was that the foxes slept in their holes and birds slept in their nests.

> Jesus said to him, “Foxes **have holes to live in**, and the birds of the sky **have nests to live in**, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head and sleep.”

> It will be more tolerable for **Tyre and Sidon** at the day of judgment than for you (Matthew 11:22 ULT)

The assumed knowledge was that the people of Tyre and Sidon were very, very wicked. This can be stated explicitly.

> At the day of judgment, it will be more tolerable for **those cities of Tyre and Sidon, whose people were very wicked**, than it will be for you. or At the day of judgment, It will be more tolerable for those **wicked cities, Tyre and Sidon,** than for you.

> Why do your disciples violate the traditions of the elders? For **they do not wash their hands** when they eat bread. (Matthew 15:2 ULT)

The assumed knowledge was that one of the traditions of the elders was a ceremony in which people would wash their hands in order to be ritually clean before eating, which they must do to be righteous. It was not to remove germs from their hands to avoid sickness, as a modern reader might think.

> Why do your disciples violate the traditions of the elders? For **they do not go through the ceremonial handwashing ritual of righteousness** when they eat bread.

(2) If readers cannot understand the message because they do not know certain implicit information, then state that information clearly, but try to do it in a way that does not imply that the information was new to the original audience.

> Then a scribe came to him and said, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.” Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.” (Matthew 8:19-20 ULT)

The implicit information is that Jesus himself is the Son of Man. Other implicit information is that if the scribe wanted to follow Jesus, then, like Jesus, he would have to live without a house.

> Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but **I, the Son of Man**, have **no home to rest in. If you want to follow me, you will live as I live**.”

> It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you (Matthew 11:22 ULT)

The implicit information is that God would not only judge the people; he would punish them. This can be made explicit.

> At the day of judgment, God will **punish Tyre and Sidon**, cities whose people were very wicked, **less severely than he will punish you**.

or:
At the day of judgment, God will **punish you more severely** than
Tyre and Sidon, cities whose people were very wicked.

Modern readers may not know some of the things that the people in the Bible and the people who first read it knew. This can make it hard for them to understand what a speaker or writer says, and to learn things that the speaker left implicit. Translators may need to state some things explicitly in the translation that the original speaker or writer left unstated or implicit.

Making Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information Explicit

Description

Some languages have ways of saying things that are natural for them but sound strange when translated into Other Languages. One of the reasons for this is that some languages say things explicitly that some Other Languages would leave as implicit information.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

If you translate all of the explicit information from the source language into the explicit information in the target language, it could sound foreign, unnatural, or perhaps even unintelligent if the target language would not make that information explicit. Instead, it is best to leave that kind of information implicit in the target language.

Examples from the Bible

> **And** Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it and drew near to the door of the tower **to burn it with fire**. (Judges 9:52 ESV)

In Biblical Hebrew, it is normal to start most sentences with a conjunction such as “and” to show the connection between sentences. In English, it is not natural to do so, it is quite tiresome for the English reader, and it gives the impression that the author is uneducated. In English, it is best to leave the idea of connection between sentences implicit in most cases and not translate the conjunction explicitly.

In Biblical Hebrew, it is normal to say that something was burned with fire. In English, the idea of fire is included in the action of burning, and so it is unnatural to state both ideas explicitly. It is enough to say that something was burned and leave the idea of fire implicit.

> But the centurion **answered and said**, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof” (Matthew 8:8a ULT)

In the biblical languages, it was normal to introduce direct speech with two verbs of speaking. One verb indicated the action, and the other introduced the words of the speaker. English speakers do not do this, so it is very unnatural and confusing to use two verbs. For the English speaker, the idea of speaking is included in the idea of answering. Using two verbs in English implies two separate speeches, rather than just one. So in English, it is better to use only one verb of speaking.

Translation Strategies

(1) If the explicit information of the source language sounds natural in the target language, then translate it as explicit information.
(2) If the explicit information does not sound natural in the target language or seems unnecessary or confusing, leave the explicit information implicit. Only do this if the reader can understand this information from the context. You can test this by asking the reader a question about the passage.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the explicit information of the source language sounds natural in the target language, then translate it as explicit information.

- There would be no change to the text using this strategy, so no examples are given here.

(2) If the explicit information does not sound natural in the target language or seems unnecessary or confusing, make the explicit information implicit. Only do this if the reader can understand this information from the context. You can test this by asking the reader a question about the passage.

> **And** Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it and drew near to the door of the tower **to burn it with fire**. (Judges 9:52 ESV)
>
> > Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it, and he approached the door of the tower **to burn it**. (Or) … **to set it on fire**.

In English, it is clear that the action of this verse follows the action of the previous verse without the use of the connector "and" at the beginning, so it was omitted. Also, the words "with fire" were left out, because this information is communicated implicitly by the word "burn." An alternative translation for "to burn it" is "to set it on fire." It is not natural in English to use both "burn" and "fire," so the English translator should choose only one of them. You can test if the readers understood the implicit information by asking, "How would the door burn?" If they knew it was by fire, then they have understood the implicit information. Or, if you chose the second option, you could ask, "What happens to a door that is set on fire?" If the readers answer, "It burns," then they have understood the implicit information.

> But the centurion **answered and said**, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof" (Matthew 8:8a ULT)
>
> > The centurion **answered**, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof"

In English, the information that the centurion responded by speaking is included in the verb "answered," so the verb "said" can be left implicit. You can test if the readers understood the implicit information by asking, "How did the centurion answer?" If they knew it was by speaking, then they have understood the implicit information.

> **He opened his mouth** and taught them, saying, (Matthew 5:2 ULT)
>
> > **He began to** teach them, saying, (Or) He taught them, saying,

In English, it would be very strange to include the information that Jesus opened his mouth when he spoke. That information is included in the verbs "taught" and "saying," so that phrase can be omitted and that information left implicit. However, "he opened his mouth" is an idiom that indicates the beginning of a speech, so that information may be included, or it may also be left implicit.

When to Keep Information Implicit

Description

Sometimes it is better not to state assumed knowledge or implicit information explicitly. This page gives some direction about when not to do this.

Translation Principles

- If a speaker or author intentionally left something unclear, do not try to make it more clear.
- If the original audience did not understand what the speaker meant, do not make it so clear that your readers would find it strange that the original audience did not understand.
- If you need to explicitly state some assumed knowledge or implicit information, try to do it in a way that does not make your readers think that the original audience needed to be told those things.
- Do not make implicit information explicit if it confuses the message or leads the reader to forget what the main point is.
- Do not make assumed knowledge or implicit information explicit if your readers already understand it.

Examples From the Bible

> From the eater came forth food;
> and from the strong one came forth sweetness. (Judges 14:14 ULT)

This was a riddle. Samson purposely said this in a way that it would be hard for his enemies to know what it meant. Do not make it clear that the eater and the strong thing was a lion and that the sweet thing to eat was honey.

> Jesus said to them, “Take heed and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” They reasoned among themselves saying, “It is because we did not take bread.” (Matthew 16:6-7 ULT)

Some possible implicit information here is that the disciples should beware of the false teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. But Jesus’ disciples did not understand this. They thought that Jesus was talking about real yeast and bread. So it would not be appropriate to state explicitly that the word “yeast” here refers to false teaching. The disciples did not understand what Jesus meant until they heard what Jesus said in Matthew 16:11.

> “How is it that you do not understand that I was not speaking to you about bread? Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Then they understood that he was not telling them to beware of yeast in bread, but to beware of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Matthew 16:11-12 ULT)

Only after Jesus explained that he was not talking about bread did they realize that he was talking about the false teaching of the Pharisees. Therefore, it would be wrong to explicitly state the implicit information in Matthew 16:6.

Translation Strategies

Because we recommend that translators not change this kind of passage to make it more clear, this page does not have any translation strategies.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

Because we recommend that translators not change this kind of passage to make it more clear, this page does not have any translation strategies applied.

Biblical Distance

Description

The following terms are the most common measures for distance or length that were originally used in the Bible. Most of these are based on the sizes of the hand and forearm.

- The **handbreadth** was the width of the palm of a man's hand.
- The **span** or handspan was the width of a man's hand with the fingers spread out.
- The **cubit** was the length of a man's forearm, from the elbow to the tip of the longest finger.
- The **"long" cubit** is used only in Ezekiel 40-48. It is the length of a normal cubit plus a span.
- The **stadium** (plural, **stadia**) referred to a certain footrace that was about 185 meters in length. Some older English versions translated this word as "furlong," which referred to the average length of a plowed field.

The metric values in the table below are close but not exactly equal to the biblical measures. The biblical measures probably differed in exact length from time to time and place to place. The equivalents below are an attempt to give an average measurement.

Original Measure	Metric Measure
handbreadth	8 centimeters
span	23 centimeters
cubit	46 centimeters
"long" cubit	54 centimeters
stadia	185 meters

Translation Principles

1. The people in the Bible did not use modern measures such as meters, liters, and kilograms. Using the original measures can help readers know that the Bible really was written long ago in a time when people used those measures.
2. Using modern measures can help readers understand the text more easily.
3. Whatever measure you use, it would be good, if possible, to tell about the other kind of measure in the text or a footnote.
4. If you do not use the Biblical measures, try not to give the readers the idea that the measurements are exact. For example, if you translate one cubit as ".46 meters" or even as "46 centimeters," readers might think that the measurement is exact. It would be better to say "half a meter," "45 centimeters," or "50 centimeters."
5. Sometimes it can be helpful to use the word "about" to show that a measurement is not exact. For example, Luke 24:13 says that Emmaus was 60 stadia from Jerusalem. This can be translated as "about ten kilometers" from Jerusalem.
6. When God tells people how long something should be, and when people make things according to those lengths, do not use "about" in the translation. Otherwise it will give the impression that God did not care exactly how long something should be.

Translation Strategies

(1) Use the measurements from the ULT. These are the same kinds of measurements that the original writers used. Spell them in a way that is similar to the way they sound or are spelled in the ULT. (See Copy or Borrow Words.)
(2) Use the metric measurements given in the UST. The translators of the UST have already figured how to represent the amounts in the metric system.
(3) Use measurements that are already used in your language. In order to do this you would need to know how your measurements relate to the metric system and figure out each measurement.
(4) Use the measurements from the ULT and include measurements that your people know in the text or a note.
(5) Use measurements that your people know, and include the measurements from the ULT in the text or in a note.

Translation Strategies Applied

The strategies are all applied to Exodus 25:10 below.

> They are to make an ark of acacia wood. Its length must be two and a half cubits; its width will be one cubit and a half; and its height will be one cubit and a half. (Exodus 25:10 ULT)

(1) Use the measurements given in the ULT. These are the same kinds of measurements that the original writers used. Spell them in a way that is similar to the way they sound or are spelled in the ULT. (See Copy or Borrow Words.)

> "They are to make an ark of acacia wood. Its length must be **two and a half kubits**; its width will be **one kubit and a half**; and its height will be **one kubit and a half**."

(2) Use the metric measurements given in the UST. The translators of the UST have already figured how to represent the amounts in the metric system.

> "They are to make an ark of acacia wood. Its length must be **one meter**; its width will be **two thirds of a meter**; and its height will be **two thirds of a meter**."

(3) Use measurements that are already used in your language. In order to do this you would need to know how your measurements relate to the metric system and figure out each measurement. For example, if you measure things using the standard meter length, you could translate it as below.

> "They are to make an ark of acacia wood. Its length must be **one meter**; its width will be **two thirds of a meter**; and its height will be **two thirds of a meter**."

(4) Use the measurements from the ULT and include measurements that your people know in the text or a note. The following shows both measurements in the text.

> "They are to make an ark of acacia wood. Its length must be **two and a half cubits (one meter)**; its width will be **one cubit and a half**

> **(two thirds of a meter)**; and its height will be **one cubit and a half (two thirds of a meter)**."

(5) Use measurements that your people know, and include the measurements from the ULT in the text or in a note. The following shows the ULT measurements in notes.

> "They are to make an ark of acacia wood. Its length must be **one meter**; [1] its width will be **two thirds of a meter**; [2] and its height will be **two thirds of a meter**."

The footnotes would look like:

> "They are to make an ark of acacia wood. Its length must be **one meter**; [1] its width will be **two thirds of a meter**; [2] and its height will be **two thirds of a meter**."

The footnotes would look like:

> [1] two and a half cubits
> [2] one cubit and a half

Biblical Volume

Description

The following terms are the most common units of volume used in the Bible to state how much a certain container could hold. The containers and measurements are given for both liquids (such as wine) and dry solids (such as grain). The metric values are not exactly equal to the biblical measures. The biblical measures probably differed in exact amount from time to time and place to place. The equivalents below are an attempt to give an average measurement.

Type	Original Measure	Liters
Dry	omer	2 liters
Dry	ephah	22 liters
Dry	homer	220 liters
Dry	cor	220 liters
Dry	seah	7.7 liters
Dry	lethek	114.8 liters
Liquid	metrete	40 liters
Liquid	bath	22 liters
Liquid	hin	3.7 liters
Liquid	kab	1.23 liters
Liquid	log	0.31 liters

Translation Principles

- The people in the Bible did not use modern measures such as meters, liters, and kilograms. Using the original measures can help readers know that the Bible really was written long ago in a time when people used those measures.
- Using modern measures can help readers understand the text more easily.
- Whatever measures you use, it would be good, if possible, to tell about the other kinds of measures in the text or a footnote.
- If you do not use the biblical measures, try not to give the readers the idea that the measurements are exact. For example, if you translate one hin as “3.7 liters,” readers might think that the measurement is exactly 3.7 liters, not 3.6 or 3.8. It would be better to use a more approximate measure such as “three and a half liters” or “four liters.”
- When God tells people how much of something to use, and when people use those amounts in obedience to him, do not say “about” in the translation. Otherwise it will give the impression that God did not care exactly how much they used.

When the unit of measure is stated

Translation Strategies

(1) Use the measurements from the ULT. These are the same kinds of measurements that the original writers used. Spell them in a way that is similar to the way they sound or are spelled in the ULT. (See Copy or Borrow Words.)
(2) Use the metric measurements given in the UST. The translators of the UST have already

figured how to represent the amounts in the metric system.
(3) Use measurements that are already used in your language. In order to do this you would need to know how your measurements relate to the metric system and figure out each measurement.
(4) Use the measurements from the ULT and include measurements that your people know in the text or a note.
(5) Use measurements that your people know, and include the measurements from the ULT in the text or in a note.

Translation Strategies Applied

The strategies are all applied to Isaiah 5:10 below.

> For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only one bath, and one homer of seed will yield only an ephah. (Isaiah 5:10 ULT)

(1) Use the measurements from the ULT. These are the same kinds of measurements that the original writers used. Spell them in a way that is similar to the way they sound or are spelled in the ULT. (See Copy or Borrow Words.)

> "For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only one **bat**, and one **homer** of seed will yield only an **efa**."

(2) Use the measurements given in the UST. Usually they are metric measurements. The translators of the UST have already figured how to represent the amounts in the metric system.

> "For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only **22 liters** and **220 liters** of seed will yield only **22 liters**."

> "For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only **22**, and **ten baskets** of seed will yield only **one basket**."

(3) Use measurements that are already used in your language. In order to do this you would need to know how your measurements relate to the metric system and figure out each measurement.

> "For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only **six gallons**, and **six and a half bushels** of seed will yield only **20 quarts**."

(4) Use the measurements from the ULT and include measurements that your people know in the text or a note. The following shows both measurements in the text.

> "For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only **one bath (six gallons)**, and **one homer (six and a half bushels)** of seed will yield only **an ephah (20 quarts)**."

(5) Use measurements that your people know, and include the measurements from the ULT in the text or in a note. The following shows the ULT measurements in footnotes.

> "For a ten-yoke vineyard will yield only 22 liters[1], and 220 liters[2] of seed will yield only 22 liters[3]."

The footnotes would look like:

> [1] one bath
> [2] one homer
> [3] one ephah

When the unit of measure is implied

Sometimes the Hebrew does not specify a particular unit of volume but only uses a number. In these cases, many English versions, including the ULT and UST, add the word "measure."

> When you came to a heap of **20 measures** of grain, there were only **ten**, and when you came to the wine vat to draw out **50 measures** of wine, there were only 20. (Haggai 2:16 ULT)

Translation Strategies

(1) Translate literally by using the number without a unit.
(2) Use a generic word like "measure" or "quantity" or "amount."
(3) Use the name of an appropriate container, such as "basket" for grain or "jar" for wine.
(4) Use a unit of measure that you are already using in your translation.

Translation Strategies Applied

The strategies are all applied to Haggai 2:16 below.

> When you came to a heap of **20 measures** of grain, there were only **ten**, and when you came to the wine vat to draw out **fifty measures** of wine, there were only **20**. (Haggai 2:16 ULT)

(1) Translate literally by using the number without a unit.

> When you came to a heap of **20** of grain, there were only **ten**, and when you came to the wine vat to draw out **50** of wine, there were only **20**.

(2) Use a generic word like "measure" or "quantity" or "amount."

> When you came to a heap of **20 amounts** of grain, there were only **ten**, and when you came to the wine vat to draw out **fifty amounts** of wine, there were only **20**.

(3) Use the name of an appropriate container, such as "basket" for grain or "jar" for wine.

> When you came to a heap of **20 baskets** of grain, there were only **ten**, and when you came to the wine vat to draw out **50 jars** of wine, there were only **20**.

(4) Use a unit of measure that you are already using in your translation.

When you came to a heap for **20 liters** of grain, there were only **ten liters**, and when you came to the wine vat to draw out **50 liters** of wine, there were only **20 liters**.

Biblical Weight

Description

The following terms are the most common units of weight in the Bible. The term "shekel" means "weight," and many other weights are described in terms of the shekel. Some of these weights were used for money. The metric values in the table below are not exactly equal to the biblical measures. The biblical measures differed in exact amount from time to time and place to place. The equivalents below are only an attempt to give an average measurement.

Original Measure	Shekels	Grams	Kilograms
shekel	1 shekel	11 grams	-
bekah	1/2 shekel	5.7 grams	-
pim	2/3 shekel	7.6 grams	-
gerah	1/20 shekel	0.57 grams	-
mina	50 shekels	550 grams	1/2 kilogram
talent	3,000 shekels	-	34 kilograms

Translation Principles

1. The people in the Bible did not use modern measures such as meters, liters, and kilograms. Using the original measures can help readers know that the Bible really was written long ago in a time when people used those measures.
2. Using modern measures can help readers understand the text more easily.
3. Whatever measure you use, it would be good, if possible, to tell about the other kind of measure in the text or a footnote.
4. If you do not use the biblical measures, try not to give the readers the idea that the measurements are exact. For example, if you translate one gerah as ".57 grams," readers might think that the measurement is exact. It would be better to say "half a gram."
5. Sometimes it can be helpful to use the word "about" to show that a measurement is not exact. For example, 2 Samuel 21:16 says that Goliath's spear weighed 300 shekels. Instead of translating this as "3300 grams" or "3.3 kilograms," it can be translated as "about three and one half kilograms."
6. When God tells people how much something should weigh, and when people use those weights, do not say "about" in the translation. Otherwise, it will give the impression that God did not care exactly how much the thing should weigh.

Translation Strategies

(1) Use the measurements from the ULT. These are the same kinds of measurements that the original writers used. Spell them in a way that is similar to the way they sound or are spelled in the ULT. (See Copy or Borrow Words.)
(2) Use the metric measurements given in the UST. The translators of the UST have already figured how to represent the amounts in the metric system.
(3) Use measurements that are already used in your language. In order to do this, you would need to know how your measurements relate to the metric system and figure out each measurement.

(4) Use the measurements from the ULT and include measurements that your people know in the text or a note.
(5) Use measurements that your people know, and include the measurements from the ULT in the text or in a note.

Translation Strategies Applied

The strategies are all applied to Exodus 38:29 below.

> The bronze from the wave offering weighed **70 talents and 2,400 shekels**.
> (Exodus 38:29 ULT)

(1) Use the measurements from the ULT. These are the same kinds of measurements that the original writers used. Spell them in a way that is similar to the way they sound or are spelled in the ULT. (See Copy or Borrow Words.)

> "The bronze from the wave offering weighed **70 talents and 2,400 sekeles**."

(2) Use the metric measurements given in the UST. The translators of the UST have already figured how to represent the amounts in the metric system.

> "The bronze from the wave offering weighed **2,400 kilograms**."

(3) Use measurements that are already used in your language. In order to do this you would need to know how your measurements relate to the metric system and figure out each measurement.

> "The bronze from the wave offering weighed **5,300 pounds**."

(4) Use the measurements from the ULT and include measurements that your people know in the text or a footnote. The following shows both measurements in the text.

> "The bronze from the wave offering weighed **70 talents (2,380 kilograms)** and **2,400 shekels (26.4 kilograms)**."

(5) Use measurements that your people know, and include the measurements from the ULT in the text or in a footnote. The following shows the ULT measurements in notes.

> "The bronze from the offering weighed **70 talents and 2,400 shekels**.
> 1"

The footnote would look like:

> [1] This was a total of about 2,400 kilograms.

Biblical Money

Description

In early Old Testament times, people weighed their metals, such as silver and gold, and would pay a certain weight of that metal in order to buy things. Later, people started to make coins that each contained a standard amount of a certain metal. The daric is one such coin. In New Testament times, people used silver and copper coins.

The two tables below show some of the most well-known units of money found in the Old Testament (OT) and New Testament (NT). The table for Old Testament units shows what kind of metal was used and how much it weighed. The table for New Testament units shows what kind of metal was used and how much it was worth in terms of a day's wage.

Unit in OT	Metal	Weight
daric	gold coin	8.4 grams
shekel	various metals	11 grams
talent	various metals	33 kilograms

Unit in NT	Metal	Day's Wage
denarius/denarii	silver coin	1 day
drachma	silver coin	1 day
mite	copper coin	1/64 day
shekel	silver coin	4 days
talent	silver	6,000 days

Translation Principle

Do not use modern money values since these change from year to year. Using them will cause the Bible translation to become outdated and inaccurate.

Translation Strategies

The value of most money in the Old Testament was based on its weight. So when translating these weights in the Old Testament, see Biblical Weight. The strategies below are for translating the value of money in the New Testament.

(1) Use the Bible term and spell it in a way that is similar to the way it sounds. (See Copy or Borrow Words.)
(2) Describe the value of the money in terms of what kind of metal it was made of and how many coins were used.
(3) Describe the value of the money in terms of what people in Bible times could earn in one day of work.
(4) Use the biblical term and give the equivalent amount in the text or a footnote.
(5) Use the biblical term and explain it in a footnote.

Translation Strategies Applied

The translations strategies are all applied to Luke 7:41 below.

> The one owed 500 denarii, and the other, 50. (Luke 7:41b ULT)

1. Use the Bible term and spell it in a way that is similar to the way it sounds. (See Copy or Borrow Words.)

> "The one owed **500 denali**, and the other, **50**."

1. Describe the value of the money in terms of what kind of metal it was made of and how many pieces or coins were used.

> "The one owed **500 silver coins**, and the other, **50**."

(3) Describe the value of the money in terms of what people in Bible times could earn in one day of work.

> "The one owed **500 days' wages**, and the other, **50**."

(4) Use the Bible term and give the equivalent amount in the text or a footnote.

> "The one owed **500 denarii** 1, and the other owed **50 denarii**. 2"

The footnotes would look like:

> [1] 500 days' wages [2] 50 days' wages

(5) Use the Bible term and explain it in a footnote.

> "The one owed **500 denarii**,1 and the other, **50**." (Luke 7:41 ULT)
>
> [1] A denarius was the amount of silver that people could earn in one day of work.

Hebrew Months

Description

The Hebrew calendar used in the Bible has twelve months. Unlike the western calendar, its first month begins in the spring of the northern hemisphere. Sometimes a month is called by its name (Aviv, Ziv, Sivan), and sometimes it is called by its order in the Hebrew calendar year (first month, second month, third month).

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Readers may be surprised to read of months that they have never heard of, and they may wonder how those months correspond to the months that they use.
- Readers may not realize that phrases such as “the first month” or “the second month” refer to the first or second month of the Hebrew calendar, not some other calendar.
- Readers may not know when the first month of the Hebrew calendar begins.
- The Bible may tell about something happening in a certain month, but readers will not be able to fully understand what is said about it if they do not know what season of the year that was.

List of Hebrew Months

This is a list of the Hebrew months with information about them that may be helpful in the translation.

Aviv — (This month was called **Nisan** after the Babylonian exile.) This is the first month of the Hebrew calendar. It marks when God brought the people of Israel out of Egypt. It is at the beginning of the spring season when the late rains come and people begin to harvest their crops. It is during the last part of March and the first part of April on western calendars. The Passover celebration started on Aviv 10; the Festival of Unleavened Bread was right after that, and the Festival of Harvest was a few weeks after that.

Ziv — This is the second month of the Hebrew calendar. This is during the harvest season. It is during the last part of April and the first part of May on Western calendars.

Sivan — This is the third month of the Hebrew calendar. It is at the end of the harvest season and the beginning of the dry season. It is during the last part of May and the first part of June on Western calendars. The Feast of Weeks is celebrated on Sivan 6.

Tammuz — This is the fourth month of the Hebrew calendar. It is during the dry season. It is during the last part of June and the first part of July on Western calendars.

Ab — This is the fifth month of the Hebrew calendar. It is during the dry season. It is during the last part of July and the first part of August on Western calendars.

Elul — This is the sixth month of the Hebrew calendar. It is at the end of the dry season and the beginning of the rainy season. It is during the last part of August and the first part of September on Western calendars.

Ethanim — This is the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar. This is during the early rain season which would soften the land for sowing. It is during the last part of September and the first part of October on Western calendars. The Feast of Ingathering and the Day of Atonement are celebrated in this month.

Bul — This is the eighth month of the Hebrew calendar. It is during the rainy season when people plough their fields and sow seed. It is during the last part of October and the first part of November on Western calendars.

Kislev — This is the ninth month of the Hebrew calendar. This is at the end of the sowing season and the beginning of the cold season. It is during the last part of November and the first part of December on Western calendars.

Tebeth — This is the tenth month of the Hebrew calendar. It is during the cold season when there may be rain and snow. It is during the last part of December and the first part of January on Western calendars.

Shebat — This is the eleventh month of the Hebrew calendar. This is the coldest month of the year, and it has heavy rainfall. It is during the last part of January and the first part of February on Western calendars.

Adar — This is the twelfth and last month of the Hebrew calendar. This is during the cold season. It is during the last part of February and the first part of March on western calendars. The feast called Purim is celebrated in Adar.

Examples From the Bible

> Today you are going out, in **the month of Aviv**. (Exodus 13:4 ULT)
>
> You must eat unleavened bread from evening of the fourteenth day **in the first month of the year**, until evening of the twenty-first day of the month. (Exodus 12:18 ULT)

Translation Strategies

You may need to make some information about the months explicit. (See Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information.)

(1) Tell the number of the Hebrew month.
(2) Use the names for months that people know.
(3) State clearly what season the month occurred in.
(4) Refer to the time in terms of the season rather than in terms of the Hebrew name of the month. (If possible, use a footnote to show the Hebrew month and day.)

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

The examples below use these two verses.

> At that time, you will appear before me in **the month of Aviv**, which is fixed for this purpose. It was in this month that you came out from Egypt. (Exodus 23:15b ULT)

> It will always be a statute for you that in **the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month,** you must humble yourselves and do no work. (Leviticus 16:29a ULT)

(1) Tell the number of the Hebrew month.

> At that time, you will appear before me in **the first month of the year**, which is fixed for this purpose. It was in this month that you came out from Egypt.

(2) Use the months that people know.

> At that time, you will appear before me in **the month of March**, which is fixed for this purpose. It was in this month that you came out from Egypt.
>
> It will always be a statute for you that **on the day I choose in late September** you must humble yourselves and do no work.

(3) State clearly what season the month occurs in.

> It will always be a statute for you that **in the autumn, on the tenth day of the seventh month,** you must humble yourselves and do no work.

(4) Refer to the time in terms of the season rather than in terms of the month.

> It will always be a statute for you that in **the day I choose in early autumn**[1] you must humble yourselves and do no work.

The footnote would look like:

> [1] The Hebrew says, “the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month.”

Numbers

Description

There are many numbers in the Bible. They can be written as words (“five”) or as numerals (“5”). Some numbers are very large, such as “two hundred” (200), “twenty-two thousand” (22,000), or “one hundred million” (100,000,000). Some languages do not have words for all of these numbers. Translators need to decide how to translate numbers and whether to write them as words or numerals.

Some numbers are exact and others are rounded.

> Abram was **86** years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram. (Genesis 16:16 ULT)

Eighty-six (86) is an exact number.

> That day about **3,000** of the people died. (Exodus 32:28b ULT)

Here the number three thousand (3,000) is a round number. It may have been a little more than that or a little less than that. The word “about” shows that it is not an exact number.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages do not have words for some of these numbers.

Translation Principles

- Exact numbers should be translated as closely and specifically as they can be.
- Rounded numbers can be translated more generally.

Examples From the Bible

> When Jared had lived **162** years, he became the father of Enoch. After he became the father of Enoch, Jared lived **800** years. He became the father of more sons and daughters. Jared lived **962** years, and then he died. (Genesis 5:18-20 ULT)

The numbers 162, 800, and 962 are exact numbers and should be translated with something as close to those numbers as possible.

> Our sister, may you be the mother of **thousands of ten thousands.** (Genesis 24:60b ULT)

This is a rounded number. It does not say exactly how many descendants she should have, but it was a huge number of them.

Translation Strategies

(1) Write numbers using numerals.
(2) Write numbers using your language’s words or the Gateway Language words for those

numbers.
(3) Write numbers using words, and put the numerals in parentheses after them.
(4) Combine words for large numbers.
(5) Use a very general expression for very large rounded numbers and write the numeral in parentheses afterward.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

We will use the following verse in our examples:

> Now, see, at great effort I have prepared for Yahweh's house **100,000** talents of gold, **1,000,000** talents of silver, and bronze and iron in large quantities. (1 Chronicles 22:14a ULT)

(1) Write numbers using numerals.

> I have prepared for Yahweh's house **100,000** talents of gold, **1,000,000** talents of silver, and bronze and iron in large quantities.

(2) Write numbers using your language's words or the Gateway Language words for those numbers.

> I have prepared for Yahweh's house **one hundred thousand** talents of gold, **one million** talents of silver, and bronze and iron in large quantities.

(3) Write numbers using words, and put the numerals in parenthesis after them.

> I have prepared for Yahweh's house one **hundred thousand (100,000)** talents of gold, **one million (1,000,000)** talents of silver, and bronze and iron in large quantities.

(4) Combine words for large numbers.

> I have prepared for Yahweh's house **one hundred thousand** talents of gold, **a thousand thousand** talents of silver, and bronze and iron in large quantities.

(5) Use a very general expression for very large rounded numbers and write the numeral in parentheses afterward.

> I have prepared for Yahweh's house **a great amount of gold (100,000 talents)**, **ten times that amount of silver (1,000,000 talents)**, and bronze and iron in large quantities.

Consistency

Be consistent in your translations. Decide how the numbers will be translated, using numbers or numerals. There are different ways of being consistent.

- Use words to represent numbers all of the time. (You might have very long words.)
- Use numerals to represent numbers all of the time.

- Use words to represent the numbers that your language has words for and use numerals for the numbers that your language does not have words for.
- Use words for low numbers and numerals for high numbers.
- Use words for numbers that require few words and numerals for numbers that require more than a few words.
- Use words to represent numbers, and write the numerals in parentheses after them.

Consistency in the ULT and UST

The *unfoldingWord® Literal Text* (ULT) and the *unfoldingWord® Simplified Text* (UST) use words for the numbers one through ten and use numerals for all numbers above ten.

> When Adam had lived **130** years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image, and he called his name Seth. After Adam became the father of Seth, he lived **800** years. He became the father of more sons and daughters. Adam lived **930** years, and then he died. (Genesis 5:3-5 ULT)

Ordinal Numbers

Description

Ordinal numbers are used in the Bible mainly to tell the position of something in a list.

> And God has indeed appointed some in the church, **first** apostles, **second** prophets, **third** teachers, then miracles. (1 Corinthians 12:28a ULT)

This is a list of workers that God gave to the church in their order.

Ordinal Numbers in English

Most ordinal numbers in English simply have "-th" added to the end.

Numeral Number		Ordinal Number
4	four	fourth
10	ten	tenth
100	one hundred	one hundredth
1,000	one thousand	one thousandth

Some ordinal numbers in English do not follow that pattern.

Numeral Number	Ordinal Number
1	one	first
2	two	second
3	three	third
5	five	fifth
12	twelve	twelfth

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages do not have special numbers for showing the order of items in a list. There are different ways to deal with this.

Examples From the Bible

> The **first** lot went to Jehoiarib, the **second** to Jedaiah, the **third** to Harim, the **fourth** to Seorim … the **twenty-third** to Delaiah, and the **twenty-fourth** to Maaziah. (1 Chronicles 24:7-18 ULT)

The people cast lots and one went to each of these people in the order given.

> You must place in it four rows of precious stones. The **first** row must have a ruby, a topaz, and a garnet. The **second** row must have an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. The **third** row must have a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst. The

> **fourth** row must have a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper. They must be mounted in gold settings. (Exodus 28:17-20 ULT)

This describes four rows of stones. The first row is probably the top row, and the fourth row is probably the bottom row.

Translation Strategies

If your language has ordinal numbers and using them would give the right meaning, consider using them. If not, here are some strategies to consider:

(1) Use “one” with the first item and “another” or “the next” with the rest.
(2) Tell the total number of items and then list them or the things associated with them.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Tell the total number of items, and use “one” with the first item and “another” or “the next” with the rest.

> The first lot went to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim … the twenty-third to Delaiah, and the twenty-fourth to Maaziah. (1 Chronicles 24:7-18 ULT)
>
> > There were **24** lots. **One lot** went to Jehoiarib, **another** to Jedaiah, **another** to Harim … **another** to Delaiah, **and the last** went to Maaziah.
> >
> > There were **24** lots. **One lot** went to Jehoiarib, **the next** to Jedaiah, **the next** to Harim … **the next** to Delaiah, **and the last** went to Maaziah.
>
> A river went out of Eden to water the garden. From there it divided and became **four** rivers. The name of **the first** is Pishon. It is the one which flows throughout the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. The gold of that land is good. There is also bdellium and the onyx stone there. The name of **the second** river is Gihon. This one flows throughout the whole land of Cush. The name of **the third** river is Tigris, which flows east of Asshur. **The fourth** river is the Euphrates. (Genesis 2:10-14 ULT)
>
> > A river went out of Eden to water the garden. From there it divided and became **four** rivers. The name of **one** is Pishon. It is the one which flows throughout the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. The gold of that land is good. There is also bdellium and the onyx stone there. The name of **the next** river is Gihon. This one flows throughout the whole land of Cush. The name of **the next** river is Tigris, which flows east of Asshur. The **last** river is the Euphrates.

(2) Tell the total number of items and then list them or the things associated with them.

> The **first** lot went to Jehoiarib, the **second** to Jedaiah, the **third** to Harim, the **fourth** to Seorim … the **twenty-third** to Delaiah, and the **twenty-fourth** to Maaziah. (1 Chronicles 24:7-18 ULT)

They cast **24** lots. The lots went to Jerhoiarib, Jedaiah, Harim, Seorim … Delaiah, and Maaziah.

Fractions

Description

A fraction is a number that represents part of a whole. When an item is divided into several equal parts, a fraction refers to one or more of those parts.

For the drink offering, you must offer **a third** of a hin of wine. (Numbers 15:7a ULT)

A hin is a container of a set size which is used for measuring wine and other liquids. The people were to think about dividing a hin container into three equal parts, filling up only one of those parts and offering that amount.

> … **a third** of the ships were destroyed. (Revelation 8:9b ULT)

There were many ships. If all those ships were divided into three equal groups of ships, one group of ships was destroyed.

Most fractions in English simply have the letters “th” added to the end of the number, such as fourth, sixth, ninth, tenth.

| Number of parts the whole is divided into | Fraction | | -------- | -------- | | four | fourth | | ten | tenth | | one hundred | one hundredth | | one thousand | one thousandth |

Some fractions in English do not follow that pattern.

| Number of parts the whole is divided into | Fraction | | -------- | -------- | | two | half | | three | third | | five | fifth |

Reason This is a Translation Issue

Some languages do not use fractions. They may simply talk about parts or groups, but they do not use fractions to tell how big a part is or how many parts are included in a group.

Examples From the Bible

> Now to the **half-tribe** of Manasseh, Moses had given a possession in Bashan, but to the other **half**, Joshua gave a possession among their brothers across the Jordan on the west. (Joshua 22:7 ULT)

The tribe of Manasseh divided into two groups. The phrase “the half-tribe of Manasseh” refers one of those groups. The phrase “the other half” refers to the other group.

> So the four angels who had been prepared for that hour, that day, that month, and that year, were released so that they would kill **a third** of mankind. (Revelation 9:15 ULT)

If all the people in the world were to be divided into three equal groups, then the number of people in one group would be killed.

> You must also prepare **a fourth** of a hin of wine as the drink offering. (Numbers 15:5 ULT)

They were to imagine dividing a hin of wine into four equal parts and prepare the amount equal to one of them.

Translation Strategies

If a fraction in your language would give the right meaning, consider using it. If not, you could consider these strategies.

(1) Tell the number of parts or groups that the item would be divided into, and then tell the number of parts or groups that is being referred to.
(2) For measurements such as for weight and length, use a unit that your people might know or the unit in the UST.
(3) For measurements, use ones that are used in your language. In order to do that you would need to know how your measurements relates to the metric system and figure out each measurement.

Examples of These Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Tell the number of parts or groups that the item would be divided into, and then tell the number of parts or groups that is being referred to.

> **A third** of the ocean became red like blood (Revelation 8:8 ULT)
>
> > It was like they **divided** the ocean **into three parts**, and **one part** of the ocean became blood.
>
> Then you must offer with the bull a grain offering of **three-tenths** of an ephah of fine flour mixed with **half a hin** of oil. (Numbers 15:9 ULT)
>
> > … then you must **divide** an ephah of fine flour **into ten parts** and **divide** a hin of oil **into two parts**. Then mix **three of those parts** of the flour with **one of the parts** of oil. Then you must offer that grain offering along with the bull.

(2) For measurements, use the measurements that are given in the UST. The translators of the UST have already figured how to represent the amounts in the metric system.

> … **two-thirds of a shekel** … (1 Samuel 13:21b ULT)
>
> … **eight grams** of silver … (1 Samuel 13:21b UST)
>
> … **three-tenths of an ephah** of fine flour mixed with **half a hin** of oil. (Numbers 15:9b ULT)
>
> > … **six and one-half liters** of finely ground flour mixed with **two liters** of olive oil. (Numbers 15:9b UST)

(3) For measurements, use ones that are used in your language. In order to do that you would need to know how your measurements relates to the metric system and figure out each measurement.

> … **three-tenths of an ephah** of fine flour mixed with **half a hin** of oil. (Numbers 15:9b ULT)
>
> > **six quarts** of fine flour mixed with **two quarts** of oil.

Symbolic Action

Description

A symbolic action is something that someone does in order to express a certain idea. For example, in some cultures people nod their heads up and down to mean “yes” or turn their heads from side to side to mean “no.” Symbolic actions do not mean the same things in all cultures. In the Bible, sometimes people perform symbolic actions and sometimes they only refer to the symbolic action.

Examples of symbolic actions

- In some cultures people shake hands when they meet to show that they are willing to be friendly.
- In some cultures people bow when they meet to show respect to each other.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

An action may have a meaning in one culture and a different meaning or no meaning at all in another culture. For example, in some cultures raising the eyebrows means “I am surprised” or “What did you say?” In other cultures it means “yes.”

In the Bible, people did things that had certain meanings in their culture. When we read the Bible, we might not understand what someone meant if we interpret the action based on what it means in our own culture today.

You (the translator) need to understand what people in the Bible meant when they used symbolic actions. If an action does not mean the same thing in your own culture, then you need to figure out how to translate what the action meant.

Examples From the Bible

> And behold, a man came whose name was Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue. And **falling at the feet of Jesus**, he begged him to come to his house. (Luke 8:41 ULT)

Meaning of symbolic action: He did this to show great respect to Jesus.

> Look, I am standing at the door and am knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and will eat with him, and he with me. (Revelation 3:20 ULT)

Meaning of symbolic action: When people wanted someone to welcome them into their home, they stood at the door and knocked on it.

Translation Strategies

If people would correctly understand what a symbolic action meant to the people in the Bible, consider using it. If not, here are some strategies for translating it.

(1) Tell what the person did and why he did it.
(2) Do not tell what the person did, but tell what he meant.
(3) Use an action from your own culture that has the same meaning. Do this only in poetry, parables, and sermons. Do not do this when there actually was a person who did a specific action.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Tell what the person did and why he did it.

> And **falling at the feet of Jesus** (Luke 8:41 ULT)
>
> > Jairus fell down at Jesus' feet in order to show that he greatly respected him.
>
> Look, I am **standing at the door and am knocking**. (Revelation 3:20 ULT)
>
> > Look, I stand at the door and knock on it, asking you to let me in.

(2) Do not tell what the person did, but tell what he meant.

> And **falling at the feet of Jesus** (Luke 8:41 ULT)
>
> > Jairus showed Jesus great respect.
>
> Look, I am **standing at the door and am knocking**. (Revelation 3:20 ULT)
>
> > Look, I stand at the door and ask you to let me in.

(3) Use an action from your own culture that has the same meaning.

> And **falling at the feet of Jesus** (Luke 8:41 ULT) — Since Jairus actually did this, you should not substitute an action from your own culture.
>
> Look, I am **standing at the door and am knocking**. (Revelation 3:20 ULT) — Jesus was not standing at a real door. Rather he was speaking about wanting to have a relationship with people. So in cultures where it is polite to clear one's throat when wanting to be let into a house, you could use that.
>
> > Look, I stand at the door and clear my throat.

Figures of Speech

Figures of Speech

Figures of speech have special meanings that are not the same as the meanings of their individual words. There are different kinds of figures of speech. This page lists and defines some of those that are used in the Bible. In-depth study will follow

Description

Figures of speech are ways of saying things that use words in non-literal ways. That is, the meaning of a figure of speech is not the same as the more direct meaning of its words. In order to translate the meaning, you need to be able to recognize figures of speech and know what the figure of speech means in the source language. Then you can choose either a figure of speech or a direct way to communicate that same meaning in the target language.

Types

Listed below are different types of Figures of Speech. If you would like additional information simply click the colored word to be directed to a page containing definitions, examples, and videos for each figure of speech.

- **Apostrophe** — An apostrophe is a figure of speech in which a speaker directly addresses someone who is not there, or addresses a thing that is not a person.
- **Doublet** — A doublet is a pair of words or very short phrases that mean the same thing and that are used in the same phrase. In the Bible, doublets are often used in poetry, prophecy, and sermons to emphasize an idea.
- **Euphemism** — A euphemism is a mild or polite way of referring to something that is unpleasant or embarrassing. Its purpose is to avoid offending the people who hear or read it.
- **Hendiadys** — In hendiadys a single idea is expressed with two words connected with "and," when one word could be used to modify the other.
- **Hyperbole** — A hyperbole is a deliberate exaggeration used to indicate the speaker's feeling or opinion about something.
- **Idiom** — An idiom is a group of words that has a meaning that is different from what one would understand from the meanings of the individual words.
- **Irony** — Irony is a figure of speech in which the sense that the speaker intends to communicate is actually the opposite of the literal meaning of the words.
- **Litany** — Litany is a figure of speech in which the various components of a thing are listed in a series of very similar statements.
- **Litotes** — Litotes is an emphatic statement about something made by negating an opposite expression.

- **Merism** — Merism is a figure of speech in which a person refers to something by listing some of its parts or by speaking of two extreme parts of it.

- **Metaphor** — A metaphor is a figure of speech in which one concept is used in place of another, unrelated concept. This invites the hearer to think of what the unrelated concepts have in common. That is, metaphor is an implied comparison between two unrelated things.

- **Metonymy** — Metonymy is a figure of speech in which a thing or idea is called not by its own name, but by the name of something closely associated with it. A metonym is a word or phrase used as a substitute for something it is associated with.

- **Parallelism** — In parallelism two phrases or clauses that are similar in structure or idea are used together. It is found throughout the whole of the Hebrew Bible, most commonly in the poetry of the books of Psalms and Proverbs.

- **Personification** — Personification is a figure of speech in which an idea or something that is not human is referred to as if it were a person and could do the things that people do or have the qualities that people have.

- **Predictive Past** — The predictive past is a form that some languages use to refer to things that will happen in the future. This is sometimes done in prophecy to show that the event will certainly happen.

- **Rhetorical Question** — A rhetorical question is a question that is used for something other than getting information. Often it indicates the speaker's attitude toward the topic or the listener. Often it is used for rebuking or scolding, but some languages have other purposes as well.

- **Simile** — A simile is a comparison of two things that are not normally thought to be similar. It focuses on a particular trait that the two items have in common, and it includes words such as "like," "as," or "than" to make the comparison explicit.

- **Synecdoche** — Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which (1) the name of a part of something is used to refer to the whole thing, or (2) the name of a whole thing is used to refer to just one part of it.

Apostrophe

Description

An apostrophe is a figure of speech in which a speaker turns his attention away from his listeners and speaks to someone or something that he knows cannot hear him. He does this to tell his listeners his message or feelings about that person or thing in a very strong way.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Many languages do not use apostrophe, and readers could be confused by it. They may wonder who the speaker is talking to, or think that the speaker is crazy to talk to things or people who cannot hear.

Examples from the Bible

> Mountains of Gilboa, let there not be dew or rain on you. (2 Samuel 1:21a ULT)

King Saul was killed on Mount Gilboa, and David sang a sad song about it. By telling these mountains that he wanted them to have no dew or rain, he showed how sad he was.

> Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those sent to you. (Luke 13:34a ULT)

Jesus was expressing his feelings for the people of Jerusalem in front of his disciples and a group of Pharisees. By speaking directly to Jerusalem as though its people could hear him, Jesus showed how deeply he cared about them.

> He cried against the altar by the word of Yahweh: "**Altar**, **altar**! This is what Yahweh says, 'See, … on you they will burn human bones.'" (1 Kings 13:2 ULT)

The man of God spoke as if the altar could hear him, but he really wanted the king, who was standing there, to hear him.

Translation Strategies

If apostrophe would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. But if this way of speaking would be confusing to your people, let the speaker continue speaking to the people that are listening to him as he tells **them** his message or feelings about the people or thing that cannot hear him. See the example below.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

> He cried against the altar by the word of Yahweh: "**Altar**, **altar**! This is what Yahweh says, 'See, … on you they will burn human bones.'" (1 Kings 13:2 ULT)
>
> > He said this about the altar: "This is what Yahweh says **about this altar.** 'See, … they will burn people's bones on **it**.'"
>
> **Mountains of Gilboa**, let there not be dew or rain on **you.** (2 Samuel 1:21a ULT)

As for these mountains of Gilboa, let there not be dew or rain on **them**.

Aside

Description

An aside is a figure of speech in which someone who is speaking to a person or group pauses to speak confidentially to himself or someone else about those to whom he had been speaking. The speaker does this to indicate in a strong way his thoughts or feelings about that person or group.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Many languages do not use asides, and readers could be confused by them. They may wonder why the speaker suddenly starts talking to himself or someone else about the people he is speaking with.

Examples From the Bible

> All the men of your covenant are sending you away as far as the border.
> The men of your peace are deceiving you and are prevailing against you.
> They of your bread will set a trap under you.
> **There is no understanding in him.** (Obadiah 1:7 ULT)

In the first three lines, Yahweh is telling the people of Edom what will happen to them because they did not help the people of Judah. In the fourth line, Yahweh says something about Edom to himself.

> And I purified them from everything foreign. And I caused the service watches to stand: for the priests and for the Levites, a man in his work; and for the offering of pieces of wood at the appointed times; and for the firstfruits. **Remember me, my God, for good.** (Nehemiah 13:30-31 ULT)

Nehemiah is speaking to the readers of his account and describing some of the many things he did to restore true worship in Judah after the people returned from exile. But he suddenly turns aside and addresses God, asking God to bless him for what he, Nehemiah, has done for those people.

Translation Strategies

(1) If an aside would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. But if this way of speaking would be confusing, let the speaker continue speaking to the people who are listening to him, but make clear that he is now expressing his thoughts and feelings about them.
(2) If a person speaks a prayer to God as an aside, you can put the prayer in quotation marks to indicate that.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1)

> All the men of your covenant are sending you away as far as the border.
> The men of your peace are deceiving you and are prevailing against you. They of your bread will set a trap under you. **There is no understanding in him.**
> (Obadiah 1:7 ULT)

All the men of your covenant are sending you away as far as the border. The men of your peace are deceiving you and are prevailing against you. They of your bread will set a trap under you. **You do not understand any of this.**

(2)

> And I purified them from everything foreign. And I caused the service watches to stand: for the priests and for the Levites, a man in his work; 31 and for the offering of pieces of wood at the appointed times; and for the firstfruits. **Remember me, my God, for good.** (Nehemiah 13:30-31 ULT)

And I cleansed them from everything foreign, and I made assignments for the priests and for the Levites, a man to his own work. And the wood offering at the stated time, and the firstfruits. **“Remember me, my God, for good.”**

Doublet

Description

We are using the word “doublet” to refer to two words or phrases that are used together and either mean the same thing or mean very close to the same thing. Often they are joined with the word “and.” Unlike Hendiadys, in which one of the words modifies the other, in a doublet the two words or phrases are equal and are used to emphasize or intensify the one idea that is expressed by the two words or phrases.

A very similar issue is the repetition of the same word or phrase for emphasis, usually with no other words between them. Because these figures of speech are so similar and have the same effect, we will treat them here together.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

In some languages people do not use doublets. Or they may use doublets, but only in certain situations, so a doublet might not make sense in their language in some verses. People might think that the verse is describing two ideas or actions, when it is only describing one. In this case, translators may need to find some other way to express the meaning expressed by the doublet.

Examples From the Bible

> He has one people **scattered** and **dispersed** among the peoples (Esther 3:8 ULT)

The bolded words mean the same thing. Together they mean the people were spread out.

> He attacked two men **more righteous** and **better** than himself. (1 Kings 2:32b ULT)

This means that they were “much more righteous” than he was.

> You have decided to prepare **false** and **deceptive** words. (Daniel 2:9b ULT)

This means that they had decided to lie, which is another way of saying that they intended to deceive people.

> … like of a lamb **without blemish** and **without spot**. (1 Peter 1:19b ULT)

This means that he was like a lamb that did not have any defect—not even one.

> Then they approached {and} woke him up, saying, **“Master! Master!** We are perishing!” (Luke 8:24 ULT)

The repetition of “Master” means that the disciples called to Jesus urgently and continually.

Translation Strategies

If a doublet would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, consider these strategies.

(1) Translate only one of the words or phrases.
(2) If the doublet is used to intensify the meaning, translate one of the words or phrases and add a word that intensifies it such as "very" or "great" or "many."
(3) If the doublet is used to intensify or emphasize the meaning, use one of your language's ways of doing that.

Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Translate only one of the words.

> You have decided to prepare **false** and **deceptive** words. (Daniel 2:9b ULT)
>
> > "You have decided to prepare **false** things to say."

(2) If the doublet is used to intensify the meaning, translate one of the words and add a word that intensifies it such as "very" or "great" or "many."

> He has one people **scattered** and **dispersed** among the peoples (Esther 3:8 ULT)
>
> > "He has one people **very spread out**."

(3) If the doublet is used to intensify or emphasize the meaning, use one of your language's ways of doing that.

> … like a lamb **without blemish** and **without spot**. (1 Peter 1:19b ULT)
>
> • English can emphasize this with "any" and "at all."
>
> "… like a lamb **without any blemish at all**."

> Then they approached {and} woke him up, saying, **"Master! Master!** We are perishing!" (Luke 8:24 ULT)
>
> > Then they approached {and} woke him up, **urgently shouting,**
> > **"Master!** We are perishing!"

Euphemism

Description

A euphemism is a mild or polite way of referring to something that is unpleasant, embarrassing, or socially unacceptable, such as death or activities usually done in private.

> … they found Saul and his sons **fallen** on Mount Gilboa. (1 Chronicles 10:8b ULT)

This means that Saul and his sons "were dead." It is a euphemism because the important thing was not that Saul and his sons had fallen but that they were dead. Sometimes people do not like to speak directly about death because it is unpleasant.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages use different euphemisms. If the target language does not use the same euphemism as in the source language, readers may not understand what it means and they may think that the writer means only what the words literally say.

Examples From the Bible

> … where there was a cave. Saul went inside to **cover his feet**. (1 Samuel 24:3b ULT)

The original hearers would have understood that Saul went into the cave to use it as a toilet, but the writer wanted to avoid offending or distracting them, so **he did not say specifically** what Saul did or what he left in the cave.

> But Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I have not **known a man**?" (Luke 1:34 ULT)

In order **to be polite**, Mary uses a euphemism to say that she has never had sexual intercourse with a man.

Translation Strategies

If euphemism would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are other options:

(1) Use a euphemism from your own culture.
(2) State the information plainly without a euphemism if it would not be offensive.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use a euphemism from your own culture.

> … where there was a cave. Saul went inside to **cover his feet**. (1 Samuel 24:3b ULT) — Some languages might use euphemisms like these:

> "… where there was a cave. Saul went into the cave to **dig a hole**"
>
> "… where there was a cave. Saul went into the cave to **have some time alone**"

But Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I have not **known a man**?" (Luke 1:34 ULT)

> But Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I have not **slept with a man**?"

(2) State the information plainly without a euphemism if it would not be offensive.

They found Saul and his sons **fallen** on Mount Gilboa. (1 Chronicles 10:8b ULT)

> "They found Saul and his sons **dead** on Mount Gilboa."

Hendiadys

Description

In a hendiadys, a speaker uses two words that mean different things and that are connected with "and." These two words work together to express a single idea. Usually one of the words is the primary idea and the other word further describes the primary one.

> … his own **kingdom and glory.** (1 Thessalonians 2:12b ULT)

Though "kingdom" and "glory" are both nouns, "glory" actually tells what kind of kingdom it is: it is a **kingdom of glory** or **a glorious kingdom**.

Two phrases connected by "and" can also be a hendiadys when they refer to a single person, thing, or event.

> while we look forward to receiving **the blessed hope and appearing of the glory** of **our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**. (Titus 2:13b ULT)

Titus 2:13 contains two hendiadyses. "The blessed hope" and "appearing of the glory" refer to the same thing and serve to strengthen the idea that the return of Jesus Christ is greatly anticipated and wonderful. Also, "our great God" and "Savior Jesus Christ" refer to one person, not two.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Often a hendiadys contains an abstract noun. Some languages may not have a noun with the same meaning.
- Many languages do not use the hendiadys, so people may not understand that the second word is further describing the first one.
- Many languages do not use the hendiadys, so people may not understand that only one person or thing is meant, not two.

Examples From the Bible

> For I will give you **a mouth and wisdom** … (Luke 21:15a ULT)

"A mouth" and "wisdom" are nouns, but in this figure of speech "wisdom" describes what comes from the mouth.

> If you are willing and obedient … (Isaiah 1:19a ULT)

"Willing" and "obedient" are adjectives, but "willing" describes "obedient."

Translation Strategies

If the hendiadys would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are other options:

(1) Substitute the describing noun with an adjective that means the same thing.
(2) Substitute the describing noun with a phrase that means the same thing.
(3) Substitute the describing adjective with an adverb that means the same thing.
(4) Substitute other parts of speech that mean the same thing and show that one word or phrase describes the other.
(5) If it is unclear that only one thing is meant, change the phrase so that this is clear.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Substitute the describing noun with an adjective that means the same thing.

> For I will give you **a mouth and wisdom** … (Luke 21:15a ULT)
>
> > For I will give you **wise words** …
>
> Walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you into **his own kingdom and glory**. (1 Thessalonians 2:12b ULT)
>
> > You should walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you to **his own glorious kingdom**.

(2) Substitute the describing noun with a phrase that means the same thing.

> For I will give you **a mouth and wisdom** … (Luke 21:15a ULT)
>
> > for I will give you **words of wisdom**.
>
> You should walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you into **his own kingdom and glory**. (1 Thessalonians 2:12b ULT)
>
> > You should walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you to **his own kingdom of glory**.

(3) Substitute the describing adjective with an adverb that means the same thing.

> If you are willing and obedient … (Isaiah 1:19a ULT)
>
> > If you are **willingly obedient** …

(4) Substitute other parts of speech that mean the same thing and show that one word or phrase describes the other.

> If you are willing and obedient … (Isaiah 1:19a ULT)

The adjective “obedient” can be substituted with the verb “obey.”

> > if you **obey willingly** …

(4) and (5) If it is unclear that only one thing is meant, change the phrase so that this is clear.

> We look forward to receiving **the blessed hope and appearing of the glory** of **our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**. (Titus 2:13b ULT)

The noun “glory” can be changed to the adjective “glorious” to make it clear that Jesus’ appearing is what we hope for. Also, “Jesus Christ” can be moved to the front of the phrase and “great God and Savior” put into a relative clause that describes the one person, Jesus Christ.

> We look forward to receiving **what we are longing for, the blessed and glorious appearing** of **Jesus Christ, who is our great God and Savior**.

Hyperbole

Description

A speaker or writer can use exactly the same words to say something that he means as completely true, or as generally true, or as a hyperbole. This is why it can be hard to decide how to understand a statement. For example, the sentence below could mean three different things.

It rains here every night.

1. The speaker means this as literally true if he means that it really does rain here every night.
2. The speaker means this as a **generalization** if he means that it rains here most nights.
3. The speaker means this as a **hyperbole** if he wants to say that it rains more than it actually does, usually in order to express a strong attitude toward the amount or frequency of rain, such as being annoyed or being happy about it.

Hyperbole

In hyperbole, a figure of speech that uses exaggeration, a speaker deliberately describes something with an extreme or even unreal statement, usually to show his strong feeling or opinion about it. He expects people to understand that he is exaggerating.

> They will not leave **stone upon stone in you.** (Luke 19:44b ULT)

This is an exaggeration. It means that the enemies will completely destroy Jerusalem.

> Moses was educated in **all the wisdom of the Egyptians.** (Acts 7:22a ULT)

This hyperbole means that he had learned everything an Egyptian education could offer.

Generalization

This is a statement that is true most of the time or in most situations that it could apply to.

> The one who ignores instruction **will have poverty and shame,**
> but **honor will come** to him who learns from correction. (Proverbs 13:18)

These generalizations tell about what normally happens to people who ignore instruction and what normally happens to people who learn from correction. There may be some exceptions to these statements, but they are generally true.

> And when you pray, do not make useless repetitions as **the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.** (Matthew 6:7)

This generalization tells about what Gentiles were known for doing. Many Gentiles did this. It does not matter if a few did not. The point was that the hearers should not join in this well-known practice.

Even though a hyperbole or a generalization may have a strong-sounding word like “all,” “always,” “none,” or “never,” it does not necessarily mean **exactly** “all,” “always,” “none,” or “never.” It simply means “most,” “most of the time,” “hardly any,” or “rarely.”

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

1. Readers need to be able to understand whether or not a statement is literally true.
2. If readers realize that a statement is not literally true, they need to be able to understand whether it is a hyperbole, a generalization, or a lie. (Though the Bible is completely true, it tells about people who did not always tell the truth.)

Examples From the Bible

Examples of Hyperbole

> If your hand causes you to stumble, **cut it off**. It is better for you to enter into life maimed … (Mark 9:43a ULT)

When Jesus said to cut off your hand, he meant that we should **do whatever extreme things** we need to do in order not to sin. He used this hyperbole to show how extremely important it is to try to stop sinning.

> The Philistines gathered together to fight against Israel with 3,000 chariots, 6,000 men to drive the chariots, and troops **as numerous as the sand on the seashore**. (1 Samuel 13:5a ULT)

The bolded phrase is an exaggeration for the purpose of expressing the emotion that the Philistine army was overwhelming in number. It means that there were **many, many** soldiers in the Philistine army.

> But as his anointing teaches you **everything** and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, remain in him. (1 John 2:27b ULT)

This is a hyperbole. It expresses the assurance that God’s Spirit teaches us about **all things that we need to know**. God’s Spirit does not teach us about everything that it is possible to know.

> When they found him, they also said to him, “**Everyone** is looking for you.” (Mark 1:37 ULT)

The disciples probably did not mean that everyone in the city was looking for Jesus, but that **many people** were looking for him, or that all of Jesus’ closest friends there were looking for him. This is an exaggeration for the purpose of expressing the emotion that they and many others were worried about him.

Examples of Generalization

> Can **any good thing** come out of Nazareth? (John 1:46b ULT)

This rhetorical question is meant to express the generalization that there is nothing good in Nazareth. The people there had a reputation for being uneducated and not strictly religious. Of course, there were exceptions.

> One of them, of their own prophets, has said, "**Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy bellies**." (Titus 1:12 ULT)

This is a generalization that means that Cretans had a reputation to be like this because, in general, this is how Cretans behaved. It is possible that there were exceptions.

> **A lazy hand causes a person to be poor, but the hand of the diligent person gains riches.** (Proverbs 10:4 ULT)

This is generally true, and it reflects the experience of most people. It is possible that there are exceptions in some circumstances.

Caution

- Do not assume that something is an exaggeration just because it seems to be impossible. God does miraculous things.

  They saw Jesus **walking on the sea** and coming near the boat. (John 6:19b ULT)

This is not hyperbole. Jesus really walked on the water. It is a literal statement.

- Do not assume that the word "all" is always a generalization that means "most."

  Yahweh is righteous in **all** his ways
  and gracious in **all** he does. (Psalms 145:17 ULT)

Yahweh is always righteous. This is a completely true statement.

Translation Strategies

If the hyperbole or generalization would be natural and people would understand it and not think that it is a lie, consider using it. If not, here are other options.

(1) Express the meaning without the exaggeration.
(2) For a generalization, show that it is a generalization by using a phrase like "in general" or "in most cases."
(3) For a hyperbole or a generalization, add a word like "many" or "almost" to show that the hyperbole or generalization is not meant to be exact.
(4) For a hyperbole or a generalization that has a word like "all," "always," "none," or "never," consider deleting that word.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Express the meaning without the exaggeration.

> The Philistines gathered together to fight against Israel: 3,000 chariots, 6,000 men to drive the chariots, and troops **as numerous as the sand on the seashore**. (1 Samuel 13:5a ULT)

> The Philistines gathered together to fight against Israel: 3,000 chariots, 6,000 men to drive the chariots, and **a great number of troops**.

(2) For a generalization, show that it is a generalization by using a phrase like "in general" or "in most cases."

> **The one who ignores instruction will have poverty and shame.** (Proverbs 13:18a ULT)
>
> > **In general,** the one who ignores instruction will have poverty and shame
>
> When you pray, do not make useless repetitions as the **Gentiles do,** for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. (Matthew 6:7 ULT)
>
> > And when you pray, do not make useless repetitions as the Gentiles **generally** do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.

(3) For a hyperbole or a generalization, add a word like "many" or "almost" to show that the hyperbole or generalization is not meant to be exact.

> The **whole** country of Judea and **all** the people of Jerusalem went out to him. (Mark 1:5a ULT)
>
> > **Almost all** the country of Judea and **almost all** the people of Jerusalem went out to him.
> > or:
> >
> > **Many** of the country of Judea and **many** of the people of Jerusalem went out to him.

(4) For a hyperbole or a generalization that has a word like "all," "always," "none," or "never," consider deleting that word.

> The **whole** country of Judea and **all** the people of Jerusalem went out to him. (Mark 1:5a ULT)
>
> > The country of Judea and the people of Jerusalem went out to him.

Idiom

An idiom is a figure of speech made up of a group of words that, as a whole, has a meaning that is different from what one would understand from the meanings of the individual words. Someone from outside of the culture usually cannot understand an idiom without someone inside the culture explaining its true meaning. Every language uses idioms. Some English examples are:

- You are pulling my leg. (This means, "You are teasing me by telling me something that is not true.")
- Do not push the envelope. (This means, "Do not take a matter to its extreme.")
- This house is under water. (This means, "The debt owed for this house is greater than its actual value.")
- We are painting the town red. (This means, "We are going around town tonight celebrating very intensely.")

Description

An idiom is a phrase that has a special meaning to the people of the language or culture who use it. Its meaning is different than what a person would understand from the meanings of the individual words that form the phrase.

> he **set his face** to go to Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51b ULT)

The words "set his face" is an idiom that means "decided."

Sometimes people may be able to understand an idiom from another culture, but it might sound like a strange way to express the meaning.

> I am not worthy that you would **come under my roof**. (Luke 7:6b ULT)

The phrase "come under my roof" is an idiom that means "enter my house."

> Put these words **into your ears**. (Luke 9:44a ULT)

This idiom means "Listen carefully and remember what I say."

Purpose: An idiom is probably created in a culture somewhat by accident when someone describes something in an unusual way. But, when that unusual way communicates the message powerfully and people understand it clearly, other people start to use it. After a while, it becomes a normal way of talking in that language.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- People can easily misunderstand idioms in the original languages of the Bible if they do not know the cultures that produced the Bible.
- People can easily misunderstand idioms that are in the source language Bibles if they do not know the cultures that made those translations.
- It is useless to translate idioms literally (according to the meaning of each word) when the target language audience will not understand what they mean.

Examples From the Bible

> Then all Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Look, we are your **flesh and bone**." (1 Chronicles 11:1 ULT)

This means, "We and you belong to the same race, the same family."

> The children of Israel went out **with a high hand**. (Exodus 14:8b ASV)

This means, "The Israelites went out defiantly."

> the one who **lifts up my head** (Psalm 3:3b ULT)

This means, "the one who helps me."

Translation Strategies

If the idiom would be clearly understood in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other options.

(1) Translate the meaning plainly without using an idiom.
(2) Use a different idiom that people use in your own language that has the same meaning.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Translate the meaning plainly without using an idiom.

> Then all Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Look, we are your **flesh and bone**." (1 Chronicles 11:1 ULT)
>
> > Look, we all **belong to the same nation**.
>
> Then he **set his face** to go to Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51b ULT)
>
> > He started to travel to Jerusalem, **determined to reach it**.
>
> I am not worthy that you would come **under my roof**. (Luke 7:6b ULT)
>
> > I am not worthy that you should enter **my house**.

(2) Use an idiom that people use in your own language that has the same meaning.

> Put these words **into your ears.** (Luke 9:44a ULT)
>
> > **Be all ears** when I say these words to you.
>
> My **eyes grow dim** from grief. (Psalm 6:7a ULT)
>
> > I am crying my **eyes out**

Irony

Description

Irony is a figure of speech in which the sense that the speaker intends to communicate is actually the opposite of the literal meaning of the words. Sometimes a person does this by using someone else's words, but in a way that communicates that he does not agree with them. People do this to emphasize how different something is from what it should be, or how someone else's belief about something is wrong or foolish. It is often humorous.

> Then Jesus answered and said to them, "People who are well do not have need of a physician, but those who have sickness. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:31-32 ULT)

When Jesus spoke of "the righteous," he was not referring to people who were truly righteous, but to people who wrongly believed that they were righteous. By using irony, Jesus communicated that they were wrong to think that they were better than others and did not need to repent.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

If someone does not realize that a speaker is using irony, he will think that the speaker actually believes what he is saying. He will understand the passage to mean the opposite of what it was intended to mean.

Examples From the Bible

> **How well you reject the commandment of God** so that you may keep your tradition! (Mark 7:9b ULT)

Here Jesus praises the Pharisees for doing something that is obviously wrong. Through irony, he communicates the opposite of praise: He communicates that the Pharisees, who take great pride in keeping the commandments, are so far from God that they do not even recognize that their traditions are breaking God's commandments. The use of irony makes the Pharisee's sin more obvious and startling.

> "Present your case," says Yahweh; "present your best arguments for your idols," says the King of Jacob. **"Let them bring us their own arguments; have them come forward and declare to us what will happen, so we may know these things well. Have them tell us of earlier predictive declarations, so we can reflect on them and know how they were fulfilled**." (Isaiah 41:21-22 ULT)

People worshiped idols as if their idols had knowledge or power, and Yahweh was angry at them for doing that. So he used irony and challenged their idols to tell what would happen in the future. He knew that the idols could not do this, but by speaking as if they could, he mocked the idols, making their inability more obvious, and rebuked the people for worshiping them.

> Can you lead light and darkness to their places of work?
> Can you find the way back to their houses for them?

> **You know, for you were born then, and the number of your days is many!** (Job 38:20-21 ULT)

Job thought that he was wise. Yahweh used irony to show Job that he was not so wise. The two phrases in bold above are irony. They emphasize the opposite of what they say, because they are so obviously false. They emphasize that Job could not possibly answer God's questions about the creation of light because Job was not born until many, many years later.

> Already you are satisfied! Already you have become rich! **You began to reign** apart from us, and I wish you really did reign, so that we also might reign with you. (1 Corinthians 4:8 ULT)

The Corinthians considered themselves to be very wise, self-sufficient, and not in need of any instruction from the Apostle Paul. Paul used irony, speaking as if he agreed with them, to show how proudly they were acting and how far from being wise they really were.

Translation Strategies

If the irony would be understood correctly in your language, translate it as it is stated. If not, here are some other strategies.

(1) Translate the irony in a way that shows that the speaker is saying what someone else believes.
(2) Translate the actual, intended meaning of the statement of irony. (Remember: The true meaning of the irony is **not** found in the literal words of the speaker, but instead the true meaning is found in the opposite of the literal meaning of the speaker's words.)

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Translate it in a way that shows that the speaker is saying what someone else believes.

> **How well you reject the commandment of God** so that you may keep your tradition! (Mark 7:9a ULT)
>
> > **You think that you are doing well when you reject God's commandment** so you may keep your tradition!
> > or:
> > **You act like it is good to reject God's commandment** so you may keep your tradition!
>
> I did not come to call **the righteous**, but sinners to repentance. (Luke 5:32 ULT)
>
> > I did not come to call **people who think that they are righteous** to repentance, but to call people who know that they are sinners to repentance.

(2) Translate the actual, intended meaning of the statement of irony.

> **How well you reject the commandment of God** so that you may keep your tradition! (Mark 7:9a ULT)

> **You are doing a terrible thing when you reject the commandment of God** so you may keep your tradition!

"Present your case," says Yahweh; "present your best arguments for your idols," says the King of Jacob. "**Let them bring us their own arguments; have them come forward and declare to us what will happen**, so we may know these things well. **Have them tell us of earlier predictive declarations, so we can reflect on them and know how they were fulfilled**." (Isaiah 41:21-22 ULT)

> 'Present your case,' says Yahweh; 'present your best arguments for your idols,' says the King of Jacob. **Can your idols bring us their own arguments or come forward to declare to us what will happen** so we may know these things well? **No!** We cannot hear them because **they cannot speak** to tell us their earlier predictive declarations, so we cannot reflect on them and know how they were fulfilled.

Can you lead light and darkness to their places of work?
Can you find the way back to their houses for them?
You know, for you were born then,
and the number of your days is many! (Job 38:20-21 ULT)

> Can you lead light and darkness to their places of work? Can you find the way back to their houses for them? **You act like you know how light and darkness were created, as if you were there; as if you are as old as creation, but you are not**!

Litany

Description

A litany is a figure of speech in which the various components of a thing are listed in a series of very similar statements. The speaker does this to indicate that what he is saying should be understood as comprehensive and without exceptions. In a sense, the speaker is describing an overwhelming situation by overwhelming his audience with an excessive series of statements.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Many languages do not use litanies, and readers could be confused by them. They may wonder why the speaker seems to be saying the same thing over and over again.

Examples From the Bible

> Though they dig into Sheol, there my hand will take them. Though they climb up to heaven, there I will bring them down. Though they hide on the top of Carmel, there I will search and take them. Though they are hidden from my sight in the bottom of the sea, there will I give orders to the serpent, and it will bite them. Though they go into captivity, driven by their enemies before them, there will I give orders to the sword, and it will kill them. (Amos 9:2-4 ULT)

In this passage Yahweh is telling the people of Israel that when he punishes them, none of them will escape.

> But you should not have looked on the day of your brother, on the day of his misfortune. And you should not have rejoiced over the sons of Judah in the day of their perishing. And you should not have made your mouth great in a day of distress. You should not have entered the gate of my people in the day of their calamity. Yes, you! You should not have looked on his evil in the day of his calamity. And you women should not have looted his wealth in the day of his calamity. And you should not have stood at the crossroads to cut down his fugitives. And you should not have delivered up his survivors in a day of distress. (Obadiah 1:12–14)

In this passage Yahweh is telling the people of Edom that they should have helped the people of Judah when they were conquered by the Babylonians.

Translation Strategies

If the litany is understood as it is in the ULT, then translate the litany as it is. If it is not understood, then try one or more of the following strategies.

(1) Often in the Bible there will be a general statement at the beginning or end of a litany that sums up its overall meaning. You can format that statement in a way that will show that it is a summary statement that gives the meaning of the litany.
(2) You can put each sentence of the litany on a separate line. Also, if each sentence in the litany has two parts, you can format the litany so that the equivalent parts of each sentence line up. Use this or any other type of formatting that will show that each sentence is reinforcing the

same meaning.
(3) You can eliminate words like “and,” “but,” and “or” at the beginning of sentences so that it will be clearer that the component parts of the litany are all being listed in a row.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) combined with (3):
Often in the Bible there will be a general statement at the beginning or end of a litany that sums up its overall meaning. You can format that statement in a way that will show that it is a summary statement that gives the meaning of the litany;
You can eliminate words like “and,” “but,” and “or” at the beginning of sentences so that it will be clearer that the component parts of the litany are all being listed in a row.

> You did nothing to help the Israelites when strangers carried away their wealth. They conquered all the cities of Judah, and they even plundered Jerusalem. And you were just as bad as those foreigners, because you did nothing to help:
>
> You should not have looked on the day of your brother, on the day of his misfortune. You should not have rejoiced over the sons of Judah in the day of their perishing. You should not have made your mouth great in a day of distress. You should not have entered the gate of my people in the day of their calamity. Yes, you! You should not have looked on his evil in the day of his calamity. You women should not have looted his wealth in the day of his calamity. You should not have stood at the crossroads to cut down his fugitives. You should not have delivered up his survivors in a day of distress. (Obadiah 1:11-14)

In the above example, verse 11 provides the summary and meaning for the litany that follows in verses 12-14.

(1) combined with (2):
Often in the Bible there will be a general statement at the beginning or end of a litany that sums up its overall meaning. You can format that statement in a way that will show that it is a summary statement that gives the meaning of the litany;
You can put each sentence of the litany on a separate line. Also, if each sentence in the litany has two parts, you can format the litany so that the equivalent parts of each sentence line up. Use this or any other type of formatting that will show that each sentence is reinforcing the same meaning.

> Not one of them will get away, not one of them will escape:
>
> Though they dig into Sheol, there my hand will take them.
>
> Though they climb up to heaven, there I will bring them down.
> Though they hide on the top of Carmel, there I will search and take them.
> Though they are hidden from my sight in the bottom of the sea, there will I give orders to the serpent, and it will bite them.

> Though they go into captivity, driven by their enemies before them, there will I give orders to the
>
> sword, and
>
> it will kill them. (Amos 9:1b–4 ULT)

In the above example, the sentence before the litany explains its overall meaning. That sentence can be placed as an introduction. The second half of each sentence can be formatted in a descending staircase pattern as above, or lined up evenly like the first half of each sentence, or in another way. Use whatever format best shows that these sentences are all communicating the same truth, that it is not possible to escape from God.

Litotes

Description

Litotes is a figure of speech in which the speaker expresses a strong positive meaning by negating a word or phrase that means the opposite of the meaning that he intends. For example, someone could intend to communicate that something is extremely good by describing it as "not bad." The difference between a litotes and a double negative is that a litotes heightens the positive meaning beyond what a plain positive statement would do, and a double negative does not. In the example above, the literal meaning of "not bad," taken as a plain double negative, would be "acceptable" or even "good." But if the speaker intended it as a litotes, then the meaning is "very good" or "extremely good."

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages do not use litotes. People who speak those languages might not understand that a statement using litotes actually strengthens the positive meaning. Instead, they might think that it weakens or even cancels the positive meaning.

Examples From the Bible

> For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was **not useless**, (1 Thessalonians 2:1 ULT)

By using litotes, Paul emphasized that his visit with them was **very** useful.

> Now when it became day, there was **no small disturbance** among the soldiers over what therefore had happened to Peter. (Acts 12:18 ULT)

By using litotes, Luke emphasized that there was a **lot** of excitement or anxiety among the soldiers about what happened to Peter. (Peter had been in prison, and even though there were soldiers guarding him, he escaped when an angel let him out. So they were very agitated.)

> But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
> are **not the least** among the leaders of Judah,
> for from you will come a ruler
> who will shepherd my people Israel. (Matthew 2:6 ULT)

By using litotes, the prophet emphasized that Bethlehem would be a **very important city**.

Translation Strategies

If the litotes would be understood correctly, consider using it.

(1) If the meaning with the negative would not be clear, give the **positive** meaning in a strong way.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the meaning with the negative would not be clear, give the **positive** meaning in a strong way.

> For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was **not useless**. (1 Thessalonians 2:1 ULT)
>
> > "For you yourselves know, brothers, our visit to you **did much good**."
>
> Now when it became day, there was **no small disturbance** among the soldiers over what therefore had happened to Peter. (Acts 12:18 ULT)
>
> > "Now when it became day, there was **great excitement** among the soldiers, regarding what had happened to Peter."
> >
> > or:
> > "Now when it became day, the soldiers were **very concerned** because of what had happened to Peter."

Merism

Definition

Merism is a figure of speech in which a person refers to something by speaking of two extreme parts of it. By referring to the extreme parts, the speaker intends to include also everything in between those parts.

> "I am **the alpha and the omega**," says the Lord God, "the one who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." (Revelation 1:8 ULT)

> I am **the alpha and the omega**, **the first and the last**, **the beginning and the end**. (Revelation 22:13, ULT)

Alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. This is a merism that includes everything from the beginning to the end. It means eternal.

> … I praise you, Father, Lord of **heaven and earth** …, (Matthew 11:25b ULT)

Heaven and earth is a merism that includes everything that exists.

Reason This is a Translation Issue

Some languages do not use merism. The readers of those languages may think that the phrase only applies to the items mentioned. They may not realize that it refers to those two things and everything in between.

Examples From the Bible

> **From the rising of the sun to its setting**, Yahweh's name should be praised. (Psalm 113:3 ULT)

This bolded phrase is a merism because it speaks of the east and the west and everywhere in between. It means "everywhere."

> He will bless those who honor him, both **young and old**. (Psalm 115:13)

The bolded phrase is merism because it speaks of old people and young people and everyone in between. It means "everyone."

Translation Strategies

If the merism would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are other options:

(1) Identify what the merism refers to without mentioning the parts.
(2) Identify what the merism refers to and include the parts.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Identify what the merism refers to without mentioning the parts.

I praise you, Father, Lord of **heaven and earth**. (Matthew 11:25b ULT)

I praise you, Father, Lord of **everything**.

From the rising of the sun to its setting, Yahweh's name should be praised. (Psalm 113:3 ULT)

In all places, people should praise Yahweh's name.

(2) Identify what the merism refers to and include the parts.

I praise you, Father, Lord of **heaven and earth**. (Matthew 11:25b ULT)

I praise you, Father, Lord of **everything, including both what is in heaven and what is on earth**.

He will bless those who honor him, both **young and old**. (Psalm 115:13 ULT)

He will bless **all those** who honor him, regardless of whether they are **young or old**.

Metaphor

Description

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which someone speaks of one thing as if it were a different thing because he wants people to think about how those two things are alike.

For example, someone might say, “The girl I love is a red rose.”

A girl and a rose are very different things, but the speaker considers that they are alike in some way. The hearer’s task is to understand in what way they are alike.

The Parts of a Metaphor

The example above shows us that a metaphor has three parts. In this metaphor, the speaker is talking about “the girl I love.” This is the **Topic**. The speaker wants the hearer to think about what is similar between her and “a red rose.” The red rose is the **Image** to which he compares the girl. Most probably, he wants the hearer to consider that they are both beautiful. This is the **Idea** that the girl and the rose both share, and so we may also call it the **Point of Comparison**.

Every metaphor has three parts:

- The **Topic**, the item being immediately discussed by the writer/speaker.
- The **Image**, the physical item (object, event, action, etc.) which the speaker uses to describe the topic.
- The **Idea**, the abstract concept or quality that the physical **Image** brings to the mind of the hearer when he thinks of how the **Image** and the **Topic** are similar. Often, the **Idea** of a metaphor is not explicitly stated in the Bible, but it is only implied from the context. The hearer or reader usually needs to think of the **Idea** himself.

Using these terms, we can say that a metaphor is a figure of speech that uses a physical **Image** to apply an abstract **Idea** to the speaker’s **Topic**.

Usually, a writer or speaker uses a metaphor in order to express something about a **Topic**, with at least one **Point of Comparison** (**Idea**) between the **Topic** and the **Image**. Often in metaphors, the **Topic** and the **Image** are explicitly stated, but the **Idea** is only implied. The writer/speaker often uses a metaphor in order to invite the readers/listeners to think about the similarity between the **Topic** and the **Image** and to figure out for themselves the **Idea** that is being communicated.

Speakers often use metaphors in order to strengthen their message, to make their language more vivid, to express their feelings better, to say something that is hard to say in any other way, or to help people remember their message.

Sometimes speakers use metaphors that are very common in their language. However, sometimes speakers use metaphors that are uncommon, and even some metaphors that are unique. When a metaphor has become very common in a language, often it becomes a “passive” metaphor, in contrast to uncommon metaphors, which we describe as being “active.”

Passive metaphors and active metaphors each present a different kind of translation problem, which we will discuss below.

Passive Metaphors

A passive metaphor is a metaphor that has been used so much in the language that its speakers no longer regard it as one concept standing for another. Linguists often call these "dead metaphors." Passive metaphors are extremely common. Examples in English include the terms "table **leg**," "family **tree**," "book **leaf**" (meaning a page in a book), or the word "crane" (meaning a large machine for lifting heavy loads). English speakers simply think of these words as having more than one meaning. Examples of passive metaphors in Biblical Hebrew include using the word "hand" to represent "power," using the word "face" to represent "presence," and speaking of emotions or moral qualities as if they were "clothing."

Patterned Pairs of Concepts Acting as Metaphors

Many ways of metaphorical speaking depend on pairs of concepts, where one underlying concept frequently stands for a different underlying concept. For example, in English, the direction "up" (the Image) often represents the concepts of "more" or "better" (the Idea). Because of this pair of underlying concepts, we can make sentences such as "The price of gasoline is going **up**," "A **highly** intelligent man," and also the opposite kind of idea: "The temperature is going **down**," and "I am feeling very **low**."

Patterned pairs of concepts are constantly used for metaphorical purposes in the world's languages because they serve as convenient ways to organize thought. In general, people like to speak of abstract qualities (such as power, presence, emotions, and moral qualities) as if they were body parts, or as if they were objects that could be seen or held, or as if they were events that could be watched as they happened.

When these metaphors are used in normal ways, it is rare that the speaker and audience regard them as figurative speech. Examples of metaphors in English that go unrecognized are:

- "Turn the heat **up**." More is spoken of as up.
- "Let us **go ahead** with our debate." Doing what was planned is spoken of as walking or advancing.
- "You **defend** your theory well." Argument is spoken of as war.
- "A **flow** of words." Words are spoken of as liquids.

English speakers do not view these as metaphorical expressions or figures of speech, so it would be wrong to translate them into other languages in a way that would lead people to pay special attention to them as figurative speech. For a description of important patterns of this kind of metaphor in biblical languages, please see Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns and the pages it will direct you to.

When translating something that is a passive metaphor into another language, do not treat it as a metaphor. Instead, just use the best expression for that thing or concept in the target language.

Active Metaphors

These are metaphors that people recognize as one concept standing for another concept, or one thing for another thing. Metaphors make people think about how the one thing is like the other thing, because in most ways the two things are very different. People also easily recognize these metaphors as giving strength and unusual qualities to the message. For this reason, people pay attention to these metaphors. For example,

> But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. (Malachi 4:2a ULT)

Here, God speaks about his salvation as if it were the sun rising in order to shine its rays on the people whom he loves. He also speaks of the sun's rays as if they were wings. Also, he speaks of these wings as if they were bringing medicine that would heal his people. Here is another example:

> And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox …" (Luke 13:32a ULT)

Here, "that fox" refers to King Herod. The people listening to Jesus certainly understood that Jesus was intending for them to apply certain characteristics of a fox to Herod. They probably understood that Jesus intended to communicate that Herod was evil, either in a cunning way or as someone who was destructive, murderous, or who took things that did not belong to him, or all of these.

Active metaphors require the translator's special care to make a correct translation. To do so, you need to understand the parts of a metaphor and how they work together to produce meaning.

> Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me will not be hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35 ULT)

In this metaphor, Jesus called himself the bread of life. The **Topic** is "I" (meaning Jesus himself) and the **Image** is "bread." Bread was the primary food that people ate in that place and time. The similarity between bread and Jesus is that people need both to live. Just as people need to eat food in order to have physical life, people need to trust in Jesus in order to have eternal life. The **Idea** of the metaphor is "life." In this case, Jesus stated the central Idea of the metaphor, but often the Idea is only implied.

Purposes of Metaphor

- One purpose of metaphor is to teach people about something that they do not know (the **Topic**) by showing that it is like something that they already do know (the **Image**).
- Another purpose is to emphasize that something (the **Topic**) has a particular quality (the **Idea**) or to show that it has that quality in an extreme way.
- Another purpose is to lead people to feel the same way about the **Topic** as they would feel about the **Image**.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- People may not recognize that something is a metaphor. In other words, they may mistake a metaphor for a literal statement, and thus, misunderstand it.

- People may not be familiar with the thing that is used as an image, and so, not be able to understand the metaphor.
- If the topic is not stated, people may not know what the topic is.
- People may not know the points of comparison that the speaker wants them to understand. If they fail to think of these points of comparison, they will not understand the metaphor.
- People may think that they understand the metaphor, but they do not. This can happen when they apply points of comparison from their own culture, rather than from the biblical culture.

Translation Principles

- Make the meaning of a metaphor as clear to the target audience as it was to the original audience.
- Do not make the meaning of a metaphor more clear to the target audience than you think it was to the original audience.

Examples From the Bible

> Listen to this word, **you cows of Bashan**, (Amos 4:1q ULT)

In this metaphor Amos speaks to the upper-class women of Samaria ("you," the Topic) as if they were cows (the Image). Amos does not say what similarity(s) he intends between these women and cows. He wants the reader to think of them, and he fully expects that readers from his culture will easily do so. From the context, we can see that he means that the women are like cows in that they are fat and interested only in feeding themselves. If we were to apply similarities from a different culture, such as that cows are sacred and should be worshiped, we would get the wrong meaning from this verse.

NOTE: Amos does not actually mean that the women are cows. He speaks to them as human beings.

> Yet, Yahweh, you are our father; **we are the clay**. **You are our potter**; and we all are the work of your hand. (Isaiah 64:8 ULT)

The example above has two related metaphors. The Topic(s) are "we" and "you," and the Image(s) are "clay" and "potter." The similarity between a potter and God is the fact that both make what they wish out of their material. The potter makes what he wishes out of the clay, and God makes what he wishes out of his people. The Idea being expressed by the comparison between the potter's clay and "us" is that **neither the clay nor God's people have a right to complain about what they are becoming**.

> Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of **the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees**." The disciples reasoned among themselves and said, "It is because we did not take bread." (Matthew 16:6-7 ULT)

Jesus used a metaphor here, but his disciples did not realize it. When he said "yeast," they thought he was talking about bread, but "yeast" was the Image in his metaphor, and the Topic was the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Since the disciples (the original audience) did not understand what Jesus meant, it would not be good to state clearly here what Jesus meant.

Translation Strategies

If people would understand the metaphor in the same way that the original readers would have understood it, go ahead and use it. Be sure to test the translation to make sure that people do understand it in the right way.

If people do not or would not understand it, here are some other strategies.

(1) If the metaphor is a common expression in the source language or expresses a patterned pair of concepts in a biblical language (that is, it is a passive metaphor), then express the **Idea** in the simplest way preferred by your language.
(2) If the metaphor seems to be an active metaphor, you can translate it literally **if you think that the target language also uses this metaphor in the same way to mean the same thing as in the Bible**. If you do this, be sure to test it to make sure that the language community understands it correctly.
(3) If the target audience does not realize that it is a metaphor, then change the metaphor to a simile. Some languages do this by adding words such as "like" or "as." See Simile.
(4) If the target audience would not know the **Image**, see Translate Unknowns for ideas on how to translate that image.
(5) If the target audience would not use that **Image** for that meaning, use an image from your own culture instead. Be sure that it is an image that could have been possible in Bible times.
(6) If the target audience would not know what the **Topic** is, then state the topic clearly. (However, do not do this if the original audience did not know what the Topic was.)
(7) If the target audience would not know the intended similarity (the **Idea**) between the topic and the image, then state it clearly.
(8) If none of these strategies is satisfactory, then simply state the **Idea** plainly without using a metaphor.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the metaphor is a common expression in the source language or expresses a patterned pair of concepts in a biblical language (that is, a passive metaphor), then express the Idea in the simplest way preferred by your language.

> Then, see, one of the leaders of the synagogue, named Jairus, came, and when he saw him, **fell at his feet**. (Mark 5:22 ULT)
>
> > Then one of the leaders of the synagogue, named Jairus, came, and when he saw him, **immediately bowed down in front of him**.

(2) If the metaphor seems to be an active metaphor, you can translate it literally **if you think that the target language also uses this metaphor in the same way to mean the same thing as in the Bible**. If you do this, be sure to test it to make sure that the language community understands it correctly.

> But Jesus said to them, "He wrote this commandment to you because of your **hardness of heart.**" (Mark 10:5 ULT)
>
> > It was because of your **hard hearts** that he wrote you this law.

We made no change to this one, but it must be tested to make sure that the target audience correctly understands this metaphor.

(3) If the target audience does not realize that it is a metaphor, then change the metaphor to a simile. Some languages do this by adding words such as “like” or “as.”

> Yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we **are the clay.** You **are our potter**; and we all are the work of your hand. (Isaiah 64:8 ULT)
>
> > And yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are **like** clay. You are **like** a potter; and we all are the work of your hand.

(4) If the target audience would not know the **Image**, see Translate Unknowns for ideas on how to translate that image.

> Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you **to kick against a goad**. (Acts 26:14b ULT)
>
> > Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to **kick against a pointed stick**.

(5) If the target audience would not use that **Image** for that meaning, use an image from your own culture instead. Be sure that it is an image that could have been possible in Bible times.

> Yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are the **clay**. You are our **potter**; and we all are the work of your hand. (Isaiah 64:8 ULT)
>
> > “And yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are the **wood**. You are our **carver**; and we all are the work of your hand.”
> > “And yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are the **string**. You are the **weaver**; and we all are the work of your hand.”

(6) If the target audience would not know what the **Topic** is, then state the topic clearly. (However, do not do this if the original audience did not know what the topic was.)

> Yahweh lives; may **my rock** be praised. May the God of my salvation be exalted. (Psalm 18:46 ULT)
>
> > Yahweh lives; **He is my rock**. May he be praised. May the God of my salvation be exalted.

(7) If the target audience would not know the intended similarity between the Topic and the Image, then state it clearly.

> Yahweh lives; may **my rock** be praised. May the God of my salvation be exalted. (Psalm 18:46 ULT)
>
> > Yahweh lives; may he be praised because he is the rock **under which I can hide from my enemies**. May the God of my salvation be exalted.
>
> Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you **to kick against a goad**. (Acts 26:14 ULT)

> Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? You **fight against me and hurt yourself like an ox that kicks against its owner's pointed stick**.

(8) If none of these strategies are satisfactory, then simply state the idea plainly without using a metaphor.

> I will make you to become **fishers of men**. (Mark 1:17b ULT)
>
> I will make you to become **people who gather men**.
> Now you gather fish. I will make you **gather people**.

To learn more about specific metaphors, see Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns.

Metonymy

Description

Metonymy is a figure of speech in which an item (either physical or abstract) is called not by its own name, but by the name of something closely associated with it. A metonym is a word or phrase used as a substitute for something that it is associated with.

> … and **the blood** of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin. (1 John 1:7b ULT)

The blood represents Christ's death.

> And he took **the cup** in the same way after supper, saying, "**This cup** is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:20 ULT)

The cup represents the wine that is in the cup.

Metonymy can be used

- as a shorter way of referring to something
- to make an abstract idea more meaningful by referring to it with the name of a physical object associated with it

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

The Bible uses metonymy very often. Speakers of some languages are not familiar with metonymy and they may not recognize it when they read it in the Bible. If they do not recognize the metonymy, they will not understand the passage or, worse yet, they will get a wrong understanding of the passage. Whenever a metonym is used, people need to be able to understand what it represents.

Examples From the Bible

> The Lord God will give to him **the throne** of his father David. (Luke 1:32b ULT)

A throne represents the authority of a king. "Throne" is a metonym for "kingly authority," "kingship," or "reign." This means that God would make him become a king who would follow King David.

> Then immediately his **mouth** was opened (Luke 1:64a ULT)

The mouth here represents the power to speak. This means that he was able to talk again.

> Who warned you to flee from **the wrath** that is coming? (Luke 3:7b ULT)

The word "wrath" or "anger" is a metonym for "punishment." God was extremely angry with the people and, as a result, he would punish them.

Translation Strategies

If people would easily understand the metonym, consider using it. Otherwise, here are some options.

(1) Use the metonym along with the name of the thing it represents.

(2) Use only the name of the thing the metonym represents.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use the metonym along with the name of the thing it represents.

> And he took the cup in the same way after the supper, saying, "**This cup** is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:20 ULT)
>
> > He took the cup in the same way after supper, saying, "**The wine in this cup** is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

This verse also contains a second metonym: The cup, (representing the wine it contains) also represents the new covenant made with the blood Christ shed for us.

(2) Use the name of the thing the metonym represents.

> The Lord God will give him **the throne** of his father David. (Luke 1:32b ULT)
>
> > "The Lord God will give him **the kingly authority** of his father, David."
> > or:
> > "The Lord God will **make him king** like his ancestor, King David."

> Who warned you to flee from **the wrath** that is coming? (Luke 3:7b ULT)
>
> > "Who warned you to flee from God's coming **punishment**?"

To learn about some common metonymies, see Biblical Imagery — Common Metonymies.

Parallelism

Description

Parallelism is a poetic device in which two phrases or clauses that are similar in structure or idea are used together. The following are some of the different kinds of parallelism.

- The second clause or phrase means the same as the first. This is called synonymous parallelism.
- The second clarifies or strengthens the meaning of the first.
- The second completes what is said in the first.
- The second says something that contrasts with the first, but adds to the same idea.

Parallelism is most commonly found in Old Testament poetry, such as in the books of Psalms and Proverbs. It also occurs in Greek in the New Testament, both in the four gospels and in the apostles' letters.

This article will only discuss synonymous parallelism, the kind in which the two parallel phrases mean the same thing, because that is the kind that presents a problem for translation. Note that we use the term "synonymous parallelism" for long phrases or clauses that have the same meaning. We use the term "doublet" for words or very short phrases that mean basically the same thing and are used together.

In the poetry of the original languages, synonymous parallelism has several effects:

- It shows that something is very important by saying it more than once and in more than one way.
- It helps the hearer to think more deeply about the idea by saying it in different ways.
- It makes the language more beautiful and raises it above the ordinary way of speaking.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages would not use synonymous parallelism. They would either think it odd that someone said the same thing twice, or, since it is in the Bible, they would think that the two phrases must have some difference in meaning. For them it would be confusing, rather than beautiful. They would not understand that the repetition of the idea in different words serves to emphasize the idea.

Examples From the Bible

> Your word is a lamp to my feet
>
> and a light for my path. (Psalm 119:105 ULT)

Both parts of the sentence are metaphors saying that God's word teaches people how to live. That is the single idea. The words "lamp" and "light" are similar in meaning because they refer to light. The words "my feet" and "my path" are related because they refer to a person walking. Walking is a metaphor for living.

> You make him to rule over the works of your hands;

> you have put all things under his feet (Psalm 8:6 ULT)

Both lines say that God made man the ruler of everything. “To rule over” is the same idea as putting things “under his feet,” and “the works of your [God’s] hands” is the same idea as “all things.”

> Yahweh sees everything a person does
>
> and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)

The first phrase and the second phrase mean the same thing. There are three ideas that are the same between these two phrases. “Sees” corresponds to “watches,” “everything…does” corresponds to “all the paths…takes,” and “a person” corresponds to “he.”

> Praise Yahweh, all you nations;
>
> exalt him, all you peoples! (Psalm 117:1 ULT)

Both parts of this verse tell people everywhere to praise Yahweh. The words ‘Praise’ and ‘exalt’ mean the same thing. The words ‘Yahweh’ and ‘him’ refer to the same person. The terms ‘all you nations’ and ‘all you peoples’ refer to the same people.

> For Yahweh has a lawsuit with his people,
>
> and he will fight in court against Israel. (Micah 6:2b ULT)

The two parts of this verse say that Yahweh has a serious disagreement with his people, Israel. These are not two different disagreements or two different groups of people.

Translation Strategies

For most kinds of parallelism, it is good to translate both of the clauses or phrases. For synonymous parallelism, it is good to translate both clauses if people in your language understand that the purpose of saying something twice is to strengthen a single idea. But if your language does not use parallelism in this way, then consider using one of the following translation strategies.

(1) Combine the ideas of both clauses into one.
(2) If it appears that the clauses are used together to show that what they say is really true, you could combine the ideas of both clauses into one and include words that emphasize the truth such as “truly” or “certainly.”
(3) If it appears that the clauses are used together to intensify an idea in them, you could combine the ideas of both clauses into one and use words like “very,” “completely,” or “all.”

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Combine the ideas of both clauses into one.

> Until now you have dealt deceitfully with me and you have spoken lies to me.
> (Judges 16:13, ULT)

Delilah expressed this idea twice to emphasize that she was very upset.

> Until now you have deceived me with your lies.

> Yahweh sees everything a person does and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)

The phrase “all the paths he takes” is a metaphor for “all he does.”

> Yahweh pays attention to everything a person does.

> For Yahweh has a lawsuit with his people, and he will fight in court against Israel. (Micah 6:2 ULT)

This parallelism describes one serious disagreement that Yahweh had with one group of people. If this is unclear, the phrases can be combined:

> For Yahweh has a lawsuit with his people, Israel.

(2) If it appears that the clauses are used together to show that what they say is really true, you could combine the ideas of both clauses into one and include words that emphasize the truth such as “truly” or “certainly.”

> Yahweh sees everything a person does and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)

> Yahweh truly sees everything a person does.

> You make him to rule over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet (Psalm 8:6 ULT)

> You have certainly made him to rule over everything that you have created.

(3) If it appears that the clauses are used together to intensify an idea in them, you could combine the ideas of both clauses into one and use words like “very,” “completely” or “all.”

> Until now you have dealt deceitfully with me and you have spoken lies to me. (Judges 16:13, ULT)

> All you have done is lie to me.

> Yahweh sees everything a person does and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)

> Yahweh sees absolutely everything that a person does.

Personification

Description

Personification is a figure of speech in which someone speaks of something as if it could do things that animals or people can do. People often do this because it makes it easier to talk about things that we cannot see:

Such as wisdom:

> Does not Wisdom call out? (Proverbs 8:1a ULT)

Or sin:

> Sin crouches at the door. (Genesis 4:7b ULT)

People also use personification because it is sometimes easier to talk about people's relationships with non-human things such as wealth as if they were relationships between people.

> You cannot serve God and wealth. (Matthew 6:24b ULT)

In each case, the purpose of the personification is to highlight a certain characteristic of the non-human thing. As in metaphor, the reader needs to think of the way that the thing is like a certain kind of person.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Some languages do not use personification.
- Some languages use personification only in certain situations.

Examples From the Bible

> You cannot **serve** God and wealth. (Matthew 6:24b ULT)

Jesus speaks of wealth as if it were a master whom people might serve. Loving money and basing one's decisions on it is like serving it as a slave would serve his master.

> Does not Wisdom **call** out? Does not Understanding **raise her voice**? (Proverbs 8:1 ULT)

The author speaks of wisdom and understanding as if they were woman who calls out to teach people. This means that they are not something hidden, but something obvious that people should pay attention to.

Translation Strategies

If the personification would be understood clearly, consider using it. If it would not be understood, here are some other ways for translating it.

(1) Add words or phrases to make the human (or animal) characteristic clear.
(2) In addition to Strategy (1), use words such as “like” or “as” to show that the sentence is not to be understood literally.
(3) Find a way to translate it without the personification.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Add words or phrases to make the human (or animal) characteristic clear.

> **Sin crouches** at the door. (Genesis 4:7b ULT) — God speaks of sin as if it were a wild animal that is waiting for the chance to attack. This shows how dangerous sin is. An additional phrase can be added to make this danger clear.
>
> > **Sin** is at your door, **waiting to attack you.**

(2) In addition to Strategy (1), use words such as “like” or “as” to show that the sentence is not to be understood literally.

> Sin crouches at the door. (Genesis 4:7b ULT) — This can be translated with the word “as.”
>
> > Sin is crouching at the door, **just as a wild animal does as it waits to attack a person.**.

(3) Find a way to translate it without the personification.

> Even the **winds and the sea obey him**. (Matthew 8:27b ULT) — The men speak of the “wind and the sea” as if they are able to hear and obey Jesus, just as people can. This could also be translated without the idea of obedience by speaking of Jesus controlling them.
>
> > He even **controls the winds and the sea**.

NOTE: We have broadened our definition of “personification” to include “zoomorphism” (speaking of other things as if they had animal characteristics) and “anthropomorphism” (speaking of non-human things as if they had human characteristics) because the translation strategies for them are the same.

Predictive Past

Description

The predictive past is a figure of speech that uses the past tense to refer to things that will happen in the future. This is sometimes done in prophecy to show that the event will certainly happen. It is also called the prophetic perfect.

> Therefore my people have gone into captivity for lack of understanding;
> their honored leaders go hungry, and their common people have nothing to drink.
> (Isaiah 5:13 ULT)

In the example above, the people of Israel had not yet gone into captivity, but God spoke of their going into captivity as if it had already happened because he had decided that they certainly would go into captivity.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue:

Readers who are not aware of the past tense being used in prophecy to refer to future events may find it confusing.

Examples From the Bible

> Now Jericho was tightly closed because of the sons of Israel. No one went out and
> no one came in. Yahweh said to Joshua, “See, I have delivered Jericho, and its
> king, and its powerful soldiers into your hand.” (Joshua 6:1-2 ULT)

> For to us a child has been born, to us a son has been given;
> and the rule will be on his shoulder. (Isaiah 9:6a ULT)

In the examples above, God spoke of things that would happen in the future as if they had already happened.

> But even Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them, saying, “Look!
> The Lord came with thousands and thousands of his holy ones.” (Jude 1:14 ULT)

Enoch was speaking of something that would happen in the future, but he used the past tense when he said “the Lord came.”

Translation Strategies

If the past tense would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other options.

(1) Use the future tense to refer to future events.
(2) If it refers to something in the immediate future, use a form that would show that.
(3) Some languages may use the present tense to show that something will happen very soon.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use the future tense to refer to future events.

> For to us a child **has been born**, to us a son **has been given**. (Isaiah 9:6a ULT)
>
> > For to us a child **will be born**, to us a son **will be given**.

(2) If it refers to something that would happen very soon, use a form that shows that.

> Yahweh said to Joshua, “See, I have delivered Jericho, and its king, and its powerful soldiers into your hand.” (Joshua 6:2 ULT)
>
> > Yahweh said to Joshua, “See, I **am about to deliver** over to you Jericho, its king, and its powerful soldiers.”

(3) Some languages may use the present tense to show that something will happen very soon.

> Yahweh said to Joshua, “See, I have delivered Jericho, and its king, and its powerful soldiers into your hand.” (Joshua 6:2 ULT)
>
> > Yahweh said to Joshua, “See, I **am delivering** over to you Jericho, its king, and its powerful soldiers.”

Rhetorical Question

A rhetorical question is a question that a speaker asks when he is more interested in expressing his attitude about something than in getting information about it. Speakers use rhetorical questions to express deep emotion or to encourage hearers to think deeply about something. The Bible contains many rhetorical questions, often to express surprise, to rebuke or scold the hearer, or to teach. Speakers of some languages use rhetorical questions for other purposes as well.

Description

A rhetorical question is a question that strongly expresses the speaker's attitude toward something. Often the speaker is not looking for information at all. Or, if he is asking for information, it is not usually the information that the question appears to ask for. The speaker is more interested in expressing his attitude than in getting information.

> But those who stood by said, "**Are you insulting the high priest of God?**"(Acts 23:4 ULT)

The people who asked Paul this question were not asking if he was insulting God's high priest. Rather, they used this question to accuse Paul of insulting the high priest.

The Bible contains many rhetorical questions. These rhetorical questions might be used for the purposes: of expressing attitudes or feelings, rebuking people, teaching something by reminding people of something they know and encouraging them to apply it to something new, or introducing something they want to talk about.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Some languages do not use rhetorical questions; for them a question is always a request for information.
- Some languages use rhetorical questions, but for purposes that are different or more limited than in the Bible.
- Because of these differences between languages, some readers might misunderstand the purpose of a rhetorical question in the Bible.

Examples From the Bible

> Do you not still rule the kingdom of Israel? (1 Kings 21:7b ULT)

Jezebel used the question above **to remind** King Ahab of something he already knew: he still ruled the kingdom of Israel. The rhetorical question made her point more strongly than if she had merely stated it, because it forced Ahab to admit the point himself. She did this in order **to rebuke** him for being unwilling to take over a poor man's property. She was implying that, since he was the king of Israel, he had the power to take the man's property.

> **Will a virgin forget her jewelry, a bride her veils?** Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number! (Jeremiah 2:32 ULT)

God used the question above **to remind** his people of something they already knew: a young woman would never forget her jewelry or a bride forget her veils. He then **rebuked** his people for forgetting him who is so much greater than those things.

> But you, why do you judge your brother? And you also, why do you despise your brother? (Romans 14:10 ULT)

Paul used these rhetorical questions **to rebuke** the Romans for doing what they should not do.

> Why did I not die when I came out from the womb? (Job 3:11a ULT)

Job used the question above **to show deep emotion**. This rhetorical question expresses how sad he was that he did not die as soon as he was born. He wished that he had not lived.

> And how has this happened to me that the mother of my Lord would come to me? (Luke 1:43 ULT)

Elizabeth used the question above **to show how surprised and happy she was** that the mother of her Lord came to her.

> Or what man is there among you, of whom his son will ask for a loaf of bread, but he will give him a stone? (Matthew 7:9 ULT)

Jesus used the question above **to remind** the people of something they already knew: a good father would never give his son something bad to eat. By introducing this point, Jesus could go on **to teach them** about God with his next rhetorical question:

> Therefore, if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him? (Matthew 7:11 ULT)

Jesus used this question **to teach** the people in an emphatic way that God gives good things to those who ask him.

> **What is the kingdom of God like, and what can I compare it to?** It is like a mustard seed that a man took and threw into his garden … (Luke 13:18b-19a ULT)

Jesus used the question above **to introduce what he was going to talk about**. He was about to compare the kingdom of God to something. In this case, he compared the kingdom of God to a mustard seed.

Translation Strategies

In order to translate a rhetorical question accurately, first be sure that the question you are translating truly is a rhetorical question and is not an information question. Ask yourself, "Does the person asking the question already know the answer to the question?" If so, it is a rhetorical question. Or, if no one answers the question, did the person who asked it expect to receive an answer? If not, it is a rhetorical question.

When you are sure that the question is rhetorical, then be sure that you understand the purpose for the rhetorical question. Is it to encourage or rebuke or shame the hearer? Is it to bring up a new topic? Is it to express surprise or other emotion? Is it to do something else?

When you know the purpose of the rhetorical question, then think of the most natural way to express that purpose in the target language. It might be as a question, or a statement, or an exclamation.

If using the rhetorical question would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider doing so. If not, here are other options:

(1) Add the answer after the question.
(2) Change the rhetorical question to a statement or exclamation.
(3) Change the rhetorical question to a statement, and then follow it with a short question.
(4) Change the form of the question so that it communicates in your language what the original speaker communicated in his.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Add the answer after the question.

> **Will a virgin forget her jewelry, a bride her veils?** Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number! (Jeremiah 2:32 ULT)
>
> > Will a virgin forget her jewelry, a bride her veils? **Of course not!** Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number!
>
> Or what man is there among you, of whom his son will ask for a loaf of bread, but he will give him a stone? (Matthew 7:9 ULT)
>
> > Or what man is there among you, of whom his son will ask for a loaf of bread, but he will give him a stone? **None of you would do that!**

(2) Change the rhetorical question to a statement or exclamation.

> **What is the kingdom of God like, and what can I compare it to?** It is like a mustard seed. (Luke 13:18-19a ULT)
>
> > **This is what the kingdom of God is like.** It is like a mustard seed …
>
> **Are you insulting the high priest of God?** (Acts 23:4b ULT) (Acts 23:4 ULT)
>
> > **You should not insult God's high priest!**
>
> **Why did I not die when I came out from the womb?** (Job 3:11a ULT)
>
> > **I wish I had died when I came out from the womb!**
>
> **And how has this happened to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?** (Luke 1:43 ULT)
>
> > **How wonderful it is that the mother of my Lord has come to me!**

(3) Change the rhetorical question to a statement, and then follow it with a short question.

> **Do you not still rule** the kingdom of Israel? (1 Kings 21:7b ULT)
>
> > You still rule the kingdom of Israel, **do you not?**

(4) Change the form of the question so that it communicates in your language what the orignal speaker communicated in his.

> Or what man is there among you, of whom his son will ask for a loaf of bread, but he will give him a stone? (Matthew 7:9 ULT)
>
> > If your son asks you for a loaf of bread, **would you give him a stone**?
>
> **Will a virgin forget her jewelry, a bride her veils**? Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number! (Jeremiah 2:32 ULT)
>
> > **What virgin would forget her jewelry, and what bride would forget her veils**? Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number!
>
> But you, **why do you judge your brother**? And you also, **why do you despise your brother**? (Romans 14:10 ULT)
>
> > Do you think it is good to judge your brother? Do you think it is good to despise your brother?

Simile

Description

A simile is a comparison of two things that are not normally thought to be similar. The simile focuses on a particular trait the two items have in common, and it includes the words "like," "as," or "than."

> When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were troubled and discouraged, **like sheep not having a shepherd**. (Matthew 9:36)

Jesus compared the crowds of people to sheep without a shepherd. Sheep grow frightened when they do not have a good shepherd to lead them in safe places. The crowds were like that because they did not have good religious leaders.

> See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**, so be as wise **as the serpents** and harmless **as the doves**. (Matthew 10:16 ULT)

Jesus compared his disciples to sheep and their enemies to wolves. Wolves attack sheep; Jesus' enemies would attack his disciples.

> For the word of God is living and active and sharper **than any two-edged sword**. (Hebrews 4:12a ULT)

God's word is compared to a two-edged sword. A two-edged sword is a weapon that can easily cut through a person's flesh. God's word is very effective in showing what is in a person's heart and thoughts.

Purposes of Simile

- A simile can teach about something that is unknown by showing how it is similar to something that is known.
- A simile can emphasize a particular trait, sometimes in a way that gets people's attention.
- Similes help form a picture in the mind or help the reader experience what he is reading about more fully.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- People may not know how the two items are similar.
- People may not be familiar with both of the items being compared.

Examples From the Bible

> Suffer hardship with me, **as a good soldier** of Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 2:3 ULT)

In this simile, Paul compares suffering with what soldiers endure, and he encourages Timothy to follow their example.

> Just as the lightning flashing from a place under the sky shines to another place under the sky, so will the Son of Man be. (Luke 17:24b ULT)

This verse does not tell how the Son of Man will be like the lightning. But in context we can understand from the verses before it that just as lighting flashes suddenly and everyone can see it, the Son of Man will come suddenly and everyone will be able to see him. No one will have to be told about it.

Translation Strategies

If people would understand the correct meaning of a simile, consider using it. If they would not, here are some strategies you can use:

(1) If people do not know how the two items are alike, tell how they are alike. However, do not do this if the meaning was not clear to the original audience.
(2) If people are not familiar with the item that something is compared to, use an item from your own culture. Be sure that it is one that could have been used in the cultures of the Bible. If you use this strategy, you may want to put the original item in a footnote.
(3) Simply describe the item without comparing it to another.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If people do not know how the two items are alike, tell how they are alike. However, do not do this if the meaning was not clear to the original audience.

> See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves.** (Matthew 10:16a ULT) — This compares the danger that Jesus' disciples would be in with the danger that sheep are in when they are surrounded by wolves.
>
> > See, I send **you out among wicked people** and you will be in danger from them **as sheep are in danger when they are among wolves**.

> For the word of God is living and active and sharper **than any two-edged sword**. (Hebrews 4:12a ULT)
>
> > For the word of God is living and active and **more powerful than a very sharp two-edged sword**.

(2) If people are not familiar with the item that something is compared to, use an item from your own culture. Be sure that it is one that could have been used in the cultures of the Bible. If you use this strategy, you may want to put the original item in a footnote.

> See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**, (Matthew 10:16a ULT) — If people do not know what sheep and wolves are, or that wolves kill and eat sheep, you could use some other animal that kills another.
>
> > See, I send you out **as chickens in the midst of wild dogs**.

> How often did I long to gather your children together, just **as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings**, but you were not willing! (Matthew 23:37b ULT)

> How often I wanted to gather your children together, **as a mother closely watches over her infants**, but you refused!

If you have faith **as a grain of mustard** … (Matthew 17:20)

> If you have faith even as small **as a tiny seed**,

(3) Simply describe the item without comparing it to another.

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**. (Matthew 10:16a ULT)

> See, I send you out among **people who will want to harm you**.

How often did I long to gather your children together, just **as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings**, but you were not willing! (Matthew 23:37b ULT)

> How often I wanted to **protect you**, but you refused!

Synecdoche

Description

Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a speaker uses a part of something to refer to the whole thing, or uses the whole to refer to a part.

> **My soul** magnifies the Lord. (Luke 1:46b ULT)

Mary was was very happy about what the Lord was doing, so she said "my soul," which means the inner, emotional part of herself, to refer to her whole self.

> So **the Pharisees** said to him, "Look, why are they doing that which is not lawful?" (Mark 2:24a ULT)

The Pharisees who were standing there did not all say the same words at the same time. Instead, it is more likely that one man representing the group said those words.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Some readers may not recognize the synecdoche and thus misunderstand the words as a literal statement.
- Some readers may realize that they are not to understand the words literally, but they may not know what the meaning is.

Example From the Bible

> Then I looked on all the deeds that **my hands** had accomplished. (Ecclesiastes 2:11a ULT)

"My hands" is a synecdoche for the whole person because clearly the arms and the rest of the body and the mind were also involved in the person's accomplishments. The hands are chosen to represent the person because they are the parts of the body most directly involved in the work.

Translation Strategies

If the synecdoche would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here is another option:

(1) State specifically what the synecdoche refers to.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) State specifically what the synecdoche refers to.

> "**My soul** magnifies the Lord." (Luke 1:46b ULT)
>
> > "**I** magnify the Lord."

So **the Pharisees** said to him … (Mark 2:24a ULT)

> **A representative of the Pharisees** said to him …

Then I looked on all the deeds that **my hands** had accomplished. (Ecclesiastes 2:11a ULT)

> I looked on all the deeds that **I** had accomplished

Biblical Imagery

Biblical Imagery

Description

The term “biblical imagery” refers in a general way to any kind of language in which an image is paired with an idea such that the image represents the idea. This general definition is applied most directly to metaphors but can also include similes, metonymies, and cultural models.

We have included several modules about biblical imagery in order to tell about the various patterns of imagery found in the Bible. The patterns of pairings found in the Bible are often unique to the Hebrew and Greek languages. It is useful to recognize these patterns because they repeatedly present translators with the same problems regarding how to translate them. Once translators think through how they will handle these translation challenges, they will be ready to meet them anywhere they see the same patterns. See Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns for links to pages showing common patterns of pairings between ideas in similes and metaphors.

Common Types of Biblical Imagery

A **simile** is an explicit figure of speech that compares two items using one of the specific terms “like,” “as,” or “than.”

A **metonymy** is an implicit figure of speech that refers to an item (either physical or abstract) not by its own name, but by the name of something closely related to it. See Biblical Imagery — Common Metonymies for a list of some common metonymies in the Bible.

A **metaphor** is a figure of speech which uses a physical image to refer to an abstract idea, either explicitly or implicitly. In our translation helps, we distinguish between three different types of metaphors: simple metaphors, extended metaphors, and complex metaphors.

In a metaphor, the **Image** is the physical term (object, event, action, etc.) that is used to refer to an abstract term (idea, concept, action, etc.).

In a metaphor, the **Idea** is the abstract term (concept, action, etc.) which is referred to by the physical term (object, event, action, etc.). Often, the Idea of a metaphor is not explicitly stated in the Bible, but only implied from the context.

A **simple metaphor** is an explicit metaphor in which a single physical image is used to refer to a single abstract idea. For example, when Jesus said “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12 ULT), he was using the Image of “light” to refer to an abstract Idea about himself. NOTE: As with many simple metaphors in the Bible, the Image is explicitly stated, but the Idea is implied from the context.

An **extended metaphor** is an explicit metaphor that uses multiple images and multiple ideas at the same time. For example, in Psalm 23 the psalmist writes “Yahweh is my shepherd” and then goes on to describe multiple physical aspects of the relationship between sheep and a shepherd as well as multiple abstract ideas concerning the relationship between himself and Yahweh.

A **complex metaphor** is an implicit metaphor that uses multiple images and multiple ideas at the same time. Complex metaphors are very similar to extended metaphors, except that they are implied by the text rather than explicitly stated. Because of this, complex metaphors can be very difficult to identify in the Bible. For example, in Ephesians 6:10-20 the apostle Paul describes how a Christian should prepare to resist temptation by comparing abstract ideas to pieces of armor worn by a soldier. The term "full armor of God" is not a combination of several simple metaphors (where the belt represents truth, the helmet represents salvation, etc.). Rather, the unstated complex metaphor PREPARATION IS GETTING DRESSED underlies the entire description as a whole. The apostle Paul was using the physical Image of a soldier putting on his armor (that is, "GETTING DRESSED") to refer to the abstract Idea (that is, "PREPARATION") of a Christian preparing himself to resist temptation.

In our translation helps, we use the term **cultural model** to refer to either an extended metaphor or a complex metaphor that is widely used within a specific culture but which may or may not be used within a different culture. See Biblical Imagery — Cultural Models for a list of some cultural models found in the Bible.

Cultural Models

Cultural models are complex metaphors that people use to help them imagine and talk about various aspects of life and behavior. For example, Americans often think of many things, including marriage and friendship, as if they were machines. Americans might say, "His marriage is breaking up," or "Their friendship is going full speed ahead." Often, cultural models that are used in the Bible are not explicitly stated, but must be learned by reading large amounts of text and looking for images and metaphors that are repeated in many different contexts.

For example, both the Old Testament and New Testament describe God as if he were a shepherd and his people were sheep. This is a cultural model that is used frequently in the Bible, and it appears as an extended metaphor in Psalm 23. In the culture of ancient Israel, GOD IS MODELED AS A SHEPHERD.

> **Yahweh is my shepherd**; I will lack nothing. (Psalm 23:1 ULT)
>
> He led his own people out **like sheep** and guided them through the wilderness **like a flock**. (Psalm 78:52 ULT)
>
> **I am the good shepherd**. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (John 10:11 ULT)
>
> Then when **the Chief Shepherd** is revealed, you will receive an unfading crown of glory. (1 Peter 5:4 ULT)

Another cultural model is found in Psalm 24, where the psalmist describes God as if he were a mighty and glorious king coming into a city. In the culture of ancient Israel, GOD IS MODELED AS A KING.

> Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, everlasting doors, so that the **King of glory** may come in! Who is this **King of glory**? Yahweh, strong and mighty; Yahweh, mighty in battle. (Psalm 24:7-8 ULT)

> Someone who breaks open their way for them will go ahead of them. They break through the gate and go out; **their king** will pass on before them. **Yahweh** will be at their head. (Micah 2:13 ULT)
>
> Out of his mouth goes a sharp sword, so that with it he might strike the nations, and he will shepherd them with an iron rod. He tramples in the winepress of the fury of the wrath of **God Almighty**. He has a name written on his robe and on his thigh: "**King of kings and Lord of lords**." (Revelation 19:15-16 ULT)

This cultural model was very common in ancient Near Eastern cultures, and the ancient Israelites who read the Bible would have understood it easily because their nation was ruled by a king. However, many modern nations are not ruled by kings, so this specific cultural model is not as easily understood in many modern cultures.

Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns

This page discusses ideas that are paired together in limited ways. (For a discussion of more complex pairings, see Biblical Imagery — Cultural Models.)

Description

In all languages, most metaphors come from broad patterns of pairings of items in which a physical Image represents an abstract Idea. For example, some languages have the pattern of pairing **height** with "much" and pairing **being low** with "not much," so that **height** represents "much" and **being low** represents "not much." This could be because when there is a lot of something in a pile, that pile will be high. So also if something costs a lot money, in some languages people would say that the price is **high**, or if a city has more people in it than it used to have, we might say that its number of people has gone **up**. Likewise if someone gets thinner and loses weight, we would say that their weight has gone **down**.

The patterns found in the Bible are often unique to the Hebrew and Greek languages. It is useful to recognize these patterns because they repeatedly present translators with the same problems of how to translate them. Once translators think through how they will handle these translation challenges, they will be ready to meet them anywhere. (See the modules about simple metaphors and extended metaphors.)

For example, one pattern of pairings in the Bible is of WALKING representing "behaving" and a PATH representing a kind of behavior. In Psalm 1:1, to "walk" in the advice of the wicked represents doing what wicked people say to do.

> Blessed is the man who does not **walk** in the advice of the wicked. (Psalm 1:1 ULT)

This pattern is also seen in Psalm 119:32 where running in the path of God's commands represents doing what God commands. Since running is more intense than walking, the idea of running here might give the idea of doing this wholeheartedly.

> I will **run in the path** of your commandments. (Psalm 119:32a ULT)

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

These patterns present three challenges to anyone who wants to identify them:

(1) When looking at particular metaphors in the Bible, it is not always obvious what two ideas are paired with each other. For example, it may not be immediately obvious that the expression, "It is God who puts strength on me like a belt" (Psalm 18:32 ULT) is based on the pairing of CLOTHING with moral quality. In this case, the image of a BELT represents strength. (See "CLOTHING represents a moral quality" in Biblical Imagery — Man-made Objects as well as the module about complex metaphors.)

(2) When looking at a particular expression, the translator needs to know whether or not it represents something. This can only be done by considering the surrounding text. The surrounding text shows us, for example, whether "lamp" refers literally to a container with oil

and a wick for giving light or whether "lamp" is a metaphor that represents life. (See "LIGHT or FIRE represents life" in Biblical Imagery — Natural Phenomena.)

In 1 Kings 7:50, a lamp trimmer is a tool for trimming the wick on an ordinary lamp. In 2 Samuel 21:17 the lamp of Israel represents King David's life. When his men were concerned that he might "put out the lamp of Israel" they were concerned that he might be killed.

> Solomon also had made the cups, lamp trimmers, basins, spoons, and incense burners, all of which were made of pure gold. (1 Kings 7:50a ULT)

> Ishbi-benob … intended to kill David. But Abishai the son of Zeruiah rescued David, attacked the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David swore to him, saying, "You must not go to battle anymore with us, so that you do not put out the **lamp** of Israel." (2 Samuel 21:16-17 ULT)

(3) Expressions that are based on these pairings of ideas frequently combine together in complex ways. Moreover, they frequently combine with (and in some cases are based on) common metonymies and cultural models. (See Biblical Imagery — Common Metonymies and Biblical Imagery — Cultural Models.)

For example, in 2 Samuel 14:7 below, "the burning coal" is an image for the life of the son, who represents what will cause people to remember his father. So there are two patterns of pairings here: the pairing of the burning coal with the life of the son, and the pairing of the son with the memory of his father.

> They say, 'Hand over the man who struck his brother, so that we may put him to death, to pay for the life of his brother whom he killed.' And so they would also destroy the heir. Thus they will put out **the burning coal** that I have left, and they will leave for **my husband neither name nor descendant** on the surface of the earth. (2 Samuel 14:7 ULT)

Links to Lists of Images in the Bible

The following pages have lists of some of the Images that represent Ideas in the Bible, together with examples from the Bible. They are organized according to the kinds of image:

- Biblical Imagery — Body Parts and Human Qualities
- Biblical Imagery — Human Behavior — Includes both physical and non-physical actions, conditions and experiences
- Biblical Imagery — Plants
- Biblical Imagery — Natural Phenomena
- Biblical Imagery — Man-made Objects

Biblical Imagery — Common Metonymies

Some very common metonymies from the Bible are listed below in alphabetical order. The word in all capital letters identifies an Image that represents an Idea. The specific word of the Image may not appear in every verse that uses the Image, but the text will communicate somehow the concept of the Image.

A CUP or BOWL represents what is inside it

> My **cup** runs over. (Psalm 23:5b ULT)

There is so much in the cup that it runs over the top of the cup.

> For every time you eat this bread and drink this **cup**, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:26 ULT)

People do not drink cups. They drink what is in the cup.

A LOCATION (city, nation, etc.) represents the people who live in or near that place

> Then Mordecai went out from before the face of the king in a garment of royalty of blue and white, with a great crown of gold and a robe of fine linen and purple, and **the city of Susa** cheered and rejoiced. (Esther 8:15 ULT)

> So as for me, should I not feel troubled about **Nineveh, the great city ** … (Jonah 4:11a ULT)

The MEMORY OF A PERSON means "his descendants"

The memory of a person represents his descendants, because they are the ones who should remember and honor him. When the Bible says that someone's memory dies, it means that either he will not have any descendants, or his descendants will all die.

> You have rebuked the nations;
> you have destroyed the wicked;
> you have blotted out **their memory** forever.
> The enemy crumbled like ruins
> when you overthrew their cities.
> All **remembrance of them** has perished. (Psalm 9:5-6 ULT)

> **His memory** will perish from the earth. (Job 18:17a ULT)

> The face of Yahweh is against those who do evil, to cut off **the memory of them** from the earth. (Psalm 34:16 ULT)

ONE PERSON means "a group of people"

> For **the wicked person** boasts of his deepest desires;
> he blesses the greedy and insults Yahweh. (Psalm 10:3 ULT)

This does not refer to a particular wicked person, but to wicked people in general.

A PERSON'S NAME means "his descendants"

> **Gad**—raiders will attack him, but he will attack them at their heels.
> **Asher's** food will be rich, and he will provide royal delicacies.
> **Naphtali** is a doe let loose; he will have beautiful fawns. (Genesis 49:19-21 ULT)

The names Gad, Asher, and Naphtali refer not only to those men, but to their descendants.

A PERSON means "himself and the people with him"

> It came about that when **Abram** entered into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that Sarai was very beautiful. (Genesis 12:14 ULT)

Here when it says "Abram" it represents Abram and all the people traveling with him. The focus was on Abram.

PIERCING means "killing"

> His hand **pierced** the fleeing serpent. (Job 26:13b ULT)

This means that he killed the serpent.

> Look, he is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, including those who **pierced** him. (Revelation 1:7 ULT)

"Those who pierced him" refers to those who killed Jesus.

SINS (or INIQUITY) means "punishment for wrongdoing"

> Yahweh has placed on him the **iniquity** of us all (Isaiah 53:6b ULT)

This means that Yahweh placed on him the punishment that should have gone to all of us.

Simple Metaphor

A **simple metaphor** is an explicit metaphor that uses a single physical **Image** to refer to a single abstract **Idea**. This is in contrast to extended metaphors and complex metaphors, which can use multiple images and multiple ideas at the same time.

Explanation of a Simple Metaphor

Usually, a writer/speaker uses a simple metaphor in order to express something about a **Topic**, with one main **Idea** or **Point of Comparison** between the **Topic** and the **Image**. In simple metaphors, often the **Topic** and the **Image** are explicitly stated, but the **Idea** is not; it is only implied. The writer/speaker uses a metaphor in order to invite the reader/listener to think about the similarity between the **Topic** and the **Image** and to figure out for themselves the **Idea** that is being communicated.

For example, Jesus used a simple metaphor when he said:

> I am the light of the world. (John 9:5b ULT)

In this simple metaphor, the **Topic** is Jesus himself. The **Image** is the phrase "light of the world" because light is the physical object that Jesus uses to refer to some unknown **Idea** about himself. As is often the case with simple metaphors in the Bible, in this instance Jesus does not explicitly tell his listeners the Idea that he intends to communicate. The reader must read the story and figure out the Idea for himself from the context.

After making this statement, Jesus healed a man who was born blind. After the healed man saw Jesus for the first time and worshiped him as God, Jesus explained the **Idea** of his "light of the world" metaphor:

> … I came into this world so that those who do not see may see … (John 9:39b ULT)

Jesus was using the **Image** of seeing physical light to express the abstract **Idea** of understanding, believing, and confessing that Jesus is God. Jesus healed the blind man, giving him physical sight; similarly, Jesus told the blind man who He was, and the blind man believed.

> Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. (John 9:38 ULT)

Other Examples From the Bible

> Listen to this word, **you cows of Bashan**. (Amos 4:1a ULT)

In this metaphor, Amos spoke to the upper-class women of Samaria ("you," the Topic) as if they were cows (the Image). Amos did not say what similarity(s) he was thinking of between these women and cows. He wants the reader to think of them, and he fully expects that readers from his culture will easily do so. From the context, we can see that he meant that the women are like cows in that they are fat and interested only in feeding themselves. If we were to apply similarities from a different culture, such as that cows are sacred and should be worshiped, we would get the wrong meaning from this verse.

NOTE: Amos did not actually mean that the women were cows. He spoke to them as human beings.

> Yet, Yahweh, you are our father; **we are the clay**. **You are our potter**; and we all are the work of your hand. (Isaiah 64:8 ULT)

The example above has two related metaphors. The Topic(s) are "we" and "you," and the Image(s) are "clay" and "potter." The similarity between a potter and God is the fact that both make what they wish out of their material. The potter makes what he wishes out of the clay, and God makes what he wishes out of his people. The Idea being expressed by the comparison between the potter's clay and us is that **neither the clay nor God's people have a right to complain about what they are becoming**.

> Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of **the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees**." They reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we did not take bread." (Matthew 16:6-7 ULT)

Jesus used a metaphor here, but his disciples did not realize it. When he said "yeast," they thought he was talking about bread, but yeast was the Image in his metaphor, and the Topic was the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Since the disciples (the original audience) did not understand what Jesus meant, it would not be good to state clearly here what Jesus meant.

Translation Strategies

- Simple metaphors in the Bible should be translated like active metaphors.
- For strategies regarding translating metaphors, see Metaphor.
- To learn more about simple metaphors, see Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns.

Biblical Imagery — Extended Metaphors

An **extended metaphor** is an explicit metaphor that uses multiple images and multiple ideas at the same time. This is in contrast to a simple metaphor, which uses only a single Image and a single Idea. The difference between an extended metaphor and a complex metaphor is that an extended metaphor is explicitly stated by a writer/speaker, but a complex metaphor is not.

Explanation of an Extended Metaphor

When using a metaphor, a writer/speaker uses a physical Image in order to express an abstract Idea about some immediate Topic, with at least one point of comparison between the Topic and the Image. In an extended metaphor, the writer/speaker explicitly states the Topic, and then describes multiple images and communicates multiple ideas.

In Isaiah 5:1b-7, the prophet Isaiah uses a vineyard (the **Image**) to express God's disappointment (the **Idea**) with the nation of Israel (the **Topic**) for their unfaithfulness to God and his covenant with them as his people. Farmers care for their gardens, and a farmer would feel disappointed if his vineyard produced bad fruit. If a vineyard produced only bad fruit for a long enough time, the farmer would eventually stop caring for it. We call this an extended metaphor because the prophet describes in detail multiple images relating to a vineyard as well as multiple aspects of God's disappointment.

> 1b My well beloved had a **vineyard** on a very fertile hill. 2 He **spaded it, removed the stones**, and **planted it** with an excellent kind of vine. He **built a tower** in the middle of it, and also **built a winepress**. **He waited for it to produce grapes, but it produced wild grapes**. 3 So now, inhabitant of Jerusalem and man of Judah; judge between me and my vineyard. 4 What more could have been done for my vineyard, that I have not done for it? **When I looked for it to produce grapes, why did it produce wild grapes**? 5 Now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard; I will remove the hedge; I will turn it into a pasture; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled down. 6 I will lay it waste, and it will not be pruned nor hoed. Instead, briers and thorns will spring up. I will also command the clouds not to rain on it. 7 For **the vineyard of Yahweh of hosts is the house of Israel**, and the man of Judah his pleasant planting; **he waited for justice, but instead, there was killing**; **for righteousness, but, instead, a shout for help**. (Isa 5:1b-7 ULT)

Other Examples From the Bible

In Psalm 23, the psalmist uses the physical **Image** of a shepherd to describe the way that God (the **Topic**) shows great concern and care (the **Idea**) for his people. The psalmist describes multiple aspects of what shepherds do for sheep (leads them to pasture and to water, protects them, etc.). The psalmist also describes multiple aspects of how God takes care of him (gives him life, righteousness, comfort, etc.). Shepherds give sheep what they need, take them to safe places, rescue them, guide them, and protect them. What God does for his people is like these actions.

> 1 Yahweh is my shepherd; I will lack nothing.
> 2 He **makes me** to lie down in green pastures;
> he **leads me** beside tranquil water.

> 3 He **brings back** my life;
> he **guides me** along right paths for his name's sake.
> 4 Even though I walk through a valley of darkest shadow,
> I will not fear harm since you are with me;
> your rod and your staff comfort me. (Psalm 23:1-4 ULT)

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- People may not realize that the images represent other things.
- People may not be familiar with the things that are used as images.
- Extended metaphors are often so profound that it would be impossible for a translator to show all of the meaning generated by the metaphor.

Translation Principles

- Make the meaning of the extended metaphor as clear to the target audience as it was to the original audience.
- Do not make the meaning more clear to the target audience than it was to the original audience.
- When someone uses an extended metaphor, the images are an important part of what he is trying to say.
- If the target audience is not familiar with some of the images, you will need to find some way of helping them understand the images so that they can understand the whole extended metaphor.

Translation Strategies

Consider using the same extended metaphor if your readers will understand it in the same way the original readers would have understood it. If not, here are some other strategies:

(1) If the target audience would think that the images should be understood literally, translate the metaphor as a simile by using words such as "like" or "as." It may be enough to to do this in just the first sentence or two.
(2) If the target audience would not know the image, find a way of translating it so they can understand what the image is.
(3) If the target audience still would not understand, then state it clearly.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the target audience would think that the images should be understood literally, translate the metaphor as a simile by using words such as "like" or "as." It may be enough to to do this in just the first sentence or two. See Psalm 23:1-2 as an example:

> Yahweh is **my shepherd**; I will lack nothing.
> He makes **me** to lie down in green pastures;
> **he leads me** beside tranquil water. (ULT)

Can be translated as:

> "Yahweh is **like** a shepherd to me, so I will lack nothing.
> **Like** a shepherd who makes his sheep lie down in green pastures and leads them by peaceful waters, Yahweh helps me to rest peacefully."

(2) If the target audience would not know the image, find a way of translating it so they can understand what the image is.

> My well beloved had a **vineyard** on a very fertile hill.
> He **spaded** it, removed the stones, and planted it with **an excellent kind of vine**.
> He built **a tower** in the middle of it, and also built a **winepress**.
> He waited for it to produce grapes, but it only produced **wild grapes.** (Isaiah 5:1b-2 ULT)

May be translated as:

> My well beloved had a **grapevine garden** on a very fertile hill.
> He **dug up the ground** and removed the stones, and planted it with **the best grapevines**.
> He built a **watchtower** in the middle of it, and also built **a tank where he could crush the juice out of the grapes**.
> He waited for it to produce grapes, but it produced **wild grapes that were not good for making wine**.

(3) If the target audience still would not understand, then state it clearly.

> Yahweh is **my shepherd**; I will lack nothing. (Psalm 23:1 ULT)
>
> > "Yahweh **cares for me** like a shepherd that cares for his sheep, so I will lack nothing."
>
> For the vineyard of Yahweh of hosts **is** the house of Israel,
> and the men of Judah his pleasant planting;
> he waited for justice, but instead, there was killing;
> for righteousness, but, instead, a shout for help. (Isaiah 5:7 ULT)

Can be translated as:

> > For the vineyard of Yahweh of hosts **represents** the house of Israel,
> > and the men of Judah **are like** his pleasant planting;
> > he waited for justice, but instead, there was killing;
> > for righteousness, but, instead, a cry for help.

or as:

> > **So as a farmer stops caring for a grapevine garden that produces bad fruit**,
> > **Yahweh will stop protecting** Israel and Judah,
> > **because they do not do what is right.**
> > He waited for justice, but instead, there was killing;
> > for righteousness, but, instead, a cry for help.

Complex Metaphor

A complex metaphor is an implicit metaphor that uses multiple images and multiple ideas at the same time. This is in contrast to simple metaphors, which use only a single Image and a single Idea. Complex metaphors are similar to extended metaphors; the difference is that extended metaphors are explicitly stated in the text, but complex metaphors are not. For this reason, it can be extremely difficult to identify complex metaphors in the Bible.

Explanation of a Complex Metaphor

When using a metaphor, a writer/speaker uses a physical **Image** in order to express an abstract **Idea** about some immediate **Topic**, with at least one point of comparison between the Topic and the Image.

In simple metaphors, usually the Topic and the Image are expressed, and the Idea is implied from the context. In extended metaphors, the writer or speaker explicitly states the topic, and then describes multiple images and communicates multiple ideas.

A complex metaphor is different from both of these. In a complex metaphor, a writer/speaker uses multiple **Images** to express multiple **Ideas** about a **Topic**, but he does not explicitly say how the images and ideas are metaphorically related to one another. The reader/listener must think very carefully about what the writer/speaker is saying in order to figure out the underlying relationship between the images and the ideas.

One can say more precisely that a complex metaphor operates *in the mind of the writer/speaker* rather than **in the text itself**.

For example, the metaphor FORGIVENESS IS CLEANSING is a very common complex metaphor in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Consider the following verses from Psalm 51.

> Have mercy on me, God, because of your covenant faithfulness; for the sake of the multitude of your merciful actions, **blot out** my transgressions. **Wash me thoroughly** from my iniquity and **cleanse me** from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, I have sinned and done what is evil in your sight; you are right when you speak; you are correct when you judge. See, I was born in iniquity; as soon as my mother conceived me, I was in sin. See, you desire trustworthiness in my inner self; and you teach me wisdom in the secret place within. **Purify me** with hyssop, and **I will be clean**; **wash me**, and I will be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness so that the bones that you have broken may rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and **blot out** all my iniquities. Create in me **a clean heart**, God, and renew a right spirit within me. (Psa 51:1-10 ULT)

Here the psalmist is praying to God in earnest repentance for his sin (the **Topic**). This psalm includes multiple terms for sin (“transgressions,” “iniquity,” “evil”) as well as multiple images related to the event of cleansing (“wash,” “purify,” “blot out”). If you were to read the psalm literally, you might think that the psalmist is asking God to give him a bath! But the psalmist is not asking for that because washing will not solve his problem. He knows that he is guilty of sin and that he deserves that God would judge him for his wrongdoing. Rather, the psalmist is

asking God to forgive him for what he has done wrong, using words that mean "washing" or "cleansing." In other words, in his mind the psalmist is imagining the action of forgiving as if it were washing. The psalmist is using the **Image** of CLEANSING to represent the **Idea** of FORGIVENESS. We express this as the complex metaphor FORGIVENESS IS CLEANSING, but this metaphor is nowhere stated in the text itself. (This same complex metaphor is also found in Isa 1:2-31, Eph 5:25-27, 1 John 1:7-9, and others.)

The apostle Paul uses an even more difficult complex metaphor in Ephesians 6:10-20:

> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the force of his strength. **Put on the whole armor of God, to enable you to stand against the scheming of the devil.** For our struggle is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-controllers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done everything, to stand. 14 Stand, therefore, **having fastened up your robe around your waist with the truth** and **having put on the breastplate of righteousness**, and **having shod your feet with the readiness of the gospel of peace**. 16 In everything **take up the shield of the faith**, by which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. **Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**. With every prayer and request, pray at all times in the Spirit. To this end, be watchful with all perseverance and requests for all the saints, 19 and for me, so that a message might be given to me when I open my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel 20 (for which I am an ambassador in chains), so that in it I may speak boldly, as it is necessary for me to speak. (Eph 6:10-20 ULT)

In this paragraph, the apostle Paul describes how a Christian should prepare to resist temptation (the **Topic**) by comparing a series of abstract ideas to pieces of armor worn by a soldier. The term "full armor of God" is not a combination of several simple metaphors. The soldier's belt does not represent truth, the helmet does not represent salvation, the shield does not represent faith, and so on. Rather, the apostle Paul was using the central **Image** of a soldier putting on his armor (that is, "GETTING DRESSED" for battle) to refer to the central abstract **Idea** of a Christian preparing himself (that is, "PREPARATION") to resist temptation. The unstated complex metaphor PREPARATION IS GETTING DRESSED underlies the entire description as a whole.

Other Examples From the Bible

The Bible often speaks of God as doing things that people do, such as speaking, seeing, walking, etc. But God is not a human being, although Jesus is both God and a human being, of course. So when the Old Testament says that God speaks, we should not think that he has vocal chords that vibrate. And when the Bible says something about God doing something with his hand, we should not think that God has a physical hand made of flesh and bones. Rather, the writer is thinking about God as a person, using the physical **Image** of a human being to represent the abstract **Idea** "God." The writer is using the complex metaphor GOD IS A HUMAN, even though he does not explicitly say so in the text.

> If we hear **the voice of Yahweh our God** any longer, we will die. (Deuteronomy 5:25b ULT)

I was strengthened as **the hand of Yahweh** my God was upon me. (Ezra 7:28b ULT)

You drove out the nations with **your hand**, but you planted our people; you afflicted the peoples, but you spread our people out in the land. For they did not obtain the land for their possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but **your right hand**, **your arm**, and the light of **your face**, because you were favorable to them. (Psa 44:2-3 ULT)

Translation Strategies

- Complex metaphors in the Bible should be translated like passive metaphors.
- For strategies regarding translating metaphors, see Metaphor.
- To learn more about biblical imagery, complex metaphors, and cultural models in the Bible, see Biblical Imagery and/or Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns and/or Biblical Imagery — Cultural Models.

Biblical Imagery — Common Metaphors in the Bible

Biblical Imagery — Body Parts and Human Qualities

Some common metonymies and metaphors from the Bible involving body parts and human qualities are listed below in alphabetical order. The word in all capital letters identifies an Image that represents an Idea. The specific word of the Image may not appear in every verse that uses the Image, but the text will communicate somehow the concept of the Image.

The BODY represents a group of people

> Now you are the **body** of Christ and individually members of it. (1 Corinthians 12:27 ULT)
>
> Instead, speaking the truth in love, let us grow up in all things into him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole **body,** being joined and held together by every supporting ligament, according to the working in measure of each individual part, causes the growth of the **body** for building up itself in love. (Ephesians 4:15-16 ULT)

In these verses, the body of Christ represents the group of people who follow Christ.

A BROTHER represents a person's relatives, associates, or peers

> For Mordecai the Jew was second to the King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and favored by the multitude of his **brothers ** … (Esther 10:3a ULT)

A DAUGHTER represents a village located near a town or city

A MOTHER represents a town or city with villages surrounding it

> And for the villages in their fields, some from the sons of Judah dwelt: in Kiriath Arba and its daughters; and in Dibon and its daughters; and in Jekabzeel and its villages … (Nehemiah 11:25 ULT)

The FACE represents someone's presence, sight, knowledge, perception, attention, or judgment

> Then Esther repeated her action, and she spoke before the **face** of the king. (Esther 8:3a ULT)
>
> Why do you hide your **face** and forget our affliction and our oppression? (Psalm 44:24 ULT)

To hide one's face from someone means to ignore him.

> Many are those who seek the **face** of the ruler. (Proverbs 29:26 ULT)

If someone seeks another person's face, he hopes that the person will pay attention to him.

> Do you not fear me—this is Yahweh's declaration—or tremble before my **face**? (Jeremiah 5:22 ULT)

> Every man of the house of Israel who takes his idols into his heart, or who puts the stumbling block of his iniquity before his **face**, and who then comes to a prophet —I, Yahweh, will answer him according to the number of his idols. (Ezekiel 14:4 ULT)

To put something before one's face is to look at it intently or pay attention to it.

The FACE represents the front of something

> So Hathak went out to Mordecai, to the open place of the city that was before the **face** of the gate of the king. (Esther 4:6 ULT)

> She fell before the **face** of his feet and wept and implored favor from him to take away the evil of Haman the Agagite and his plot that he had plotted against the Jews. (Esther 8:3b ULT)

The FACE represents the surface of something

> The famine was over all **the face** of the whole land. (Genesis 41:56a ULT)

> He covers **the face** of the moon and spreads his clouds on it. (Job 26:9 ULT)

A FATHER represents someone's ancestor(s)

A SON represents someone's descendant(s)

> But they acted presumptuously, they and our **fathers**. And they stiffened their neck and did not listen to your commandments. (Nehemiah 9:16 ULT)

> "We have not listened to your servants the prophets who spoke in your name to our kings, our leaders, our **fathers**, and to all the people of the land. To you, Lord, belongs righteousness …" (Daniel 9:6-7a ULT)

The HAND represents someone's power, control, agency, or action

> Yahweh has burst through my enemies **by my hand** like a bursting flood of water. (1 Chronicles 14:11 ULT)

"Yahweh has burst through my enemies by my hand" means "Yahweh has used me to burst through my enemies."

> **Your hand** will seize all your enemies; **your right hand** will seize those who hate you. (Psalm 21:8 ULT)

"Your hand will seize all your enemies" means "By your power you will seize all your enemies."

> Look, **Yahweh's hand** is not so short that it cannot save. (Isaiah 59:1 ULT)

"His hand is not short" means that he is not weak.

The HEAD represents the tip, top, or uppermost part of something

> And the king held out to Esther the scepter of gold which was in his hand, so Esther approached and touched the **head** of the scepter. (Esther 5:2b ULT)

The HEART represents the action of thinking or feeling

> And Boaz ate and drank, and his **heart** was good, and he went to lie down at the end of the pile of grain. (Ruth 3:7a ULT)
>
> On the seventh day, when the **heart** of the king was pleased by the wine… (Esther 1:10a ULT)

The HEART represents someone's attitude

> Then the king Ahasuerus spoke and said to Esther the queen, "Who is he, this man? Where is this man, he whose **heart** is full to do thus?" (Esther 7:5 ULT)

In this context, having a full heart means to be proud or arrogant.

The EYES represent sight, knowledge, perception, attention, or judgment

> For the matter of the queen will go out to all the women, in order to make their husbands despised in their **eyes** … (Esther 1:17a ULT)

The EYES represent someone's attitude

> … but you bring down those with **proud, uplifted eyes**! (Psalm 18:27b ULT)

Uplifted eyes show that a person is proud.

> God humbles a proud man, and he saves the one with **lowered eyes**. (Job 22:29 ULT)

Lowered eyes show that a person is humble.

The HEAD represents a ruler, a leader, or a person with authority over others

> A man from each tribe, **a clan head**, must serve with you as his tribe's leader. (Num 1:4 ULT)

> He put all things under his feet and **gave him as head** over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:22-23 ULT)

A MASTER represents anything that motivates someone to act

> No one can serve **two masters**, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. (Matthew 6:24 ULT)

To serve God is to be motivated by God. To serve money is to be motivated by money.

The MOUTH means speech or words

> A fool's **mouth** is his ruin. (Proverbs 18:7 ULT)

> I would strengthen you with my mouth. (Job 16:5 ULT)

In these examples the mouth refers to what a person says.

A NAME represents the person who has that name

> "May your God make **the name of Solomon** better than your name, and make his throne greater than your throne." (1 Kings 1:47 ULT)

> "See, I have sworn **by my great name**," says Yahweh. "**My name** will no longer be called upon by the mouths of any of the men of Judah in all the land of Egypt." (Jeremiah 44:26b ULT)

If someone's name is great, it means that he is great.

> Please let your ear be attentive to the prayer of your servant and to the prayer of your servants, the ones who delight to **fear your name**. (Nehemiah 1:11 ULT)

To fear someone's name is to honor him.

A NAME represents someone's fame or reputation

> You must no longer profane **my holy name** with your gifts and your idols. (Ezekiel 20:39 ULT)

To profane God's name is to profane his reputation, that is, to profane how people think about him.

> For I will make **my great name** holy, which you have profaned among the nations … (Ezekiel 36:23 ULT)

To make God's name holy is to cause people to see that God is holy.

> Your servants have come from a very distant country, because of **the name** of Yahweh your God, for we have heard a report about him and about everything that he did in Egypt. (Joshua 9:9 ULT)

The fact that the men said they heard a report about Yahweh shows that "because of the name of Yahweh" means because of Yahweh's reputation.

A NAME represents someone's power, authority, position, or status

> In the **name** of the king Ahasuerus it was written, and it was sealed with the signet ring of the king. (Esther 3:12b ULT)

The NOSE represents anger

> Then … the foundations of the world were laid bare at your rebuke, Yahweh, at the blast of the breath of **your nostrils**. (Psalms 18:15 ULT)

> By the blast of **your nostrils** the waters were piled up. (Exodus 15:8a ULT)

> Smoke went up from out of **his nostrils**, and blazing fire came out of his mouth. (2 Samuel 22:9a ULT)

> Yahweh, Yahweh, God is merciful and gracious, **slow to anger ** … (Exodus 34:6a ULT)

In Hebrew, a hot nose represents anger, including such images as a blast of air or smoke coming from someone's nostrils. The opposite of a "hot nose" is a "long nose." The phrase "slow to anger" in Hebrew literally means "long of nose." A long nose represents patience, meaning that it takes a long time for that person's nose to get hot.

A SON represents the offspring of an animal(s)

> And he sent letters (by the hand of runners on horses, riders of the royal pack horses, sons of the mares) … (Esther 8:10a ULT)

The SON OF SOMETHING represents something shares the qualities of another thing

> No **son of wickedness** will oppress him. (Psalm 89:22b ULT)

A son of wickedness is a wicked person.

> May the groans of the prisoners come before you;
> with the greatness of your power keep the **children of death** alive. (Psalm 79:11 ULT)

Children of death here are people that others plan to kill.

> We all also once lived among these, in the evil desires of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the body and of the mind. We were by nature **children of wrath**, as also the rest. (Ephesians 2:3 ULT)

Children of wrath here are people with whom God is very angry.

The TONGUE represents the language spoken by a person or a group of people

> Every man should be ruling in his house and speaking according to the **tongue** of his people. (Esther 1:22b ULT)

Translation Strategies

See the Translations Strategies on Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns.

Biblical Imagery — Human Behavior

Some common metonymies and metaphors from the Bible involving human qualities are listed below in alphabetical order. The word in all capital letters identifies an Image that represents an Idea. The specific word of the Image may not appear in every verse that uses the Image, but the text will communicate somehow the concept of the Image.

Being BENT OVER means being discouraged or oppressed

> Yahweh supports all who are falling and raises up all those who are **bent over**. (Psalm 145:14 ULT)

Having BIRTH PAINS mean suffering that is necessary to achieve a new condition

> **Be in pain and labor to give birth**, daughter of Zion, like a **woman in labor**.
> For now you will go out of the city, live in the field, and go to Babylon.
> There you will be rescued. There Yahweh will rescue you from the hand of your enemies. (Micah 4:10 ULT)

> For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. But all these things are only the beginning of **birth pains**. (Matthew 24:7-8 ULT)

> My little children, again I am in the **pains of childbirth** for you until Christ is formed in you. (Galatians 4:19 ULT)

Being CALLED SOMETHING means being that thing

> The Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he **is called** the God of the whole earth. (Isaiah 54:5b ULT)

This is because he actually is the God of the whole earth.

> The one who is wise in heart **is called** discerning, (Proverbs 16:21a ULT)

This is because he actually is discerning.

> He will … **be called** the Son of the Most High. (Luke 1:32a ULT)

This is because he actually is the Son of the Most High.

> Therefore, the holy one who will be borne will **be called** the Son of God. (Luke 1:35b ULT)

This is because he actually is the Son of God.

> Every male who opens the womb will **be called** dedicated to the Lord. (Luke 2:23b ULT)

This is because he actually will be dedicated to the Lord.

Being CLEAN means being acceptable for God's purposes

> Noah built an altar to Yahweh. He took some of the **clean** animals and some of the **clean** birds, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. Yahweh smelled the pleasing aroma. (Genesis 8:20 ULT)
>
> The priest will examine him again on the seventh day to see if the disease is better and has not spread farther in the skin. If it has not, then the priest will pronounce him **clean**. It is a rash. He must wash his clothes, and then he is **clean**. (Leviticus 13:6 ULT)

CLEANSING or PURIFYING means making something acceptable for God's purposes

> He must go out to the altar that is before Yahweh and make atonement for it, and he must take some of the bull's blood and some of the goat's blood and put it on the horns of the altar all around. He must sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times to **cleanse** it and dedicate it to Yahweh, away from the **unclean** actions of the people of Israel. (Leviticus 16:18-19 ULT)
>
> This is because on this day atonement will be made for you, to **cleanse** you from all your sins so you will be **clean** before Yahweh. (Leviticus 16:30 ULT)

COMING or STANDING BEFORE SOMEONE means serving him

> How blessed are your wives, and how blessed are your servants who constantly **stand before you**, because they hear your wisdom. (1 Kings 10:8 ULT)
>
> Covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness **come before you**. (Psalm 89:14b ULT)

Covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness are also personified here. (See Personification.)

Being CUT OFF means being killed

> So you must keep the Sabbath, for it must be treated by you as holy, reserved for him. Everyone who defiles it must surely **be put to death**. Whoever works on the Sabbath, that person must surely **be cut off from his people**. (Exodus 31:14 ULT)
>
> Whoever does not humble himself on that day must be **cut off from his people**. Whoever does any work on that day, **I, Yahweh, will destroy him** from among his people. (Leviticus 23:29-30 ULT)
>
> But he was **cut off** from the land of the living … (Isaiah 53:8b ULT)

Being CUT OFF from something means being separated from it

> Uzziah, the king, was a leper to the day of his death, and lived in a separate house, since he was a leper; for he was **cut off from the house of Yahweh.** (2 Chronicles 26:21a ULT)

DRINKING WINE means being judged

Too much wine makes a person weak so that he staggers. So too, when God judges people, they become weak and stagger. So the idea of wine is used to represent God's judgment.

> You have made your people see difficult things; you have made us **drink the wine of staggering**. (Psalm 60:3 ULT)

> But God is the judge;
> he brings down and he lifts up.
> For Yahweh holds in his hand a cup of **foaming wine**,
> which is mixed with spices, and pours it out.
> Surely all the wicked of the earth will **drink it** to the last drop. (Psalm 75:7-8 ULT)

> He also will drink from the **wine** of the wrath of God, the **wine** that has been poured undiluted into the cup of his anger. (Revelation 14:10a ULT)

EATING UP means defeating, destroying, or harming

> God brings him out of Egypt.
> with strength like a wild ox.
> **He will eat up the nations who fight against him**.
> He will break their bones to pieces.
> He will shoot them with his arrows. (Numbers 24:8 ULT)

Another word for "eat up" is devour.

> Therefore as **the tongue of fire devours stubble**, and as the dry grass goes down in flame, so their root will rot, and their blossom will blow away like dust. (Isaiah 5:24 ULT)

> Therefore Yahweh will raise up against him Rezin, his adversary, and will stir up his enemies, the Arameans on the east, and the Philistines on the west.
> **They will devour Israel with open mouth**. (Isaiah 9:11-12 ULT)

> I will make my arrows drunk with blood, and **my sword will devour flesh** with the blood of the killed and the captives, and from the heads of the leaders of the enemy. (Deuteronomy 32:42 ULT)

FALLING UPON or BEING UPON means affecting

> Yahweh God caused a deep sleep to **fall upon** the man, so the man slept. (Genesis 2:21a ULT)

> Will not his majesty terrify you, and the dread of him fall upon you? (Job 13:11 ULT)
>
> Then the Spirit of Yahweh **fell on me** and he said for me to say … (Ezekiel 11:5a ULT)
>
> Now look, the hand of the Lord **is upon you**, and you will become blind. (Acts 13:11a ULT)

FOLLOWING SOMEONE means being loyal to him

> Thus they forsook Yahweh, the God of their fathers, the one who brought them out of the land of Egypt. **They went after** other gods from the gods of the people groups who were around them, and they bowed down to them. They provoked Yahweh to anger. They forsook Yahweh and they served the Baal and the Ashtoreths. (Judges 2:12-13 ULT)
>
> For Solomon **followed** Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and **he followed** Milcom, the disgusting idol of the Ammonites. (1 Kings 11:5 ULT)
>
> Not one of them who despised me will see it, except for my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit. **He has followed me fully**; I will bring him into the land which he went to examine. His descendants will possess it. (Numbers 14:23-24 ULT)

GOING BEFORE, ACCOMPANYING, or FOLLOWING A KING WITH HIS OTHER ATTENDANTS means serving him

> See, his reward is **with him**, and his recompense is **going before him**. (Isaiah 62:11b ULT)
>
> Righteousness will **go before him** and make a way for his footsteps. (Psalm 85:13 ULT)

INHERITING means permanently possessing something

an INHERITANCE means something that a person permanently possesses

an HEIR means someone who permanently possesses something

> Then the King will say to those on his right hand, “Come, you who have been blessed by my Father, **inherit** the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matthew 25:34)

The blessing of God’s complete rule is given as the permanent possession to those to whom the King is speaking.

> Now this I say, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot **inherit** the kingdom of God. Neither does what is perishable **inherit** what is imperishable. (1 Corinthians 15:50 ULT)

People cannot receive the kingdom of God in its complete form as a permanent possession while they are still in their mortal bodies.

> You will bring them and plant them on the mountain of your **inheritance**. (Exodus 15:17a ULT)

The mountain where God will be worshiped is viewed as his permanent possession.

> Pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as your **inheritance**. (Exodus 34:9b ULT)

Moses asks God to still accept the people of Israel as his special possession, that is, as the people permanently belonging to him.

> … the richness of the glory of his **inheritance** in the saints … (Ephesians 1:18b ULT)

The wonderful things that God will give all who are set apart for him are viewed as their permanent possessions.

> For the promise to Abraham and to his descendants that he would be **heir** of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. (Romans 4:13 ULT)

The promise was that Abraham and his descendants would permanently possess the entire world.

> He has spoken to us through a Son, whom he appointed to be the **heir** of all things. (Hebrews 1:2b ULT)

God's Son will receive all things as a permanent possession.

> By faith Noah … condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that is according to faith. (Hebrews 11:7 ULT)

Noah received righteousness as a permanent possession.

LIFTING means promoting or giving someone higher status or importance

> Then Haman recounted to them the glory of his wealth, and the multitude of his sons, and all about how the king had made him great and how he had **lifted** him over the officials and administrators of the king. (Esther 5:11 ULT)

LYING DOWN or SLEEPING means dying or being dead

> When your days are fulfilled and you **lie down with your fathers**, I will raise up a descendant after you, (2 Samuel 7:12a ULT)

> 'Are you really more beautiful than anyone else? Go down and **lie down** with the uncircumcised.' They will fall among those who were killed by the sword. The

sword has been drawn! She has been given to the sword; they will seize her and her multitudes. (Ezekiel 32:19-20 ULT)

REIGNING or RULING means controlling

This happened so that, as sin **ruled** in death, even so grace might **rule** through righteousness for everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:21 ULT)

Therefore do not let sin **rule** in your mortal body in order that you obey its lusts. (Romans 6:12 ULT)

RESTING or a RESTING PLACE means a safe and beneficial situation

Then Naomi, her mother-in-law, said to her, "My daughter, should I not seek a **resting place** for you, that will be good for you?" (Ruth 3:1 ULT)

Therefore I vowed in my anger that they would never enter into my **resting place**. (Psalm 95:11 ULT)

This is my **resting place** forever. I will live here, for I desire her. (Psalm 132:14 ULT)

The nations will seek him out, and his **resting place** will be glorious. (Isaiah 11:10b ULT)

RISING or STANDING UP means doing or taking action

Rise up for our help and redeem us for the sake of your covenant faithfulness. (Psalm 44:26 ULT)

Get up, go to Nineveh, the great city, and call out against it, because their wickedness has risen up before my face. (Jonah 1:2 ULT)

SEEING means knowledge, perception, notice, attention, or judgment

Why have I found favor **in your eyes** that you should take notice of me … (Ruth 2:10b ULT)

And the young woman was pleasing **in his eyes**, and she lifted kindness before his face. (Esther 2:9a ULT)

The **eyes** of Yahweh are everywhere, **keeping watch** over the evil and the good. (Proverbs 15:3 ULT)

But Haman remained in order to seek for his life from Esther the queen, for he **saw** that evil was determined against him by the king. (Esther 7:7b ULT)

SEEKING means pleading or begging

> But Haman remained in order to **seek** for his life from Esther the queen, for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king. (Esther 7:7b ULT)

SEEKING means trying to do something or making an effort to do something

> For Mordecai the Jew was second to the King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and favored by the multitude of his brothers, **seeking** good for his people and speaking peace to all its seed. (Esther 10:3 ULT)

SELLING means handing over to someone's control

BUYING represents removing from someone's control

> … {Yahweh} **sold** {the Israelites} into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim, the king of Aram Naharaim. (Judges 3:8a ULT)

SITTING means reigning, ruling, or judging

> A throne will be established in covenant faithfulness, and one from David's tent will faithfully **sit** there. (Isaiah 16:5a ULT)

> … in those days, as the king Ahasuerus **sat** on his royal throne, which was in Susa the citadel: (Esther 1:2 ULT)

STANDING means defending or successfully resisting

> So the wicked will not **stand** in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. (Psalm 1:5 ULT)

> … that the king gave to the Jews who were in every city by city: to gather and to **stand** for their life, to annihilate, and to slaughter, and to destroy any strength of a people or province that would attack them, children and women, and plunder their spoil; (Esther 8:11 ULT)

TURNING or TURNING OVER means changing

> … as the days when the Jews rested on them from their enemies, and as the month when it had **turned** for them from sorrow into joy and from mourning into a good day, in order to make them days of feasting and rejoicing and sending of gifts, a man to his friend, and gifts to the needy. (Esther 9:22 ULT)

Being UNCLEAN means not being acceptable for God's purposes

> You may eat any animal that has a split hoof and that also chews the cud. However, some animals either chew the cud or have a split hoof, and **you must**

> **not eat them**, animals such as the camel, because it chews the cud but does not have a split hoof. So the camel is **unclean** for you. (Leviticus 11:3-4 ULT)
>
> And if any of them dies and falls on anything, that thing will be **unclean**, whether it is made of wood, cloth, leather, or sackcloth. Whatever it is and whatever it is used for, it must be put into water; it will be **unclean** until evening. Then it will be **clean**. (Leviticus 11:32 ULT)

WALKING means behaving

a PATH or a WAY means a person's behavior

> Blessed is the man who does not **walk** in the advice of the wicked. (Psalm 1:1a ULT)
>
> For Yahweh approves of the **way** of the righteous. (Psalm 1:6a ULT)
>
> Turn from me the **path** of deceit. (Psalm 119:29a ULT)
>
> I will run in the **path** of your commandments. (Psalm 119:32a ULT)

Biblical Imagery — Natural Phenomena

Some common metonymies and metaphors from the Bible involving natural phenomena are listed below in alphabetical order. The word in all capital letters identifies an Image that represents an Idea. The specific word of the Image may not appear in every verse that uses the Image, but the text will communicate somehow the concept of the Image.

LIGHT represents moral righteousness, DARKNESS represents moral wickedness

> Woe to those **who call evil good, and good evil**; **who represent darkness as light, and light as darkness**; who represent bitter as sweet, and sweet as bitter! (Isaiah 5:20 ULT)

> But if your eye is **bad**, your whole body is **full of darkness**. Therefore, if the light that is in you is actually **darkness**, how great is that **darkness**! (Matthew 6:23 ULT)

LIGHT or SWEETNESS represents pleasant feelings, DARKNESS or BITTERNESS represents unpleasant feelings

> Truly the **light is sweet**, and it is a **pleasant thing** for the eyes to see the sun. (Ecclesiastes 11:7 ULT)

> I am a man who has seen **misery** under the rod of Yahweh's fury. He drove me away and caused me to walk in **darkness** rather than light. (Lamentations 3:1-2 ULT)

LIGHT represents wisdom, DARKNESS represents foolishness

> Then I began to understand that **wisdom has advantages over folly**, just as **light is better than darkness**. (Ecclesiastes 2:13 ULT)

> They are **darkened in their understanding**, being alienated from the life of God because of the **ignorance** that is in them, because of the **hardness of their hearts**. (Ephesians 4:18 ULT)

> For with you is the fountain of life; **in your light we will see light**. (Psalm 36:9 ULT)

LIGHT or FIRE represents life

> They say, 'Give into our hand the man who struck his brother, so that we may put him to death, to pay for the life of his brother whom he killed.' And so they would also destroy the heir. Thus they will put out the **burning coal** that I have left, and they will leave for my husband neither name nor descendant on the surface of the earth. (2 Samuel 14:7b ULT)

"You must not go to battle anymore with us, so that you do not put out the **lamp of Israel**." (2 Samuel 21:17b ULT)

I will give one tribe to Solomon's son, so that David my servant may always have **a lamp** before me in Jerusalem. (1 Kings 11:36a ULT)

Nevertheless for David's sake, Yahweh his God gave him **a lamp** in Jerusalem by raising up his son after him in order to strengthen Jerusalem. (1 Kings 15:4 ULT)

Indeed, **the light** of the wicked person will be put out; **the spark of his fire** will not shine. **The light** will be dark in his tent; **his lamp** above him will be put out. (Job 18:5-6 ULT)

For you give **light to my lamp**; Yahweh my God **lights up my darkness**. (Psalm 18:28 ULT)

A **dimly burning wick** he will not quench. (Isaiah 42:3b ULT)

DARKNESS or SHADOW represents death

Yet you have severely broken us in the place of jackals and covered us with the **shadow of death**. (Psalm 44:19 ULT)

LIGHT OF THE FACE represents smiling (that is, an attitude of grace or favor)

Yahweh, lift up the **light of your face** on us. (Psalm 4:6b ULT)

For they did not obtain the land for their possession by their own sword,
neither did their own arm save them;
but your right hand, your arm, and the **light of your face**,
because you were favorable to them. (Psalm 44:3 ULT)

they did not reject the **light of my face**. (Job 29:24b ULT)

Yahweh, they walk in the **light of your face**. (Psalm 89:15b ULT)

FIRE represents extreme feelings, particularly love or anger

Because lawlessness will increase, the love of many will **grow cold**. (Matthew 24:12 ULT)

Surging waters cannot **quench** love. (Song of Songs 8:7a ULT)

For **a fire is kindled by my anger** and **is burning** to the lowest Sheol. (Deuteronomy 32:22a ULT)

Therefore **the anger of Yahweh blazed** against Israel. (Judges 3:8a ULT)

When Yahweh heard this, **he was angry**; so **his fire burned** against Jacob, and **his anger** attacked Israel. (Psalm 78:21 ULT)

A WIDE SPACE represents safety, security, and ease

> They came against me on the day of my distress but Yahweh was my support.
> He set me free in **a wide open place**; he saved me because he was pleased with me. (Psalms 18:18-19 ULT)

> You have made **a wide place** for my feet beneath me,
> so my feet have not slipped. (2 Samuel 22:37 ULT)

> You made people ride over our heads;
> we went through fire and water,
> but you brought us out into **a spacious place**. (Psalms 66:12 ULT)

A NARROW SPACE represents danger or difficulties

> Answer me when I call, God of my righteousness;
> give me room when **I am hemmed in**.
> Have mercy on me and listen to my prayer. (Psalm 4:1 ULT)

> For a prostitute is a deep pit,
> and an immoral woman is **a narrow well**. (Proverbs 23:27 ULT)

WATER or LIQUID represents a moral or emotional quality (attitude, spirit, life)

> Yahweh has burst through my enemies before me like a bursting **flood of water**. (2 Samuel 5:20 ULT)

> He will make a complete end to his enemies with an overwhelming **flood**. (Nahum 1:8a ULT)

> I am being **poured out like water**. (Psalm 22:14a ULT)

> It will come about afterward that I will **pour out** my Spirit on all flesh. (Joel 2:28a ULT)

> For it is great, the anger of Yahweh that has been **poured out** on us. (2 Chronicles 34:21b ULT)

FLOODING WATER represents disaster

> I have come into **deep waters**, where the **floods flow** over me. (Psalm 69:2b ULT)

> Do not let the **floods of water** overwhelm me. (Psalm 69:15a ULT)

> Reach out your hand from above; rescue me out of **many waters** from the hand of foreigners. (Psalm 144:7 ULT)

A FOUNTAIN or SPRING OF WATER represents the origin or source of something

> The fear of Yahweh is a **fountain of life**. (Proverbs 14:27a ULT)

> For with you is the **fountain of life**; in your light we will see light. (Psalm 36:9 ULT)

LIQUID represents what someone says

> A quarreling wife is a constant **dripping of water**. (Proverbs 19:13b ULT)
>
> His lips are lilies, **dripping liquid myrrh**. (Song of Songs 5:13b ULT)
>
> My groaning is **poured out like water**. (Job 3:24b ULT)
>
> The words of a man's mouth are **deep waters**; the **fountain of wisdom** is a flowing stream. (Proverbs 18:4 ULT)

A ROCK represents salvation or protection

> Who is a **rock** except our God? (Psalm 18:31b ULT)
>
> Yahweh, **my rock**, and my redeemer. (Psalm 19:14b ULT)

Biblical Imagery — Man-made Objects

Some common metonymies and metaphors from the Bible involving man-made objects or are listed below in alphabetical order. The word in all capital letters identifies an Image that represents an Idea. The specific word of the Image may not appear in every verse that uses the Image, but the text will communicate somehow the concept of the Image.

BRONZE represents strength

> He trains … my arms to bend a bow of **bronze**. (Psalm 18:34 ULT)

CHAINS represent control

> "Let us tear off the **shackles** they put on us and throw off their **chains**." Psalm 2:3

CLOTHING represents moral or emotional qualities (attitudes, spirit, life)

> It is God who puts strength on me like a **belt**. (Psalm 18:32a ULT)
>
> Righteousness will be the **belt of his waist**, and faithfulness the **belt around his hips**. (Isaiah 11:5 ULT)
>
> May my adversaries be **clothed with shame**; may they **wear their shame like a robe**. (Psalm 109:29 ULT)
>
> I will **clothe his enemies with shame**. (Psalm 132:18a ULT)

A HOUSE represents a family or household (that is, the people who live and work at a family house or property)

> Now Yahweh said to Abram, "Go from your country, and from your relatives, and from your father's **household**, to the land that I will show you." (Genesis 12:1 ULT)
>
> On that day, the king Ahasuerus gave to Esther the queen the **house** of Haman, the adversary of the Jews. (Esther 8:1a ULT)
>
> They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your **household**." They spoke the word of the Lord to him, together with everyone in his house. Then he took them at that same hour of the night, and washed them from the blows, and he was baptized immediately—he and all those who were his. (Acts 16:31-33 ULT)

In the original languages (Hebrew and Greek), the words translated here as "household" literally mean "house." The word "house" is a metonym for the people who live in the house. This is a very common metonym in the Bible.

A HOUSE can represent a person's descendants or possessions.

> You have even spoken about your servant's family for a great while to come, and have shown me future generations, Lord Yahweh!… For you, Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, have revealed to your servant that you will build him a **house**. (2 Samuel 7:19, 27a ULT)

Here "house" represents David's descendants.

> On that day, the king Ahasuerus gave to Esther the queen the **house** of Haman, the adversary of the Jews. (Esther 8:1 ULT)

Here "house" represents all of Haman's property and possessions.

A HOUSE can represent a people group.

> Not a word failed from all the good things that Yahweh had spoken to the **house** of Israel; it all came to be. (Joshua 21:45 ULT)

Here "house" represents a people group, the people of Israel.

A SNARE (that is, a SMALL TRAP for birds worked by cords) represents death

> For he will rescue you from the **snare** of the hunter. (Psalm 91:3a ULT)
>
> The **cords of death** surrounded me, and the **snares** of sheol confronted me. (Psalm 116:3a ULT)
>
> The **cords of the wicked** have **ensnared** me. (Psalm 119:61a ULT)
>
> The wicked have **set a snare** for me. (Psalm 119:110a ULT)
>
> The wicked is **ensnared** by his own actions. (Psalm 9:16b ULT)
>
> They mingled with the nations and learned their ways and worshiped their idols, which became **a snare** to them. (Psalm 106:35-36 ULT)

In this case the snare was a persuasion to do evil, which leads to death.

A TENT represents a house, home, people in one's home, descendants

> God will likewise destroy you forever; he will take you up and pluck you out of your **tent**. (Psalm 52:5a ULT)
>
> The house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the **tent** of the upright will flourish. (Proverbs 14:11 ULT)
>
> A throne will be established in covenant faithfulness, and one from David's **tent** will faithfully sit there. (Isaiah 16:5a ULT)

Biblical Imagery — Farming

Some common metonymies and metaphors from the Bible relating to farming are listed below in alphabetical order. The word in all capital letters identifies an Image that represents an Idea. The specific word of the Image may not appear in every verse that uses the Image, but the text will communicate somehow the concept of the Image.

A FARMER represents God, and the VINEYARD represents his chosen people

> My well beloved had a **vineyard** on a very fertile hill.
> He spaded it, removed the stones, and planted it with an excellent kind of vine.
> He built a tower in the middle of it, and also built a winepress.
> He waited for it to produce grapes, but it only produced wild grapes. (Isaiah 5:1-2)

> For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his **vineyard**. (Matthew 20:1 ULT)

> There was a man, a landowner. He planted a **vineyard**, set a hedge about it, dug a winepress in it, built a watchtower, and rented it out to vine growers. Then he went into another country. (Matthew 21:33 ULT)

The GROUND represents people's hearts (inner being)

> For Yahweh says this to each person in Judah and Jerusalem: 'Plow your own **ground**, and do not sow among thorns.' (Jeremiah 4:3 ULT)

> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom but does not understand it … This is the seed that was sown **beside the road**. That which was sown on **rocky ground** is the person who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy … That which was sown **among the thorn plants**, this is the person who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word… That which was sown on the **good soil**, this is the person who hears the word and understands it. (Matthew 13:19-23 ULT)

> Break up your **unplowed ground**,
> for it is time to seek Yahweh. (Hosea 10:12 ULT)

SOWING represents actions or attitudes, and REAPING represents judgment or reward

> According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity and **sow** trouble **reap** it. (Job 4:8 ULT)

> Do not be deceived. God is not mocked, for whatever a man **plants**, that he will also **gather** in. For he who **plants** seed to his own sinful nature, from the sinful nature **will gathe**r in destruction. But the one who **plants** seed to the Spirit, from the Spirit **will gather** in eternal life. (Galatians 6:7-8 ULT)

THRESHING and WINNOWING represent the separation of evil people from good people

After farmers harvest wheat and other types of grain, they bring them to a **threshing floor**, a flat place with hard ground, and have oxen pull heavy wheeled carts or sleds without wheels over the grain to **thresh** it, to separate the usable grains from the useless chaff. Then they take large forks and **winnow** the threshed grain by throwing it up in the air so the wind can carry off the chaff (waste) while the grains fall back to the threshing floor, where they can be gathered and used for food. (See "thresh" and "winnow" pages in unfoldingWord® Translation Words for help translating thresh and winnow.)

> So I will **winnow** them with a pitchfork at the gates of the land. I will bereave them. I will destroy my people since they will not turn from their ways. (Jeremiah 15:7 ULT)

> His **winnowing fork** is in his hand to thoroughly clear off his **threshing floor** and to gather the wheat into his storehouse. But he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. (Luke 3:17 ULT)

GRAFTING represents God's allowing the Gentiles to become his people

> For if you were cut out of what is by nature a wild olive tree, and contrary to nature were **grafted** into a good olive tree, how much more will these Jews, who are the natural branches, be **grafted** back into their own olive tree? For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of this mystery, in order that you will not be wise in your own thinking. This mystery is that a partial hardening has occurred in Israel, until the completion of the Gentiles come in. (Romans 11:24-25 ULT)

RAIN represents God's gifts to his people

> … he comes and **rains** righteousness on you. (Hosea 10:12b ULT)

> For the land that drinks in the **rain** that often comes on it, and that produces plants useful to those for whom the land was also cultivated, receives a blessing from God. But land that bears thorns and thistles is worthless and is about to be cursed. Its end is to be burned. (Hebrews 6:7-8 ULT)

> So be patient, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See, the farmer awaits the valuable harvest from the ground. He is patiently waiting for it, until it receives the early and late **rains**. (James 5:7 ULT)

Biblical Imagery — Animals

Some common metonymies and metaphors from the Bible involving animals are listed below in alphabetical order. The word in all capital letters identifies an Image that represents an Idea. The specific word of the Image may not appear in every verse that uses the Image, but the text will somehow communicate the concept of the Image.

An ANIMAL HORN represents strength

> God is my rock. I take refuge in him.
> He is my shield, the **horn** of my salvation, my stronghold, and my refuge,
> the one who saves me from violence. (2 Samuel 22:3 ULT)

The "horn of my salvation" is the strong one who saves me.

> There I will make a **horn** to sprout for David. (Psalm 132:17a ULT)

The horn is King David's military strength.

BIRDS represent people who are in danger and defenseless

This is because some birds are easily trapped.

> I have been hunted like a **bird** by those who were my enemies; they hunted me
> without a reason. (Lamentations 3:52 ULT)

> Save yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter,
> like a **bird** from the hand of the fowler. (Proverbs 6:5 ULT)

A fowler is a person who catches birds, and a snare is a small trap.

> We have escaped like a **bird** out of the snare of the fowlers;
> the snare has been broken, and we have escaped. (Psalm 124:7 ULT)

BIRDS THAT EAT MEAT represent enemies who attack swiftly

In Habakkuk and Hosea, Israel's enemies who would come and attack them were compared to an eagle.

> Their horsemen come from a great distance—they fly like an **eagle** hurrying to
> eat! (Habakkuk 1:8 ULT)

> An **eagle** is coming over the house of Yahweh.
> … Israel has rejected what is good,
> and the enemy will pursue him. (Hosea 8:1, 3 ULT)

In Isaiah, God called a certain foreign king a bird of prey because he would come quickly and attack Israel's enemies.

> I call a **bird of prey** from the east, the man of my choice from a distant land. (Isaiah 46:11a ULT)

A BIRD'S WINGS represent protection

This is because birds spread their wings over their chicks to protect them from danger.

> Protect me like the apple of your eye; hide me under the shadow of **your wings** from the presence of the wicked ones who assault me, my enemies who surround me. (Psalms 17:8-9 ULT)

Here is another example of how the wings represent protection.

> Be merciful to me, God, be merciful to me,
> for I take refuge in you until these troubles are over.
> I stay under **your wings** for protection until this destruction is over. (Psalm 57:1 ULT)

DANGEROUS ANIMALS represent dangerous people

In Psalms, David referred to his enemies as lions.

> My life is among **lions**;
> I am among those who are ready to devour me.
> I am among people whose teeth are spears and arrows,
> and whose tongues are sharp swords. (Psalm 57:4 ULT)

Peter called the devil a roaring lion.

> Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary—the devil—like a roaring **lion** is stalking around, looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:8 ULT)

In Matthew, Jesus called false prophets wolves because of the harm they did to people by their lies.

> Beware of false prophets, those who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous **wolves**. (Matthew 7:15 ULT)

In Matthew, John the Baptist called the religious leaders poisonous snakes because of the harm they did by teaching lies.

> But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to him for baptism, he said to them, "You offspring of **vipers**, who warned you to flee from the wrath that is coming?" (Matthew 3:7 ULT)

EAGLES represent strength

> He satisfies your life with good things
> so that your youth is renewed like the **eagle**. (Psalm 103:5 ULT)

For Yahweh says this, “See, the enemy will come flying like an **eagle**, spreading out his wings over Moab.” (Jeremiah 48:40 ULT)

SHEEP or a FLOCK OF SHEEP represents people who need to be led or are in danger

My people have been a lost **flock**. Their shepherds have led them astray in the mountains. (Jeremiah 50:6 ULT)

He led his own people out like **sheep** and guided them through the wilderness like a **flock**. (Psalm 78:52 ULT)

Israel is a **sheep** scattered and driven away by lions. First the king of Assyria devoured him;
then after this, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon broke his bones. (Jeremiah 50:17 ULT)

See, I send you out as **sheep** in the midst of wolves, so be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves. (Matthew 10:16 ULT)

Biblical Imagery — Plants

Some common metonymies and metaphors from the Bible involving plants are listed below in alphabetical order. The word in all capital letters identifies an Image which represents an Idea. The specific word of the Image may not appear in every verse that uses the Image, but the text will communicate somehow the concept of the Image.

A BRANCH represents a person's descendant

In the examples below, Isaiah wrote about one of Jesse's descendants and Jeremiah wrote about one of David's descendants.

> **A shoot** will sprout from the root of Jesse, and **a branch** out of his root will bear fruit. (Isaiah 11:1 ULT)

> See, the days are coming—this is Yahweh's declaration—when I will raise up for David a righteous **branch**. He will reign as king; he will act wisely and cause justice and righteousness in the land. (Jeremiah 23:5 ULT)

In Job when it says "his branch will be cut off," it means that he will not have any descendants.

> His roots will be dried up beneath;
> above will **his branch be cut off**.
> His memory will perish from the earth;
> he will have no name in the street. (Job 18:16-17 ULT)

A PLANT represents a person

> God will likewise destroy you forever; he will … **root you out** of the land of the living. (Psalm 52:5 ULT)

A PLANT represents actions or behaviors

Just as planting one kind of seeds results in that kind of plant growing, behaving in one way results in that kind of consequence.

The action or behavior in the verses is marked in bold below.

> **Sow righteousness** for yourselves, and **reap the fruit** of covenant faithfulness. (Hosea 10:12a ULT)

> According to what I have seen, those who **plow iniquity** and **sow trouble reap it**. (Job 4:8 ULT)

> For the people **sow the wind and reap the whirlwind**. (Hosea 8:7a ULT)

> … what **fruit then did you have** at that time of the things of which you are now ashamed? (Romans 6:21a ULT)

A SEED represents the descendant(s) of a person or group of people

> The Jews set up and accepted for themselves, and for their **seed**, and for all those who unite themselves to them (and it will not pass away) to be making these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed time every year by year. (Esther 9:27 ULT)

A TREE represents a person

> He will be like **a tree planted** by the streams of water that **produces its fruit in its season**, whose **leaves do not wither**; whatever he does will prosper. (Psalm 1:3 ULT)
>
> I have seen the wicked and terrifying person spread out **like a green tree in its native soil**. (Psalm 37:35 ULT)
>
> … I am **like a green olive tree** in God's house. (Psalm 52:8a ULT)

A TREE represents something made of wood (such as a pole or platform)

> Then the matter was sought out and was found out, and the two of them were hung on a **tree**. (Esther 2:23a ULT)

This probably means that they were killed by either by being impaled on a wooden pole or by being hung from a gallows by a rope.

Biblical Imagery — Cultural Models

Description

Cultural models are mental images that the people of a culture use to think about and to talk about certain aspects of life or behavior. For example, Americans often think of many things, even marriage and friendship, as if they were machines. Americans might say "His marriage is breaking down" or "Their friendship is going full speed ahead." In this example, human relationships are modeled as a MACHINE. One can say that cultural models are complex metaphors that are commonly used by people of a particular culture.

Some common cultural models found in the Bible are listed below. First there are models for God, then models for humans, things, and experiences. Each heading has the model written in capital letters. That word or phrase does not necessarily appear in every verse, but the idea does.

God is modeled as a KING

> For God is the **King** over all the earth. (Psalm 47:7a ULT)
>
> For the **kingdom** is Yahweh's;
> he is the **ruler** over the nations. (Psalm 22:28 ULT)
>
> Your **throne**, God, is forever and ever;
> a **scepter** of justice is the scepter of your **kingdom**. (Psalm 45:6 ULT)
>
> This is what Yahweh says,
> "Heaven is my **throne**, and the earth is my **footstool**." (Isaiah 66:1a ULT)
>
> God **reigns** over the nations;
> God sits on his holy **throne**.
> The **princes** of the peoples have gathered together
> to the people of the God of Abraham;
> for the **shields** of the earth belong to God;
> he is greatly **exalted**. (Psalm 47:8-9 ULT)

God is modeled as a WARRIOR

> Yahweh is a **warrior**. (Exodus 15:3a ULT)
>
> Yahweh will go out as a **warrior**; as a **man of war** he will stir up his zeal… He will shout, yes, he will roar his **battle cries**; he will **show his enemies his power**. (Isaiah 42:13 ULT)
>
> Your right hand, Yahweh, is **glorious in power**; your right hand, Yahweh, **has shattered the enemy**. (Exodus 15:6 ULT)
>
> But **God will shoot them**; suddenly they will be **wounded with his arrows**. (Psalm 64:7 ULT)

> For you will turn them back; **you will draw your bow** before them. (Psalm 21:12 ULT)

A leader is modeled as a SHEPHERD and those he leads are modeled as SHEEP

> Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, “Look … when Saul was king over us, it was you who led the Israelite army. Yahweh said to you, ‘You will **shepherd** my people Israel, and you will become ruler over Israel.’” (2 Samuel 5:1-2 ULT)

> “Woe to the **shepherds** who destroy and scatter the **sheep** of my **pasture**—this is Yahweh’s declaration.” (Jeremiah 23:1 ULT)

> Guard yourselves and all the **flock** of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be careful to **shepherd** the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood. I know that after my departure, vicious wolves will come in among you, not sparing the **flock**. Even among you yourselves, men will come speaking perverse things which draw away the disciples after them. (Acts 20:28-30 ULT)

Life is modeled as BLOOD

In this model, the blood of a person or an animal represents its life.

> But you must not eat meat with **its life—that is its blood**—in it. (Genesis 9:4 ULT)

If blood is spilled or shed, someone has been killed.

> Whoever **sheds man’s blood**, by man will his **blood be shed**. (Genesis 9:6a ULT)

> In this way, this person would not die by the hand of the one who wanted to avenge **the blood that was shed**, until the accused person would first stand before the assembly. (Joshua 20:9b ULT)

If blood cries out, nature itself is crying out for vengeance on a person who killed someone. (This also includes personification, because the blood is pictured as someone that can cry out. See: Personification)

> Yahweh said, “What have you done? **Your brother’s blood is calling out to me** from the ground.” (Genesis 4:10 ULT)

A country is modeled as a WOMAN, and its gods are modeled as HER HUSBAND

> Now it happened that when Gideon had died, the sons of Israel turned back again and **pursued adulterously** after the Baals. They made Baal-Berith for themselves as a god. (Judges 8:33 ULT)

The nation of Israel is modeled as GOD'S SON

> When Israel was a young man I loved him, and I called **my son** out of Egypt. (Hosea 11:1 ULT)

The sun is modeled as BEING IN A CONTAINER when it is not visible

> Yet their words go out over all the earth and their speech to the end of the world. He has pitched **a tent for the sun** among them. The sun is like a bridegroom coming out of **his chamber** and like a strong man who rejoices when he runs his race. (Psalm 19:4-5 ULT)

Psalm 110 pictures the sun as being in the womb before it comes out in the morning.

> From **the womb** of the dawn your youth will be to you like the dew. (Psalm 110:3b ULT)

Things that can move fast are modeled as having WINGS

This is especially true of things that move in the air or the sky.

The sun is modeled as a disc with wings which allow it to "fly" through the air from east to west during the daytime. In Psalm 139, "the wings of the morning" refers to the sun. In Malachi 4 God called himself the "sun of righteousness" and he spoke of the sun as having wings.

> If I fly away on **the wings of the morning** and go to live in the uttermost parts across the sea … (Psalm 139:9 ULT)

> But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing **in its wings**. (Malachi 4:2 ULT)

The wind moves quickly and is modeled as having wings.

> He was seen on the **wings of the wind**. (2 Sam. 22:11b ULT)

> He rode on a cherub and flew; he glided on the **wings of the wind**. (Psalm 18:10 ULT)

> You walk on the **wings of the wind**. (Psalm 104:3b ULT)

Futility is modeled as something that the WIND can blow away

In this model, the wind blows away things that are worthless, and they are gone.

Psalm 1 and Job 27 show that wicked people are worthless and will not live long.

> The wicked are not so,
> but are instead **like the chaff that the wind drives away**. (Psalm 1:4 ULT)

> **The east wind carries him away**, and he leaves;
> **it sweeps him out of his place**. (Job 27:21 ULT)

The writer of Ecclesiastes says that everything is worthless.

> "**Like a vapor of mist**,
> **like a breeze in the wind**,
> everything vanishes, leaving many questions.
> What profit does mankind gain from all the work that they labor at under the sun?" (Ecclesiastes 1:2-3 ULT)

In Job 30:15, Job complains that his honor and prosperity are gone.

> Terrors are turned upon me;
> my honor is **driven away as if by the wind**;
> my prosperity **passes away as a cloud**. (Job 30:15 ULT)

Human warfare is modeled as DIVINE WARFARE

When there was a war between nations, people believed that the gods of those nations were also at war.

> This happened while the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, those whom Yahweh had killed among them, for **he also inflicted punishment on their gods**. (Numbers 33:4 ULT)

> And what nation is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom you, God, went and rescued for yourself? … You drove out nations **and their gods** from before your people, whom you rescued from Egypt. (2 Samuel 7:23 ULT)

> The servants of the king of Aram said to him, "**Their god is a god of the hills. That is why they were stronger than we were**. But now let us fight against them in the plain, and surely there we will be stronger than they are." (1 Kings 20:23 ULT)

Constraints in life are modeled as PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

The verses below are not about real physical boundaries but about difficulties or the lack of difficulties in life.

> He has built **a wall** around me, and I cannot escape. He has made my shackles heavy. (Lamentations 3:7 ULT)

> He blocked my path with **a wall of hewn stone**; he made my paths crooked. (Lamentations 3:9 ULT)

> **Measuring lines** have been laid for me in pleasant places. (Psalm 16:6a ULT)

Dangerous places are modeled as NARROW PLACES

In Psalm 4 David asks God to rescue him.

> Answer me when I call, God of my righteousness;
> give me room **when I am hemmed in**.
> Have mercy on me and listen to my prayer. (Psalm 4:1 ULT)

A distressing situation is modeled as a WILDERNESS

When Job was distressed because of all the sad things that happened to him, he spoke as if he were in a wilderness. Jackals and ostriches are animals that live in the wilderness.

> My heart is troubled and does not rest;
> days of affliction have come on me.
> I have gone about like one who was living in the dark, but not because of the sun;
> I stand up in the assembly and cry for help.
> I am **a brother to jackals**,
> **a companion of ostriches**. (Job 30:27-29 ULT)

Wellbeing is modeled as PHYSICAL CLEANLINESS, and evil is modeled as PHYSICAL DIRTINESS

Leprosy is a disease. If a person had it, he was said to be unclean.

> Behold, a leper came to him and bowed before him, saying, “Lord, if you are willing, **you can make me clean**.” Jesus reached out his hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing. Be clean.” Immediately he was **cleansed of his leprosy.** (Matthew 8:2-3 ULT)

An “unclean spirit” is an evil spirit.

> When an **unclean spirit** has gone away from a man, it passes through waterless places and looks for rest, but does not find it. (Matthew 12:43 ULT)

Checking Manual

Introduction to Checking

Introduction to Translation Checking

Translation Checking

Introduction

Why do we do Translation Checking?

As part of the translation process, it is necessary that several people check the translation to make sure that it is clearly communicating the message that it should communicate. A beginning translator who was told to check his translation once said, “But I speak my native language perfectly. The translation is for that language. What more is needed?” What he said was true, but there are two more things to keep in mind.

First, he may not have understood the source text correctly, and so someone who knows what it should say might be able to correct the translation. This could be because he did not correctly understand a phrase or expression in the source language. In this case, someone else who understands the source language well can correct the translation.

Or it could be that he did not understand something about what the Bible meant to communicate at a certain place. In this case, someone who knows the Bible well, such as a Bible teacher or a Bible translation checker, can correct the translation.

Secondly, although the translator may know very well what the text should say, the way he translated it might mean something else to a different person. That is, another person might think that the translation is talking about something other than what the translator intended. Or the person hearing or reading the translation might not understand what the translator was trying to say.

It often happens when one person writes a sentence and then another person reads it (or sometimes even if the first person reads it again later), that they understand it to say something different from what the writer meant. Take the following sentence as an example.

“John took Peter to the temple and then he went home.”

In his mind when he wrote it, the writer meant that Peter went home, but the reader thought that the writer probably meant that it was John who went home. The sentence needs to be changed so that it is more clear.

Finally, a translation team is very close to and involved in their work, and so they sometimes do not see mistakes that others can see more easily. For these reasons, it is always necessary to check what someone else understands from the translation so that you (the translator) can make it more accurate and more clear.

This Checking Manual is a guide to the process of checking. It will guide you through several kinds of checks that will allow you to fix these problems. We believe that having many people

doing a variety of different checks will result in a faster checking process, allow broad church participation and ownership, and produce better translations.

For more examples of the things that need to be checked, see Types of Things to Check.

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Introduction to the Checking Manual

Translation Checking Manual

This manual describes how to check Bible translations in Other Languages (OLs) for accuracy, clarity, and naturalness. (For the process to check Gateway Languages (GLs), see the Gateway Language Manual). This Translation Checking Manual also discusses the importance of obtaining approval for the translation and the translation process from the church leaders of the language area.

The manual begins with instructions for checking the translation that the translation team will use to check each other's work. These checks include the Oral Partner Check and the Team Oral Chunk Check. Then there are instructions for the translation team to use for checking the translation with the translationCore software. These include the Translation Words Check and the Translation Notes check.

After this, the translation team will need to check the translation with the Language Community for clarity and naturalness. This is necessary because other speakers of the language can often suggest better ways of saying things that the translation team may not have thought of. Sometimes the translation team makes the translation sound strange because they are following the words of the source language too closely. Other speakers of the language can help them fix that. Another check that the translation team can do at this point is Church Leader Check (or OL pastor check). Since the OL pastors are familiar with the Bible in the Gateway Language (GL), they can check the translation for accuracy to the GL Bible. They can also catch mistakes that the translation team did not see because the translation team is so close to and involved in their work. Also, the translation team may lack some of the expertise or knowledge of the Bible that other OL pastors might have who are not part of the translation team. In this way, the whole language community can work together to make sure that the Bible translation is accurate, clear, and natural in the target language.

A further check for the accuracy of the Bible translation is to align it to the original languages of the Bible using the Word Alignment tool in Translation Core. After all of these checks have been performed and the translation has been aligned, the leaders of the OL church networks will want to Review the translation and give their Endorsement. Because many leaders of church networks do not speak the language of the translation, there are also instructions for creating a Back Translation, which allows people to check a translation in a language that they do not speak.

The Goal of Checking

Why Check?

The goal of checking is to help the translation team produce a translation that is accurate, natural, clear, and accepted by the church. The translation team also wants to achieve this goal. This might seem easy, but it is actually very difficult to do, and achieving it takes many people and many, many revisions to the translation. For this reason, the checkers play a very important role in helping the translation team to produce a translation that is accurate, natural, clear, and accepted by the church.

Accurate

The checkers who are pastors, church leaders, and leaders of church networks will help the translation team produce a translation that is accurate. They will do this by comparing the translation with the source language and, when possible, also with the original languages of the Bible. (For more information about accurate translations, see Create Accurate Translations.)

Clear

The checkers who are members of the language community will help the translation team produce a translation that is clear. They will do this by listening to the translation and pointing out to them the places where the translation is confusing or does not make sense to them. Then the translation team can fix those places so that they are clear. (For more information about clear translations, see Create Clear Translations.)

Natural

The checkers who are members of the language community will also help the translation team produce a translation that is natural. They will do this by listening to the translation and pointing out to them the places where the translation sounds strange and does not sound like the way that someone who speaks their language would say it. Then the translation team can fix those places so that they are natural. (For more information about natural translations, see Create Natural Translations.)

Church-approved

The checkers who are members of a church in the language community will help the translation team produce a translation that is approved and accepted by the church in that community. They will do this by working together with members and leaders of other churches from the language community. When members and leaders that represent the churches of a language community work together and agree that the translation is good, then it will be accepted and used by the churches in that community. (For more information about translations that are approved by the church, see Create Church-Approved Translations.)

Checking Authority and Process

Explanation

Accountability

The Bible belongs to the global Church, meaning all Christians throughout history and throughout the world. Every part of the Church is accountable to every other part of the Church for how we interpret, proclaim, and live what the Bible says. In regard to Bible translation, each language of the world will have its own way of expressing the meaning that the Bible contains. Even so, the part of the Church that speaks each language is accountable to the other parts of the Church for how they express that meaning. For that reason, those who translate the Bible must study how others have translated it. They must be guided by and open to correction from others who are experts in biblical languages and how the Church has understood and interpreted the Bible through history.

Authority and Capacity

With the above understanding, we also affirm that the church that speaks each language has the authority to decide for themselves what is and what is not a good quality translation of the Bible in their language. While this authority to check and approve a Bible translation is unchanging, the ability to carry out the process of checking a Bible translation can increase over time. In other words, the authority for determining the quality of a Bible translation belongs to the church that speaks the language of the translation, independent of their current ability, experience, or access to resources that facilitate the checking of the Bible translation. So while the church in a language group has the authority to check and approve their own Bible translation, the unfoldingWord® tools (including these modules of unfoldingWord® Translation Academy) are designed to enable the church in each language group to have the capacity to check the quality of their Bible translation using an excellent process. These tools are designed to give the church in each language group access to some of what Bible experts have said about the Bible and how those in other parts of the Church have translated it into other languages.

The process for checking a translation will be described in the rest of this Checking Manual.

The Checking Process

Oral Partner Check

How to do an Oral Partner Check

At this point, you (the translator) should have already gone through the steps of drafting at least one chapter of your translation, following the guidelines in the module called First Draft. Now you are ready for others to help you to check it, to find any errors or problems, and to make it better. You (or your translation team) should check your translation before you translate very many stories or chapters of the Bible, so that you can correct mistakes as early as possible in the translation process. Many of the steps in this process will need to be done several times before the translation is finished. To do an Oral Partner Check, follow these steps.

- Read your translation to a partner (a member of the translation team) who did not work on this passage.
- The partner can listen first for naturalness (without looking at the source text) and tell you which parts do not sound natural in your language. Together, you can think of how someone would say that meaning in your language.
- Use those ideas to change the unnatural parts of your translation to be more natural. For more information, see Natural.
- Then read the passage to your partner again. This time, the partner can check for accuracy by listening to the translation while following along in the source text. The purpose of this step is to make sure that the translation accurately communicates the meaning of the original story or Bible passage.
- Your partner can tell you if there is any part where something was added, was missing, or was changed when compared to the source text.
- Correct those parts of the translation.
- It can also be useful to do accuracy checking with members of the community who are not part of the translation team. They should be speakers of the language of the translation, be respected in the community, and, if possible, know the Bible well in the source language. These checkers can help the translation team to think about the best way to translate the meaning of the story or Bible passage in their own language. Having more than one person checking a Bible passage in this way can be helpful, because often different checkers will notice different things.
- For more help with checking for accuracy, see Accuracy-Check.
- If you are unsure about something, ask other members of the translation team.

Team Oral Chunk Check

To check the translation of a passage or chapter as a team, do a Team Oral Chunk Check. To do this, each translator will read his translation out loud to the rest of the team. At the end of each chunk, the translator will stop so that the team can discuss that chunk. Ideally, each written translation is projected where all can see it while the translator reads the text orally.

The duties of the team members are divided—it is important that each team member only plays one of the following roles at a time.

1. One or more team members listen for naturalness. If something is unnatural, at the end of reading the chunk, they recommend a more natural way to say it.
2. One or more team members follow along in the source text, noting anything that is added, is missing, or is changed. At the end of reading the chunk, they alert the team that something was added, was missing, or was changed.
3. Another team member follows along in the report mode of translationCore, noting all of the highlighted key terms in the source text. The team then discusses any key terms in the translation that seem inconsistent or inappropriate, along with any other problems that surface in the reading. If this mode is not available, this team member can look up the key terms on the team's key term spreadsheet.

These steps can be repeated as necessary until the team is satisfied with their translation.

At this point, the translation is considered a first draft, and the team needs to also do the following.

1. Someone on the translation team needs to enter the text into translationStudio. If the team has been using translationStudio from the beginning of drafting, then all that needs to be entered at this point are the changes that the team has made.
2. A new audio recording should be made of the translation, incorporating all of the changes and improvements that the team has made.
3. The translationStudio files and the audio recording should be uploaded to the team repository on Door43.

translationWords Check in tC

How to do a translationWord check in translationCore®

1. Sign in to translationCore®
2. Select the project (book of the Bible) that you want to check
3. Select the category or categories of words that you want to check
4. Select your Gateway Language
5. Click “Launch”
6. Work through the list of words on the left by following the instructions that appear to the right of the Bible verse.
7. To understand the source word better, you can read the short definition in the blue bar, or the longer one in the panel on the right side.
8. After selecting (highlighting) the translation for the word or phrase in the list, click “Save.”
9. Consider whether or not the term that was chosen makes sense in this context.
10. If you think that the translation for the term is a good translation, then click “Save and Continue.”
11. If you think that there is a problem with the verse or that the translation for the word or phrase is not good, then either edit the verse to make it better, or make a comment telling someone who will review your work what you think might be wrong with the translation here.
12. If you have made an edit, you may need to make your selection again.
13. When you are finished making your edit or comment, click “Save and Continue.” If you prefer to only make a comment about a term and not make a selection for it, then click on the next verse in the list on the left to go on to the next word.

After a selection has been made for all of the verses where a translationWord occurs, the list for that word can be reviewed. The instructions that follow are for the reviewer or for the translation team.

1. You will now be able to see a list of the translations that were made for each term under each translationWord on the left. If you see that the word was translated in different ways in different verses, you will want to review the places that have differences to see if the target term used was the correct one for each context.
2. You will also want to review any comments that were made by others. To do that, click the funnel symbol to the right of “Menu” at the upper left. A list will open, including the word “Comments.”
3. Click the box next to “Comments.” This will make all verses that do not have comments in them disappear.
4. To read the comments, click on the first verse in the list.
5. Click on “Comment.”
6. Read the comment, and decide what you will do about it.
7. If you decide to make an edit to the verse, then click “Cancel” and then “Edit Verse.” This will open a small screen where you can edit the verse.
8. When you are finished making the edit, select the reason for the change, and then click “Save.”

Continue this process until you have acted on all of the comments that were left for you.

If you are unsure if a translation for a certain term is correct in a certain context, it might be helpful to consult the key terms spreadsheet that the translation team made as they were creating the translation. You may also want to discuss a difficult term with others on the translation team and try to find a solution together. You may need to use a different term in some contexts, or find another way to communicate the concept, such as using a longer phrase.

translationNotes Check in tC

How to do a translationNotes check in translationCore®

1. Sign in to translationCore®
2. Select the project (book of the Bible) that you want to check
3. Select the category or categories of Notes that you want to check
4. Select your Gateway Language
5. Click “Launch.” The verses to be checked will be listed on the left side, divided into different categories of Notes.
6. Select a verse to check, and read the Note for that verse in the blue bar. It is best to check all of the verses in the same category before moving to a new category.

Some Notes refer to a more general issue that applies to the specific verse being examined. To understand this more general issue and how it applies to the current verse, read the information in the panel on the right side.

1. After selecting (highlighting) the translation for the word or phrase in the Note, click “Save.”
2. Consider whether or not the translation that was chosen for that word or phrase makes sense in this context.
3. Decide whether or not the translation is correct, considering the issue that the Note talks about.
4. After considering these things, if you think that the translation is a good translation, then click “Save and Continue.”
5. If you think that there is a problem with the verse or that the translation for the word or phrase is not good, then either edit the verse to make it better, or make a comment telling someone who will review your work what you think might be wrong with the translation here. If you have made an edit, you may need to make your selection again.
6. When you are finished making your edit or comment, click “Save and Continue.” If you prefer to only make a comment for the word or phrase and not make a selection for it, then click on the next verse in the list on the left to go on to the next verse.

After a selection has been made for all of the verses in a Note category, the list of translations in that category can be reviewed. The instructions that follow are for the reviewer or for the translation team.

1. You will now be able to see a list of the translations that were made for each word or phrase under each translationNote category on the left. Choose the category that you want to review. It may be that different members of the translation team will have better knowledge in different areas. For example, one team member may be very good at reviewing metaphors, while another may be very good at understanding and correcting difficult grammar, such as passive voice constructions.
2. You will want to review any comments that were made by others. To do that, click the funnel symbol to the right of “Menu” at the upper left. A list will open, including the word “Comments.”
3. Click the box next to “Comments.” This will make all verses that do not have comments in them disappear.
4. To read the comments, click on the first verse in the list.
5. Click on “Comment.”

6. Read the comment, and decide what you will do about it.
7. If you decide to make an edit to the verse, click “Cancel” and then “Edit Verse.” This will open a small screen where you can edit the verse.
8. When you are finished making the edit, select the reason for the change, then click “Save.”
9. Continue this process until you have acted on all of the comments that were left for you.

After you have finished reviewing a Note category or a Bible book, you may still have questions about some verses or Note checks. You may want to discuss a difficult verse with others on the translation team and try to find a solution together, study more Bible translation resources, or refer the question to a Bible translation expert.

Language Community Check

Checking the Translation for Clarity and Naturalness

Language Community Check

After the translation team has completed the steps of drafting and checking as a team and performed the checks in translationCore, the translation is ready to be checked by the target language community. The community will help the translation team to make the translation communicate its message clearly and naturally in the target language. To do this, the translation committee will choose people to be trained in the process of community checking. These could be the same people who have been doing the translating.

These people will go throughout the language community and check the translation with members of the language community. It is best if they do this checking with a variety of people, including young and old, male and female, and speakers from various parts of the language area. This will help the translation to be understandable to everyone.

To check a translation for naturalness and clarity, it is not helpful to compare it to the source language. During these checks with the community, no one should look at the source language Bible. People will look at the source language Bible again for other checks, such as the check for accuracy, but not during these checks.

To check for naturalness, you will read or play a recording of a section of the translation to members of the language community. Before you read or play the translation, tell the people listening that you want them to stop you if they hear something that is not natural in their language. (For more information on how to check a translation for naturalness, see Natural Translation.) When they stop you, ask what was not natural, and ask how they would say it in a more natural way. Write down or record their answer, along with the chapter and verse where this phrase was, so that the translation team can consider using this way of saying the phrase in the translation.

To check the translation for clarity, there is a set of questions and answers for each *Open Bible Story* and for each chapter of the Bible that you can use. When members of the language community can answer the questions easily, you will know that the translation is clear. (See https://ufw.io/tq/ for the unfoldingWord® Translation Questions.)

To use these questions, follow these steps:

1. Read or play the passage of the translation to one or more members of the language community who will answer the questions. These members of the language community must be people who have not been involved in the translation before. In other words, the community members who are asked the questions should not already know the answers to the questions from working on the translation or from previous knowledge of the Bible. We want them to be able to answer the questions only from hearing or reading the translation of the story or Bible passage. This is how we will know if the translation is communicating clearly or not. For this same reason, it is important that the community members not look at a Bible while they are answering these questions.

2. Ask the community members some of the questions for that passage, one question at a time. It is not necessary to use all of the questions for each story or chapter if it seems that the community members are understanding the translation well.

3. After each question, a member of the language community will answer the question. If the person only answers with a "yes" or a "no," then the questioner should ask a further question so that he can be sure that the translation is communicating well. A further question could be something like, "How do you know that?" or "What part of the translation tells you that?"

4. Write down or record the answer that the person gives, along with the chapter and verse of the Bible or the story and frame number of Open Bible Stories that you are talking about. If the person's answer is similar to the suggested answer that has been provided for the question, then the translation is clearly communicating the right information at that point. The answer does not have to be exactly the same as the suggested answer to be a right answer, but it should give basically the same information. Sometimes the suggested answer is very long. If the person answers with only part of the suggested answer, that is also a right answer.

5. If the answer is unexpected or very different than the suggested answer, or if the person cannot answer the question, then the translation team will need to revise the part of the translation that communicates that information so that it communicates the information more clearly.

6. Be sure to ask the same questions to several people in the language community, including male and female and young and old, as well as people from different areas of the language community, if possible. If several people have difficulty answering the same question, then there is probably a problem with that part of the translation. Make a note of the difficulty or misunderstanding that the people have, so that the translation team can revise the translation and make it more clear.

7. After the translation team has revised the translation of a passage, then ask some other members of the language community the same questions for that passage. That is, ask other speakers of the language who have not been involved in checking that same passage before. If they answer the questions correctly, then the translation of that passage is now communicating well.

8. Repeat this process with each story or Bible chapter until members of the language community can answer the questions well, showing that the translation is communicating the right information clearly. The translation is ready for the church leader's accuracy check when language community members who have not heard the translation before can answer the questions correctly.

9. Go to the Community Evaluation page and answer the questions there. (See Language Community Evaluation Questions.)

For more information about making a clear translation, see Clear. There are also methods other than the Translation Questions that you can use to check a translation with the community. For these other methods, see Other Methods.

Other Methods

Other Checking Methods

As well as asking questions, there are other checking methods that you may also use to ensure that the translation is clear, easy to read, and sounds natural to the listeners. Here are some other methods that you may like to try:

- **Retell Method**: You (the translator or checker) can read a passage or story and ask someone else to retell what was said. If the person can easily retell the passage, then the passage was clear. Make a note of any place that the person left out or told incorrectly, along with the chapter and verse. The translation team may need to revise those places in the translation to make them more clear. Also make note of any different ways that the person said things that mean the same thing as in the translation. It may be that these ways of saying things are more natural than the ways in the translation. The translation team can use these ways of saying the same thing to make the translation more natural.

- **Reading Method**: Someone other than you (the translator or checker) can read aloud a passage of the translation while you listen and take notes of where the person pauses or makes mistakes. This will show how easy or how difficult it is to read and understand the translation. Look at the places in the translation where the reader paused or made mistakes and consider what made that part of the translation difficult. The translation team may need to revise the translation at those points so that it is easier to read and understand.

- **Offer Alternate Translations**: At some places in the translation, the translation team may not be sure of the best way to express a source word or phrase. In this case, ask other people how they would translate it. For those who do not understand the source language, describe what you are trying to say and ask how they would say it. If different translations seem equally good, offer people a choice between two translations of the same idea and ask them which alternative translation they think is the most clear.

- **Reviewer Input**: Let others whom you respect read your translation. Ask them to take notes and tell you where it might be improved. Look for better word choices, more natural expressions, and also spelling adjustments.

- **Discussion Groups**: Ask people to read the translation out loud in a group of people and allow the people to ask questions for clarification. Pay attention to the words they use, since alternate words and expressions come up when someone is trying to make sense of a difficult point. These alternate words and expressions might be better than the ones in the translation. Write them down, along with the chapter and verse that they are about. The translation team can use these to improve the translation. Also make note of the places where people do not understand the translation so that the translation team can make those places clearer.

Clear Translation

A Clear Translation

A translation should be clear. That means that someone reading or hearing it can easily understand what it is trying to say. It is possible to see if a translation is clear by reading it to yourself. But it is even better if you read it out loud to someone else from the language community. As you read the translation, ask yourself (or the person that you are reading to) questions like those listed below to see if the translated message is clear. For this section of testing, do not compare the new translation with the source language translation. If there is a problem at any place, make a note of it so that you can discuss the problem with the translation team at a later time.

1. Do the words and phrases of the translation make the message understandable? (Are the words confusing, or do they tell you plainly what the translator means?)
2. Do your community members use the words and expressions found in the translation, or has the translator borrowed many words from the national language? (Is this the way your people talk when they want to say important things in your language?)
3. Does the translation speak well to the audience that you have decided to aim your traslation at? (Remember that young and old people may choose different words and expressions.)
4. Can you read the text easily and understand what the writer might say next? (Is the translator using a good style of telling the story? Is he telling things in a way that makes sense, so that each section fits with what came before and what comes after? Do you have to stop and read part of it again in order to understand it?)

Additional help:

- One way to determine if the text is clear is to read a few verses at a time out loud and ask someone listening to retell the story after each section. If the person can easily restate your message, then the writing is clear. For other methods of testing the translation, see Other Methods.
- If there is a place where the translation is not clear, make a note of that so that you can discuss it with the translation team.

Natural Translation

A Natural Translation

To translate the Bible so that it is natural means that the translation should sound like it was written by a member of the target language community. The translation should not sound like it was written by a foreigner. The translation should say things in the way that speakers of the target language say them. When a translation is natural, it is much easier to understand.

To check a translation for naturalness, it is not helpful to compare it to the source language. During this check for naturalness, no one should look at the source language Bible. People will look at the source language Bible again for other checks—such as the check for accuracy—but not during this check.

To check a translation for naturalness, you or another member of the language community must read it out loud or play a recording of it. It is difficult to evaluate a translation for naturalness when you are only looking at it on paper. But when your people hear the language, they will know immediately if it sounds right or not.

You can read it out loud to one other person who speaks the target language or to a group of people. Before you start reading, tell the people listening that you want them to stop you when they hear something that does not sound like the way someone from your language community would say it. When someone stops you, then you can discuss together how someone would say that same thing in a more natural way.

It is helpful to think about a situation in your village in which people would talk about the same kind of thing that the translation is talking about. Imagine people that you know talking about that thing, and then say it out loud in that way. If others agree that that is a good and natural way to say it, then write it that way in the translation.

It can also be helpful to read or play a passage of the translation several times. People might notice different things each time that they hear it, that is, things that could be said in a more natural way.

Acceptable Style

Translation in an Acceptable Style

As you read the new translation, ask yourself these questions. These are questions that will help determine whether or not the translation has been done in a style that is acceptable to the language community:

1. Is the translation written in a way that can be understood easily by both young and old members of the language community? (Whenever someone speaks, they can change their choice of words for either a younger or an older audience. Is this translation done using words that communicate well to both young and old people?)
2. Is the style of this translation more formal or informal? (Is the manner of speaking the way that the local community prefers, or should it be more or less formal?)
3. Does the translation use too many words that were borrowed from another language, or are these words acceptable to the language community?
4. Did the writer use an appropriate form of the language acceptable to the wider language community? (Is the writer familiar with the dialects of your language found throughout the area? Did the writer use a form of the language that all of the language community understands well, or did he use a form that is used in only a small area?)

If there is a place where the translation uses language in the wrong style, make a note of that so that you can discuss it with the translation team.

Language Community Evaluation Questions

This page can be used as a checklist for the work of the Community Checkers. This page can be printed, filled in by the translation team and community leaders, and kept as a record of the process of checking that was done for this translation.

We, the members of the translation team, affirm that we have checked the translation of _____ with members of the language community.

- We have checked the translation with old people and young people, and with men and women.
- We used the translationQuestions when we checked the translation with the community.
- We corrected the translation to make it clearer and easier to understand in the places where the community members did not understand it well.

Please also answer the following questions. The answers to these questions will help those in the wider Christian community know that the target language community finds the translation to be clear, accurate, and natural.

- List a few passages where the community feedback was helpful. How did you change these passages to make them clearer?

- Write an explanation for some of the Important Terms, explaining how they are equal to terms used in the source language. This will help the checkers understand why you chose these terms.

- Does the community verify that there is a good flow to the language when the passages are read out loud? (Does the language sound like the writer was a person from your own community?)

The community leaders might want to add their own information to this or make a summary statement about how acceptable this translation is to the local community. The wider church leadership will have access to this information, and it will help them to understand and to have confidence in the checking process that has been done so far. This will help them to validate the translation as approved by the local Christian community both when they do the Accuracy Check and when they do the final Validation Check.

Church Leader Check

Accuracy Checking by Church Leaders

Accuracy Checking by Church Leaders

After the translation has been checked by community members for clarity and naturalness, it will be checked by church leaders for accuracy. These are the guidelines for these church leaders who do the accuracy checking. They should be mother-tongue speakers of the target language and also understand well one of the languages in which the source text is available. They should not be the same people who did the translation. They should be church leaders who know the Bible well. Usually these reviewers will be pastors. These church leaders should represent as many of the different church networks in the language community as possible.

These reviewers should follow these steps:

1. Read the Translation Guidelines to make sure that the translation is in agreement with these as they review the translation.
2. Answer the questions about the translator or translation team that are located at Translator Qualifications.
3. Verify that the translation has been done in a style that is acceptable to the intended audience by asking the questions at Acceptable Style.
4. Verify that the translation accurately communicates the meaning of the source text by following the guidelines at Accuracy Check.
5. Verify that the translation is complete by following the guidelines at Complete Translation.
6. After you (the accuracy checker) have reviewed several chapters or one book of the Bible, meet with the translation team and ask about each problem that you have discovered. Discuss with the translation team how they might adjust the translation in order to fix each problem. Make plans to meet again with the translation team at a later time, after they have had time to adjust the translation and test it with the community.
7. Meet again with the translation team to verify that they have fixed the problems.
8. Affirm that the translation is good on the Accuracy Affirmation page.

Checking the Translation for Accuracy

Checking the Translation for Accuracy by Pastors and Church Leaders

It is very important to make sure that the new translation is accurate. A translation is accurate when it communicates the same meaning as the original. In other words, an accurate translation communicates the same message that the original writer intended to communicate. A translation can be accurate even though it uses more or fewer words or puts the ideas in a different order. Often this is necessary in order to make the original message clear in the target language.

Although members of the translation team have checked the translation for accuracy with each other during the Oral Partner Check, the translation will continue to improve as it is checked by many people, especially by pastors and church leaders. Each passage or book can be checked by one church leader, or, if many leaders are available, there can be several church leaders checking each passage or book. Having more than one person checking a story or passage can be helpful, because often different checkers will notice different things.

The church leaders who do accuracy checking should be speakers of the language of the translation, be respected in the community, and know the Bible well in the source language. They should not be the same people who translated the passage or book that they are checking. The accuracy checkers will be helping the translation team make sure that the translation says everything that the source says, and that it does not add things that are not part of the source message. Keep in mind, however, that accurate translations also might include Implicit Information.

It is true that the language community members who do the Language Community Check *must not* look at the source text while they check the translation for naturalness and clarity. But for accuracy testing, the accuracy checkers *must* look at the source text so that they can compare it with the new translation.

The Church Leaders doing accuracy checking should follow these steps:

1. If possible, find out ahead of time which set of stories or which Bible passage you will be checking. Read the passage in several versions in any languages you understand. Read the passage in the ULT and UST, along with unfoldingWord® Translation Notes and unfoldingWord® Translation Words. You can read these in translationStudio or in Bible Viewer.

2. Then each of the accuracy checkers should read the translation (or listen to the recording) by himself, comparing it to the original Bible passage or story in the source language. The checker can do this using translationStudio. It can be helpful for someone, such as the translator, to read the translation out loud to the checker while the checker follows along looking at the source Bible or Bibles. As the checker reads (or listens to) the translation and compares it to the source, he should keep in mind these general questions:

    - Does the translation add anything to the original meaning? (The original meaning also includes Implicit Information.)
    - Is there any part of the meaning that is left out of the translation?

    - Has the translation changed the meaning in any way?

3. It can be helpful to read or listen to the translation of the Bible passage several times. You might not notice everything the first time through a passage or verse. This is especially true if the translation puts ideas or parts of a sentence in a different order than in the source. You may need to check for one part of the sentence, then read or listen again to check for another part of the sentence. When you have read or listened to the passage as many times as it takes to find all of its parts, then you can move to the next passage. For more ways to check if the translation is complete, see Complete.

4. The checker should make notes where he thinks there might be a problem or something to be improved. Each checker will discuss these notes with the translation team. The notes could be in the margins of a printed translation draft, or in a spreadsheet, or using the comment feature of translationCore.

5. After the checkers have checked a chapter or book of the Bible individually, they should all meet with the translator or translation team and review the chapter or book together. If possible, project the translation on the wall so that everyone can see it. As the team comes to the places where each checker made note of a problem or question, the checkers can ask their questions or make suggestions for improvement. As the checkers and the translation team discuss the questions and suggestions, they might think of other questions or new ways of saying things. This is good. As the checkers and the translation team work together, God will help them discover the best way to communicate the meaning of the story or Bible passage.

6. After the checkers and the translation team have decided what they need to change, the translation team will revise the translation. They can do this right away during the meeting if all are in agreement about the change.

7. After the translation team revises the translation, they should read it out loud to each other or to other members of the language community to make sure that it still sounds natural in their language.

8. If there are any Bible passages or verses that are still difficult to understand, the translation team should make a note of the difficulty. The translation team can assign these problems to members to do more research in Bible translation helps or commentaries to find the answer, or they can ask for additional help from other Bible checkers or consultants. When the members have discovered the meaning, the translation team can meet again to decide how to express that meaning naturally and clearly in their language.

Additional Questions

These questions can also be helpful for finding anything that might be inaccurate in the translation:

- Was everything that was mentioned in the source language translation also mentioned in the flow of the new (local) translation?

- Did the meaning of the new translation follow the message (not necessarily the wording) of the source translation? (Sometimes if the arrangement of words or the order of ideas is different than in the source translation, it sounds better that way and is still accurate.)
- Were the people introduced in each story doing the same things as those mentioned in the source language translation? (Was it easy to see who was doing the events of the new translation when it was compared to the source language?)
- Are there any unfoldingWord® Translation Words used in the new translation that do not match your understanding of the words in the source version? Think about things like this: How do your people talk about a priest (one who sacrifices to God) or a temple (the sacrifice place of the Jews) without using a word borrowed from the source language?
- Are the phrases used in the new translation helpful in understanding the more difficult phrases of the source translation? (Are the phrases of the new translation put together in a way that brings better understanding yet still fits with the meaning of the source language translation?)
- Another way to determine if the text is accurate is to ask comprehension questions about the translation, such as, “who did what, when, where, how, and why?” There are questions that have already been prepared to help with this. (To view the unfoldingWord® Translation Questions go to https://ufw.io/tq/.) The answers to those questions should be the same as the answers to those questions about the source language translation. If they are not, there is a problem in the translation.

For more general types of things that need to be checked, go to Types of Things to Check.

Affirmation of Accuracy and Community Acceptance

Documentation for Affirmation of Accuracy and Community Evaluation

We, as church leaders in our language community, affirm the following:

1. The translation conforms to the Statement of Faith and Translation Guidelines.
2. The translation is accurate, clear, and natural in the target language.
3. The translation uses an acceptable style of the language.
4. The translation uses an appropriate alphabet and system of spelling.
5. The community approves of the translation.
6. The community evaluation form has been completed.

If there are any remaining problems, make a note of them here for the attention of the Validation Checkers.

Names and positions of the Accuracy checkers:

- Name:
    - Position:
- Name:
    - Position:
- Name:
    - Position:
- Name:
    - Position:
- Name:
    - Position:
- Name:
    - Position:

Alignment Checking

Alignment Checking

Alignment Checking will be done by the Church Network Delegates. These are people who are chosen by the church leaders in the language community. These people are first-language speakers of the target language, are knowledgeable about the Bible, and are persons whose opinions are respected by the church leaders. If possible, they should be people who are trained in biblical languages, biblical content, and translation principles. When these people affirm the translation, the church leaders will approve of the distribution and use of the translation among the people who know and respect them.

If these people do not exist in the language community, then the translation team may want to collaborate with Quality Checkers from outside the language community in order to do Alignment Checking. In this case, it may be necessary to prepare a backtranslation.

Those who do Alignment Checking should be other than the people who did the previous Accuracy Checking. Since Alignment Checking is also a form of accuracy checking, the translation will receive the maximum benefit if different people do each of these checks.

The purpose of Alignment Checking is to ensure that the translation accurately communicates the message of the original language texts and reflects the sound doctrine of the global Church throughout history and throughout the world. After Alignment Checking, the leaders of the churches that speak the target language can affirm that the translation is trustworthy for their people.

It is best if the leaders from every Church network in the language community can appoint or approve some of the people who will do the Alignment Checking. In that way, all of the church leaders will be able to affirm that the translation is trustworthy and useful for all of the churches of the community.

The tool that we recommend for Alignment Checking is the Alignment Tool in translationCore®. To learn how to use this tool, continue reading below.

If you are a Quality Checker (QC) and are using Alignment Checking as part of your checking process, go to Steps for Quality Checkers to see the rest of the QC checking process.

In order to use the Alignment Tool to do Alignment Checking:

1. Load the translation of the Bible book that you want to check into translationCore®.
2. Choose the Word Alignment tool.
3. Navigate through the verses using the menu of chapters and verses on the left side.
    - When you click on a verse in the menu list to open it, the words of that verse appear in a vertical list, ordered from top to bottom, just to the right of the list of chapters and verses. Each word is in a separate box.
    - The words of the original language (Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic) text for that verse are also in separate boxes in a field to the right of the target language word list. There is a space under each of the original language word boxes outlined with a dotted line.

4. In each verse, drag the target language words in the word bank onto the space below the original language words that express that same meaning.
    - To drag a word, click and hold down the button as you move each word box of the target language into the space under the word box of the source (original) text that the word corresponds to. Drop the target language word by releasing the mouse button.
    - When the target language word is over a word box of the original, the dotted outline will turn blue to let you know that the word will drop there. If you make a mistake or decide that the target word belongs somewhere else, simply drag it again to where it belongs. Target language words can also be dragged back to the list.
    - If there are repeated words in a verse, make sure to drag only the words that correspond to that part of the meaning of the original language verse. Then drag the repeated words to the place in the original verse where that meaning is repeated.
    - When the same target language word occurs more than once in a verse, each instance of the word will have a small superscript number after it. This number will help you to align each repeated target word to the correct original word in the correct order.
    - You may need to combine original language words and/or target language words in order to make groups of words that have equivalent meanings. The goal of aligning is to match the smallest group of target language words to the smallest group of original language words that have the same meaning.

When you have finished this process for a verse, it should be easy to see if there are words left over in either the target word bank or the original language pane.

- If there are target language words left over, this may mean that there is something that has been added that does not belong in the translation. If the left-over words are expressing implied information, then they are not necessarily extra, but could be aligned to the word or words that they are explaining.
- If there are original language words left over, this may mean that the translation needs to include a translation of these words.
- If you determine that the translation has words that it should not have or is missing a translation of some words of the original text, then someone will need to edit the translation. You can either make a comment to tell someone else what to change in the translation, or you can edit the translation directly in the Alignment Tool, depending on your role in the Translation Team.

Alignment Philosophy

The Alignment Tool supports one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one, and many-to-many alignments. That means that one or more target langage words can be aligned to one or more original language words, as necessary, to get the most accurate alignment of the **meaning** conveyed by the two languages. Do not be concerned if the target language uses more or fewer words than the original language to express something. Because languages are different, that is to be expected. With the Alignment Tool, you are really aligning **meaning**, not just words. It is most important that the target translation express the **meaning** of the original Bible well, no matter how many words it takes to do that. By aligning the target language words that express

the original language **meaning**, we can see if all of the original language **meaning** is there in the translation.

Because each target language will have different requirements for sentence structure and the amount of explicit information that must be provided, there will often be some target language words that do not have an exact match to any original language words. If these words are there to give information that the sentence needs in order to make sense, or to provide some implicit information that is necessary for understanding the sentence, then the target words that are provided should be aligned with the original language word that implies them, or that they help to explain.

Merge and Unmerge Instructions

- To align multiple target language words to a single original language word, simply drag and drop the target language words onto the box below the desired original language word.
- When it is desired to align target language word(s) to a combination of original language words, first drag one of the combination original language words into the same box as the other original language word. Multiple original language words can be merged together in this fashion.
- To unmerge previously merged original language words, drag the rightmost original language word slightly to the right. A small new alignment box will appear, and the unmerged original language word can be dropped into that box. (The leftmost original language word can also be unmerged by dragging and dropping it into the original language word box immediately to its left.)
- Any target language words that were aligned with that original language word then return to the word list.
- The original language words should remain in the proper order. If the merge contains 3 or more original language words, unmerge the rightmost original language word first. Un-merging the center word(s) first may result in the original language words becoming out of order. When that happens, unmerge the remaining words in that box to properly return the original language words to their original order.

After Aligning

If you are a Quality Checker, after you have finished aligning a Bible book and making questions and comments about the translation, it is time to either send the questions to the translation team or plan to meet together with the translation team and discuss them. For the steps to complete this process, return to where you left off on the Steps for Quality Checkers page.

To learn more about the kinds of things that need to be checked, go to Types of Things to Check.

Quality Checkers

Steps for Quality Checkers

Steps for Quality Checkers

These are steps for the Quality Checkers or Church Network Delegates to follow when checking a translation for accuracy on behalf of a Church Network. These steps assume that the checker has direct access to the translator or translation team, and can ask questions face-to-face as the checker and the translation team review the translation together. If this is not possible, then the checker should write down the questions for the translation team to review. This could be done using the comment feature of translationCore (preferably), or in the margins of a printed translation draft, or even in a spreadsheet.

Before Checking

1. Find out ahead of time which set of stories or which Bible passage you will be checking.
2. Read the passage in several versions in any languages you understand, including the original languages, if possible.
3. Read the passage in the ULT and UST, and read the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes and unfoldingWord® Translation Words.
4. Make note of any parts that you think might be difficult to translate.
5. Research these passages in commentaries and other translation helps, making notes about what you discover.

While Checking

1. **Align the passage**. If this has not been done, then use the Aligning Tool in translationCore to align the passage with the original language. If you do not speak the target language, then work together with someone who does speak the target language. In this way, you can align the translation by combining your knowledge of the original language with the other person's knowledge of the target language. As a result of the aligning process, you will have questions about parts of the translation. Make note of these with the comment feature in translationCore so that you can ask the translation team about them when you meet, or so that the translation team can see and discuss them before you meet. For instructions about the alignment tool, go to Alignment Tool.
2. **Ask Questions**. When you are with the translation team and you want to address something that you think might be a problem in the translation, do not make a statement to the translator that there is a problem in the translation. If you do not speak the target language, then you do not know if there is a problem or not. You only think that there might be a problem. Even if you do speak the target language, it is more polite to ask a question than to make a statement that something is wrong. You could ask something like, "What would you think about saying it this way?" and then suggest an alternative way to translate it. Then together you can discuss the different translation ideas, and you can give reasons why you think one translation alternative might be better than another. Then, after considering the alternatives, the translator or translation team must decide which way is best. For topics to ask questions about while checking a Bible translation, see Types of Things to Check.

3. **Explore the target language and culture**. The questions that you ask will be to discover what the phrase means in the target language. The best questions are the ones that help the translator to think about what the phrase means and how it is used. Useful questions are, “In what situations is this phrase used in your language?” or “Who usually says things like this, and why do they say it?” It is also useful to help the translator to think about what a person from his village would say if in the same situation as the person in the Bible.
4. **Teach the translator**. After you explore the meaning of a phrase in the target language and culture, you can tell the translator what the phrase means in the source language and culture. Then together you can decide if the phrase in the translation or the phrase he has just thought of has that same meaning or not.

Checking the Translation Directly

If you speak the target language, then you can read or hear the translation and ask the translation team about it directly.

Using a Written Back Translation

Even if you do not speak the target language, you can communicate to the translation team in the Gateway Language and help them to improve their translation. In that case, you will need to work from a back translation in the Gateway Language. This can be oral as you meet with the translation team, or in written form. If it is written, it can be written separately from the translation, or it can be written as an interlinear—that is, with a line of back translation written under each line of the translation. It is easier to compare the translation to the back translation when they are written as an interlinear, and it is easier to read a back translation that is written separately. Each method has its own strength. The person who makes the back translation should be someone who was not involved in making the translation. See Back Translation for more details.

1. If possible, review the back translation in written form before meeting with the translator or translation team face-to-face. This will give you time to think about the passage and to do further research on questions that arise because of what the back translation says. It will also save a lot of time when you meet with the translation team, because there will be a lot of text that you do not need to talk about because you read it in the back translation and it did not have problems. When you meet together, you will be much more productive because you can spend all of your time on the problem areas.
2. As you work through the back translation, make notes of questions that you want to ask the translator, either for clarification or to help the translator think about possible problems with the translation.
3. Ask the translator for a copy of the translation (if it is not interlinear), so that you can compare the translation with the back translation and make note of the connectors that the target language uses and other features that might not be visible in the back translation. Looking at the translation can also help to identify places where the back translation might not accurately represent the translation. For example, the same word that is repeated multiple times in the translation might appear as several different words in the back translation. In this case, it is good to ask the translator why the back translation is different, and if it needs to be corrected.
4. If you cannot review the back translation before meeting with the translator, then work through it with the translator, discussing questions and problems as you work together.

Often, as the back translation is compared to the translation, the translator will also discover problems with the translation.

Using an Oral Back Translation

If there is no written back translation, then have someone who knows the target language and also a language that you understand make an oral back translation for you. This should be a person who was not involved in making the translation. As you listen to the oral back translation, make notes of words or phrases that seem to communicate the wrong meaning or that present other problems. The person should translate the passage in short segments, pausing in between each segment so that you can ask your questions after you hear each segment.

After Checking

Some questions will need to be set aside for later, after the checking session. Be sure to plan a time to meet again to discuss the answers to these questions. These will be:

1. Questions that you or someone else will need to research, usually something about the biblical text that you will need to find out. These might include researching the exact meanings of biblical words or phrases, or the relationship between biblical people or the nature of biblical places.
2. Questions to ask other speakers of the target language. These kinds of questions would be asked to make sure that certain phrases are communicating correctly, or to research the cultural background of certain terms in the target language. These are questions that the translation team may need to ask of people when they return to their community.

Key Words

Make sure that the translation team is keeping a list of the Key Words (important terms) from the Bible passages that they are translating, along with the term in the target language that they have decided to use for each of these important terms. You and the translation team will probably need to add to this list and modify the terms from the target language as you progress through the translation of the Bible. Use the list of Key Words to alert you when there are Key Words in the passage that you are translating. Whenever there is a Key Word in the Bible, make sure that the translation uses the term or phrase that has been chosen for that Key Word, and also make sure that it makes sense each time. If it does not make sense, then you will need to discuss why it makes sense in some places but not in others. Then you may need to modify or change the chosen term, or decide to use more than one term in the target language to fit different ways that the Key Word is used. One useful way to do this is to keep track of each important term on a spreadsheet, with columns for the source language term, the target language term, alternative terms and the Bible passages where you are using each term. We hope that this feature will be in future versions of translationStudio.

For ideas of what kinds of things to check, see: Types of Things to Check.

Types of Things to Check

Types of Things to Check

These are things to check as you look at a passage of Scripture to check it for accuracy. Pastors who speak the target language can use these guidelines, as well as Quality Checkers who do not speak the target language.

1. Ask about anything that does not seem right to you, so that the translation team can explain it. If it also does not seem right to them, they can adjust the translation. In general:

    1. Check for anything that appears to be added, that was not a part of the meaning of the source text. (Remember, the original meaning also includes Implicit Information.)
    2. Check for anything that appears to be missing, that was a part of the meaning of the source text but was not included in the translation.
    3. Check for any meaning that appears to be different than the meaning of the source text.

2. Check to make sure that the main point or the theme of the passage is clear. Ask the translation team to summarize what the passage is saying or teaching. If they choose a minor point as the primary one, they might need to adjust the way that they translated the passage.

3. Check that the different parts of the passage are connected in the right way — that the reasons, additions, results, conclusions, etc. in the Bible passage are marked with the proper connectors in the target language.

4. Check for the consistency of the unfoldingWord® Translation Words, as explained in the last section of Steps for Quality Checking. Ask how each term is used in the culture, who uses the terms, and on what occasions. Also ask what other terms are similar and what the differences are between the similar terms. This helps the translator (or translation team) to see if some terms might have unwanted meanings, and to see which term might be better. The translation might need to use different terms in different contexts.

5. Check figures of speech. Where there is a figure of speech in the ULT, see how it has been translated and make sure it communicates the same meaning. Where there is a figure of speech in the translation, check to make sure it communicates the same meaning as in the GL Bible text.

6. Check to see how abstract ideas were translated, such as love, forgiveness, joy, etc. Many of these are also Key Words.

7. Check the translation of things or practices that might be unknown in the target culture. Showing the translation team pictures of these things and explaining to them what they are is very helpful.

8. Discuss the words about the spirit world and how they are understood in the target culture. Make sure that the words used in the translation communicate the right meaning.

9. Check anything that you think might be especially difficult to understand or translate in the passage.

After checking all of these things and making corrections, ask the translation team to read the passage out loud again to each other or to other members of their community to make sure that everything still flows in a natural way and uses the right connectors. If a correction made something sound unnatural, they will need to make additional adjustments to the translation. This process of testing and revision should repeat until the translation communicates clearly and naturally in the target language.

For questions to consider about the translation as a whole, see Questions for Quality Checkers.

Questions for Quality Checkers

Questions for Quality Checkers or Church Network Delegates

If the Church Network leadership or Translation Committee has given you the task of checking the accuracy of the translation in the role of a Quality Checker (QC), you can use these questions to guide your evaluation of the translation.

You can answer these questions after you read portions of the translation or as you come across problems in the text. If you answer "no" to any of these questions in the first group, please explain in more detail. Include the specific passage that you feel is not right, and give your recommendation for how the translation team should correct it.

Keep in mind that the goal of the translation team is to express the meaning of the source text in a natural and clear way in the target language. This means that they may have needed to change the order of some clauses and that they had to represent many single words in the source language with multiple words in the target language. These things are not considered problems in Other Language (OL) translations. The only times that translators should avoid making these kinds of changes is for Gateway Language (GL) translations of the ULT and UST. The purpose of the ULT is to show the OL translator how the original biblical languages expressed the meaning, and the purpose of the UST is to express that same meaning in simple, clear forms, even though it might be more natural to use an idiom in the OL. GL translators need to remember those guidelines. But for OL translations, the goal is always to be natural and clear, as well as accurate.

Also keep in mind that the translators may have included information that the original audience would have understood from the original message, but that the original author did not state explicitly. When this information is necessary for the target audience to understand the text, it is good to include it explicitly. For more about this, see Implicit Information.

Questions About the Translation as a Whole

1. Does the translation conform to the Statement of Faith and Translation Guidelines?

2. Did the translation team show a good understanding of the source language as well as the target language and culture?

3. Does the language community affirm that the translation speaks in a clear and natural way in their language?

4. Is the translation complete? (Does it have all of the verses, events, and information as the source)?

5. Which of the following translation styles did the translators appear to follow?

    1. word-by-word translation, staying very close to the form of the source translation
    2. phrase-by-phrase translation, using natural language phrase structures
    3. meaning-focused translation, aiming for a freedom of local language expression

6. Do the community leaders feel that the style that the translators followed (as identified in question 4) is appropriate for the community?

7. Do the community leaders feel that the dialect that the translators used is the best one to communicate to the wider language community? For example, did the translators use expressions, phrase connectors, and spellings that will be recognized by most people in the language community? For more ways to explore this question, see Acceptable Style.

8. As you read the translation, think about cultural issues in the local community that might make some passages in the book difficult to translate. Did the translation team translate these passages in a way that makes the message of the source text clear, and avoids any misunderstanding that people might have because of the cultural issue?

9. In these difficult passages, do the community leaders feel that the translator used language that communicates the same message that is in the source text?

10. In your judgment, does the translation communicate the same message as the source text? If any part of the translation causes you to answer "no," please answer the second group of questions below.

If you answer "yes" to any of the questions in this second group (below), please explain in more detail so that the translation team can know what the specific problem is, what part of the text needs correction, and how you would like them to correct it.

1. Are there any doctrinal errors in the translation?
2. Did you find any areas of the translation that seem to contradict the national language translation or the important matters of faith found in your Christian community?
3. Did the translation team add extra information or ideas that were not part of the message in the source text? (Remember, the original message also includes Implicit Information.)
4. Did the translation team leave out information or ideas that were part of the message in the source text?

If there were problems with the translation, make plans to meet with the translation team and resolve these problems. After you meet with them, the translation team may need to check their revised translation with the community leaders to make sure that it still communicates well, and then meet with you again.

For questions to guide you as you check individual passages of Scripture, go to: Types of Things to Check.

If the Church Network leadership or the Translation Committee want you to give a report of the results of your checking, you can use this form: Translation Evaluation Form.

Quality Checker Evaluation Form

Quality Checker Evaluation Form

I, as a Quality Checker for the * fill in name of church network or other organization * Church Network or Organization serving the * fill in the name of the language community * language community, affirm that I have checked the translation of * fill in name of the part of the Bible checked * with members of the Translation Team, and also affirm the following:

1. The translation conforms to the Statement of Faith and Translation Guidelines.
2. The translation is accurate and clear in the target language.
3. The translation uses an acceptable style of the language.
4. The community approves of the translation.

If any problems remain unresolved after meeting with the Translation Team a second time, please make note of them here.

Signed: sign here

Position: fill in your position here

For Gateway Languages, you will need to follow the Source Text Process so that your translation can become a source text.

Back Translation

What is a back translation?

A back translation is a translation of the biblical text from the local target language (the OL) back into the language of wider communication (the GL). It is called a “back translation” because it is a translation in the opposite direction than what was done to create the local target language translation. The purpose of a back translation is to allow someone who does not speak the target language to know what the target language translation says.

However, a back translation is not done in a completely normal style, because it does not have naturalness as a goal in the language of the translation (which is in this case, the language of wider communication). Instead, the goal of the back translation is to represent the words and expressions of the local language translation in a literal way, while also using the grammar and word order of the language of wider communication. In this way, the translation checker can most clearly see the meaning of the words in the target language text, but can also understand the back translation well and read it more quickly and easily.

Back Translation

The Purpose of the Back Translation

Why is a back translation necessary?

The purpose of a back translation is to allow a consultant or checker of biblical material who does not understand the target language to be able to see what is in the target language translation, even though he or she does not understand the target language. In this way, the checker can “look through” the back translation and check the target language translation without knowing the target language. Therefore, the language of the back translation needs to be a language that both the back translator (that is, the person doing the back translation) and the checker understand well. Often this means that the back translator will need to translate the target language text back into the same language of wider communication that was used for the source text.

Some people might consider this to be unnecessary, since the biblical text already exists in the source language. But remember that the purpose of the back translation is to allow the checker to see what is in the target language translation. The checker cannot see what is in the target language translation by reading the original source language text. In order to see what is in the target language translation, the back translator must make a new translation back into the language of wider communication that is based only on the target language translation. For this reason, the back translator *must not* look at the source language text when doing his back translation, but *must look only* at the target language text. In this way, the checker can identify any problems that might exist in the target language translation and work with the translator to fix those problems.

A back translation can also be very useful in improving the target language translation even before the checker uses it to check the translation. When the translation team reads the back translation, they can see how the back translator has understood their translation. Sometimes, the back translator has understood their translation in a different way than they intended to communicate. In those cases, they can change their translation so that it communicates more clearly the meaning that they intended. When the translation team is able to use the back translation in this way before they give it to the checker, they can make many improvements to their translation. When they do this, the checker can do his checking much more rapidly, because the translation team was able to correct many of the problems in the translation before meeting with the checker.

The Back Translator

Who should do the back translation?

To do a good back translation, the person must have three qualifications.

1. The back translator should be someone who is a mother-tongue speaker of the local target language and who also speaks the language of wider communication well. In order to make a written back translation, he must also be able to read and write both languages well.
2. The back translator must be someone who was not involved in making the local target language translation that he is back translating. This is because someone who made the local target language translation already knows what he intended the translation to mean, and will put that meaning in the back translation with the result that it looks the same as the source translation. But it is possible that a speaker of the local target language who did not work on the local target language translation will understand the translation differently, or will not understand parts of it at all. The checker wants to know what these other meanings are that other speakers of the local target language will understand from the translation so that he can work with the translation team to make those places communicate the right meaning more clearly.
3. The back translator should be someone who does not know the Bible well. This is because the back translator must give only the meaning that he understands from looking at the target language translation, not from knowledge that he might have from reading the Bible in another language.

Kinds of Back Translations

What kinds of back translations are there?

Oral

An oral back translation is one that the back translator speaks to the translation checker in the language of wider communication as he reads or hears the translation in the target language. He will usually do this one sentence at a time, or two sentences at a time if they are short. When the translation checker hears something that may be a problem, he will stop the person doing the oral back translation so that he can ask a question about it. One or more members of the translation team should also be present so that they can answer questions about the translation.

An advantage of the oral back translation is that the back translator is immediately accessible to the translation checker and can answer the translation checker's questions about the back translation. A disadvantage of the oral back translation is that the back translator has very little time to think about the best way to back translate the translation, so he may not express the meaning of the translation in the best way. This may make it necessary for the translation checker to ask more questions than if the back translation were expressed in a better way. Another disadvantage is that the checker also has very little time to evaluate the back translation. He only has a few seconds to think about one sentence before hearing another. Because of this, he may not catch all of the problems that he would catch if he had more time to think about each sentence.

Written

There are two types of written back translations. For the differences between the two, see Written Back Translations. A written back translation has several advantages over an oral back translation. First, when a back translation is written, the translation team can read it to see if there are any places where the back translator has misunderstood their translation. If the back translator misunderstood the translation, then other readers or hearers of the translation certainly will misunderstand it also, and so the translation team will need to revise their translation at those points.

Second, when the back translation is written, the checker can read the back translation before meeting with the translation team and take time to research any questions that arise from the back translation. Even when the checker does not need to research a problem, the written back translation allows him more time to think about the translation. He can identify and address more of the problems in the translation and sometimes come to better solutions to the problems because he has more time to think about each one rather than having only a few seconds to think about each sentence.

Third, when the back translation is written, the translation checker can also prepare his questions in written form before meeting with the translation team. If there is time before their meeting and if they have a way to communicate, the checker can send his written questions to the translation team so that they can read them and change the parts of the translation that the checker thought might contain problems. This helps the translation team and the checker to be able to review much more of the biblical material when they meet together, because they were

able to fix many of the problems in the translation before their meeting. During the meeting, they can concentrate on the problems that remain. These are usually places where the translation team has not understood the checker's question or where the checker has not understood something about the target language. In these cases, often the checker thinks that there is a problem where there is not. During the meeting time the translation team can explain to the checker what it is that he has not understood.

Even if there is not time for the checker to send his questions to the translation team before their meeting, they will still be able to review more material at the meeting than they would have been able to review otherwise because the checker has already read the back translation and has already prepared his questions. Because he has had this previous preparation time, he and the translation team can use their meeting time to discuss only the problem areas of the translation rather than reading through the entire translation at a slow pace (as is required when making an oral back translation).

Fourth, the written back translation relieves the strain on the checker from having to concentrate for many hours at a time on hearing and understanding an oral translation as it is spoken to him. If the checker and translation team are meeting in a noisy environment, the difficulty of making sure that he hears every word correctly can be quite exhausting for the checker. The mental strain of concentration increases the likelihood that the checker will miss some problems with the result that they remain uncorrected in the biblical text. For these reasons, we recommend the use of a written back translation whenever possible.

Kinds of Written Back Translations

There are two kinds of written back translations.

Interlinear Back Translation

In an interlinear back translation, the back translator puts a translation for each word of the target language translation underneath that word. This results in a text in which each line of the target language translation is followed by a line in the language of wider communication. The advantage of this kind of back translation is that the checker can easily see how the translation team is translating each word of the target language. He can more easily see the range of meaning of each target language word and can compare how it is used in different contexts. The disadvantage of this kind of back translation is that the line of text in the language of wider communication is made up of translations of individual words. This makes the text difficult to read and understand, and may create more questions and misunderstandings in the mind of the translation checker than the other method of back translation. This is the same reason we do not recommend the word-for-word method for translation of the Bible!

Free Back Translation

A free back translation is one in which the back translator makes a translation in the language of wider communication in a separate space from the target language translation. The disadvantage of this method is that the back translation is not related as closely to the target language translation. However, the back translator can help to overcome this disadvantage when back translating the Bible by including the verse numbers and punctuation with the back translation. By referring to the verse numbers in both translations and carefully reproducing the punctuation marks in their proper places, the translation checker can keep track of which part of the back translation represents which part of the target language translation. The advantage of this method is that the back translation can use the grammar and word order of the language of wider communication, and so it is much easier for the translation checker to read and understand. Even while using the grammar and word order of the language of wider communication, however, the back translator should remember to translate the words in a literal way. This provides the most beneficial combination of literalness and readability for the checker. We recommend that the back translator use this method of free back translation.

Guidelines for Creating a Good Back Translation

1. Show the Target Language Usage for Words and Clauses

For the purposes of this module, “target language” refers to the language into which the Bible draft was made, and “language of wider communication” refers to the language into which the back translation is being made.

Use the meaning of the word in context

If a word has only one basic meaning, then the back translator should use a word in the language of wider communication that represents that basic meaning throughout the back translation. However, if a word in the target language has more than one meaning, so that the meaning changes depending on the specific context, then the back translator should use the word or phrase in the language of wider communication that best represents the way that the word was used in that context. In order to avoid confusion for the translation checker, the back translator can put the other meaning in parentheses the first time that he uses the word in a different way, so that the translation checker can see and understand that this word has more than one meaning. For example, he might write, “come (go)” if the target language word was translated as “go” earlier in the back translation but is better translated as “come” in the new context.

If the target language translation uses an idiom, it is most helpful to the translation checker if the back translator translates the idiom literally (according to the meaning of the words), but then also includes the meaning of the idiom in parentheses. The translation checker can see that the target language translation uses an idiom in that place, and can also see what it means. For example, a back translator might translate an idiom such as, “He kicked the bucket (he died).” If the idiom occurs more than once or twice, the back translator does not need to continue to explain it each time, but can either just translate it literally or just translate the meaning.

Keep parts of speech the same

In the back translation, the back translator should represent the parts of speech of the target language with the same parts of speech in the language of wider communication. This means that the back translator should translate nouns as nouns, verbs as verbs, and modifiers as modifiers. This will help the translation checker to see how the target language works.

Keep clause types the same

In the back translation, the back translator should represent each clause of the target language with the same type of clause in the language of wider communication. For example, if the target language clause uses a command, then the back translation should also use a command rather than a suggestion or request. Or if the target language clause uses a rhetorical question, then the back translation should also use a question rather than a statement or other expression.

Keep punctuation the same

The back translator should use the same punctuation in the back translation as in the target language translation. For example, wherever there is a comma in the target language translation, the back translator should also put a comma in the back translation. Periods, exclamation points, quote marks, and all punctuation need to be at the same place in both translations. The translation checker can more easily see which parts of the back translation represent which parts of the target language translation. When making a back translation of the Bible, all chapter and verse numbers must be in the right places in the back translation.

Express the full meaning of complex words

Sometimes words in the target language will be more complex than words in the language of wider communication. In this case, the back translator will need to represent the target language word with a longer phrase in the language of wider communication. This is necessary so that the translation checker can see as much of the meaning as possible. For example, to translate one word in the target language it might be necessary to use a phrase in the language of wider communication such as “go up” or “be lying down.” Also, many languages have words that contain more information than the equivalent words in the language of wider communication. In this case, it is most helpful if the back translator includes that additional information in parentheses, such as “we (inclusive)” or “you (feminine, plural).”

2. Use the Language of Wider Communication Style for Sentence and Logical Structure

The back translation should use the sentence structure that is natural for the language of wider communication, not the structure that is used in the target language. This means that the back translation should use the word order that is natural for the language of wider communication, not the word order that is used in the target language. The back translation should also use the way of relating phrases to each other and the way of indicating logical relations (such as cause or purpose) that are natural for the language of wider communication. This will make it easier for the checker to read and to understand the back translation. This will also speed up the process of checking the back translation.

Formatting and Publishing

How to Check for Good Formatting

There are checks that you can do before, during, and after translation of a book of the Bible that will make the translation process go much easier so that the translation will look good and be as easy to read as possible. The modules on these topics are gathered here under Formatting and Publishing, but they are things that the translation team should be thinking about and deciding throughout the translation process.

Before Translating

The translation team should make decisions about the following issues before you start to translate.

1. Alphabet (see Appropriate Alphabet)
2. Spelling (see Consistent Spelling)
3. Punctuation (see Consistent Punctuation)

While Translating

After several chapters have been translated, the translation team may need to revise some of these decisions to take care of problems that they discovered while translating. If ParaText is available to you, you can also do consistency checks in ParaText at this time to see if there are more decisions that you need to make about spelling and punctuation.

After Finishing a Book

After finishing a book, you can check to make sure that all the verses are there, and you can decide on section headings. It is also helpful to write down ideas for section headings as you translate.

1. Versification (see Complete Versification)
2. Section Headings (see Section Headings)

Appropriate Alphabet

The Alphabet for the Translation

As you read the translation, ask yourself these questions about the way words are spelled. These questions will help to determine if an appropriate alphabet has been chosen to represent the sounds of the language. They will also help to determine if words have been written in a consistent way so that the translation will be easy to read.

1. Is the alphabet suitable to represent the sounds of the language of the new translation? (Are there any sounds that make a difference in meaning but have to use the same symbol as another sound? Does this make the words hard to read? Can additional marks be used to adjust these letters and show the differences?)
2. Is the spelling used in the book consistent? (Are there rules that the writer should follow to show how words change in different situations? Can they be described so others will know how to read and write the language easily?)
3. Has the translator used expressions, phrases, connectors, and spellings that will be recognized by most of the language community?

If there is something about the alphabet or spelling that is not right, make a note of that so that you can discuss it with the translation team.

Consistent Spelling

In order for the reader to be able to read and understand the translation easily, it is important that you (the translator) spell words consistently. This can be difficult if there is not a tradition of writing or spelling in the target language. When there are several people working on different parts of a translation, they may spell the same words differently from each other. For that reason, it is important for the translation team to meet together before they start translating to talk about how they plan to spell words.

As a team, discuss the words that are difficult to spell. If the words have sounds in them that are difficult to represent, then you may need to make a change in the writing system that you are using (see Alphabet/Orthography). If the sounds in the words can be represented in different ways, then the team will need to agree on how to spell them. Make a list of the agreed-upon spellings of these words in alphabetical order. Make sure that each member of the team has a copy of this list so that they can consult it when translating. Add other difficult words to the list as you come across them, and make sure that these are added to everyone's list with the same spelling. It may be helpful to use a spreadsheet to maintain your spelling list. This can be easily updated and shared electronically, or printed out periodically.

The names of people and places in the Bible can be difficult to spell because many of them are unknown in target languages. Be sure to include these in your spelling list.

Computers can be a great help for checking spelling. If you are working on a Gateway Language, a word processor may have a dictionary already available. If you are translating into an Other Language, you can use the find-and-replace feature of a word processor to fix misspelled words. ParaText also has a spell check feature which will find all variant spellings of words. It will present these to you, and then you can choose which spellings you have decided to use.

Consistent Punctuation

“Punctuation” refers to the marks that indicate how a sentence is to be read or understood. Examples include the indicators of pauses such as the comma or period and the quotation marks that surround the exact words of a speaker. In order for the reader to be able to read and understand the translation correctly, it is important that you (the translator) use punctuation consistently.

Before translating, the translation team will need to decide on the methods of punctuation that you will use in the translation. It may be easiest to adopt the method of punctuation that the national language uses, or that a national language Bible or related language Bible uses. Once the team decides on a method, make sure that everyone follows it. It may be helpful to distribute a guide sheet to each of the team members with examples on it of the correct use of different punctuation marks.

Even with the guide sheet, it is common for translators to make mistakes in punctuation. Because of this, after a book has been translated, we recommend importing it into ParaText. You can enter the rules for punctuation in the target language into ParaText, and then run the different punctuation checks that ParaText can perform. ParaText will list all of the places where it finds punctuation errors and show them to you. You can then review these places to see if there is an error there or not. If there is an error, you can fix the error. After running these punctuation checks, you can be confident that your translation is using punctuation correctly.

Complete Translation

A Complete Translation

The purpose of this section is to make sure that the translation is complete. In this section, the new translation must be compared to the source translation. As you (the translator or checker) compare the two translations, ask yourself these questions:

1. Is the translation missing any of its parts? In other words, does the translation include all the events of the book that was translated?
2. Does the translation include all the verses of the book that was translated? (When you look at the verse numbering of the source language translation, are all of the verses included in the target language translation?) Sometimes there are differences in verse numbering between translations. For example, in some translations some verses are grouped together or sometimes certain verses are put in footnotes. Even though there may be these kinds of differences between the source translation and the target translation, the target translation is still considered to be complete. For more information, see Complete Versification.
3. Are there places in the translation where something seems to be left out, or there seems to be a different message than is found in the source language translation? (The wording and the order can be different, but the language that the translator used should give the same message as the source language translation.)

If there is a place where the translation is not complete, make a note of that so that you can discuss it with the translation team.

Complete Versification

It is important that your target language translation include all of the verses that are in the source language Bible. You do not want some verses to be missing by mistake. But remember that there can be good reasons why some Bibles have certain verses that other Bibles do not have.

Reasons for Missing Verses

1. **Textual Variants** — There are some verses that many Bible scholars do not believe were original to the Bible, but were added later. Therefore, the translators of some Bibles chose not to include those verses, or chose to include them only as footnotes. (For more information about this, see Textual Variants.) Your translation team will need to decide whether you will include these verses or not.
2. **Different Numbering** — Some Bibles use a different system of verse numbering than other Bibles. (For more information about this, see Chapter and Verse Numbers.) Your translation team will need to decide which system to use.
3. **Verse Bridges** — In some translations of the Bible, the contents of two or more verses are rearranged so that the order of information is more logical or easier to understand. When that happens, the verse numbers are combined, such as 4-5 or 4-6. The UST does this sometimes. Because not all of the verse numbers appear (or they do not appear where you expect them to be), it might look like some verses are missing. But the contents of those verses are there. (For more information about this, see Verse Bridges.) Your translation team will need to decide whether to use verse bridges or not.

Checking for Missing Verses

Here is one way to check your translation for missing verses. After a book has been translated, import the translation into ParaText, and then run the check for “chapter/verse numbers.” ParaText will give you a list of all the places in that book where verses are missing. You can then look at each of those places and decide if the verse is missing because of one of the three reasons above, or if it is missing by mistake and you need to go back and translate that verse.

Section Headings

Decisions about Section Headings

One of the decisions that the translation team will have to make is whether or not to use section headings. Section headings are like titles to each section of the Bible that begins a new topic. The section heading lets people know what that section is about. Some Bible translations use them, and others do not. You (the translator) may want to follow the practice of the Bible in the national language that most people use. You will also want to find out what the language community prefers.

Using section headings requires more work, because you will need either to write or to translate each one in addition to the text of the Bible. It will also make your translation of the Bible longer. But section headings can be very helpful to your readers. Section headings make it much easier to find where the Bible talks about different topics. If a person is looking for something in particular, he can just read the section headings until he finds one that introduces the topic that he wants to read about. Then he can read that section.

If you have decided to use section headings, then you will need to decide which kind to use. Again, you should find out which kind of section heading the language community prefers. You may also choose to follow the style of the national language. Be sure to use a kind of section heading that the people will understand is not part of the text that it introduces. The section heading is not a part of the Bible; it is just a guide to the different parts of the Bible. You might be able to make this clear by putting a space before and after the section heading and by using a different font (style of letters) or a different size of letters. See how the Bible in the national language does this, and test different methods with the language community.

Kinds of Section Headings

There are many different kinds of section headings. Here are some different kinds, with examples of how each one would look for Mark 2:1-12:

- Summary statement: “By healing a paralyzed man, Jesus demonstrated his authority to forgive sins as well as to heal.” This tries to summarize the main point of the section, and so it gives the most information in a full sentence.
- Explanatory comment: “Jesus heals a paralyzed man.” This is also a full sentence, but gives just enough information to remind the reader which section follows.
- Topical reference: “Cure of a paralytic.” This tries to be very short, only giving a label of a few words. This might save space, but it is probably only useful for people who already know the Bible well.
- Question: “Does Jesus have authority to heal and forgive sins?” This one creates a question that the information in the section answers. People who have a lot of questions about the Bible may find this especially helpful.
- “About” comment: “About Jesus healing a paralyzed man.” This kind of heading explicitly tells the reader what the section is about. This may be the one that makes it easiest to see that the heading is not a part of the words of the Bible.

As you can see, it is possible to make many different kinds of section headings, but they all have the same purpose. They all give the reader information about the main topic of the section of the Bible that follows. Some headings are shorter, and some headings are longer. Some give

only a little information, and some give more information. You may want to experiment with the different kinds, and ask people which kind they think is most helpful for them.

Publishing

Publishing on Door43

- Throughout the translation and checking process, the translation draft will be uploaded to and maintained in a repository under the username that you have chosen on the Door43 website. This is where translationStudio and translationCore send the drafts when you tell them to upload.
- When checking has been completed and all appropriate edits have been made to the translation on door43, the checkers or church leaders will inform unfoldingWord of their desire to publish. They will provide unfoldingWord with the documents affirming that the Pastors, the Community, and the Church Network Leaders affirm that the translation is trustworthy. The documents also contain an affirmation of the unfoldingWord Translation Guidelines and the unfoldingWord Statement of Faith. All translated content is expected to be in accordance with the theology of the Statement of Faith. We also expect that the translators have followed the procedures and methodologies of the Translation Guidelines. unfoldingWord has no way to verify the accuracy of the translations or the affirmations, and so we rely on the integrity of the leadership of the church networks.
- After obtaining these affirmations, unfoldingWord will then make a copy of the translation that is on Door43, digitally publish a static copy of it on the unfoldingWord website (see https://www.unfoldingword.org), and make it available on the unfoldingWord mobile app. A print-ready PDF will also be produced and made available for download. It will continue to be possible to change the checked version on Door43, allowing for future checking and editing.
- unfoldingWord will also need to know the version number of the source that was used for the translation. This number will be incorporated into the version number for the translation so that it will be easy to keep track of the state of the source and the translation as they both improve and change over time. For information about version numbers, see Source Texts and Version Numbers.

Ongoing Checking

The process and checking framework described in this document depends on an ongoing process of checking and revising content, as determined by the Church that uses the content. We encourage each translation team to continue to accept feedback from the language and church community. By doing so, they can continue to improve the translation by incorporating corrections and including better ways of saying things as people discover them. For that reason, the translations of the content continue to be made available on the translation platform (see https://door43.org) indefinitely so that users can continue to improve it. We recommend that the translation committee invite input from the language community to Door43, and appoint one or more people to monitor the issues that people submit there for the translation. These people can make corrections to the translation and discuss other suggested changes with the translation committee. Over time, the committee may decide to adjust the style of the translation as well, such as to add or remove implied information or to use newer words or phrases. By maximizing input in this way from the greatest number of users of the content, the Church can work together to create biblical content that increases in quality and usability over time.

Self-Assessment Rubric

Self-assessment of Translation Quality

The objective of this module is to describe a process by which the Church can reliably determine for themselves the quality of a translation. This assessment is intended to suggest some of the most important techniques for checking a translation. It does not describe every conceivable check that could be employed. Ultimately, the Church must make the decisions regarding what checks are used, when they are done, and who does those checks.

How to Use the Assessment

This assessment method employs two types of statements. Some are “yes/no” statements, where a negative response indicates a problem that must be resolved. Other sections use an equally-weighted method that provides translation teams and checkers with statements about the translation. Each statement should be scored by the person doing the check (beginning with the translation team) on a scale of 0-2:

0 — disagree

1 — agree somewhat

2 — strongly agree

At the end of the review, the total value of all responses in a section should be added up. If the responses accurately reflect the state of the translation, this value will provide the reviewer with an approximation of the probability that the translated chapter is of excellent quality. This assessment method is designed to be simple and provide the reviewer with an objective way to determine where the work needs improvement. **For example, if the translation scores relatively well in “Accuracy” but quite poorly in “Naturalness” and “Clarity,” then the translation team needs to do more community checking.**

This assessment method is intended to be used for each chapter of translated biblical content. The translation team should do an assessment of each chapter after they finish their other checks. Then the Level 2 checkers should do it again. Then the Level 3 checkers should also assess the translation with this checklist. As more detailed and extensive checking of the chapter is performed by the Church at each level, the points for the chapter should be updated from each of the first four sections (overview, naturalness, clarity, accuracy), allowing the church and community to see how the translation is improving.

The Self-Assessment

The process is divided into five parts: the **overview** (information about the translation itself), **naturalness**, **clarity**, **accuracy**, and **Church approval**.

1. Overview

Circle either “no” or “yes” for each statement below.

no | yes This translation is a meaning-based translation that attempts to communicate the meaning of the original text in ways that are natural, clear, and accurate in the target language.

no | yes Those involved in checking the translation are first-language speakers of the target language.

no | yes The translation of this chapter is in agreement with the Statement of Faith.

no | yes The translation of this chapter has been done in accordance with the Translation Guidelines.

2. Naturalness: "this is *my* language"

Circle either "0" or "1" or "2" for each statement below.

This section can be strengthened by doing more community checking. (See Language Community Check)

0 1 2 Those who speak this language and have heard this chapter agree that it is translated using the correct form of the language.

0 1 2 Those who speak this language and have heard this chapter agree that the key words used in this chapter are acceptable and correct for this culture.

0 1 2 The illustrations or stories in this chapter are easy for people who speak this language to understand.

0 1 2 Those who speak this language and have heard this chapter agree that the sentence structure and order of the text in this chapter is natural and flows correctly.

0 1 2 The review of the translation of this chapter for naturalness included community members who have not been directly involved in creating the translation of this chapter.

0 1 2 The review of the translation of this chapter for naturalness included both believers and non-believers, or at least believers who are relatively unfamiliar with the Bible so that they do not know what the text is supposed to say before they hear it.

0 1 2 The review of the translation of this chapter for naturalness included speakers of the language from many different age groups.

0 1 2 The review of the translation of this chapter for naturalness included both men and women.

3. Clarity: "the meaning is clear"

Circle either "0" or "1" or "2" for each statement below.

This section can be strengthened by doing more community checking. (See Language Community Check)

0 1 2 This chapter is translated using language that native speakers of the language agree is easy to understand.

0 1 2 Speakers of this language agree that the translations of names, places, and verb tenses are all correct in this chapter.

0 1 2 Figures of speech in this chapter make sense for people in this culture.

0 1 2 Speakers of this language agree that the way this chapter is structured does not distract from the meaning.

0 1 2 The review of the translation of this chapter for clarity included community members who have not been directly involved in creating the translation of this chapter.

0 1 2 The review of the translation of this chapter for clarity included both believers and non-believers, or at least believers who are relatively unfamiliar with the Bible so that they do not know what the text is supposed to say before they hear it.

0 1 2 The review of the translation of this chapter for clarity included speakers of the language from many different age groups.

0 1 2 The review of the translation of this chapter for clarity included both men and women.

4. Accuracy: "the translation communicates what the original source text communicated"

Circle either "0" or "1" or "2" for each statement below.

This section can be strengthened by doing more accuracy checking. (See Accuracy Check)

0 1 2 A complete list of all the important words in the source text for this chapter has been used to help ensure all terms are present in the translation.

0 1 2 All the important words are translated correctly in this chapter.

0 1 2 All the important words are translated consistently in this chapter, as well as in other places where the important words appear.

0 1 2 For the entire chapter, exegetical resources and translation helps have been used to identify and resolve potential translation challenges, including the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes and unfoldingWord® Translation Words.

0 1 2 Historical details in the source text (like names, places, and events) have been preserved in the translation.

0 1 2 The meaning of each figure of speech in the translated chapter has been compared and aligned to the intent of the original.

0 1 2 The translation has been tested with first-language speakers of the target language who were not involved in creating the translation, and they agree that the translation accurately communicates the intended meaning of the source text.

0 1 2 The translation of this chapter has been compared against at least two source texts.

0 1 2 All questions or disagreements about any of the meaning in this chapter have been resolved.

0 1 2 The translation of this chapter has been compared against the original texts (Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic) to check for correct definitions of words and for intent of the original texts.

5. Church approval: "the naturalness, clarity, and accuracy of the translation is approved by the Church that speaks that language"

Circle either "no" or "yes" for each statement below.

no | yes Church leaders who have checked this translation are first-language speakers of the target language, and include someone who understands well one of the languages in which the source text is available.

no | yes People from the language community—both men and women, old and young—have reviewed the translation of this chapter and agree that it is natural and clear.

no | yes Church leaders from at least two different church networks have reviewed the translation of this chapter and agree that it is accurate.

no | yes The leadership (or their delegates) of at least two different church networks have reviewed the translation of this chapter and endorse it as a faithful translation of this chapter of the Bible in this language.