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1 John

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Introduction to 1 John

Part 1: General Introduction

Outline of the book of 1 John

This is a letter that the apostle John wrote to challenge and correct false teachings that were leading followers of Jesus to believe wrong things and live in wrong ways. At that time, the letter form had distinct opening and closing sections. The main body of the letter came in between. 1. Opening of Letter (1:1-4) 1. Main Body of Letter (1:5–5:12) * Genuine believers obey God and love one another (1:5–2:17) * It is false teaching to deny that Jesus is the Messiah (2:18–2:27) * Genuine children of God do not sin (2:28–3:10) * Genuine believers help one another sacrificially (3:11–18) * Genuine believers have confidence in prayer (3:19–24) * It is false teaching to deny that Jesus became human (4:1–6) * Genuine believers love one another as God has loved them (4:7–21) * It is false teaching to deny that Jesus is the Son of God (5:1–12) 1. Closing of Letter (5:13-21)

Who wrote the book of 1 John?

The author of this letter does not give his name. However, since early Christian times, the church has widely considered the apostle John to be the author. He wrote the Gospel of John, and there are many similarities between the content of that book and this letter. If John did write this letter, he probably did so near the end of his life.

To whom was the book of 1 John written?

The author wrote this letter to people whom he addresses as "beloved" and, figuratively, as "my little children." This probably refers to believers in various churches located in the area where John was then living.

What is the book of 1 John about?

False teachers were encouraging followers of Jesus to believe wrong things and to live in wrong ways. John wanted to challenge and correct those false teachings so that the people who received his letter would continue to believe the truth that they had been taught and live in right ways. The false teachers were saying that these people were not saved; John wanted to assure them that they were saved.

How should the title of this book be translated?

Translators may choose to call this book by its traditional title, "1 John" or "First John." They may also choose a different title, such as "The First Letter from John" or "The First Letter John Wrote." (See: How to Translate Names)

Part 2: Important Religious and Cultural Concepts

Who were the people whom John spoke against?

The false teachers whom John was challenging seem to have held beliefs similar to what would later become known as Gnosticism. Those false teachers believed that the physical world was evil. They thought that God would not become human, since they considered the physical body to be evil, so they denied that Jesus was God come to earth in human form. (See: evil, wicked, unpleasant)

Part 3: Important Translation Issues

"sin"

In chapter 1, John says that we should not deny that we have sinned. Rather, if we confess our sin, God will forgive us. In chapter 2, John says that he is writing this letter so that the recipients will not sin, but he adds that if they do sin, Jesus will advocate on their behalf. But in chapter 3, John says that everyone who has been begotten from God and who remains in God does not commit sin and is not able to sin. And in chapter 5, John says that we should not pray for people who are sinning in certain ways, although we should pray for people who are sinning in other ways. This may seem confusing and contradictory.

However, the explanation is that the people whose teachings John challenged and corrected in this letter were saying that it did not matter what people did in their bodies. This was because they thought that physical matter was evil, and so they thought that God did not care about it. In effect, they were saying that there was no such thing as sin. So John needed to say, in chapter 1, that sin is real and that everyone has sinned. Some of the believers may have been deceived by the false teaching and committed sins, so John also needed to reassure them that if they repented and confessed their sins, God would forgive them. John says similar things in chapter 2. Then in chapter 3 he explains that the new nature that believers have as children of God is one that does not want to sin and that does not enjoy sinning. So they should recognize that those who excuse or condone sin are not truly children of God, and that as children of God themselves, they can become more and more obedient and free from sin. Finally, in chapter 5, John warns that if a person sins wantonly and continually, this likely means that they have rejected Jesus and are not influenced by the Holy Spirit. He says that in that case, it may not be effective to pray for them. But he then encourages his readers that if a person sins occasionally but feels remorse, he is influenced by the Spirit, and so the prayers of other believers will help him repent and live in a right way again. (See: sin, sinful, sinner, sinning and faith and forgive, forgiven, forgiveness, pardon, pardoned)

"remain"

In this letter, John often uses the word "remain" (which could also be translated as "reside" or "abide") as a spatial metaphor. John speaks of a believer becoming more faithful to Jesus and knowing Jesus better as if the teaching of Jesus "remained" in the believer. He speaks of a person being spiritually joined to someone else as if that person "remained" in the other person: He writes that Christians "remain" in Christ and in God, and he says that the Father "remains" in the Son, the Son "remains" in the Father, the Son "remains" in believers, and the Holy Spirit "remains" in believers.

Translators may find it difficult to represent these ideas in their own languages if they try to use exactly the same words and expressions each time. For example, in 2:6, when John speaks of a believer "remaining" in God, he intends to express the idea of that believer being spiritually unified with God. Accordingly, UST speaks of how the believer "shares life with God." To give another example, for the statement in 2:14 that "the word of God remains in you," UST says, "you continue to obey what God commands." This shows how other expressions can be found that accurately communicate the various ideas that John is expressing through the term "remain."

"appear"

In several places in this letter, John uses a term that ULT usually translates as "appear." This is actually a passive verbal form in Greek, but as is often the case with such forms in that language, it can have an active meaning. When it has an active meaning, it is important to recognize that it does not simply mean "seemed to be there," as the word "appeared" might suggest. Rather, it means "came to be there." This is illustrated well by the use of the term in another New Testament book, 2 Corinthians, in which Paul writes in 5:10 that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." Clearly this does not mean that we must only seem to be present there. Rather, we must actually arrive there.

Throughout the epistle, it is a subtle matter of interpretation to decide whether John is using the term "appear" in an active sense or in a passive sense. For example, in 1:2, John applies the term twice to the "Word of life," that is, to Jesus. But it is not clear whether he is saying that Jesus himself "appeared," that is, he came to earth, or that he "was made apparent" (made visible), with the emphasis on the idea that God revealed Jesus to the world and in the process revealed himself to the world through Jesus. At each place where John uses this term, notes will call attention to it and discuss what it likely means in that context.

"the world"

John also uses the term "world" in a variety of senses in this letter. It can mean the earth, something material, the people who live in the world, the people who do not honor God, or the values of the people who do not honor God. Notes will address the meaning of the term "world" in each instance where John uses it.

"to know"

The verb "to know" is used in two different ways in this letter. Sometimes it is used about knowing a fact, as in 3:2, 3:5, and 3:19. Sometimes it means to experience and understand someone or something, as in 3:1, 3:6, 3:16, and 3:20. Sometimes John uses it in two different senses in the same sentence, as in 2:3, "in this we know that we have known him." Your language may have different words for these different meanings. If so, you must be careful to use the appropriate word in the right place in your translation.

"We"

In most cases in this letter, the first-person plural pronouns ("we, our," etc.) are inclusive, and so if your language marks that distinction, use the inclusive form in your translation. In those cases, John is speaking of what both he and the recipients know, or of things that are true of both him and the recipients. However, in a few cases, the first-person pronouns are exclusive, since John is telling the recipients what he and his fellow apostles saw and heard from Jesus. The notes will identify all such places, and in them you should use the exclusive forms, if your language marks that distinction. (See: Exclusive and Inclusive 'We')

"You, your"

The words "you" and "your" in this letter are plural.

Light and darkness

In 1:5-7 and 2:8-11 John uses an extended metaphor in which light represents what is good or holy and darkness represents what is evil. If this is not easily understood in your language, you may need to say explicitly that light represents goodness or that light is like goodness, or you may choose to talk about goodness without using the symbol of light. There will be a note explaining the metaphor in each place. (See: Biblical Imagery — Extended Metaphors)

Major textual issues in the text of the book of 1 John

When ancient manuscripts of the Bible differ, ULT puts the reading that scholars consider to be the most accurate in its text, but it puts other possibly accurate readings in footnotes. The introductions to each chapter will discuss places where the ancient manuscripts differ in significant ways, and notes will address those places again where they occur in the book. If a translation of the Bible already exists in your region, consider using the readings found in that version. If not, we recommend that you follow the readings in the ULT text. (See: Textual Variants)

1 John 1

1 John 1 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Opening of the letter (1:1-4)
Genuine believers obey God and love one another (1:5–10, continues through 2:17)

Important translation issues in this chapter

Like many Greek compositions of this time, for stylistic purposes this letter begins with a very long sentence. It goes from the beginning of 1:1 to the middle of 1:3. The parts of this sentence are not in the order that is customary in many languages. The direct object comes first, and it is very long, made up of many different clauses. The subject and verb do not come until near the end. And in the middle, there is a long digression. So it will be a challenge to translate.

One approach that might work well in your language would be to create a verse bridge that includes all of 1:1–3. You could break up this long sentence into several smaller sentences, repeating the subject and verb for clarity. This would allow you to present the parts of the sentence in an order that might be more customary in your language and that your readers might understand better. Here is an example of 1 John 1:1-3 rearranged into an order that might be clearer in your language:

"So that you will have fellowship with us, we are declaring to you what we have seen and heard. We are declaring to you what was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched. It has to do with the Word of life. Indeed, the life appeared, and we have seen it, and we are testifying to it. Yes, we are announcing to you the eternal life that was with the Father and that then came to us."

If you take this approach, another way to translate the second sentence would be, "We are declaring to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and our hands have touched."

Another approach that could also work well, and which would not require a verse bridge, would be to leave the phrases in their present order, but to divide the sentence into three parts at the verse divisions. If you do that, you could also put your translation of the phrase "regarding the Word of life" at the beginning rather than the end of 1:1 and present it as a topical introduction to the letter. Otherwise, your readers might not get the sense that this is a letter until they reached 1:4, where John formally states his purpose for writing.

The notes to 1:1–4 provide further specific suggestions for how to translate this long opening sentence. (See: Verse Bridges)

Important textual issues in this chapter

In 1:4, the most accurate ancient manuscripts read "so that our joy may be fulfilled." ULT follows that reading. However, some other ancient manuscripts read "your joy" instead of "our joy." If a translation of the Bible already exists in your region, consider using whichever reading is found in that version. If a translation does not already exist, we recommend that you follow the reading in the ULT text. (See: Textual Variants)

1 John 1:1

If you are using section headings, you could put one here before verse 1. Suggested heading: "The Word of Life" (See: Section Headings)

What was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched

ULT

1 What was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched, regarding the Word of life—

See the discussion in the General Notes to this chapter for how to translate the long sentence in 1:1–3. If you follow the suggestion to translate the phrase **regarding the Word of life** as a topical introduction to this letter, you will already have indicated that the four clauses in this verse refer to a person, Jesus. If you have pronouns in your language that refer to people, such as "he," "who," and "whom," it would be appropriate to use them here. Alternate translation: "Regarding the Word of life—he is the one who has existed from all eternity, whom we heard speak, whom we saw with our own eyes, and whom we looked at and touched with our own hands" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

from the beginning (ULT)

John uses the phrase **from the beginning** in various ways in this letter. Here it refers to the fact that Jesus has always existed. Alternate translation: "from all eternity" (See: Idiom)

we have heard … we have seen … our … we have looked at … our

Here the pronouns **we** and **our** are exclusive, since John is speaking on behalf of himself and the other eyewitnesses to the earthly life of Jesus, but the people to whom he is writing did not see Jesus. So use exclusive forms here, if your language marks that distinction. (See: Exclusive and Inclusive 'We')

we have heard (ULT)

The implication is that what John and the other eyewitnesses **heard** was Jesus speaking. If your readers would misunderstand this, you can include this information, as in the UST. Alternate translation: "we heard speak" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at (ULT)

These two phrases mean the same thing. John is likely using the repetition for emphasis. If your readers would misunderstand this, you could combine these phrases and show the emphasis in another way. Alternate translation: "whom we saw clearly ourselves" (See: Parallelism)

we have seen with our eyes…and our hands have touched (ULT)

In your language, it might seem that these phrases express unnecessary extra information. If so, you could abbreviate them. However, your language may have its own way of using such extra information for emphasis, and you could also do that in your translation. Alternate translation: "we saw … and touched" or "we saw with our own eyes … and touched with our own hands" (See: Making Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information Explicit)

we have seen with our eyes...our hands have touched (ULT)

The false teachers were denying that Jesus was a real human being and saying that he was only a spirit. But the implications of what John is saying here are that Jesus was a real human being. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly, as in the UST. (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

regarding the Word of life (ULT)

As the General Notes to this chapter suggest, you could put your translation of this phrase, **regarding the Word of life**, at the beginning of this verse and present it as a sentence of its own as a topical introduction to the letter, as UST does. Alternate translation: "We are writing to you about Jesus, the Word of life"

regarding the Word of life (ULT)

Letter writers of this time typically began by giving their own names. That is the case for most of the letters in the New Testament. This letter is an exception, but if it would be helpful to your readers, you could supply John's name here, as UST does. As noted above, John uses the plural pronoun "we" because he is speaking on behalf of himself and the other eyewitnesses to Jesus' earthly life. But it may be more natural in your language for him to refer to himself with a singular pronoun, and if so, you could do that in your translation. Alternate translation: "I, John, am writing to you about Jesus, the Word of life" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

the Word of life (ULT)

Here, **the Word of life** is implicitly a description of Jesus. As the General Introduction explains, there are many similarities between this letter and the Gospel of John. That gospel begins by saying about Jesus, "In the beginning was the Word." So it is likely that when John speaks in this letter of **the Word of life** that "was from the beginning," he is also speaking about Jesus. ULT indicates this by capitalizing **Word** to indicate that this is a title for Jesus. Alternate translation: "Jesus, the Word of God, who gives life" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

of life (ULT)

This could be referring either to the life that Jesus has or to the life that Jesus gives. But since John is writing this letter to reassure believers, it seems more likely that this expression is referring to the **life** that "the Word" (Jesus) gives to those who believe. Alternate translation: "who gives life to everyone who believes in him" (See: Possession)

of life (ULT)

In this letter, John uses **life** in different ways, either to refer literally to physical life or figuratively to spiritual life. Here the reference is to spiritual life. Alternate translation: "of spiritual life" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 1:2

indeed, the life appeared (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "appear" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. Here the term could mean one of two things. (1) John could be emphasizing how Jesus came to this earth. (UST brings this out by saying "he came here to the earth.") In that case, this would be a situation in which a Greek passive verbal form has an active meaning. As the General Notes to this chapter suggest, it may be helpful to begin a new sentence here. Alternate translation: "Indeed, the life came right here" (2) John could be emphasizing how God revealed Jesus to the world and thereby revealed himself to the world through Jesus. To bring out that emphasis, you could translate this with a passive verbal form or, if your language does not use passive forms, you could use an active form and say who did the action. Alternate translation: "Indeed, the life was made visible" or "Indeed, God made the life visible" (See: Active or Passive)

the life (ULT)

John is speaking figuratively of Jesus, whom he calls the "Word of life" in the previous verse, by referring to the **life** that is associated with him. In this case it seems to describe the **life** that Jesus embodies rather than the **life** that he gives. Alternate translation: "Jesus" or "Jesus, who is life" (See: Metonymy)

we have seen it…we are testifying to it…we are announcing…to us (ULT)

John is speaking on behalf of himself and the other eyewitnesses to the earthly life of Jesus, so the pronouns **we** and **us** are exclusive in this verse. (See: Exclusive and Inclusive 'We')

to you (ULT)

As the General Introduction explains, John is writing this letter to believers in various churches, and so the pronouns **you**, "your," and "yourselves" are plural throughout the entire letter. (See: Forms of You)

we have seen it, and we are testifying to it (ULT)

If you decided to use personal pronouns in 1:1, you could use them in these cases as well. Alternate translation: "we have seen him, and we are testifying that we saw him" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

we are testifying to it, and we are announcing to you (ULT)

These two phrases mean similar things. John is likely using repetition for emphasis. If your readers would misunderstand this, you could combine these phrases and express the emphasis in another way, as UST does. Alternate translation: "we are enthusiastically telling you about" (See: Parallelism)

the eternal life (ULT)

As earlier in the verse, John is speaking figuratively of Jesus by referring to the **life** that is associated with him. Alternate translation: "Jesus, who is eternal life" or "Jesus, who has always been alive" (See: Metonymy)

the Father (ULT)

The title **the Father** is an important title for God. Alternate translation: "God the Father" (See: Translating Son and Father)

and appeared to us (ULT)

See how you translated **appeared** earlier in this verse. Alternate translation: "and came right to us" or "and was made visible to us" or "and whom God made visible to us" (See: Active or Passive)

1 John 1:3

what we have seen and heard, we declare also to you, so that you also may have fellowship with us (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this sentence, you could rearrange the parts of this section. You could move the clause beginning with **so you also** to the beginning of the verse, since that clause gives the reason for the action that the rest of the verse describes. For clarity, you could also place the direct-object clause **what we have seen and heard** after the subject and verb **we declare … to you**. In that case, you would not need to translate **also** after **declare**. As the General Notes to this chapter suggest, it may be helpful to begin a new sentence here. Alternate translation: "So that you also may have fellowship with us, we are declaring to you what we have seen and heard" (See: Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship)

what we have seen and heard (ULT)

John is referring implicitly to the way that he and the other eyewitnesses had **seen and heard** Jesus when he was alive on earth. If your readers would misunderstand this, you can include this information, as in the UST. Alternate translation: "what we saw and heard of Jesus when he was alive on earth" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

we have seen and heard, we declare…us (ULT)

John is speaking on behalf of himself and the other eyewitnesses to the earthly life of Jesus, so the pronouns **we** and **us** are exclusive. (See: Exclusive and Inclusive 'We')

you also may have fellowship with us…fellowship…our…is} with the Father and with his Son (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **fellowship**, you could express the idea behind it with a concrete noun such as "friends" and an adjective such as "close." Alternate translation: "so that you can be close friends with us … we are all close friends with God the Father and with his Son Jesus" (See: Abstract Nouns)

fellowship…our (ULT)

The word **our** here is likely inclusive, since John is writing to fellow believers. So if your language marks that distinction, you should translate the term as inclusive. Even if your language does not mark that distinction, you can indicate in your translation that the term applies both to John and to the people he is writing to. Alternate translation: "we are all close friends" (See: Exclusive and Inclusive 'We')

the Father…his Son (ULT)

These are important titles. Alternate translation: "God the Father … his Son" (See: Translating Son and Father)

1 John 1:4

we are writing these things (ULT)

As the General Notes to this chapter explain, here John is formally
stating his purpose for writing. If you decided in 1:1 that it would be
more natural in your language for him to refer to himself with a
singular pronoun in such a context, you could do the same thing
here. Alternate translation: "I, John, am writing these things" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

> **ULT**
>
> **4** And we are writing these things so
> that our joy may be fulfilled. *[1]*

we…our (ULT)

If you use the plural pronoun **we** here, it would be exclusive, since John is speaking of himself and the other
eyewitnesses on whose behalf he is writing. However, the term **our** in the second clause is likely inclusive, since
John probably means that he wants both himself and his readers to have **joy** in the shared fellowship with one
another and with the Father and the Son that he describes in the previous verse. (See: Exclusive and Inclusive 'We')

our joy (ULT)

See the discussion of textual issues at the end of the General Notes to this chapter to decide whether to follow the
reading of ULT and say **our joy** or to follow the reading of some other versions and say "your joy." (See: Textual
Variants)

our joy (ULT)

If you follow the variant reading "your joy" here instead of **our joy**, the word "your" would be plural, as in the rest
of this letter, since it would refer to a group of believers. (See: Forms of You)

so that our joy may be fulfilled (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **joy**, you could express the idea behind it with an adjective
such as "happy." Alternate translation: "so that we will be completely happy" (See: Abstract Nouns)

so that our joy may be fulfilled (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this passive phrase, you could say this with an active form. Alternate
translation: "so that we will be completely happy" (See: Active or Passive)

so that our joy may be fulfilled (ULT)

The implications are that John and his readers will be completely happy together if his readers recognize the truth
of what he is writing to them about. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly, as UST does.
(See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

1 John 1:5

If you are using section headings, you could put one here before verse 5. Suggested heading: "Sin Prevents Fellowship with God" (See: Section Headings)

ULT

5 And this is the message that we have heard from him and are announcing to you, that God is light, and darkness is not in him at all.

we have heard (ULT)

The pronoun **we** is exclusive, since John is speaking on behalf of himself and the other eyewitnesses to the earthly life of Jesus. (See: Exclusive and Inclusive 'We')

from him (ULT)

The pronoun **him** in this first instance in the verse refers to Jesus, since John is speaking of the message that he and the other eyewitnesses heard from Jesus. Alternate translation: "from Jesus" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

God is light, and darkness is not in him at all (ULT)

These two phrases mean similar things. John is likely using repetition for emphasis. If your readers would misunderstand this connection, you could combine these phrases and express the emphasis in another way. Alternate translation: "God is entirely light" or, if you represent these metaphors non-figuratively (see next two notes), "God is completely holy" (See: Parallelism)

God is light (ULT)

John often uses **light** figuratively in this letter to mean what is holy, right, and good. Here, in reference to God, it indicates holiness. Alternate translation: "God is holy" (See: Metaphor)

darkness is not in him at all (ULT)

John often uses the word **darkness** figuratively in this letter to mean what is evil. Alternate translation: "God is not evil at all" (See: Metaphor)

darkness is not in him at all (ULT)

John is using a double negative in Greek for emphasis. In English it would come out as, "darkness is not in him not at all." In Greek the second negative does not cancel the first negative to create a positive meaning. In English the meaning would inaccurately be positive, which is why ULT uses only one negative and says "darkness is not in him at all." But if your language uses double negatives for emphasis that do not cancel one another, it would be appropriate to use that construction in your translation. (See: Double Negatives)

in him (ULT)

In this second instance in the verse, the pronoun **him** refers to God. Alternate translation: "in God" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

1 John 1:6

If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we are lying and we are not doing the truth (ULT)

John is using a hypothetical situation to help his readers recognize the importance of consistency between their words and their actions. Alternate translation: "Suppose we say that we have fellowship with him, but we walk in darkness. Then we are lying and are not doing the truth" (See: Hypothetical Situations)

If we say that we have fellowship with him (ULT)

If your language does not use abstract nouns, see how you expressed the idea behind the abstract noun **fellowship** in 1:3. Alternate translation: "If we say that we are close friends with God" (See: Abstract Nouns)

with him (ULT)

The pronoun **him** here refers to God, the antecedent from the previous verse. Alternate translation: "with God" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

and (ULT)

John is using the word **and** here to introduce a contrast between what would be expected of a person who claims to have fellowship with God and what such a person might do instead. Alternate translation: "but" (See: Connect — Contrast Relationship)

walk in the darkness (ULT)

John is using the word **walk** figuratively to mean how a person lives and behaves. Alternate translation: "do what is evil" (See: Metaphor)

walk in the darkness (ULT)

As in 1:5, John is using the word **darkness** figuratively to mean evil. Alternate translation: "do what is evil" (See: Metaphor)

we are lying and we are not doing the truth (ULT)

These two phrases mean similar things. John is likely using repetition for emphasis. If your readers would misunderstand this connection, you could combine these phrases and express the emphasis in another way. Alternate translation: "we are really not truthful at all" (See: Parallelism)

we are not doing the truth (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **truth**, you could express the idea behind it with the concrete noun "message" from the previous verse, since that seems to be what John means by **the truth** in this case. Alternate translation: "we are not living according to God's true message" (See: Abstract Nouns)

1 John 1:7

But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another (ULT)

John is using another hypothetical situation to help his readers recognize the value and benefits of living a life that is holy, as God is holy. Alternate translation: "But suppose we walk in the light as he is in the light. Then we have fellowship with one another" (See: Hypothetical Situations)

we walk in the light (ULT)

John is using the word **walk** figuratively to mean how a person lives and behaves. Alternate translation: "we do what is right" (See: Metaphor)

we walk in the light (ULT)

As in 1:5, John is using the word **light** figuratively to mean what is holy, right, and good. Alternate translation: "we do what is holy" or "we do what is right" (See: Metaphor)

as he is in the light (ULT)

Here the pronoun **he** refers to God. Alternate translation: "as God is in the light" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

as he is in the light (ULT)

John is using the word **light** figuratively to mean what is holy. Alternate translation: "as God is holy" (See: Metaphor)

we have fellowship with one another (ULT)

If your language does not use abstract nouns, see how you expressed the idea behind the abstract noun **fellowship** in 1:3. Alternate translation: "then we are close friends with one another" (See: Abstract Nouns)

the blood of Jesus (ULT)

John is using the word **blood** figuratively here to refer to the sacrificial death of Jesus, by association with the **blood** that Jesus shed when he died for our sins. Alternate translation: "the death of Jesus" (See: Metonymy)

cleanses us from all sin (ULT)

John is speaking figuratively of **sin** as if it made a person dirty and of the **blood** of Jesus as if it made a person clean. Alternate translation: "takes away all of our sin" (See: Metaphor)

of Jesus his Son (ULT)

Son is an important title for Jesus, the Son of God. (See: Translating Son and Father)

1 John 1:8

If we say that we have no sin, we are leading ourselves astray, and the truth is not in us (ULT)

John is using another hypothetical situation to help his readers recognize the importance of consistency between their words and their actions. Alternate translation: "Suppose we say that we have no sin. Then we are leading ourselves astray, and the truth is not in us" (See: Hypothetical Situations)

we have no sin (ULT)

Alternate translation: "we never sin"

we are leading ourselves astray (ULT)

John speaks figuratively of those who say this as if they were guides who were leading people—themselves, actually—in the wrong direction. Alternate translation: "we are deceiving ourselves" (See: Metaphor)

the truth is not in us (ULT)

John speaks figuratively of the **truth** as if it were an object that could be inside believers. Alternate translation: "we do not believe that what God says is true" (See: Metaphor)

the truth is not in us (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **truth**, you could express the idea behind it with an adjective such as "true." Alternate translation: "we do not believe that what God says is true" (See: Abstract Nouns)

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous (ULT)

John is using another hypothetical situation to help his readers recognize the value and benefits of living in holiness. Alternate translation: "Suppose we confess our sins. Then he is faithful and righteous" (See: Hypothetical Situations)

> **ULT**
> **9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, that he should forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we confess our sins (ULT)

Part of confessing sin to God is rejecting them. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly. Alternate translation: "If we confess our sins to God and turn away from them" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

he is faithful…that he should forgive (ULT)

The pronoun **he** refers to God in both instances in this verse. Alternate translation: "God is faithful … and God will forgive" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

that he should forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (ULT)

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. John is likely using them together for emphasis. If including both phrases would be confusing for your readers, you could combine them and express the emphasis in another way. Alternate translation: "and he will completely forgive us of what we have done wrong" (See: Parallelism)

cleanse us from all unrighteousness (ULT)

As in 1:7, John is speaking figuratively of **sins** as if they made a person dirty and of God's forgiveness as if it made a person clean. Alternate translation: "not hold against us anything that we have done wrong" (See: Metaphor)

all unrighteousness (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **unrighteousness**, you could express the idea behind it with an equivalent phrase. Alternate translation: "anything that we have done wrong" (See: Abstract Nouns)

1 John 1:10

If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar (ULT)

John is using another hypothetical situation to help his readers recognize the serious implications of not living in holiness. Alternate translation: "Suppose we say that we have not sinned. Then we are calling God a liar" (See: Hypothetical Situations)

him...his (ULT)

The pronouns **him** and **his** refer to God in this verse. Alternate translation: "God ... God's" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

we make him a liar (ULT)

Be sure that it is clear in your translation that God would not actually be a **liar** in this case. Rather, a person who claimed to be without sin would be calling God a liar, since God has said that everyone is a sinner. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly. Alternate translation: "that is the same as calling God a liar, because God has said that we have all sinned" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

his word is not in us (ULT)

John is using the term **word** figuratively to mean what God has said by using words. Alternate translation: "we do not believe what God has said" (See: Metonymy)

his word is not in us (ULT)

As he did about the "truth" in 1:8, John is speaking figuratively of God's **word** as if it were an object that could be inside believers. Alternate translation: "we do not believe what God has said" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 2

1 John 2 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Genuine believers obey God and love one another (2:1–17, continuing from 1:5)
It is false teaching to deny that Jesus is the Messiah (2:18–2:27)
Genuine children of God do not sin (2:28–29, continues through 3:10)

In order to show that John is writing something like poetry in 2:12–14, some translations set the statements in those verses farther to the right than the rest of the text, and they begin a new line at the start of each statement.

Special concepts in this chapter

Antichrist

In 2:18 and 2:22, John writes both about a specific person called the Antichrist and about many people who will be "antichrists." The word "antichrist" means "opposed to Christ." The Antichrist is a person who will come just before the return of Jesus and imitate Jesus' work, but he will do that for evil purposes. Before that person comes, there will be many other people who work against Christ. They too are called "antichrists," but as a description rather than as a name. (See: antichrist and last day, latter days and evil, wicked, unpleasant)

Important textual issues in this chapter

In 2:20, some ancient manuscripts read "you all know," and that is the reading that ULT follows. However, other ancient manuscripts read "you know all things." It seems more likely, based on everything else in the letter, that "you all know" is the correct original reading, since John is countering the claim of false teachers to know more than other believers. The reading "you know all things" seems to have arisen because copyists felt a need to have an object for the verb "know." Nevertheless, if a translation of the Bible already exists in your region, consider using whichever reading is found in that version. If a translation does not already exist, we recommend that you follow the reading in the ULT text. (See: Textual Variants)

1 John 2:1

My little children (ULT)

Here and in several other places in the book, John uses the diminutive form of the word **children** as an affectionate form of address. Alternate translation: "My dear children"

My little children (ULT)

John is using the word **children** figuratively to describe the believers to whom he is writing. They are under his spiritual care, and so he regards them in that sense as if they were his own children. You could translate this in a non-figurative way, or you could represent the metaphor as a simile, as UST does. Alternate translation: "You dear believers who are under my care" (See: Metaphor)

I am writing these things (ULT)

Here, **these things** refers generally to everything that John has written about in the letter so far. Alternate translation: "I am writing this letter"

And (ULT)

The word **And** here introduces a contrast between what John hopes to achieve by writing, that these believers will not sin, and what might happen, that one of them might sin. Alternate translation: "But" (See: Connect — Contrast Relationship)

if anyone should sin, we have an advocate with the Father (ULT)

John is describing a hypothetical situation in order to reassure his readers. Alternate translation: "suppose someone does sin. Then we have an advocate with the Father" (See: Hypothetical Situations)

we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ (ULT)

John assumes that his readers will know that an **advocate** is someone who takes a person's side and pleads on his behalf. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly. Alternate translation: "Jesus Christ will take our side and ask God the Father to forgive us" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

the Father (ULT)

This is an important title for God. Alternate translation: "God the Father" (See: Translating Son and Father)

the righteous (ULT)

John is using the adjective **righteous** as a noun in order to indicate a specific type of person. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you can translate this with an equivalent expression. Alternate translation: "the one who is righteous" (See: Nominal Adjectives)

1 John 2:2

he (ULT)

The pronoun **he** here refers to Jesus, the antecedent in the previous verse. Alternate translation: "Jesus" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world (ULT)

The abstract noun **propitiation** refers to something that someone does for someone else or gives to someone else so that he will no longer be angry. If your readers would misunderstand this term, you could translate it with an equivalent expression. Alternate translation: "because of Jesus, God is no longer angry about our sins, and not only about ours, but also about those of the whole world" (See: Abstract Nouns)

the whole world (ULT)

John uses **world** to mean various things in this letter. Here it figuratively refers to the people living in the world. Alternate translation: "everyone in the world" (See: Metonymy)

and not for ours only, but also for the whole world (ULT)

John leaves out the word for "sins" in these clauses because it is understood from the previous clause. If your readers would misunderstand this clause, you can include the missing word. Alternate translation: "and not only for our sins, but also for the sins of the whole world" (See: Ellipsis)

1 John 2:3

in this we know that we have known him, if we keep his commandments (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this sentence, you could reverse the order of these phrases, since the second phrase gives the reason for the result that the first phrase describes. Alternate translation: "if we obey what he has commanded, then we can be assured that we have a close relationship with him" (See: Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship)

in this we know that we have known him, if we keep his commandments (ULT)

If your language would not use a conditional statement with **if** for something that is true, you can express the same idea using a word like "by" or another way. Alternate translation: "there is a way to be sure that we truly know God. This is by obeying his commandments" (See: Connect — Factual Conditions)

in this we know that (ULT)

This is an idiomatic expression that John uses many times in this letter. Alternate translation: "this is how we know that" (See: Idiom)

we know that we have known him (ULT)

John is using the word **know** in two different senses here. See the discussion of the word **know** in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. If your language has different words for these different senses, it would be appropriate to use them here. Alternate translation: "we can be assured that we have a close relationship with him"

him…his (ULT)

In this verse, the pronouns **him** and **his** refer to God, the one who has given the commandments that people must obey. Alternate translation: "God … God's" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

if we keep his commandments (ULT)

Here, **keep** is an idiom that means "obey." Alternate translation: "if we obey what he has commanded" (See: Idiom)

1 John 2:4

The one who says, "I know him," and does not keep his commandments is a liar

John is describing a hypothetical situation in order to challenge his readers. Alternate translation: "Suppose someone says, 'I have a close relationship with God,' but he does not obey what God has commanded. Then that person is a liar" (See: Hypothetical Situations)

The one who says (ULT)

Alternate translation: "Anyone who says" or "The person who says"

I know him (ULT)

As in the second instance in 2:3, John is using the word **know** in the sense of knowing someone by personal experience. Alternate translation: "I know God very well"

him...his (ULT)

In this verse, the pronouns **him** and **his** refer to God, the one who has given the commandments that people must obey. Alternate translation: "God ... God's" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

and (ULT)

John is using the word **and** to introduce a contrast between what such a person might say and what his conduct actually indicates to be true. Alternate translation: "but" (See: Connect — Contrast Relationship)

does not keep (ULT)

In this instance, the word **keep** is an idiom that means "obey." Alternate translation: "does not obey" or "disobeys" (See: Idiom)

is a liar, and the truth is not in this one (ULT)

These two phrases mean similar things. John is likely using repetition for emphasis. If your readers would misunderstand this connection, you could combine these phrases and express the emphasis in another way. Alternate translation: "is certainly not speaking the truth" (See: Parallelism)

and the truth is not in this one (ULT)

John is speaking figuratively of the **truth** as if it were an object that could be inside someone. See how you translated a similar expression in 1:8. Alternate translation: "and such a person is not speaking the truth" (See: Metaphor)

and the truth is not in this one (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **truth**, you could express the idea behind it with an adjective such as "true." Alternate translation: "and what such a person says is not true" (See: Abstract Nouns)

1 John 2:5

But (ULT)

This sentence makes a contrast by saying in a positive way what the previous sentence said in a negative way. Indicate this contrast in a natural way in your language. Alternate translation: "On the other hand," (See: Connect — Contrast Relationship)

But whoever keeps his word, in this one truly the love of God has been perfected (ULT)

John is suggesting another hypothetical situation in order to reassure his readers. Alternate translation: "But suppose someone keeps his word. Then the love of God truly has been perfected in that person." (See: Hypothetical Situations)

keeps his word (ULT)

John is using the term **word** figuratively to mean what God has commanded by using words. Alternate translation: "obeys God's commandments" (See: Metonymy)

keeps his word (ULT)

In this instance, the word **keep** is an idiom that means "obey." Alternate translation: "obeys God's commandments" (See: Idiom)

his...him (ULT)

The pronouns **his** and **him** in this verse refer to God. Alternate translation: "God's … God" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

in this one truly the love of God has been perfected (ULT)

The phrase **the love of God** could mean one of two things. (1) It could refer to a person loving God. Alternate translation: "that person indeed loves God completely" (2) It could refer to God loving people. Alternate translation: "God's love has completely achieved its purpose in that person's life" (See: Possession)

in this one truly the love of God has been perfected (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the passive verbal form **has been perfected**, you could use an active verbal form in its place. The person or thing doing the action will depend on how you decide to translate the phrase **the love of God**. Alternate translation: "that person indeed loves God completely" or "God's love has completely achieved its purpose in that person's life" (See: Active or Passive)

In this we know that we are in him (ULT)

The word **this** could be referring to (1) what John is about to say in verse 6, or (2) what John has just said in verse 5, or (3) both. If your language allows it, you could choose option (3), since both verses are talking about completely obeying God, but most languages will need to choose one or the other. (See: Metaphor)

we are in him (ULT)

John is speaking figuratively as if believers could be inside of God. This expression describes having a close relationship with God. Alternate translation: "we are living in fellowship with God" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 2:6

he remains in him (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to this book. Here to **remain in** God means very much the same thing as to have "fellowship with God" in 1:3 and 1:6 and to "be in" God in 2:5. John is repeating the same idea in different ways. Alternate translation: "he has close fellowship with God" or "he shares life with God" (See: Metaphor)

he remains in him (ULT)

John once again speaks figuratively as if believers could be inside of God. Alternate translation: "he is close friends with God" or "he shares life with God" (See: Metaphor)

in him (ULT)

The pronoun **him** refers to God. Alternate translation: "in God" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

ought, just as that one walked, also to walk himself (ULT)

As in 1:6 and 1:7, John is using the word **walk** figuratively to mean how a person lives and behaves. Alternate translation: "must live as Jesus lived" or "must obey God just as Jesus did" (See: Metaphor)

ought, just as that one walked, also to walk himself (ULT)

John is referring specifically to the way that Jesus behaved when he lived on earth. If your readers would misunderstand this, you could say that explicitly. Alternate translation: "must walk in the same way as Jesus walked when he was living on earth" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

that one (ULT)

John is using this demonstrative pronoun to refer to Jesus. Alternate translation: "Jesus" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

1 John 2:7

Beloved (ULT)

This is another term of affection by which John addresses the
believers to whom he is writing. It involves using the adjective
beloved as a noun in order to indicate a specific group of people.
Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you can
translate this with an equivalent expression. Alternate translation:
"You people whom I love" or "My dear friends" (See: Nominal
Adjectives)

> **ULT**
>
> **7** Beloved, I am not writing a new
> commandment to you, but an old
> commandment, which you have had
> from the beginning. The old
> commandment is the word that you
> heard.

from the beginning (ULT)

John uses the phrase **from the beginning** in various ways in this letter. Here it refers to the time when the people
to whom he is writing first believed in Jesus. Alternate translation: "ever since you first believed in Jesus" (See:
Idiom)

the word that you heard (ULT)

John is using **word** figuratively to refer to the message that these believers heard, which was communicated
through words. Alternate translation: "the message that you heard" (See: Metonymy)

the word that you heard (ULT)

The implication is that the specific **word** or message that John is describing is the commandment Jesus gave to
believers that they should love one another. See the Gospel of John 13:34 and 15:12. John indicates this explicitly in
this letter in 3:23 and 4:21. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly at this point as well.
Alternate translation: "the commandment Jesus gave that we should love one another" (See: Assumed Knowledge
and Implicit Information)

1 John 2:8

Again (ULT)

John is using the term **Again** idiomatically in the sense of "Looking at this again from another perspective." Alternate translation: "On the other hand" (See: Idiom)

I am writing a new commandment to you (ULT)

John is referring to the same **commandment** as in 2:7, the commandment that Jesus gave to love one another, which the believers have had all along. So he does not mean that he is now writing a **new** and different commandment, but rather that this same commandment, which he called "old" there, can also be considered **new** in a certain sense. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say explicitly what **commandment** John is referring to, and you could give the likely reason why it can be considered **new** as well as "old." Alternate translation: "the commandment that I am writing to you, to love one another, is also, in a sense, a new commandment, because it is characteristic of a new way of life" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is going away and the true light is already shining (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this sentence, you could reverse the order of these clauses, since the second clause gives the reason for the result that the first clause describes. It may also be helpful to begin a new sentence here. Alternate translation: "Because the darkness is going away and the true light is already shining, this commandment is true in Jesus and in you" (See: Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship)

which is true in him and in you (ULT)

Since Jesus consistently obeyed the commandment to love, it is likely that John is emphasizing that believers are doing the same thing themselves. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could bring out this implicit emphasis in your translation. It may also be helpful to begin a new sentence here. Alternate translation: "Jesus truly obeyed this commandment, and you are now truly obeying it as well" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

which is true in him and in you (ULT)

John is speaking figuratively as if this commandment were **true** inside of Jesus and these believers. Alternate translation: "Jesus truly obeyed this commandment, and you are now truly obeying it as well" (See: Metaphor)

him (ULT)

The pronoun **him** refers to Jesus. John is using him as the supreme example of loving others. Alternate translation: "Jesus" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

the darkness is going away and the true light is already shining (ULT)

As in 1:5, John is using the word **darkness** figuratively to represent evil and the word **light** figuratively to represent what is holy, right, and good. The **shining** of the light figuratively represents its influence on people. Alternate

translation: "what is evil is going away and people are able to see what is genuinely good more and more" (See: Metaphor)

the true light (ULT)

Since John calls God "the True One" in 5:20, he may be referring to God's goodness and holiness when he says **the true light**. Alternate translation: "the goodness of God" or "the holiness of God" (See: Metonymy)

1 John 2:9

The one who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness until now (ULT)

John is suggesting a further hypothetical situation in order to challenge his readers. Alternate translation: "Suppose someone says that he is in the light, but he hates his brother. That person is actually still in the darkness." (See: Hypothetical Situations)

he is in the light (ULT)

As in 1:5 and 2:8, John is using the word **light** figuratively to mean what is holy, right, and good. Alternate translation: "he does what is right" (See: Metaphor)

and (ULT)

John is using the word **and** here to introduce a contrast between what such a person might say and what his conduct actually indicates to be true. Alternate translation: "but" (See: Connect — Contrast Relationship)

his brother (ULT)

John is using the term **brother** figuratively to mean someone who shares the same faith. Alternate translation: "a fellow believer" (See: Metaphor)

his brother (ULT)

Although the term **brother** is masculine, John is using the word in a generic sense that includes both men and women. Alternate translation: "a fellow believer" (See: When Masculine Words Include Women)

is in the darkness (ULT)

As in 1:5, John is using the word **darkness** figuratively to mean what is wrong or evil. Alternate translation: "is doing what is wrong" (See: Metaphor)

until now (ULT)

Alternate translation: "still"

1 John 2:10

The one who loves his brother remains in the light (ULT)

John is suggesting a further hypothetical situation in order to reassure his readers. Alternate translation: "Suppose someone does love his fellow believers. Then he is genuinely doing what is right" (See: Hypothetical Situations)

his brother (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:9. Alternate translation: "each fellow believer" (See: Metaphor)

his brother (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this term, you could translate this in the plural, since John is speaking of loving all believers. Alternate translation: "each of his brothers" (See: Generic Noun Phrases)

remains in the light (ULT)

John is using the word **light** figuratively to mean what is holy, right, and good. Alternate translation: "is genuinely doing what is right" (See: Metaphor)

remains in the light (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. Here the word seems to describe behavior that is recognized to be genuine because it is consistent. Alternate translation: "is genuinely doing what is right" (See: Metaphor)

a stumbling-block is not in him (ULT)

John is using the term **stumbling-block**, which means something that a person would trip over, figuratively to mean something that would cause a person to sin. Alternate translation: "he has no reason to sin" or "nothing will cause him to sin" (See: Metaphor)

a stumbling-block is not in him (ULT)

John speaks of this **stumbling-block** being **in** or inside a person because it represents the hatred for a fellow believer that he describes in 2:9. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could indicate this explicitly. Alternate translation: "he has no hatred inside of him that will cause him to sin" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

1 John 2:11

his brother (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:9. Alternate translation: "a fellow believer" (See: Metaphor)

is in the darkness and walks in the darkness (ULT)

> **ULT**
>
> **11** But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

These two phrases mean similar things. John is likely using repetition for emphasis. If your readers would misunderstand this emphasis, you could combine these phrases and express the emphasis in a different way. Alternate translation: "is living in complete darkness" (See: Parallelism)

is in the darkness and walks in the darkness (ULT)

As in 1:5, John is using the word **darkness** figuratively to mean what is wrong or evil. Alternate translation: "is living in a way that is wrong" or "does what is evil" (See: Metaphor)

walks in the darkness (ULT)

John is using the word **walk** figuratively to mean how a person lives and behaves. Alternate translation: "conducts his life in wrong ways" (See: Metaphor)

he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this part of the sentence, you could reverse the order of these phrases, since the second phrase gives the reason for the result that the first phrase describes. Alternate translation: "because the darkness has blinded his eyes, he does not know where he is going" (See: Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship)

he does not know where he is going (ULT)

This is a continuation of the metaphor of walking as a figurative description of how a person lives and behaves. Alternate translation: "he does not know the right way to live" (See: Metaphor)

because the darkness has blinded his eyes (ULT)

John is using blindness figuratively to mean a loss of moral sense. Alternate translation: "because his evil thoughts are keeping him from knowing right and wrong" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 2:12

little children (ULT)

The term **little children** here could refer to: (1) all of the believers to whom John is writing. This is the way that he uses this term in 2:1 and in several other places in this letter. See the explanation of it in two of the notes to 2:1. If that is the sense, then John divides the believers into only two groups in verses 12-14, the older ones and the younger ones. See the UST. Or it could refer to: (2) only some of the believers. In that case, John is addressing the believers in three different groups in verses 12-14, and this group would figuratively represent new believers, that is, those who have very recently put their faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. This would also apply to the similar term in 2:14. Alternate translation: "new believers" (See: Metaphor)

> **ULT**
>
> **12** I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven because of his name.

because (ULT)

The word translated as **because** here could also be translated as "that." In other words, what follows this word could be either: (1) the reason that John is writing or (2) the content that John wants to communicate. This also applies to the same phrase that is used several times in verses 13 and 14. Alternate translation: "that"

your sins have been forgiven (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this passive phrase, you could say this with an active form, and you could say who has done the action. Alternate translation: "God has forgiven your sins" (See: Active or Passive)

because of his name (ULT)

The pronoun **his** refers to Jesus. Alternate translation: "because of the name of Jesus" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

because of his name (ULT)

John is using the **name** of Jesus figuratively to represent who Jesus is and what he has done. Alternate translation: "on account of Jesus" (See: Metonymy)

1 John 2:13

fathers (ULT)

The term **fathers** here is likely a figurative description of one part of the believers. In that case, it could mean either: (1) "mature believers" or (2) "church leaders" (See: Metaphor)

you know (ULT)

As in 2:4, John is using the word **know** in a specific sense. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "you know very well"

the one {who is} from the beginning (ULT)

John uses the phrase **from the beginning** in various ways in this letter. Here it refers to Jesus or possibly to God the Father. John refers to Jesus with these same words at the beginning of this letter and in a similar way in John 1:1-2. Alternate translation: "him who has always existed" or "Jesus, who has always existed" (See: Idiom)

young men (ULT)

This is likely a figurative description of a part of the group of believers. It probably refers to people who have become strong in their faith, even if they are not yet as mature as those in the group of **fathers**, since **young men** are in the time of life when they are strong and vigorous. Alternate translation: "strong believers" (See: Metaphor)

young men (ULT)

Although the term **men** is masculine, John is likely using the word figuratively in a generic sense that includes both men and women. Alternate translation: "strong believers" (See: When Masculine Words Include Women)

you have overcome the evil one (ULT)

John speaks figuratively of these strong believers refusing to do what the devil wants them to do as if they had defeated him in a struggle. Alternate translation: "you refuse to do what the devil wants you to do" (See: Metaphor)

the evil one (ULT)

John is using the adjective **evil** as a noun in order to indicate a specific being. ULT adds **one** to show this. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you can translate this with an equivalent expression. Alternate translation: "the one who is evil" (See: Nominal Adjectives)

the evil one (ULT)

John is speaking figuratively of the devil by association with his characteristic of being **evil**. Alternate translation: "the devil" or "Satan" (See: Metonymy)

1 John 2:14

I have written to you, young children, because you know the Father (ULT)

This sentence is similar to the sentence in 2:12. The next two sentences in this verse mean basically the same thing as the two sentences in 2:13. John is using these repetitions for emphasis and for poetic effect. For those reasons, it would be appropriate to translate all of these sentences separately and not combine them with the ones in the previous two verses, even if you combine parallel statements with similar meanings elsewhere in the book. (See: Parallelism)

> **ULT**
>
> **14** I have written to you, young children, because you know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you know the one {who is} from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God remains in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

I have written to you, young children, because you know the Father (ULT)

In some Bibles, this sentence comes at the end of 2:13 instead of at the beginning of this verse. The verse divisions were introduced to the Bible many centuries after its books were written, and their purpose is only to help readers find things easily. So the placement of this sentence, either at the start of this verse or at the end of the previous one, does not create any significant difference in meaning. If a translation of the Bible already exists in your region, consider using the placement in that version. If not, we recommend that you follow the placement in the ULT text. (See: Textual Variants)

I have written to you (ULT)

By saying **I have written**, John is expressing himself slightly differently than in 2:12–13, where he says, "I am writing." The difference is likely only for emphasis, as John looks back at what he has just said and indicates that he is saying it again. However, if your language distinguishes between the present and present perfect tenses, it would be appropriate to show the difference in your translation. (See: Verbs)

young children (ULT)

While **young children** is a different term from "little children" in 2:12, figuratively it means the same thing. See how you translated the similar term there. Alternate translation: "who are like my own children" or "new believers" (See: Metaphor)

you know (ULT)

As in 2:4, John is using the word **know** in a specific sense. See how you translated it there and in 2:13. Alternate translation: "you are very close with"

the Father (ULT)

The Father is an important title for God. Alternate translation: "God the Father" (See: Translating Son and Father)

fathers (ULT)

The term **fathers** likely has the same figurative meaning as in 2:13. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: (1) "mature believers" or (2) "church leaders" (See: Metaphor)

you know (ULT)

As in 2:4, 2:13, and earlier in this verse, John is using the word **know** in a specific sense. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "you are very close with"

the one {who is} from the beginning (ULT)

John uses the phrase **from the beginning** in various ways in this letter. Here it refers to Jesus or possibly to God the Father. John refers to Jesus with these same words at the beginning of this letter, in 2:13, and in a similar way in John 1:1-2. Alternate translation: "him who has always existed" or "Jesus, who has always existed" (See: Idiom)

young men (ULT)

The term **young men** likely has the same figurative meaning here as in 2:13. Alternate translation: "strong believers" (See: Metaphor)

young men (ULT)

Although the term **men** is masculine, John is likely using the word figuratively in a generic sense that includes both men and women. Alternate translation: "strong believers" (See: When Masculine Words Include Women)

you are strong (ULT)

John is using the word **strong** not literally to describe believers' physical strength, but figuratively to describe their faithfulness to Jesus. Alternate translation: "you are faithful to Jesus" (See: Metaphor)

the word of God remains in you (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. Here the word seems to describe behavior that is recognized to be genuine because it is consistent. Alternate translation: "you genuinely obey what God has commanded" (See: Metaphor)

the word of God (ULT)

John is using the term **word** figuratively to refer to what God has commanded using words. Alternate translation: "what God has commanded" (See: Metonymy)

you have overcome the evil one (ULT)

John speaks figuratively of these strong believers refusing to do what the devil wants them to do as if they had defeated him in a struggle. Alternate translation: "you refuse to do what the devil wants you to do" (See: Metaphor)

the evil one (ULT)

John is using the adjective **evil** as a noun in order to indicate a specific being. ULT adds **one** to show this. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you can translate this with an equivalent expression. Alternate translation: "the one who is evil" (See: Nominal Adjectives)

the evil one (ULT)

John is speaking figuratively of the devil by association with his characteristic of being **evil**. Alternate translation: "the devil" or "Satan" (See: Metonymy)

1 John 2:15

Do not love the world, nor the things that {are} in the world (ULT)

In the second phrase in this sentence, John leaves out some of the words that a sentence would need in many languages in order to be complete. These words can be supplied from the first phrase. Alternate translation: "Do not love the world, and do not love any of the things that are in the world" (See: Ellipsis)

Do not love the world (ULT)

John uses **world** to mean various things in this letter. Here it figuratively refers to the system of values that people share who do not honor God. This system is necessarily contrary to the values that godly people have. Alternate translation: "Do not share the ungodly value system of the people who do not honor God" (See: Metonymy)

nor the things that {are} in the world (ULT)

This phrase means essentially the same thing as the preceding one. John is likely using repetition for emphasis. However, since there is a slight difference in meaning, you may wish to translate these phrases separately rather than combining them. It may be helpful to begin a new sentence here. Alternate translation: "No, do not share any of the values that characterize the worldly system" (See: Parallelism)

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him (ULT)

John is describing a hypothetical situation in order to challenge his readers. Alternate translation: "Suppose someone loves the world. Then the love of the Father is not in him" (See: Hypothetical Situations)

the love of the Father is not in him (ULT)

The phrase **the love of the Father** could mean: (1) the love that a person has for God the Father. Alternate translation: "that person does not really love God the Father" or (2) the love that God has for people. Alternate translation: "God the Father's love is not genuinely at work in that person" (See: Possession)

of the Father (ULT)

Father is an important title for God. Alternate translation: "of God the Father" (See: Translating Son and Father)

1 John 2:16

For (ULT)

In this verse, John is giving the reason why the previous sentence is true. If your readers would misunderstand this connection, you could put this reason before that statement of result by combining this verse and the previous one into a verse bridge. In order to create a verse bridge, you could begin this verse with "since" instead of **for**; you could end it with a comma instead of a period; and you could make it the beginning of the second sentence in the previous verse, putting it before "if anyone loves the world." (See: Verse Bridges)

everything that {is} in the world (ULT)

See how you translated the similar expression in 2:15. Alternate translation: "everything that characterizes the ungodly value system of the people who do not honor God" (See: Metonymy)

the lust of the flesh (ULT)

John is using the term **flesh** figuratively to mean the physical human body, which is made of **flesh**. Alternate translation: "the strong desire to have sinful physical pleasure" (See: Metonymy)

the lust of the eyes (ULT)

John is using the term **eyes** figuratively to mean the ability to see. Alternate translation: "the strong desire to have the things that we see" (See: Metonymy)

the…arrogance of life (ULT)

John is likely using the Greek term that ULT translates as **life** in one of its specific senses, to mean "possessions," as in 3:17. Alternate translation: "pride in one's possessions"

is not from the Father, but is from the world (ULT)

See how you translated the term **world** in 2:15. It has a similar meaning in this verse. Alternate translation: "does not represent how God the Father wants us to live, but instead comes from an ungodly value system" (See: Metonymy)

the Father (ULT)

Father is an important title for God. Alternate translation: "God the Father" (See: Translating Son and Father)

1 John 2:17

the world (ULT)

See how you translated the term **world** in 2:15. It has a similar meaning in this verse. Alternate translation: "the ungodly value system of the people who do not honor God" (See: Metonymy)

the world is going away (ULT)

John speaks figuratively of the **world** as if it were leaving. Alternate translation: "the world will not last very much longer" (See: Metaphor)

and its desire (ULT)

John is leaving out some of the words that a sentence would need in many languages in order to be complete. These words can be supplied from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: "and its desire is also going away" (See: Ellipsis)

its desire (ULT)

John is using the possessive form to show that the **world** is the source of this **desire** and gives it its character. Alternate translation: "the worldly desire" or "people's desire for the world" or "the desire that this system of values creates in people" (See: Possession)

its desire (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this term, you could translate this in the plural, since John is referring to all of the different types of **desire** associated with the **world** that he described in 2:16. Alternate translation: "worldly desires" or "the desires that this system of values creates in people" (See: Generic Noun Phrases)

remains to eternity (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. Here the word refers to continuing existence. Alternate translation: "will live forever" (See: Metaphor)

to eternity (ULT)

This is an idiom. Consider using an idiom in your language that has this meaning. Alternate translation: "forever" (See: Idiom)

1 John 2:18

If you are using section headings, you could put one here before verse 18. Suggested heading: "False Teaching and True Teaching" (See: Section Headings)

Young children (ULT)

This is the same term that John used figuratively in 2:14 that seems to be a stylistic variation of the term that he uses in 2:1 and 2:12, as well as in several other places in the book, to address all of the believers to whom he is writing. See how you translated this in those places. Alternate translation: "My dear children" or "You dear believers who are under my care" (See: Metaphor)

it is the last hour (ULT)

John is using the term **hour** figuratively to refer a specific time. The expression **the last hour** refers specifically to the time at the end of earthly history just before Jesus returns. Alternate translation: "Jesus will return soon … Jesus will return soon" (See: Idiom)

antichrist is coming, indeed now many antichrists have come (ULT)

See the discussion of the terms **antichrist** and **antichrists** in the General Notes to this chapter. Alternate translation: "someone is coming who will lead a great opposition to Jesus, already many people are opposing Jesus in that way now" (See: Translate Unknowns)

ULT

18 Young children, it is the last hour, and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, indeed now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

1 John 2:19

They went out from us (ULT)

These people formerly met with the group of believers to whom John is writing. While they physically left the places where the believers met, John is also using the expression **went out** figuratively to mean that these people stopped being part of the group. Alternate translation: "They left our group of believers in Jesus" (See: Metaphor)

> **ULT**
>
> **19** They went out from us, but they were not from us. For if they had been from us, they would have remained with us, but so that they would be made apparent, that they are all not from us.

but they were not from us...they are all not from us (ULT)

John is using the expression **from us** in a slightly different sense in these instances than in the first instance in the verse. In the first instance, it means that these people left the group. In this instance, it means that they were never genuinely part of the group. Alternate translation: "but they were never genuinely part of our group ... none of them are genuinely part of our group" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

they were not from us (ULT)

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say explicitly why John makes this claim. Alternate translation: "they were never genuinely part of our group, because they did not actually believe in Jesus in the first place" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

For if they had been from us, they would have remained with us (ULT)

John is presenting a situation that is not real to help his readers recognize why the claim that he is making is true. Alternate translation: "We know that they were not genuinely part of our group because they did not continue to participate in it" (See: Connect — Contrary to Fact Conditions)

they would have remained with us (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. Here the word seems to refer to continuing participation in a group. Alternate translation: "they would have continued to participate in our group" (See: Metaphor)

but so that they would be made apparent, that they are all not from us (ULT)

John is leaving out some of the words that a sentence would need in many languages in order to be complete. These words can be supplied from the previous sentence. Alternate translation: "but they left us so that their actions would reveal that all of them were not genuinely part of our group" (See: Ellipsis)

so that they would be made apparent (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "appear" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. Here, the people were revealed as unbelievers when they left the group. If your language does not use passive forms, you could say this with an active form, and you could say what is doing the action. Alternate translation: "they left so that their actions would reveal" (See: Active or Passive)

from us…not…they are all (ULT)

The word **all** refers to all the people who left the group. If your readers would misunderstand this reference, you could make the subject negative and the verb positive. Alternate translation: "none of them are from us" or "none of them were genuinely part of our group"

1 John 2:20

And (ULT)

John is using the word **and** to introduce a contrast between the people who left the group and the remaining believers to whom he is writing. Alternate translation: "However," (See: Connect — Contrast Relationship)

you have an anointing from the Holy One (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **anointing**, you could express the idea behind it with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: "the Holy One has anointed you" (See: Abstract Nouns)

you have an anointing from the Holy One (ULT)

The word **anointing** refers to the practice, seen often in the Old Testament, of pouring oil on a person to set that person apart to serve God. If your readers would not be familiar with this practice, you could describe it specifically in your translation. Alternate translation: "the Holy One has poured oil on you to set you apart to serve him" (See: Translate Unknowns)

you have an anointing from the Holy One (ULT)

Here John is using **anointing** figuratively to refer to the Holy Spirit. Just as people poured oil on kings and priests to set them apart for service to God, God gives the Holy Spirit to believers to set them apart and equip them to serve God. John says specifically in 3:24 and 4:13 that God has given the Spirit to believers in this way. Alternate translation: "the Holy One has given you his Spirit" (See: Metaphor)

the Holy One (ULT)

John is using the adjective **Holy** as a noun in order to indicate a specific person. ULT adds **One** to show this. John is referring specifically to God, and so ULT capitalizes both of these words to show that they are describing a divine person. Your language may allow you to use this adjective as a noun. If not, you can translate this with an equivalent expression. Alternate translation: "God, the One who is holy" (See: Nominal Adjectives)

you all know (ULT)

See the discussion of textual issues at the end of the General Notes to this chapter to decide whether to follow the reading of ULT and say **you all know** or to follow the reading of some other versions and say "you know all things." (See: Textual Variants)

you all know (ULT)

Based on what he says in the next verse, John likely means here that the believers to whom he is writing **all know** the truth. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly. Alternate translation: "you all know the truth" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

1 John 2:21

I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this double negative, you could translate it as a positive statement. Since John then repeats the statement in positive form in the next phrase, you can make the connection to that phrase as an affirmation rather than as a contrast. Alternate translation: "I have written to you because you know the truth, yes, because you do know it" (See: Double Negatives)

I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it (ULT)

If saying **I have not written to you** seems wrong or confusing in your language, you can move the negative to the next clause. Alternate translation: "I have written to you not because you do not know the truth, but because you do know the truth" or "I have written to you not to inform you of the truth, but I have written to you because you already know it" (See: Connect — Exception Clauses)

the truth...from the truth (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **truth**, you could express the idea behind it with an adjective such as "true." Alternate translation: "what is true ... from what is true" (See: Abstract Nouns)

the truth...from the truth (ULT)

John is likely referring figuratively to the teaching that believers have received from Jesus by association with the way that it is true. Alternate translation: "the true teaching that we received from Jesus ... from this true teaching" (See: Metonymy)

and that every lie is not from the truth (ULT)

John is leaving out some of the words that a sentence would need in many languages in order to be complete. These words can be supplied from earlier in the sentence. Alternate translation: "and you know that every lie is not from the truth" (See: Ellipsis)

not...every lie is...from the truth (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this phrase, you could clarify it by making the subject negative and the verb positive. Alternate translation: "no lie is from the truth"

from the truth (ULT)

This second occurrence of **the truth** could refer to: (1) The same as the first occurrence. Alternate translation: "part of God's true message" (2) God, who is the source of all truth. Alternate translation: "from God, the One who is true"

1 John 2:22

Who is the liar, if not the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ (ULT)

John is using the question form for emphasis. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you could translate his words as a statement or exclamation. Alternate translation: "Anyone who denies that Jesus is the Messiah is certainly a liar!" (See: Rhetorical Question)

not...the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ (ULT)

For emphasis, John is using a double negative in Greek, specifically, a negative verb (**denies**) with a negative particle, "not." In English, it would come out as, "the one who denies that Jesus is not the Christ." In Greek, the second negative does not cancel the first to create a positive meaning. But in English, the meaning would inaccurately be positive, which is why ULT uses only one negative. It leaves out "not" and says **the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ**. However, if your language uses double negatives for emphasis that do not cancel one another, it would be appropriate to use that construction in your translation. (See: Double Negatives)

This one is the antichrist (ULT)

John is not referring here to the ultimate antichrist who will appear at the end of earthly history. John does not have a specific person in view here. Rather, he is speaking generally of all people who oppose Christ. See how you translated the term **antichrist** in 2:18. Alternate translation: "Such a person is the enemy of Jesus" (See: Generic Noun Phrases)

the one who denies the Father and the Son (ULT)

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could indicate explicitly why John says this about these people. It may be helpful to begin a new sentence here. Alternate translation: "By denying that Jesus is the Messiah, he is denying both God the Father, who sent Jesus to be the Messiah, and Jesus his Son, whom he sent" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

the Father and the Son (ULT)

Father and **Son** are important titles that describe the relationship between God and Jesus. Alternate translation: "God the Father and Jesus his Son" (See: Translating Son and Father)

1 John 2:23

Everyone who denies the Son (ULT)

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say explicitly what this means in light of what John says in the previous verse. Alternate translation: "Everyone who denies that Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

the Son (ULT)

Son is an important title for Jesus. (See: Translating Son and Father)

the...does not have...Father...the...also has...Father (ULT)

The language of possession that John is using actually indicates that such a person does not or does belong to God, rather than that God does not or does belong to such a person. Alternate translation: "does not belong to the Father … belongs to the Father as well" (See: Possession)

the...Father (ULT)

Father is an important title for God. Alternate translation: "God the Father … God the Father" (See: Translating Son and Father)

The one who confesses the Son (ULT)

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say explicitly what this means in light of what John says in the previous verse. Alternate translation: "Everyone who truly believes and acknowledges publicly that Jesus is the Son of God and the Messiah" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

1 John 2:24

what you have heard ... what you have heard

John is referring implicitly to the teaching about Jesus that these believers **have heard**. Alternate translation: "the teaching you have heard ... the teaching you have heard" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

from the beginning (ULT)

> **ULT**
>
> **24** As for you, what you have heard from the beginning, let it remain in you. If what you have heard from the beginning remains in you, you will also remain in the Son and in the Father.

John uses the phrase **from the beginning** in various ways in this letter. Here it refers to the time when the people to whom he is writing first believed in Jesus. Alternate translation: "ever since you first believed in Jesus ... ever since you first believed in Jesus" (See: Idiom)

let it remain in you...remains in you (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. In these instances, in reference to the teaching about Jesus, the word seems to refer to continuing belief in that teaching. Alternate translation: "continue to believe it ... you continue to believe" (See: Metaphor)

If what you have heard from the beginning remains in you, you will also remain in the Son and in the Father (ULT)

John is describing a conditional situation in order to reassure his readers. Alternate translation: "As long as what you have heard from the beginning remains in you, then you will also remain in the Son and in the Father" (See: Connect — Hypothetical Conditions)

you will also remain in the Son and in the Father (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. In this instance, it seems to mean the same thing as in 2:6. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "you will also continue to have a close relationship with the Son and with the Father" (See: Metaphor)

the Son...the Father (ULT)

Son and **Father** are important titles for Jesus and God, respectively. Alternate translation: "Jesus the Son of God ... God the Father" (See: Translating Son and Father)

1 John 2:25

the promise that he promised to us (ULT)

If it is unnatural in your language to use both the noun **promise** and the verb **promised**, you can use just one form of the word in your translation. Alternate translation: "the promise that he made to us" or "what he promised us"

> **ULT**
>
> **25** And this is the promise that he promised to us—eternal life.

he (ULT)

The pronoun **he** could refer in this context either to Jesus or to God the Father. However, it seems more likely that it refers to Jesus, since John has just talked in 2:22–23 about denying or confessing him, and it was Jesus who promised **eternal life** to everyone who believed in him. See, for example, the Gospel of John 3:36 and 6:47. Alternate translation: "Jesus" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

eternal life (ULT)

John means more than physical **life**. This expression can indicate living forever in the presence of God after death, a commonly recognized meaning, but it can also indicate receiving power from God in this life to live in a new way. Alternate translation: "that we would have power to live a new life now and that we would live with him forever after we die" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 2:26

those who are leading you astray (ULT)

John speaks figuratively of these people as if they were guides who
were leading others in the wrong direction. This is a metaphor for
their attempts to get the people to whom John is writing to believe
things that are not true. Alternate translation: "those who are
deceiving you" or "those who are trying to get you to believe things that are not true" (See: Metaphor)

those who are leading you astray (ULT)

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say explicitly in what way these people are leading others astray.
Alternate translation: "the people who are leading you astray about Jesus" or "the people who are lying to you
about Jesus" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

1 John 2:27

the anointing that you received from him (ULT)

See how you translated the word **anointing** in 2:20. Alternate translation: "the Spirit, whom Jesus has given you" (See: Metaphor)

from him…in him (ULT)

Like the pronoun "he" in 2:25, the words **him** and **his** in this verse likely refer to Jesus. If your readers would misunderstand this, you can use the name instead of a pronoun. Alternate translation: "from Jesus … in Jesus" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

remains in you (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. In this instance, it seems to refer to the continuing presence of the Spirit with a believer. Alternate translation: "lives inside of you" (See: Metaphor)

and (ULT)

John is using the word **and** to introduce the results of what he says in the previous part of this sentence. Alternate translation: "and so" (See: Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship)

his anointing (ULT)

See how you translated this earlier in this verse. Alternate translation: "his Spirit" (See: Metaphor)

about all things (ULT)

This is a generalization for emphasis. If this is confusing in your language, you can be more specific. Alternate translation: "about the things that you need to know" (See: Hyperbole)

And…is true…is not a lie (ULT)

Alternate translation: "tells the truth and does not lie"

it has taught you (ULT)

Since the Spirit is a person, if you translate **anointing** as "Spirit" in this verse, it may also be more appropriate in your language to use a personal pronoun in this clause. Alternate translation: "he has taught you" or "the Spirit has taught you" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

remain in him (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. In this instance, it seems to mean the same thing as in 2:6. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "continue to have a close relationship with him" (See: Metaphor)

remain in him (ULT)

John is speaking figuratively as if believers could be inside of God. Alternate translation: "continue to have a close relationship with him" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 2:28

If you are using section headings, you could put one here before verse 28. Suggested heading: "Children of God" (See: Section Headings)

And now (ULT)

John uses this expression to introduce a new part of the letter, in which he will talk about being children of God and the return of Jesus. In your translation, you can use a word, phrase, or other method that is natural in your language for introducing a new topic.

little children (ULT)

John readdresses the recipients as he begins a new section of the letter. See how you translated this in 2:1. Alternate translation: "you dear believers who are under my care" (See: Metaphor)

remain in him (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. In this instance, John seems to be using the expression in the same way that he has just used it in 2:27. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "continue to have a close relationship with him" (See: Metaphor)

him...whenever he appears...by him...his (ULT)

The pronouns **him**, **he**, and **his** likely refer to Jesus in this verse, since John speaks of his **coming** or return. Consider whether it might be helpful to your readers or more natural in your language to use the name "Jesus" in one or more of these instances. (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

whenever he appears (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "appear" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. Here the term could have either an active or a passive meaning. In either case, John is not saying that Jesus will only appear to return. (1) If the meaning is active, John is speaking of the act of Jesus physically returning to earth. Alternate translation: "when Jesus returns" (2) If the meaning is passive, John is speaking of God revealing Jesus to the world as its true king. To bring out that meaning, you could translate this with a passive verbal form or, if your language does not use passive forms, you could use an active form and say who will do the action. Alternate translation: "when Jesus is revealed" or "when God reveals Jesus" (See: Active or Passive)

we may have boldness and not be put to shame by him (ULT)

These two phrases mean similar things. John is likely using the repetition for emphasis. If your readers would misunderstand this connection, you could combine these phrases into an emphatic expression. Alternate translation: "we may be completely confident at his coming" (See: Parallelism)

we may have boldness (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **boldness**, you could express the idea behind it with an adjective. Alternate translation: "we may be bold" (See: Abstract Nouns)

not be put to shame by him (ULT)

John is using the word **him**, meaning Jesus, figuratively to mean the presence of Jesus. Alternate translation: "we will not be ashamed to be in his presence" (See: Synecdoche)

not be put to shame by him (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this passive phrase, you could say this with an active form. Alternate translation: "we will not be ashamed to be in his presence" (See: Active or Passive)

in…him…coming (ULT)

Alternate translation: "when he returns to earth"

1 John 2:29

If you know that he is righteous (ULT)

John is using the form of conditional possibility here, but he is stating something that is actually true. In Greek, this was a way of affirming that the part that follows this statement is also true. If your language does not state something as a condition if it is certain or true, and if your readers might misunderstand and think that what John is saying is not certain, then you can translate his words as an affirmative statement. Alternate translation: "Since you know that God is righteous" (See: Connect — Factual Conditions)

he is…him (ULT)

The pronouns **he** and **him** likely refer to God the Father, since in the next two verses John says that believers are "children of God," and he speaks in this verse of those who have **been begotten from him**. Alternate translation: "God is … God" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

everyone who does righteousness (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **righteousness**, you could express the idea behind it with an adjective such as "right." Alternate translation: "everyone who does what is right" (See: Abstract Nouns)

everyone who does righteousness has been begotten from him (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this passive phrase, you could say this with an active form. Alternate translation: "God is the father of everyone who does what is right" (See: Active or Passive)

everyone who does righteousness has been begotten from him (ULT)

Since believers have not literally **been begotten** by God, John means this figuratively. He says in 4:9 that Jesus is the "only-begotten" of God, since God is the actual Father of Jesus in a way that he is not the actual father of believers. Alternate translation: "God is the spiritual father of everyone who does what is right" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 3

1 John 3 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Genuine children of God do not sin (3:1–10, continuing from 2:28)
Genuine believers help one another sacrificially (3:11–18)
Genuine believers have confidence in prayer (3:19–24)

Special concepts in this chapter

"children of God"

People are sometimes described as "children of God" because God created them. However, John uses this expression in a different sense in this chapter. He uses it to describe people who have entered into a father-child relationship with God by putting their faith and trust in Jesus. God indeed created all people, but people can only become children of God in this sense by believing in Jesus. "Children" in this usage does not refer to those who are young, but only to the relationship that people have at any age to their father. (See: believe, believer, belief, unbeliever, unbelief)

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

"the one who keeps his commandments remains in him, and he in him" (3:24)

This does not mean that keeping our salvation is conditional on doing certain works. Rather, John is describing the results of keeping the commandments that he describes in 3:32. Those commandments are to believe in Jesus and to love one another. John is saying that the person who believes in Jesus and loves others shows that he has a close relationship with God, and that he will continue to have that close relationship because of this obedience. Christians around the world hold different beliefs about whether people who have been saved can lose their salvation. That is not what John is addressing here, and translators should be careful not to let how they understand that issue affect how they translate this passage. (See: eternity, everlasting, eternal, forever and save, saved, safe, salvation)

Important textual issues in this chapter

In 3:1, the most accurate ancient manuscripts include the words "and we are." That is the reading that ULT follows. However, some other ancient manuscripts do not include these words, and so some Bibles do not have them. If a translation of the Bible already exists in your region, consider using whichever reading is found in that version. If a translation does not already exist, we recommend that you follow the reading in the ULT text. (See: Textual Variants)

1 John 3:1

See (ULT)

John is using the term **see** figuratively. Alternate translation: "Consider" (See: Metaphor)

what kind of love the Father has given to us (ULT)

Alternate translation: "how greatly the Father has loved us"

the Father (ULT)

Father is an important title for God. Alternate translation: "God the Father" (See: Translating Son and Father)

that we should be called children of God (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this passive phrase, you could say this with an active form. Alternate translation: "that God should call us his children" (See: Active or Passive)

children of God (ULT)

Here John expresses the same metaphor as in 2:29 in a slightly different way. See whether you decided to indicate the figurative meaning there. If you translate **children** using a literal term, choose a word that can refer to people of any age in relation to their father. Alternate translation: "spiritual children of God" (See: Metaphor)

and we are (ULT)

See the discussion of textual issues at the end of the General Notes to this chapter to decide whether to follow the reading of ULT and include these words or to follow the reading of some other versions and not include them. (See: Textual Variants)

For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know him (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this sentence, you could reverse the order of these phrases, since the second phrase gives the reason for the result that the first phrase describes. Alternate translation: "Because the world did not know God, for that reason it does not know us" (See: Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship)

For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know him (ULT)

John uses **world** to mean various things in this letter. Here it figuratively refers to people who do not honor God and who do not live as God wishes. Alternate translation: "because ungodly people have not known God, for that reason they do not know us" (See: Metonymy)

> **ULT**
> **1** See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God, and we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know him. [1]

does not know us…it did not know him (ULT)

John is using the word **know** in two different senses. See the discussion of the word "know" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. If your language has different words for these different senses, it would be appropriate to use them in your translation. Alternate translation: "does not recognize who we are … it did not become acquainted with him"

does not know us (ULT)

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say explicitly what **the world does not know** about believers in Jesus. Alternate translation: "does not recognize that we are God's children" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

him (ULT)

The pronoun **him** refers to God, the antecedent in the previous sentence. Alternate translation: "God" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

1 John 3:2

Beloved (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:7. Alternate translation: "You people whom I love" or "My dear ones" (See: Nominal Adjectives)

children of God (ULT)

See whether you decided to indicate the figurative meaning of this expression in 3:1. Alternate translation: "spiritual children of God" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

> **ULT**
>
> **2** Beloved, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that whenever he appears, we will be like him because we will see him just as he is.

and (ULT)

John is using the word **and** to introduce a contrast between what is **now** known about believers and what is **not yet** known. Alternate translation: "but" (See: Connect — Contrast Relationship)

what we will be has not yet been revealed (ULT)

If your language does not use passive forms, you could use an active form and say who will do the action. Alternate translation: "God has not yet revealed what we will be" (See: Active or Passive)

whenever he appears (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "appear" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. The meaning of the term in this instance seems to be the same as in 2:28. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "when Jesus returns" or "when Jesus is revealed" or "when God reveals Jesus" (See: Active or Passive)

whenever he appears...him...him...he is (ULT)

The pronouns **he** and **him** likely refer to Jesus in this verse, since John speaks of **when he appears** or returns. Consider whether it might be helpful to your readers or more natural in your language to use the name "Jesus" in one or more of these instances. (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

we will be like him because we will see him just as he is (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this phrase, you could reverse the order of these phrases, since the second phrase gives the reason for the result that the first phrase describes. Alternate translation: "we will see him just as he is, and so we will be like him" (See: Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship)

1 John 3:3

everyone who has this hope upon him (ULT)

The pronoun **him** here does not refer to **everyone**; it refers to Jesus. The expression **this hope** refers to the hope that John describes in the previous verse, of seeing Jesus as he is. Alternate translation: "everyone who hopes to see Jesus as he really is" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

ULT

3 And everyone who has this hope upon him purifies himself, just as that one is pure.

him...that one (ULT)

These pronouns refer to Jesus. Alternate translation: "Jesus … Jesus" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

1 John 3:4

Everyone who commits sin also commits lawlessness. Indeed, sin is lawlessness (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **lawlessness**, you could express the idea behind it with an equivalent expression. Alternate translation: "Everyone who commits sin is also breaking God's law. Indeed, sin is breaking God's law" (See: Abstract Nouns)

Everyone who commits sin also commits lawlessness. Indeed, sin is lawlessness (ULT)

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could explain why John gives this warning. See the discussion of "sin" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. Suggested footnote: "The false teachers were saying that it does not matter what people do in their physical bodies. In this way, they were tempting the people to sin."

1 John 3:5

that one…he might take away…him (ULT)

The pronouns **that one**, **he**, and **him** refer to Jesus in this verse. Consider whether it might be helpful to your readers or more natural in your language to use the name "Jesus" in one or more of these instances. (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

> **ULT**
>
> **5** And you know that that one appeared so that he might take away sins, and sin is not in him.

that one appeared (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "appear" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. Here the term seems to have an active meaning. Alternate translation: "Jesus came to earth" (See: Active or Passive)

sin is not in him (ULT)

John speaks figuratively of **sin** as if it were an object that could be inside of Jesus, although he is emphasizing that **sin** is not in Jesus. Alternate translation: "Jesus has never sinned" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 3:6

Everyone who remains in him (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. In this instance, it seems to mean the same thing as in 2:6. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "Everyone who has a close relationship with Jesus" (See: Metaphor)

Everyone who remains in him (ULT)

John is speaking figuratively as if believers could be inside of Jesus. Alternate translation: "Everyone who has a close relationship with Jesus" (See: Metaphor)

him...him...him (ULT)

The pronoun **him** refers to Jesus in this verse. Consider whether it might be helpful to your readers or more natural in your language to use the name "Jesus" in one or more of these instances. (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

does not sin (ULT)

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say what this implicitly means in light of the situation that John is addressing in this letter. See the discussion of "sin" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. John acknowledges elsewhere in this letter that genuine believers actually do sin, but they do not sin continually or wantonly. Alternate translation: "does not sin wantonly and continually" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

has not seen him and has not known him (ULT)

The words **seen** and **known** mean similar things. John is likely using repetition for emphasis. If your readers would misunderstand this connection, you could combine these terms into a single expression. Alternate translation: "certainly does not have a close relationship with Jesus" (See: Doublet)

has not seen him (ULT)

John is not referring to people literally seeing Jesus. Rather, he is using sight figuratively to mean perception and recognition. Alternate translation: "has not recognized who Jesus is" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 3:7

Little children (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:1. Alternate translation: "You dear believers who are under my care" (See: Metaphor)

let no one lead you astray (ULT)

> **ULT**
>
> **7** Little children, let no one lead you astray. The one who does righteousness is righteous, just as that one is righteous.

See how you translated the similar expression in 2:26. Alternate translation: "do not be deceived by anyone" or "do not let anyone get you to believe things that are not true" (See: Metaphor)

The one who does righteousness (ULT)

See how you translated the similar expression in 2:29. Alternate translation: "The one who does what is right" (See: Abstract Nouns)

is righteous, just as that one is righteous (ULT)

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say explicitly what the term **righteous** means in this context. Alternate translation: "is acceptable to God, just as Jesus is acceptable to God" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

that one (ULT)

The demonstrative pronoun **that one** refers to Jesus. Alternate translation: "Jesus" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

1 John 3:8

is from the devil (ULT)

Here the preposition **from** indicates influence. The usage here is similar to that in the phrase "from the world" in 2:16. Alternate translation: "is acting under the influence of the devil"

> **ULT**
>
> **8** The one who commits sin is from the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this reason the Son of God appeared, so that he might destroy the works of the devil.

from the beginning (ULT)

John uses the phrase **from the beginning** in various ways in this letter. Here it refers to the time when God created the world. In this case, the word **from** indicates not that the devil began to sin at that time, but that he had already begun to sin by that time. Alternate translation: "even before the world was created" (See: Idiom)

the Son of God (ULT)

Son of God is an important title for Jesus. Alternate translation: "Jesus, the Son of God" or "God's Son Jesus" (See: Translating Son and Father)

appeared (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "appear" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. Here the term seems to have an active meaning and to mean the same thing as in 3:5, that Jesus came to earth. It does not mean that he only appeared to come. Alternate translation: "came to earth" (See: Active or Passive)

so that he might destroy the works of the devil (ULT)

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say explicitly what **works** John is talking about. Alternate translation: "so that he might free people from continually sinning, as the devil had gotten them to do" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

1 John 3:9

Everyone who has been begotten from God... because he has been begotten from God (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:29. Alternate translation: "Everyone whose father is God ... because God is his father" (See: Active or Passive)

Everyone who has been begotten from God... because he has been begotten from God (ULT)

See whether in 2:29 you decided to explain this metaphor. Alternate translation: "Everyone whose spiritual father is God ... because God is his spiritual father" (See: Metaphor)

his seed remains in him (ULT)

In this phrase, **his** refers to **God** and **him** refers to the person **who has been begotten from God**. Alternate translation: "God's seed remains in such a person" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

his seed remains in him (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. In this instance, as in 2:27, it seems to refer to a continuing presence. Alternate translation: "God's seed continues to be present in such a person" (See: Metaphor)

his seed remains in him (ULT)

John is using the word **seed** figuratively here. It could mean: (1) The characteristics of a father that a child inherits from him and displays more and more as he grows. Alternate translation: "the characteristics that show that God is his father become continually more evident" (2) Something that gives life such as the **seed** from which plants grow. Alternate translation: "the new life that God has put in that person continues to grow" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 3:10

In this the children of God and the children of the devil are apparent (ULT)

In this means something similar to the idiomatic expression "in this we know" that John uses many times in this letter. The word **this** refers to what John says in the next sentence. Alternate translation: "This is how we can tell the difference between the children of God and the children of the devil" (See: Idiom)

the children of God and the children of the devil (ULT)

John is using the word **children** idiomatically in both of these instances. His usage is similar to the Hebrew idiom in which the "child" of something shares its characteristics. Alternate translation: "people who are living a new life in close relationship with God and people who are still in their old way of life influenced by the devil" (See: Idiom)

Everyone who does not do righteousness is not from God (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this double negative, you could translate it as a positive statement. Alternate translation: "Everyone who does wrong is alienated from God" (See: Double Negatives)

who does not do righteousness (ULT)

See how you translated the similar expression in 2:29. Alternate translation: "who does not do what is right" (See: Abstract Nouns)

is not from God (ULT)

The expression **from God** is an idiom. John uses it in various ways in this letter. Alternate translation: "does not belong to God" or "is not living in relationship with God" (See: Idiom)

and the one who does not love his brother (ULT)

John is leaving out some of the words that a sentence would need in many languages in order to be complete. These words can be supplied from earlier in the sentence. Alternate translation: "and the one who does not love his brother is not from God" or, if you translated the double negative in the previous clause as a positive statement, "and anyone who hates a fellow believer is alienated from God" (See: Ellipsis)

his brother (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:9. Alternate translation: "a fellow believer" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 3:11

If you are using section headings, you could put one here before verse 11. Suggested heading: "What Love Is" (See: Section Headings)

from the beginning (ULT)

John uses the phrase **from the beginning** in various ways in this letter. Here it refers to the time when the people to whom he is writing first heard about or first believed in Jesus. See how you translated this phrase in 2:7. Alternate translation: "ever since you first heard about Jesus" (See: Idiom)

ULT

11 For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,

1 John 3:12

not like Cain (ULT)

John is leaving out some of the words that a sentence would need in many languages in order to be complete. These words can be supplied from the previous verse. Alternate translation: "and we should not be like Cain" (See: Ellipsis)

Cain…killed his brother (ULT)

John assumes that his readers will know that Cain was a son of the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. As the book of Genesis describes, Cain was jealous of his younger brother Abel and murdered him. If your readers might not know this, you could say this explicitly in a footnote or by putting the names of his parents and brother in the text. Alternate translation: "Cain, the son of the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, … murdered his younger brother Abel" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

Cain (ULT)

Cain is the name of a man. (See: How to Translate Names)

who was from the evil one (ULT)

This is similar to the phrase "from the devil" in 3:8. See how you translated that phrase. Alternate translation: "who belonged to the evil one" or "who was influenced by the evil one"

the evil one (ULT)

John is using the adjective **evil** as a noun in order to indicate a specific being. ULT adds **one** to show this. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you can translate this with an equivalent expression. Alternate translation: "the one who is evil" (See: Nominal Adjectives)

the evil one (ULT)

John is speaking figuratively of the devil by association with the way that he is **evil**. Alternate translation: "the devil" (See: Metonymy)

And on account of what did he kill him? Because (ULT)

John is using a question as a teaching tool. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you could translate his words as a statement. Alternate translation: "He killed him because" (See: Rhetorical Question)

but those of his brother, righteous (ULT)

John is leaving out a word, "were," that a sentence would need in many languages in order to be complete. The word "were" can be supplied for clarity. Alternate translation: "but his brother's works were righteous" (See: Ellipsis)

1 John 3:13

Do not be amazed (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this phrase, you could show the connection between this sentence and the previous one by using a connecting word like "so" or "therefore." Using the example of Cain, John shows that evil people naturally hate righteous people. Alternate translation: "So do not be surprised" (See: Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship)

> **ULT**
>
> **13** Do not be amazed, brothers, if the world hates you.

brothers (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:9. Alternate translation: "my friends" (See: Metaphor)

if the world hates you (ULT)

John uses **world** to mean various things in this letter. Here it figuratively refers to people who do not honor God and who do not live as God wishes, as in 3:1. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "if ungodly people hate you" (See: Metonymy)

1 John 3:14

We know that we have relocated from death into life, because we love the brothers (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this sentence, you could reverse the order of these phrases, since the second phrase gives the reason for the result that the first phrase describes. Alternate translation: "Because we love the brothers, we know that we have relocated from death into life" (See: Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship)

We know that we have relocated from death into life, because we love the brothers (ULT)

Be sure that your translation does not communicate that loving the brothers is what causes people to pass from death to life. Alternate translation: "The way that we know that we have relocated from death into life is because we love the brothers"

we have relocated from death into life (ULT)

John is speaking figuratively of the conditions of being dead and alive as if they were physical locations between which a person could move. Alternate translation: "we are no longer dead but have become alive" (See: Metaphor)

we have relocated from death into life (ULT)

Since John and his readers were not literally dead, he is referring to spiritual **death** and to spiritual **life**. Alternate translation: "we are no longer dead spiritually but have become alive spiritually" (See: Metaphor)

the brothers (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:9. Alternate translation: "the other believers" (See: Metaphor)

The one who does not love (ULT)

John does not say specifically whom such a person **does not love**. In context, it appears that he means other believers. But it is also possible that John means other people in general. Alternate translation: "The one who does not love his fellow believers" or "The one who does not love other people" (See: Ellipsis)

remains in death (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. In this instance, it means staying in the same place. John is once again speaking figuratively of the state of **death** as if it were a location. Alternate translation: "remains dead spiritually" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 3:15

Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer (ULT)

John is using the term **murderer** figuratively, and he is echoing the teaching of Jesus that is recorded in Matthew 5:21–22. John means that since people commit murder because they hate other people, anyone who hates is the same on the inside as someone who actually kills another person. It may be helpful to translate this metaphor as a simile. Alternate translation: "Whoever hates another believer is just like someone who kills a person" (See: Metaphor)

> **ULT**
>
> **15** Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that every murderer does not have eternal life remaining in him.

his brother (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:9. Alternate translation: "a fellow believer" (See: Metaphor)

Everyone…a murderer…does not have eternal life (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this phrase, you could make the subject negative and the verb positive. Alternate translation: "no murderer has eternal life"

eternal life (ULT)

Since John is speaking of a present reality, by **eternal life** he does not mean living forever in the presence of God after death, which is one thing that this expression can describe. Rather, he means the regenerating power that God gives to believers in this life that helps them to stop sinning and to do what pleases him. Clearly, anyone who is a **murderer** does not have this power at work in him. Alternate translation: "the power that God gives to help us become new people" (See: Metaphor)

does not have eternal life remaining in him (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. In this instance, John seems to be using the term literally, in the sense of "residing," to depict **eternal life** figuratively as if it were a living thing that could actively reside within a person. Alternate translation: "has not received eternal life" (See: Personification)

1 John 3:16

In this we have known love (ULT)

In this we have known means something similar to the idiomatic expression "in this we know" that John uses many times in this letter. Alternate translation: "This is how we have come to understand what love is" (See: Idiom)

that one (ULT)

The demonstrative pronoun **that one** refers to Jesus. Alternate translation: "Jesus" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

laid down his life for us (ULT)

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: "willingly gave his life for us" or "willingly died for us" (See: Idiom)

And we ought to lay down {our} lives for the brothers (ULT)

John is not saying that we should seek out ways to die for our fellow believers in a literal sense, but that we should be prepared to do so, if necessary. However, he is also using the expression **lay down our lives** figuratively to mean that we should seek ways to love our fellow believers in sacrificial ways, as he illustrates in the next verse. (See: Metaphor)

the brothers (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:9. Alternate translation: "our fellow believers" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 3:17

whoever...whoever...has the possessions of the world (ULT)

John uses this expression to introduce a hypothetical situation, which he discusses over the course of the whole verse. He is not talking about any specific person. If your readers would misunderstand this to translate this hypothetically, you can follow the UST. (See: Hypothetical Situations)

the possessions of the world (ULT)

In this letter, John uses **world** to mean various things. Here it refers to the created world, and so to material things such as, in this context, money, food, and clothing. Alternate translation: "material possessions" (See: Metonymy)

his brother (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:9. Alternate translation: "a fellow believer" (See: Metaphor)

having need (ULT)

Alternate translation: "who needs help"

closes his entrails from him (ULT)

This is an idiom in which the **entrails** or internal organs figuratively represent the emotions that would lead a person to act generously. Your language may have an equivalent figurative expression that you could use. You could also express the plain meaning in your translation. Alternate translation: "closes his heart to him" or "refuses to have compassion on him" or "declines to help him" (See: Idiom)

how does the love of God remain in him (ULT)

John is using the question form as a teaching tool. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you could translate his words as a statement or exclamation. Alternate translation: "the love of God does not remain in such a person!" (See: Rhetorical Question)

how does the love of God remain in him (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. As in 2:14, here the word seems to describe behavior that is recognized to be genuine because it is consistent. Alternate translation: "such a person does not genuinely love others with love that is from God!" (See: Metaphor)

how does the love of God remain in him (ULT)

As in 2:5, the phrase **the love of God** could mean: (1) God loving people. Alternate translation: "Is it possible that he has truly received God's love" (2) a person loving God. Alternate translation: "is it really possible that he truly loves God" We recommend option (1) if you must choose. But it is probable that John intends both meanings here,

so if your translation can leave the possibilities open, that would be best. Alternate translation: "is he really loving others the way that God loves him" (See: Possession)

1 John 3:18

Little children (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:1. Alternate translation: "You dear believers who are under my care" (See: Metaphor)

let us not love in word nor in tongue (ULT)

The phrases **in word** and **in tongue** mean similar things. John is likely using repetition for emphasis. If your readers would misunderstand this connection, you could combine these terms into a single expression. Alternate translation: "let us not love only by what we say" (See: Doublet)

let us not love in word nor in tongue (ULT)

John is using the phrases **in word** and **in tongue** figuratively to refer to what a person says. Alternate translation: "let us not love only by what we say" (See: Metonymy)

let us not love in word nor in tongue (ULT)

John is not saying that we should never express love through words. He is using hyperbole to make a contrast between words and actions. If your readers would misunderstand this you can include a word such as "only" or "merely." Alternate translation: "let us not love only by what we say" (See: Hyperbole)

but in deed and truth (ULT)

John is leaving out some of the words that a sentence would need in many languages in order to be complete. These words can be supplied from earlier in the sentence. Alternate translation: "but let us love in deed and in truth" (See: Ellipsis)

in deed and truth (ULT)

John is expressing a single idea by using two words connected with **and**. The word **truth** indicates the quality that loving **in deed** would have. Alternate translation: "truly, in actions" (See: Hendiadys)

1 John 3:19

If you are using section headings, you could put one here before verse 19. Suggested heading: "Have Confidence When You Pray" (See: Section Headings)

> **ULT**
>
> **19** In this we will know that we are from the truth and we will persuade our hearts before him,

In this we will know...and...we will persuade our hearts (ULT)

John describes a result in this verse. He gives the reason for that result in the next verse. If your readers would misunderstand this, you could put the reason before the result by creating a verse bridge. You could put 3:20 first in your translation, making it a separate sentence and leaving out both instances of the word "that." You could put this verse next, translating it as in the following suggestions. Alternate translation: "That is how we can know … and how we can persuade our hearts" (See: Verse Bridges)

In this (ULT)

In this could refer either to: (1) What John has just said in verse 18. Alternate translation: "If we do that" (2) What John is about to say in verse 20. Alternate translation: "I will tell you how"

In this we will know (ULT)

This is an idiomatic expression that John uses many times in this letter. Alternate translation: "This is how we can know" (See: Idiom)

we will know that we are from the truth and...we will persuade our hearts (ULT)

The phrases **we will know** and **we will persuade our hearts** mean similar things. John is likely using the repetition for emphasis. If your readers would misunderstand this connection, you could combine these phrases into an emphatic expression. Alternate translation: "we will be completely convinced that we are from the truth" (See: Parallelism)

we are from the truth (ULT)

This could mean one of two things. (1) John could be referring figuratively to God by association with the way that God is true. In other words, God always tells **the truth** and does what he says. Alternate translation: "we are from God, who is true" (2) As in 2:21, the word **truth** could refer to the true teaching that believers have received from Jesus. Alternate translation: "we are conducting our lives according to the true message" (See: Metonymy)

we are from the truth (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **truth**, you could express the idea behind it with an adjective such as "true." Alternate translation: "we are from the One who is true" (See: Abstract Nouns)

we are from the truth (ULT)

See how you translated the expression in 3:10 that has a similar meaning. Alternate translation: "we belong to God" or "we are living in relationship with God" (See: Idiom)

we will persuade our hearts (ULT)

John is speaking figuratively of **hearts** to mean thoughts and feelings. There may be a similar expression in your language. Alternate translation: "we can reassure ourselves about this" (See: Metaphor)

before him (ULT)

The pronoun **him** refers to God. Alternate translation: "before God" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

before him (ULT)

The word **before** means "in front of" or "in the presence of" someone. It likely refers to when we pray to God or are otherwise aware that he sees everything that we do. Alternate translation: "when we pray to God" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 3:20

that if our heart condemns us, that God is greater than our heart and knows everything (ULT)

John is discussing a hypothetical situation in order to reassure his readers. Alternate translation: "Suppose our heart condemns us. Then we should remember that God is greater than our heart and knows everything" (See: Hypothetical Situations)

if our heart condemns us (ULT)

John continues speaking figuratively of the **heart** to mean the thoughts and feelings. There may be a similar expression in your language. Alternate translation: "if our feelings condemn us" or "if our thoughts accuse us" (See: Metaphor)

if our heart condemns us (ULT)

The topic here, continuing from 3:19, is how we can know that "we are from the truth," so this is likely a reference to needing reassurance about that. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly. Alternate translation: "if we ever feel that we do not belong to God" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

our heart...our heart (ULT)

If it would be unusual in your language to speak of one **heart** in reference to many people, and if you decide to retain the word **heart** as a metaphor in your translation, you can make it plural. Alternate translation: "our hearts ... our hearts" (See: Possession)

God is greater than our heart and knows everything (ULT)

Since John is using the **heart** figuratively to mean the thoughts and feelings, the statement that **God is greater than our heart** likely means that God knows and understands more than we do and that God has greater compassion for us than we have for ourselves. In that case, the phrases **is greater than our heart** and **knows everything** would mean similar things. If your readers would misunderstand this connection, you could combine these phrases into an emphatic expression. Alternate translation: "God certainly knows better than we do that we belong to him" (See: Parallelism)

God is greater than our heart and knows everything (ULT)

The implications are that, given God's greater knowledge, we should believe what he has said rather than what our thoughts and feelings are saying. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly. Alternate translation: "God certainly knows better than we do that we belong to him, and so we should believe that because he has said so" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

1 John 3:21

Beloved (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:7. Alternate translation: "You people whom I love" (See: Nominal Adjectives)

if the heart does not condemn, we have confidence toward God (ULT)

John discusses another hypothetical situation in order to reassure his readers. Alternate translation: "Suppose our hearts do not condemn us. Then we have confidence toward God" (See: Hypothetical Situations)

if the heart does not condemn (ULT)

See how you translated the similar expression in 3:20. Alternate translation: "if we do not feel that we do not belong to God" or, positively, "if we feel assured that we belong to God" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

the heart (ULT)

If you decided in the previous verse to retain the word **heart** as a metaphor in your translation and you made it plural there, you can make it plural in this instance as well. You can also use the same possessive pronoun as in the previous verse. Alternate translation: "our hearts" (See: Possession)

we have confidence toward God (ULT)

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say explicitly what this **confidence** applies to, in light of what John says in the next verse. Alternate translation: "we can pray to God confidently" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

we have confidence toward God (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **confidence**, you could express the idea behind it with an adverb such as "confidently." Alternate translation: "we can pray to God confidently" (See: Abstract Nouns)

1 John 3:22

because we keep his commandments and we do the pleasing things before him (ULT)

John is not saying that we **receive whatever we ask** in return for obeying God's commandments and doing what pleases him. Our obedience does not obligate God to give us what we ask for. Our obedience is simply what God has a right to expect from us. Rather, the word **because** reaches back to the statement earlier in this sentence, in the previous verse, that "we have confidence toward God," that is, we can pray to God confidently. Living in obedience and doing what pleases God gives us confidence to ask for things according to his will. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could indicate this explicitly by starting a new sentence here that refers back to that statement and explains how John's statement in this verse relates to it. Alternate translation: "We can pray confidently like this because we obey God's commandments and do what pleases him, and that assures us that we belong to him" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

we keep his commandments (ULT)

As in 2:3, the word **keep** is an idiom that means "obey." Alternate translation: "we obey his commandments" (See: Idiom)

the pleasing things before him (ULT)

John is using the adjective **pleasing** as a noun. ULT adds **things** to show this. (The word is plural.) Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you can translate this with an equivalent expression. Alternate translation: "the things that please him" (See: Nominal Adjectives)

the pleasing things before him (ULT)

The word **before** means "in front of" or "in the presence of" another person. In this case, **before him** indicates "in God's sight." Seeing, for its part, represents attention and judgment. So this means the things that God regards as pleasing. Alternate translation: "the things that please him" or "what God considers to be good" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 3:23

this is his commandment (ULT)

The pronoun **his** refers to God in this verse. Alternate translation: "this is what God has commanded" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

in the name of his Son Jesus Christ (ULT)

As in 2:12, John is using the **name** of Jesus figuratively to represent who Jesus is and what he has done. Alternate translation: "in Jesus Christ his Son and what he has done for us" (See: Metonymy)

of...Son (ULT)

Son is an important title for Jesus, the Son of God. (See: Translating Son and Father)

he gave (ULT)

The pronoun **he** here may refer to: (1) Jesus or (2) God. (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

> **ULT**
>
> **23** And this is his commandment: that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another just as he gave us a commandment.

1 John 3:24

the one who keeps his commandments remains in him (ULT)

The pronouns **his** and **him** here refer to God. Alternate translation: "the one who keeps God's commandments remains in God" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

the one who keeps his commandments (ULT)

The word **keep** is an idiom that means "obey." Alternate translation: "the person who obeys God's commandments" (See: Idiom)

remains in him (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. In this instance, it seems to mean the same thing as in 2:6. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "continues to have a close relationship with him" (See: Metaphor)

remains in him (ULT)

John is speaking figuratively as if believers could be inside of God. Alternate translation: "continues to have a close relationship with God" (See: Metaphor)

and he in him (ULT)

John is leaving out some of the words that a sentence would need in many languages in order to be complete. These words can be supplied from earlier in the sentence. Alternate translation: "and God remains in him" (See: Ellipsis)

and he in him (ULT)

John is speaking figuratively as if God could be inside of believers. Alternate translation: "and God continues to have a close relationship with that person" (See: Metaphor)

and he in him (ULT)

Although the term **him** here is masculine, John is using the word in a generic sense that includes both men and women. Alternate translation: "and God continues to have a close relationship with that person" (See: When Masculine Words Include Women)

in this we know that (ULT)

This is an idiomatic expression that John uses many times in this letter. Alternate translation: "this is how we know that" (See: Idiom)

he remains in us (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. In this instance, it seems to mean the same thing as it does earlier in the verse. Alternate translation: "he continues to have a close relationship with us" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 4

1 John 4 General Notes

Structure and formatting

It is false teaching to deny that Jesus became human (4:1–6)
Genuine believers love one another as God has loved them (4:7–21)

Special concepts in this chapter

"Spirit" and "spirit"

John uses the word "spirit" in different ways in this chapter. Sometimes the word "spirit" clearly refers to a supernatural being. Sometimes the word "spirit" may refer either to the human spirit, to the character of something, or to a supernatural being. Therefore, the expressions "the spirit of the antichrist," "the spirit of truth," and "the spirit of error" may refer to the spirit of the humans who promote those things, the attitudes and thinking that are typical of those things, or to spiritual beings who inspire those things. When the word is written with a capital letter, as in the expressions "the Spirit of God" and "his Spirit," it refers to the Holy Spirit.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Loving God

If people love God, they should show it in the way that they live and the way that they treat other people. Doing this may assure us that God has saved us and that we belong to him. But loving others does not save us. Be sure that this is clear in your translation. John says in 4:7 that "everyone who loves is begotten from God and knows God." As the notes explain, this means that God is the spiritual father of everyone who loves, and everyone who loves is in a close relationship with God. But this love from God is a sign that they belong to God only because of what Jesus did for them on the cross, as John says in 4:10. They were saved by what Jesus did, not because they themselves loved others. (See: save, saved, safe, salvation)

Important textual issues in this chapter

In 4:3, the most accurate ancient manuscripts say "acknowledge Jesus." That is the reading that ULT follows. Some other ancient manuscripts say "acknowledge Jesus Christ having come in the flesh." (Some of these manuscripts say "Jesus" or "the Lord Jesus" instead of "Jesus Christ.") If a translation of the Bible already exists in your region, consider using whichever reading is found in that version. If a translation does not already exist, we recommend that you follow the reading in the ULT text. (See: Textual Variants)

1 John 4:1

If you are using section headings, you could put one here before verse 1. Suggested heading: "Recognizing the Spirit of God" (See: Section Headings)

Beloved (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:7. Alternate translation: "You people whom I love" (See: Nominal Adjectives)

do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits (ULT)

John is speaking figuratively of a prophet by association with the **spirit** that would inspire a prophet to speak. Alternate translation: "do not believe every prophet; instead, consider carefully what prophets say" (See: Metonymy)

whether they are from God (ULT)

John uses the expression **from God** in various ways in this letter. Here it refers to origin. Alternate translation: "in order to determine whether God has sent them" or "in order to determine whether God is inspiring them"

whether they are from God (ULT)

This sentence leaves out some of the words that a sentence would need in many languages to be complete. If your readers would misunderstand this phrase, you could supply these words. Alternate translation: "to see whether they are from God, or whether they are not from God" (See: Ellipsis)

have gone out into the world (ULT)

John uses **world** to mean various things in this letter. Here it figuratively refers to the people living in the world. Alternate translation: "are out there speaking to people" (See: Metonymy)

1 John 4:2

In this you know (ULT)

This is an idiomatic expression that John uses many times in this letter. Alternate translation: "This is how you can recognize" (See: Idiom)

Every spirit that confesses (ULT)

John is speaking figuratively of a prophet by association with the **spirit** that would inspire a prophet to speak. Alternate translation: "Every prophet who teaches" (See: Metonymy)

Jesus Christ having come in the flesh (ULT)

As in 2:16, John is using the term **flesh** figuratively to mean the physical human body, which is made of **flesh**. See Part 2 of the Introduction to 1 John for an explanation of why the false teachers denied that Jesus had a human body. Alternate translation: "that Jesus Christ had a real human body" (See: Metonymy)

of God...is from (ULT)

See how you translated this expression in 4:1. Alternate translation: "is inspired by God" or, if your language does not use passive forms, "God is inspiring," placing that phrase before **every spirit** or "every prophet"

1 John 4:3

every spirit that does not confess (ULT)

See how you translated the similar expression in 4:2. Alternate translation: "every prophet who does not teach" (See: Metonymy)

Jesus (ULT)

See the discussion of textual issues at the end of the General Notes to this chapter to decide whether to follow the reading of ULT and say **Jesus** here or to follow the reading of some other manuscripts and say "Jesus Christ having come in the flesh." (See: Textual Variants)

> **ULT**
>
> **3** and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is that of the antichrist, which you have heard about, that it is coming, and it is now already in the world. [1]

Jesus (ULT)

If you follow the variant reading "Jesus Christ having come in the flesh," see how you translated that expression in the previous verse. Alternate translation: "that Jesus Christ had a real human body" (See: Metonymy)

Jesus (ULT)

Even if you do not follow the reading of the textual variant here, you may wish to explain more fully what John means by **Jesus** in this context in order to make the implied information explicit for your readers. Alternate translation: "that Jesus Christ had a real human body" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

is not from God (ULT)

See how you translated the similar expression in the previous verse. Alternate translation: "is not inspired by God" or, if your language does not use passive forms, "God is not inspiring," placing that phrase before **every spirit** or "every prophet"

this is that of the antichrist (ULT)

The word **that** most likely means "the spirit," referring back to the word **spirit** in the previous sentence. Alternate translation: "this is the spirit of the Antichrist" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

this is that of the antichrist (ULT)

Assuming that the word **that** means "the spirit," see the discussion of the word "spirit" in the General Notes to this chapter. In this instance, John is referring to either: (1) the characteristic attitude of something, or (2) a supernatural being who inspires that attitude. Also see how you translated the term **antichrist** in 2:18. Alternate translation: "this false teaching is opposed to Jesus"

which you have heard about, that it is coming, and it is now already in the world (ULT)

The word **which** refers to the **spirit** of **the antichrist**, which was already **in the world** at the time when John wrote, and not to **the antichrist** himself, who was not **in the world**. It may be helpful to begin a new sentence here.

Alternate translation: "You have heard that this false teaching is coming, and it is now already circulating among people" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

in the world (ULT)

John uses **world** to mean various things in this letter. Here, while it could possibly mean the literal earth (so this expression would mean "on this earth"), it more likely refers figuratively to the people living in the world. Alternate translation: "circulating among people" (See: Metonymy)

1 John 4:4

You are from God (ULT)

The expression **from God** means something different in this verse than in the previous three verses, since it refers to believers rather than to the spirits that are inspiring prophets. It means the same thing as in 3:10. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "You belong to God" or "You are living in relationship with God" (See: Idiom)

> **ULT**
>
> **4** You are from God, little children, and you have overcome them because the one who is in you {is} greater than the one in the world.

little children (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:1. Alternate translation: "you dear believers who are under my care" (See: Metaphor)

you have overcome them (ULT)

As in 2:13 and 2:14, John is using the word **overcome** figuratively. He is speaking of the believers' refusal to believe the false prophets as if the believers had defeated these prophets in a struggle. Alternate translation: "you have refused to believe these false teachers" (See: Metaphor)

them (ULT)

The pronoun **them** refers to the false prophets whom John describes in 4:1. Alternate translation: "these false teachers" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

the one who is in you (ULT)

As in 3:24, John is speaking figuratively as if God could be inside of believers. Alternate translation: "God, with whom you have a close relationship," (See: Metaphor)

is} greater...than (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this phrase, for this context you can use a more specific word than **greater**. Alternate translation: "stronger than"

the one in the world (ULT)

The phrase **in the world** here and in verse 5 seems to have a different meaning than in verse 1 and verse 3. There, it refers to location, so when John says in verse 3 that the spirit of the antichrist is "in the world," it means "on this earth" or "circulating among people." But here, John seems to be using the term **world** to mean the value system that is opposed to God. In that case, the phrase **the one in the world** would refer to the devil by association with the way that he inspires that system. Alternate translation: "the devil" (See: Metonymy)

1 John 4:5

They are from the world. Because of this, they speak from the world (ULT)

John uses **world** to mean various things in this letter. Here in these first two instances, it figuratively refers to the system of values shared by people who do not know God. Alternate translation: "These false teachers are influenced by the ungodly value system of the people who do not honor God. As a result, they express the perspectives of that system" (See: Metonymy)

They (ULT)

The pronoun **they** refers to the false prophets whom John describes in 4:1. Alternate translation: "These false teachers" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

the world listens to them (ULT)

In this instance, the term **world** figuratively refers to people who share the world's value system. That is, they do not honor or obey God. Alternate translation: "ungodly people listen to them" (See: Metonymy)

the world listens to them (ULT)

The word **listens** is an idiom that means "believes" or "is persuaded by." Alternate translation: "ungodly people believe them" (See: Idiom)

1 John 4:6

We...to us...to us (ULT)

These pronouns in the first three sentences of this verse are probably exclusive, and so if your language marks that distinction, we recommend using the exclusive form in your translation. John appears to be speaking here of himself and his fellow eyewitnesses of the resurrection as teachers of the truth about Jesus. He has already said that the believers to whom he is writing are from God in 4:4. (See: Exclusive and Inclusive 'We')

> **ULT**
>
> **6** We are from God. The one who knows God listens to us. Whoever is not from God does not listen to us. From this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

We are from God (ULT)

Here, **from God** could mean: (1) that John and his fellow eyewitnesses teach the truth about Jesus because God has sent them to do that. Alternate translation: "God has sent us" (2) the same thing as it does in 4:4 and in 4:1–3. Alternate translation: "We belong to God" (See: Idiom)

We are from God (ULT)

If you have decided that **We are from God** means "God has sent us," and if it would be helpful to your readers, you could say explicitly what God has sent John and the other eyewitnesses to do, either here or in a footnote. Alternate translation: "God has sent us to teach the truth about Jesus as eyewitnesses to his life on earth" (See: Idiom)

The one who knows God (ULT)

As in 2:3–4, John is using the word **knows** in a specific sense. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "Anyone who has a close relationship with God"

listens to us...does not listen to us (ULT)

As in 4:5, the word **listens** is an idiom that means "believes" or "is persuaded by." Alternate translation: "believes what we teach ... does not believe what we teach" (See: Idiom)

Whoever is not from God (ULT)

The expression **from God** means the same thing in this verse as in 4:4. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "Whoever does not belong to God" or "Whoever is not living in relationship with God" (See: Idiom)

From this we know (ULT)

This is an idiomatic expression. It means the same thing as the expression "in this we know" which John uses several times in this letter. Alternate translation: "This is how we can recognize" (See: Idiom)

From this we know (ULT)

Here, **this** refers back to what John has just written in the previous two sentences. We can know if someone is teaching a true message if it agrees with what John and the other apostles teach, and that it is a false message if it does not. John may have intended for **this** to also include what he said in 4:2–3. (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

we know (ULT)

Since John is once again speaking of himself and the believers to whom he is writing, **we** in this last sentence in the verse would be inclusive, and so if your language marks that distinction, use the inclusive form in your translation. This inclusive usage continues through 4:13. (See: Exclusive and Inclusive 'We')

the spirit of truth and the spirit of error (ULT)

See the discussion of the word **spirit** in the General Notes to this chapter. In these instances, the word may refer to: (1) spirits that inspire messages of a certain kind. In this case, **the spirit of truth** would refer to God's Spirit, and **the spirit of error** would refer to the devil. These would also be what John refers to as "the one in you" and "the one in the world" in 4:4. See the UST. (2) the character of something. In this case, John would be using **spirit** figuratively to refer to people whose teaching has a certain character. Alternate translation: "whose teaching is true and whose teaching is false" (See: Metonymy)

the spirit of truth and the spirit of error (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract nouns **truth** and **error**, you could express the idea behind them with the adjectives "true" and "false." Alternate translation: "the spirit whose messages are true and the spirit whose messages are false" (See: Abstract Nouns)

1 John 4:7

If you are using section headings, you could put one here before verse 7. Suggested heading: "Love Comes from God" (See: Section Headings)

Beloved (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:7. Alternate translation: "You people whom I love" (See: Nominal Adjectives)

love is from God (ULT)

The expression **from God** means something similar to what it does in 4:1–3. Alternate translation: "God inspires us to love" (See: Idiom)

everyone who loves has been begotten from God (ULT)

See how you translated this metaphor in 2:29 and 3:9. Alternate translation: "God is the spiritual father of everyone who loves" (See: Metaphor)

everyone who loves has been begotten from God (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this passive phrase, you could say this with an active form. Alternate translation: "God is the father of everyone who loves" (See: Active or Passive)

and...knows God (ULT)

As in 2:4, John is using the word **knows** in a specific sense. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "and such a person has a close relationship with God"

ULT

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and everyone who loves has been begotten from God and knows God.

1 John 4:8

The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this sentence, you could reverse the order of these phrases, since the second phrase gives the reason for the result that the first phrase describes. Alternate translation: "Since God is love, the one who does not love does not know God" (See: Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship)

does not know God (ULT)

As in 2:4, John is using the word **know** in a specific sense. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "does not have a close relationship with God"

God is love (ULT)

This is a metaphor that describes what God is like in his character. Alternate translation: "God is entirely loving" (See: Metaphor)

God is love (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **love**, you could express the idea behind it with an adjective such as "loving." Alternate translation: "God is entirely loving" (See: Abstract Nouns)

1 John 4:9

In this (ULT)

In this means something similar to the idiomatic expression "in this we know" that John uses many times in this letter. Alternate translation: "This is how" (See: Idiom)

In this (ULT)

Here, **this** refers forward to what John will say in the rest of the sentence. God demonstrated that he loves us by sending his Son. (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

the love of God appeared among us (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "appear" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. This is a Greek passive verbal form that may have an active meaning, so it could be translated **appeared** or "was revealed." If your language does not use passive forms, you could use an active form and say who did the action. Alternate translation: "God showed us how much he loves us" (See: Active or Passive)

the love of God (ULT)

Here, **the love of God** refers to God loving people. Alternate translation: "God's love for us" (See: Possession)

us (ULT)

The expression **among us** likely refers to all of humanity, not just to the people who saw and heard Jesus when he was alive, so this would be an inclusive use of the term **us** that would include the believers to whom John is writing. John says later in the sentence that Jesus came **so that we might live through him**, and **we** in that instance does include these believers. So it is likely that **us** earlier in the sentence includes them as well. (See: Exclusive and Inclusive 'We')

his Son (ULT)

His Son is an important title for Jesus. Alternate translation: "his Son Jesus" (See: Translating Son and Father)

Son...One and Only (ULT)

Alternate translation: "who is God's only actual Child" or "his only one"

into the world (ULT)

John uses **world** to mean various things in this letter. Here it refers to the created world. Alternate translation: "to this earth" (See: Metonymy)

so that we might live through him (ULT)

Since people were already literally alive before Jesus came, John means this in a figurative sense. He is likely referring to what he calls "eternal life" in 3:15. That includes both living forever in the presence of God after death

and receiving power from God in this life to live in a new way. Alternate translation: "so that through him we might receive power from God to live as new people in this life and to live forever in God's presence after we die" (See: Metaphor)

his...through (ULT)

Alternate translation: "as a result of what he did for us"

1 John 4:10

In this is love (ULT)

In this means something similar to the idiomatic expression "in this we know" that John uses many times in this letter. Alternate translation: "This is how we have experienced genuine love" (See: Idiom)

> ### ULT
>
> **10** In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as the propitiation for our sins.

In this is love (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **love**, you could express the meaning behind it with a verb. Alternate translation: "This is how we know what it means to love" (See: Abstract Nouns)

his Son (ULT)

His Son is an important title for Jesus. Alternate translation: "his Son Jesus" (See: Translating Son and Father)

sent his Son as the propitiation for our sins (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **propitiation**, you could express the meaning behind it with an equivalent expression. See how you translated the term in 2:2. Alternate translation: "sent his Son to be the offering that made him no longer angry with us because of our sins" (See: Abstract Nouns)

1 John 4:11

Beloved (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:7. Alternate translation: "You people whom I love" (See: Nominal Adjectives)

if God thus loved us (ULT)

John is speaking as if this were a hypothetical possibility, but he means that it is actually true. If your language does not state something as a condition if it is certain or true, and if your readers might misunderstand and think that what John is saying is not certain, then you can translate his words as an affirmative statement. Alternate translation: "because God loved us in this way" (See: Connect — Factual Conditions)

thus (ULT)

The word **thus** refers to the manner in which God showed his love to us, as described in verses 9 and 10. Alternate translation: "in that way" (See: Connect — Factual Conditions)

1 John 4:12

If we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is perfected in us (ULT)

John is speaking of a real situation as if it were a hypothetical condition. If your language does not state something as a condition if it is already real, and if your readers might misunderstand and think that what John is saying is not real, then you can translate his words as an affirmative statement. Alternate translation: "But as we love each other, God remains in us, and his love is perfected in us" or "But we do love each other, so that means that God remains in us, and his love is perfected in us"(See: Connect — Factual Conditions)

God remains in us (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. In this instance, it seems to mean the same thing as in 2:6. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "God continues to have a close relationship with us" (See: Metaphor)

his love is perfected in us (ULT)

See how you translated the similar expression in 2:5. In this case, it is clear that John is referring to God's love for us, rather than to our love for God. Alternate translation: "God's love has achieved its purpose in our lives" (See: Active or Passive)

1 John 4:13

In this we know that we remain in him and he in us: that he has given us of his Spirit

This verse is very similar to the second half of 3:24. See how you translated that verse. **In this** may set up an awkward sentence in your language. If so, try wording it in other ways. Alternate translation: "This is how we know that we remain in him, and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit" or "We know that we remain in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit"

In this we know that (ULT)

This is an idiomatic expression that John uses many times in this letter. Alternate translation: "This is how we know that" (See: Idiom)

we remain in him and he in us (ULT)

In the expression **and he in us**, John is leaving out some of the words that a sentence would need in many languages in order to be complete. These words can be supplied from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: "we remain in him and he remains in us" (See: Ellipsis)

we remain in him and he in us (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. In this instance, it seems to mean the same thing as in 2:6. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "we continue to have a close relationship with God, and God continues to have a close relationship with us" (See: Metaphor)

us...he has given...of his Spirit (ULT)

The word **of** here means "some of." However, God's Spirit is not something that can be divided. Rather, John is saying that God is sharing his Spirit with us. God's Spirit can be in many places, and he is fully present in every place. John is saying that through his Spirit, God is fully present in the entire community, and that each believer experiences some of that full presence of God through the presence of the Spirit in his own life. Be sure that it is also clear in your translation that God does not have less of his Spirit now that each of us has some. Alternate translation: "he has sent his Spirit to live in each of us"

1 John 4:14

we have seen and we testify that (ULT)

In this verse, John is speaking on behalf of himself and the other eyewitnesses of the earthly life of Jesus, so the pronoun **we** is exclusive. Alternate translation: "we apostles have seen and bear witness to the fact that" (See: Exclusive and Inclusive 'We')

> **ULT**
>
> **14** Indeed, we have seen and we testify that the Father sent the Son as the Savior of the world.

the Father...the Son (ULT)

These are important titles that describe the relationship between God and Jesus. Alternate translation: "God the Father ... Jesus his Son" (See: Translating Son and Father)

as the Savior of the world (ULT)

John uses **world** to mean various things in this letter. Here it figuratively refers to the people living in the world. Alternate translation: "to save the people in the world" (See: Metonymy)

1 John 4:15

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God (ULT)

This can be translated as a conditional statement. John is saying that what he describes in the second phrase will happen only if what he describes in the first phrase happens. Then it will certainly happen. Alternate translation: "If someone confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, then God will remain in him and he will remain in God" (See: Hypothetical Situations)

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God (ULT)

The meaning of this expression is similar to the expression "the one who confesses the Son" in 2:23. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "Everyone who truly believes and acknowledges publicly that Jesus is the Son of God" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

the Son of God (ULT)

The Son of God is an important title for Jesus that describes his relationship to God. (See: Translating Son and Father)

God remains in him and he in God (ULT)

In the expression **and he in God**, John is leaving out some of the words that a sentence would need in many languages in order to be complete. These words can be supplied from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: "God remains in him and he remains in God" (See: Ellipsis)

God remains in him and he in God (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. In this instance, it seems to mean the same thing as in 2:6. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "God continues to have a close relationship with him, and he continues to have a close relationship with God" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 4:16

we…us (ULT)

Here and in the rest of the letter, John speaks of himself and the believers to whom he is writing, so the words **we** and **us** will be inclusive. If your language marks that distinction, use the inclusive form in your translation. (See: Exclusive and Inclusive 'We')

> **ULT**
>
> **16** And we have known and believed the love that God has in us. God is love, and the one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him.

the love that God has in us (ULT)

The phrase translated **in us** here is the same as the phrase translated "among us" in 4:9. Here it could mean: (1) God's love directed to us. Alternate translation: "the love that God has for us" (2) God's love directed to others through us. Alternate translation: "the love that God has put into us" It may also be that John used a very general phrase in order to include both meanings. (See: Idiom)

God is love (ULT)

This is a metaphor that describes what God is like in his character. See how you translated it in 4:8. Alternate translation: "God is entirely loving" (See: Metaphor)

the one who remains in love (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. As in 2:24, in this instance the word seems to refer to maintaining a pattern of behavior. Alternate translation: "someone who continues to love others" (See: Metaphor)

remains in God, and God remains in him (ULT)

See the discussion of the term "remain" in Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John. In this instance, it seems to mean the same thing as in 2:6 and in 4:15. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "continues to have a close relationship with God, and God continues to have a close relationship with him" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 4:17

In this (ULT)

As in 4:9, **In this** means something similar to the idiomatic expression "in this we know" that John uses many times in this letter. Alternate translation: "This is how" (See: Idiom)

In this may refer: (1) backward to the last sentence of verse 16. Alternate translation: "By remaining in God," (2) forward to the clause beginning **because just as that one is**. Alternate translation: "By loving others just the way that Jesus does," (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

love has been perfected with us (ULT)

See how you translated the similar expression in 2:5. Since John speaks in the previous verse of God's love, here John is probably continuing to refer to God's love for us, rather than to our love for God. Alternate translation: "God's love has achieved its purpose in our lives" (See: Active or Passive)

so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment (ULT)

The clause beginning **so that** could function as: (1) a result clause. That is, John may be saying that as a result of God's love achieving its purposes in our lives now, we will be confident on the day of judgment of his forgiveness and acceptance. If you decide that is the case, then your translation should follow the conventions of your language for result clauses. Alternate translation: "with the result that we may have confidence in the day of judgment" (2) a purpose clause. That is, John may be saying that one reason why God is having his love achieve its purpose in our lives now is because he wants us to be confident on the day of judgment of his forgiveness and acceptance. If you decide that is the case, then your translation should follow the conventions of your language for purpose clauses. (See: Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship)

so that we may have confidence (ULT)

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say explicitly what believers will **have confidence** about. Alternate translation: "so that we will be confident that God has forgiven us and will accept us" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **confidence**, you could express the idea behind it with an adjective such as "confident." Alternate translation: "so that we will be confident that God has forgiven us and will accept us" (See: Abstract Nouns)

in the day of judgment (ULT)

John is using the term **day** figuratively to refer to a specific time. Alternate translation: "at the time when God judges us" (See: Idiom)

> **ULT**
>
> **17** In this, love has been perfected with us so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because just as that one is, we also are in this world.

because (ULT)

The word translated **because** here can be understood in different ways, depending on how you translated **In this** at the beginning of the verse. (1) If you translated **In this** as referring back to verse 16, then this word can be translated as "because." (2) If you translated **In this** as referring to the clause beginning with this word, then translate this word with one that introduces the content of **In this**, such as "that."

because just as that one is, we also are (ULT)

The demonstrative pronoun **that one** refers to Jesus. Alternate translation: "since we are becoming more and more like Jesus" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

in this world (ULT)

John uses **world** to mean various things in this letter, usually in a figurative sense. Here, however, it refers literally to the created world. Alternate translation: "as we live in this world" or "in our lives on this earth" (See: Metonymy)

1 John 4:18

Fear is not in love, but perfect love throws fear outside, because fear has punishment (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this sentence, you could put the third clause before the first clause, since the third clause gives the reason for the result that the first clause describes. Alternate translation: "Because fear has punishment, fear is not in love, but perfect love throws fear outside" (See: Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship)

Fear is not in love, but perfect love throws fear outside, because fear has punishment (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this sentence, you could say explicitly what John means by **fear**, **perfect love**, and **punishment**, particularly in light of what he says in the previous verse. Alternate translation: "A person who thinks he is going to be punished is afraid, but no one who truly understands how much God loves him will be afraid, because when God's love has achieved its purpose in our lives, we are confident that he has forgiven us and will accept us" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

Fear is not in love (ULT)

John speaks figuratively as if **fear** could be inside of **love**. Alternate translation: "no one who truly understands how much God loves him will be afraid" (See: Metaphor)

perfect love throws fear outside (ULT)

By **perfect love**, John means the same thing as when he speaks in the previous verse of love that "has been perfected." See how you translated that expression. Alternate translation: "when God's love has achieved its purpose in our lives, it keeps us from being afraid"

perfect love throws fear outside (ULT)

John speaks figuratively of **love** as if it could actively throw **fear** far away from us. Alternate translation: "when God's love has achieved its purpose in our lives, it keeps us from being afraid" (See: Personification)

Fear...fear has punishment (ULT)

Alternate translation: "fear has to do with punishment" or "people are afraid when they think they will be punished"

So the one who fears has not been perfected in love (ULT)

See how you translated the similar expression in 2:5. Here, as there, **love** could mean: (1) God's love for us. Alternate translation: "So if someone is afraid, then God's love has not achieved its purpose in his life" (2) our love for God. Alternate translation: "So if someone is afraid, then he does not yet love God perfectly" It could also mean both things, as in 3:17. If you must choose, then we recommend option (1). But if your translation can leave both

possibilities open, that would be best. Alternate translation: "So if someone is afraid, then love is not yet fully working in his life"(See: Active or Passive)

So the one who fears has not been perfected in love (ULT)

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say explicitly what such a person **fears**. This is clear from the previous verse. Alternate translation: "So if someone is afraid that God has not forgiven him and that God will not accept him, then God's love has not achieved its purpose in his life" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

1 John 4:19

We love because he first loved us (ULT)

This verse summarizes the idea of verse 10. See how you translated there. If your readers would misunderstand this sentence, you could reverse the order of these phrases, since the second phrase gives the reason for the result that the first phrase describes. Alternate translation: "Because God first loved us, we love" (See: Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship)

We love (ULT)

If you need to say who it is that **We love**, there are two possibilities, and John probably intended both here. If you must choose, then we recommend option (1) below, but if your translation can include both possibilities as in the UST, that would be best. Alternate translation: (1) "We love God" or (2) "We love others" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

he first loved us (ULT)

The pronoun **he** refers to God. Alternate translation: "God first loved us" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

1 John 4:20

If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar

John is using a hypothetical situation to help his readers recognize the importance of consistency between their words and their actions. Alternate translation: "Suppose someone says, 'I love God,' but he hates his brother. Then he is a liar" (See: Hypothetical Situations)

and (ULT)

John is using the word **and** to introduce a contrast between what would be expected, that someone who loved God would also love his fellow believers, and what would actually be true of this hypothetical person. Alternate translation: "but" (See: Connect — Contrast Relationship)

his brother (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:9. Alternate translation: "a fellow believer" (See: Metaphor)

the one…who does not love his brother…God…is not able to love (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this double negative, you could translate it as a positive statement. Alternate translation: "only those who love their fellow believers … are able to love God" (See: Double Negatives)

For the one who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, is not able to love God, whom he has not seen (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this sentence, you could say why this is true. Alternate translation: "This is true because it is much easier to love your fellow believer who is right in front of you than to love God, whom you cannot even see." (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

1 John 4:21

we have this commandment from him (ULT)

Alternate translation: "this is what God has commanded us"

> **ULT**
>
> **21** Indeed, we have this commandment from him, that the one who loves God should also love his brother.

from him (ULT)

The pronoun **him** refers to God. Alternate translation: "from God" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

the one who loves God (ULT)

Here, **the one** refers to anyone who loves God. Alternate translation: "anyone who loves God" (See: Generic Noun Phrases)

his brother (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:9. Alternate translation: "each fellow believer" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 5

1 John 5 General Notes

Structure and formatting

It is false teaching to deny that Jesus is the Son of God (5:1–12)
Closing of Letter (5:13-21)

Possible translation difficulties in this chapter

"a sin towards death"

It is not entirely clear what John means by this phrase. The word "death" could refer either to physical death or to spiritual death, which is eternal separation from God. See the further discussion in the notes to 5:16. (See: die, dead, deadly, death)

"the whole world lies in the power of the evil one"

The phrase "the evil one" refers to Satan. God has allowed him to rule the world, but, ultimately, God is in control over everything. God keeps his children safe from the evil one. (See: Satan, devil, evil one)

Important textual issues in this chapter

In 5:7–8, all ancient manuscripts say: "For there are three who testify, the Spirit and the water and the blood, and the three are unto the one." That is the reading that ULT follows. Some much later manuscripts say: "For there are three who testify in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one; and there are three who testify on earth: the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three are unto the one." In this case, translators are advised to translate this as the ULT text does, since there is wide agreement that it follows the accurate reading. However, if there are older versions of the Bible in your region that have the longer reading, you can include it, but you should put it inside square brackets [ ] and indicate in a footnote that it was most likely not in the original version of 1 John. (See: Textual Variants)

1 John 5:1

If you are using section headings, you could put one here before verse 1. Suggested heading: "Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God" (See: Section Headings)

who believes...Christ (ULT)

Christ is the Greek word for "Messiah." Alternate translation: "the Messiah"

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten from God (ULT)

See how you translated the similar expression in 2:29. Alternate translation: "God is the father of everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah" (See: Active or Passive)

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten from God (ULT)

See whether in 2:29 you decided to explain this metaphor. Alternate translation: "God is the spiritual father of everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah" (See: Metaphor)

everyone who loves the one begetting also loves the one having been begotten from him (ULT)

John includes this short saying to teach something that is generally true about life and that applies to the point he has been developing since 4:7, that genuine believers love one another as God has loved them. Use the natural form in your language for a true saying. Alternate translation: "everyone who loves a father also loves that father's child" (See: Proverbs)

everyone who loves the one begetting also loves the one having been begotten from him (ULT)

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say explicitly what this means and how it applies to John's argument in this part of the letter. See the UST. Alternate translation: "everyone who loves God will also love his fellow believers, since God is their spiritual father" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

1 John 5:2

In this we know that (ULT)

This is an idiomatic expression that John uses many times in this letter. Alternate translation: "This is how we know that" (See: Idiom)

> **ULT**
>
> **2** In this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and we keep his commandments.

the children of God (ULT)

Since John says in the previous verse that God is the spiritual father of believers, by **the children of God** he means other believers. Alternate translation: "our fellow believers" (See: Metaphor)

we keep his commandments (ULT)

Here, **keep** is an idiom that means "obey." Alternate translation: "we obey his commandments" (See: Idiom)

1 John 5:3

For (ULT)

In this verse, John gives a reason why his readers should recognize that the statement he makes in the previous verse is true. Alternate translation: "After all," (See: Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship)

For this is the love of God, that we should keep his commandments (ULT)

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say explicitly why this is the reason for the statement that John makes in the previous verse. Alternate translation: "And this is why: If we really do love God, we will love other believers, as he has commanded" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

the love of God (ULT)

In this context, the phrase **the love of God** refers to believers loving God. John speaks in the previous verse of "when we love God." Alternate translation: "what it means to love God" (See: Possession)

that we should keep his commandments (ULT)

Here, **keep** is an idiom that means "obey." Alternate translation: "that we should obey his commandments" (See: Idiom)

his commandments are not burdensome (ULT)

John speaks figuratively of God's **commandments** as if they had weight but did not weigh very much. Alternate translation: "his commandments are not difficult to obey" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 5:4

For everyone who has been begotten from God overcomes the world (ULT)

In order to create a verse bridge, you could begin this sentence with "since" instead of **for**; you could end it with a comma instead of a period; and you could make it the beginning of the second sentence in the previous verse. It would go before "his commandments are not burdensome." The word "And" would be left out. The result of combining verses 4 and 5 would be: "For this is the love of God, that we should keep his commandments. Since everyone who has been begotten from God overcomes the world, his commandments are not burdensome. And this is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith." (See: Verse Bridges)

everyone who has been begotten from God (ULT)

See how you translated the similar expression in 2:29. Alternate translation: "everyone whose father is God" (See: Active or Passive)

everyone who has been begotten from God (ULT)

See whether in 2:29 you decided to explain this metaphor. Alternate translation: "everyone whose spiritual father is God" (See: Metaphor)

overcomes the world (ULT)

As in 2:13, John is using the word **overcomes** figuratively. He is speaking of the believers' refusal to live by the value system of ungodly people as if the believers had defeated that system in a struggle. Alternate translation: "does not live by the value system of ungodly people" (See: Metaphor)

the world (ULT)

See how you translated the term **world** in 2:15. It has a similar meaning in this verse. Alternate translation: "the value system of ungodly people" (See: Metonymy)

the victory (ULT)

John is speaking figuratively of the thing that has won **the victory** as if it were **the victory** itself. Alternate translation: "what has won the victory" (See: Metonymy)

the victory that has overcome (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **victory**, you could express the idea behind it by combining it with the verb **overcome**. Alternate translation: "what has enabled us to overcome" (See: Abstract Nouns)

that has overcome the world (ULT)

Once again John is using the word **overcome** figuratively. He is speaking of the **faith** that he and his readers share as if it had defeated the ungodly value system in a struggle. Alternate translation: "that enables us to live differently from the value system of ungodly people" (See: Metaphor)

the world (ULT)

John is using the term **world** to mean the same thing as in the previous sentence. Alternate translation: "the value system of ungodly people" (See: Metonymy)

our faith (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **faith**, you could express the idea behind it with a verb such as "believe." Alternate translation: "that we believe in Jesus" (See: Abstract Nouns)

1 John 5:5

But who is the one who overcomes the world, if not the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God (ULT)

John is using the question form for emphasis, to reaffirm what he said in the first sentence of the previous verse. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you could translate his words as a statement and provide emphasis in another way. Alternate translation: "But only someone who believes that Jesus is the Son of God overcomes the world." (See: Rhetorical Question)

who overcomes the world (ULT)

See how you translated **overcomes the world** in the previous verse. Alternate translation: "who does not live by the value system of ungodly people" (See: Metaphor)

the world (ULT)

See how you translated **the world** in the previous verse. Alternate translation: "the value system of ungodly people" (See: Metonymy)

the Son of God (ULT)

The Son of God is an important title for Jesus that describes his relationship to God. (See: Translating Son and Father)

1 John 5:6

This is the one who came by water and blood (ULT)

John is specifying here what it means to believe fully that "Jesus is the Son of God," as he described in the previous verse. The terms **water** and **blood** are metonyms, representing different important ways that the Son of God **came** to us. You may want to clarify these meanings in the text, or do so in a footnote. The **blood** represents Jesus' death on the cross, when he shed his blood as the Savior of the world. The **water** could stand for: (1) Jesus' baptism. When John baptized Jesus in the water of the Jordan River, the Son of God began his ministry of reconciling the world to God. See the UST. (2) Jesus' birth. There was the breaking of the birth water when the Son of God was born as a man. Alternate translation: "This is the one who came through the water of human birth and the blood of his sacrificial death" (See: Metonymy)

the one who came (ULT)

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say more explicitly what this means, as UST does. (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

by water and blood (ULT)

John is using a metaphor that pictures water and blood conveying Jesus to us or Jesus coming to us through water and through blood. The meaning is that Jesus became our Savior as he experienced baptism in water and submitted himself to death on the cross. Alternate translation "as our Savior, undergoing baptism and death" (See: Metaphor)

not in water alone, but in water and in blood (ULT)

If it sounds confusing in your language to say **not in water … but in water**, you could reword this to avoid repeating the phrase **in water**. Alternate translation: "not in water alone, but also in blood" (See: Connect — Exception Clauses)

the Spirit is the one who testifies

Alternate translation: "the Holy Spirit gives us assurance about this"

the Spirit is truth (ULT)

Like the statement "God is love" in 4:8 and 4:16, which describes God's character, this is a metaphor that describes the character of the Holy Spirit. Alternate translation: "the Spirit is entirely truthful" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 5:7

For there are three who testify (ULT)

In this statement, John reaffirms that the three things that he mentions in verse 6 give us confidence that Jesus is the Son of God and came from him. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could indicate this explicitly. Alternate translation: "So there are three who testify that Jesus is God's Son and came from him" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

For there are three who testify (ULT)

See the discussion of textual issues at the end of the General Notes to this chapter to decide whether to follow the reading of ULT or to follow the reading of some late manuscripts and say in your translation, "For there are three who testify in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three who testify on earth." As the General Notes recommend, if you decide to use the longer reading, put it inside square brackets [ ] to indicate that it was most likely not in the original version of 1 John. (See: Textual Variants)

who testify (ULT)

Here, John speaks of water and blood as though they were people who could **testify**, or speak about what they saw. If this might be confusing for your readers, you could express this meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: "ways that God has given us to know that he sent Jesus" (See: Personification)

1 John 5:8

the water and the blood (ULT)

See how you decided to translate the terms **water** and **blood** in 5:6.
Alternate translation: (1) "the baptism of Jesus and his death on the
cross" or (2) "the birth of Jesus and his death on the cross" (See:
Metonymy)

> **ULT**
>
> **8** the Spirit and the water and the blood,
> and the three are unto the one. [1]

the three are unto the one (ULT)

This is an idiom. If this does not communicate well in your language, you could use an equivalent idiom or use
plain language. Alternate translation: "these three all say the same thing" or "these three all agree" (See: Idiom)

1 John 5:9

If we receive the testimony of men (ULT)

John is speaking as if this were a hypothetical possibility, but he means that it is actually true. If your language does not state something this way if it is certain or true, and if your readers might misunderstand and think that what John is saying is not certain, then you can translate his words as an affirmative statement. Alternate translation: "Since we receive the testimony of men" (See: Connect — Factual Conditions)

> ### ULT
> **9** If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater. For this is the testimony of God, that he has testified about his Son.

we receive the testimony of men (ULT)

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: "we believe people when they give testimony" (See: Idiom)

of men (ULT)

Although the term **men** is masculine, John is using the word in a generic sense that could include both men and women. Alternate translation: "of people" (See: When Masculine Words Include Women)

the testimony of God is greater (ULT)

The word **greater** implicitly means that the testimony of God is more reliable than human testimony, since God knows everything and God always tells the truth. Alternate translation: "the testimony of God is more reliable" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

the testimony of God is greater (ULT)

John is leaving out some of the words that a sentence would need in many languages in order to be complete. These words can be supplied from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: "we should certainly receive the testimony of God, since it is greater" or "we should certainly believe God when he gives testimony, since his testimony is even more reliable" (See: Ellipsis)

For this is the testimony of God that he has testified about his Son

Here, **For** could be introducing: (1) the content of God's testimony to his Son. In that case, the content itself comes in 5:11 after he repeats, "this is the testimony." Verse 10 talks about the importance of believing God's testimony. Alternate translation: "Now this is the testimony that God himself has given regarding his Son" (2) the reason why the testimony of God is greater than human testimony. Alternate translation: "After all, this is God who has told us about his own Son."

this is the testimony of God (ULT)

Here, **this** could refer to: (1) God's testimony, which John says in verse 11. Alternate translation: "I will tell you what God's testimony is" (2) the three testimonies from verse 8. Alternate translation: "those things are the testimony of God" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

his Son (ULT)

Son is an important title for Jesus. Alternate translation: "his Son Jesus" (See: Translating Son and Father)

1 John 5:10

The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in him. The one who does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has testified about his Son (ULT)

This verse comes in between John's two introductions of God's testimony. If this is confusing in your language, you could say something explicitly that tells your reader that the testimony is still coming, as in the UST. (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

The one who believes (ULT)

John is speaking of everyone who believes, not of any particular person. Alternate translation: "Any person who believes" (See: Generic Noun Phrases)

in the Son of God (ULT)

John implicitly means believing that Jesus is the Son of God. Alternate translation: "that Jesus is the Son of God" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

the Son of God (ULT)

Son of God is an important title for Jesus. (See: Translating Son and Father)

has the testimony in him (ULT)

John speaks figuratively of the **testimony** as if it were an object that could be inside believers. Alternate translation: "completely accepts what God has said" (See: Metaphor)

the testimony (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **testimony**, you could express the idea behind it with an equivalent expression. Alternate translation: "what God has said" (See: Abstract Nouns)

has made him a liar (ULT)

As in 1:10, be sure that it is clear in your translation that God would not actually be a liar in this case. Rather, since God has said that Jesus is his Son, a person who did not believe that would be calling God a liar. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly. Alternate translation: "is, in effect, calling God a liar" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

The one…of God…the testimony…that…God…has testified about his…Son (ULT)

If it is unnatural in your language to use both the noun **testimony** and the verb **testified**, you can use just one form of the word in your translation. Alternate translation: "what God has solemnly said to be true about his Son"

1 John 5:11

this is the testimony (ULT)

Alternate translation: "this is what God has said about his Son"

God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand this indirect quotation, you could express this as a direct quotation, as in the UST. (See: Direct and Indirect Quotations)

God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son (ULT)

John speaks figuratively of **life** as if it were an object that was inside Jesus. Alternate translation: "God gave us eternal life, which people receive by believing in his Son Jesus" (See: Metaphor)

eternal life (ULT)

As in 4:9, **eternal life** means two things at once. It means receiving power from God in this life to live in a new way, and it also means living forever in the presence of God after death. See how you translated the expression in 4:9. (See: Metaphor)

Son (ULT)

Son is an important title for Jesus. Alternate translation: "his Son Jesus" (See: Translating Son and Father)

1 John 5:12

The one who has the Son has life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have life (ULT)

John speaks figuratively of believers who are in a close relationship with Jesus as if Jesus were their possession. If this is confusing in your language, you can use a different expression. Alternate translation: "Anyone who is in a close relationship with the Son has life. Anyone who is not in a close relationship with the Son of God does not have life" (See: Metaphor)

has life…does not have life (ULT)

Since both groups of people are physically alive, John means this in a spiritual sense. As in 4:9, he is likely referring to what he calls "eternal life" in 3:15 and 5:11. See how you translated that term in those verses. Alternate translation: "has power from God to live as a new person now and will live forever in God's presence after death … does not have power from God to live as a new person now and will not live forever in God's presence after death" (See: Metaphor)

the Son…the Son of God (ULT)

The Son of God is an important title for Jesus that describes his relationship to God. (See: Translating Son and Father)

1 John 5:13

If you are using section headings, you could put one here before verse 13. Suggested heading: "Eternal Life with the True God" (See: Section Headings)

these things (ULT)

Here, **these things** refers back to everything that John has written so far in the letter. Alternate translation: "all of this" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

the ones believing in the name of the Son of God (ULT)

As in 2:12, John is using the **name** of Jesus figuratively to represent who Jesus is and what he has done. Alternate translation: "who believe in the Son of God and what he has done for you" (See: Metonymy)

of the Son of God (ULT)

The Son of God is an important title for Jesus that describes his relationship to God. (See: Translating Son and Father)

that you have eternal life (ULT)

The emphasis in this verse seems to be more on the future aspect of the expression **eternal life**. Alternate translation: "that you will live forever in God's presence after you die" (See: Metaphor)

> **ULT**
>
> **13** I have written these things to you, the ones believing in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

1 John 5:14

this is the confidence that we have towards him (ULT)

If it would be helpful to your readers, as in 3:21 you could say explicitly what this **confidence** applies to, in light of what John says in the rest of this sentence. Alternate translation: "we can be confident of this as we pray to God" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

this is the confidence that we have towards him (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **confidence**, you could express the idea behind it with an adjective such as "confident." Alternate translation: "we can be confident of this as we pray to God" (See: Abstract Nouns)

him...his...he listens (ULT)

The pronouns **him**, **his**, and **he** refer to God in this verse. Consider whether it might be helpful to your readers or more natural in your language to use the name "God" in one or more of these instances. (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

if we ask anything according to his will (ULT)

Alternate translation: "if we ask for the things that God wants for us"

he listens to us (ULT)

As in 4:5, the word **listens** is an idiom. However, the meaning here is different than the meaning there, which was, "is persuaded by." Rather, here it refers to God being willing to grant what we ask. Alternate translation: "he is willing to give it to us" (See: Idiom)

1 John 5:15

if we know that he listens to us (ULT)

John is speaking as if this were a hypothetical possibility, but he means that it is actually true. If your language does not state something as a possibility if it is certain or true, and if your readers might misunderstand and think that what John is saying is not certain, then you can translate his words as an affirmative statement. Alternate translation: "since we know that he listens to us" (See: Connect — Factual Conditions)

he listens to us (ULT)

As in 5:14, the word **listens** is an idiom. See how you translated it there. Alternate translation: "he is willing to give us what we ask for" (See: Idiom)

he listens to us (ULT)

It may be helpful to repeat the condition that John specifies in the previous verse. Alternate translation: "he is disposed to give us what we ask for if it is according to his will" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

he listens...him (ULT)

The pronouns **he** and **him** refer to God in this verse. Consider whether it might be more natural in your language to use the name "God" for **he** and to say **him** later in the verse. (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

we know that...we have the requests that we have requested from him (ULT)

Alternate translation: "we know that we will receive what we have asked God for"

1 John 5:16

If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not towards death, he will ask (ULT)

John is describing a hypothetical situation in order to counsel his readers. UST models a way of showing this. (See: Hypothetical Situations)

his brother (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:9. Alternate translation: "a fellow believer" (See: Metaphor)

sinning a sin (ULT)

If it is unnatural in your language to use both the verb **sinning** and the noun **sin**, you can use just one form of the word in your translation. Alternate translation: "committing a sin"

a sin not towards death...for those sinning not towards death...a sin towards death (ULT)

The word **death** in this verse and the next refers figuratively to spiritual death, that is, to eternal separation from God. (See the later note to this verse for a discussion of what kind of sin John may have in mind that would lead to that.) Alternate translation: "a sin that does not lead to eternal separation from God ... for those whose sin will not lead to eternal separation from God ... a sin that does lead to eternal separation from God" (See: Metaphor)

he will ask (ULT)

John is using a future statement to give an instruction and command. Alternate translation: "he should pray for that fellow believer" (See: Statements — Other Uses)

he will give him life (ULT)

In this clause, the pronoun **him** refers to the believer who is sinning, and the pronoun **he** could refer to: (1) God, since only God can give spiritual life. Alternate translation: "God will give life to the believer who is sinning" (2) **anyone**, that is, the person praying. In this case, John may be picturing God giving life by means of the person's prayers, as in James 5:15, 20. Alternate translation: "he will be God's instrument to give life to the believer who is sinning" (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

he will give him life (ULT)

The word **life** here refers figuratively to spiritual life, that is, to eternal life with God. Alternate translation: "God will make sure that the believer who is sinning is not separated from him eternally" (See: Metaphor)

There is a sin towards death; I am not saying that he should pray about that (ULT)

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say more explicitly what this means. In the context of the whole letter, by **a sin towards death**, John is probably referring to behavior such as the false teachers engaged in and

---

ULT

16 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not towards death, he will ask, and he will give him life, for those sinning not towards death. There is a sin towards death; I am not saying that he should pray about that.

encouraged. As Part 3 of the Introduction to 1 John explains, these false teachers claimed that it did not matter what people did in their bodies, and so they would have been committing many serious sins without feeling any conviction that their actions were wrong. This showed that they had abandoned faith in Jesus and had rejected the influence of the Holy Spirit. John implicitly corrects this false teaching again in 5:18. His statement that believers should not pray for people who behave in this way is likely descriptive rather than prescriptive. That is, he is not saying that he does not want the believers to pray for them. Rather, he is explaining that it will not do any good to pray for them, since they are determined to live in a way that is contrary to faith in Jesus and the influence of the Holy Spirit. Alternate translation: "There are people (such as the false teachers) who are sinning in a way that shows that they have decided to be separated from God for eternity. Praying for them is not likely to make any difference" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

1 John 5:17

All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not towards death (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **unrighteousness**, you could express the idea behind it with an equivalent expression. Alternate translation: "Every time we do what God does not want, that is sin" (See: Abstract Nouns)

and (ULT)

John is using the word **and** to introduce a contrasting statement that is intended to encourage the believers to whom he is writing. Alternate translation: "however," (See: Connect — Contrast Relationship)

there is sin not towards death (ULT)

See how you translated the word **death** in the previous verse. Alternate translation: "not every sin leads to eternal separation from God" or "not every sin causes a person to die spiritually" (See: Metaphor)

1 John 5:18

everyone who has been begotten from God (ULT)

See how you translated the similar expression in 2:29. Alternate translation: "everyone whose father is God" (See: Active or Passive)

everyone who has been begotten from God (ULT)

See whether in 2:29 you decided to explain this metaphor. Alternate translation: "everyone whose spiritual father is God" (See: Metaphor)

does not sin (ULT)

See how you translated this expression in 3:6. Alternate translation: "does not sin wantonly and continually" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

who has been begotten from God...who was begotten (ULT)

This is a description of Jesus, whom John calls "the only-begotten" in 4:9. See how you translated that expression there. Alternate translation: "Jesus, God's actual Son"

keeps him (ULT)

This could mean one of two things. Alternate translation: (1) "keeps him in a close relationship with God" or (2) "keeps him from sinning" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

the evil one (ULT)

As in 2:13, John is using the adjective **evil** as a noun in order to indicate a specific being. ULT adds **one** to show this. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you can translate this with an equivalent expression. Alternate translation: "the one who is evil" (See: Nominal Adjectives)

the evil one (ULT)

John is speaking figuratively of the devil by association with the way that he is **evil**. Alternate translation: "the devil" (See: Metonymy)

does not touch him (ULT)

This is an idiom. If your readers would misunderstand this idiom, you could use an equivalent idiom or use plain language. Alternate translation: "cannot harm him" (See: Idiom)

> **ULT**
>
> **18** We know that everyone who has been begotten from God does not sin, but the One who was begotten from God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.

1 John 5:19

we are from God (ULT)

See how you translated the similar expression in 4:4. Alternate translation: "we are sharing life with God" or "we are living in relationship with God" (See: Idiom)

the whole world (ULT)

John uses the term **world** in various ways in this letter. In this instance, it likely refers figuratively both to the people living in the **world** who do not honor God and to their value system. Alternate translation: "all ungodly people and their value system" (See: Metonymy)

lies in the evil one (ULT)

The expression **lies in** figuratively represents being controlled by someone or something. Alternate translation: "is controlled by the evil one" or "is controlled by evil influences" (See: Metaphor)

the evil one (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **evil**, you could express the meaning behind it with an equivalent expression. This could mean: (1) John may be speaking figuratively of the devil, as in 2:13. Alternate translation: "the devil" (2) John may be speaking of evil influences. Alternate translation: "evil influences" (See: Abstract Nouns)

1 John 5:20

the Son of God (ULT)

Son of God is an important title for Jesus that describes his relationship to God. (See: Translating Son and Father)

has come (ULT)

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say more explicitly what this means, as you may have done in 5:6. Alternate translation: "has come to earth from God" (See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information)

has given us understanding (ULT)

If your readers would misunderstand the abstract noun **understanding**, you could express the idea behind it with a verb such as "understand." Alternate translation: "has enabled us to understand" (See: Abstract Nouns)

has given us understanding (ULT)

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say explicitly what Jesus has enabled us to understand. Alternate translation: "has enabled us to understand the truth" or "has enabled us to understand the truth about God" (See: Abstract Nouns)

the True One...the True One (ULT)

John is using the adjective **True** as a noun in order to indicate a specific being. ULT adds **One** to show this. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you can translate this with an equivalent expression. Alternate translation: "the One who is true … the One who is true" (See: Nominal Adjectives)

the True One...the True One (ULT)

John is speaking figuratively of God by association with the way that he is **True**. This could mean: (1) The God who is genuine, in contrast to false gods. Alternate translation: "the real God … the real God" (2) The God who is true in all that he says and does. Alternate translation: "God, who always tells the truth and does what he says he will do … God, who always tells the truth and does what he says he will do" (See: Metonymy)

we are in the True One, in his Son Jesus Christ (ULT)

As in 2:5, John is speaking figuratively as if believers could be inside of God and Jesus. This expression describes having a close relationship with God and Jesus. Alternate translation: "we have a close relationship with the true God, with his Son Jesus Christ" (See: Metaphor)

we are in the True One, in his Son Jesus Christ (ULT)

This second occurrence of **the True One** could refer to: (1) Jesus, as the rest of the clause makes clear. In this case, John is saying that both God and Jesus are the true God, and we are in both. See the UST. (2) God, just as the first occurrence of **the True One** refers to God. In this case, John is saying that we are in God because of being in Jesus. Alternate translation: "we are in the True One through being in Jesus Christ, his Son" (See: Metaphor)

his Son (ULT)

Son is an important title for Jesus that describes his relationship to God. (See: Translating Son and Father)

This is the true God (ULT)

This could refer either to (1) Jesus, who was mentioned just before, or (2) God, who was mentioned earlier. (See: Pronouns — When to Use Them)

the true God and eternal life (ULT)

John is expressing a single idea by using two noun phrases connected with **and**. The phrase **eternal life** describes a quality of **the true God**, that he gives eternal life. Alternate translation: "the true God, who gives eternal life" (See: Hendiadys)

eternal life (ULT)

As in 4:9, this means both receiving power from God in this life to live in a new way and living forever in the presence of God after death. See how you translated the expression there. (See: Metaphor)

1 John 5:21

Little children (ULT)

See how you translated this in 2:1. Alternate translation: "You dear believers who are under my care" (See: Metaphor)

keep yourselves (ULT)

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: "stay away" (See: Idiom)

idols (ULT)

Here, **idols** could mean: (1) figurative idols, that is, anything that might take the place of the real God in a person's life. Alternate translation: "anything that might take the place of God in your life" (2) literal idols, that is, statues that were worshiped as if they embodied a god. (See: Metaphor)

ULT

21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

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**.

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]]
> *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:** 1 John 1:2; 1:4; 2:5; 2:12; 2:19; 2:28; 2:29; 3:1; 3:2; 3:5; 3:8; 3:9; 4:7; 4:9; 4:12; 4:17; 4:18; 5:1; 5:4; 5:18)

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:
>
> *Making Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information Explicit*

(**Go back to:** 1 John 1:1; 1:3; 1:4; 1:9; 1:10; 2:1; 2:6; 2:7; 2:8; 2:10; 2:19; 2:20; 2:22; 2:23; 2:24; 2:26; 3:1; 3:2; 3:6; 3:7; 3:8; 3:12; 3:20; 3:21; 3:22; 4:3; 4:15; 4:17; 4:18; 4:19; 4:20; 5:1; 5:3; 5:6; 5:7; 5:9; 5:10; 5:14; 5:15; 5:16; 5:18; 5:20)

Biblical Imagery — Extended Metaphors

An **extended metaphor** is an explicit metaphor that uses multiple images and multiple ideas at the same time. This is in contrast to a simple metaphor, which uses only a single Image and a single Idea. The difference between an extended metaphor and a complex metaphor is that an extended metaphor is explicitly stated by a writer/speaker, but a complex metaphor is not.

This page answers the question: *What is an extended metaphor?*

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

Metaphor
[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-simile]]

Explanation of an Extended Metaphor

When using a metaphor, a writer/speaker uses a physical Image in order to express an abstract Idea about some immediate Topic, with at least one point of comparison between the Topic and the Image. In an extended metaphor, the writer/speaker explicitly states the Topic, and then describes multiple images and communicates multiple ideas.

In Isaiah 5:1b-7, the prophet Isaiah uses a vineyard (the **Image**) to express God's disappointment (the **Idea**) with the nation of Israel (the **Topic**) for their unfaithfulness to God and his covenant with them as his people. Farmers care for their gardens, and a farmer would feel disappointed if his vineyard produced bad fruit. If a vineyard produced only bad fruit for a long enough time, the farmer would eventually stop caring for it. We call this an extended metaphor because the prophet describes in detail multiple images relating to a vineyard as well as multiple aspects of God's disappointment.

> 1b My well beloved had a **vineyard** on a very fertile hill. 2 He **spaded it, removed the stones**, and **planted it** with an excellent kind of vine. He **built a tower** in the middle of it, and also **built a winepress**. **He waited for it to produce grapes, but it produced wild grapes**. 3 So now, inhabitant of Jerusalem and man of Judah; judge between me and my vineyard. 4 What more could have been done for my vineyard, that I have not done for it? **When I looked for it to produce grapes, why did it produce wild grapes**? 5 Now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard; I will remove the hedge; I will turn it into a pasture; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled down. 6 I will lay it waste, and it will not be pruned nor hoed. Instead, briers and thorns will spring up. I will also command the clouds not to rain on it. 7 For **the vineyard of Yahweh of hosts is the house of Israel**, and the man of Judah his pleasant planting; **he waited for justice, but instead, there was killing**; **for righteousness, but, instead, a shout for help**. (Isa 5:1b-7 ULT)

Other Examples From the Bible

In Psalm 23, the psalmist uses the physical **Image** of a shepherd to describe the way that God (the **Topic**) shows great concern and care (the **Idea**) for his people. The psalmist describes multiple aspects of what shepherds do for sheep (leads them to pasture and to water, protects them, etc.). The psalmist also describes multiple aspects of how God takes care of him (gives him life, righteousness, comfort, etc.). Shepherds give sheep what they need, take them to safe places, rescue them, guide them, and protect them. What God does for his people is like these actions.

> 1 Yahweh is my shepherd; I will lack nothing.
> 2 He **makes me** to lie down in green pastures;
> he **leads me** beside tranquil water.
> 3 He **brings back** my life;
> he **guides me** along right paths for his name's sake.
> 4 Even though I walk through a valley of darkest shadow,

> I will not fear harm since you are with me;
> your rod and your staff comfort me. (Psalm 23:1-4 ULT)

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- People may not realize that the images represent other things.
- People may not be familiar with the things that are used as images.
- Extended metaphors are often so profound that it would be impossible for a translator to show all of the meaning generated by the metaphor.

Translation Principles

- Make the meaning of the extended metaphor as clear to the target audience as it was to the original audience.
- Do not make the meaning more clear to the target audience than it was to the original audience.
- When someone uses an extended metaphor, the images are an important part of what he is trying to say.
- If the target audience is not familiar with some of the images, you will need to find some way of helping them understand the images so that they can understand the whole extended metaphor.

Translation Strategies

Consider using the same extended metaphor if your readers will understand it in the same way the original readers would have understood it. If not, here are some other strategies:

(1) If the target audience would think that the images should be understood literally, translate the metaphor as a simile by using words such as "like" or "as." It may be enough to to do this in just the first sentence or two.
(2) If the target audience would not know the image, find a way of translating it so they can understand what the image is.
(3) If the target audience still would not understand, then state it clearly.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the target audience would think that the images should be understood literally, translate the metaphor as a simile by using words such as "like" or "as." It may be enough to to do this in just the first sentence or two. See Psalm 23:1-2 as an example:

> Yahweh is **my shepherd**; I will lack nothing.
> He makes **me** to lie down in green pastures;
> **he leads me** beside tranquil water. (ULT)

Can be translated as:

> "Yahweh is **like** a shepherd to me, so I will lack nothing.
> **Like** a shepherd who makes his sheep lie down in green pastures and leads them by peaceful waters, Yahweh helps me to rest peacefully."

(2) If the target audience would not know the image, find a way of translating it so they can understand what the image is.

> My well beloved had a **vineyard** on a very fertile hill.
> He **spaded** it, removed the stones, and planted it with **an excellent kind of vine**.
> He built **a tower** in the middle of it, and also built a **winepress**.
> He waited for it to produce grapes, but it only produced **wild grapes.** (Isaiah 5:1b-2 ULT)

May be translated as:

> My well beloved had a **grapevine garden** on a very fertile hill.
> He **dug up the ground** and removed the stones, and planted it with **the best grapevines**.
> He built a **watchtower** in the middle of it, and also built **a tank where he could crush the juice out of the grapes**.
> He waited for it to produce grapes, but it produced **wild grapes that were not good for making wine**.

(3) If the target audience still would not understand, then state it clearly.

> Yahweh is **my shepherd**; I will lack nothing. (Psalm 23:1 ULT)

> > "Yahweh **cares for me** like a shepherd that cares for his sheep, so I will lack nothing."

> For the vineyard of Yahweh of hosts **is** the house of Israel,
> and the men of Judah his pleasant planting;
> he waited for justice, but instead, there was killing;
> for righteousness, but, instead, a shout for help. (Isaiah 5:7 ULT)

Can be translated as:

> > For the vineyard of Yahweh of hosts **represents** the house of Israel,
> > and the men of Judah **are like** his pleasant planting;
> > he waited for justice, but instead, there was killing;
> > for righteousness, but, instead, a cry for help.

or as:

> > **So as a farmer stops caring for a grapevine garden that produces bad fruit**,
> > **Yahweh will stop protecting** Israel and Judah,
> > **because they do not do what is right.**
> > He waited for justice, but instead, there was killing;
> > for righteousness, but, instead, a cry for help.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/bita-part1]]

(**Go back to:** Introduction to 1 John)

Connect — Contrary to Fact Conditions

Conditional Relationships

> This page answers the question: *How can I translate contrary-to-fact conditions?*

Conditional connectors connect two clauses to indicate that one
of them will happen when the other one happens. In English, the most common way to connect conditional clauses
is with the words, "if … then." Often, however, the word "then" is not stated.

Contrary-to-Fact Conditions

Description

A Contrary-to-Fact Condition is a condition that sounds hypothetical, but the speaker is already certain that it is
NOT true.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Usually there are no special words that indicate a Contrary-to-Fact Condition. The writer assumes that the reader
knows that it is NOT a true condition. For this reason it often requires knowledge of implied information to know
that it is not true. If this kind of condition is difficult for translators to communicate, they may want to consider
using the same strategies that they used for Rhetorical Questions or Implied Information.

Examples From OBS and the Bible

> But **if Baal is God**, worship him! (Story 19 Frame 6 OBS)

> Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you keep changing your mind? If
> Yahweh is God, follow him. But **if Baal is God**, then follow him." Yet the people did not answer
> him a word. (1 Kings 18:21 ULT)

Baal is not God. Elijah is not suggesting that Baal might be God, and he does not want the people to follow Baal.
But Elijah used a conditional statement to show them that what they were doing was wrong. In the example above,
we see two conditions that have the same construction. The first one, "If Yahweh is God," is a Factual Condition
because Elijah is certain that it is true. The second one, "if Baal is God," is a Contrary-to-Fact Condition because
Elijah is certain that it is not true. You will need to consider if people would say both of these in the same way in
your language or if they would say them in different ways.

> But his wife replied to him, "**If Yahweh had desired to kill us**, he would not have taken from
> our hand the whole burnt offering and the offering. He would not have shown us all these
> things, and at this time would he have not allowed us to hear about this." (Judges 13:23 ULT)

Manoah's wife thinks that the second part of her conditional statement is not true, therefore the first part is also
not true. God received their burnt offering; therefore, He does not want to kill them.
>

> "**If only we had died** by Yahweh's hand in the land of Egypt, sitting by a pot of meat and
> eating bread to the full." (Exodus 16b:3 ULT)

Of course the people speaking here did not die in Egypt, and so this is a Contrary-to-Fact condition that is used to
express a wish.

> "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! **If the mighty deeds had been done** in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, **they would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes." (Matthew 11:21 ULT)

The English reader knows that these last two examples are Contrary-to-Fact conditions because of the past-tense verbs used in the first part (they are not things that might happen). The last example also has a second part that uses "would have." These words also signal something that did not happen.

Translation Strategies

If Contrary-to-Fact conditions are clear in your language, then use them as they are.

(1) If the condition leads the reader to think that the speaker believes something that is false, then restate the condition as something that others believe.

(2) If the condition leads the reader to think that the speaker is suggesting that the first part is true, then restate it as a statement that it is not true.

(3) If the condition is expressing something that did not happen but the speaker wanted it to happen, restate it as a wish.

(4) If the condition is expressing something that did not happen, restate it as a negative statement.

(5) Often Factual and Contrary-to-Fact conditions are used to make reasoned arguments for a change in behavior. If translators are struggling to know the best way to translate them, it could be helpful to discuss how this is done in their language community. If someone is trying to convince people to change their behavior, how do they do that? It may be possible to adapt similar strategies when translating these conditions.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the condition leads the reader to think that the speaker believes something that is false, then restate the condition as something that others believe.

> But **if Baal is God**, worship him! (Story 19 Frame 6 OBS)

>> If you believe that Baal is God, then worship him!

(2) If the condition leads the reader to think that the speaker is suggesting that the first part is true, then restate it as a statement that it is not true.

>> If Baal is not God, then you should not worship him!

But his wife replied to him, "**If Yahweh had desired to kill us**, he would not have taken from our hand the whole burnt offering and the offering. He would not have shown us all these things, and at this time would he have not allowed us to hear about this." (Judges 13:23 ULT)

>> "**Yahweh does not want to kill us**, or he would not have received the burnt offering and the offering we gave him."

(3) If the condition is expressing something that did not happen but the speaker wanted it to happen, restate it as a wish.

> "**If only we had died** by Yahweh's hand in the land of Egypt, sitting by a pot of meat and eating bread to the full." (Exodus 16b:3 ULT)

> > "**I wish we had died** by Yahweh's hand in the land of Egypt…"

(4) If the condition is expressing something that did not happen, restate it as a negative statement.

> "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! **If the mighty deeds had been done** in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, **they would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes." (Matthew 11:21 ULT)

> > "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! The mighty deeds which were done in you **were not done** in Tyre and Sidon. But **if they had been done there, those people would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

(5) Often Factual and Contrary-to-Fact Conditions are used to make reasoned arguments for a change in behavior. If translators are struggling to know the best way to translate them, it could be helpful to discuss how this is done in their language community. If someone is trying to convince people to change their behavior, how do they do that? It may be possible to adapt similar strategies when translating these conditions.

> But **if Baal is God**, worship him! (Story 19 Frame 6 OBS)

> > Is Baal the one who is truly God? Should you worship him?

> "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! **If the mighty deeds had been done** in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, **they would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes." (Matthew 11:21 ULT)

> > "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! You think that you are better than Tyre and Sidon, but you are not! **They would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes at seeing the mighty deeds that you have seen! **You should be like them**!"

(**Go back to:** 1 John 2:19)

Connect — Contrast Relationship

Logical Relationships

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

Contrast Relationship

Description

A contrast relationship is a logical relationship in which one event or item is in contrast or opposition to another.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

In Scripture, many events did not happen as the people involved intended or expected them to happen. Sometimes people acted in ways that were not expected, whether good or bad. Often it was God at work, changing the events. These events were often pivotal. It is important that translators understand and communicate these contrasts. In English, contrast relationships are often indicated by the words "but," "although," "even though," "though," "yet," or "however."

Examples From OBS and the Bible

> You tried to do evil when you sold me as a slave, **but** God used the evil for good! (Story 8 Frame 12 OBS)

Joseph's brothers' evil plan to sell Joseph is contrasted with God's good plan to save many people. The word "but" marks the contrast.

> For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? **Yet** I am among you as one who serves. (Luke 22:27 ULT)

Jesus contrasts the proud way that human leaders behave with the humble way that he behaves. The contrast is marked by the word "yet."

> The hill country will also be yours. **Though** it is a forest, you will clear it and it will become yours to its farthest borders, for you will drive out the Canaanites, even **though** they have chariots of iron, and even **though** they are strong. (Joshua 17:18 ULT)

It was unexpected that the Israelites, who had been slaves in Egypt, would be able to conquer and lay claim to the promised land.

Translation Strategies

If your language uses contrast relationships in the same way as in the text, then use them as they are.

(1) If the contrast relationship between the clauses is not clear, then use a connecting word or phrase that is more specific or more clear.

(2) If it is more clear in your language to mark the other clause of the contrast relationship, then use a connecting word on the other clause.

(3) If your language shows a contrast relationship in a different way, then use that way.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the contrast relationship between the clauses is not clear, then use a connecting word or phrase that is more specific or more clear.

> For who is greater, the one who reclines at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? **Yet** I am among you as one who serves. (Luke 22:27 ULT)
>
>> For who is greater, the one who reclines at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? **Unlike that person**, I am among you as one who serves.

(2) If it is more clear in your language to mark the other clause of the contrast relationship, then use a connecting word on the other clause.

> The hill country will also be yours. **Though** it is a forest, you will clear it and it will become yours to its farthest borders, for you will drive out the Canaanites, even **though** they have chariots of iron, and even **though** they are strong. (Joshua 17:18 ULT)
>
>> The hill country will also be yours. It is a forest, **but** you will clear it and it will become yours to its farthest borders. They have chariots of iron, and they are strong, **but** you will drive out the Canaanites.

(3) If your language shows a contrast relationship in a different way, then use that way.

> [David] found favor in the sight of God, and he asked if he might find a dwelling place for the house of Jacob. **However**, Solomon built the house for him. **But** the Most High does not live in houses made with hands. (Acts 7:46-48a ULT)
>
>> [David] found favor in the sight of God, and he asked if he might find a dwelling place for the house of Jacob. **But** it was, Solomon, **not David**, who built the house for God. **Even though Solomon built him a house**, the Most High does not live in houses made with hands.

(**Go back to:** 1 John 1:6; 2:1; 2:4; 2:5; 2:9; 2:20; 3:2; 4:20; 5:17)

Connect — Exception Clauses

Exceptional Relationship

Description

Exceptional relationship connectors exclude one or more items or people from a group.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

English indicates exceptional relationships by first describing a group (Part 1) and then stating what is not in that group by using words like "except," "but not," "other than," "besides," "unless," "however … not," and "only" (Part 2). Some languages do not indicate in this way that one or more items or people are excluded from a group. Instead, they have other ways of doing this. In some languages this type of construction does not make sense because the exception in Part 2 seems to contradict the statement in Part 1. Translators need to understand who (or what) is in the group and who (or what) is excluded in order to be able to accurately communicate this in their language.

Examples From OBS and the Bible

> God told Adam that he could eat from **any** tree in the garden **except** from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (OBS Story 1 Frame 11)

> But if you will not redeem it, then tell me so that I may know, for there is **no one** to redeem it **besides** you, and I am after you. (Ruth 4:4b ULT)

> David attacked them from the twilight to the evening of the next day. **Not** a man escaped **except for** 400 young men, who rode on camels and fled. (1 Samuel 30:17 ULT)

> The man said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." Jacob said, "I will **not** let you go **unless** you bless me." (Genesis 32:26 ULT)

Translation Strategies

If the way that Exceptional Clauses are marked in the source language is also clear in your language, then translate the Exceptional Clauses in the same way.

(1) Very often, the exception in Part 2 contradicts something that was negated in Part 1. In this case, the translator can phrase the same idea without the contradiction by deleting the negative and using a word like "**only**."

(2) Reverse the order of the clauses so that the exception is stated first, and then the larger group is named second.

Examples of Translation Strategy Applied

(1) Very often, the exception in Part 2 contradicts something that was negated in Part 1. In this case, the translator can phrase the same idea without the contradiction by deleting the negative and using a word like "**only**."

> David attacked them from the twilight to the evening of the next day. **Not a man escaped except for 400 young men**, who rode on camels and fled. (1 Samuel 30:17 ULT)

• Part 1: (**Not** a man escaped)
• Part 2: (**except for** 400 young men)

>> David attacked them from the twilight to the evening of the next day. **Only** 400 young men escaped; they rode on camels and fled.

> But if you will not redeem it, then tell me so that I may know, for there is **no one** to redeem it **besides** you, and I am after you. (Ruth 4:4 ULT)

>> But if you will not redeem it, then tell me so that I may know, for **you are first in line to redeem it [only you can redeem it]**, and I am after you.

> The man said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." Jacob said, "I will **not** let you go **unless** you bless me." (Genesis 32:26 ULT)

>> The man said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." Jacob said, "I will let you go **only if** you bless me."

(2) Reverse the order of the clauses, so that the exception is stated first, and then the larger group is named second.

> God told Adam that he could eat from **any** tree in the garden **except** from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (OBS Story 1 Frame 11)

>> God told Adam that he could **not** eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but he could eat from **any other** tree in the garden.

(**Go back to:**)

Connect — Factual Conditions

Conditional Relationships

Conditional connectors connect two clauses to indicate that one of them will happen when the other one happens. In English, the most common way to connect conditional clauses is with the words, "if … then." Often, however, the word "then" is not stated.

Factual Conditions

Description

A Factual Condition is a condition that sounds hypothetical but is already certain or true in the speaker's mind. In English, a sentence containing a Factual Condition can use the words "even though," "since," or "this being the case" to indicate that it is a factual condition and not a hypothetical condition.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages do not state something as a condition if it is certain or true. Translators from these languages may misunderstand the original languages and think that the condition is uncertain. This would lead to mistakes in their translations. Even if the translators understand that the condition is certain or true, the readers may misunderstand it. In this case, it would be best to translate it as a statement of fact rather than as a conditional statement.

Examples From OBS and the Bible

> "**If** Yahweh is God, worship him!" (Story 19 Frame 6 OBS)

> Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you keep changing your mind? **If Yahweh is God**, follow him. But if Baal is God, then follow him." Yet the people did not answer him a word. (1 Kings 18:21 ULT)

This sentence has the same construction as a hypothetical condition. The condition is "if Yahweh is God." If that is true, then the Israelites should worship Yahweh. But the prophet Elijah does not question whether or not Yahweh is God. In fact, he is so certain that Yahweh is God that later in the passage he pours water all over his sacrifice. He is confident that God is real and that he will burn even an offering that is completely wet. Over and over again, the prophets taught that Yahweh is God, so the people should worship him. The people did not worship Yahweh, however, even though He is God. By putting the statement or instruction into the form of a Factual Condition, Elijah is trying to get the Israelites to understand more clearly what they should do.

> "A son honors his father, and a servant honors his master. **If** I, then, am a father, where is my honor? **If** I am a master, where is the reverence for me?" says Yahweh of hosts to you priests, who despise my name. (Malachi 1:6 ULT)

Yahweh has said that he is a father and a master to Israel, so even though this sounds like a hypothetical condition because it begins with "if," it is not hypothetical. This verse begins with the proverb that a son honors his father. Everyone knows that is right. But the Israelites are not honoring Yahweh. The other proverb in the verse says that a servant honors his master. Everyone knows that is right. But the Israelites are not honoring Yahweh, so it seems that he is not their master. But Yahweh is the master. Yahweh uses the form of a hypothetical condition to demonstrate that the Israelites are wrong. The second part of the condition that should occur naturally is not happening, even though the conditional statement is true.

Translation Strategies

If using the form of a hypothetical condition is confusing or would make the reader think that the speaker doubts what he is saying in the first part of the sentence, then use a statement instead. Words such as "since" or "you know that …" or "it is true that …" can be helpful to make the meaning clear.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

> "**If** Yahweh is God, worship him!" (Story 19 Frame 6 OBS)

> > "**It is true that** Yahweh is God, so worship him!"

> "A son honors his father, and a servant honors his master. **If** I, then, am a father, where is my honor? **If** I am a master, where is the reverence for me?" says Yahweh of hosts to you priests, who despise my name. (Malachi 1:6 ULT)
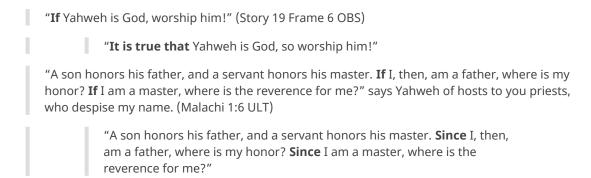
> > "A son honors his father, and a servant honors his master. **Since** I, then, am a father, where is my honor? **Since** I am a master, where is the reverence for me?"

(**Go back to:** 1 John 2:3; 2:29; 4:11; 4:12; 5:9; 5:15)

Connect — Hypothetical Conditions

Conditional Relationships

> This page answers the question: *How can I translate hypothetical conditions?*

Conditional connectors connect two clauses to indicate that one of them will happen when the other one happens. In English, the most common way to connect conditional clauses is with the words "if … then." Often, however, the word "then" is not stated.

Hypothetical Condition

Description

A Hypothetical Condition is a condition in which the second event (the "then" clause) will only take place if the first event (the "if" clause) takes place or is fulfilled in some way. Sometimes what takes place is dependent on the actions of other people.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

It is important that translators understand whether or not something is a Hypothetical Condition so that they translate it in the correct way. For example, some of God's promises to Israel were conditional, based on whether or not Israel obeyed God. However, many of God's promises to Israel were not conditional; God would keep these promises whether or not the Israelites obeyed. It is important that you (the translator) know the difference between these two types of promises and communicate each one accurately in your own language. Also, sometimes conditions are stated in an order different than the order in which they would happen. If the target language would state the clauses in a different order, then you will need to make that adjustment.

Examples From OBS and the Bible

> God promised to bless the people and protect them, **if** they obeyed these laws. But he said he would punish them **if** they did not obey them (Story 13 Frame 7 OBS)

There are two hypothetical conditions in this frame. In both of these conditions, the first event (the "if clause") is stated after the "then" clause. If this is unnatural or confusing, the clauses can be restated in the more natural order. The first hypothetical condition is: if the Israelites obeyed God, then God would bless and protect them. The second hypothetical condition is: if the Israelites did not obey God, then God would punish them.

> If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? (Genesis 4:7a ULT)

If Cain does what is right, then he will be accepted. The only way for Cain to be accepted is by doing what is right.

> … **if** this plan or this work is of men, it will be overthrown. But **if** it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. (Acts 5:38b-39aULT)

There are two hypothetical conditions here: (1) If it is true that this plan is of men, then it will be overthrown; (2) If it is true that this plan is of God, then it cannot be overthrown.

Translation Strategies

(1) If the order of clauses makes the hypothetical condition confusing, then change the order of the clauses.

(2) If it is not clear where the second event is, mark that part with a word like "then."

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the order of clauses makes the hypothetical condition confusing, then change the order of the clauses.

> God promised to bless the people and protect them **if** they obeyed these laws. But he said he would punish them **if** they did not obey them. (Story 13 Frame 7 OBS)

>> If the people obeyed these laws, God promised he would bless them and protect them. But **if** they did not obey these laws, God said that he would punish them.

(2) If it is not clear where the second event is, mark that part with a word like "then."

> God promised to bless the people and protect them, **if** they obeyed these laws. But he said he would punish them **if** they did not obey them. (Story 13 Frame 7 OBS)

>> If the people obeyed these laws, **then** God promised he would bless them and protect them. But **if** they did not obey these laws, **then** God said that he would punish them.

> ... **if** this plan or this work is of men, it will be overthrown. But **if** it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; (Acts 5:38b-39a ULT)

>> ... **if** this plan or this work is of men, **then** it will be overthrown. But **if** it is of God, **then** you will not be able to overthrow them;

(**Go back to:** 1 John 2:24)

Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship

Logical Relationships

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

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

Reason-and-Result Relationships

Description

A reason-and-result relationship is a logical relationship in which one event is the **reason** or cause for another event. The second event, then, is the **result** of the first event.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

A reason-and-result relationship can look forward — "I did Y because I wanted X to happen." But usually it is looking backward — "X happened, and so I did Y." Also, it is possible to state the reason either before or after the result. Many languages have a preferred order for the reason and the result, and it will be confusing for the reader if they are in the opposite order. Common words used to indicate a reason-and-result relationship in English are "because," "so," "therefore," and "for." Some of these words can also be used to indicate a goal relationship, so translators need to be aware of the difference between a goal relationship and a reason-and-result relationship. It is necessary for translators to understand how the two events are connected, and then communicate them clearly in their language.

If the reason and result are stated in different verses, it is still possible to put them in a different order. If you change the order of the verses, then put the verse numbers together at the beginning of the group of verses that were rearranged like this: 1-2. This is called a Verse Bridge.

Examples From OBS and the Bible

> The Jews were amazed, **because** Saul had tried to kill believers, and now he believed in Jesus! (Story 46 Frame 6 OBS)

The **reason** is the change in Saul — that he had tried to kill people who believed in Jesus, and now he himself believed in Jesus. The **result** is that the Jews were amazed. "Because" connects the two ideas and indicates that what follows it is a reason.

> Behold, a great storm arose on the sea, **so that** the boat was covered with the waves. (Matthew 8:24a ULT)

The **reason** is the great storm, and the **result** is that the boat was covered with the waves. The two events are connected by "so that." Notice that the term "so that" often indicates a goal relationship, but here the relationship is reason-and-result. This is because the sea cannot think and therefore does not have a goal.

> God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, **because** in it he rested from all his work which he had done in his creation. (Genesis 2:3 ULT)

The **result** is that God blessed and sanctified the seventh day. The **reason** is because he rested on the seventh day from his work.

> "Blessed are the poor, **for** yours is the kingdom of God." (Luke 6:20b ULT)

The **result** is that the poor are blessed. The **reason** is that the kingdom of God is theirs.

> But he raised up in their place their sons that Joshua circumcised, being uncircumcised,
> **because** they had not been circumcised on the way. (Joshua 5:7 ULT)

The **result** is that Joshua circumcised the boys and men who had been born in the wilderness. The **reason** was that they had not been circumcised while they were journeying.

Translation Strategies

If your language uses reason-and-result relationships in the same way as in the text, then use them as they are.

(1) If the order of the clauses is confusing for the reader, then change the order.

(2) If the relationship between the clauses is not clear, then use a more clear connecting word.

(3) If it is more clear to put a connecting word in the clause that does not have one, then do so.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

> God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, **because** in it he rested from all his work which
> he had done in his creation. (Genesis 2:3 ULT)

(1) God rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done in his creation. **That is why** he blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.

> Blessed are the poor, **for** yours is the kingdom of God. (Luke 6:20 ULT)

(1) The kingdom of God belongs to you who are poor. **Therefore**, the poor are blessed.

(2) Blessed are the poor, **because** yours is the kingdom of God.

(3) **The reason that** the poor are blessed **is because** yours is the kingdom of God.

> Behold, a great storm arose on the sea, **so that** the boat was covered with the waves.
> (Matthew 8:24a ULT)

(1) Behold, the boat was covered with the waves **because** a great storm arose on the sea.

(2) Behold, a great storm arose on the sea, **with the result that** the boat was covered with the waves.

(3) Behold, **because** a great storm arose on the sea, the boat was covered with the waves.

> **Since** he was not able to find out anything for certain because of the noise, he ordered that he
> be brought into the fortress. (Acts 21:34b ULT)

(1) The captain ordered that Paul be brought into the fortress, **because** he could not tell anything because of all the noise.

(2) **Because** the captain could not tell anything because of all the noise, he ordered that Paul be brought into the fortress.

(3) The captain could not tell anything because of all the noise, **so** he ordered that Paul be brought into the fortress.

(**Go back to:** 1 John 1:3; 2:3; 2:8; 2:11; 2:27; 3:1; 3:2; 3:13; 3:14; 4:8; 4:17; 4:18; 4:19; 5:3)

Direct and Indirect Quotations

Description

There are two kinds of quotations: direct quotations and indirect quotations.

A direct quotation occurs when someone reports what another person said from the viewpoint of that original speaker. People usually expect that this kind of quotation will represent the original speaker's exact words. In the example below, John would have said "I" when referring to himself, so the narrator, who is reporting John's words, uses the word "I" in the quotation to refer to John. To show that these are John's exact words, many languages put the words between quotation marks: "".

> This page answers the question: *What are direct and indirect quotations?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> [[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-pronouns]]
> *Verbs*
> [[rc://en/ta/man/translate/writing-quotations]]

- John said, "**I** do not know at what time **I** will arrive."

An indirect quotation occurs when a speaker reports what someone else said, but in this case, the speaker is reporting it from his own point of view instead and not from the original person's point of view. This kind of quotation usually contains changes in pronouns, and it often includes changes in time, in word choices, and in length. In the example below, the narrator refers to John as "he" in the quotation and uses the word "would" to replace the future tense, indicated by "will."

- John said that **he** did not know at what time **he** would arrive.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

In some languages, reported speech can be expressed by either direct or indirect quotations. In other languages, it is more natural to use one than the other. There may be a certain meaning implied by using one rather than the other. So for each quotation, translators need to decide whether it is best to translate it as a direct quotation or as an indirect quotation.

Examples From the Bible

The verses in the examples below contain both direct and indirect quotations. In the explanation below the verse, we have marked in bold the words that are quoted.

> And he commanded him to tell no one, but, "Go, show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing, according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them." (Luke 5:14 ULT)

- Indirect quote: He commanded him **to tell no one**,
- Direct quote: but told him, "**Go, show yourself to the priest …**"

> And being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with careful observation. Neither will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is among you." (Luke 17:20-21 ULT)

- Indirect quote: Being asked by the Pharisees **when the kingdom of God was coming,**
- Direct quote: he answered them and said, "**The kingdom of God is not coming with careful observation. Neither will they say, 'Look. here it is!' or 'There it is!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is among you.**"
- Direct quotes: Neither will they say, '**Look, here it is!**' or, '**There it is!**'

Translation Strategies

If the kind of quote used in the source text would work well in your language, consider using it. If the kind of quote used in that context is not natural for your language, follow these strategies.

(1) If a direct quote would not work well in your language, change it to an indirect quote.

(2) If an indirect quote would not work well in your language, change it to a direct quote.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If a direct quote would not work well in your language, change it to an indirect quote.

> And he commanded him to tell no one, but, "**Go, show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing, according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.**" (Luke 5:14 ULT)
>
>> He commanded him to tell no one, but **to go and show himself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for his cleansing according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them**.

(2) If an indirect quote would not work well in your language, change it to a direct quote.

> And he commanded him **to tell no one,** but, "Go, show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing, according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them." (Luke 5:14 ULT)
>
>> He commanded him, "**Tell no one**. But go and show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them."

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_quotations.

> Next we recommend you learn about:
>
> *[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-quotesinquotes]]*

(**Go back to:** 1 John 5:11)

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 "use**less**." Some other kinds of words also have a negative meaning, such as "lack" or "reject," or even "fight" or "evil."

A double negative occurs when a clause has two words that each have a negative meaning.

> We did this **not** because we have **no** authority … (2 Thessalonians 3:9a ULT)
>
> And this was **not** done **without** an oath! (Hebrews 7:20a ULT)
>
> Be sure of this—the wicked person will **not** go **un**punished. (Proverbs 11:21a ULT)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Double negatives mean very different things in different languages.

- In some languages, such as 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 **unfruitful**. (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 can**not** 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 **un**punished. (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:
>
> *Verbs*

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:** 1 John 3:6; 3:18)

Ellipsis

Description

An ellipsis[1] occurs when a speaker or writer leaves out one or more words that normally should be in the sentence. The speaker or writer does this because he knows that the hearer or reader will understand the meaning of the sentence and supply the words in his mind when he hears or reads the words that are there. For example:

> 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]]*

> 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:

> He makes Lebanon skip like a calf and **he makes** Sirion **skip** like a young
> ox.

> Watch carefully, therefore, how you walk—**not as unwise but as wise**. (Ephesians 5:15b ULT)

The information that the reader must understand in the second parts of these sentences can be filled in from the first parts:

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

Absolute Ellipsis

> Then when he had come near, he asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And so he
> said, "Lord, **that I might recover my sight**." (Luke 18:40b-41 ULT)

It seems that the man answered in an incomplete sentence because he wanted to be polite and not directly ask Jesus for healing. He knew that Jesus would understand that the only way he could receive his sight would be for Jesus to heal him. The complete sentence would be:

> "Lord, **I want you to heal me so** that I might receive my sight."

> To Titus, a true son in our common faith. Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ
> Jesus our Savior. (Titus 1:4 ULT)

The writer assumes that the reader will recognize this common form of a blessing or wish, so he does not need to include the full sentence, which would be:

> To Titus, a true son in our common faith. **May you receive** grace and
> peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Translation Strategies

If ellipsis would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here is another option:

(1) Add the missing words to the incomplete phrase or sentence.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Add the missing words to the incomplete phrase or sentence.

> So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor **sinners in the assembly** of the righteous. (Psalm 1:5 ULT)

> > So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, and **sinners will not stand
> > in the assembly** of the righteous.

> Then when he had come near, he asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And so he
> said, "Lord, **that I might recover my sight**." (Luke 18:40b-41 ULT)

> > Then when the man was near, Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to
> > do for you?" He said, "Lord, **I want you to heal me** that I might receive
> > my sight."

> He makes Lebanon skip like a calf **and Sirion like a young ox**. (Psalm 29:6 ULT)

> He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and **he makes** Sirion **skip** like a young ox.

(**Go back to:**)

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,"

> 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:
>
> [[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-pronouns]]

"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.

we/us (inclusive)

we/us (exclusive)

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:

When Masculine Words Include Women

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.
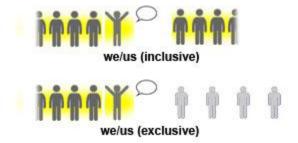
> This page answers the question: *What are the different forms of you?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-yousingular]]*
> *[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-youdual]]*

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:** 1 John 1:2; 1:4)

Generic Noun Phrases

Description

Generic noun phrases refer to people or things in general rather than to specific individuals or things. This happens frequently in proverbs, because proverbs tell about things that are true about people in general.

> This page answers the question: *What are generic noun phrases and how can I translate them?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> [[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-partsofspeech]]

> Can **a man** walk on hot coals without scorching his feet?
> So is **the man who goes in to his neighbor's wife**;
> **the one who touches her** will not go unpunished. (Proverbs 6:28-29 ULT)

The phrases in bold above do not refer to a specific man. They refer to any man who does these things.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages have different ways of showing that noun phrases refer to something in general. You (the translator) should refer to these general ideas in ways that are natural in your language.

Examples From the Bible

> The **righteous person** is kept away from trouble and it comes upon **the wicked** instead. (Proverbs 11:8 ULT)

The bold phrases above do not refer to a specific person but to anyone who does what is right or anyone who is wicked.

> People curse **the man who refuses to sell grain**. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)

This does not refer to a particular man, but to any person who refuses to sell grain.

> Yahweh gives favor to **a good man**, but he condemns **a man who makes evil plans**. (Proverbs 12:2 ULT)

The phrase "a good man" does not refer to a particular man, but to any person who is good. The phrase "a man who makes evil plans" does not refer to a particular man, but to any person who makes evil plans.

Translation Strategies

If your language can use the same wording as in the ULT to refer to people or things in general rather than to specific individuals or things, consider using the same wording. If not, here are some strategies you might use.

(1) Use the word "the" in the noun phrase.

(2) Use the word "a" in the noun phrase.

(3) Use the word "any," as in "any person" or "anyone."

(4) Use the plural form, as in "people."

(5) Use any other way that is natural in your language.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use the word "the" in the noun phrase.

> Yahweh gives favor to **a good man**, but he condemns **a man who makes evil plans**. (Proverbs 12:2 ULT)
>
>> "Yahweh gives favor to **the good man**, but he condemns **the man who makes evil plans**." (Proverbs 12:2)

(2) Use the word "a" in the noun phrase.

> People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)
>
>> "People curse **a man** who refuses to sell grain."

(3) Use the word "any," as in "any person" or "anyone."

> People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)
>
>> "People curse **any man** who refuses to sell grain."

(4) Use the plural form, as in "people" (or in this sentence, "men").

> People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)
>
>> "People curse **men** who refuse to sell grain"

(5) Use any other way that is natural in your language.

> People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)
>
>> "People curse **whoever** refuses to sell grain."

Next we recommend you learn about:

When Masculine Words Include Women

(**Go back to:** 1 John 2:10; 2:17; 2:22; 4:21; 5:10)

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**.

Next we recommend you learn about:

(**Go back to:** 1 John 3:18; 5:20)

Doublet

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:
>
> *Translate Unknowns*

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 1 John; 1 John 3:12)

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.

> 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]]

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.

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:** 1 John 2:27; 3:18)

Hypothetical Situations

Consider these phrases: "If the sun stopped shining …" "What if the sun stopped shining …" "Suppose the sun stopped shining …" and "If only the sun had not stopped shining." We use such expressions to set up hypothetical situations, imagining what might have happened or what could happen in the future but probably will not. We also use them to express regret or wishes. Hypothetical expressions occur often in the Bible. You (the translator) need to translate them in a way that people will know that the event did not actually happen and so that they will understand why the event was imagined.

> This page answers the question: *What is a hypothetical situation?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> [[rc://en/ta/man/translate/writing-intro]]

Description

Hypothetical situations are situations that are not real. They can be in the past, present, or future. Hypothetical situations in the past and present have not happened, are not happening now, and ones in the future are not expected to happen.

People sometimes tell about conditions and what would happen if those conditions were met, but they know that these things have not happened or probably will not happen. (The conditions comprise a phrase that starts with "if.")

- If he had lived to be 100 years old, he would have seen his grandson's grandson. (But he did not.)
- If he lived to be 100 years old, he would still be alive today. (But he is not.)
- If he lives to be 100 years old, he will see his grandson's grandson. (But he probably will not.)

People sometimes express wishes about things that have not happened or that are not expected to happen.

- I wish he had come.
- I wish he were here.
- I wish he would come.

People sometimes express regrets about things that have not happened or that are not expected to happen.

- If only he had come.
- If only he were here.
- If only he would come.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Translators need to recognize the different kinds of hypothetical situations in the Bible and understand that they are unreal.
- Translators need to know their own language's ways of talking about different kinds of hypothetical situations.

Examples From the Bible

Hypothetical Situations in the Past

> "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! **If the mighty deeds had been done** in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, **they would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes." (Matthew 11:21 ULT)

Here in Matthew 11:21, Jesus said that **if** the people living in the ancient cities of Tyre and Sidon had been able to see the miracles that he performed, they would have repented long ago. The people of Tyre and Sidon did not actually see his miracles, and they did not repent. He said this to rebuke the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida who had seen his miracles and yet did not repent.

> Martha then said to Jesus, "Lord, **if you had been here, my brother would not have died**." (John 11:21 ULT)

Martha said this to express her wish that Jesus would have come sooner so that her brother would not have died. But Jesus did not come sooner and her brother did die.

Hypothetical Situations in the Present

> And no man puts new wine into old wineskins. **But if he did do that, the new wine would burst the wineskins, and it would be spilled out, and the wineskins would be destroyed**. (Luke 5:37 ULT)

Jesus told about what would happen if a person were to put new wine into old wineskins. But no one would do that. He used this imaginary situation as an example to show that there are times when it is unwise to mix new things with old things. He did this so that people could understand why his disciples were not fasting as people traditionally did.

> Jesus said to them, "What man would there be among you, who, **if he had just one sheep, and if this sheep fell into a deep hole on the Sabbath, would not grasp hold of it and lift it out**?" (Matthew 12:11 ULT)

Jesus asked the religious leaders what they would do on the Sabbath if one of their sheep fell into a hole. He was not saying that their sheep would fall into a hole. He used this imaginary situation to show them that they were wrong to judge him for healing people on the Sabbath.

Hypothetical Situation in the Future

> **Unless those days are shortened, no flesh would be saved**. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened. (Matthew 24:22 ULT)

Jesus was talking about a future time when very bad things would happen. He told what would happen if those days of trouble were to last a long time. He did this to show how bad those days will be—so bad that if they lasted a long time, no one would be saved. But then he clarified that God will shorten those days of trouble so that the elect (those he has chosen) will be saved.

Expressing Emotion About a Hypothetical Situation

People sometimes talk about hypothetical situations in order to express regrets and wishes. Regrets are about the past and wishes are about the present and future.

> The Israelites said to them, "**If only we had died by Yahweh's hand in the land of Egypt when we were sitting by the pots of meat and were eating bread to the full.** For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill our whole community with hunger." (Exodus 16:3 ULT)

Here the Israelites were afraid that they would have to suffer and die of hunger in the wilderness, and so they wished that they had stayed in Egypt and died there with full stomachs. They were complaining, expressing regret that this had not happened.

> I know what you have done, and that you are neither cold nor hot. **I wish that you were either cold or hot!** (Revelation 3:15 ULT)

Jesus wished that the people were either hot or cold, but they are neither. He was rebuking them, expressing anger at this.

Translation Strategies

Find out how people speaking your language show:

- that something could have happened, but did not.
- that something could be true now, but is not.
- that something could happen in the future, but will not unless something changes.
- that they wish for something, but it does not happen.
- that they regret that something did not happen.

Use your language's ways of showing these kinds of things.

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_hypo.

(**Go back to:** 1 John 1:6; 1:7; 1:8; 1:9; 1:10; 2:1; 2:4; 2:5; 2:9; 2:10; 2:15; 3:17; 3:20; 3:21; 4:15; 4:20; 5:16)

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:

> 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]]

- You are pulling my leg. (This means, "You are teasing me by telling me something that is not true.")
- Do not push the envelope. (This means, "Do not take a matter to its extreme.")
- This house is under water. (This means, "The debt owed for this house is greater than its actual value.")
- We are painting the town red. (This means, "We are going around town tonight celebrating very intensely.")

Description

An idiom is a phrase that has a special meaning to the people of the language or culture who use it. Its meaning is different than what a person would understand from the meanings of the individual words that form the phrase.

> he **set his face** to go to Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51b ULT)

The words "set his face" is an idiom that means "decided."

Sometimes people may be able to understand an idiom from another culture, but it might sound like a strange way to express the meaning.

> I am not worthy that you would **come under my roof**. (Luke 7:6b ULT)

The phrase "come under my roof" is an idiom that means "enter my house."

> Put these words **into your ears**. (Luke 9:44a ULT)

This idiom means "Listen carefully and remember what I say."

Purpose: An idiom is probably created in a culture somewhat by accident when someone describes something in an unusual way. But, when that unusual way communicates the message powerfully and people understand it clearly, other people start to use it. After a while, it becomes a normal way of talking in that language.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- People can easily misunderstand idioms in the original languages of the Bible if they do not know the cultures that produced the Bible.
- People can easily misunderstand idioms that are in the source language Bibles if they do not know the cultures that made those translations.
- It is useless to translate idioms literally (according to the meaning of each word) when the target language audience will not understand what they mean.

Examples From the Bible

> Then all Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Look, we are your **flesh and bone**." (1 Chronicles 11:1 ULT)

This means, "We and you belong to the same race, the same family."

> The children of Israel went out **with a high hand**. (Exodus 14:8b ASV)

This means, "The Israelites went out defiantly."

> the one who **lifts up my head** (Psalm 3:3b ULT)

This means, "the one who helps me."

Translation Strategies

If the idiom would be clearly understood in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other options.

(1) Translate the meaning plainly without using an idiom.

(2) Use a different idiom that people use in your own language that has the same meaning.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Translate the meaning plainly without using an idiom.

> Then all Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Look, we are your **flesh and bone**." (1 Chronicles 11:1 ULT)
>
> > Look, we all **belong to the same nation**.

> Then he **set his face** to go to Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51b ULT)
>
> > He started to travel to Jerusalem, **determined to reach it**.

> I am not worthy that you would come **under my roof**. (Luke 7:6b ULT)
>
> > I am not worthy that you should enter **my house**.

(2) Use an idiom that people use in your own language that has the same meaning.

> Put these words **into your ears.** (Luke 9:44a ULT)
>
> > **Be all ears** when I say these words to you.

> My **eyes grow dim** from grief. (Psalm 6:7a ULT)
>
> > I am crying my **eyes out**

Making Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information Explicit

Description

Some languages have ways of saying things that are natural for them but sound strange when translated into Other Languages. One of the reasons for this is that some languages say things explicitly that some Other Languages would leave as implicit information.

> This page answers the question: *What can I do if some of the explicit information seems confusing, unnatural, or unnecessary in our language?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information*

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

If you translate all of the explicit information from the source language into the explicit information in the target language, it could sound foreign, unnatural, or perhaps even unintelligent if the target language would not make that information explicit. Instead, it is best to leave that kind of information implicit in the target language.

Examples from the Bible

> **And** Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it and drew near to the door of the tower **to burn it with fire**. (Judges 9:52 ESV)

In Biblical Hebrew, it is normal to start most sentences with a conjunction such as "and" to show the connection between sentences. In English, it is not natural to do so, it is quite tiresome for the English reader, and it gives the impression that the author is uneducated. In English, it is best to leave the idea of connection between sentences implicit in most cases and not translate the conjunction explicitly.

In Biblical Hebrew, it is normal to say that something was burned with fire. In English, the idea of fire is included in the action of burning, and so it is unnatural to state both ideas explicitly. It is enough to say that something was burned and leave the idea of fire implicit.

> But the centurion **answered and said**, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof" (Matthew 8:8a ULT)

In the biblical languages, it was normal to introduce direct speech with two verbs of speaking. One verb indicated the action, and the other introduced the words of the speaker. English speakers do not do this, so it is very unnatural and confusing to use two verbs. For the English speaker, the idea of speaking is included in the idea of answering. Using two verbs in English implies two separate speeches, rather than just one. So in English, it is better to use only one verb of speaking.

Translation Strategies

(1) If the explicit information of the source language sounds natural in the target language, then translate it as explicit information.

(2) If the explicit information does not sound natural in the target language or seems unnecessary or confusing, leave the explicit information implicit. Only do this if the reader can understand this information from the context. You can test this by asking the reader a question about the passage.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the explicit information of the source language sounds natural in the target language, then translate it as explicit information.

> • There would be no change to the text using this strategy, so no examples are given here.

(2) If the explicit information does not sound natural in the target language or seems unnecessary or confusing, make the explicit information implicit. Only do this if the reader can understand this information from the context. You can test this by asking the reader a question about the passage.

> **And** Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it and drew near to the door of the tower **to burn it with fire**. (Judges 9:52 ESV)
>
> > Abimelech came to the tower and fought against it, and he approached the door of the tower **to burn it**. (Or) … **to set it on fire**.

In English, it is clear that the action of this verse follows the action of the previous verse without the use of the connector "and" at the beginning, so it was omitted. Also, the words "with fire" were left out, because this information is communicated implicitly by the word "burn." An alternative translation for "to burn it" is "to set it on fire." It is not natural in English to use both "burn" and "fire," so the English translator should choose only one of them. You can test if the readers understood the implicit information by asking, "How would the door burn?" If they knew it was by fire, then they have understood the implicit information. Or, if you chose the second option, you could ask, "What happens to a door that is set on fire?" If the readers answer, "It burns," then they have understood the implicit information.

> But the centurion **answered and said**, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof" (Matthew 8:8a ULT)
>
> > The centurion **answered**, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof"

In English, the information that the centurion responded by speaking is included in the verb "answered," so the verb "said" can be left implicit. You can test if the readers understood the implicit information by asking, "How did the centurion answer?" If they knew it was by speaking, then they have understood the implicit information.

> **He opened his mouth** and taught them, saying, (Matthew 5:2 ULT)
>
> > **He began to** teach them, saying, (Or) He taught them, saying,

In English, it would be very strange to include the information that Jesus opened his mouth when he spoke. That information is included in the verbs "taught" and "saying," so that phrase can be omitted and that information left implicit. However, "he opened his mouth" is an idiom that indicates the beginning of a speech, so that information may be included, or it may also be left implicit.

> Next we recommend you learn about:
>
> *[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-extrainfo]]*

(**Go back to:** 1 John 1:1)

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]]
> [[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-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.

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.

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.

> 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]]*

> **The rich man** had huge numbers of flocks and herds. (2 Samuel 12:2 ULT)

The adjective "rich" comes before the word "man" and describes "man."

> **He will not be rich**; his wealth will not last. (Job 15:29a ULT)

The adjective "rich" comes after the verb "be" and describes "He."

Here is a sentence that shows that "rich" can also function as a noun.

> **The rich** must not give more than the half shekel, and **the poor** must not give less. (Exodus 30:15b ULT)

In Exodus 30:15, the word "rich" acts as a noun in the phrase "the rich," and it refers to rich people. The word "poor" also acts as a noun and refers to poor people.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Many times in the Bible adjectives are used as nouns to describe a group of people.
- Some languages do not use adjectives in this way.
- Readers of these languages may think that the text is talking about one particular person when it is really talking about the group of people whom the adjective describes.

Examples From the Bible

> The scepter of wickedness must not rule in the land of **the righteous**. (Psalms 125:3a ULT)

"The righteous" here are people who are righteous, not one particular righteous person.

> Blessed are **the meek**. (Matthew 5:5a ULT)

"The meek" here are all people who are meek, not one particular meek person.

Translation Strategies

If your language uses adjectives as nouns to refer to a class of people, consider using the adjectives in this way. If it would sound strange, or if the meaning would be unclear or wrong, here is another option:

(1) Use the adjective with a plural form of the noun that the adjective describes.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use the adjective with a plural form of the noun that the adjective describes.

> The scepter of wickedness must not rule in the land of **the righteous**. (Psalms 125:3a ULT)

>> The scepter of wickedness must not rule in the land of **righteous people**.

> Blessed are **the meek**. (Matthew 5:5a ULT)

>> Blessed are **people who are meek**.

(**Go back to:** 1 John 2:1; 2:7; 2:13; 2:14; 2:20; 3:2; 3:12; 3:21; 3:22; 4:1; 4:7; 4:11; 5:18; 5:20)

Parallelism

Description

Parallelism is a poetic device in which two phrases or clauses that are similar in structure or idea are used together. The following are some of the different kinds of parallelism.

> This page answers the question: *What is parallelism?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro]]*

- The second clause or phrase means the same as the first. This is called synonymous parallelism.
- The second clarifies or strengthens the meaning of the first.
- The second completes what is said in the first.
- The second says something that contrasts with the first, but adds to the same idea.

Parallelism is most commonly found in Old Testament poetry, such as in the books of Psalms and Proverbs. It also occurs in Greek in the New Testament, both in the four gospels and in the apostles' letters.

This article will only discuss synonymous parallelism, the kind in which the two parallel phrases mean the same thing, because that is the kind that presents a problem for translation. Note that we use the term "synonymous parallelism" for long phrases or clauses that have the same meaning. We use the term "doublet" for words or very short phrases that mean basically the same thing and are used together.

In the poetry of the original languages, synonymous parallelism has several effects:

- It shows that something is very important by saying it more than once and in more than one way.
- It helps the hearer to think more deeply about the idea by saying it in different ways.
- It makes the language more beautiful and raises it above the ordinary way of speaking.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages would not use synonymous parallelism. They would either think it odd that someone said the same thing twice, or, since it is in the Bible, they would think that the two phrases must have some difference in meaning. For them it would be confusing, rather than beautiful. They would not understand that the repetition of the idea in different words serves to emphasize the idea.

Examples From the Bible

> Your word is a lamp to my feet
>
> and a light for my path. (Psalm 119:105 ULT)

Both parts of the sentence are metaphors saying that God's word teaches people how to live. That is the single idea. The words "lamp" and "light" are similar in meaning because they refer to light. The words "my feet" and "my path" are related because they refer to a person walking. Walking is a metaphor for living.

> You make him to rule over the works of your hands;
>
> you have put all things under his feet (Psalm 8:6 ULT)

Both lines say that God made man the ruler of everything. "To rule over" is the same idea as putting things "under his feet," and "the works of your [God's] hands" is the same idea as "all things."

> Yahweh sees everything a person does
>
> and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)

The first phrase and the second phrase mean the same thing. There are three ideas that are the same between these two phrases. "Sees" corresponds to "watches," "everything...does" corresponds to "all the paths...takes," and "a person" corresponds to "he."

> Praise Yahweh, all you nations;
>
> exalt him, all you peoples! (Psalm 117:1 ULT)

Both parts of this verse tell people everywhere to praise Yahweh. The words 'Praise' and 'exalt' mean the same thing. The words 'Yahweh' and 'him' refer to the same person. The terms 'all you nations' and 'all you peoples' refer to the same people.

> For Yahweh has a lawsuit with his people,
>
> and he will fight in court against Israel. (Micah 6:2b ULT)

The two parts of this verse say that Yahweh has a serious disagreement with his people, Israel. These are not two different disagreements or two different groups of people.

Translation Strategies

For most kinds of parallelism, it is good to translate both of the clauses or phrases. For synonymous parallelism, it is good to translate both clauses if people in your language understand that the purpose of saying something twice is to strengthen a single idea. But if your language does not use parallelism in this way, then consider using one of the following translation strategies.

(1) Combine the ideas of both clauses into one.

(2) If it appears that the clauses are used together to show that what they say is really true, you could combine the ideas of both clauses into one and include words that emphasize the truth such as "truly" or "certainly."

(3) If it appears that the clauses are used together to intensify an idea in them, you could combine the ideas of both clauses into one and use words like "very," "completely," or "all."

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Combine the ideas of both clauses into one.

> Until now you have dealt deceitfully with me and you have spoken lies to me. (Judges 16:13, ULT)

Delilah expressed this idea twice to emphasize that she was very upset.

> > Until now you have deceived me with your lies.

> Yahweh sees everything a person does and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)

The phrase "all the paths he takes" is a metaphor for "all he does."

> > Yahweh pays attention to everything a person does.

> For Yahweh has a lawsuit with his people, and he will fight in court against Israel. (Micah 6:2 ULT)

This parallelism describes one serious disagreement that Yahweh had with one group of people. If this is unclear, the phrases can be combined:

> > For Yahweh has a lawsuit with his people, Israel.

(2) If it appears that the clauses are used together to show that what they say is really true, you could combine the ideas of both clauses into one and include words that emphasize the truth such as "truly" or "certainly."

> Yahweh sees everything a person does and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)

> > Yahweh truly sees everything a person does.

> You make him to rule over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet (Psalm 8:6 ULT)

> > You have certainly made him to rule over everything that you have created.

(3) If it appears that the clauses are used together to intensify an idea in them, you could combine the ideas of both clauses into one and use words like "very," "completely" or "all."

> Until now you have dealt deceitfully with me and you have spoken lies to me. (Judges 16:13, ULT)

> > All you have done is lie to me.

> Yahweh sees everything a person does and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)

> > Yahweh sees absolutely everything that a person does.

Next we recommend you learn about:

Personification

Personification

Description

Personification is a figure of speech in which someone speaks of something as if it could do things that animals or people can do. People often do this because it makes it easier to talk about things that we cannot see:

> This page answers the question: *What is personification?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> [[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-intro]]

Such as wisdom:

> Does not Wisdom call out? (Proverbs 8:1a ULT)

Or sin:

> Sin crouches at the door. (Genesis 4:7b ULT)

People also use personification because it is sometimes easier to talk about people's relationships with non-human things such as wealth as if they were relationships between people.

> You cannot serve God and wealth. (Matthew 6:24b ULT)

In each case, the purpose of the personification is to highlight a certain characteristic of the non-human thing. As in metaphor, the reader needs to think of the way that the thing is like a certain kind of person.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Some languages do not use personification.
- Some languages use personification only in certain situations.

Examples From the Bible

> You cannot **serve** God and wealth. (Matthew 6:24b ULT)

Jesus speaks of wealth as if it were a master whom people might serve. Loving money and basing one's decisions on it is like serving it as a slave would serve his master.

> Does not Wisdom **call** out? Does not Understanding **raise her voice**? (Proverbs 8:1 ULT)

The author speaks of wisdom and understanding as if they were woman who calls out to teach people. This means that they are not something hidden, but something obvious that people should pay attention to.

Translation Strategies

If the personification would be understood clearly, consider using it. If it would not be understood, here are some other ways for translating it.

(1) Add words or phrases to make the human (or animal) characteristic clear.

(2) In addition to Strategy (1), use words such as "like" or "as" to show that the sentence is not to be understood literally.

(3) Find a way to translate it without the personification.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Add words or phrases to make the human (or animal) characteristic clear.

> **Sin crouches** at the door. (Genesis 4:7b ULT) — God speaks of sin as if it were a wild animal that is waiting for the chance to attack. This shows how dangerous sin is. An additional phrase can be added to make this danger clear.
>
> > **Sin** is at your door, **waiting to attack you.**

(2) In addition to Strategy (1), use words such as "like" or "as" to show that the sentence is not to be understood literally.

> Sin crouches at the door. (Genesis 4:7b ULT) — This can be translated with the word "as."
>
> > Sin is crouching at the door, **just as a wild animal does as it waits to attack a person.**.

(3) Find a way to translate it without the personification.

> Even the **winds and the sea obey him**. (Matthew 8:27b ULT) — The men speak of the "wind and the sea" as if they are able to hear and obey Jesus, just as people can. This could also be translated without the idea of obedience by speaking of Jesus controlling them.
>
> > He even **controls the winds and the sea**.

NOTE: We have broadened our definition of "personification" to include "zoomorphism" (speaking of other things as if they had animal characteristics) and "anthropomorphism" (speaking of non-human things as if they had human characteristics) because the translation strategies for them are the same.

> Next we recommend you learn about:
>
> *[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-apostrophe]]*
> *[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/bita-part1]]*

(**Go back to:** 1 John 3:15; 4:18; 5:7)

Possession

Description

In English, the grammatical form that commonly indicates possession is also used to indicate a variety of relationships between people and objects or people and other people. In English, that grammatical relationship is shown by using the word "**of**," by using **an apostrophe and the letter "s"**, or by using a **possessive pronoun**. The following examples are different ways to indicate that my grandfather owns a house.

> This page answers the question: *What is possession and how can I translate phrases that show it?*
>
> 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]]

- the house **of** my grandfather
- my grandfather**'s** house
- **his** house

Possession is used in Hebrew, Greek, and English for a variety of situations. Here are a few common situations that it is used for.

- Ownership — Someone owns something.

    ◦ My clothes — The clothes that I own

- Social Relationship — Someone has some kind of social relationship with another.

    ◦ my mother — the woman who gave birth to me, or the woman who cared for me

    ◦ my teacher — the person who teaches me

- Association — A particular thing is associated with a particular person, place, or thing.

    ◦ David's sickness — the sickness that David is experiencing

    ◦ the fear of the Lord — the fear that is appropriate for a human being to have when relating to the Lord

- Contents — Something has something in it.

    ◦ a bag of clothes — a bag that has clothes in it, or a bag that is full of clothes

- Part and whole: One thing is part of another.

    ◦ my head — the head that is part of my body

    ◦ the roof of a house — the roof that is part of a house

In some languages there is a special form of possession, termed **inalienable possession.** This form of possession is used for things that cannot be removed from you, as opposed to things you could lose. In the examples above, *my head* and *my mother* are examples of inalienable possession (at least in some languages), while *my clothes* or *my teacher* would be alienably possessed. What may be considered alienable vs. inalienable may differ by language.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- You (the translator) need to understand the relationship between two ideas represented by the two nouns when one is in the grammatical relationship of possessing the other.
- Some languages do not use grammatical possession for all of the situations that your source text Bible might use it for.

Examples From the Bible

Ownership — In the example below, the son owned the money.

> The younger son … wasted his wealth by living recklessly. (Luke 15:13b)

Social Relationship — In the example below, the disciples were people who learned from John.

> Then **the disciples of John** came to him. (Matthew 9:14a ULT)

Association — In the example below, the gospel is the message associated with Paul because he preaches it.

> Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, from the seed of David, according to **my gospel**, (2 Timothy 2:8 ULT)

Material — In the example below, the material used for making the crowns was gold.

> On their heads were something like **crowns of gold.** (Revelation 9:7b)

Contents — In the example below, the cup has water in it.

> For whoever gives you **a cup of water** to drink … will not lose his reward. (Mark 9:41 ULT)

Part of a whole — In the example below, the door was a part of the palace.

> But Uriah slept at **the door of the king's palace.** (2 Samuel 11:9a ULT)

Part of a group — In the example below, "us" refers to the whole group and "each one" refers to the individual members.

> Now to **each one of us** grace has been given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (Ephesians 4:7 ULT)

Events and Possession

Sometimes one or both of the nouns is an abstract noun that refers to an event or action. In the examples below, the abstract nouns are in **bold** print. These are just some of the relationships that are possible between two nouns when one of them refers to an event.

Subject — Sometimes the word after "of" tells who would do the action named by the first noun. In the example below, **John baptized people**.

> The **baptism of John**, was it from heaven or from men? Answer me. (Mark 11:30)

In the example below, **Christ loves us**.

> Who will separate us from the **love of Christ**? (Romans 8:35)

Object — Sometimes the word after "of" tells who or what something would happen to. In the example below, **people love money**.

> For the **love of money** is a root of all kinds of evil. (1 Timothy 6:10a ULT)

Instrument — Sometimes the word after "of" tells how something would happen. In the example below, God would **punish people by sending enemies to attack them with swords**.

> Then be afraid of the sword, because wrath brings **the punishment of the sword**. (Job 19:29a ULT)

Representation — In the example below, John was baptizing people who were repenting of their sins. They were being baptized to show that they were repenting. Their **baptism represented their repentance**.

> John came, baptizing in the wilderness and preaching **a baptism of repentance** for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 1:4 ULT)

Strategies for learning what the relationship is between the two nouns

(1) Read the surrounding verses to see if they help you to understand the relationship between the two nouns.

(2) Read the verse in the UST. Sometimes it shows the relationship clearly.

(3) See what the notes say about it.

Translation Strategies

If possession would be a natural way to show a particular relationship between two nouns, consider using it. If it would be strange or hard to understand, consider these.

(1) Use an adjective to show that one noun describes the other.

(2) Use a verb to show how the two are related.

(3) If one of the nouns refers to an event, translate it as a verb.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use an adjective to show that one noun describes the other.

> On their heads were something like **crowns of gold.** (Revelation 9:7b)

>> "On their heads were **gold crowns**"

(2) Use a verb to show how the two are related.

> Whoever gives you **a cup of water** to drink … will not lose his reward. (Mark 9:41 ULT)

>> Whoever gives you a **cup that has water in it** to drink … will not lose his reward.

> Wealth is worthless on **the day of wrath.** (Proverbs 11:4a ULT)

>> Wealth is worthless on **the day when God shows his wrath**.
>> or:
>> Wealth is worthless on the **day when God punishes people because of his wrath**.

(3) If one of the nouns refers to an event, translate it as a verb. (In the example below, there are two possession relationships, "punishment of Yahweh" and "your God.")

> Notice that I am not speaking to your children, who have not known or seen **the punishment of Yahweh your God.** (Deuteronomy 11:2a ULT)

>> Notice that I am not speaking to your children who have not known or seen **how Yahweh, the God whom you worship, punished the people of Egypt**.

> You will only observe and see the **punishment of the wicked**. (Psalms 91:8 ULT)

>> You will only observe and see **how Yahweh punishes the wicked**.

> You will receive **the gift of the Holy Spirit**. (Acts 2:38b ULT)

>> You will receive the **Holy Spirit, whom God will give to you**.

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:
>
> [[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-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.

Proverbs

Description

Proverbs are short sayings that give wise advice or teach something that is generally true about life. People enjoy proverbs because they give a lot of wisdom in few words. Proverbs in the Bible often use metaphor and parallelism. Proverbs should not be understood as absolute and unchangeable laws. Rather, proverbs offer general advice to a person about how to live his life.

> This page answers the question: *What are proverbs, and how can I translate them?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *Metaphor*
> *Parallelism*
> *[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/writing-intro]]*

> Hatred stirs up conflicts, but love covers over all offenses. (Proverbs 10:12 ULT)

Here is another example from the book of Proverbs.

> Look at the ant, you lazy person, consider her ways, and be wise. It has no commander, officer, or ruler, yet it prepares its food in the summer, and during the harvest it stores up what it will eat. (Proverbs 6:6-8 ULT)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Each language has its own ways of saying proverbs. There are many proverbs in the Bible. They need to be translated in the way that people say proverbs in your language so that people recognize them as proverbs and understand what they teach.

Examples From the Bible

> A good name is to be chosen over great riches,
>
> and favor is better than silver and gold. (Proverbs 22:1 ULT)

This means that it is better to be a good person and to have a good reputation than it is to have a lot of money.

> Like vinegar on the teeth and smoke in the eyes,
>
> so is the sluggard to those who send him. (Proverbs 10:26 ULT)

This means that a lazy person is very annoying to those who send him to do something.

> The way of Yahweh protects those who have integrity,
>
> but it is destruction for the wicked. (Proverbs 10:29 ULT)

This means that Yahweh protects people who do what is right, but he destroys those who are wicked.

Translation Strategies

If translating a proverb literally would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider doing that. If not, here are some options:

(1) Find out how people say proverbs in your language, and use one of those ways.

(2) If certain objects in the proverb are not known to many people in your language group, consider replacing

them with objects that people know and that function in the same way in your language.

(3) Substitute a proverb in your language that has the same teaching as the proverb in the Bible.

(4) Give the same teaching but not in a form of a proverb.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Find out how people say proverbs in your language, and use one of those ways.

> A good name is to be chosen over great riches,
>
> and favor is better than silver and gold. (Proverbs 22:1 ULT)

Here are some ideas for ways that people might say a proverb in their language.

>> It is better to have a good name than to have great riches,
>>
>> and to be favored by people than to have silver and gold.
>>
>> Wise people choose a good name over great riches,
>>
>> and favor over silver and gold.
>
>> Try to have a good reputation rather than great riches.
>
>> Will riches really help you?
>
>> I would rather have a good reputation.

(2) If certain objects in the proverb are not known to many people in your language group, consider replacing them with objects that people know and that function in the same way in your language.

> Like **snow in summer** or rain in harvest,
>
> so a fool does not deserve honor. (Proverbs 26:1 ULT)

>> It is not natural for **a cold wind to blow in the hot season** or for it to rain in the harvest season;
>>
>> And it is not natural to honor a foolish person.

(3) Substitute a proverb in your language that has the same teaching as the proverb in the Bible.

> Do not boast about tomorrow,
>
> for you do not know what a day may bring. (Proverbs 27:1a ULT)

>> Do not count your chickens before they hatch.

(4) Give the same teaching but not in a form of a proverb.

> There is a generation that curses their father
>
> and does not bless their mother.
>
> There is a generation that is pure in their own eyes,

> and yet they are not washed of their filth. (Proverbs 30:11-12 ULT)

>> People who do not respect their parents think that they are righteous,

>> and they do not turn away from their sin.

(**Go back to:** 1 John 5:1)

Rhetorical Question

A rhetorical question is a question that a speaker asks when he is more interested in expressing his attitude about something than in getting information about it. Speakers use rhetorical questions to express deep emotion or to encourage hearers to think deeply about something. The Bible contains many rhetorical questions, often to express surprise, to rebuke or scold the hearer, or to teach. Speakers of some languages use rhetorical questions for other purposes as well.

This page answers the question: *What are rhetorical questions 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]]
[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-sentencetypes]]

Description

A rhetorical question is a question that strongly expresses the speaker's attitude toward something. Often the speaker is not looking for information at all. Or, if he is asking for information, it is not usually the information that the question appears to ask for. The speaker is more interested in expressing his attitude than in getting information.

> But those who stood by said, "**Are you insulting the high priest of God?**"(Acts 23:4 ULT)

The people who asked Paul this question were not asking if he was insulting God's high priest. Rather, they used this question to accuse Paul of insulting the high priest.

The Bible contains many rhetorical questions. These rhetorical questions might be used for the purposes: of expressing attitudes or feelings, rebuking people, teaching something by reminding people of something they know and encouraging them to apply it to something new, or introducing something they want to talk about.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Some languages do not use rhetorical questions; for them a question is always a request for information.
- Some languages use rhetorical questions, but for purposes that are different or more limited than in the Bible.
- Because of these differences between languages, some readers might misunderstand the purpose of a rhetorical question in the Bible.

Examples From the Bible

> Do you not still rule the kingdom of Israel? (1 Kings 21:7b ULT)

Jezebel used the question above to remind King Ahab of something he already knew: he still ruled the kingdom of Israel. The rhetorical question made her point more strongly than if she had merely stated it, because it forced Ahab to admit the point himself. She did this in order to rebuke him for being unwilling to take over a poor man's property. She was implying that, since he was the king of Israel, he had the power to take the man's property.

> **Will a virgin forget her jewelry, a bride her veils?** Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number! (Jeremiah 2:32 ULT)

God used the question above to remind his people of something they already knew: a young woman would never forget her jewelry or a bride forget her veils. He then rebuked his people for forgetting him who is so much greater than those things.

> Why did I not die when I came out from the womb? (Job 3:11a ULT)

Job used the question above to show deep emotion. This rhetorical question expresses how sad he was that he did not die as soon as he was born. He wished that he had not lived.

> And how has this happened to me that the mother of my Lord would come to me? (Luke 1:43 ULT)

Elizabeth used the question above to show how surprised and happy she was that the mother of her Lord came to her.

> Or what man is there among you, of whom his son will ask for a loaf of bread, but he will give him a stone? (Matthew 7:9 ULT)

Jesus used the question above to remind the people of something they already knew: a good father would never give his son something bad to eat. By introducing this point, Jesus could go on to teach them about God with his next rhetorical question:

> Therefore, if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him? (Matthew 7:11 ULT)

Jesus used this question to teach the people in an emphatic way that God gives good things to those who ask him.

> **What is the kingdom of God like, and what can I compare it to?** It is like a mustard seed that a man took and threw into his garden … (Luke 13:18b-19a ULT)

Jesus used the question above to introduce what he was going to talk about. He was about to compare the kingdom of God to something. In this case, he compared the kingdom of God to a mustard seed.

Translation Strategies

In order to translate a rhetorical question accurately, first be sure that the question you are translating truly is a rhetorical question and is not an information question. Ask yourself, "Does the person asking the question already know the answer to the question?" If so, it is a rhetorical question. Or, if no one answers the question, did the person who asked it expect to receive an answer? If not, it is a rhetorical question.

When you are sure that the question is rhetorical, then be sure that you understand the purpose for the rhetorical question. Is it to encourage or rebuke or shame the hearer? Is it to bring up a new topic? Is it to do something else?

When you know the purpose of the rhetorical question, then think of the most natural way to express that purpose in the target language. It might be as a question, or a statement, or an exclamation.

If using the rhetorical question would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider doing so. If not, here are other options:

(1) Add the answer after the question.
(2) Change the rhetorical question to a statement or exclamation.
(3) Change the rhetorical question to a statement, and then follow it with a short question.
(4) Change the form of the question so that it communicates in your language what the original speaker communicated in his.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Add the answer after the question.

> **Will a virgin forget her jewelry, a bride her veils?** Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number! (Jeremiah 2:32 ULT)

> > Will a virgin forget her jewelry, a bride her veils? **Of course not!** Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number!

> Or what man is there among you, of whom his son will ask for a loaf of bread, but he will give him a stone? (Matthew 7:9 ULT)

> > Or what man is there among you, of whom his son will ask for a loaf of bread, but he will give him a stone? **None of you would do that!**

(2) Change the rhetorical question to a statement or exclamation.

> **What is the kingdom of God like, and what can I compare it to?** It is like a mustard seed. (Luke 13:18-19a ULT)

> > **This is what the kingdom of God is like.** It is like a mustard seed …

> **Are you insulting the high priest of God?** (Acts 23:4b ULT) (Acts 23:4 ULT)

> > **You should not insult God's high priest!**

> **Why did I not die when I came out from the womb?** (Job 3:11a ULT)

> > **I wish I had died when I came out from the womb!**

> **And how has this happened to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?** (Luke 1:43 ULT)

> > **How wonderful it is that the mother of my Lord has come to me!**

(3) Change the rhetorical question to a statement, and then follow it with a short question.

> **Do you not still rule** the kingdom of Israel? (1 Kings 21:7b ULT)

> > You still rule the kingdom of Israel, **do you not?**

(4) Change the form of the question so that it communicates in your language what the orignal speaker communicated in his.

> Or what man is there among you, of whom his son will ask for a loaf of bread, but he will give him a stone? (Matthew 7:9 ULT)

> > If your son asks you for a loaf of bread, **would you give him a stone**?

> **Will a virgin forget her jewelry, a bride her veils**? Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number! (Jeremiah 2:32 ULT)

> > **What virgin would forget her jewelry, and what bride would forget her veils**? Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number

(**Go back to:**)

Section Headings

Decisions about Section Headings

One of the decisions that the translation team will have to make is whether or not to use section headings. Section headings are like titles to each section of the Bible that begins a new topic. The section heading lets people know what that section is about. Some Bible translations use them, and others do not. You (the translator) may want to follow the practice of the Bible in the national language that most people use. You will also want to find out what the language community prefers.

Using section headings requires more work, because you will need either to write or to translate each one in addition to the text of the Bible. It will also make your translation of the Bible longer. But section headings can be very helpful to your readers. Section headings make it much easier to find where the Bible talks about different topics. If a person is looking for something in particular, he can just read the section headings until he finds one that introduces the topic that he wants to read about. Then he can read that section.

If you have decided to use section headings, then you will need to decide which kind to use. Again, you should find out which kind of section heading the language community prefers. You may also choose to follow the style of the national language. Be sure to use a kind of section heading that the people will understand is not part of the text that it introduces. The section heading is not a part of the Bible; it is just a guide to the different parts of the Bible. You might be able to make this clear by putting a space before and after the section heading and by using a different font (style of letters) or a different size of letters. See how the Bible in the national language does this, and test different methods with the language community.

Kinds of Section Headings

There are many different kinds of section headings. Here are some different kinds, with examples of how each one would look for Mark 2:1-12:

- Summary statement: "By healing a paralyzed man, Jesus demonstrated his authority to forgive sins as well as to heal." This tries to summarize the main point of the section, and so it gives the most information in a full sentence.
- Explanatory comment: "Jesus heals a paralyzed man." This is also a full sentence, but gives just enough information to remind the reader which section follows.
- Topical reference: "Cure of a paralytic." This tries to be very short, only giving a label of a few words. This might save space, but it is probably only useful for people who already know the Bible well.
- Question: "Does Jesus have authority to heal and forgive sins?" This one creates a question that the information in the section answers. People who have a lot of questions about the Bible may find this especially helpful.
- "About" comment: "About Jesus healing a paralyzed man." This kind of heading explicitly tells the reader what the section is about. This may be the one that makes it easiest to see that the heading is not a part of the words of the Bible.

As you can see, it is possible to make many different kinds of section headings, but they all have the same purpose. They all give the reader information about the main topic of the section of the Bible that follows. Some headings are shorter, and some headings are longer. Some give only a little information, and some give more information. You may want to experiment with the different kinds, and ask people which kind they think is most helpful for them.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[[rc://en/ta/man/checking/community-evaluation]]
[[rc://en/ta/man/checking/publishing]]

(**Go back to:** 1 John 1:1; 1:5; 2:18; 2:28; 3:11; 3:19; 4:1; 4:7; 5:1; 5:13)

Statements — Other Uses

Description

Normally statements are used to give information. Sometimes they are used in the Bible for other functions.

This page answers the question: *What other uses are there for statements?*

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages would not use a statement for some of the functions that statements are used for in the Bible.

Examples From the Bible

Statements are normally used to give **information**. All of the sentences in John 1:6-8 below are statements, and their function is to give information.

> There was a man who was sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness in order to testify about the light, that all might believe through him. John was not the light, but came that he might testify about the light. (John 1:6-8 ULT)

A statement can also be used as a **command** to tell someone what to do. In the examples below, the high priest used statements with the verb "will" to tell people what to do.

> He commanded them, saying, "This is what you **must** do. A third of you who come on the Sabbath **will** keep watch over the king's house, and a third **will** be at the Sur Gate, and a third at the gate behind the guardhouse." (2 Kings 11:5 ULT)

A statement can also be used to give **instructions**. The speaker below was not just telling Joseph about something Joseph would do in the future; he was telling Joseph what he needed to do.

> She will give birth to a son, and **you will call his name Jesus**, for he will save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21 ULT)

A statement can also be used to make a **request**. The man with leprosy was not just saying what Jesus was able to do. He was also asking Jesus to heal him.

> Behold, a leper came to him and bowed before him, saying, "Lord, if you are willing, **you can make me clean**." (Matthew 8:2 ULT)

A statement can also be used to **perform** something. By telling Adam that the ground was cursed because of him, God actually cursed it.

> … **cursed is the ground** because of you; (Genesis 3:17b ULT)

By telling a man that his sins were forgiven, **Jesus forgave** the man's sins.

> When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "**Son, your sins are forgiven**." (Mark 2:5 ULT)

Translation Strategies

(1) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, **use a sentence type** that would express that function.

(2) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, **add a sentence type** that would express that function.

(3) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, **use a verb form** that would express that function.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, use a sentence type that would express that function.

> She will give birth to a son, and **you will call his name Jesus**, for he will save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21 ULT)

The phrase "you will call his name Jesus" is an instruction. It can be translated using the sentence type of a normal instruction.

> > She will give birth to a son. **Name him Jesus**, because he will save his people from their sins.

(2) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, add a sentence type that would express that function.

> Lord, **please heal me**, because I know you are able to heal me if you are willing to. (Matthew 8:2 ULT)

The function of "I know you can" is to make a request. In addition to the statement, a request can be added.

> > Lord, **I know you can heal me**. If you are willing, please do so**.**
>
> > Lord, if you are willing, please heal me. **I know you can do so.**

(3) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, use a verb form that would express that function.

> She will give birth to a son, and **you will call his name Jesus**, for he will save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21 ULT)

> > She will give birth to a son, and **you must call his name Jesus**, for he will save his people from their sins.

> Son, your sins are forgiven. (Mark 2:5 ULT)

> > Son, I forgive your sins.
>
> > Son, God has forgiven your sins.

(**Go back to:** 1 John 5:16)

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.

> 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]]*

> **My soul** magnifies the Lord. (Luke 1:46b ULT)

Mary was was very happy about what the Lord was doing, so she said "my soul," which means the inner, emotional part of herself, to refer to her whole self.

> So **the Pharisees** said to him, "Look, why are they doing that which is not lawful?" (Mark 2:24a ULT)

The Pharisees who were standing there did not all say the same words at the same time. Instead, it is more likely that one man representing the group said those words.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Some readers may not recognize the synecdoche and thus misunderstand the words as a literal statement.
- Some readers may realize that they are not to understand the words literally, but they may not know what the meaning is.

Example From the Bible

> Then I looked on all the deeds that **my hands** had accomplished. (Ecclesiastes 2:11a ULT)

"My hands" is a synecdoche for the whole person because clearly the arms and the rest of the body and the mind were also involved in the person's accomplishments. The hands are chosen to represent the person because they are the parts of the body most directly involved in the work.

Translation Strategies

If the synecdoche would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here is another option:

(1) State specifically what the synecdoche refers to.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) State specifically what the synecdoche refers to.

> "**My soul** magnifies the Lord." (Luke 1:46b ULT)
>
>> "**I** magnify the Lord."

> So **the Pharisees** said to him ... (Mark 2:24a ULT)
>
>> **A representative of the Pharisees** said to him ...

> Then I looked on all the deeds that **my hands** had accomplished. (Ecclesiastes 2:11a ULT)

| | I looked on all the deeds that **I** had accomplished

> Next we recommend you learn about:
>
> *Metonymy*
> *[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/bita-part2]]*

(**Go back to:** 1 John 2:28)

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

> 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]]

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.

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 1 John; 1 John 1 General Notes; 1:4; Notes; 2:14; 2:20; Notes; 3:1; Notes; 4:3; Notes; 5:7)

Translate Unknowns

While working to translate the Bible, you (the translator) might find yourself asking: "How do I translate words like lion, fig tree, mountain, priest, or temple when people in my culture have never seen these things and we do not have a word for them?"

> This page answers the question: *How can I translate ideas that my readers are not familiar with?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> [[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-sentences]]

Description

Unknowns are things that occur in the source text that are not known to the people of your culture. The unfoldingWord® Translation Words pages and the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes will help you understand what they are. After you understand them, you will need to find ways to refer to those things so that people who read your translation will understand what they are.

> They said to him, "We have nothing here except five loaves of **bread** and two fish." (Matthew 14:17 ULT)

Bread is a particular food made by mixing finely crushed grains with oil, and then cooking the mixture so that it is dry. (Grains are the seeds of a kind of grass.) In some cultures people do not have bread and do not know what it is.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Readers may not know some of the things that are in the Bible because those things are not part of their own culture.
- Readers may have difficulty understanding a text if they do not know some of the things that are mentioned in it.

Translation Principles

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

Examples From the Bible

> So I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **jackals**. (Jeremiah 9:11a ULT)

Jackals are wild animals like dogs that live in only a few parts of the world. So they are not known in many places.

> Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous **wolves**. (Matthew 7:15 ULT)

If wolves do not live where the translation will be read, the readers may not understand that they are fierce, wild animals like dogs that attack and eat sheep.

> They offered him wine mixed with **myrrh**, but he did not drink it. (Mark 15:23 ULT)

People may not know what myrrh is and that it was used as a medicine.

> ... to him who made **great lights** ... (Psalm 136:7a ULT)

Some languages have terms for things that give light, like the sun and fire, but they have no general term for lights.

> Your sins … will be white like **snow**. (Isaiah 1:18b ULT)

People in many parts of the world have not seen snow, but they may have seen it in pictures.

Translation Strategies

Here are ways you might translate a term that is not known in your language:

(1) Use a phrase that describes what the unknown item is, or what is important about the unknown item for the verse being translated.

(2) Substitute something similar from your language if doing so does not falsely represent a historical fact.

(3) Copy the word from another language, and add a general word or descriptive phrase to help people understand it.

(4) Use a word that is more general in meaning.

(5) Use a word or phrase that is more specific in meaning.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use a phrase that describes what the unknown item is, or what is important about the unknown item for the verse being translated.

> Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but are inwardly they are **ravenous wolves**. (Matthew 7:15 ULT)
>
>> Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but **inwardly they are very hungry and dangerous animals**.

"Ravenous wolves" is part of a metaphor here, so the reader needs to know that they are very dangerous to sheep in order to understand this metaphor. (If sheep are also unknown, then you will need to also use one of the translation strategies to translate sheep, or change the metaphor to something else, using a translation strategy for metaphors. See Translating Metaphors.)

> "We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish." (Matthew 14:17 ULT)
>
>> We have nothing here except five **loaves of baked grain seeds** and two fish.

(2) Substitute something similar from your language if doing so does not falsely represent a historical fact.

> Your sins … will be white like **snow.** (Isaiah 1:18b ULT) This verse is not about snow. It uses snow in a figure of speech to help people understand how white something will be.
>
>> Your sins … will be white like **milk**.
>>
>> Your sins … will be white like **the moon**.

(3) Copy the word from another language, and add a general word or descriptive phrase to help people understand it.

Then they tried to give Jesus wine that was mixed with **myrrh**. But he refused to drink it. (Mark 15:23 ULT) — People may understand better what myrrh is if it is used with the general word "medicine."

> Then they tried to give Jesus wine that was mixed with **a medicine called myrrh**. But he refused to drink it.

"We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish." (Matthew 14:17 ULT) — People may understand better what bread is if it is used with a phrase that tells what it is made of (seeds) and how it is prepared (crushed and baked).

> We have nothing here except five loaves of **baked crushed seed bread** and two fish.

(4) Use a word that is more general in meaning.

> I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **jackals** (Jeremiah 9:11a ULT)

> > I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **wild dogs**

> "We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish." (Matthew 14:17 ULT)

> > We have nothing here except five **loaves of baked food** and two fish.

(5) Use a word or phrase that is more specific in meaning.

> … to him who made **great lights** … (Psalm 136:7a ULT)

> > to him who made **the sun and the moon**

Next we recommend you learn about:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-transliterate]]
How to Translate Names

(**Go back to:** 1 John 2:18; 2:20)

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)

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.")

Verbs

Description

Verbs are words that refer to an action or event or that is used in describing or identifying things. An "action" is something you do. "Event" is more general than "action." "Events" are things that happen, such as death. A linking verb ("is") describes a condition of being.

This page answers the question: *What are verbs and what kinds of things are associated with them?*

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

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

Examples The verbs in the examples below are bolded.

- John **ran**. ("Run" is an action.)
- John **ate** a banana. ("Eat" is an action.)
- John **saw** Mark. ("See" is an event.)
- John **died.** ("Die" is an event.)
- John **is** tall. (The phrase "is tall" describes John. The word "is" is a verb that links "John" with "tall.")
- John **looks** handsome. (The phrase "is handsome" describes John. The word "looks" here is a verb that links "John" with "handsome.")
- John **is** my brother. (The phrase "is my brother" identifies John.)

People or Things Associated With a Verb

A verb usually says something about someone or something. All of the example sentences above say something about John. "John" is the **subject** of those sentences. In English the subject usually comes before the verb.

Sometimes there is another person or thing associated with the verb. In the examples below, the bolded word is the verb, and the quoted phrase is the **object**. In English the object usually comes after the verb.

- He **ate** "lunch."
- He **sang** "a song."
- He **read** "a book."
- **He saw** "the book."

Some verbs never have an object.

- The sun **rose** at six o'clock.
- John **slept** well.
- John **fell** yesterday.

For many verbs in English, where the object is not important in the sentence, the object may not be stated.

- He never **eats** at night.
- He **sings** all the time.
- He **reads** well.
- He cannot **see**.

In some languages, a verb that needs an object must always take one, even if the object is not very important. People who speak those languages might restate the sentences above like this.

- He never **eats food** at night.
- He **sings songs** all the time.
- He **reads words** well.
- He cannot **see anything**.

Subject and Object Marking on Verbs

In some languages, the form of the verb may vary depending on the persons or things associated with it. For example, English speakers sometimes put "s" at the end of the verb when the subject is just one person. In other languages, marking on the verb may show whether the subject is "I," "you," or "he"; singular, dual, or plural; male or female, or human or non-human.

> • They **eat** bananas every day. (The subject "they" is more than one person.)
> • John **eats** bananas every day. (The subject "John" is one person.)

Time and Tense

When we tell about an event, we usually tell whether it is in the past, the present, or the future. Sometimes we do this with words like "yesterday," "now," or "tomorrow."

In some languages the verb may be a little bit different depending on the time associated with it. This kind of marking on a verb is called "tense." English speakers sometimes put "ed" at the end of the verb when the event happened in the past.

> • Sometimes Mary **cooks** meat.
> • Yesterday Mary **cooked** meat. (She did this in the past.)

In some languages speakers might add a word to tell something about the time. English speakers use the word "will" when the verb refers to something in the future.

> • Tomorrow Mary **will cook** meat.

Aspect

When we tell about an event, sometimes we want to show how the event progressed over a period of time or how the event relates to another event. This is called "aspect." English speakers sometimes use the verbs "is" or "has" then add "s," "ing," or "ed" to the end of the verb in order to show how the event relates to another event or to the present time.

> • Mary **cooks** meat every day. (This tells about something Mary often does.)
> • Mary **is cooking** the meat. (This tells about something Mary is in the process of doing right now.)
> • Mary **cooked** the meat, and John **came** home. (This simply tells about things that Mary and John did.)
> • While Mary **was cooking** the meat, John came home. (This tells about something Mary was in the process of doing when John came home)
> • Mary **has cooked** the meat, and she wants us to come eat it. (This tells about something Mary did that is still relevant now.)
> • Mary **had cooked** the meat by the time John came home. (This tells about something that Mary completed in the past before something else happened.)

> Next we recommend you learn about:
>
> *[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-sentences]]*
> *Active or Passive*
> *[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-pastforfuture]]*

(**Go back to:** 1 John 2:14)

Verse Bridges

Description

In some cases, you will see in the unfoldingWord® Simplified Text (UST) that two or more verse numbers are combined, such as 17-18. This is called a verse bridge. This means that the information in the verses was rearranged so that the story or message could be more easily understood.

> This page answers the question: *Why are some verse numbers combined in the UST, such as "3-5" or "17-18"?*
>
> In order to understand this topic, it would be good to read:
>
> *[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-bibleorg]]*

> 29 These were the clans of the Horites: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, and Anah, 30 Dishon, Ezer, Dishan: these are clans of the Horites, according to their clan lists in the land of Seir. (Genesis 36:29-30 ULT)

> 29-30 The people groups who were descendants of Hor lived in Seir land. The names of the people groups are Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. (Genesis 36:29-30 UST)

In the ULT text, verses 29 and 30 are separate, and the information about the people living in Seir is at the end of verse 30. In the UST text, the verses are joined, and the information about them living in Seir is at the beginning. For many languages, this is a more logical order of information.

Examples From the Bible

Where the UST has a verse bridge, the ULT will have separate verses.

> 4-5 Yahweh our God will bless you in the land that he is giving to you. If you obey Yahweh our God and obey all the commandments that I am giving to you today, there will not be any poor people among you. (Deuteronomy 15:4-5 UST)

> 4 However, there should be no poor among you (for Yahweh will surely bless you in the land that he gives you as an inheritance to possess), 5 if only you diligently listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, to keep all these commandments that I am commanding you today. (Deuteronomy 15:4-5 ULT)

> 16-17 But Yahweh said to him, "I will not permit you to eat the fruit of the tree that will enable you to know what actions are good to do and what actions are evil to do. If you eat any fruit from that tree, on the day you eat it you will surely die. But I will permit you to eat the fruit of any of the other trees in the park." (Genesis 2:16-17 UST)

> 16 Yahweh God commanded the man, saying, "From every tree in the garden you may freely eat. 17 But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you may not eat, for on the day that you eat from it, you will surely die." (Genesis 2:16-17 ULT)

Translation Strategies

Order the information in a way that will be clear to your readers. If the order of information is clear as it is in the ULT, then use that order. But if the order is confusing or gives the wrong meaning, then change the order so that it is more clear.

(1) If you put information from one verse before information from an earlier verse, then combine the verses and put a hyphen between the two verse numbers.

See how to mark verses in translationStudio.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If information from one verse is put before information from an earlier verse, then combine the verses and put the verse numbers before the first verse with a hyphen between them.

> 2 You must select three cities for yourself in the middle of your land that Yahweh your God is giving you to possess. 3 You must build a road and divide the borders of your land into three parts, the land that Yahweh your God is causing you to inherit, so that everyone who kills another person may flee there. (Deuteronomy 19:2-3 ULT)

> 2-3 You must divide into three parts the land that he is giving to you. Then select a city in each part. You must make good roads in order that people can get to those cities easily. Someone who kills another person can escape to one of those cities to be safe. (Deuteronomy 19:2-3 UST)

> Next we recommend you learn about:
>
> *[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-chapverse]]*

(**Go back to:** 1 John 1 General Notes; 2:16; 3:19; 5:4)

When Masculine Words Include Women

In the Bible, sometimes the words "men," "brothers," and "sons" refer only to men. At other times, those words include both men and women. In those places where the writer meant both men and women, you (the translator) need to translate it in a way that does not limit the meaning to men.

This page answers the question: *How do I translate "brother" or "he" when it could refer to anyone, male or female?*

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

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-pronouns]]
Generic Noun Phrases

Description

In some languages a word that normally refers to men can also be used in a more general way to refer to both men and women. For example, the Bible sometimes says "brothers" when it refers to both brothers and sisters.

Also in some languages, the masculine pronouns "he" and "him" can be used in a more general way for any person if it is not important whether the person is a man or a woman. In the example below, the pronoun is "his," but it is not limited to males.

> A wise son makes **his** father rejoice
> but a foolish son brings grief to **his** mother. (Proverbs 10:1 ULT)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- In some cultures words like "man," "brother," and "son" can only be used to refer to men. If those words are used in a translation in a more general way, people will think that what is being said does not apply to women.
- In some cultures, the masculine pronouns "he" and "him" can only refer to men. If a masculine pronoun is used, people will think that what is said does not apply to women.

Translation Principles

When a statement applies to both men and women, translate it in such a way that people will be able to understand that it applies to both.

Examples From the Bible

> Now we want you to know, **brothers**, the grace of God that has been given to the churches of Macedonia. (2 Corinthians 8:1 ULT)

This verse is addressing the believers in Corinth, not only men, but **men and women**.

> Then said Jesus to his disciples, "If anyone wants to follow me, **he** must deny **himself**, take up **his** cross, and follow me." (Matthew 16:24 ULT)

Jesus was not speaking only of men, but of **men and women**.

Caution: Sometimes masculine words are used specifically to refer to men. Do not use words that would lead people to think that they include women. The words below are specifically about men.
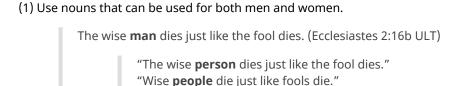
> Moses said, 'If **someone** dies, not having children, **his brother** must marry **his** wife and have children for **his brother**.' (Matthew 22:24 ULT)

Translation Strategies

If people would understand that that masculine words like "man," "brother," and "he" can include women, then consider using them. Otherwise, here are some ways for translating those words when they include women.

(1) Use a noun that can be used for both men and women.

(2) Use a word that refers to men and a word that refers to women.

(3) Use pronouns that can be used for both men and women.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use nouns that can be used for both men and women.

> The wise **man** dies just like the fool dies. (Ecclesiastes 2:16b ULT)

>> "The wise **person** dies just like the fool dies."
>> "Wise **people** die just like fools die."

(2) Use a word that refers to men and a word that refers to women.

> For we do not want you to be uninformed, **brothers**, about the troubles that happened to us in Asia. (2 Corinthians 1:8) — Paul was writing this letter to both men and women.

>> "For we do not want you to be uninformed, **brothers and sisters**, about the troubles that happened to us in Asia."

(3) Use pronouns that can be used for both men and women.

> "If anyone wants to follow me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." (Matthew 16:24 ULT)

English speakers can change the masculine singular pronouns, "he," "himself," and "his" to plural pronouns that do not mark gender, "they," "themselves," and "their" in order to show that it applies to all people, not just men.
>

>> "If **people** want to follow me, **they** must deny **themselves**, take up **their** cross, and follow me."

(**Go back to:** 1 John 2:9; 2:13; 2:14; 3:24; 5:9)

unfoldingWord® Translation Words

Version 28

antichrist

Definition:

The term "antichrist" refers to a person or teaching that is against Jesus Christ and his work. There are many antichrists in the world.

- The apostle John tells us that a person is the antichrist if he deceives people by saying that Jesus is not the Messiah or if he denies that Jesus is both God and human.
- The Bible also teaches that there is a general spirit of antichrist in the world that opposes Jesus' work.
- The beast in chapter 13 of the New Testament book of Revelation is often identified as the ultimate antichrist. This person or being will attempt to destroy God's people, but he will be defeated by Jesus.
- The apostle Paul refers to this person as "the man of lawlessness" (2 Thess 2:3) and to the general spirit of antichrist in the world as "the secret power of lawlessness" (2 Thess 2:7).

Translation Suggestions:

- Other ways to translate this term could include a word or phrase that means "Christ-opposer" or "enemy of Christ" or "person who is against Christ."
- The phrase "spirit of the antichrist" could also be translated as "spirit that is against Christ" or "attitude of spreading lies about Christ" or "spirit that teaches lies about Christ."
- Also consider how this term is translated in a Bible translation in a local or national language. (See: How to Translate Unknowns)

(See also: Christ, tribulation)

Bible References:

- 1 John 2:18
- 1 John 2:22
- 1 John 4:3
- 2 John 1:7

Word Data:

- Strong's: G05000

(**Go back to:** 1 John 2 General Notes)

believe, believer, belief, unbeliever, unbelief

Definition:

The terms "believe" and "believe in" are closely related, but have slightly different meanings:

1. believe

- To believe something is to accept or trust that it is true.
- To believe someone is to acknowledge that what that person has said is true.

2. believe in

- To "believe in" someone means to "trust in" that person. It means to trust that the person is who he says he is, that he always speaks the truth, and that he will do what he has promised to do.
- When a person truly believes in something, he will act in such a way that shows that belief.
- The phrase "have faith in" usually has the same meaning as "believe in."
- To "believe in Jesus" means to believe that he is the Son of God, that he is God himself who also became human and who died as a sacrifice to pay for our sins. It means to trust him as Savior and live in a way that honors him.

3. believer

In the Bible, the term "believer" refers to someone who believes in and relies on Jesus Christ as Savior.

- The term "believer" literally means "person who believes."
- The term "Christian" eventually came to be the main title for believers because it indicates that they believe in Christ and obey his teachings.

4. unbelief

The term "unbelief" refers to not believing something or someone.

- In the Bible, "unbelief" refers to not believing in or not trusting in Jesus as one's Savior.
- A person who does not believe in Jesus is called an "unbeliever."

Translation Suggestions:

- To "believe" could be translated as to "know to be true" or "know to be right."
- To "believe in" could be translated as "trust completely" or "trust and obey" or "completely rely on and follow."
- Some translations may prefer to say "believer in Jesus" or "believer in Christ."
- This term could also be translated by a word or phrase that means "person who trusts in Jesus" or "someone who knows Jesus and lives for him."
- Other ways to translate "believer" could be "follower of Jesus" or "person who knows and obeys Jesus."
- The term "believer" is a general term for any believer in Christ, while "disciple" and "apostle" were used more specifically for people who knew Jesus while he was alive. It is best to translate these terms in different ways, in order to keep them distinct.
- Other ways to translate "unbelief" could include "lack of faith" or "not believing."

- The term "unbeliever" could be translated as "person who does not believe in Jesus" or "someone who does not trust in Jesus as Savior."

(See also: believe, apostle, Christian, disciple, faith, trust)

Bible References:

- Genesis 15:6
- Genesis 45:26
- Job 9:16-18
- Habakkuk 1:5-7
- Mark 6:4-6
- Mark 1:14-15
- Luke 9:41
- John 1:12
- Acts 6:5
- Acts 9:42
- Acts 28:23-24
- Romans 3:3
- 1 Corinthians 6:1
- 1 Corinthians 9:5
- 2 Corinthians 6:15
- Hebrews 3:12
- 1 John 3:23

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **3:4** Noah warned the people about the coming flood and told them to turn to God, but they did not **believe** him.
- **4:8** Abram **believed** God's promise. God declared that Abram was righteous because he **believed** God's promise.
- **11:2** God provided a way to save the firstborn of anyone who **believed in** him.
- **11:6** But the Egyptians did not **believe** God or obey his commands.
- **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. Do you **believe** this?"
- **43:1** After Jesus returned to heaven, the disciples stayed in Jerusalem as Jesus had commanded them to do. The **believers** there constantly gathered together to pray.
- **43:3** While the **believers** were all together, suddenly the house where they were was filled with a sound like a strong wind. Then something that looked like flames of fire appeared over the heads of all the **believers**.
- **43:13** Every day, more people became **believers**.
- **46:6** That day many people in Jerusalem started persecuting the followers of Jesus, so the **believers** fled to other places. But in spite of this, they preached about Jesus everywhere they went.
- **46:1** Saul was the young man who guarded the robes of the men who killed Stephen. He did not believe in Jesus, so he persecuted the **believers**.
- **46:9** Some **believers** who fled from the persecution in Jerusalem went far away to the city of Antioch and preached about Jesus.
- **46:9** It was at Antioch that **believers** in Jesus were first called "Christians."
- **47:14** They also wrote many letters to encourage and teach the **believers** in the churches.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0539, H0540, G05430, G05440, G05690, G05700, G05710, G39820, G41000, G41020, G41030, G41350

(**Go back to:** 1 John 3 General Notes)

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:** 1 John 5 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:** 1 John 3 General Notes)

evil, wicked, unpleasant

Definition:

In the Bible, the term "evil" can refer either to the concept of moral wickedness or emotional unpleasantness. The context will usually make it clear which meaning is intended in the specific instance of the term.

- While "evil" may describe a person's character, "wicked" may refer more to a person's behavior. However, both terms are very similar in meaning.
- The term "wickedness" refers to the state of being that exists when people do wicked things.
- The results of evil are clearly shown in how people mistreat others by killing, stealing, slandering and being cruel and unkind.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, the terms "evil" and "wicked" can be translated as "bad" or "sinful" or "immoral."
- Other ways to translate these could include "not good" or "not righteous" or "not moral."
- Make sure the words or phrases that are used to translate these terms fit the context that is natural in the target language.

(See also: disobey, sin, good, righteous, demon)

Bible References:

- 1 Samuel 24:11
- 1 Timothy 6:10
- 3 John 1:10
- Genesis 2:17
- Genesis 6:5-6
- Job 1:1
- Job 8:20
- Judges 9:57
- Luke 6:22-23
- Matthew 7:11-12
- Proverbs 3:7
- Psalms 22:16-17

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **2:4** "God just knows that as soon as you eat it, you will be like God and will understand good and **evil** like he does."
- **3:1** After a long time, many people were living in the world. They had become very **wicked** and violent.
- **3:2** But Noah found favor with God. He was a righteous man living among **wicked** people.
- **4:2** God saw that if they all kept working together to do **evil**, they could do many more sinful things.
- **8:12** "You tried to do **evil** when you sold me as a slave, but God used the **evil** for good!"
- **14:2** They (Canaanites) worshiped false gods and did many **evil** things.
- **17:1** But then he (Saul) became a **wicked** man who did not obey God, so God chose a different man who would one day be king in his place.
- **18:11** In the new kingdom of Israel, all the kings were **evil**.
- **29:8** The king was so angry that he threw the **wicked** servant into prison until he could pay back all of his debt.

- **45:2** They said, "We heard him (Stephen) speak **evil** things about Moses and God!"
- **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: H0205, H0605, H1100, H1681, H1942, H2154, H2162, H2254, H2617, H3399, H3415, H4209, H4849, H5753, H5766, H5767, H5999, H6001, H6090, H7451, H7455, H7489, H7561, H7562, H7563, H7564, G00920, G01130, G04590, G09320, G09870, G09880, G14260, G25490, G25510, G25540, G25550, G25560, G25570, G25590, G25600, G26350, G26360, G41510, G41890, G41900, G41910, G53370

(**Go back to:** Introduction to 1 John; 1 John 2 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:** Introduction to 1 John)

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:** Introduction to 1 John)

last day, latter days

Definition:

The term "last days" or "latter days" refers generally to the time period at the end of the current age.

- This time period will have an unknown duration.
- The "last days" are a time of judgment upon those who have turned away from God.

Translation Suggestions:

- The term "last days" can also be translated as "final days" or "end times."
- In some contexts, this could be translated as "end of the world" or "when this world ends."

(See also: day of the Lord, judge, turn, world)

Bible References:

- 2 Peter 3:3-4
- Daniel 10:14-15
- Hebrews 1:2
- Isaiah 2:2
- James 5:3
- Jeremiah 23:19-20
- John 11:24-26
- Micah 4:1

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0319, H3117, G20780, G22500

(**Go back to:** 1 John 2 General Notes)

Satan, devil, evil one

Facts:

Although the devil is a spirit being that God created, he rebelled against God and became God's enemy. The devil is also called "Satan" and "the evil one."

- The devil hates God and all that God created because he wants to take the place of God and be worshiped as God.
- Satan tempts people to rebel against God.
- God sent his Son, Jesus, to rescue people from Satan's control.
- The name "Satan" means "adversary" or "enemy."
- The word "devil" means "accuser."

Translation Suggestions:

- The word "devil" could also be translated as "the accuser" or "the evil one" or "the king of evil spirits" or "the chief evil spirit."
- "Satan" could be translated as "Opponent" or "Adversary" or some other name that shows that he is the devil.
- These terms should be translated differently from demon and evil spirit.
- Consider how these terms are translated in a local or national language.

(See: How to Translate Unknowns)

(Translation suggestions: How to Translate Names)

(See also: demon, evil, kingdom of God, tempt)

Bible References:

- 1 John 3:8
- 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20
- 1 Timothy 5:15
- Acts 13:10
- Job 1:8
- Mark 8:33
- Zechariah 3:1

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **21:1** The snake who deceived Eve was **Satan**. The promise meant that the Messiah who would come would defeat **Satan** completely.
- **25:6** Then **Satan** showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and all their glory and said, "I will give you all this if you bow down and worship me."
- **25:8** Jesus did not give in to **Satan's** temptations, so **Satan** left him.
- **33:6** So Jesus explained, "The seed is the word of God. The path is a person who hears God's word, but does not understand it, and the **devil** takes the word from him."
- **38:7** After Judas took the bread, **Satan** entered into him.
- **48:4** God promised that one of Eve's descendants would crush **Satan's** head, and **Satan** would wound his heel. This meant that **Satan** would kill the Messiah, but God would raise him to life again, and then the Messiah will crush the power of **Satan** forever.
- **49:15** God has taken you out of **Satan's** kingdom of darkness and put you into God's kingdom of light.

- **50:9** "The weeds represent the people who belong to the **evil one**. The enemy who planted the weeds represents the **devil**."
- **50:10** "When the world ends, the angels will gather together all the people who belong to the **devil** and throw them into a raging fire, where they will cry and grind their teeth in terrible suffering."
- **50:15** When Jesus returns, he will completely destroy **Satan** and his kingdom. He will throw **Satan** into hell where he will burn forever, along with everyone who chose to follow him rather than to obey God.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H7700, H7854, H8163, G11390, G11400, G11410, G11420, G12280, G41900, G45660, G45670

(**Go back to:** 1 John 5 General Notes)

save, saved, safe, salvation

Definition:

The term "save" refers to keeping someone from experiencing something bad or harmful. To "be safe" means to be protected from harm or danger.

- In a physical sense, people can be saved or rescued from harm, danger, or death.
- In a spiritual sense, if a person has been "saved," then God, through Jesus' death on the cross, has forgiven him and rescued him from being punished in hell for his sin.
- People can save or rescue people from danger, but only God can save people from being punished eternally for their sins.

The term "salvation" refers to being saved or rescued from evil and danger.

- In the Bible, "salvation" usually refers to the spiritual and eternal deliverance granted by God to those who repent of their sins and believe in Jesus.
- The Bible also talks about God saving or delivering his people from their physical enemies.

Translation Suggestions:

- Ways to translate "save" could include "deliver" or "keep from harm" or "take out of harm's way" or "keep from dying."
- In the expression "whoever would save his life," the term "save" could also be translated as "preserve" or "protect."
- The term "safe" could be translated as "protected from danger" or "in a place where nothing can harm."
- The term "salvation" could also be translated using words related to "save" or "rescue," as in "God's saving people (from being punished for their sins)" or "God's rescuing his people (from their enemies)."
- "God is my salvation" could be translated as "God is the one who saves me."
- "You will draw water from the wells of salvation" could be translated as "You will be refreshed as with water because God is rescuing you."

(See also: cross, deliver, punish, sin, Savior)

Bible References:

- Genesis 49:18
- Genesis 47:25-26
- Psalms 80:3
- Jeremiah 16:19-21
- Micah 6:3-5
- Luke 2:30
- Luke 8:36-37
- Acts 4:12
- Acts 28:28
- Acts 2:21
- Romans 1:16
- Romans 10:10
- Ephesians 6:17
- Philippians 1:28
- 1 Timothy 1:15-17
- Revelation 19:1-2

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **9:8** Moses tried to **save** his fellow Israelite.
- **11:2** God provided a way to **save** the firstborn son of anyone who believed in him.
- **12:5** Moses told the Israelites, "Stop being afraid! God will fight for you today and **save** you."
- **12:13** The Israelites sang many songs to celebrate their new freedom and to praise God because he **saved** them from the Egyptian army.
- **16:17** This pattern repeated many times: the Israelites would sin, God would punish them, they would repent, and God would send a deliverer to **save** them.
- **44:8** "You crucified Jesus, but God raised him to life again! You rejected him, but there is no other way to be **saved** except through the power of Jesus!"
- **47:11** The jailer trembled as he came to Paul and Silas and asked, "What must I do to be **saved**?" Paul answered, "Believe in Jesus, the Master, and you and your family will be **saved**."
- **49:12** Good works cannot **save** you.
- **49:13** God will **save** everyone who believes in Jesus and receives him as their Master. But he will not **save** anyone who does not believe in him.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0983, H2421, H2502, H3444, H3467, H3468, H4190, H4422, H4931, H5338, H6308, H6403, H7682, H7951, H7965, H8104, H8199, H8668, G08030, G08040, G08060, G12950, G15080, G49820, G49910, G49920, G51980

(**Go back to:** 1 John 3 General Notes; Notes)

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 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 "rebelling 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 **sinners** 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:** Introduction to 1 John)

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