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unfoldingWord® Translation Notes

Ephesians

Introduction to Ephesians

Part 1: General Introduction

Outline of Ephesians

Greeting and prayer for the spiritual blessings in Christ (1:1-23)

Sin and salvation (2:1-10)

Unity and peace (2:11-22)

Mystery of Christ in the believers, made known (3:1-13)

Prayer for riches of his glory to make the believers strong (3:14-21)

Unity of the Spirit, building up the Body of Christ (4:1-16)

New life (4:17-32)

Imitators of God (5:1-21)

1 Wives and husbands; children and parents; slaves and masters (5:22-6:9)

Armor of God (6:10-20)

Final greeting (6:21-24)

Who wrote the Book of Ephesians?

Paul wrote Ephesians. Paul was from the city of Tarsus. He had been known as Saul in his early life. Before becoming a Christian, Paul was a Pharisee. He persecuted Christians. After he became a Christian, he traveled several times throughout the Roman Empire telling people about Jesus.

The Apostle Paul helped start the church in Ephesus on one of his trips. He also lived in Ephesus for a year and a half and helped the believers there. Paul probably wrote this letter while he was in prison in Rome.

What is the Book of Ephesians about?

Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Ephesus to explain God's love for them in Christ Jesus. He described the blessings that God was giving them because they were now united with Christ. He explained that all believers are united together, whether Jew or Gentile. Paul also wanted to encourage them to live in a way that pleases God.

How should the title of this book be translated?

Translators may choose to call this book by its traditional title, "Ephesians." Or they may choose a clearer title, such as "Paul's Letter to the Church in Ephesus" or "A Letter to the Christians in Ephesus." (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Part 2: Important Religious and Cultural Concepts

What was the "mystery" in the book of Ephesians?

The expression translated in the ULT as "mystery" or "hidden" occurs six times. By it, Paul always meant something that God had to reveal to human beings because they could not know it on their own. It always referred to something about how God planned to save mankind. Sometimes it was about his plan to bring about peace between himself and mankind. Sometimes it was more specifically about his plan to save both Jews and Gentiles by uniting them through Christ. This hidden truth was that Gentiles are now able to benefit from the promises of Christ as equals with the Jews.

What did Paul say about salvation and righteous living?

Paul said much about salvation and righteous living in this letter and in many of his letters. He said that God has been very kind and saved Christians because they believe in Jesus. Therefore, after they become Christians, they should live in a righteous way to show that they have faith in Christ. (See: [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Part 3: Important Translation Issues

Singular and plural “you”

In this book, the word “I” refers to Paul. The word “you” is almost always plural and refers to the believers who may read this letter. The three exceptions to this are: 5:14, 6:2, and 6:3. (See: [Forms of You](#))

What did Paul mean by the “new self” or the “new man”?

When Paul spoke of the “new self” or the “new man,” he meant the new nature that a believer receives from the Holy Spirit. This new nature was created in God’s image (See: 4:24). The phrase “new man” is also used for God bringing about peace between Jews and Gentiles. God brought them together as one people group that belong to him (See: 2:15).

How are the ideas of “holy” and “sanctify” represented in Ephesians in the ULT?

The scriptures use such words to indicate any one of several ideas. For this reason, it is often difficult for translators to represent them well in their versions. In translating into English, the ULT uses the following principles: * Sometimes the meaning in a passage implies moral holiness. Especially important for understanding the gospel is the use of “holy” to express the fact that God views Christians as sinless because they are united to Jesus Christ. Another use of “holy” is to express the idea that God is perfect and faultless. A third use is to express the idea that Christians are to conduct themselves in a blameless, faultless manner in life. In these cases, the ULT uses “holy,” “holy God,” “holy ones,” or “saints.” (See: 1:1, 4) * Sometimes the meaning in a passage indicates a simple reference to Christians without implying any particular role filled by them. In these cases, the ULT uses “saint” or “saints.” * Sometimes the meaning in a passage implies the idea of someone or something set apart for God alone. In these cases, the ULT uses “set apart,” “dedicated to,” or “reserved for.” (See: 3:5)

The UST will often be helpful as translators think about how to represent these ideas in their own versions.

What did Paul mean by the expression “in Christ,” “in the Lord,” etc.?

This kind of expression occurs in 1:1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 20; 2:6, 7, 10, 13, 15, 16, 18, 21, 22; 3:5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 21; 4:1, 17, 21, 32; 5:8, 18, 19; 6:1, 10, 18, 21. Paul meant to express the idea of a very close union between Christ and the believers. Please see the introduction to the book of Romans for more details about this kind of expression.

What are the major issues in the text of the book of Ephesians?

- “in Ephesus” (1:1). Some of the earliest manuscripts do not include this phrase. It is likely that Paul intended this letter to be read in many churches, including Ephesus and many other cities. He may have originally left a blank space for the city name to be filled in by those copying the letter and carrying it to different cities. But “Ephesus” is the only name found on manuscripts that have a city name. Therefore, the ULT, UST, and many modern versions include it.

- “because we are members of his body” (5:30). Most modern versions, including the ULT and UST, read in this way. Some older versions read, “because we are members of his body and of his bones.” Translators might decide to choose the second reading if other versions in their area have it that way. If translators choose the second reading, they should put the additional words inside square brackets ([]) to indicate that they are probably not original to the book of Ephesians.

(See: [Textual Variants](#))

Ephesians 1

Ephesians 1 General Notes

Structure and formatting

“I pray”

Paul structures part of this chapter like a prayer of praise to God. But Paul is not just talking to God. He is teaching the church in Ephesus. He also tells the Ephesians how he is praying for them.

Special concepts in this chapter

Predestination

Many scholars believe this chapter teaches on a subject known as “predestination.” See the use of the word “predestine” in 1:5, 11. Some scholars take this to indicate that God has, from before the foundation of the world, chosen some people to save. Christians have different views on what the Bible teaches on this subject, so translators need to take extra care when translating this chapter. (See: [predestine](#), [predestined](#))

Ephesians 1:1

General Information:

Paul names himself as the writer of this letter to the believers in the church at Ephesus (and elsewhere). Except where noted, all instances of “you” and “your” refer to the Ephesian believers as well as to all believers, and so are plural. (See: [Forms of You](#))

ULT

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, to the saints who are [in Ephesus] ^[1] and faithful in Christ Jesus.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus ... to the saints who are

Your language may have a particular way of introducing the author of a letter and the intended audience. Alternate translation: “I, Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ ... write this letter to you, God’s holy people”

in Christ Jesus (ULT)

The phrase **in Christ Jesus** and similar expressions are metaphors that frequently occur in the New Testament letters. They express the strongest kind of relationship possible between Christ and those who believe in him, picturing believers as being surrounded by Christ. Alternate Translation: “in close relationship to Christ Jesus” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 1:2

Grace to you and peace (ULT)

This is a common greeting and blessing that Paul often uses in the beginning of his letters. Use a form in your language that makes it clear that this is a greeting and blessing.

ULT

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:3

General Information:

In this book, unless otherwise stated, the words “us” and “we” refer to Paul, the believers in Ephesus, and all believers. (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’](#))

Connecting Statement:

Paul opens his letter by talking about the believers’ position and their safety before God.

ULT

³ Blessed {be} the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

Blessed {be} the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (ULT)

You can state this in an active form. Alternate translation: “Let us praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the...who has blessed...us (ULT)

Alternate translation: “for God has blessed us”

every spiritual blessing (ULT)

Alternate translation: “every blessing coming from the Spirit of God”

with...the heavenly places (ULT)

“in the supernatural world.” The word **heavenly** refers to the place where God is.

in Christ (ULT)

Here, **in Christ** could mean: (1) a metaphor referring to our close relationship with Christ. Alternate translation: “by uniting us with Christ” or “because we are united with Christ” (2) what Christ has done. Alternate translation: “through Christ” or “through what Christ has done” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 1:4

holy and blameless (ULT)

Paul uses these two similar words to emphasize moral goodness. If your language does not have two similar words, you can use one word for both, as in the UST. (See: [Doublet](#))

blameless (ULT)

The word **blameless** contains two negative ideas: “blame” or “fault,” and “-less,” which means “without.” If your readers would misunderstand this, the two negative ideas can be replaced with the corresponding positive idea, “perfect.” (See: [Double Negatives](#))

ULT

⁴ just as he chose us in him from the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before him. In love

Ephesians 1:5

General Information:

The words “his,” “He,” and “he” refer to God.

he predestined us for adoption (ULT)

The word **us** refers to Paul, the Ephesian church, and all believers in Christ. Alternate translation: “God planned long ago to adopt us” (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’](#))

he predestined us (ULT)

Alternate translation: “God chose us ahead of time” or “God chose us long ago”

for adoption (ULT)

Here, **adoption** is a metaphor that refers to becoming part of God’s family. Alternate translation: “to become his children” (See: [Metaphor](#))

through Jesus Christ (ULT)

God brought believers into his family by the work of Jesus Christ.

ULT

⁵ he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

Ephesians 1:6

he has freely given us in the Beloved One (ULT)

Alternate translation: "he has kindly given to us by means of the One whom he loves"

ULT

⁶ to the praise of the glory of his grace
that he has freely given us in the
Beloved One,

the Beloved One (ULT)

Alternate translation: "the One he loves, Jesus Christ" or "his Son, whom he loves"

Ephesians 1:7

through his blood (ULT)

The **blood** of Jesus is a metonym for his death. Alternate translation: “because he died” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the riches of his grace (ULT)

Paul speaks of God’s grace as if it were material wealth. Alternate translation: “greatness of God’s grace” or “abundance of God’s grace” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁷ in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,

Ephesians 1:8

which he caused to abound to us (ULT)

Alternate translation: "which he gave us in a great amount" or "being extremely kind to us"

ULT

⁸ which he caused to abound to us in all wisdom and understanding.

in all wisdom and understanding (ULT)

This could mean: (1) because he has all wisdom and understanding. (2) so that we might have great wisdom and understanding.

wisdom and understanding (ULT)

Here, **wisdom** and **understanding** mean very similar things. If your language does not have two similar words, you can use one word for both. (See: [Doublet](#))

Ephesians 1:9

his...according to...good pleasure (ULT)

This could mean: (1) because he wanted to make it known to us. (2) which was what he wanted.

which he had planned in him (ULT)

Alternate translation: "as he demonstrated this purpose in Christ"

in him (ULT)

Alternate translation: "by means of Christ"

ULT

⁹ He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he had planned in him,

Ephesians 1:10

with a view to an administration (ULT)

A new sentence can be started here. Alternate translation: "He did this with a view to an administration" or "He did this, thinking about a stewardship"

of the fullness of time (ULT)

Alternate translation: "when the time is right" or "at the time that he has appointed"

in...him (ULT)

Alternate translation: "under his rule" or "under his authority"

ULT

¹⁰ with a view to an administration of the fullness of time, to bring all things together in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on earth, in him,

Ephesians 1:11

we were also allotted as a possession. We were predestined (ULT)

Both pronouns **we** and **We** are inclusive in this verse. Paul is referring to all Christians, who were predestined to belong to Christ. In verses 12 and 13 he will divide this group into “we” (exclusive) Jewish Christians and “you” Gentile Christians. (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’](#))

ULT

11 in whom we were also allotted as a possession. We were predestined according to the purpose of the one who works out everything according to the counsel of his will,

we were also allotted as a possession (ULT)

You can state this in active form. This could mean: (1) God also chose us to be his possession. (2) God also chose us to be heirs. (See: [Active or Passive](#))

We were predestined (ULT)

You can state this in active form. Alternate translation: “God chose us ahead of time” or “God chose us long ago” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Ephesians 1:12

we...who were the first to hope in Christ (ULT)

Here, the word **we** is exclusive and refers to the Jewish believers who first heard the good news, not the believers at Ephesus. (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'](#))

ULT

¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ, would be for the praise of his glory.

so that we ... would be for the praise of his glory

Alternate translation: "so that we ... would live to praise him for his glory"

Ephesians 1:13

General Information:

Paul has been speaking in the previous two verses about himself and the other Jewish believers, but now he begins speaking about the Ephesian believers.

the word of truth (ULT)

This could mean: (1) the message about the truth. (2) the true message.

ULT

13 In him, you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and you believed in him, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,

you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit (ULT)

In this metaphor Paul pictures the Holy Spirit as a seal, comparing him to the wax that was placed on a letter and stamped with a symbol representing the person who wrote the letter. Paul uses this custom as a picture to show how God has used the Holy Spirit to assure us that we belong to him. Alternate translation: “God has placed the Holy Spirit that he promised on you as if he were a seal” (See: [Metaphor](#))

you were sealed (ULT)

You can state this in active form. Alternate translation: “God has sealed you” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Ephesians 1:14

a down payment of our inheritance (ULT)

Receiving what God has promised is spoken of in terms of one inheriting property or wealth from a family member. Alternate translation: “an initial portion that we will receive from what God has promised” or “a guarantee that we will receive what God has promised to give us” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

14 who is a down payment of our inheritance until the redemption of the full possession, to the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:15

Connecting Statement:

Paul prays for the Ephesian believers and praises God for the power that believers have through Christ.

Because of this (ULT)

The connecting phrase **Because of this** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that the Ephesians had believed the gospel and had been sealed by the Holy Spirit. The result is that Paul praises God. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

ULT

15 Because of this, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and the love ^[2] for all the saints,

Ephesians 1:16

I have not stopped giving thanks (ULT)

Paul uses **not stopped** to emphasize that he continues to thank God.
Alternate translation: "I continue to thank God" (See: [Litotes](#))

I have not stopped giving thanks (ULT)

Paul uses this exaggeration to emphasize that he thanks God very often. Alternate translation: "I continue to thank God" or "I often thank God" (See: [Hyperbole](#))

ULT

16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, making mention {of you} in my prayers,

Ephesians 1:17

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that Paul prays for the Ephesians. The result is that God would enlighten the Ephesians about all that he has done for them through Christ. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

ULT

17 so that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, will give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him,

a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him (ULT)

Alternate translation: "spiritual wisdom to understand his revelation"

Ephesians 1:18

that the eyes of {your} heart may be enlightened (ULT)

Here, **heart** refers to a person's mind or thinking. Alternate Translation: "that you may gain understanding" (See: [Metonymy](#))

that the eyes of {your} heart may be enlightened (ULT)

You can state this in the active tense. Alternate translation: "that God may give you understanding" or "that God may enlighten your mind" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the eyes of {your} heart (ULT)

The phrase **eyes of your heart** is a metaphor for one's ability to gain understanding. Alternate translation: "that you may gain understanding and be enlightened" (See: [Metaphor](#))

that...may be enlightened (ULT)

Alternate translation: "that ... may be made to see"

of {your} heart...of...his...calling (ULT)

The **calling** of God refers to his choosing people to believe in him. Alternate translation: "that you have because he chose you to be his people"

of his inheritance (ULT)

Receiving what God has promised believers is spoken of as if one were inheriting property and wealth from a family member. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the saints (ULT)

Alternate translation: "those whom he has set apart for himself" or "those who belong completely to him"

ULT

¹⁸ that the eyes of {your} heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of his calling {and} what {are} the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

Ephesians 1:19

the incomparable greatness of his power (ULT)

Alternate translation: "God's power, which is far beyond all other power"

toward us who believe (ULT)

Alternate translation: "for us who believe"

of his power...the working of the force...of...strength (ULT)

Alternate translation: "his great power that is at work for us"

of the force of his strength (ULT)

The words **force** and **strength** have very similar meanings and may be combined. Alternate translation: "of his great strength" (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

¹⁹ and what {is} the incomparable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of the force of his strength,

Ephesians 1:20

when he raised him from the dead (ULT)

Alternate translation: "when he made him alive again"

from the dead (ULT)

This expression describes all dead people together in the underworld. To come back from among them speaks of becoming alive again. Alternate translation: "from among all those who have died" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

ULT

²⁰ which he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places (ULT)

The person who sits **at the right hand** of a king sits at his right side and rules with all the authority of the king at whose right hand or side he sits. This is a metonym of location that represents the authority that the person in that location possesses. Alternate translation: "gave him all authority to rule from heaven" (See: [Metonymy](#))

seated him at his right hand (ULT)

To sit at the **right hand** of God is a symbolic action of receiving great honor and authority from God. Alternate translation: "seated him in the place of honor and authority beside him" (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

in...the heavenly places (ULT)

"in the supernatural world." The word **heavenly** refers to the place where God is. See how you translated this in [Ephesians 1:3](#).

Ephesians 1:21

far above all rule and authority and power and dominion (ULT)

These are all terms for the ranks of supernatural beings, both angelic and demonic. If your language does not have four different terms for rulers or authorities, you can combine them. Alternate translation: "far above all types of supernatural beings" (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one coming.

every name that is named (ULT)

You can state this in active form. This could mean: (1) every name that man gives. (2) every name that God gives. (See: [Active or Passive](#))

name (ULT)

This could refer to: (1) a title. (2) a position of authority.

in this age (ULT)

Alternate translation: "at this time"

in...age...coming (ULT)

Alternate translation: "in the future"

Ephesians 1:22

under his feet (ULT)

Here, **feet** represents Christ's lordship, authority, and power.
Alternate translation: "under Christ's power" (See: [Metonymy](#))

head over all things (ULT)

Here, **head** is a metaphor that refers to the leader or the one who is in charge. Alternate translation: "ruler over all things" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

22 And he put all things under his feet
and gave him as head over all things to
the church,

Ephesians 1:23

his body (ULT)

Just as the head (verse 22) rules all things pertaining to a human body, so Christ is the head of the church body. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²³ which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all in all.

body...fullness of the one who fills all in all (ULT)

Alternate translation: "for Christ fills the church with his life and power just as he gives life to all things"

body...fullness (ULT)

This could have: (1) a passive sense, which would mean that Christ fills or completes the church. (2) an active sense, which would mean that the church completes Christ (as a body completes a head).

Ephesians 2

Ephesians 2 General Notes

Structure and formatting

This chapter focuses on the life that a Christian had before coming to believe in Jesus. Paul then uses this information to explain how a person's former way of living is distinct from a Christian's new identity "in Christ." (See: [faith](#))

Special concepts in this chapter

One body

Paul teaches about the church in this chapter. The church is made of two different groups of people (Jews and Gentiles). They are now one group or "body." The church is also known as the body of Christ. Jews and Gentiles are united in Christ.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

"Dead in trespasses and sins"

Paul teaches that those who are not Christians are "dead" in their sin. Sin binds or enslaves them. This makes them spiritually "dead." Paul writes that God makes Christians alive in Christ. (See: [die](#), [dead](#), [deadly](#), [death](#), [sin](#), [sinful](#), [sinner](#), [sinning](#) and [faith](#) and [Metaphor](#))

Descriptions of worldly living

Paul uses many different ways to describe how non-Christians act. They "lived according to the ways of this world" and are "living according to the ruler of the authorities of the air," "fulfilling the evil desires of our sinful nature," and "carrying out the desires of the body and of the mind."

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

"It is the gift of God"

Some scholars believe "it" here refers to being saved. Other scholars believe that it is faith that is the gift of God. Because of how the Greek tenses agree, "it" here probably refers to both things: the gift is that we are saved by God's grace through faith.

Flesh

"Flesh" is sometimes used as a metaphor for a person's sinful nature. The phrase "Gentiles in the flesh" indicates the Ephesians once lived without any concern for God. But "flesh" is also used in this verse to refer to the physical person, similar to "body part of man." (See: [flesh](#))

Ephesians 2:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds the believers of their past and the way they now are before God.

ULT

¹ And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

you were dead in your trespasses and sins (ULT)

This shows how the inability of a sinful person to obey God is similar to a dead person's inability to respond physically. Alternate translation: "you were spiritually dead, unable to do anything but sin" (See: [Metaphor](#))

in your trespasses and sins (ULT)

The words **trespasses** and **sins** have similar meanings. Paul uses them together to emphasize the greatness of the people's sin. If your language has just one word for this, the two words can be combined. Alternate translation: "your many sins" (See: [Doublet](#))

in your trespasses and sins (ULT)

The words **trespasses** and **sins** are abstract nouns that represent actions. You can use an adjective or a verb for this if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "the sinful things that you did" or "always sinning against God" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Ephesians 2:2

in which you once walked (ULT)

Here, **walk** is a metaphor for the way a person lives. Alternate translation: “which is how you lived” or “which you did habitually” (See: [Metaphor](#))

according to the age of this world (ULT)

The apostles often used **world** to refer to the selfish behaviors and corrupt values of the people living in this world. Alternate translation: “according to the values of people living in the world” or “following the principles of this present world” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

² in which you once walked according to the age of this world, according to the ruler of the authorities of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience,

the...of...world...ruler of the authorities of...air (ULT)

This refers to the devil or Satan.

the spirit that is now working

Alternate translation: “the spirit of Satan, who is currently working”

the sons of disobedience (ULT)

“people who routinely disobey God” (See: [Idiom](#))

Ephesians 2:3

the desires of the body and of the mind (ULT)

The words **body** and **mind** represent the entire person. Alternate Translation: “the selfish things that people want to do” (See: [Metonymy](#))

children...of wrath (ULT)

“people with whom God is angry” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

³ in which we all also once lived in the evil desires of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the body and of the mind. And we were by nature children of wrath, as also the rest.

Ephesians 2:4

But (ULT)

The connecting word **But** introduces a contrast relationship. The love and mercy of God is in sharp contrast to the evil way the Ephesians lived before they believed in God. (See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

ULT

⁴ But God being rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us,

God...being rich in mercy (ULT)

The word **mercy** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “God is abundantly merciful” or “God is very kind to us” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

because of his great love with which he loved us (ULT)

The word **love** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “because he loved us so very much” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Ephesians 2:5

by grace you have been saved (ULT)

You can state this in an active form. Alternate translation: “God saved you by being gracious to you” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

by grace you have been saved (ULT)

The word **grace** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “God saved you by being extremely kind to you” or “God saved you as a free gift” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

⁵ and we being dead in trespasses, he made us alive together in Christ—by grace you have been saved—

Ephesians 2:6

raised us up with him (ULT)

Here, **raised up** is an idiom for causing someone who has died to become alive again. (See: [Idiom](#))

raised us up with him (ULT)

This could mean: (1) because God has caused Christ to come alive again, God has already given Paul and the believers in Ephesus new spiritual life. Alternate translation: “God has given us new life because we belong to Christ” (2) because God has caused Christ to come alive again, the believers in Ephesus can know that after they die they will live with Christ, and Paul can speak of the believers living again as if it has already happened. Alternate translation: “we can be sure that God will give us life just as he has caused Christ to come alive again” (See: [Predictive Past](#))

ULT

⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

seated us with him (ULT)

Paul talks about the believers as already **seated** in heaven with Christ because, although it is something that will happen in the future, it was guaranteed by what Christ did in the past. Alternate translation: “it is as though God has already seated us next to Christ” (See: [Predictive Past](#))

in the heavenly places (ULT)

The phrase **heavenly places** refers to the place where God is. See how this is translated in [Ephesians 1:3](#). Alternate translation: “in the supernatural world”

in...Christ Jesus (ULT)

The phrase **in Christ Jesus** and similar expressions are metaphors that frequently occur in the New Testament letters. They express the strongest kind of relationship possible between Christ and those who believe in him.

Ephesians 2:7

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a goal relationship. The goal or purpose of God raising up believers and seating them in heaven with Christ is to show the extent of his grace in Christ. (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship](#))

in the ages that are coming

Alternate translation: "in the future"

ULT

⁷ so that in the ages that are coming he might show the immeasurably great riches of his grace in {his} kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:8

For (ULT)

The connecting word **For** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that the Ephesians had been saved by God, and not by their own good works. The result is that people would see the grace of God to us in Christ. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

ULT

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this {is} not from yourselves; {it is} the gift of God,

For by grace you have been saved through faith (ULT)

You can state this actively. Alternate translation: “God saved you by grace because of your faith in him” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

For by grace you have been saved (ULT)

The word **grace** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “God saved you as a free gift” or “God saved you because of his extreme kindness to you” See how you translated this phrase in [Ephesians 2:5](#). (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

this {is} (ULT)

The word **this** refers back to **by grace you have been saved by faith**.

Ephesians 2:9

not from works, so that no one may boast (ULT)

You may want to start a new sentence here. Alternate translation:

“Salvation does not come from works, so that no one may boast” or

“God does not save a person because of what that person does, so no one can boast and say that he earned his salvation”

ULT

⁹ not from works, so that no one may boast.

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a goal relationship. The goal or purpose of God for saving believers by grace instead of by their works is that no person might boast. (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship](#))

Ephesians 2:10

For (ULT)

The connecting word **For** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that God is the one who created us to do any good works that we do. The result is that people cannot boast. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

ULT

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works that God prepared beforehand, so that we would walk in them.

in Christ Jesus (ULT)

The phrase **in Christ Jesus** and similar expressions are metaphors that frequently occur in the New Testament letters. They express the strongest kind of relationship possible between Christ and those who believe in him.

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a goal relationship. The goal or purpose of God creating us as he did is that we would do the good works that he intended for us to do. (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship](#))

we would walk in them (ULT)

To **walk** on a path is a metaphor for how a person lives his life. Here, **in them** refers to the “good works.” Alternate translation: “we would always and continually do those good deeds” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 2:11

Therefore (ULT)

The connecting word **Therefore** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that they were saved by God and not by anything they had done on their own. The result is that the Ephesians would remember that they were once separated from God. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

ULT

11 Therefore, remember that once you {were} Gentiles in the flesh, who are called “uncircumcised” by those who are called “circumcised” in the flesh, performed by human hands.

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds these believers that God has now made Gentiles and Jews into one body through Christ and his cross.

were} Gentiles in the flesh (ULT)

This refers to people who were not born Jewish. (See: [Metaphor](#))

uncircumcised (ULT)

Non-Jewish people were not circumcised as babies and thus the Jews considered them people who do not follow any of God’s laws. Alternate translation: “uncircumcised pagans” (See: [Metonymy](#))

circumcised (ULT)

This was another term for Jewish people because all male infants were **circumcised**. Alternate translation: “circumcised people” (See: [Metonymy](#))

by those who are called (ULT)

You can translate this with an active form. Alternate translation: “by what people call” or “by those whom people call” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

in...those who are called “circumcised...the flesh, performed by human hands (ULT)

This could refer to: (1) the Jews, who are circumcised by humans. (2) the Jews, who circumcise the physical body.

Ephesians 2:12

For (ULT)

The connecting word **For** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that they were not part of the Jews, who were circumcised. The result is that the Gentile Ephesians were separated from God. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

ULT

12 For at that time you were apart from Christ, excluded from the community of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

apart from Christ (ULT)

Alternate translation: “unbelievers”

strangers to the covenants of the promise (ULT)

Paul speaks to the Gentile believers as if they had been foreigners, kept out of the land of God’s **covenants** and **promise**. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 2:13

But (ULT)

The connecting word **But** introduces a contrast relationship. The current condition of the Ephesian Gentile believers, after they believed in Christ, is that they are near to God. That is in contrast to their previous condition, before they believed in Christ, of being separated from God. (See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

ULT

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ (ULT)

Not belonging to God due to sin is spoken of as being far away from God. Belonging to God because of the blood of Christ is spoken of as being brought near to God. Alternate translation: “you who once did not belong to God now belong to God because of the blood of Christ” (See: [Metaphor](#))

by the blood of Christ (ULT)

Here the **blood of Christ** is a metonym for his death. Alternate translation: “by Christ’s death” or “when Christ died for us” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Ephesians 2:14

For (ULT)

The connecting word **For** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that Christ himself joined them to the Jewish believers. The result is that the Ephesian Gentile believers were brought near to God. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

ULT

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and destroyed in his flesh the middle wall of partition, the hostility.

himself...he...is our peace (ULT)

Alternate translation: "Jesus gives us his peace"

our peace (ULT)

The word **our** refers to Paul and his readers and so, it is inclusive. (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'](#))

who has made the two one (ULT)

Alternate translation: "who made the Jews and Gentiles one"

in his flesh (ULT)

The phrase **his flesh**, his physical body, is a metonym for his body dying. Alternate translation: "by the death of his body on the cross" (See: [Metonymy](#))

the middle wall of partition...the hostility (ULT)

The **hostility** between the Jews and Gentiles is compared to a **wall**. Alternate translation: "the hostility that was like a wall that separated them" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 2:15

He abolished the law of commandments in regulations (ULT)

Jesus' blood satisfies the law of Moses so that both the Jews and Gentiles can live at peace in God. Alternate translation: "He took away the requirements in the law of Moses"

ULT

¹⁵ He abolished the law of commandments in regulations so that he might make the two into one new man in himself, making peace,

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a goal relationship. The goal or purpose of Christ in abolishing the law was to join the Jews and the Gentiles together into one group. (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship](#))

one new man (ULT)

Paul talks about the unity of Jews and Gentiles as if they had become **one** person. Alternate translation: "a single new people" (See: [Metaphor](#))

in himself (ULT)

It is being joined to Christ that makes reconciliation possible between Jews and Gentiles. Paul describes this relationship as though Christ surrounded all of us. Alternate translation: "because he made it possible" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 2:16

so that he might reconcile both (ULT)

Alternate translation: "so that Christ might bring the Jews and the Gentiles together in peace"

as one body (ULT)

The church is often pictured as the **body** of Christ, who is its head. Here it is comprised of both Jews and Gentiles. (See: [Metaphor](#))

through the cross (ULT)

Here the **cross** here represents Christ's death on the cross. Alternate translation: "by means of Christ's death on the cross" (See: [Metonymy](#))

putting to death the hostility (ULT)

Stopping their **hostility** is spoken of as if he killed their hostility. By dying on the cross, Jesus eliminated the reason for Jews and Gentiles to be hostile toward each other. Neither are now required to live according to the law of Moses. Alternate translation: "stopping them from hating one another" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

16 and so that he might reconcile both to God as one body through the cross, putting to death the hostility in it.

Ephesians 2:17

Connecting Statement:

Paul tells the Ephesians that Gentile believers are also now just as much a part of God's people as are Jewish believers. The Jewish apostles and prophets are theirs, as is Christ, and they all form a temple for God in the Spirit.

ULT

17 And he came {and} proclaimed peace to you who {were} far away and peace to those who {were} near,

and} proclaimed peace (ULT)

Alternate translation: "and announced the gospel of peace" or "declaring the gospel of peace"

to you who {were} far away (ULT)

Paul pictures the Gentiles (non-Jews), who were not part of God's people, as though they were physically distant from God. (See: [Metaphor](#))

to those who {were} near (ULT)

Paul pictures the Jews, who were God's people by birth, as though they were physically close to God. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 2:18

for through him we both have access (ULT)

Here, **we both** refers to Paul, the believing Jews, and the believing non-Jews. (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'](#))

ULT

18 for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

for (ULT)

The connecting word **for** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that he himself is the one who enabled both Jew and Gentile to come to the Father. The result is that Christ proclaimed peace to both the Jews and the Gentiles. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

in one Spirit (ULT)

All believers, both Jewish and Gentile, are enabled to enter into the presence of God the Father by the same Holy **Spirit**. Alternate translation: "by means of the same Spirit"

Ephesians 2:19

So then (ULT)

The connecting phrase **So then** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that Christ gave them access to God through the Spirit. The result is that the Ephesian believers are no longer separated from God. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

ULT

19 So then, you are no longer strangers and foreigners. Instead, you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

strangers and foreigners (ULT)

The words **strangers** and **foreigners** have very similar meanings and may be combined. Alternate translation: “people who had no relationship to God” (See: [Doublet](#))

Instead (ULT)

The connecting word **Instead** introduces a contrast relationship. The previous separation of the Ephesians from God is in contrast to their current status as citizens of the kingdom of God and members of his household. (See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God (ULT)

Paul is again speaking of the spiritual condition of Gentiles after they become believers as he would speak about foreigners becoming citizens of a different nation. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 2:20

You have been built on the foundation (ULT)

Paul speaks of God's people as if they were a building. Christ is the cornerstone, the apostles are the **foundation**, and the believers are the structure. Alternate translation: "you depend on the teaching" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

20 You have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

You have been built (ULT)

You can state this in the active tense. Alternate translation: "God has built you" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Ephesians 2:21

the whole building, being fit together, grows into a holy temple (ULT)

Paul continues to speak of Christ's family as if it were a **building**. In the same way that a builder fits stones together while building, so Christ is fitting us together. Alternate translation: "all of us, as we grow together, become a holy group that worships God" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²¹ in whom the whole building, being fit together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,

in whom...in the Lord (ULT)

"In Christ ... in the Lord Jesus" These metaphors express the strongest kind of relationship possible between Christ and those who believe in him. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 2:22

in whom (ULT)

You can translate this as “in Christ,” which is a metaphor that expresses the strongest kind of relationship possible between Christ and those who believe in him. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God in the Spirit.

you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God in the Spirit (ULT)

This describes how believers are being put together to become a **place** where **God** will permanently live through the power of the Holy **Spirit**. Alternate translation: “you also are being joined to this group where God lives by his Spirit” (See: [Metaphor](#))

you also are being built together (ULT)

You can state this as active. Alternate translation: “God is also building you together” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Ephesians 3

Ephesians 3 General Notes

Structure and formatting

“I pray”

Paul structures part of this chapter as a prayer to God. But Paul is not just talking to God. He is both praying for and instructing the church in Ephesus.

Special concepts in this chapter

Mystery

Paul refers to the church as a “mystery.” The role of the church in the plans of God was once not known. But God has now revealed it. Part of this mystery involves the Gentiles having equal standing with the Jews in the plans of God.

Ephesians 3:1

Connecting Statement:

To make clear the hidden truth about the church to believers, Paul refers back to the oneness of Jews and Gentiles and how believers from both groups form part of the one group that worships God, like the stones that form one temple.

ULT

¹ For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles,

For this reason (ULT)

The connecting phrase **For this reason** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is what Paul talked about in Chapter 2, that Christ showed his grace by removing the division between Jews and Gentiles and making them into one group. The result is that Paul prays for the Gentiles. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

For this reason (ULT)

You may need to make explicit what the reason is. Alternate translation: “because of God’s grace to you” You may also need to make explicit here what the result is, as in the UST, because Paul does not state the result until 3:14, that he prays for them. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

the prisoner of Christ Jesus (ULT)

Alternate translation: “the one who is in prison because I serve Christ Jesus”

Ephesians 3:2

the stewardship of the grace of God that was given to me for you

Here, **grace** could mean: (1) the gift of the gospel that Paul is bringing to the Gentiles, and you could translate, “the responsibility that God gave me to bring his grace to you.” (2) the gift to Paul of being the steward of the gospel for the Gentiles, and you could translate that as “the responsibility that God graciously gave me for your benefit.”

ULT

² if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of the grace of God that was given to me for you,

Ephesians 3:3

according to the revelation made known to me (ULT)

You can state this in active form. Alternate translation: “according to what God revealed to me” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³ according to the revelation made known to me, the mystery about which I already wrote in brief.

about which I already wrote in brief (ULT)

Paul refers here to another letter that he had written to these people.

Ephesians 3:4

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁴ Concerning that, when you read it, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,

Ephesians 3:5

which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men (ULT)

You can state this in active form. Alternate translation: “God did not make these things known to people in the past” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁵ which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men as it now has been revealed by the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets—

as it now has been revealed...by the Spirit (ULT)

You can state this in active form. Alternate translation: “but now the Spirit has revealed it” or “but now the Spirit has made it known” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Ephesians 3:6

that the Gentiles are to be fellow heirs... through the gospel (ULT)

This is the hidden truth that Paul began to explain in the previous verse. The **Gentiles** who receive Christ also receive everything that the Jewish believers receive from God.

ULT

⁶ that the Gentiles are to be fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,

fellow members of the body (ULT)

The church is often referred to as the **body** of Christ.

in Christ Jesus (ULT)

The phrase **in Christ Jesus** and similar expressions are metaphors that frequently occur in the New Testament letters. They express the strongest kind of relationship possible between Christ and those who believe in him.

through the gospel (ULT)

This could mean: (1) because of the **gospel**, the Gentiles are fellow sharers in the promise. (2) because of the **gospel**, the Gentiles are fellow heirs and members of the body and fellow sharers in the promise.

Ephesians 3:7

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁷ for which I became a servant by the gift of the grace of God that was given to me through the working of his power.

Ephesians 3:8

unsearchable (ULT)

Paul speaks of everything that Christ offers as something so physically vast that it cannot be fully explored. Alternate Translation: “unable to be completely known” (See: [Metaphor](#))

riches of Christ (ULT)

Paul speaks of the truth about **Christ** and the blessings he brings as if they were material wealth. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁸ To me—the least of all the saints—this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

Ephesians 3:9

of the mystery that was hidden from the ages in God who created all things (ULT)

You can state this in active form. Alternate translation: “of God, who created all things, kept this plan hidden for long ages in the past”
(See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁹ and to reveal for everyone what {is} the administration of the mystery that was hidden from the ages in God who created all things,

Ephesians 3:10

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a goal relationship. The goal or purpose of God revealing the mystery of the church to Paul is to enable the rulers in the heavenly places to see the wisdom of God. (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship](#))

ULT

¹⁰ so that now through the church the multifaceted wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and to the authorities in the heavenly places,

might be made known...to the rulers and to the authorities in the heavenly places...the multifaceted wisdom of God (ULT)

You can state this in active form. Alternate translation: "God may make his great wisdom known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

to the rulers and to the authorities (ULT)

These words share similar meanings. Paul uses them together to emphasize that every spiritual being will know God's wisdom. If your language does not have two words for this, you can use one. (See: [Doublet](#))

in the heavenly places (ULT)

The phrase **heavenly places** refers to the place where God is. See how this is translated in [Ephesians 1:3](#). Alternate translation: "in the supernatural world"

the multifaceted wisdom of God (ULT)

Paul talks of God's **wisdom** as though it were an object with many surfaces. Alternate translation: "the complex wisdom of God" or "how extremely wise God is" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 3:11

according to the eternal purpose (ULT)

Alternate translation: "in keeping with the eternal plan" or "consistent with the eternal plan"

ULT

11 according to the eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Ephesians 3:12

Connecting Statement:

In the next section, Paul praises God in his sufferings and prays for these Ephesian believers.

we have boldness (ULT)

Alternate translation: “we are without fear” or “we have courage”

boldness and access (ULT)

These two words work together to express one idea: “bold access” or “boldness to enter” (See: [Hendiadys](#))

access with confidence (ULT)

It may be helpful to state explicitly that this **access** is into God’s presence. Alternate translation: “access into God’s presence with confidence” or “freedom to enter into God’s presence with confidence” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

confidence (ULT)

Alternate translation: “certainty” or “assurance”

ULT

12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in him.

Ephesians 3:13

Therefore (ULT)

The connecting word **Therefore** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that the believers have access to Christ with confidence. The result is that the believers will not be discouraged. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

ULT

13 Therefore, I ask you not to be discouraged by my sufferings for you, which is your glory.

for you, which is your glory (ULT)

Here, **your glory** is a metonym for the salvation and eternal life that the Ephesians will have because of Paul's work of telling them about Christ, which resulted in his suffering in prison. You can state this as a new sentence. Alternate translation: "for you. They bring you a wonderful benefit" or "for you. They result in your salvation" (See: [Metonymy](#))

Ephesians 3:14

For this reason (ULT)

The connecting phrase **For this reason** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that Paul's sufferings have caused glory for the believers. The result is that Paul prays to the Father. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

ULT

14 For this reason I bend my knees to the Father,

For this reason (ULT)

You may need to make explicit what the reason is. Alternate translation: "because God has done all this for you" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

I bend my knees to the Father (ULT)

Bent **knees** are a picture of the whole person in an attitude of prayer. Alternate translation: "I bow down in prayer to the Father" or "I humbly pray to the Father" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Ephesians 3:15

from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named (ULT)

The act of naming here probably also represents the act of creating.
Alternate translation: "who created and named every family in heaven and on earth" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,

Ephesians 3:16

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a goal relationship. The goal or purpose of Paul's prayer is that the Ephesian believers would be strengthened by God in their faith and love. (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship](#))

ULT

16 so that he would grant you,
according to the riches of his glory, to
be strengthened with power through
his Spirit in the inner man,

he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power (ULT)

Alternate translation: "God, because he is so great and powerful, would allow you to become strong with his power"

he would grant (ULT)

Alternate translation: "he would give"

Ephesians 3:17

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues the prayer he began in [Ephesians 3:14](#).

that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, being rooted and grounded in love

This is the second item for which Paul prays that God will “grant” the Ephesians “according to the riches of his glory.” The first is that they would “be strengthened” ([Ephesians 3:16](#)).

that Christ may live in your hearts through faith (ULT)

Here, **hearts** represent a person’s inner being, and **through** expresses the means by which Christ lives within the believer. Christ lives in the hearts of believers because God graciously allows them to have faith. Alternate translation: “that Christ may live within you because you trust in him” (See: [Metaphor](#))

being rooted and grounded in love (ULT)

Paul speaks of their faith as if it were a tree that has deep roots or a house built on a solid foundation. Alternate translation: “you will be like a firmly rooted tree and a building built on stone” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

17 that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, being rooted and grounded in love,

Ephesians 3:18

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that Christ would live in their hearts. The result is that the Ephesian believers would fully know the love of God and be filled with God's fullness. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

ULT

¹⁸ so that you may be fully able to comprehend, along with all the saints, what {is} the width and length and height and depth,

to comprehend (ULT)

This is the third item for which Paul bends his knees and prays; the first is that God will grant that they be strengthened ([Ephesians 3:16](#)) and the second is that Christ may live in their hearts through faith ([Ephesians 3:17](#)).

all the saints (ULT)

Alternate translation: "all the believers in Christ"

the width and length and height and depth (ULT)

In this metaphor Paul pictures something that is not physical or measurable as something that is physical but stretches out in all directions and, thus, is very large. This could refer to: (1) the intensity of Christ's love for us. Alternate translation: "how very much Christ loves us" (2) the greatness of God's wisdom. Alternate translation: "how very wise God is" (See: [Metaphor](#))

the width and length and height and depth (ULT)

It may be necessary to state explicitly what these words refer to. If so, you can combine this with the phrase from the next verse and say: "the width and length and height and depth of, and truly know the love of Christ" or "the width and length and height and depth of the love of Christ, and truly know it" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Ephesians 3:19

and to know the...love of Christ (ULT)

This continues the idea from the previous verse. They both refer to knowing the greatness of the love of Christ. Alternate translation: “that you can know how great Christ’s love for us is”

ULT

¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ, which goes beyond knowledge so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (ULT)

This is the fourth item for which Paul bends his knees and prays ([Ephesians 3:14](#)). The first is that they would “be strengthened” ([Ephesians 3:16](#)), the second is that “Christ would live in their hearts through faith” ([Ephesians 3:17](#)), and the third is that they “could comprehend Christ’s love” ([Ephesians 3:18](#)).

so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God (ULT)

In this metaphor Paul pictures the Ephesian believers as containers into which **God** can pour himself. Alternate translation: “so God can give you everything that he has to give you” (See: [Metaphor](#))

so that you may be filled (ULT)

You can state this actively. Alternate translation: “so that God can fill you” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

with all the fullness of God (ULT)

The word **fullness** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “with everything that God is full of” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that the Ephesian believers would know the love of Christ. The result is that they would be filled with the fullness of God. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

Ephesians 3:20

General Information:

The words “we” and “us” in this book continue to include Paul and all believers. (See: [Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’](#))

Connecting Statement:

Paul concludes his prayer with a blessing.

And to him (ULT)

Alternate translation: “Now to God, who”

to do exceedingly abundantly...that we ask or think (ULT)

Alternate translation: “to do much more than all that we ask or think” or “to do things that are much greater than anything that we ask him for or think about”

ULT

20 And to him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that is working in us,

Ephesians 3:21

to him {be} the glory in the church (ULT)

The word **glory** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “may God’s people glorify him” or “may God’s people praise him for how great he is” See the UST. (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

21 to him {be} the glory in the church
and in Christ Jesus to all generations
forever {and} ever. Amen.

Ephesians 4

Ephesians 4 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with verse 8, which is quoted from the Old Testament.

Special concepts in this chapter

Spiritual gifts

Spiritual gifts are specific supernatural abilities that the Holy Spirit gives to Christians after they come to believe in Jesus. These spiritual gifts were foundational to developing the church. Paul lists here only some of the spiritual gifts. (See: [faith](#))

Unity

Paul considers it very important that the church is united. This is a major theme of this chapter.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Old man and new man

The term “old man” probably refers to the sinful nature with which a person is born. The “new man” is the new nature or new life that God gives a person after they come to believe in Christ.

Ephesians 4:1

Connecting Statement:

Because of what Paul has been writing to the Ephesians, he tells them how they should live their lives as believers and again emphasizes that believers are to agree with each other.

ULT

¹ Therefore I, the prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk worthily of the calling by which you were called,

Therefore (ULT)

The connecting word **Therefore** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that God will be glorified in the church for all generations. The result is that believers should walk in a way that is worthy of the Lord. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

the prisoner for the Lord (ULT)

Alternate translation: "someone who is in prison because he serves the Lord"

to walk worthily of the calling (ULT)

The phrase **to walk** is a common way to express the idea of living one's life. (See: [Metaphor](#))

of the calling by which you were called (ULT)

Here, **the calling** refers to the fact that God chose them to be his people. Alternate translation: "because God chose you to be his people"

Ephesians 4:2

with all humility and gentleness (ULT)

The words **humility**, **gentleness**, and **patience** are abstract nouns.
 Alternate Translation: "to learn to be humble, gentle, and patient"
 (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

² with all humility and gentleness, with
 patience, putting up with one another
 in love,

Ephesians 4:3

to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (ULT)

Here Paul speaks of **peace** as if it were a **bond** that ties people together. This is a metaphor for being united with other people by living peacefully with them. Alternate translation: “to live peacefully with one another and remain united as the Spirit made possible” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³ doing your best to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (ULT)

The words **unity** and **peace** are abstract nouns. Alternate translation: “to live peacefully with one another and remain united as the Spirit made possible” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Ephesians 4:4

There is} one body (ULT)

The church is often referred to as the **body** of Christ.

There is} one...Spirit (ULT)

Alternate translation: "only one Holy Spirit"

ULT

⁴ {There is} one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling,

you were called in one hope of your calling (ULT)

You can state this in active form. Alternate translation: "God called you to have one confident hope in your calling" or "there is one thing that God also chose you to be confident in and expect him to do" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Ephesians 4:5

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

Ephesians 4:6

**Father of all...of all...over...of all...through...in
all (ULT)**

The word **all** here means “everything.”

ULT

⁶ one God and Father of all, who {is}
over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:7

General Information:

The quote here is from a song that King David wrote.

Connecting Statement:

Paul reminds believers of the gifts that Christ gives believers to use in the church, which is the whole body of believers.

ULT

⁷ And to each one of us grace has been given according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

to...one...each...of us grace has been given (ULT)

You can state this using an active form. Alternate translation: “God has given grace to each one of us” or “God gave a gift to each believer” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

to...one...each...of us grace has been given (ULT)

The word **grace** is an abstract noun that refers here to a gift from God. Alternate translation: “God has given a gift to each believer” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Ephesians 4:8

Therefore (ULT)

The connecting word **Therefore** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that every believer has been given a spiritual gift. The result is that the Scripture says Jesus gave gifts to men. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

ULT

⁸ Therefore it says: "When he ascended to the heights, he led captives into captivity, {and} he gave gifts to men."

When he ascended to the heights (ULT)

Alternate translation: "When Christ went up into heaven"

Ephesians 4:9

He ascended (ULT)

Alternate translation: "Christ went up"

he also descended (ULT)

Alternate translation: "Christ also came down"

into the lower regions of the earth (ULT)

This could refer to: (1) the **lower regions** as a part of the **earth**. (2) **the lower regions** as another way of referring to the **earth** itself. Alternate translation: "into the lower regions, the earth"

ULT

⁹ And this "He ascended," what is it except that he also descended into the lower regions of the earth?

Ephesians 4:10

so that he might fill all things (ULT)

Alternate translation: "so that he might be working powerfully everywhere"

he might fill (ULT)

Alternate translation: "he might complete" or "he might satisfy"

ULT

¹⁰ He who descended is also himself he who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.

Ephesians 4:11

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

11 And he himself gave the apostles,
and the prophets, and the evangelists,
and the pastors and teachers,

Ephesians 4:12

for the equipping of the saints (ULT)

Alternate translation: "to prepare the people whom he has set apart" or "to provide the believers with what they need"

for the work of serving (ULT)

Alternate translation: "so that they can serve others"

for the building up of the body of Christ (ULT)

Paul is speaking of people who grow spiritually as if they were doing exercises to increase the strength of their physical bodies. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the building up (ULT)

Alternate translation: "the improvement"

of the body of Christ

The **body of Christ** refers to all of the members of Christ's Church.

ULT

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of serving, for the building up of the body of Christ,

Ephesians 4:13

we all reach to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God

The believers need to know Jesus as the Son of God if they are to be united in faith and mature as believers.

ULT

¹³ until we all reach to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

we all reach to the unity of the faith (ULT)

The word **unity** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “we all become equally strong in faith” or “we all become united together in faith” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

we all reach to the unity of the faith (ULT)

The word **faith** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “become united together as believers” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

the knowledge of the Son of God (ULT)

The word **knowledge** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “all know well the Son of God” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

of the Son of God (ULT)

This is an important title for Jesus. (See: [Translating Son and Father](#))

to...a mature man (ULT)

Alternate translation: “to a mature believer”

mature (ULT)

Alternate translation: “fully developed” or “grown up” or “complete”

Ephesians 4:14

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a goal relationship. The goal or purpose of gifted people in the church is to bring all the believers to spiritual maturity. (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship](#))

ULT

14 so that we may no longer be children tossed back and forth by the waves and carried away by every wind of teaching through the trickery of people in cleverness for deceitful scheming.

we may no longer be children (ULT)

Paul refers to believers who have not grown spiritually as if they were **children** who have had very little experience in life. Alternate translation: “we may no longer be like children” (See: [Metaphor](#))

tossed back and forth by the waves and carried away by every wind of teaching (ULT)

Paul speaks of a believer who has not become mature and follows various wrong teachings as if that believer were a boat and the teachings were the **wind** and **waves** that move the boat in different directions on the water. See the UST. (See: [Metaphor](#))

through the trickery of people in cleverness for deceitful scheming (ULT)

The words **trickery**, **cleverness**, and **scheming** are abstract nouns. Alternate translation: “by crafty people who trick believers with clever lies” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Ephesians 4:15

Instead (ULT)

The connecting word **Instead** introduces a contrast relationship. Following every changing teaching is in contrast to becoming mature in Christ and building up his body. Use a word in your language that indicates contrast. (See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

ULT

15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, let us grow up in all things into him who is the head, {even} Christ,

speaking the truth (ULT)

The word **truth** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “speaking truthfully” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

in love (ULT)

the word **love** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “as the members love one another” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

into him...who is the head (ULT)

Paul uses a metaphor of the human body to describe how Christ causes believers to work together in harmony as the **head** of a body causes the body parts to work together to grow in a healthy way. See the UST. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 4:16

from whom the whole body...causes the growth of the body (ULT)

Paul continues the metaphor of the believers as a human **body** with Christ as the head to describe how Christ causes believers to work together in harmony as the head of a body causes the body parts to work together to grow in a healthy way. See the UST. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁶ 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.

for building up itself in love (ULT)

The word **for** indicates a purpose clause. The purpose of all of the believers working together in harmony, as the members of a human body do, is so that all believers will grow in our ability to love each other and to love God. Use a word in your language that marks this as a purpose clause. (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship](#))

in love (ULT)

The word **love** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “as the members love one another” or “to be able to love each other more” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

by every supporting ligament (ULT)

Paul continues the metaphor comparing the believers to a human body. A **ligament** is a strong band that connects bones or holds organs in place in the body. Just as the body is held together by strong ligaments, so the believers are held together by love that grows stronger as the body parts grow and work together. See the UST. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 4:17

Connecting Statement:

Paul tells them what they should no longer do now that they, as believers, are sealed by the Holy Spirit of God.

Therefore (ULT)

The connecting word **Therefore** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that Christ wants every believer to become spiritually mature and to serve the other believers. The result is that the Ephesian believers should no longer act as the Gentiles act. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

ULT

17 Therefore, I say this and strongly urge you in the Lord, to walk no longer as the Gentiles also walk, in futility of their minds.

Therefore, I say this and strongly urge (ULT)

Alternate translation: "Because of what I have just said, I will now say something more in order to strongly encourage"

in the Lord (ULT)

This could be: (1) referring to the authority of the Lord. (2) stating that we all belong to the Lord.

you...to walk no longer as the Gentiles also walk, in futility of their minds (ULT)

Paul commonly uses this metaphor that compares walking to living one's life. Alternate translation: "you ... to stop living like the Gentiles with their worthless thoughts" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 4:18

They have been darkened in {their} understanding (ULT)

This metaphor compares wrong thinking with darkness. Alternate translation: “they no longer think or reason clearly” or “they are not able to understand” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁸ They have been 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.

They have been darkened in {their} understanding (ULT)

You can state this in active form. Alternate translation: “Their way of thinking has become dark” or “They no longer think or reason clearly” or “They are not able to understand” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them (ULT)

You can state this in active form. Alternate translation: “because they do not know God, they cannot live the way that God wants his people to live” or “they have cut themselves off from the life of God by their ignorance” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

alienated (ULT)

Alternate translation: “cut off” or “separated”

ignorance (ULT)

Alternate translation: “lack of knowledge” or “lack of information”

because of the hardness of their hearts (ULT)

The phrase **hardness of their hearts** is a metaphor that means “stubbornness.” Alternate translation: “because they are stubborn” or “because they refuse to listen to God” (See: [Metaphor](#))

because of (ULT)

The connecting word **because** introduces a reason-result relationship. The first reason is that they are ignorant of him. The result is that the Gentiles are separated from God. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

because of (ULT)

The connecting word **because** introduces a reason-result relationship. The second reason is that their hearts are hardened. The result is that Gentiles are separated from God. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

Ephesians 4:19

have handed themselves over to sensuality (ULT)

Paul speaks of these people as if they were objects that they themselves were giving to other people, and he speaks of the way that they want to satisfy their physical desires as if the desires were the person to whom they give themselves. Alternate translation:

“have given in to every physical desire” or “only want to satisfy their physical desires” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁹ They, being dead to all feeling, have handed themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

Ephesians 4:20

But you did not thus learn about Christ (ULT)

The word **thus** refers to the way that the Gentiles live, as described in [Ephesians 4:17-19](#). This emphasizes that what the believers learned from Christ was the opposite of that. Alternate translation: “But what you learned about the ways of Christ was not like that”

ULT

²⁰ But you did not thus learn about Christ,

But (ULT)

The connecting word **But** introduces a contrast relationship. The sinful way the Gentiles live is in contrast to the way that Paul taught the Ephesians to live according to the truth of Jesus. Use a connecting word in your language that marks a contrast here (See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

Ephesians 4:21

if indeed you have heard about him and were taught in him (ULT)

Paul knows that the people to whom he is writing have **heard** and been **taught** these things. He is using irony as a form of rebuke—if they are doing things contrary to the way of Christ, they know better than that and need to stop. See the UST. (See: [Irony](#))

ULT

²¹ if indeed you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus.

were taught in him (ULT)

You can state this in active form. This could mean: (1) they received instruction in his ways. (2) Jesus' people have taught them. (See: [Active or Passive](#))

in...as the truth is...Jesus (ULT)

“as Jesus teaches us the true way to live” or “as everything about Jesus is true.” See the UST.

Ephesians 4:22

You are to put aside what belongs to {your} former manner of life (ULT)

Paul is speaking of moral qualities as if they were pieces of clothing. Alternate translation: “You must stop living according to your former manner of life” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²² You are to put aside what belongs to {your} former manner of life, the old man that is corrupt because of {its} deceitful desires,

You are to put aside what belongs to {your} former manner of life, the old man (ULT)

Paul is speaking of a way of living as if it were a person. Alternate translation: “You must stop doing the things that your former self did” or “Stop doing the things that you used to do” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the old man (ULT)

The **old man** refers to the “old nature” or “former self,” the way that the person was before the person became a believer in Christ (See: [Metaphor](#))

that is corrupt because of {its} deceitful desires (ULT)

Paul is continuing to speak of a sinful way of living as if it were a person who does evil things. Alternate translation: “when you fooled yourself into thinking that it was good to do whatever evil thing that you wanted to do” See the UST. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 4:23

to be renewed...in the spirit of your minds (ULT)

This may be translated with an active form. Alternate translation: “to allow God to change your attitudes and thoughts” or “to allow God to give you new attitudes and thoughts” See the UST. (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,

Ephesians 4:24

in righteousness and holiness of the truth (ULT)

The words **righteousness**, **holiness**, and **truth** are abstract nouns.
Alternate translation: “truly righteous and holy” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

²⁴ and to put on the new man that was created according to God—in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

to put on the new man (ULT)

Paul continues to speak of a way of living as if it were a person, and also as if it were clothing, so that one could **put on** the **new** person like a robe. Alternate translation: “be the new person” or “start living in the new way” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 4:25

Therefore (ULT)

The connecting word **Therefore** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that God has created the believers as new, holy people. The result is that they would stop acting immorally like they used to live. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

ULT

²⁵ Therefore, putting aside lying, let each of you speak truth with his neighbor, because we are members of one another.

putting aside lying (ULT)

Paul speaks of telling lies as if they were objects that the believers could set aside. Alternate translation: “no longer telling lies” or “instead of telling lies” (See: [Metaphor](#))

let each of you speak truth (ULT)

The word **truth** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “each of you should speak truthfully” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

because (ULT)

The connecting word **because** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that believers are members of the same body of Christ. The result is that believers should speak the truth to each other. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

we are members of one another (ULT)

Here Paul speaks of the close union of believers with each other as if they were each part of one single body. Alternate translation: “we belong to one another” or “we are all members of God’s family” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 4:26

Be angry and do not sin (ULT)

Alternate translation: "You may get angry, but do not sin" or "If you become angry, do not sin"

ULT

²⁶ Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your indignation,

Do not let the sun go down on your indignation (ULT)

The **sun** going **down** represents nightfall or the end of the day. Alternate translation: "You must stop being angry before night comes" or "Let go of your anger before the day ends" (See: [Metonymy](#))

Ephesians 4:27

nor give an opportunity to the devil (ULT)

Alternate translation: “and do not give the devil an opportunity to lead you into sin”

ULT

27 nor give an opportunity to the devil.

Ephesians 4:28

But rather (ULT)

The connecting phrase **But rather** introduces a contrast relationship. The way a former thief should work hard to have something to share with others is in contrast to the way he formerly stole for himself. (See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a goal relationship. The goal or purpose of working hard with ones own hands is to be able to meet the needs of others. (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship](#))

ULT

²⁸ The thief must steal no longer. But rather, he must labor, working good with {his} hands, so that he may have something to share with those who have a need.

Ephesians 4:29

corrupt talk (ULT)

This refers to speech that is cruel or rude.

but (ULT)

The connecting word **but** introduces a contrast relationship. Speaking what is corrupt is in contrast to speaking good things that will build up others. (See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

for building up (ULT)

Alternate translation: “for encouraging” or “for strengthening”

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a goal relationship. The goal or purpose of speaking things that build up others is to give grace to those who hear the words. (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship](#))

of the {one in} need, so that it might give grace to the hearers (ULT)

Alternate translation: “the needy. In this way you will help those who hear you”

so that it might give grace to the hearers (ULT)

The word **grace** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “so that those who hear you may be spiritually encouraged” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

²⁹ Do not let any corrupt talk come out from your mouth, but whatever {is} good for building up of the {one in} need, so that it might give grace to the hearers,

Ephesians 4:30

do not grieve (ULT)

Alternate translation: “do not distress” or “do not upset”

by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption (ULT)

The Holy Spirit assures believers that God will redeem them. Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as if he were a mark that God puts on believers to show that he owns them. Alternate translation: “for he is the seal that assures you that God will redeem you on the day of redemption” or “for he is the one who assures you that God will redeem you on the day of redemption” (See: [Metaphor](#))

by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption (ULT)

You can state this in active form. Alternate translation: “for he has sealed you for the day of redemption” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³⁰ and do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Ephesians 4:31

Connecting Statement:

Paul finishes his instructions on what believers should not do and ends with what they must do.

Let...be removed (ULT)

Paul speaks of attitudes and behaviors as though they were physical objects that can be removed. Alternate translation: "you must not allow ... to be part of your life" (See: [Metaphor](#))

bitterness, and rage, and anger (ULT)

These are abstract nouns that can be expressed as adjectives. Alternate translation: "being bitter, and intensely angry, and angry" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

malice (ULT)

The word **malice** is an abstract noun that can be expressed as an adjective. Alternate translation: "being malicious" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

³¹ Let all bitterness, and rage, and anger, and quarreling, and insults be removed from yourselves, along with all malice.

Ephesians 4:32

Instead (ULT)

The connecting word **Instead** introduces a contrast relationship. Speaking angry and hurtful things is in contrast to speaking kind and tender things to one another. (See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

ULT

³² Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.

tenderhearted (ULT)

Alternate translation: "gentle and compassionate towards others"

Ephesians 5

Ephesians 5 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with the words of verse 14.

Special concepts in this chapter

Inheritance of the kingdom of Christ

Some scholars believe that those who continue to practice the things listed in 5:5 will not inherit eternal life. But God can forgive all the sins listed in this verse. Immoral, impure, or greedy people can still receive eternal life if they repent and believe in Jesus. God will be the one who decides this. (See: [forgive](#), [forgiven](#), [forgiveness](#), [pardon](#), [pardoned](#), [eternity](#), [everlasting](#), [eternal](#), [forever](#) and [life](#), [live](#), [living](#), [alive](#) and [inherit](#), [inheritance](#), [heir](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Wives, submit to your husbands

Scholars are divided over how to understand this passage in its historical and cultural context. Some scholars believe that men and women are perfectly equal in all things. Other scholars believe that God created men and women to serve in distinctly different roles in marriage and the church. Translators should be careful not to let how they interpret this issue affect how they translate this passage.

Ephesians 5:1

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to tell the believers how they should and should not live as God's children.

ULT

¹ Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children,

Therefore, be imitators of God (ULT)

The word **imitators** is a verbal noun, and can be translated with a verb. Alternate translation: "Therefore, imitate God" or "Therefore you should do what God does."

Therefore (ULT)

The connecting word **Therefore** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason (stated in [Ephesians 4:32](#)) is that God has forgiven us through Christ. The result (stated here) is that believers should imitate what God is like. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

as beloved children (ULT)

God desires us to imitate or follow him since we are his spiritual children. Alternate translation: "as dearly loved children imitate their fathers" or "because you are his children and he loves you dearly" (See: [Simile](#))

Ephesians 5:2

walk in love (ULT)

To **walk** is a common way to express the idea of living one's life.
Alternate translation: "live a life of love" or "always love each other"
(See: [Metaphor](#))

an offering and sacrifice to God for a fragrant aroma (ULT)

This metaphor compares Christ dying on the cross for our sins with an Old Testament **sacrifice** for sin, which were roasted in a fire and gave off a pleasing smell. Alternate translation: "like a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice to God" or "an offering and sacrifice to God that pleased God very much" See the UST. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

² and walk in love, as also Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a fragrant aroma.

Ephesians 5:3

But sexual immorality and every impurity or greed must not even be named among you (ULT)

You can state this in an active form: “Do not do anything that would let anyone think that you are guilty of sexual immorality or any kind of impurity or greed.” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³ But sexual immorality and every impurity or greed must not even be named among you, just as is proper for saints,

But (ULT)

The connecting word **But** introduces a contrast relationship. The fragrant offering and sacrifice to God is in contrast to sinful acts and thoughts that are not fitting for saints. Use a connecting word that indicates a contrast in your language. (See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

every impurity (ULT)

Alternate translation: “any moral uncleanness”

Ephesians 5:4

but instead, thanksgiving (ULT)

The word **thanksgiving** is a verbal noun, and can be translated with a verb: “instead of those things, you should thank God”

but instead (ULT)

The connecting phrase **but instead** introduces a contrast relationship. Sinful acts and thoughts are in contrast to thanksgiving to God. Use a connecting word that indicates a contrast in your language. (See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

ULT

⁴ and filthiness and foolish talk or crude jokes—which are not fitting—but instead, thanksgiving.

Ephesians 5:5

unclean (ULT)

Here being **unclean** (dirty) is a metaphor for being sinful. (See: [Metaphor](#))

has no inheritance (ULT)

Receiving what God has promised believers is spoken of as if it were inheriting property and wealth from a family member. Alternate translation: “will receive nothing” or “has no part” See the UST. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁵ Indeed, know this for certain, that every sexually immoral or unclean or greedy person—that is, an idolater—has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Ephesians 5:6

with empty words (ULT)

Alternate translation: “with words that have no truth in them” or “by speaking words that are not true”

for (ULT)

The connecting word **for** introduces a reason-result relationship. The result is stated first: that the Ephesian believers should not let anyone deceive them with empty words. Then the reason is stated: that the wrath of God will judge those things. Use a phrase that connects a reason to a result, and put them in the order that is most natural in your language. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

the wrath of God is coming upon (ULT)

The word **wrath** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “God will certainly punish” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

the sons of disobedience (ULT)

This is an idiom that means, “people who habitually disobey” or “people who are characterized by disobedience”
Alternate translation: “those who disobey God” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience.

Ephesians 5:7

Therefore (ULT)

The connecting word **Therefore** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that God will judge those people in his wrath. The result is that the Ephesian believers should not become partners with evil men. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

ULT

⁷ Therefore, do not become partners with them,

Ephesians 5:8

because formerly you were darkness (ULT)

Just as one cannot see in the dark, so people who love to sin cannot see or understand the things of God. Alternate translation: “because formerly you did not understand anything about God” See the UST. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁸ because formerly you were darkness, but now {are} light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

because (ULT)

The connecting word **because** introduces a reason-result relationship. The result is stated first (v.7): that the Ephesian believers should not become partners with evil men. The reason is stated second (v. 8): that the Ephesian believers are no longer darkness, but are now light. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result, using the order that is most natural for your language. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

but now {are} light in the Lord (ULT)

Just as one can see in the **light**, so people whom God has saved understand how to please God. Alternate translation: “but now you know God and can live for him” See the UST. (See: [Metaphor](#))

but (ULT)

The connecting word **but** introduces a contrast relationship. The fact that the Ephesian believers were formerly darkness is in contrast to the fact that they are now light. (See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

Walk as children of light (ULT)

To **Walk** on a path is a metaphor for how a person lives his life. Alternate translation: “Live as people who understand what the Lord wants them to do” (See: [Metaphor](#))

as children of light (ULT)

God desires us to imitate or follow him since we are his spiritual **children**. Alternate translation: “as God’s children who know the truth” or “because you are God’s children and see the truth” (See: [Simile](#))

Ephesians 5:9

the...fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth (ULT)

Here, **fruit** is a metaphor for “result” or “outcome.” Alternate translation: “the result of living in the light is good work, right living, and truthful behavior” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),

for (ULT)

The connecting word **for** introduces the reason of a reason-result relationship. The reason is that fruit of the light is goodness and righteousness and truth. The result is that the Ephesian believers should walk as children of light. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

Ephesians 5:10

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁰ carefully testing what is pleasing to the Lord.

Ephesians 5:11

do not take part in the unfruitful works of darkness (ULT)

Paul speaks of the useless, sinful things that unbelievers do as if they are evil deeds that people do in the dark so no one will see them.

Alternate translation: "do not do useless, sinful things with unbelievers" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

11 And do not take part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even expose them.

in the unfruitful works of darkness (ULT)

Here Paul is comparing evil actions to an unhealthy tree that produces nothing good. Alternate translation: "actions that do nothing good, useful, or profitable, caused by darkness" (See: [Metaphor](#))

in the unfruitful works of darkness (ULT)

The word **darkness** is often used to represent sin. In this instance, these works result from sinful motives.

Alternate translation: "deeds that are worthless because they were done from sinful motives" (See: [Metaphor](#))

but rather (ULT)

The connecting phrase **but rather** introduces contrast relationship. Participating in the works of darkness is in contrast to exposing them. (See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

expose them (ULT)

Speaking against the works of darkness is spoken of as bringing them out into the light so that people can see them. Alternate translation: "bring them out into the light" or "uncover them" or "show and tell people how wrong these actions are" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 5:12

them (ULT)

Here, **them** refers to the “sons of disobedience” mentioned in 5:6 and also referred to as “them” in 5:7. If it is unclear who “them” refers to in either place, then use “those who disobey God” or a similar phrase. (See: [Pronouns — When to Use Them](#))

ULT

12 For it is shameful even to mention the things done by them in secret.

Ephesians 5:13

General Information:

It is unknown if this quotation is a combination of quotations from the prophet Isaiah or a quotation from a hymn sung by the believers.

But (ULT)

The connecting word **But** introduces a contrast relationship. Hiding the shameful works of darkness now is in contrast to the light exposing them later. (See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

everything...that is revealed is light (ULT)

Paul makes this general statement in order to imply that God's Word shows people's actions to be good or bad. The Bible often speaks of God's truth as if it were **light** that could reveal the character of something. Alternate translation: "if you compare everything to what God says, you can know if it is good or bad" See the UST. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

13 But everything exposed by the light is revealed, for everything that is revealed is light.

Ephesians 5:14

Therefore (ULT)

The connecting word **Therefore** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that their sins will be revealed by the light. The result is that sinners should allow Christ to shine on them. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

ULT

14 Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead (ULT)

This could mean: (1) Paul is addressing the believers and using death as a metaphor for their areas of spiritual weakness that they need to become aware of and reject. (2) Paul is addressing unbelievers who need to wake up from being dead spiritually just as a person who has died must come alive again in order to respond. See the UST. (See: [Apostrophe](#))

O sleeper (ULT)

This could mean: (1) Paul is addressing this comment directly to the believers who are reading or hearing the letter. (2) Paul is addressing this comment directly to unbelievers who are not reading or hearing the letter. (See: [Apostrophe](#))

from the dead (ULT)

This expression describes all **dead** people together in the underworld. To arise from among them speaks of becoming alive again and is a metaphor for becoming alive spiritually and living for God. Alternate Translation: "from among all those who have died" or "from among those who are spiritually dead" (See: [Metaphor](#))

will shine on you (ULT)

Here, **you** refers to the "sleeper" and is singular. (See: [Forms of You](#))

Christ will shine on you (ULT)

Christ will enable an unbeliever to understand how evil his deeds are and how Christ will forgive him and give him new life, just as light shows what actually is there that the darkness had hid. This also applies to anything that a believer has not yet recognized as sinful. Alternate translation: "Christ will show you what is right" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 5:15

Watch carefully, therefore, how you walk— not as unwise but as wise

People who are **unwise** do not guard themselves against sin. Wise people, however, can identify sin and flee from it. Alternate translation: “Therefore, you must be careful to live as a wise person rather than a foolish person”

ULT

¹⁵ Watch carefully, therefore, how you walk—not as unwise but as wise,

therefore (ULT)

The connecting word **therefore** introduces a reason-result relationship. The reason is that Christ has shown the light on him. The result is that the sinner will walk carefully in the light. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

but (ULT)

The connecting word **but** introduces a contrast relationship. Being unwise is in contrast to being wise. (See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

as wise (ULT)

The verb “walk” is left out. You can state this clearly. Alternate translation: “walk as wise” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

Ephesians 5:16

redeeming the time (ULT)

Using time wisely is spoken of as if it were **redeeming the time**.
Alternate translation: “doing the best things you can with your time”
or “using time wisely” or “putting time to its best use” (See:
[Metaphor](#))

ULT

16 redeeming the time because the days
are evil.

because the days are evil (ULT)

The word **days** is a metonym for what people do during those days. Alternate translation: “because the people around you are constantly doing all kinds of evil things and the opportunities that you have to do good may become few” (See: [Metonymy](#))

because (ULT)

The connecting word **because** introduces the reason of a reason-result relationship. The reason is that the days are evil. The result is that the believers must redeem the time. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

Ephesians 5:17

Because of this (ULT)

The connecting phrase **Because of this** introduces the result of a reason-result relationship. The reason is that the days are evil. The result is that the believers will not be foolish, but understand God's will. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

ULT

17 Because of this, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord {is}.

but (ULT)

The connecting word **but** introduces a contrast relationship. Being foolish is in contrast to understanding God's will. (See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

Ephesians 5:18

Connecting Statement:

Paul ends his instructions on how all believers should live.

And do not get drunk with wine (ULT)

Alternate translation: "You should not get drunk from drinking wine"

in which is recklessness (ULT)

The word **recklessness** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: "which leads to reckless behavior" or "because that will ruin you" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

in...Instead, be filled...the Spirit (ULT)

Alternate translation: "Instead, you should be controlled by the Holy Spirit"

Instead (ULT)

The connecting word **Instead** introduces a contrast relationship. Being drunk is in contrast to being filled with the Spirit. (See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

ULT

18 And do not get drunk with wine, in which is recklessness. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,

Ephesians 5:19

psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (ULT)

This could mean: (1) Paul is using these words as a merism for “all sorts of songs to praise God” (2) Paul is listing specific forms of music. (See: [Merism](#))

psalms (ULT)

These are probably songs from the Old Testament book of Psalms that Christians sang.

hymns (ULT)

These are songs of praise and worship that may have been written specifically for Christians to sing.

spiritual songs (ULT)

This could mean: (1) these are songs that the Holy Spirit inspires a person to sing right at that moment (2) **spiritual songs** and “hymns” form a doublet. They mean basically the same thing, and you could use one word for these instead of two. (See: [Doublet](#))

in your heart (ULT)

Here, **heart** is a metonym for a person’s thoughts or inner being. This could mean: (1) they should do this with true motives and sincerity. Alternate translation: “from deep within your being” or “sincerely” (2) they should do this with enthusiasm: Alternate translation: “with all of your being” or “enthusiastically” See the UST. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

19 speaking to each other in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and singing psalms in your heart to the Lord,

Ephesians 5:20

in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (ULT)

Here, **name** could refer to: (1) Jesus himself. Alternate translation: “because you belong to our Lord Jesus Christ” (2) the authority of Jesus. Alternate translation: “with the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ” (See: [Metaphor](#))

to God, even the Father (ULT)

Alternate translation: “to God, who is our father”

ULT

²⁰ giving thanks always for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father,

Ephesians 5:21

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²¹ submitting yourselves to one another
in reverence for Christ—

Ephesians 5:22

Connecting Statement:

Paul begins to explain how Christians are to submit themselves to one another ([Ephesians 5:21](#)). He starts with instructions to wives and husbands on how they should act toward each other.

ULT

²² wives, to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

Ephesians 5:23

For (ULT)

The connecting word **For** introduces the reason of a reason-result relationship. The reason is that the husband is head of the wife in the same way Christ is head of the church. The result is that wives should submit to their husbands. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

ULT

²³ For a husband is the head of the wife as Christ also {is} the head of the church —he himself {is} the savior of the body.

the head of the wife...the head of the church (ULT)

The word **head** here represents the leader. (See: [Metaphor](#))

of the body (ULT)

The church is often referred to as the **body** of Christ.

Ephesians 5:24

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁴ But as the church is subject to Christ,
so also {are} wives to {their} husbands
in everything.

Ephesians 5:25

General Information:

Here the words **himself** and **he** refer to Christ. The word **her** refers to the church.

love {your} wives (ULT)

Here, **love** means that the husband unselfishly does what is best for the wife, unselfishly serving or giving to his wife.

gave himself up (ULT)

Alternate translation: “allowed people to kill him”

for her (ULT)

Paul speaks of the assembly of believers as though it were a woman whom Jesus will marry. Alternate translation: “for us” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁵ Husbands, love {your} wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her,

Ephesians 5:26

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a goal relationship. The goal or purpose of Christ giving himself up to death is to sanctify the church. (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship](#))

ULT

²⁶ so that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

he might sanctify her, having cleansed her (ULT)

Paul speaks of the assembly of believers as though it were a woman whom Jesus will marry. Alternate translation: "he might make us holy, having cleansed us" (See: [Metaphor](#))

having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word (ULT)

This could mean: (1) Paul is referring to God making Christ's people clean by the preaching and acceptance of God's **word** in the gospel message and through **water** baptism in Christ. (2) Paul is speaking of God making us spiritually clean from our sins by the message as if God were making our bodies clean by washing them with **water**. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 5:27

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a goal relationship. The goal or purpose of Christ cleansing the church with the word is to present the church to himself as a glorious bride. (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship](#))

ULT

²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself as glorious, not having stain or wrinkle or any of those things, but so that she might be holy and blameless.

not having stain or wrinkle (ULT)

Paul speaks of the church as though it were a garment that is clean and in perfect condition. Alternate translation: “not having any defect” (See: [Metaphor](#))

not having stain or wrinkle (ULT)

Here, **stain** and **wrinkle** represent the same idea of defect in two ways to emphasize the church’s purity. If your language does not have two different words, you can use one word for this. (See: [Doublet](#))

but (ULT)

The connecting word **but** introduces a contrast relationship. The church having stains and wrinkles of sin is in contrast to the church being holy and blameless. (See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a goal relationship. The goal or purpose of Christ washing the church is to make the church holy and blameless. (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship](#))

holy and blameless (ULT)

Here, **blameless** means basically the same thing as **holy**. Paul uses the two together to emphasize the church’s purity. If your language does not have two different words, you can use one word for this. (See: [Doublet](#))

Ephesians 5:28

as their own bodies (ULT)

You can state explicitly that people love **their own bodies**. Alternate translation: "as husbands love their own bodies" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²⁸ In the same way, husbands also ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself.

Ephesians 5:29

but he nourishes (ULT)

Alternate translation: "but he feeds"

but (ULT)

The connecting word **but** introduces a contrast relationship. Hating one's own body is in contrast to caring for it.
(See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

ULT

²⁹ For no one ever hated his own body,
but he nourishes and treats it with care,
just as Christ also {does} the church,

Ephesians 5:30

because (ULT)

The connecting word **because** introduces the reason of a reason-result relationship. The reason is that the church is Christ's body. The result is that Christ cares for the church. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

ULT

³⁰ because we are members of his body.

we are members of his body (ULT)

Here Paul speaks of the close union of believers with Christ as if they were part of his own **body**, for which he would naturally care. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 5:31

General Information:

The quotation is from the writings of Moses in the Old Testament.

General Information:

The words **his** and **himself** refer to a male believer who marries.

For this reason (ULT)

The connecting phrase **For this reason** introduces the result of a reason-result relationship. In this case, this phrase is part of a quotation from Genesis 2:24 and so the reason is not stated here, but it is stated in Genesis 2:23 that woman was created out of man. The result is that a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife. If it is confusing to not state the reason, you can include a footnote that says, "the reason for this is that woman was created out of man. See Genesis 2:23" (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

ULT

31 "For this reason a man will leave {his} father and {his} mother and will be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."

Ephesians 5:32

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³² This mystery is great—but I am speaking about Christ and about the church.

Ephesians 5:33

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³³ Nevertheless, you also—each one of you—must love his own wife in this way—as himself, and the wife must respect {her} husband.

Ephesians 6

Ephesians 6 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Slavery

Paul does not write in this chapter about whether slavery is good or bad. Paul teaches about working to please God whether as a slave or as a master. What Paul teaches here about slavery would have been surprising. In his time, masters were not expected to treat their slaves with respect and not threaten them.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Armor of God

This extended metaphor describes how Christians can protect themselves when spiritually attacked. (See: [spirit](#), [wind](#), [breath](#) and [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 6:1

General Information:

The command in verse one is plural. Then in verses two and three Paul quotes from the law of Moses. Moses was talking to the people of Israel as though they were one person, so **your** and **you** are singular there. If that does not make sense, you may need to translate them as plurals. (See: [Forms of You](#))

ULT

¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is righteous.

Connecting Statement:

Paul continues to explain how Christians are to submit themselves to each other. He gives instructions to children, fathers, workers, and masters.

in the Lord (ULT)

Alternate translation: “because you belong to the Lord” or “as followers of the Lord”

for (ULT)

The connecting word **for** introduces the reason of a reason-result relationship. The reason is that children should do what is right. The result is that children should obey their parents. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

Ephesians 6:2

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

² “Honor your father and mother”
(which is the first commandment with a
promise),

Ephesians 6:3

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a goal relationship. The goal or purpose of obeying your father and mother is to live well and long on the earth. (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship](#))

ULT

³ “so that it may be well with you and you may be long-lived on the earth.”

Ephesians 6:4

do not provoke your children to anger (ULT)

Alternate translation: “do not make your children angry” or “do not cause your children to be angry”

Instead (ULT)

The connecting word **Instead** introduces a contrast relationship. Fathers provoking their children to anger is in contrast to raising their children in discipline and instruction. (See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

raise them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (ULT)

The abstract nouns **discipline** and **instruction** can be expressed as verbs. Alternate translation: “teach them to become adults by making sure that they know and do what the Lord wants them to do” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

⁴ And fathers, do not provoke your children to anger. Instead, raise them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Ephesians 6:5

fear and trembling (ULT)

The phrase **fear and trembling** uses two similar ideas to emphasize the importance of honoring their masters. Alternate translation: “with deep respect” (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

⁵ Slaves, obey {your} masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling, in honesty of your heart, as to Christ,

and trembling (ULT)

Here, **trembling** is an exaggeration used to emphasize how important it is that slaves obey their masters. Alternate translation: “and deep respect” or “as though you were shaking with fear” (See: [Hyperbole](#))

in honesty of your heart (ULT)

Here, **heart** is a metonym for a person’s mind or intentions. Alternate translation: “with honesty” or “with sincerity” (See: [Metonymy](#))

in honesty (ULT)

The word **honesty** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “honestly” or “sincerely” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

as to Christ (ULT)

To make this clear, you may want to include the verb here: “as you obey Christ.” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Ephesians 6:6

but (ULT)

The connecting word **but** introduces a contrast relationship. Obeying our masters as men-pleasers is in contrast to obeying them because we are slaves of Christ. (See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

ULT

⁶ not with eye-service as men-pleasers,
but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of
God from the soul,

as...slaves of Christ (ULT)

Alternate translation: “as though your earthly master were Christ himself”

from the soul (ULT)

Here, **soul** is a metonym for “attitudes” or “intentions.” Alternate translation: “wholeheartedly” or “enthusiastically” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Ephesians 6:7

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁷ serving with a good attitude, as to the Lord and not to men,

Ephesians 6:8

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁸ knowing that each person, if he does something good, this he will receive from the Lord, whether slave or free.

Ephesians 6:9

do the same to them (ULT)

Here, **the same** refers back to “if he does something good” from ([Ephesians 6:8](#)). Alternate translation: “you also must treat your slaves well” or “just as slaves must do good to their masters, you also must do good to your slaves” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

You know that the Master, both theirs and yours, is in heaven

Alternate translation: “You know that Christ is the Master of both slaves and their masters, and that he is in heaven”

there is no favoritism with him (ULT)

Alternate translation: “he judges everyone the same way”

ULT

⁹ And masters, do the same to them. Stop using threats. You know that the Master, both theirs and yours, is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

Ephesians 6:10

Connecting Statement:

Paul gives instructions to make believers strong in this battle we are in for God.

ULT

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the force of his strength.

the force of his strength (ULT)

These two words are very similar in meaning. Together, they reinforce each other. Alternate translation: “his great power” See how you translated this phrase near the end of [Ephesians 1:19](#) (See: [Doublet](#))

Ephesians 6:11

Put on the whole armor of God, to enable you to stand against the scheming of the devil (ULT)

In this metaphor, Paul pictures the spiritual resources that **God** gives to all Christians as a soldier's **armor**. Alternate translation: "Just as a soldier puts on armor to protect himself from enemy attacks, use all of God's resources to stand firmly against the devil" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

11 Put on the whole armor of God, to enable you to stand against the scheming of the devil.

the scheming (ULT)

Alternate translation: "the tricky plans"

Ephesians 6:12

For (ULT)

The connecting word **For** introduces the reason of a reason-result relationship. The reason is that we are in a struggle against spiritual forces of darkness. The result is that we should put on the whole armor of God. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

blood and flesh (ULT)

This expression refers to people, not spirits who do not have human bodies. Alternate translation: “human beings” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

but (ULT)

The connecting word **but** introduces a contrast relationship. People made of flesh and blood are in contrast to spiritual forces. (See: [Connect — Contrast Relationship](#))

against the world-controllers (ULT)

Here it is implied that **the world-controllers** refers to powerful spiritual beings. Alternate translation: “against the powerful spiritual beings that rule over people” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

of this darkness (ULT)

Here, **darkness** is a metaphor for things that are evil. Alternate translation: “during this present evil time” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

12 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.

Ephesians 6:13

Because of this, put on the whole armor of God (ULT)

Christians should use the protective resources **God** gives them in fighting the devil in the same way that a soldier puts on **armor** to protect himself against his enemies. See the UST. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹³ Because of this, 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.

Because of this (ULT)

The connecting phrase **Because of this** introduces the result of a reason-result relationship. The reason is that we are in a battle against evil spiritual forces. The result is that we should put on the whole armor of God. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

so that you may be able to withstand in the evil day (ULT)

The word **withstand** means to successfully resist something. Alternate translation: “so that you may be able to resist when evil attacks you” (See: [Metaphor](#))

so that you may be able to withstand (ULT)

It may be helpful to state explicitly what believers are to withstand. Alternate translation: “so that you may be able to withstand the attacks of the devil” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a goal relationship. The goal or purpose of putting on the whole armor of God is to be able to withstand the attacks of the spiritual forces of darkness. (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship](#))

Ephesians 6:14

Stand, therefore (ULT)

Here the word **Stand** represents taking a position on what is right and true and successfully resisting forces that try to make the believer compromise that position. See how you translated “stand firm” in [Ephesians 6:13](#). “So resist evil” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

14 Stand, therefore, having girded up your loins with the truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

therefore (ULT)

The connecting word **therefore** introduces the result of a reason-result relationship. The reason is that we believers have put on our spiritual armor. The result is that we will stand and resist the evil spiritual forces. Use a phrase in your language that connects a reason to a result. (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship](#))

having girded up your loins with the truth (ULT)

In this metaphor, **truth** is compared to a soldier’s belt. Truth holds everything together for a believer just as a belt holds the clothing of a soldier together. See the UST. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the truth (ULT)

The word **truth** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “what is true” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

having put on the breastplate of righteousness (ULT)

In this metaphor, **righteousness** is compared to a soldier’s **breastplate**. Just as soldiers put on a breastplate to protect themselves from enemy attacks, believers should behave in a righteous way to protect themselves from spiritual attacks. See the UST. (See: [Metaphor](#))

of righteousness (ULT)

The word **righteousness** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “the right way to live” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Ephesians 6:15

having shod your feet with the readiness of the gospel of peace (ULT)

In this metaphor, **the gospel of peace** is compared to a soldier's sandals. Just as a soldier wears sturdy footwear to give him solid footing and enable him to march long distances, the believer must have solid knowledge of the gospel of peace and be ready to go where the Lord sends him to proclaim it. See the UST. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the readiness of the gospel of peace.

of peace (ULT)

The word **peace** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: "that makes everything good between people and God" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Ephesians 6:16

In everything take up the shield of the faith (ULT)

In this metaphor, faith is compared to a soldier's **shield**. Just as a soldier uses a shield to protect himself from enemy attacks, the believer must use the **faith** that God gives for protection when the devil attacks. See the UST. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

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.

of the faith (ULT)

The word **faith** is an abstract noun that can be translated with a verb. Alternate translation: "that represents how much you trust in the Lord" See the UST. (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

the flaming arrows of the evil one (ULT)

The attacks of the devil against a believer are like **flaming arrows** shot at a soldier by an enemy. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Ephesians 6:17

take the helmet of salvation (ULT)

The **salvation** that God gives protects the believer's mind just as a **helmet** protects the head of a soldier. (See: [Metaphor](#))

of salvation (ULT)

The word **salvation** is an abstract noun that can be translated with a verb. Alternate Translation: "that represents the fact that God has saved you" See the UST. (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (ULT)

In this metaphor, God's message is compared to a soldier's **sword**. Just as soldiers use a sword to fight and defeat their enemy, so a believer can use God's message in the Bible to fight against the devil. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

17 And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Ephesians 6:18

With every prayer and request, pray at all times in the Spirit

Alternate translation: “Pray at all times in the Spirit as you pray and make specific requests”

to this end (ULT)

The connecting phrase **to this end** marks a goal or purpose relationship. The goal is what was just mentioned: to pray at all times in the Spirit. In order to do that, believers must be watchful and persevere in making requests for all the saints. Alternate Translation: “for this reason” or “in order to do that” (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship](#))

be watchful with all perseverance and requests for all the saints (ULT)

The word **perseverance** is an abstract noun that can be translated with a verb. Alternate translation: “persevere in being alert, and pray for all God’s holy people” or “pray with constant alertness for all the believers” See the UST. (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

¹⁸ With every prayer and request, pray at all times in the Spirit. And to this end, be watchful with all perseverance and requests for all the saints,

Ephesians 6:19

Connecting Statement:

In closing this letter, Paul asks his readers to pray for his boldness in telling the gospel while he is in prison and he says that he is sending Tychicus to comfort them.

so that a message might be given to me (ULT)

You can state this in active form. Alternate translation: “that God might give me the word” or “God might give me the message” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a goal relationship. The goal or purpose of the believers praying for Paul is to enable him to preach the gospel boldly. (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship](#))

I open my mouth (ULT)

This is a metonym for speaking. Alternate translation: “I speak” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

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

Ephesians 6:20

for which I am an ambassador in chains (ULT)

The phrase **in chains** is a metonym for being in prison. Alternate translation: “because of which I am now in prison” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

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.

so that in it I may speak boldly, as it is necessary for me to speak (ULT)

The word “pray” is understood from verse 18. Alternate translation: “pray that whenever I teach the gospel, I will speak it as boldly as I should” or “pray that I may speak the gospel as boldly as I should” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a goal relationship. The goal or purpose of the believers praying for Paul is to enable him to preach the gospel boldly even though he is in chains. (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship](#))

in it (ULT)

Here, **it** refers back to the “message” in verse 19 that Paul wants to speak. If your readers would misunderstand this, you can repeat the word “message” here. Alternate translation: “in my message” (See: [Pronouns](#))

Ephesians 6:21

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a goal relationship. The goal or purpose of Paul sending Tychicus to Ephesus was to tell the Ephesian believers what was happening to Paul. (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship](#))

Tychicus (ULT)

Tychicus was one of several men who served with Paul. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

brother (ULT)

Paul speaks of Tychicus as if he were a **brother** to all the other believers who were in God's spiritual family. Alternate translation: "fellow believer" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

21 But so that you also may know the things concerning me, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will make known to you everything,

Ephesians 6:22

your hearts may be encouraged (ULT)

Here, **hearts** is a metonym for people's inner beings. Alternate translation: "he may encourage you" (See: [Metonymy](#))

so that (ULT)

The connecting phrase **so that** introduces a goal relationship. The goal or purpose of Paul sending Tychicus to the Ephesians is to encourage their hearts and to let them know what was happening to Paul and his companions. (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship](#))

ULT

²² whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, so that you may know the things about us and your hearts may be encouraged.

Ephesians 6:23

Connecting Statement:

Paul closes his letter to the Ephesian believers with a blessing of peace and grace on all believers who love Christ.

ULT

²³ Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peace to the brothers (ULT)

Peace is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “May the brothers have a peaceful spirit” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

to the brothers (ULT)

Paul speaks of the other believers as if they were **brothers** to all of the other believers who were in God’s spiritual family. Alternate translation: “to the fellow believers” (See: [Metaphor](#))

love (ULT)

The word **love** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “may you love one another” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

with faith (ULT)

The word **faith** is an abstract noun that can be translated with a verb. Alternate translation: “as you trust in the Lord” See the UST. (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Ephesians 6:24

Grace {be} with (ULT)

The word **Grace** is an abstract noun that can be translated with an adverb. Alternate translation: “May God act graciously to” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

with incorruptibility (ULT)

The word **incorruptibility** is an abstract noun. Alternate translation: “in a way that no one is able to corrupt” or “so much that no one can make them stop loving him” See the UST. (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

²⁴ Grace {be} with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptibility.



unfoldingWord® Translation Academy

Version 25

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.

This page answers the question: *What are abstract nouns and how do I deal with them in my translation?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-partsofspeech]]
[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-sentences]]

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**.

(Go back to: [Ephesians 2:1](#); [2:4](#); [2:5](#); [2:8](#); [3:19](#); [3:21](#); [4:2](#); [4:3](#); [4:7](#); [4:13](#); [4:14](#); [4:15](#); [4:16](#); [4:24](#); [4:25](#); [4:29](#); [4:31](#); [5:6](#); [5:18](#); [6:4](#); [6:5](#); [6:14](#); [6:15](#); [6:16](#); [6:17](#); [6:18](#); [6:23](#); [6:24](#))

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.

This page answers the question: *What do active and passive mean, and how do I translate passive sentences?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-sentences\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-verbs\]\]](#)

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.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Abstract Nouns](#)

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-order]]

(Go back to: [Ephesians 1:3](#); [1:11](#); [1:13](#); [1:18](#); [1:21](#); [2:5](#); [2:8](#); [2:11](#); [2:20](#); [2:22](#); [3:3](#); [3:5](#); [3:9](#); [3:10](#); [3:15](#); [3:19](#); [4:4](#); [4:7](#); [4:18](#); [4:21](#); [4:23](#); [4:30](#); [5:3](#); [6:19](#))

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.

This page answers the question: *What is the figure of speech called an apostrophe?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro]]

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**.'" (1 Kings 13:2 ULT)

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**. (2 Samuel 1:21a ULT)

(Go back to: [Ephesians 5:14](#))

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.

This page answers the question: *How can I be sure that my translation communicates the assumed knowledge and implicit information along with the explicit information of the original message?*

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.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-explicitinfo\]\]](#)

(Go back to: [Ephesians 3:1](#); [3:12](#); [3:14](#); [3:18](#); [5:28](#); [6:5](#); [6:9](#); [6:12](#); [6:13](#); [6:20](#))

Connect — Contrast Relationship

Logical Relationships

Some connectors establish logical relationships between two phrases, clauses, sentences, or chunks of text.

This page answers the question: *How can I translate a contrast relationship?*

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.

(Go back to: [Ephesians 2:4](#); [2:13](#); [2:19](#); [4:15](#); [4:20](#); [4:28](#); [4:29](#); [4:32](#); [5:3](#); [5:4](#); [5:8](#); [5:11](#); [5:13](#); [5:15](#); [5:17](#); [5:18](#); [5:27](#); [5:29](#); [6:4](#); [6:6](#); [6:12](#))

Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship

Logical Relationships

Some connectors establish logical relationships between two phrases, clauses, sentences, or chunks of text.

This page answers the question: *How can I translate a goal (purpose) relationship?*

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 19:17b ULT)

“... 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.**

(Go back to: [Ephesians 2:7](#); [2:9](#); [2:10](#); [2:15](#); [3:10](#); [3:16](#); [4:14](#); [4:16](#); [4:28](#); [4:29](#); [5:26](#); [5:27](#); [6:3](#); [6:13](#); [6:18](#); [6:19](#); [6:20](#); [6:21](#); [6:22](#))

Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship

Logical Relationships

Some connectors establish logical relationships between two phrases, clauses, sentences, or chunks of text.

This page answers the question: *How can I translate the reason-result relationship?*

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.

(Go back to: Ephesians 1:15; 1:17; 2:8; 2:10; 2:11; 2:12; 2:14; 2:18; 2:19; 3:1; 3:13; 3:14; 3:18; 3:19; 4:1; 4:8; 4:17; 4:18; 4:25; 5:1; 5:6; 5:7; 5:8; 5:9; 5:14; 5:15; 5:16; 5:17; 5:23; 5:30; 5:31; 6:1; 6:12; 6:13; 6:14)

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.

This page answers the question: *What are double negatives?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-partsofspeech\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-sentences\]\]](#)

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 “**useless**.” 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 Spanish, a double negative emphasizes the negative. 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 second negative cancels the first one, creating a positive sentence. So, “He is not unintelligent” means “He is intelligent.”
- In some languages the 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, such as the languages of the Bible, the double negative can create a positive sentence, and often strengthens the statement. So, “He is not unintelligent” can mean “He is intelligent” or “He is very intelligent.”

To translate sentences with double negatives accurately and clearly in your language, you need to know what a double negative means in the Bible and how to express the same idea in your language.

Examples From the Bible

... in order **not** to be **un**fruitful. (Titus 3:14b ULT)

This means “so that they will be fruitful.”

All things were made through him and **without** him there was **not** one thing made that has been made. (John 1:3 ULT)

By using a double negative, John emphasized that the Son of God created absolutely everything. The double negative makes a stronger statement than the simple positive.

Translation Strategies

If double negatives are natural and are used to express the positive in your language, consider using them. Otherwise, you could consider these strategies:

- (1) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is simply 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 strong positive statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove the two negatives and put in a strengthening word or phrase such as “very” or “surely” or “absolutely.”

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is simply 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 strong positive statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove the two negatives and put in a strengthening word or phrase such as “very” or “surely” or “absolutely.”

Be sure of this—the wicked person will **not** go **unpunished**. (Proverbs 11:21a ULT)

“Be sure of this—wicked people will **certainly** be punished.”

All things were made through him and **without** him there was **not** one thing made that has been made. (John 1:3 ULT)

“All things were made through him. He made **absolutely** everything that has been made.”

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-verbs\]\]](#)

(Go back to: [Ephesians 1:4](#))

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.

This page answers the question: *What are doublets and how can I translate them?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)

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!"

(Go back to: [Ephesians 1:4](#); [1:8](#); [1:19](#); [1:21](#); [2:1](#); [2:19](#); [3:10](#); [5:19](#); [5:27](#); [6:5](#); [6:10](#))

Ellipsis

Description

An ellipsis¹ 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

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.

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:

This page answers the question: *What is ellipsis ?* ([^1])

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro]]

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-sentences]]

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 **sinner in the assembly** of the righteous. (Psalm 1:5 ULT)

So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, and **sinner 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.

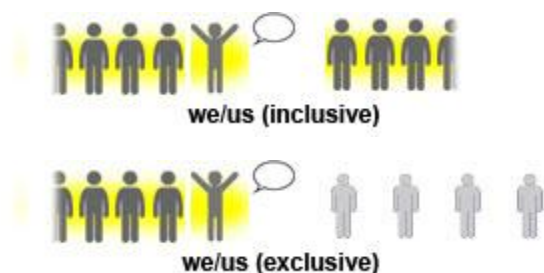
(Go back to: [Ephesians 5:15](#))

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.



This page answers the question: *What are the exclusive and inclusive forms of "we"?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Pronouns](#)

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.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-gendernotations]]

(Go back to: [Ephesians 1:3](#); [1:5](#); [1:11](#); [1:12](#); [2:14](#); [2:18](#); [3:20](#))

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.

This page answers the question: *What are the different forms of you?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-yousingular\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-youdual\]\]](#)

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.

- 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 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

(Go back to: [Introduction to Ephesians](#); [Ephesians 1:1](#); [5:14](#); [6:1](#))

Hendiadys

Description

When a speaker expresses a single idea by using two words that are connected with “and,” it is called a hendiadys. In a hendiadys, the two words work together. Usually one of the words is the primary idea and the other word further describes the primary one.

This page answers the question: *What is hendiadys and how can I translate phrases that have it?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)
[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-partsofspeech\]\]](#)

... 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**.

(Go back to: [Ephesians 3:12](#))

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.

This page answers the question: *How can I translate names that are new to my culture?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-unknown]]

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.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-transliterate]]

(Go back to: [Introduction to Ephesians](#); [Ephesians 6:21](#))

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.

The speaker means this as literally true if he means that it really does rain here every night.

The speaker means this as a **generalization** if he means that it rains here most nights.

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.

This page answers the question: *What are hyperboles? What are generalizations? How can I translate them?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)

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

Readers need to be able to understand whether or not a statement is literally true.

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.

(Go back to: [Ephesians 1:16; 6:5](#))

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.”)

This page answers the question: *What are idioms and how can I translate them?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)

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**

(Go back to: [Ephesians 2:2](#); [2:3](#); [2:6](#); [5:6](#))

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.

This page answers the question: *What is irony and how can I translate it?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)

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 "righteous people," 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?
Undoubtedly you know, for you were born then; "the number of your days is so large!" (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 it in a way that shows that the speaker is saying what someone else believes.
- (2) 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!
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 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. Your idols **cannot bring us their own arguments or come forward to declare to us what will happen** so we may know these things well. 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?

**Undoubtedly you know, for you were born then;
the number of your days is so large!** (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!**

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Litotes](#)

(Go back to: [Ephesians 4:21](#))

Litotes

Description

Litotes is a figure of speech in which the speaker expresses a strong positive meaning by using two negative words or a negative word with a word that means the opposite of the meaning he intends. A few examples of negative words are “no,” “not,” “none,” and “never.” The opposite of “good” is “bad.” Someone could say that something is “not bad” to mean that it is extremely good.

This page answers the question: *What is litotes?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro]]

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.”

(Go back to: [Ephesians 1:16](#))

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.

This page answers the question: *What does the word merism mean and how can I translate phrases that have it?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)

"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**.

(Go back to: [Ephesians 5:19](#))

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.

This page answers the question: *What is a metaphor and how can I translate a Bible passage that has one?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)

[Simile](#)

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.

(Go back to: [Ephesians 1:1](#); [1:3](#); [1:5](#); [1:7](#); [1:13](#); [1:14](#); [1:18](#); [1:22](#); [1:23](#); [Notes](#); [2:1](#); [2:2](#); [2:10](#); [2:11](#); [2:12](#); [2:13](#); [2:14](#); [2:15](#); [2:16](#); [2:17](#); [2:19](#); [2:20](#); [2:21](#); [2:22](#); [3:8](#); [3:10](#); [3:17](#); [3:18](#); [3:19](#); [4:1](#); [4:3](#); [4:12](#); [4:14](#); [4:15](#); [4:16](#); [4:17](#); [4:18](#); [4:19](#); [4:22](#); [4:24](#); [4:25](#); [4:30](#); [4:31](#); [5:2](#); [5:5](#); [5:8](#); [5:9](#); [5:11](#); [5:13](#); [5:14](#); [5:16](#); [5:20](#); [5:23](#); [5:25](#); [5:26](#); [5:27](#); [5:30](#); [Notes](#); [6:11](#); [6:12](#); [6:13](#); [6:14](#); [6:15](#); [6:16](#); [6:17](#); [6:21](#); [6:23](#))

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.

This page answers the question: *What is a metonymy?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro]]

... 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](#).

(Go back to: [Ephesians 1:7](#); [1:18](#); [1:20](#); [1:22](#); [2:2](#); [2:3](#); [2:11](#); [2:13](#); [2:14](#); [2:16](#); [3:13](#); [4:26](#); [5:16](#); [5:19](#); [6:5](#); [6:6](#); [6:19](#); [6:20](#); [6:22](#))

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.

This page answers the question: *How do I translate adjectives that act like nouns?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-partsofspeech]]

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**.

(Go back to: [Ephesians 1:20](#))

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)

This page answers the question: *What is the predictive past?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-verbs\]\]](#)

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."

(Go back to: [Ephesians 2:6](#))

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.

This page answers the question: *What are pronouns, and what kinds of pronouns are in some languages?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-partsofspeech]]

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.

(Go back to: [Ephesians 6:20](#))

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.

This page answers the question: *How do I decide whether or not to use a pronoun?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[Pronouns](#)

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-sentences]]

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.

(Go back to: [Ephesians 5:12](#))

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.”

This page answers the question: *What is a simile?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro]]

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!

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Metaphor](#)

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/bita-part1]]

(Go back to: [Ephesians 5:1](#); [5:8](#))

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.

This page answers the question: *What is a symbolic action and how do I translate it?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-unknown]]

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.

(Go back to: [Ephesians 1:20](#))

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 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)

This page answers the question: *What is a synecdoche, and how can I translate such a thing into my language?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro]]

I looked on all the deeds that I had accomplished

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Metonymy](#)

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/bita-part2]]

(Go back to: [Ephesians 3:14; 6:12](#))

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 on wordings that scholars say are most likely correct. 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.

This page answers the question: *Why does the ULT have missing or added verses, and should I translate them?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-source-text\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-manuscripts\]\]](#)

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 manuscripts. 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

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 the footnote that the ULT provides.
- (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. 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 If any man has ears to hear, let him hear." ^[1]

^[1] Some ancient manuscripts do not include verse 16.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-chapverse\]\]](#)
[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-manuscripts\]\]](#)
[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-terms\]\]](#)
[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-original\]\]](#)

(Go back to: [Introduction to Ephesians](#))

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, he [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)

This page answers the question: *Why are these concepts important in referring to God?*

In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/guidelines-faithful\]\]](#)

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/guidelines-sonofgod\]\]](#)

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.”)

(Go back to: [Ephesians 4:13](#))



unfoldingWord® Translation Words

Version 28

die, dead, deadly, death

Definition:

The term “death” refers to being physically dead instead of alive.

1. Physical death

- To “die” means to stop living. Death is the end of physical life.
- The expression “put to death” refers to killing or murdering someone, especially when a king or other ruler gives an order for someone to be killed.

2. Eternal death

- Eternal death is the separation of a person from God.
- This is the kind of death that happened to Adam when he sinned and disobeyed God. His relationship with God was broken. He became ashamed and tried to hide from God.
- This same kind of death happens to every person, because we sin. But God gives us eternal life when we have faith in Jesus Christ.

Translation Suggestions:

- To translate this term, it is best to use the everyday, natural word or expression in the target language that refers to death.
- In some languages, to “die” may be expressed as to “not live.” The term “dead” may be translated as “not alive” or “not having any life” or “not living.”
- Many languages use figurative expressions to describe death, such as to “pass away” in English. However, in the Bible it is best to use the most direct term for death that is used in everyday language.
- In the Bible, eternal life and eternal death are often compared to physical life and physical death. It is important in a translation to use the same word or phrase for both physical death and eternal death.
- In some languages it may be more clear to say “eternal death” when the context requires that meaning. Some translators may also feel it is best to say “physical death” in contexts where it is being contrasted to spiritual death.
- The expression “the dead” is a nominal adjective that refers to people who have died. Some languages will translate this as “dead people” or “people who have died.” (See: [nominal adjective](#))
- The expression “put to death” could also be translated as “kill” or “murder” or “execute.”

(See also: believe, [faith](#), [life](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 15:21
- 1 Thessalonians 4:17
- Acts 10:42
- Acts 14:19
- Colossians 2:15
- Colossians 2:20
- Genesis 2:15-17
- Genesis 34:27
- Matthew 16:28
- Romans 5:10

- Romans 5:12
- Romans 6:10

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **1:11** God told Adam that he could eat from any tree in the garden except from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If he ate from this tree, he would **die**.
- **2:11** "Then you will **die**, and your body will return to dirt."
- **7:10** Then Isaac **died**, and Jacob and Esau buried him.
- **37:5** Jesus replied, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though he **dies**. Everyone who believes in me will never **die**."
- **40:8** Through his **death**, Jesus opened a way for people to come to God.
- **43:7** "Although Jesus **died**, God raised him from the dead."
- **48:2** Because they sinned, everyone on earth gets sick and everyone **dies**.
- **50:17** He (Jesus) will wipe away every tear and there will be no more suffering, sadness, crying, evil, pain, or **death**.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0006, H1478, H1826, H1934, H2491, H4191, H4192, H4193, H4194, H4463, H5038, H5315, H6297, H6757, H7496, H7523, H8045, H8546, H8552, G03360, G03370, G05200, G05990, G06150, G06220, G16340, G19350, G20790, G22530, G22860, G22870, G22880, G22890, G23480, G28370, G29660, G34980, G34990, G35000, G44300, G48800, G48810, G50530, G50540

(Go back to: [Ephesians 2 General Notes](#))

eternity, everlasting, eternal, forever

Definition:

The terms “everlasting” and “eternal” have very similar meanings and refer to something that will always exist or that lasts forever.

- The term “eternity” refers to a state of being that has no beginning or end. It can also refer to life that never ends.
- After this present life on earth, humans will spend eternity either in heaven with God or in hell apart from God.
- The terms “eternal life” and “everlasting life” are used in the New Testament to refer to living forever with God in heaven.

The term “forever” refers to never-ending time.

- The phrase “forever and ever” has the idea of time that never ends and expresses what eternity or eternal life is like. It emphasizes that something will always happen or exist. It refers to time that never ends.
- God said that David’s throne would last “forever.” This is referred to the fact that David’s descendant Jesus will reign as king forever.

Translation Suggestions:

- Other ways to translate “eternal” or “everlasting” could include “unending” or “never stopping” or “always continuing.”
- The terms “eternal life” and “everlasting life” could also be translated as “life that never ends” or “life that continues without stopping” or “the raising up of our bodies to live forever.”
- Depending on the context, different ways to translate “eternity” could include “existing outside of time” or “unending life” or “life in heaven.”
- Also consider how this word is translated in a Bible translation in a local or national language. (See: How to Translate Unknowns)
- “Forever” could also be translated by “always” or “never ending.”
- The phrase “will last forever” could also be translated as “always exist” or “will never stop” or “will always continue.”
- The emphatic phrase “forever and ever” could also be translated as “for always and always” or “not ever ending” or “which never, ever ends.”
- David’s throne lasting forever could be translated as “David’s descendant will reign forever” or “a descendant of David will always be reigning.”

(See also: David, reign, [life](#))

Bible References:

- Genesis 17:8
- Genesis 48:4
- Exodus 15:17
- 2 Samuel 3:28-30
- 1 Kings 2:32-33
- Job 4:20-21
- Psalms 21:4
- Isaiah 9:6-7
- Isaiah 40:27-28
- Daniel 7:18

- Luke 18:18
- Acts 13:46
- Romans 5:21
- Hebrews 6:19-20
- Hebrews 10:11-14
- 1 John 1:2
- 1 John 5:12
- Revelation 1:4-6
- Revelation 22:3-5

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **27:1** One day, an expert in the Jewish law came to Jesus to test him, saying, “Teacher, what must I do to inherit **eternal life**?”
- **28:1** One day, a rich young ruler came up to Jesus and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to have **eternal life**?” Jesus said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only One who is good, and that is God. But if you want to have **eternal life**, obey God’s laws.”
- **28:10** Jesus answered, “Everyone who has left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children, or property for my name’s sake, will receive 100 times more and will also receive **eternal life**.”

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H3117, H4481, H5331, H5703, H5705, H5769, H5865, H5957, H6924, G01260, G01650, G01660, G13360

(Go back to: [Ephesians 5 General Notes](#))

faith

Definition:

In general, the term “faith” refers to a belief, trust or confidence in someone or something.

- To “have faith” in someone is to believe that what he says and does is true and trustworthy.
- To “have faith in Jesus” means to believe all of God’s teachings about Jesus. It especially means that people trust in Jesus and his sacrifice to cleanse them from their sin and to rescue them from the punishment they deserve because of their sin.
- True faith or belief in Jesus will cause a person to produce good spiritual fruits or behaviors because the Holy Spirit is living in him.
- Sometimes “faith” refers generally to all the teachings about Jesus, as in the expression “the truths of the faith.”
- In contexts such as “keep the faith” or “abandon the faith,” the term “faith” refers to the state or condition of believing all the teachings about Jesus.

Translation Suggestions:

- In some contexts, “faith” can be translated as “belief” or “conviction” or “confidence” or “trust.”
- For some languages these terms will be translated using forms of the verb “believe.” (See: [abstractnouns](#))
- The expression “keep the faith” could be translated by “keep believing in Jesus” or “continue to believe in Jesus.”
- The sentence “they must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith” could be translated by “they must keep believing all the true things about Jesus that they have been taught.”
- The expression “my true son in the faith” could be translated by something like “who is like a son to me because I taught him to believe in Jesus” or “my true spiritual son, who believes in Jesus.”

(See also: believe, faithful)

Bible References:

- 2 Timothy 4:7
- Acts 6:7
- Galatians 2:20-21
- James 2:20

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **5:6** When Isaac was a young man, God tested Abraham’s **faith** by saying, “Take Isaac, your only son, and kill him as a sacrifice to me.”
- **31:7** Then he (Jesus) said to Peter, “You man of little **faith**, why did you doubt?”
- **32:16** Jesus said to her, “Your **faith** has healed you. Go in peace.”
- **38:9** Then Jesus said to Peter, “Satan wants to have all of you, but I have prayed for you, Peter, that your **faith** will not fail.”

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H0529, H0530, G16800, G36400, G41020, G60660

(Go back to: [Ephesians 2 General Notes](#); [Notes](#))

flesh

Definition:

In the Bible, the term “flesh” literally refers to the soft tissue of the physical body of a human being or animal.

- The Bible also uses the term “flesh” in a figurative way to refer to all human beings or all living creatures.
- In the New Testament, the term “flesh” is used to refer to the sinful nature of human beings. This is often used in contrast to their spiritual nature.
- The expression “own flesh and blood” refers to someone who is biologically related to another person, such as a parent, sibling, child, or grandchild.
- The expression “flesh and blood” can also refer to a person’s ancestors or descendants.
- The expression “one flesh” refers to the physical uniting of a man and woman in marriage.

Translation Suggestions:

- In the context of an animal’s body, “flesh” could be translated as “body” or “skin” or “meat.”
- When it is used to refer generally to all living creatures, this term could be translated as “living beings” or “everything that is alive.”
- When referring in general to all people, this term could be translated as “people” or “human beings” or “everyone who lives.”
- The expression “flesh and blood” could also be translated as “relatives” or “family” or “kinfolk” or “family clan.” There may be contexts where it could be translated as “ancestors” or “descendants.”
- Some languages may have an expression that is similar in meaning to “flesh and blood.”
- The expression “become one flesh” could be translated as “unite sexually” or “become as one body” or “become like one person in body and spirit.” The translation of this expression should be checked to make sure it is acceptable in the project language and culture. (See: euphemism). It should also be understood that this is figurative, and does not mean that a man and a woman who “become one flesh” literally become one person.

Bible References:

- 1 John 2:16
- 2 John 1:7
- Ephesians 6:12
- Galatians 1:16
- Genesis 2:24
- John 1:14
- Matthew 16:17
- Romans 8:8

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H0829, H1320, H1321, H2878, H3894, H4207, H7607, H7683, G29070, G45590, G45600, G45610

(Go back to: [Ephesians 2 General Notes](#))

forgive, forgiven, forgiveness, pardon, pardoned

Definition:

To forgive someone means to not hold a grudge against that person even though they did something hurtful. "Forgiveness" is the act of forgiving someone.

- Forgiving someone often means not punishing that person for something he has done wrong.
- This term can be used figuratively to mean "cancel," as in the expression "forgive a debt."
- When people confess their sins, God forgives them based on Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross.
- Jesus taught his disciples to forgive others as he has forgiven them.

The term "pardon" means to forgive and not punish someone for his sin.

- This word has the same meaning as "forgive" but may also include the meaning of a formal decision to not punish someone who is guilty.
- In a court of law, a judge can pardon a person found guilty of a crime.
- Even though we are guilty of sin, Jesus Christ pardoned us from being punished in hell, based on his sacrificial death on the cross.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, "forgive" could be translated as "pardon" or "cancel" or "release" or "not hold against" (someone).
- The term "forgiveness" could be translated by a word or phrase that means "practice of not resenting" or "declaring (someone) as not guilty" or "the act of pardoning."
- If the language has a word for a formal decision to forgive, that word could be used to translate "pardon."

(See also: guilt)

Bible References:

- Genesis 50:17
- Numbers 14:17-19
- Deuteronomy 29:20-21
- Joshua 24:19-20
- 2 Kings 5:17-19
- Psalms 25:11
- Psalms 25:17-19
- Isaiah 55:6-7
- Isaiah 40:2
- Luke 5:21
- Acts 8:22
- Ephesians 4:31-32
- Colossians 3:12-14
- 1 John 2:12

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **7:10** But Esau had already **forgiven** Jacob, and they were happy to see each other again.
- **13:15** Then Moses climbed the mountain again and prayed that God would **forgive** the people. God listened to Moses and **forgave** them.
- **17:13** David repented of his sin and God **forgave** him.

- **21:5** In the New Covenant, God would write his law on the people's hearts, the people would know God personally, they would be his people, and God would **forgive** their sins.
- **29:1** One day Peter asked Jesus, "Master, how many times should I **forgive** my brother when he sins against me?"
- **29:8** I **forgave** your debt because you begged me.
- **38:5** Then Jesus took a cup and said, "Drink this. It is my blood of the New Covenant that is poured out for the **forgiveness** of sins."

Word Data:

- H5546, H5547, H3722, H5375, H5545, H5547, H7521, G85900, G86300, G54830

(Go back to: [Ephesians 5 General Notes](#))

inherit, inheritance, heir

Definition:

The term “inherit” refers to receiving something valuable from a parent after a parent dies. The term can also refer to receiving something valuable from some other person because of a special relationship with that person. An “inheritance” is the things that are received, and an “heir” is a person who receives an inheritance.

- A physical inheritance that is received may be money, land, or other kinds of property.
- God promised Abraham and his descendants that they would inherit the land of Canaan, that it would belong to them forever.

Translation Suggestions:

- As always, consider first whether there are already terms in the target language for the concept of an heir or an inheritance, and use those terms.
- Depending on the context, other ways that the term “inherit” could be translated might include “receive” or “possess” or “come into possession of.”
- Ways to translate “inheritance” could include “promised gift” or “secure possession.”
- The term “heir” could be translated with a word or phrase that means “privileged child who receives the father’s possessions.”
- The term “heritage” could be translated as “inherited blessings.”

(See also: heir, Canaan, Promised Land, possess)

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 6:9
- 1 Peter 1:4
- 2 Samuel 21:3
- Acts 7:4-5
- Deuteronomy 20:16
- Galatians 5:21
- Genesis 15:7
- Hebrews 9:15
- Jeremiah 2:7
- Luke 15:11
- Matthew 19:29
- Psalm 79:1

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **4:6** When Abram arrived in Canaan God said, “Look all around you. I will give to you and your descendants all the land that you can see as an **inheritance**.”
- **27:1** One day, an expert in the Jewish law came to Jesus to test him, saying, “Teacher, what must I do to **inherit** eternal life?”
- **35:3** “There was a man who had two sons. The younger son told his father, ‘Father, I want my **inheritance** now!’ So the father divided his property between the two sons.”

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H2490, H2506, H3423, H3425, H4181, H5157, H5159, G28160, G28170, G28190, G28200

(Go back to: [Ephesians 5 General Notes](#))

life, live, living, alive

Definition:

The term “life” refers to being physically alive as opposed to being physically dead.

1. Physical life

- A “life” can also refer to an individual person as in “a life was saved”.
- Sometimes the word “life” refers to the experience of living as in, “his life was enjoyable.”
- It can also refer to a person’s lifespan, as in the expression, “the end of his life.”
- The term “living” may refer to being physically alive, as in “my mother is still living.” It may also refer to dwelling somewhere as in, “they were living in the city.”
- In the Bible, the concept of “life” is often contrasted with the concept of “death.”

2. Eternal life

- A person has eternal life when he believes in Jesus. God gives that person a transformed life with the Holy Spirit living in him.
- The opposite of eternal life is eternal death, which means being separated from God and experiencing eternal punishment.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, “life” can be translated as “existence” or “person” or “soul” or “being” or “experience.”
- The term “live” could be translated by “dwell” or “reside” or “exist.”
- The expression “end of his life” could be translated as “when he stopped living.”
- The expression “spared their lives” could be translated as “allowed them to live” or “did not kill them.”
- The expression “they risked their lives” could be translated as “they put themselves in danger” or “they did something that could have killed them.”
- When the Bible text talks about eternal life, the term “life” could be translated in the following ways: “eternal life” or “God making us alive in our spirits” or “new life by God’s Spirit” or “being made alive in our inner self.”
- Depending on the context, the expression “give life” could also be translated as “cause to live” or “give eternal life” or “cause to live eternally.”

(See also: [death](#), [everlasting](#))

Bible References:

- 2 Peter 1:3
- Acts 10:42
- Genesis 2:7
- Genesis 7:22
- Hebrews 10:20
- Jeremiah 44:2
- John 1:4
- Judges 2:18
- Luke 12:23
- Matthew 7:14

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **1:10** So God took some dirt, formed it into a man, and breathed **life** into him.
- **3:1** After a long time, many people were *_living_* in the world.
- **8:13** When Joseph's brothers returned home and told their father, Jacob, that Joseph was still **alive**, he was very happy.
- **17:9** However, toward the end of his [David's] **life** he sinned terribly before God.
- **27:1** One day, an expert in the Jewish law came to Jesus to test him, saying, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal **life**?"
- **35:5** Jesus replied, "I am the Resurrection and the **Life**."
- **44:5** "You are the ones who told the Roman governor to kill Jesus. You killed the author of **life**, but God raised him from the dead."

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1934, H2416, H2417, H2421, H2425, H5315, G01980, G02220, G02270, G08060, G05900

(Go back to: [Ephesians 5 General Notes](#))

predestine, predestined

Definition:

The terms “predestine” and “predestined” refer to deciding or planning beforehand that something will happen.

- This term especially refers to God predestining people to receive eternal life.
- Sometimes the word “foreordain” is used, which also means to decide beforehand.

Translation Suggestions:

- The term “predestine” could also be translated as “decide before” or “decide ahead of time.”
- The term “predestined” could be translated as “decided long ago” or “planned ahead of time” or “decided beforehand.”
- A phrase such as “predestined us” could be translated as “decided long ago that we” or “already decided ahead of time that we.”
- Note that the translation of this term should be different from the translation of the term “foreknew.”

(See also: foreknew)

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 2:6-7

Word Data:

- Strong’s: G43090

(Go back to: [Ephesians 1 General Notes](#))

righteous, righteousness, unrighteous, unrighteousness, upright, uprightness

Definition:

The term “righteousness” refers to God’s absolute goodness, justice, faithfulness, and love. Having these qualities makes God “righteous.” Because God is righteous, he must condemn sin.

- These terms are also often used to describe a person who obeys God and is morally good. However, because all people have sinned, no one except God is completely righteous.
- Examples of people the Bible who were called “righteous” include Noah, Job, Abraham, Zachariah, and Elisabeth.
- When people trust in Jesus to save them, God cleanses them from their sins and declares them to be righteous because of Jesus’ righteousness.

The term “unrighteous” means to be sinful and morally corrupt. “Unrighteousness” refers to sin or the condition of being sinful.

- These terms especially refer to living in a way that disobeys God’s teachings and commands.
- Unrighteous people are immoral in their thoughts and actions.
- Sometimes “the unrighteous” refers specifically to people who do not believe in Jesus.

The terms “upright” and “uprightness” refer to acting in a way that follows God’s laws.

- The meaning of these words includes the idea of standing up straight and looking directly ahead.
- A person who is “upright” is someone who obeys God’s rules and does not do things that are against his will.
- Terms such as “integrity” and “righteous” have similar meanings and are sometimes used in parallelism constructions, such as “integrity and uprightness.” (See: parallelism)

Translation Suggestions:

- When it describes God, the term “righteous” could be translated as “perfectly good and just” or “always acting rightly.”
- God’s “righteousness” could also be translated as “perfect faithfulness and goodness.”
- When it describes people who are obedient to God, the term “righteous” could also be translated as “morally good” or “just” or “living a God-pleasing life.”
- The phrase “the righteous” could also be translated as “righteous people” or “God-fearing people.”
- Depending on the context, “righteousness” could also be translated with a word or phrase that means “goodness” or “being perfect before God” or “acting in a right way by obeying God” or “doing perfectly good.”
- The term “unrighteous” could simply be translated as “not righteous.”
- Depending on the context, other ways to translate this could include “wicked” or “immoral” or “people who rebel against God” or “sinful.”
- The phrase “the unrighteous” could be translated as “unrighteous people.”
- The term “unrighteousness” could be translated as “sin” or “evil thoughts and actions” or “wickedness.”
- If possible, it is best to translate this in a way that shows its relationship to “righteous, righteousness.”
- Ways to translate “upright” could include “acting rightly” or “one who acts rightly” or “following God’s laws” or “obedient to God” or “behaving in a way that is right.”
- The term “uprightness” could be translated as “moral purity” or “good moral conduct” or “rightness.”
- The phrase “the upright” could be translated as “people who are upright” or “upright people.”

(See also: evil, faithful, good, holy, integrity, just, law, law, obey, pure, [righteous](#), [sin](#), unlawful)

Bible References:

- Deuteronomy 19:16
- Job 1:8
- Psalms 37:30
- Psalms 49:14
- Psalms 107:42
- Ecclesiastes 12:10-11
- Isaiah 48:1-2
- Ezekiel 33:13
- Malachi 2:6
- Matthew 6:1
- Acts 3:13-14
- Romans 1:29-31
- 1 Corinthians 6:9
- Galatians 3:7
- Colossians 3:25
- 2 Thessalonians 2:10
- 2 Timothy 3:16
- 1 Peter 3:18-20
- 1 John 1:9
- 1 John 5:16-17

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **3:2** But Noah found favor with God. He was a **righteous** man, living among wicked people.
- **4:8** God declared that Abram was **righteous** because he believed in God's promise.
- **17:2** David was a humble and **righteous** man who trusted and obeyed God.
- **23:1** Joseph, the man Mary was engaged to, was a **righteous** man.
- **50:10** Then the **righteous** ones will shine like the sun in the kingdom of God their Father.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0205, H1368, H2555, H3072, H3474, H3476, H3477, H3483, H4334, H4339, H4749, H5228, H5229, H5324, H5765, H5766, H5767, H5977, H6662, H6663, H6664, H6665, H6666, H6968, H8535, H8537, H8549, H8552, G00930, G00940, G04580, G13410, G13420, G13430, G13440, G13450, G13460, G21180, G37160, G37170

(Go back to: [Introduction to Ephesians](#))

sin, sinful, sinner, sinning

Definition:

The term “sin” refers to actions, thoughts, and words that are against God’s will and laws. Sin can also refer to not doing something that God wants us to do.

- Sin includes anything we do that does not obey or please God, even things that other people don’t know about.
- Thoughts and actions that disobey God’s will are called “sinful.”
- Because Adam sinned, all human beings are born with a “sinful nature,” a nature that controls them and causes them to sin.
- A “sinner” is someone who sins, so every human being is a sinner.
- Sometimes the word “sinners” was used by religious people like the Pharisees to refer to people who didn’t keep the law as well as the Pharisees thought they should.
- The term “sinner” was also used for people who were considered to be worse sinners than other people. For example, this label was given to tax collectors and prostitutes.

Translation Suggestions:

- The term “sin” could be translated with a word or phrase that means “disobedience to God” or “going against God’s will” or “evil behavior and thoughts” or “wrongdoing.”
- To “sin” could also be translated as to “disobey God” or to “do wrong.”
- Depending on the context “sinful” could be translated as “full of wrongdoing” or “wicked” or “immoral” or “evil” or “rebellious against God.”
- Depending on the context the term “sinner” could be translated with a word or phrase that means “person who sins” or “person who does wrong things” or “person who disobeys God” or “person who disobeys the law.”
- The term “sinners” could be translated by a word or phrase that means “very sinful people” or “people considered to be very sinful” or “immoral people.”
- Ways to translate “tax collectors and sinners” could include “people who collect money for the government, and other very sinful people” or “very sinful people, including (even) tax collectors.”
- Make sure the translation of this term can include sinful behavior and thoughts, even those that other people don’t see or know about.
- The term “sin” should be general, and different from the terms for “wickedness” and “evil.”

(See also: disobey, evil, [flesh](#), tax collector)

Bible References:

- 1 Chronicles 9:1-3
- 1 John 1:10
- 1 John 2:2
- 2 Samuel 7:12-14
- Acts 3:19
- Daniel 9:24
- Genesis 4:7
- Hebrews 12:2
- Isaiah 53:11
- Jeremiah 18:23
- Leviticus 4:14
- Luke 15:18
- Matthew 12:31

- Romans 6:23
- Romans 8:4

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **3:15** God said, "I promise I will never again curse the ground because of the evil things people do, or destroy the world by causing a flood, even though people are **sinful** from the time they are children."
- **13:12** God was very angry with them because of their **sin** and planned to destroy them.
- **20:1** The kingdoms of Israel and Judah both **sinned** against God. They broke the covenant that God made with them at Sinai.
- **21:13** The prophets also said that the Messiah would be perfect, having no **sin**. He would die to receive the punishment for other people's **sin**.
- **35:1** One day, Jesus was teaching many tax collectors and other **sinner**s who had gathered to hear him.
- **38:5** Then Jesus took a cup and said, "Drink this. It is my blood of the New Covenant that is poured out for the forgiveness of **sins**."
- **43:11** Peter answered them, "Every one of you should repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ so that God will forgive your **sins**."
- **48:8** We all deserve to die for our **sins**!
- **49:17** Even though you are a Christian, you will still be tempted to **sin**. But God is faithful and says that if you confess your **sins**, he will forgive you. He will give you strength to fight against **sin**.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0817, H0819, H2398, H2399, H2400, H2401, H2402, H2403, H2408, H2409, H5771, H6588, H7683, H7686, G02640, G02650, G02660, G02680, G03610, G37810, G39000, G42580

(Go back to: [Ephesians 2 General Notes](#))

spirit, wind, breath

Definition:

The term “spirit” refers to the non-physical part of a person which cannot be seen. In biblical times, the concept of a person’s spirit was closely related to the concept of a person’s breath. The term can also refer to wind, that is, the movement of air in the natural world.

- The term “spirit” can refer to a being that does not have a physical body, such as an evil spirit.
- In general, the term “spiritual” describes things in the non-physical world.
- The term “spirit of” can also mean “having the characteristics of,” such as in “spirit of wisdom” or “in the spirit of Elijah.” Sometimes the Bible applies this term in the context of a person’s attitude or emotional state, such as “spirit of fear” and “spirit of jealousy.”
- Jesus said that God is a spirit.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, some ways to translate “spirit” might include “non-physical being” or “inside part” or “inner being.”
- In some contexts, the term “spirit” could be translated as “evil spirit” or “evil spirit being.”
- Sometimes the term “spirit” is used to express the feelings of a person, as in “my spirit was grieved in my inmost being.” This could also be translated as “I felt grieved in my spirit” or “I felt deeply grieved.”
- The phrase “spirit of” could be translated as “character of” or “influence of” or “attitude of” or “thinking (that is) characterized by.”
- Depending on the context, “spiritual” could be translated as “non-physical” or “from the Holy Spirit” or “God’s” or “part of the non-physical world.”
- The phrase “spiritual maturity” could be translated as “godly behavior that shows obedience to the Holy Spirit.”
- The term “spiritual gift” could be translated as “special ability that the Holy Spirit gives.”
- Sometimes this term can be translated as “wind” when referring to the simple movement of air or “breath” when referring to air movement caused by living beings.

(See also: soul, Holy Spirit, demon, breath)

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 5:5
- 1 John 4:3
- 1 Thessalonians 5:23
- Acts 5:9
- Colossians 1:9
- Ephesians 4:23
- Genesis 7:21-22
- Genesis 8:1
- Isaiah 4:4
- Mark 1:23-26
- Matthew 26:41
- Philippians 1:27

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **13:3** Three days later, after the people had prepared themselves **spiritually**, God came down on top of Mount Sinai with thunder, lightning, smoke, and a loud trumpet blast.
- **40:7** Then Jesus cried out, "It is finished! Father, I give my **spirit** into your hands." Then he bowed his head and gave up his **spirit**.
- **45:5** As Stephen was dying, he cried out, "Jesus, receive my **spirit**."
- **48:7** All the people groups are blessed through him, because everyone who believes in Jesus is saved from sin, and becomes a **spiritual** descendant of Abraham.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0178, H1172, H5397, H7307, H7308, G41510, G41520, G41530, G53260, G54270

(Go back to: [Ephesians 6 General Notes](#))

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