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Ecclesiastes

Introduction to Ecclesiastes

Part 1: General Introduction

Outline of the Book of Ecclesiastes

The author questions the nature of life and the limits of human wisdom (1:1–6:12)

The author teaches about making wise choices in how one lives (7:1–12:7)

The conclusion and ending (12:8–14)

What is the Book of Ecclesiastes about?

Ecclesiastes is a group of short teachings that try to answer questions such as “What do people gain from all their labor?” Ecclesiastes is a series of thoughts about a variety of subjects, all of them about the purpose and worth of various actions and events. The author concludes that all the work we perform and all the knowledge and skill we gain is like a vapor that disappears, and that we must fear Yahweh and keep his commandments.

How should the title of this book be translated?

The traditional title for this book is “Ecclesiastes.” Its meaning is similar to “religious assembly.” Translators might decide on a title that better describes the content of the book, such as “Words of a Teacher” or “Teachings of a Wise Man.”

Who wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes?

The author appears to be Solomon, “the Teacher, the descendant of David and king in Jerusalem.” This is consistent with what Solomon was known for: * his wisdom (Ecclesiastes 1:16 and twenty-six other references to wisdom); * his vast wealth (Ecclesiastes 2:8), and the pain that comes from wealth ([Ecclesiastes 5:13-14](#); Ecclesiastes 4:8; and Ecclesiastes 9:11); * his large number of servants (Ecclesiastes 2:7 and Ecclesiastes 10:7); * his limitless opportunities for worldly pleasures ([Ecclesiastes 2:1-2](#), [Ecclesiastes 10](#); Ecclesiastes 3:13; Ecclesiastes 4:8; Ecclesiastes 5:4; and Ecclesiastes 12:1); and * the wide range of his many building projects ([Ecclesiastes 2:4-6](#)).

Solomon appears to have written the Book of Ecclesiastes near the end of his life, as he reflected on what he gained from all that he did.

Why are there so many apparent contradictions in the Book of Ecclesiastes?

Some scholars think the author was a faithful man. Other scholars think that the author made bad decisions and was sorrowful when he wrote this book. Apparent contradictions in the book may indicate that Solomon’s faith was sometimes weak. Or, it is also possible that the teachings in the book differ from each other in order to relate to different things happening in the lives of readers.

Part 2: Important Religious and Cultural Concepts

What does this book teach about how God repays people?

In the ancient Near East, people were concerned with why they were being punished or blessed. They often connected these things to their gods. The writer of Ecclesiastes explains that Yahweh will bless and reward people for the right things they do and punish people for the evil things they do. But this might not happen in this life. (See: [bless](#), [blessed](#), [blessing](#), [just](#), [justice](#), [unjust](#), [injustice](#), [justify](#), [justification](#), [god](#), [false god](#), [goddess](#), [idol](#),

idolater, idolatrous, idolatry and righteous, righteousness, unrighteous, unrighteousness, upright, uprightness and evil, wicked, unpleasant)

What value did the Israelites place on the Book of Ecclesiastes?

The Israelites have often questioned the value of this book. This is due in large part to its unusual wording and teachings. At times, it appears to disagree with the rest of Scripture. While many have questioned its authority, it has been affirmed to be Scripture. It gives valuable lessons concerning the uselessness of pursuing any goal other than to give Yahweh glory.

Part 3: Important Translation Issues

What is the meaning of “under the sun?”

“Under the sun” here is another way of saying “on the earth.” When the author says that there is “nothing new under the sun,” this means that every kind of thing has already happened before on the earth. While a particular event may not have specifically occurred before, something similar has already occurred.

How do I translate harsh or shocking passages?

Parts of the Book of Ecclesiastes can be shocking or surprising to read in Scripture. For example, “If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but if his heart is not satisfied with good and he is not buried with honor, then I say that a baby that is born dead is better off than he is” (6:3). The translator should allow these difficulties to remain and not try to make them less surprising.

How is life described in the Book of Ecclesiastes?

The author of Ecclesiastes concludes that everything in this life quickly passes away, like a vapor that disappears. A person’s circumstances or character and even all of the things of this world have little or no significance apart from God. That is because God gives meaning to everything.

At the end of their life, people often say that the years of their life seemed short. The author of Ecclesiastes used the metaphor of vapor or breath to describe how life ends while it seems to be just beginning.

Ecclesiastes 1

Ecclesiastes 1 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with the poetry in 1:2-11 and 15.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Tone

The tone of this chapter is sad, or depressing. The author believes that everything in life is pointless. The metaphors in this chapter all describe the idea that nothing ever changes. This is also known as “fatalism.” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Metaphor](#))

Ecclesiastes 1:1

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Translation Words - ULT

- the son of
- David
- king
- in Jerusalem

Translation Words - UST

- the descendant of
- King David
- who is king
- in Jerusalem

ULT

¹ The words of Qoheleth, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.

UST

¹ These are the words and sayings of the descendant of King David, who is king in Jerusalem. The people call me 'The Teacher.'

Ecclesiastes 1:2

Like a vapor of mist, like a breeze in the wind, everything vanishes

This speaks of how everything in life vanishes and has no lasting value as if everything were like a disappearing vapor or breeze. Alternate translation: "Like a vapor of mist vanishes and like a breeze in the wind disappears, everything vanishes and has no lasting value" (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

² "Most futile of futile things, Qoheleth has said, "Most futile of futile things, the entirety is futile."

UST

² The Teacher says, "Nothing is permanent. It is all like the morning mist or the wind; It goes and comes, but for what reason?"

Ecclesiastes 1:3

What profit does mankind gain ... under the sun?

The author uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that man's work is pointless and has no lasting benefit. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "Mankind gains no profit ... under the sun." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. Alternate translation: "on the earth" (See: [Idiom](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [is for mankind](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [people](#)

ULT

³ What profit [is for mankind](#) in all his toil that he continually toils under the sun?

UST

³ What do [people](#) gain from all the work that they do here on the earth?"

Ecclesiastes 1:4

General Information:

The writer is presenting the natural order of life as he understands it.

Translation Words - ULT

- A generation
- and a generation
- is going
- remains

Translation Words - UST

- Each year old people die
- Each year old people die
- and babies are born
- never changes

ULT

⁴ A generation is going, and a generation is coming, but the earth remains for forever.

UST

⁴ Each year old people die and babies are born, but the earth never changes.

Ecclesiastes 1:5

hurries back to the place

This speaks of how the sun sets at the end of the day and is soon ready to rise again, as if it were a person that quickly ran from the place where it sets to the place from which it rises. Alternate translation: “quickly returns to the place” or “quickly goes to the place” (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

⁵ Likewise, the sun rises, and the sun comes in, and comes panting to its place, it rises there.

UST

⁵ Each morning the sun rises, and each evening it sets, and then it hurries around to where it started from.

Ecclesiastes 1:6

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Translation Words - ULT

- Going
- goes
- returns

Translation Words - UST

- blows
- goes around and around in circles
- goes around and around in circles

ULT

⁶ Going towards south and circling towards north, circling, circling, the wind goes and upon its circuits the wind returns.

UST

⁶ The wind blows south, and then it turns around to start blowing to the north. It goes around and around in circles.

Ecclesiastes 1:7

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Translation Words - ULT

- are flowing
- are going
- are returning

Translation Words - UST

- flow
- The water returns to the sky, and when it rains, the water returns to the rivers...and it flows again to the sea
- The water returns to the sky, and when it rains, the water returns to the rivers...and it flows again to the sea

ULT

⁷ All the rivers are flowing to the sea, but the sea, it is not full. To a place where the rivers are going, there they are returning to go.

UST

⁷ All the streams flow into the sea, but the sea is never full. The water returns to the sky, and when it rains, the water returns to the rivers, and it flows again to the sea.

Ecclesiastes 1:8

Everything becomes wearisome

"Everything becomes tiring." Since man is unable to explain these things, it becomes useless to try.

The eye is not satisfied by what it sees

Here the "eye" represents the whole person. Alternate translation: "A person is not satisfied by what his eyes see" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

nor is the ear fulfilled by what it hears

Here the "ear" represents the whole person. Alternate translation: "nor is a person content by what his ears hear" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁸ All the things are wearisome, man is not able to explain. An eye is not satisfied by seeing, likewise an ear is not fulfilled from hearing.

UST

⁸ Everything is so unsatisfactory that we do not even want to talk about it. We see the same things, and we become bored with them. We hear the same things, but we want to hear something more.

Ecclesiastes 1:9

General Information:

There is nothing new regarding man and his activities.

whatever has been done is what will be done

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "whatever has happened before is what will happen again" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: "on the earth" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁹ Whatever that has been, it is what will be, and whatever that has been done, it is what will be done. So there is not anything new under the sun.

UST

⁹ Everything continues to be the same as it has always been. Things that happen have happened previously, and they will happen again. What has been done before will be done again. There is nothing really new in this world.

Ecclesiastes 1:10

Is there anything about which it may be said, 'Look, this is new'?

This rhetorical question is asked to emphasize that man cannot say there is anything new. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "There is nothing about which it may be said, 'Look, this is new.'" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

about which it may be said

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "about which someone may say" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁰ Is there anything about which one may say, 'See this, it is new'? Formerly it existed in ages that existed from before our faces.

UST

¹⁰ Sometimes people say, "Look at this! This is something new!" But it has existed previously. It existed before we were born.

Ecclesiastes 1:11

that will happen in the future

The understood subject may be supplied. Alternate translation: “the things that will happen in the future” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

will not likely be remembered either

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “people will not likely remember them either” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

11 There is not a remembrance of former things, or even of latter things which may be. There will not be a remembrance of them like what will be of the latter things.”

UST

11 People do not remember the things that happened long ago, and in the future, people will not remember what we are doing now.

Ecclesiastes 1:12

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Translation Words - ULT

- king
- Israel
- in Jerusalem

Translation Words - UST

- the king
- Israel
- ruling in Jerusalem

ULT

¹² I am Qoheleth, I have been king over Israel in Jerusalem.

UST

¹² I, the Teacher, have been the king of Israel for many years, ruling in Jerusalem.

Ecclesiastes 1:13

I applied my mind

Here the author refers to himself by his “mind” to emphasize his thoughts. Alternate translation: “I determined” or “I applied myself” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

to study and to search out

These two phrases mean the same thing and emphasize how diligently he studied. (See: [Doublet](#))

under heaven

This refers to things that are done on earth. Alternate translation: “on the earth” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

children of mankind

Alternate translation: “human beings”

Translation Words - ULT

- [my heart](#)
- [to study](#)
- [the sun](#)
- [frustrating](#)
- [God](#)
- [to the sons of](#)
- [the human](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [I concentrated on](#)
- [understanding](#)
- [on the earth](#)
- [that wears me out](#)
- [God](#)
- [son](#)
- [Adam](#)

ULT

¹³ Now I gave [my heart to study](#) and to search out with the wisdom about everything that has been done under [the sun](#). It is a [frustrating](#) task [God](#) has given [to the sons of the human](#) to be busy with it.

UST

¹³ By using my wisdom, [I concentrated on understanding](#) everything that was being done [on the earth](#). It is a task [that wears me out](#), just like anyone else who tries it.

Ecclesiastes 1:14

all the deeds that are done

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “everything that people do” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: “on the earth” (See: [Idiom](#))

look

The author uses this word to draw attention to what he says next. Alternate translation: “indeed” or “really” (See: [Idiom](#))

amount to vapor ... chasing the wind

These two phrases are both metaphors that emphasize the idea of things being useless and futile. (See: [Parallelism](#))

amount to vapor

“are only mist.” The author speaks of useless and meaningless things as if they were “vapor.” Just as vapor disappears and does not last, things have no lasting value. Alternate translation: “are as useless as vapor” or “are meaningless” (See: [Metaphor](#))

chasing the wind

The author says that everything that people do is as useless as if they were trying to control the wind. Alternate translation: “are as useless as trying to control the wind” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [wind](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [the wind](#)

ULT

¹⁴ I have seen all the deeds that have been done under the sun, and look, the entirety is futile as tending [wind](#).

UST

¹⁴ It seems that nothing that happens on the earth really enables us to do anything useful. It is like trying to control [the wind](#).

Ecclesiastes 1:15

The twisted cannot be straightened! The missing cannot be counted

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "People cannot straighten things that are twisted! They cannot count what is not there" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁵ Twisted is not able to be straight, and missing is not able to be counted!

UST

¹⁵ Many things that are crooked cannot be caused to become straight. We cannot count things that we cannot see.

Ecclesiastes 1:16

I have spoken to my heart

Here the author refers to himself by his “heart” to emphasize his feelings. Alternate translation: “I have spoken to myself” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

My mind has seen

Here the author refers to himself by his “mind” to emphasize what he has learned. Alternate translation: “I have gained” or “I have learned”

Translation Words - ULT

- [my heart](#)
- [I have amassed](#)
- [Jerusalem](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [myself](#)
- [Jerusalem](#)
- [proud, pride, prideful](#)

ULT

16 I, myself, have spoken with [my heart](#), by saying, “Myself, look, [I have amassed](#) and I have increased wisdom over all who were before my face in [Jerusalem](#). Indeed, my heart has seen much wisdom and knowledge.”

UST

16 I said to [myself](#), “I am wiser than any of those who ruled in [Jerusalem](#) before me. I am wiser and know more than any of them!”

Ecclesiastes 1:17

I applied my heart

Here the author refers to himself by his “heart” to emphasize his feelings. Alternate translation: “I determined” or “I applied myself” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

madness and folly

The words “madness” and “folly” share similar meanings and refer to foolish thinking and behavior, respectively. (See: [Doublet](#))

an attempt to shepherd the wind

The author says learning wisdom and madness and folly is as useless as trying to control the wind. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: “as useless as trying to control the wind” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [my heart](#)
- [and knowledge](#)
- [I have known](#)
- [wind](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [So I determined](#)
- [and also to learn about doing things that are very stupid](#)
- [But I found out that](#)
- [the wind](#)

ULT

¹⁷ So I gave [my heart](#) to know wisdom [and knowledge](#), foolishness and folly. [I have known](#) that even this, it is tending [wind](#).

UST

¹⁷ [So I determined](#) to learn more about being wise, [and also to learn about doing things that are very stupid](#) and foolish. [But I found out that](#) trying to understand those things was also useless, like trying to control [the wind](#).

Ecclesiastes 1:18

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁸ For with abundance of wisdom is much sorrow, and one adding knowledge, he will add anguish.

UST

¹⁸ Anyone who becomes very wise also becomes very frustrated. The more one knows, the sadder he becomes.

Ecclesiastes 2

Ecclesiastes 2 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with the poetry in 2:10-16.

Special concepts in this chapter

Pleasures

When the author thought about the pointlessness of life, he decided to fill it with pointless pleasures. He believed that this type of living would have no effect on the world. Therefore, he indulged in every type of pleasure.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Assumed knowledge

It is assumed that the author is going to reject the way of living in this chapter. He is certainly not encouraging this way of living even though he does not say this explicitly. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Ecclesiastes 2:1

I said in my heart

Here the author refers to himself by his “heart” to emphasize his feelings. Alternate translation: “I said to myself” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

I will test you with happiness

Here the word “you” refers to himself. The word “happiness” can be expressed as an adjective. Alternate translation: “I will test myself with things that make me happy” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

So enjoy pleasure

The word “pleasure” can be expressed as a verb. Alternate translation: “So I will enjoy things that please me” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

this also was just a temporary breeze

This speaks of how happiness only lasts for a short time as if it were a temporary breeze. Alternate translation: “this also only lasted for a short time, like a temporary breeze” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [in my heart](#)
- [Come](#)
- [with joy](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [to myself](#)
- [Well](#)
- [I will find out whether doing what I enjoy can truly enable me to be happy](#)

ULT

¹ I myself said [in my heart](#), “[Come](#) now! Let me test you [with joy](#), so experience with pleasure.” But look, it also was futile.

UST

¹ Then I said [to myself](#), “[Well](#), I will try to do everything that I enjoy. [I will find out whether doing what I enjoy can truly enable me to be happy](#).” But I found out that doing that was also useless.

Ecclesiastes 2:2

I said about laughter, “It is crazy,”

The direct quotation can be translated as an indirect quotation.
Alternate translation: “I said that it is crazy to laugh at things” (See: [Direct and Indirect Quotations](#))

What use is it?

The author uses a rhetorical question to emphasize that pleasure is useless. Alternate translation: “It is useless.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

² About laughter I said, “Making one a fool,” and about joy, “What is this doing?”

UST

² So I said to myself, “It is foolish to laugh all the time, and continually doing what makes me happy does not bring any lasting benefit.”

Ecclesiastes 2:3

I explored in my heart

This speaks of thinking hard for a long time as if it were exploring. Also, the author speaks of his feelings and his thoughts as if they were his "heart." Alternate translation: "I thought hard about" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

to gratify my desires with wine

The word "desires" may be expressed as a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: "to use wine to make myself happy" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

I let my mind guide me with wisdom

Here the author speaks of using the wisdom that he had been taught to guide himself as if this wisdom were a person who guided him. Alternate translation: "I thought about the things that wise people had taught me" (See: [Personification](#))

under heaven

This refers to things that are done on earth. Alternate translation: "on the earth" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

during the days of their lives

Alternate translation: "during the time that they are alive"

Translation Words - ULT

- in my heart
- my flesh
- with wine
- good
- for the sons of
- the man
- the heavens

Translation Words - UST

- So, after thinking a lot about it
- I decided to cheer myself up
- by drinking a lot of wine
- people
- people
- to be happy
- on the earth

ULT

³ I sought out [in my heart](#) to expand [my flesh with wine](#), while my heart was guiding into the wisdom, although by holding on to folly, until that I would see how this is [good for the sons of the man](#), what they would do under [the heavens](#) the number of the days of their lives.

UST

³ So, after thinking a lot about it, I decided to cheer myself up by drinking a lot of wine. While I was still trying to be wise, I acted stupidly. I tried to learn what [people](#) can do [to be happy](#) during the short time that they are alive [on the earth](#).

Ecclesiastes 2:4

I built houses for myself and planted vineyards

The writer probably told people to do the work. Alternate translation: "I had people build houses and plant vineyards for me" (See: [Metonymy](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [I expanded](#)
- [houses](#)
- [vineyards](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [I...great](#)
- [houses](#)
- [vineyards](#)

ULT

⁴ [I expanded](#) my works. I built [houses](#) for myself. I planted [vineyards](#) for myself.

UST

⁴ I did [great](#) things. I caused [houses](#) to be built for myself and [vineyards](#) to be planted.

Ecclesiastes 2:5

I built for myself gardens and parks; I planted

The writer probably told people to do the work. Alternate translation: "I had people build for me gardens and parks; I had them plant" (See: [Metonymy](#))

gardens and parks

These two words share similar meanings and refer to beautiful orchards of fruit trees. (See: [Doublet](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [fruit](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [fruit](#)

ULT

⁵ I made for myself gardens and parks, and I planted a tree of every kind of [fruit](#) in them.

UST

⁵ I made gardens and parks. Then I planted the gardens with many kinds of [fruit](#) trees.

Ecclesiastes 2:6

I created

The writer probably told people to do the work. Alternate translation: "I had them create" (See: [Metonymy](#))

to water a forest

Alternate translation: "to provide water for a forest"

forest where trees were grown

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "forest where trees grew" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁶ I made for myself reservoirs of waters in order to irrigate from them a forest sprouting up trees.

UST

⁶ I built pools of water to store water to irrigate the fruit trees.

Ecclesiastes 2:7

I had slaves born in my palace

Alternate translation: "I had slaves that were born in my palace" or "My slaves bore children and they also were my slaves"

much more than any king

The understood verb may be supplied. Alternate translation: "much more than any other king had" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- I acquired
- male servants
- and sons of
- the house
- cattle
- and a flock of small animals
- in Jerusalem

Translation Words - UST

- I bought
- male and female slaves
- who later became my slaves...in
- palace
- livestock
- livestock
- in Jerusalem

ULT

⁷ I acquired male servants and maidservants, and sons of the house were for me; also property, cattle and a flock of small animals. Much was for me, more than all who were before me in Jerusalem.

UST

⁷ I bought male and female slaves. Babies who later became my slaves were born in my palace. I also owned more livestock than any of the previous kings in Jerusalem had owned.

Ecclesiastes 2:8

the treasures of kings and provinces

This refers to the gold and other wealth that neighboring countries were forced to pay to the king of Israel. Alternate translation: “that I acquired from the treasures of kings and the rulers of provinces” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

provinces

Here “provinces” represents the rulers of the provinces. Alternate translation: “the rulers of provinces” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the delights of the children of humanity—and many concubines

This means that he had many concubines that he enjoyed sleeping with, as any man enjoys sleeping with women. Alternate translation: “I greatly enjoyed many concubines, as would delight any man” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- silver
- and gold
- kings
- the sons of
- the man

Translation Words - UST

- silver
- and gold
- kings
- men all over the world
- men all over the world

ULT

⁸ I also amassed for myself silver and gold, and valued property of kings and the provinces. I prepared male singers and female singers for myself, and the luxuries of the sons of the man, a concubine, indeed concubines. ^[1]

UST

⁸ I also accumulated large amounts of silver and gold that were acquired from the treasures of kings and rulers of provinces. I owned men and women who sang for me, and I had many wives and concubines, whom men all over the world would enjoy possessing.

Ecclesiastes 2:9

than all who were before me in Jerusalem

This refers to all the previous rulers of Jerusalem. Alternate translation: “than all the kings who had ruled before me in Jerusalem” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

my wisdom remained with me

This is an idiom. “I continued to act wisely” or “I continued to be wise” (See: [Idiom](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [in Jerusalem](#)
- [stood](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [in Jerusalem](#)
- [I allowed my wisdom to continue to guide](#)

ULT

⁹ So I became wealthy and I added more than all who were before me [in Jerusalem](#), moreover my wisdom [stood](#) with me.

UST

⁹ So I gained more power and wealth than any king who had ruled before me [in Jerusalem](#), and [I allowed my wisdom to continue to guide](#) me.

Ecclesiastes 2:10

Whatever my eyes desired ... from them

Here the author refers to himself by his “eyes” to emphasize what he sees. Alternate translation: “Whatever I saw and desired ... from myself” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

I did not withhold from them

This can be stated positively. Alternate translation: “I got for them”

I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure

Here the author refers to himself by his “heart” to emphasize his desires. This can be stated positively and the word “pleasure” can be expressed as a verb. Alternate translation: “I did not keep myself from any pleasure” or “I allowed myself to enjoy everything that made me happy” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

my heart rejoiced

Here the author refers to himself by his “heart” to emphasize his desires. Alternate translation: “I rejoiced” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- my heart
- my heart
- joy
- was joyful

Translation Words - UST

- I did everything that I thought would enable me to be happy
- the things that I enjoyed
- I did everything that I thought would enable me to be happy
- the things that I enjoyed

ULT

¹⁰ Thus all that my eyes asked, I did not refuse from them. I did not deny my heart from any joy, because my heart was joyful from all my toil and this was my portion from all my toil.

UST

¹⁰ I got everything that I saw and wanted. I did everything that I thought would enable me to be happy. All the things that I enjoyed were like a reward for all my hard work.

Ecclesiastes 2:11

all the deeds that my hands had accomplished

Here the author refers to himself by his “hands.” Alternate translation: “all that I had accomplished” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

vapor ... an attempt to shepherd the wind

These two phrases are both metaphors that emphasize the idea of things being useless and futile. (See: [Parallelism](#))

vapor

“mist.” The author speaks of useless and meaningless things as if they were “vapor.” See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: “as useless as vapor” or “meaningless” (See: [Metaphor](#))

an attempt to shepherd the wind

The author says that everything that people do is as useless as if they were trying to control the wind. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: “are as useless as trying to control the wind” (See: [Metaphor](#))

There was no profit under the sun in it

Alternate translation: “But it had no profit under the sun”

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: “on the earth” (See: [Idiom](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [my hands](#)
- [wind](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [I](#)
- [the wind](#)

ULT

11 Then I turned myself toward all my works that [my hands](#) had done, and at toil that I have toiled to do, and look, the entirety is futile as tending [wind](#). Thus there was not an advantage under the sun.

UST

11 But then I thought about all the hard work that [I](#) had done to obtain all those things. I saw that none of my work brought me any lasting benefit. It was all like trying to control [the wind](#).

Ecclesiastes 2:12

madness and folly

The words “madness” and “folly” have similar meanings and refer to foolish thinking and behavior, respectively. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:17](#). (See: [Doublet](#))

For what can the next king do who comes after the king, which has not already been done?

The author uses this rhetorical question to emphasize his point that the next king will not be able to do anything more valuable than what he had already done. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation:

“For the next king who comes after the king can do nothing that a king before him has not already done.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

the next king ... who comes after the king

Alternate translation: “the king ... who succeeds the current king” or “the next king ... who comes after me”

Translation Words - ULT

- [is the man](#)
- [the king](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [anybody](#)
- [I can](#)

ULT

¹² Also I turned myself to see wisdom, and foolishness and folly, for who [is the man](#) who would come after [the king](#)? What already exists, they have done it.

UST

¹² Then I started to think about being wise, and also about being foolish. I said to myself, “I certainly do not think that [anybody](#) will be able to do anything better than [I can](#).”

Ecclesiastes 2:13

wisdom has advantages over folly, just as light is better than darkness

This speaks of how wisdom is better than folly by comparing it to how light is better than darkness. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

¹³ Then I myself saw that there is an advantage to the wisdom more than the folly, as the advantage of the light over the darkness.

UST

¹³ And I thought, "Surely it is better to be wise than to be foolish, like light is better than darkness,

Ecclesiastes 2:14

The wise man uses his eyes in his head to see where he is going

This speaks of a wise man making wise decisions as walking and paying attention to where he is going. Alternate translation: "The wise man is like a person who uses his eyes to see where he is going" (See: [Metaphor](#))

uses his eyes in his head to see

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: "pays attention and looks to see" (See: [Idiom](#))

the fool walks in darkness

This compares a fool making bad decisions to someone walking in darkness. Alternate translation: "the fool is like a person who walks in the dark" (See: [Metaphor](#))

the same event

death

Translation Words - ULT

- [are in his head](#)
- [is walking](#)
- [although I know](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [walk in the daylight and can see where they are going](#)
- [walk](#)
- [But...realized](#)

ULT

¹⁴ The wise, his eyes [are in his head](#), but the fool [is walking](#) in the darkness, [although I know](#), even myself, that one event will happen to all of them.

UST

¹⁴ because wise people [walk in the daylight and can see where they are going](#), but foolish people [walk](#) in the darkness and cannot see where they are going." [But](#) I also [realized](#) that both wise people and foolish people eventually die.

Ecclesiastes 2:15

I said in my heart

Here the author refers to himself by his “heart” to emphasize his feelings. Alternate translation: “I said to myself” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

So what difference does it make if I am very wise?

The author uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that there is no benefit to being wise. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: “So it makes no difference if I am very wise.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

I concluded in my heart

Here the author refers to himself by his “heart” to emphasize his feelings. Alternate translation: “I concluded” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

is only vapor

“is only mist.” The author speaks of useless and meaningless things as if they were “vapor.” See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: “is as useless as vapor” or “is meaningless” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [in my heart](#)
- [in my heart](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [to myself](#)
- [heart](#)

ULT

¹⁵ Then I myself said [in my heart](#), “As the fate of the fool, also myself, it will happen to me. So how am I myself wise, then, abundantly?” So I spoke [in my heart](#), that also this is futile.

UST

¹⁵ So I said [to myself](#), “I am very wise, but I will die at the end of my life like foolish people do. So how has it benefited me to be very wise? I do not understand why people consider that it is valuable to be wise.

Ecclesiastes 2:16

For the wise man, like the fool, is not remembered for very long

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "People do not remember the wise man for very long, just as they do not remember the fool for very long" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

everything will have been long forgotten

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "people will have long forgotten everything" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [of the wise man](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [wise men, advisor](#)

ULT

¹⁶ For there is no remembrance [of the wise man](#), equally with the fool for forever, in that already the coming days the entirety is forgotten, and how the wise along with the fool will die.

UST

¹⁶ Wise people and foolish people all die. And after we die, we will all eventually be forgotten."

Ecclesiastes 2:17

all the work done

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “all the work that people do” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

was evil to me

Alternate translation: “troubled me”

vapor ... an attempt to shepherd the wind

These two phrases are both metaphors that emphasize the idea of things being useless and futile. (See: [Parallelism](#))

vapor

“mist.” The author speaks of useless and meaningless things as if they were “vapor.” See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: “as useless as vapor” or “meaningless” (See: [Metaphor](#))

an attempt to shepherd the wind

The author says everything that people do is as useless as if they were trying to control the wind. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: “as useless as trying to control the wind” (See: [Metaphor](#))

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: “on the earth” (See: [Idiom](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [evil](#)
- [wind](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [distressed](#)
- [the wind](#)

ULT

17 So I hated this life because of [evil](#) around me, the work that was being done under the sun, for the entirety was futile as tending [wind](#).

UST

17 So I hated being alive, because all the work that we do here on the earth [distressed](#) me. It all seemed to be useless, like trying to control [the wind](#).

Ecclesiastes 2:18

to the man who comes after me

Alternate translation: "to the man who inherits it after me"

Translation Words - ULT

- to the man

Translation Words - UST

- will belong to the one

ULT

18 Moreover I myself hated all my toil, that I had become a toiler under the sun since I must bestow it to the man who will come after me.

UST

18 I also began to hate all the hard work that I had done here on the earth, because when I die, everything that I have acquired will belong to the one who inherits it after me.

Ecclesiastes 2:19

For who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool?

The author uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that no one knows the character the man who will inherit his wealth. Alternate translation: "For no one knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

he will be

The word "he" refers to the author's heir.

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: "on the earth" (See: [Idiom](#))

that my work and wisdom have built

Here the author's "work" and "wisdom" represent himself and the things he did in his wisdom. He probably had help with the literal buildings. Alternate translation: "that I worked very hard and wisely to build" (See: [Metonymy](#))

vapor

The author speaks of useless and meaningless things as if they were mist. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: "as useless as vapor" or "meaningless" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [knows](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [knows whether](#)

ULT

¹⁹ For who [knows](#) whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my toil which I have toiled and for which I have acted wisely under the sun. Also this is futile.

UST

¹⁹ And who [knows whether](#) that person will be wise or foolish? But even if he is foolish, he will acquire all the things that I worked very hard and wisely to get.

Ecclesiastes 2:20

my heart began to despair

Here the author refers to himself by his “heart” to emphasize his feelings. Alternate translation: “I began to despair” or “I began to lose all hope” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [in my heart](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [It seemed useless, and I became depressed](#)

ULT

²⁰ Therefore I turned myself to despair [in my heart](#) about all the toil which I had toiled under the sun.

UST

²⁰ I thought about all the hard work that I had done in this world. [It seemed useless, and I became depressed.](#)

Ecclesiastes 2:21

who works with wisdom, with knowledge, and skill

Alternate translation: "who works wisely and skillfully, using the things that he has learned"

who has not made any of it

Alternate translation: "who has not worked for any of it"

vapor

The author speaks of useless and meaningless things as if they were mist. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: "as useless as vapor" or "meaningless" (See: [Metaphor](#))

a great tragedy

Alternate translation: "a great disaster"

Translation Words - ULT

- [a man](#)
- [but to a man](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [Some people](#)
- [But when they die, they leave everything, and someone](#)

ULT

²¹ For there is [a man](#) whom his toil is with wisdom, and with knowledge, and with skill, [but to a man](#) who has not toiled over it, he will give it as his portion. This also is futile and a great calamity.

UST

²¹ [Some people](#) work wisely and skillfully, using the things that they have learned. [But when they die, they leave everything, and someone](#) who has not worked for those things acquires them. That fact also seemed to be senseless and caused me to be discouraged.

Ecclesiastes 2:22

For what profit does the person gain who works so hard and tries in his heart to complete his labors under the sun?

The author uses a rhetorical question to emphasize that the man who works hard gains nothing. Translate “what profit does ... gain” as you did in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: “For the person who works so hard and tries in his heart to complete his labors under the sun gains nothing.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

works so hard and tries in his heart

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and emphasize how strenuously the person works. (See: [Parallelism](#))

tries in his heart

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “tries anxiously” (See: [Idiom](#))

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: “on the earth” (See: [Idiom](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [to the man](#)
- [his heart](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [for people](#)
- [they do](#)

ULT

²² For what happens [to the man](#) in exchange for all his toil, and concerning the striving of [his heart](#) for which he is toiling under the sun?

UST

²² So it is useless [for people](#) to work for all [they do](#).

Ecclesiastes 2:23

painful and stressful

These two words mean basically the same thing and emphasize how difficult the person's work is. (See: [Doublet](#))

his soul does not find rest

Here man's mind is referred to as his "soul" to emphasize his deep thoughts. Alternate translation: "his mind does not rest" or "he continues to worry" (See: [Idiom](#) and [Metonymy](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [his heart](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [their minds](#)

ULT

23 Because all his days are sorrows, and grievous is his travail. Even in the night [his heart](#) does not take rest. Also this, it is futile.

UST

23 Every day the work that they do causes them to experience pain and to be worried. And during the night [their minds](#) are not able to rest. That also shows how temporary everything is.

Ecclesiastes 2:24

God's hand

Here God is represented by his "hand" to emphasize how he provides for people. Alternate translation: "from God" (See: [Metonymy](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- good
- good
- in the man
- his innermost being
- from the hand of
- the true God

Translation Words - UST

- the best thing that...can do
- good, right, pleasant, better, best
- we
- God intends for us
- God intends for us
- life, live, living, alive

ULT

²⁴ There is nothing [good in the man](#) who would eat and he would drink then he would show [his innermost being good](#) in the toil of him. Also this I myself saw that [from the hand of the true God](#) it is.

UST

²⁴ So I decided that [the best thing that we can do](#) is to enjoy what we eat and drink, and also to enjoy our work. And I realized that those things are what [God intends for us](#).

Ecclesiastes 2:25

For who can eat or who can have any kind of pleasure apart from God?

The author uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that no pleasure can be had without God's provision. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "For no one can eat or have any kind of pleasure apart from God." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [may eat](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [devour](#)

ULT

²⁵ For who [may eat](#) and who may have enjoyment further than me?

UST

²⁵ There is absolutely no one who is able to enjoy those things if God does not give those things to him.

Ecclesiastes 2:26

so that he may give it away to someone who pleases God

Possible meanings for the word **he** are: (1) God or (2) the sinner. This also can be translated without making it clear who it is that gives the things that the sinner stored. Alternate translation: “so that the one who pleases God may have it”

vapor ... an attempt to shepherd the wind

These two phrases are both metaphors that emphasize the idea of things being useless and futile. (See: [Parallelism](#))

vapor

“mist.” The author speaks of useless and meaningless things as if they were “vapor.” See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: “as useless as vapor” or “meaningless” (See: [Metaphor](#))

an attempt to shepherd the wind

The author speaks of everything that people do as being useless as if they were trying to control the wind. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: “are as useless as trying to control the wind” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁶ For [to a man](#) who is good before his face, he gives wisdom and knowledge [and joy](#). But to the one who sins he gives travail to gather and to heap up in order to give to a good one before the face of [the true God](#). This also is futile as tending [wind](#).

2:8 ^[1] , , etc.

UST

²⁶ God enables [those](#) who please him to be wise, to know many things, [and to enjoy many things](#). But if sinful people work hard and become rich, God can take their money away from them and give it to those who please [him](#). However, the reason for that is also something that is difficult for me to understand. It seems useless that they worked so hard; it is like trying to control [the wind](#).

Translation Words - ULT

- [to a man](#)
- [and joy](#)
- [the true God](#)
- [wind](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [those](#)
- [and to enjoy many things](#)
- [him](#)
- [the wind](#)

Ecclesiastes 3

Ecclesiastes 3 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with the poetry in 3:1-8 and 3:15.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Parallelism

The chapter uses parallelism with the phrase, “a time to.” This gives the quotation a poetic style. Their overall purpose is to show that Yahweh directs the events of the world and therefore, they have purpose.

Ecclesiastes 3:1

General Information:

The writer uses merisms to describe various aspects of life from one extreme to the other. (See: [Merism](#))

For everything there is an appointed time, and a season for every purpose

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and are combined for emphasis. (See: [Parallelism](#))

under heaven

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: “on the earth” (See: [Idiom](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [the heavens](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [in this world](#)

ULT

¹ For the entirety there is a set time, and a proper time for every experience under [the heavens](#):

UST

¹ There is a right time for everything, a time for everything that we do [in this world](#).

Ecclesiastes 3:2

a time to pull up plants

This could mean: (1) "a time to harvest" or (2) "a time to uproot."

Translation Words - ULT

- for dying

Translation Words - UST

- for him to die

ULT

² a proper time for bearing and a proper time for dying, a proper time for planting and a proper time for plucking up what was planted,

UST

² There is the right time for any certain person to be born, and there is the right time for him to die. There is the right time to plant crops, and there is the right time to harvest crops.

Ecclesiastes 3:3

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Translation Words - ULT

- for slaying

Translation Words - UST

- to kill people

ULT

³ a proper time for slaying and a proper time for healing, a proper time for breaking down and a proper time for building,

UST

³ There is the right time to kill people, and there is the right time to heal people. There is the right time to tear things down, and there is the right time to build things.

Ecclesiastes 3:4

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁴ a proper time for weeping and a proper time for laughing, a proper time of wailing and a proper time of skipping about,

UST

⁴ There is the right time to cry, and there is the right time to laugh. There is the right time to mourn, and there is the right time to dance joyfully.

Ecclesiastes 3:5

embrace

to hold someone in your arms to show love or friendship

ULT

⁵ a proper time for casting stones and a proper time of gathering stones, a proper time for embracing, and a proper time for refraining from embracing,

UST

⁵ There is the right time to throw away stones from a field, and there is the right time to gather stones to build walls. There is the right time to embrace people, and there is the right time to keep from embracing them.

Ecclesiastes 3:6

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Translation Words - ULT

- for searching
- for letting go

Translation Words - UST

- to search for things
- to stop searching for things

ULT

⁶ a proper time for searching and a proper time for letting go, a proper time for keeping and a proper time for throwing away,

UST

⁶ There is the right time to search for things, and there is the right time to stop searching for things. There is the right time to keep things, and there is the right time to throw things away.

Ecclesiastes 3:7

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁷ a proper time for tearing apart and a proper time for sewing together, a proper time for keeping quiet and a proper time for speaking,

UST

⁷ There is the right time to tear our clothes because we are grieving, and there is the right time to mend our clothes. There is the right time to say nothing, and there is the right time for speaking.

Ecclesiastes 3:8

General Information:

The writer concludes using merisms to describe various aspects of life from one extreme to the other. (See: [Merism](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [for loving](#)
- [peace](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [when we should love things that people do](#)
- [for peace](#)

ULT

⁸ a proper time [for loving](#) and a proper time for hating, a proper time of battle, and a proper time of [peace](#).

UST

⁸ There is the right time [when we should love things that people do](#), and there is the right time when we should hate things that people do. There is the right time for war, and there is the right time [for peace](#).

Ecclesiastes 3:9

What profit does the worker gain in his labor?

This is a thought provoking question to focus the reader on the next discussion topic. Translate “what profit does ... gain” as you did in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: “The worker gains no profit for his labor.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

⁹ What advantage is there for the one working? In exchange for what is he a laborer?

UST

⁹ What do people gain from all the work that they do?

Ecclesiastes 3:10

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Translation Words - ULT

- God
- to the sons of
- man

Translation Words - UST

- God
- people
- people

ULT

¹⁰ I have seen the travail that God has given to the sons of man to be occupied with it.

UST

¹⁰ I have seen the work that God has given people to do.

Ecclesiastes 3:11

God has made everything suitable for its own time

“God has fixed a time that is right for everything to happen” or “God has set a time that is right for each thing to happen:

placed eternity in their hearts

Here the word “their” refers to human beings. Here the “hearts” of the people represent their thoughts and desires. Alternate translation: “placed eternity in the hearts of human beings” or “caused people to think about eternal things” (See: [Metonymy](#))

from their beginning all the way to their end

This refers to the beginning and the end and all that is in between. (See: [Merism](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [in their heart](#)
- [the man](#)
- [God](#)
- [from beginning](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [He has...caused people to realize that there are things that will last forever](#)
- [one](#)
- [God](#)
- [from the time that he starts doing things](#)

ULT

¹¹ The entirety he has made beautiful at its proper time. He has also given the concept of eternity [in their heart](#), because without that [the man](#) would not discover the work that [God](#) has done, [from beginning](#) even to end.

UST

¹¹ God has fixed a time that is right for everything to happen. [He has](#) also [caused people to realize that there are things that will last forever](#). But in spite of that, no [one](#) can completely understand everything that [God](#) has done, [from the time that he starts doing things](#) until he finishes them.

Ecclesiastes 3:12

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Translation Words - ULT

- I know
- good
- good (2)

Translation Words - UST

- I know
- the best thing...to do
- good things (2)

ULT

¹² I know that there is no good in them, but only to rejoice and to do good during his life,

UST

¹² I know that the best thing for us people to do is to rejoice and to do good things during the time that we are alive.

Ecclesiastes 3:13

should understand how to enjoy

Alternate translation: “should learn how to enjoy” or “should enjoy”

Translation Words - ULT

- mankind
- good
- God

Translation Words - UST

- everyone
- God
- good, right, pleasant, better, best

ULT

¹³ and the whole of mankind, that he eats and he drinks and he sees good in all of his toil. It is a gift of God.

UST

¹³ And I also know that everyone should enjoy what they eat and drink, and enjoy the work that they do. Those are gifts that God gives to us.

Ecclesiastes 3:14

Nothing can be added to it or taken away

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "No one can add anything to or take anything away from it" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- I know
- the true God

Translation Words - UST

- I also know
- God

ULT

¹⁴ I know that everything that the true God does, it will be for forever. To it there is nothing to add and from it there is nothing to remove, for the true God has acted so that they should fear from before his faces.

UST

¹⁴ I also know that what God does endures forever. No one can add to what God does, and no one can take away from the things that he does. God does those things in order that people will honor him.

Ecclesiastes 3:15

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Translation Words - ULT

- searches out
- what is pursued

Translation Words - UST

- causes us to want to understand
- mysteries

ULT

¹⁵ Whatever that is, formerly it was, and what is to be, formerly it was. So the true God searches out what is pursued.
[1]

UST

¹⁵ Things that exist now have already existed previously, and things that will happen in the future have already happened previously; God causes us to want to understand mysteries.

Ecclesiastes 3:16

I have seen the wickedness ... wickedness was there

These two phrases mean the same thing and emphasize how common wicked behavior is. (See: [Parallelism](#))

in place of righteousness

Alternate translation: "where there should be righteousness"

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: "on the earth" (See: [Idiom](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [judgment](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [even in the courts where we expect judges](#)

ULT

¹⁶ Moreover, still I have seen under the sun the place of [judgment](#), to there is the wicked one, and the place of the righteous, to there is the wicked one.

UST

¹⁶ Furthermore, I saw that on this earth, [even in the courts where we expect judges](#) to make right decisions about what people had done, they did many wicked things.

Ecclesiastes 3:17

I said in my heart

Here the author refers to himself by his “heart” to emphasize his feelings. Alternate translation: “I said to myself” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

the righteous and the wicked

This refers to righteous and wicked people. Alternate translation: “those who are righteous and those who are wicked” or “the righteous people and the wicked people” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

every matter and every deed

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and refer to every action that people do. (See: [Doublet](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [in my heart](#)
- [The true God](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [to myself](#)
- [God](#)

ULT

¹⁷ I myself said [in my heart](#), “[The true God](#) will judge the righteous and the wicked, for a proper time is for every experience and on account of all of the work there.”

UST

¹⁷ So I said [to myself](#), “[God](#) will judge both righteous people and wicked people. There is certainly a time for him to do that because there is a time for him to do everything.”

Ecclesiastes 3:18

I said in my heart

Here the author refers to himself by his “heart” to emphasize his feelings. Alternate translation: “I said to myself” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

they are like animals

Here the author says that human beings are like animals. In the next verse the author explains clearly how humans are like animals. (See: [Simile](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [in my heart](#)
- [the sons of](#)
- [man](#)
- [the true God](#)
- [are an animal](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [humans](#)
- [humans](#)
- [to myself](#)
- [God](#)
- [are no different than animals](#)

ULT

¹⁸ I myself said [in my heart](#),
“Concerning the manner of [the sons of man](#), upon [the true God](#) purging them
and upon seeing that they, themselves
[are an animal](#) by themselves,

UST

¹⁸ And regarding [humans](#), I also said [to myself](#), “[God](#) is testing us, to show us
that in one way people [are no different than animals](#).”

Ecclesiastes 3:19

is the same fate for them

Alternate translation: "is the same for both of them" or "is the same"

The breath is the same for all of them

Alternate translation: "All of them breathe same"

There is no advantage for mankind over the animals

Alternate translation: "Mankind is no better off than the animals"

is not everything just a breath?

Here the author speaks of everything being as temporary as if it were a breath of air. The author uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that everything is temporary. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "Everything is just a breath." or "Everything is as temporary as a breath." (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Rhetorical Question](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [awaits the sons of](#)
- [man](#)
- [the man](#)
- [Now...spirit](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [people](#)
- [People](#)
- [people](#)
- [must breathe to remain alive](#)

ULT

¹⁹ because a destiny [awaits the sons of man](#) and a destiny awaits the animal. So one destiny for them as a death this one, so a death this one. [Now](#) one [spirit](#) for the entirety and an advantage of [the man](#) over the beast, there is none, for the entirety is futile.

UST

¹⁹ What happens to [people](#) happens to animals. Animals die, and people die. We all [must breathe to remain alive](#). [People](#) have no advantage over animals in that way. Everything disappears so quickly.

Ecclesiastes 3:20

Everything is going to the same place

This means that all people and all animals die and decay and become part of the soil. Alternate translation: "Everything dies and goes to the same place" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

dust

soil

Translation Words - ULT

- is going
- returns

Translation Words - UST

- die and are buried
- become soil again

ULT

²⁰ The entirety [is going](#) to one place. The entirety was from the dust, and the entirety [returns](#) to the dust.

UST

²⁰ People and animals all [die and are buried](#). We are all made of soil, and when we die, our corpses [become soil again](#).

Ecclesiastes 3:21

Who knows whether the spirit ... into the earth?

The author asks this rhetorical question to emphasize that no one truly knows what happens after people and animals die. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: “No one knows whether the spirit ... into the earth.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- knows
- the spirit of
- or the spirit of
- the sons of
- man

Translation Words - UST

- knows for sure that when we die
- our
- our
- souls
- and the souls of

ULT

²¹ Who knows, the spirit of the sons of man, that it is going up towards upward or the spirit of the beast, that it is going down, towards downwards into the earth? ^[2]

UST

²¹ No one knows for sure that when we die, our souls go up to heaven and the souls of animals go down to the place where the dead are.”

Ecclesiastes 3:22

there is nothing better for anyone than to

See how you translated this phrase in [Ecclesiastes 3:12](#).

Who can bring him back to see what happens after him?

The author uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that no one will see what happens after he dies. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "No one of us knows what happens to us after we die." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [better](#)
- [the man](#)
- [would rejoice](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [the best thing for...to do](#)
- [us people](#)
- [is to be happy](#)

ULT

²² So I saw that there is nothing [better](#) than that [the man would rejoice](#) in his works, because it is his portion. For who will bring him to see about what that will be after him?"

3:15 ^[1], other modern versions interpret this line in different ways.

3:21 ^[2]

UST

²² So I think that [the best thing for us people to do is to be happy](#) about the work that we do, because that is what God has given to us. I say this because no one of us knows what happens to us after we die.

Ecclesiastes 4

Ecclesiastes 4 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with the poetry in 4:1-3, 4:5-6, and 4:8-12.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Irony

The teacher looks at the oppression in the world and is saddened by it, but he is the king and has the power to change things. He also laments being alone even though he has many wives, children, and concubines. (See: [oppress](#), [oppressed](#), [oppression](#), [oppressor](#), [dominate](#) and [lament](#), [lamentation](#) and [Irony](#))

Ecclesiastes 4:1

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: “on the earth” (See: [Idiom](#))

behold, the tears

Alternate translation: “I looked and I saw”

the tears of oppressed people

Here “tears” represent weeping. Alternate translation: “the oppressed people were weeping” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Power was in the hand of their oppressors

This means that their oppressors were powerful. Here their “hand” represents what they possess. Alternate translation: “Their oppressors were powerful” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [Then I turned](#)
- [a comforter](#)
- [a comforter](#)
- [is strength](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [some more](#)
- [to comfort them](#)
- [able to comfort the oppressed](#)
- [have power](#)

ULT

¹ [Then I turned](#) myself and I saw all those being oppressed, what was being done under the sun. Now look, the tears of those being oppressed, and there is not [a comforter](#) for them! Indeed, out of the hand of their oppressors [is strength](#), but there is not [a comforter](#) for them!

UST

¹ I thought [some more](#) about all the suffering that people are made to experience on the earth. I thought about the tears of people who were oppressed and who had no one [to comfort them](#). Those who oppress them [have power](#), and there is no one [able to comfort the oppressed](#).

Ecclesiastes 4:2

the living, who are still alive

The word “living” is a nominal adjective that refers to people who are living. The phrase “those who are still alive” means the same thing as “the living.” Alternate translation: “the people who are still alive” (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Nominal Adjectives](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- the dead ones
- the living ones
- are...alive

Translation Words - UST

- those who are...dead
- those who are
- alive

ULT

² So I myself commended [the dead ones](#), who have already died, more than [the living ones](#), who they are still alive.

UST

² So I thought that [those who are](#) already [dead](#) are more fortunate than [those who are](#) still [alive](#).

Ecclesiastes 4:3

more fortunate than both of them is the one who has not yet lived

Alternate translation: “the one who has not yet been born is better off than both of them”

both of them

This refers to those who are dead and to those who are alive.
Alternate translation: “both those who are dead and those who are living” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: “on the earth” (See: [Idiom](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [evil](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [evil](#)

ULT

³ However, better than the two of them is the one who has not yet been, who has not seen the [evil](#) work that is being done under the sun.

UST

³ And those who have not yet been born are even more fortunate than those two kinds of people, because those who have not been born have not seen all the [evil](#) things that are done on the earth.

Ecclesiastes 4:4

became the envy of one's neighbor

The word "envy" may be expressed as an adjective. Alternate translation: "made one's neighbor envious" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

the envy of one's neighbor

This could mean: (1) The neighbor envies the object his neighbor made, or (2) the neighbor envies the skills his neighbor has.

vapor ... an attempt to shepherd the wind

These two phrases are both metaphors that emphasize the idea of things being useless and futile. (See: [Parallelism](#))

vapor

"mist." The author speaks of things as being useless and meaningless as if they were vapor. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: "as useless as vapor" or "meaningless" (See: [Metaphor](#))

an attempt to shepherd the wind

The author speaks of everything that people do as being useless as if they were trying to control the wind. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: "are as useless as trying to control the wind" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [wind](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [the wind](#)

ULT

⁴ Then I myself saw every accomplishment and every success of the work, that it was the envy of a man before his neighbor. This also is futile as tending [wind](#).

UST

⁴ I also thought about all the hard work that people do and the things they are able to accomplish. And I thought about how someone who works hard sometimes makes his neighbor jealous. I decided that this also is something that is not accomplishing anything useful. It is like trying to control [the wind](#).

Ecclesiastes 4:5

The fool folds his hands and does not work

To fold the hands is a gesture of laziness and is another way of saying that the person refuses to work. Alternate translation: "The fool refuses to work" (See: [Symbolic Action](#) and [Parallelism](#))

so his food is his own flesh

This speaks of a person destroying himself as if he were eating his own body. Alternate translation: "as a result, he causes his own ruin" or "and as a result, he destroys himself" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [his hands](#)
- [thus devouring](#)
- [his flesh](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [their hands](#)
- [So they ruin themselves](#)
- [So they ruin themselves](#)

ULT

⁵ The fool is clasping [his hands](#), [thus devouring his flesh](#).

UST

⁵ Foolish people refuse to work. They sit idly with [their hands](#) folded and do not work. [So they ruin themselves](#).

Ecclesiastes 4:6

a handful

Alternate translation: "a small amount"

two handfuls

"a large amount." It is understood that this refer to profit gained.
Alternate translation: "two handfuls of profit" or "a large amount of profit" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

that tries to shepherd the wind

The author speaks of everything that people do as being useless as if they were trying to control the wind. See how you translated a similar phrase in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: "that is as useless as trying to control the wind" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [Better](#)
- [palm](#)
- [wind](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [So some say, "It is better](#)
- [to be content with working quietly for a little bit of money](#)
- [the wind](#)

ULT

⁶ [Better](#) is a fullness of [palm](#) at rest than a fullness of both fists with toil that is tending [wind](#).

UST

⁶ [So some say, "It is better to be content with working quietly for a little bit of money, than to work anxiously and try to get a lot of money, which is as useless as trying to control the wind."](#)

Ecclesiastes 4:7

futility

being useless, without profit

more vanishing vapor

“more vanishing mist.” The author speaks of things as being useless and meaningless as if they were vapor. See how you translated “vapor” in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: “more things that are as useless as vapor” or “more meaningless things” (See: [Metaphor](#))

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: “on the earth” (See: [Idiom](#))

vapor

“mist.” The author speaks of things as being useless and meaningless as if they were vapor. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: “as useless as vapor” or “meaningless” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [Then I...turned](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [thought about something else](#)

ULT

⁷ [Then I](#) myself [turned](#) and I saw futility under the sun.

UST

⁷ I [thought about something else](#) that happens on the earth that seems useless.

Ecclesiastes 4:8

no son or brother

This person has no family. Alternate translation: “he has no family” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

his eyes are not satisfied

Here the whole person is represented by his “eyes” to emphasize his desires. Alternate translation: “he is not satisfied” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

For whom am I toiling and depriving myself of pleasure

Alternate translation: “Will anyone benefit from me working hard and not enjoying myself”

Translation Words - ULT

- [a son](#)
- [or a brother](#)
- [my being](#)
- [evil](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [children](#)
- [brothers or sisters living with them](#)
- [that I](#)
- [This is very bad](#)

ULT

⁸ There is one and there is not a second. Even [a son or a brother](#) there is not for him, and there is not an end to all his toil. Even his eye is not satisfied with wealth. So for what am I a laborer and depriving [my being](#) of pleasure? This also is futile and an [evil](#) activity it is.

UST

⁸ There are people who live alone; they do not have a family nor even [children](#) or any [brothers or sisters living with them](#). Every day they work very hard without stopping; they make a lot of money, but they are never satisfied with the things that they get. They ask themselves, “Why am I working so hard; whom am I actually helping? Why am I not doing things [that I](#) would enjoy doing? What I have been doing seems useless.” [This is very bad](#).

Ecclesiastes 4:9

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Translation Words - ULT

- Better
- good

Translation Words - UST

- is better
- good, right, pleasant, better, best

ULT

⁹ Better are the two than the one, because there is for them a good reward in exchange for their toil.

UST

⁹ Having someone work with you is better than being by yourself all the time. If you have a friend, he can help you to do your work.

Ecclesiastes 4:10

sorrow follows the one who is alone when he falls

Here sorrow is spoken of as if it were a person that could follow someone else. Alternate translation: “the one who is alone when he falls is sorrowful” (See: [Personification](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [to lift him up](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [to help you stand up](#)

ULT

¹⁰ For if the one should fall, he will lift up his companion. But woe to him, the one that would fall but there is not a second [to lift him up](#).

UST

¹⁰ If you fall down, he can help you get up again. But if you fall down when you are alone, you will have trouble, because there is no one [to help you stand up](#).

Ecclesiastes 4:11

If two lie down together, they can be warm

The writer speaks of two people keeping each other warm on a cold night. Alternate translation: "If two people lie down together at night, they can be warm" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

how can one be warm alone?

This refers to a person lying down. The author use this rhetorical question to emphasize that two people can keep each other warm but one person cannot. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "a person cannot be warm when he is alone." or "a person who lies down alone cannot be warm." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

11 Also if two would lie down, then it is warm for them, but for one, how will he be warm?

UST

11 Similarly, if two people lie down together, they can help each other to remain warm. But someone who sleeps alone will certainly not be warm.

Ecclesiastes 4:12

One man alone can be overpowered

This can be written in active form. Alternate translation: "Someone can overpower a person who is alone" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

but two

Alternate translation: "but two people"

withstand an attack

Alternate translation: "defend themselves against an attack"

a three-strand rope

This speaks of three people together being stronger as if they were a three-strand rope. Alternate translation: "three people are even stronger, like a three-strand rope that" (See: [Metaphor](#))

a three-strand rope is not quickly broken

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "people cannot easily break a rope made with three strands" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [would stand](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [can help each other and resist](#)

ULT

¹² Indeed, if the one would overpower him, the two [would stand](#) against him, and a tripled rope is not torn apart in a hurry.

UST

¹² Someone who is alone can easily be attacked and defeated by another person, but two people [can help each other and resist](#) someone who attacks them. Three people can defend themselves even more easily, like a rope that is made from three cords is harder to break than a rope made from two cords.

Ecclesiastes 4:13

wise youth

Alternate translation: "wise young man"

who no longer knows how

Here knowing represents willingness. Alternate translation: "who is no longer willing" (See: [Metonymy](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- Better
- an old
- does...know

Translation Words - UST

- is a better person
- old
- to pay attention when people try to give him good advice

ULT

¹³ Better is a poor but wise child than an old and foolish king who does not know to be admonished any longer.

UST

¹³ A young man who is poor but wise is a better person than a foolish old king who refuses to pay attention when people try to give him good advice.

Ecclesiastes 4:14

from prison

Alternate translation: "after being in prison"

he was born poor in his kingdom

This means that he had poor parents. Alternate translation: "he was born to poor parents who lived in the land that he will someday rule" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- from the house of
- he came forth
- to become king
- in his kingdom

Translation Words - UST

- a young man...to succeed and some day become
- king
- in the past
- if he was in prison

ULT

¹⁴ For [from the house of](#) those who are imprisoned [he came forth to become king](#), even if [in his kingdom](#) he was born being in want.

UST

¹⁴ It is possible for [a young man](#) like that [to succeed and some day become king](#), even if his parents were poor or even [if he was in prison in the past](#).

Ecclesiastes 4:15

General Information:

Instead of choosing the wise youth, the people choose the king's son, who may not be any wiser.

alive ... walking around

The words "alive" and "walking around" mean basically the same thing and are combined to emphasize living people. (See: [Parallelism](#))

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: "on the earth" (See: [Idiom](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [the living](#)
- [the...child](#)
- [would stand](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [young man](#)
- [becomes king](#)
- [life, live, living, alive](#)

ULT

¹⁵ I saw all [the living](#), those walking around under the sun, along with the second [child](#) who [would stand](#) in his place.

UST

¹⁵ But then some other [young man](#) [becomes king](#), and everyone starts to support him.

Ecclesiastes 4:16

There is no end to all the people

This is an exaggeration used to emphasize a large number of people. Alternate translation: "There are very many people" (See: [Hyperbole](#))

vapor ... an attempt to shepherd the wind

These two phrases are both metaphors that emphasize the idea of things being useless and futile. (See: [Parallelism](#))

vapor

"mist." The author speaks of things as being useless and meaningless as if they were vapor. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: "as useless as vapor" or "meaningless" (See: [Metaphor](#))

an attempt to shepherd the wind

The author speaks of everything that people do as being useless as if they were trying to control the wind. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: "are as useless as trying to control the wind" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [the people](#)
- [will...rejoice](#)
- [wind](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [people](#)
- [they will be tired...too](#)
- [the wind](#)

ULT

¹⁶ There is no end to all [the people](#), to all who are before them, even though the ones afterward will not [rejoice](#) in him. But also this is futile as tending [wind](#).

UST

¹⁶ Large crowds of [people](#) crowd around him. But after a few years, [they will be tired](#) of him, [too](#). So it is all senseless, like trying to control [the wind](#).

Ecclesiastes 5

Ecclesiastes 5 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with the poetry in 5:2-3, and 5:10-17.

Special concepts in this chapter

Materialism

The author describes the pointlessness of pursuing material things. This is known as “materialism.” Those who pursue after things will always want more. At the end of their life, they will not be able to use these things.

Ecclesiastes 5:1

Guard your steps

Here “steps” are a metonym for a person’s conduct. Alternate translation: “Be careful how you conduct yourself” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- Guard
- you go
- the house of
- the true God
- a sacrifice
- knowing
- evil

Translation Words - UST

- Be careful
- you approach
- God in his house
- God in his house
- sacrifices
- obeying him
- obeying him

ULT

¹ Guard your feet accordingly when you go to the house of the true God, and draw near to listen rather than by the giving of the foolish ones, a sacrifice when there is not for them knowing of doing evil.

UST

¹ Be careful when you approach God in his house. Listen well to him. That is better than offering sacrifices to him and then not obeying him, which is foolish.

Ecclesiastes 5:2

Do not be too quick ... do not let your heart be too quick

These two phrases mean the same thing and emphasize that you should think first before you speak to God about a matter. (See: [Parallelism](#))

to speak with your mouth

Here the phrase “with your mouth” emphasizes and describes a person speaking. Alternate translation: “to speak”

do not let your heart

Here a person is represented by his “heart” to emphasize his emotions and desires. Alternate translation: “do not” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

let your words be few

Alternate translation: “do not say too much”

Translation Words - ULT

- [the true God](#)
- [the true God](#)
- [is in the heavens](#)
- [the earth](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [God](#)
- [God](#)
- [is in heaven and he is all-powerful](#)
- [the earth](#)

ULT

² Do not be hasty with regard to your mouth, and your heart, may it not hurry to bring forth a matter before the faces of [the true God](#). For [the true God is in the heavens](#), but you are on [the earth](#), on account of this let your words be few.

UST

² Do not speak too quickly without thinking about the words you say; and do not be too quick in your heart to complain about something to [God](#). Do not forget that [God is in heaven and he is all-powerful](#) and you are here on [the earth](#), so think carefully before you make any promises to God.

Ecclesiastes 5:3

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³ For the dream comes with much work activity, but the voice of a fool with many words.

UST

³ If you are continually thinking and worrying about things, you will have bad dreams about them and not rest well. And the more you talk, the more likely it will be that you will say things that are foolish.

Ecclesiastes 5:4

do not delay to do it, for God has no pleasure in fools

It is implied that it is foolish to delay in fulfilling a vow that you have made to God. Alternate translation: “do not foolishly delay in doing it, because God is not pleased with foolish people” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- to God

Translation Words - UST

- God

ULT

⁴ Accordingly, when you vow a vow to God, do not delay to complete it, for there is no delight in the fools. What you vow, complete!

UST

⁴ When you solemnly promise God that you will do something, do not foolishly delay in doing it, because God is not pleased with foolish people. Do all the things that you promise God that you will do.

Ecclesiastes 5:5

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Translation Words - ULT

- It is better

Translation Words - UST

- It is better

ULT

⁵ It is better that you would not vow, than that you would vow but you would not complete.

UST

⁵ It is better to not promise anything than to promise to do something and then not do it.

Ecclesiastes 5:6

Do not allow your mouth to cause your flesh to sin

Here a person's "mouth" represents a person's speech, and the person himself is represented by his "flesh." Alternate translation: "Do not let what you say cause you to sin" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

Why make God angry by vowing falsely, provoking God to destroy the work of your hands?

The author uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that it is foolish to make a vow that you will not keep. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "It would be foolish to make God angry by vowing falsely, provoking God to destroy the work of your hands." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

destroy the work of your hands

Here a person is represented by his "hands." Alternate translation: "destroy everything you do" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [your flesh](#)
- [the true God](#)
- [your hands](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [cause you to sin by not doing them](#)
- [If you do that](#)
- [everything you have worked to accomplish](#)

ULT

⁶ Do not give your mouth over to make [your flesh](#) sin, and do not say before the faces of the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should [the true God](#) be angry on account of your voice, that he would ruin the work of [your hands](#)?

UST

⁶ Do not let the things that you promise to do [cause you to sin by not doing them](#). And if you promise God that you will do something but then do not do it, do not say to God's priest that it was a mistake for you to promise to do that. [If you do that](#), God can destroy [everything you have worked to accomplish](#).

Ecclesiastes 5:7

For in many dreams, as in many words, there is meaningless vapor

The author speaks of things as being useless and futile as if they were vapor. See how you translated “vapor” in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: “For many dreams and many words are as useless as vapor” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [dreams](#)
- [fear](#)
- [God](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [Promising to do something and not doing it is like having a useless dream](#)
- [honor...by doing what you promised him that you would do](#)
- [God](#)

ULT

⁷ For with many [dreams](#), then futilities and many words. Instead [fear God](#).

UST

⁷ [Promising to do something and not doing it is like having a useless dream](#). Instead, [honor God by doing what you promised him that you would do](#).

Ecclesiastes 5:8

the poor being oppressed and robbed

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “people oppressing the poor and robbing them” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the poor

This refers to poor people. Alternate translation: “those who are poor” or “poor people” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

just and right treatment

The words “just” and “right” mean basically the same thing and refer to the kind of treatment that people deserve. Alternate translation: “fair treatment” (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

⁸ If you see oppression of poor and plunder of [justice](#) and righteousness [in a district](#), do not marvel over the matter, for a higher one than over the high one [is watching](#), and even higher ones over them.

UST

⁸ Do not be surprised if you see poor people being oppressed. [There are people able to stop others from oppressing them](#), but even these people are under the power of someone even higher.

do not be astonished as if no one knows, because there are people

“do not be surprised, for there are people

there are people in power

Alternate translation: “there are people with authority”

even higher ones over them

There are other men who rule over the men in authority. Alternate translation: “men who have even more authority than they do” (See: [Idiom](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [justice](#)
- [in a district](#)
- [is watching](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [There are people able to stop others from oppressing them](#)
- [judge, judgment](#)
- [province, provincial](#)

Ecclesiastes 5:9

the produce of the land ... produce from the fields

The word “produce” may be expressed as a verb. Alternate translation: “the food that the land produces ... crops from the fields” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- a land
- a king
- being worked

Translation Words - UST

- Even though people throughout the land own their fields
- the king
- forces them to give him some of the crops that they harvest

ULT

⁹ Moreover, an advantage for a land, along with everyone, it is a king being in a field being worked.

UST

⁹ Even though people throughout the land own their fields, the king forces them to give him some of the crops that they harvest.

Ecclesiastes 5:10

vapor

The author speaks of useless and meaningless things as if they were mist. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: “as useless as vapor” or “meaningless” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [A lover of](#)
- [loves](#) (2)
- [silver](#)
- [with silver](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [Everyone who tries to get as much...as they can](#)
- [They will...be satisfied with the money that they have](#) (2)
- [money](#)
- [money](#)

ULT

¹⁰ [A lover of silver](#) is not satisfied [with silver](#), and who [loves](#) being in abundance not by income. This also, is futile.

UST

¹⁰ [Everyone who tries to get as much money as they can](#) will never think that they have enough. [They will](#) never [be satisfied with the money that they have](#). That fact also makes no sense.

Ecclesiastes 5:11

As prosperity increases

The word “prosperity” may be expressed as an adjective. Alternate translation: “As a person becomes more prosperous” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

so also do the people who consume it

This could mean: (1) “so also the person spends more money” or (2) “so also there will be more people who use his wealth.”

who consume it

This speaks of people spending wealth as if they were “eating” it. Alternate translation: “who use it” (See: [Metaphor](#))

What advantage in wealth is there to the owner except to watch it with his eyes?

The author uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that the wealthy do not benefit from their wealth. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: “The only benefit that the owner has from wealth is that he can look at it” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [ones consuming it](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [the more they want to spend it](#)

ULT

¹¹ When goodness increases, [ones consuming it](#) increase. So what advantage is for the owner of it except if his eyes are beholding?

UST

¹¹ The more money that people have, [the more they want to spend it](#). People who have a lot of money do not benefit from it, except to look at it and admire it.

Ecclesiastes 5:12

The sleep of a working man is sweet

This speaks of a person's sleep being fulfilling and peaceful as if it were sweet like something he eats. Alternate translation: "The sleep of a working man is peaceful" (See: [Metaphor](#))

whether he eats little or a lot

Alternate translation: "whether he eats a little bit of food or a lot of food"

but the wealth of a rich person does not allow him to sleep well

"but the wealth of a rich person keeps him awake at night." This speaks of a rich person not being able to sleep because he is worried about his money as if his money were a person that would not allow him to sleep. Alternate translation: "but rich people do not sleep well because they worry about their money" (See: [Personification](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [he should eat](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [to eat](#)

ULT

¹² Sweet is the sleep of the one working, whether a little or whether much [he should eat](#), but the satiation of a rich one, it does not permit resting for him to sleep.

UST

¹² Those who work hard sleep peacefully at night, even if they do not have much food [to eat](#). But rich people do not sleep well because they worry about their money.

Ecclesiastes 5:13

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: “on the earth” (See: [Idiom](#))

riches hoarded by the owner

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “an owner hoards riches” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [evil](#)
- [being kept](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [another terrible thing](#)
- [save up...and become rich](#)

ULT

¹³ There is a sickening [evil](#) I have seen under the sun: wealth [being kept](#) by its owner, resulting in his misery.

UST

¹³ I have seen [another terrible thing](#) that happens here on the earth. People [save up](#) all their money [and become rich](#), but they are miserable because they store up their money.

Ecclesiastes 5:14

through bad luck

This could mean: (1) “through misfortune” or (2) “through a bad business deal.”

his own son, one whom he has fathered, is left with nothing in his hands

Here the phrase “in his hands” represents ownership. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “he leaves no possession for his own son” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [When...was lost](#)
- [bad](#)
- [a son](#)
- [in his hand](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [If something happens](#)
- [that causes...to be gone](#)
- [then when they die...money](#)
- [for their children](#)

ULT

¹⁴ [When](#) that wealth [was lost](#) in a [bad](#) business matter, though he had fathered [a son](#), yet there is not anything [in his hand](#).

UST

¹⁴ [If something happens that causes](#) their money [to be gone](#), [then when they die](#), there is no [money for their children](#).

Ecclesiastes 5:15

As a man comes from his mother's womb ... he will leave naked

It is implied that a man is naked when he is born. In addition to being without clothing, here the word "naked" emphasizes that people are born without any possessions. Alternate translation: "As a man is naked and owns nothing when he is born ... he will leave this life the same way" (See: [Metaphor](#))

comes from his mother's womb

Alternate translation: "is born"

he will leave

This refers to dying. Alternate translation: "he will die" (See: [Euphemism](#))

He can take none of the fruits of his labor in his hand

Here a man's possessions are spoken of as if they are fruit that he grew with his labor. Alternate translation: "He can not take any of his possessions with him" (See: [Metonymy](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [he comes forth](#)
- [he will return](#)
- [in his hand](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [When we are born](#)
- [and when we die](#)
- [with us](#)

ULT

¹⁵ Just as [he comes forth](#) from the womb of his mother, naked [he will return](#) by going just how he came. Also he can not take anything in spite of his toiling that may go [in his hand](#).

UST

¹⁵ [When we are born](#), we do not bring anything with us, [and when we die](#), we take nothing [with us](#) from all that we have earned by working hard.

Ecclesiastes 5:16

as a person comes, so he goes away

This refers to the birth and death of a person and expresses the same idea as the previous verse. This refers to women as well as men. Alternate translation: “as people bring nothing into the world when they are born, so they take nothing with them when they die and leave this world” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [When Masculine Words Include Women](#))

So what profit is there for him who works for the wind?

The writer uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that there is no benefit in working for the wind. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: “No one gets any profit in working for the wind.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

works for the wind

This could mean: (1) This speaks of the person receiving no lasting profit as if he were trying to control the wind. Alternate translation: “tries to shepherd the wind” or “work that is as useless as trying to shepherd the wind” or (2) This implies that the person only receives the air that he breathes as his profit. Alternate translation: “works to receive the air he breathes” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [is...evil](#)
- [he will go away](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [seems to make no sense](#)
- [when they leave this world they take nothing with them](#)

ULT

¹⁶ Moreover, this also is a sickening [evil](#), everyone corresponding to how he came, in the same manner [he will go away](#). So what advantage is for him that he should toil for the wind?

UST

¹⁶ That also [seems to make no sense](#). People bring nothing into the world when they are born, and [when they leave this world they take nothing with them](#). They have worked hard, but they receive no lasting benefit.

Ecclesiastes 5:17

During his days he eats with darkness

This speaks of a person mourning throughout his life as if he always ate in darkness. Here “darkness” represents sadness and mourning. Alternate translation: “He spends his life in mourning and sadness” (See: [Metaphor](#))

his days

Here a person’s “days” represent his life. Alternate translation: “his life” (See: [Metonymy](#))

is greatly distressed with sickness and anger

The words “sickness” and “anger” can be expressed as adjectives. Alternate translation: “suffers greatly, being sick and angry” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [he eats](#)
- [and strife](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [rich people are...miserable](#)
- [and depressed](#)

ULT

¹⁷ Even all his days [he eats](#) in the darkness and he is greatly vexed with his sickness [and strife](#).

UST

¹⁷ Furthermore, [rich people are](#) always [miserable](#), sad, [and depressed](#).

Ecclesiastes 5:18

Look

The author uses this word here to draw his reader's attention to what he says next. Alternate translation: "Pay attention" or "Listen" (See: [Idiom](#))

what I have seen to be good and suitable

Here the words "good" and "suitable" mean basically the same thing. The second intensifies the meaning of the first. Alternate translation: "what I have seen to be the best thing to do" (See: [Doublet](#))

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: "on the earth" (See: [Idiom](#))

during the days of this life that God has given us

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: "as long as God allows us to live" (See: [Idiom](#))

For this is man's assignment

This could mean: (1) "For this is man's reward" or (2) "For these are the things that he allows man to do"

Translation Words - ULT

- [is good](#)
- [good](#)
- [the true God](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [So the best thing](#)
- [their work](#)
- [God](#)

ULT

18 Look, what I myself have seen [is good](#), what is appealing is to eat and to drink and to see [good](#) in all his toiling that he should toil under the sun the number of the days of his life that [the true God](#) has given to him, for it is his portion.

UST

18 [So the best thing](#) for people to do here on the earth during the few years that [God](#) allows them to be alive is to eat, drink, and enjoy [their work](#), because those are the things that he allows them to do.

Ecclesiastes 5:19

riches and wealth

These two words mean basically the same thing. They refer to money and the things that a person can buy with money. (See: [Doublet](#))

to receive his share

Alternate translation: "to accept what he is given"

Translation Words - ULT

- [mankind](#)
- [the true God](#)
- [God](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [If people](#)
- [God](#)
- [God](#)

ULT

¹⁹ Indeed, the whole of [mankind](#), because [the true God](#) has given to him wealth and treasures, and he has empowered him to eat from it, and to take up his portion and to rejoice in his toiling, this, it is a gift from [God](#).

UST

¹⁹ [If people](#) are rich and have a lot of possessions, and are able to enjoy the things that they have and to enjoy their work, those things are also gifts from [God](#).

Ecclesiastes 5:20

he does not call to mind

Here the word “he” refers to the person to whom God has given a gift. The phrase “call to mind” is an idiom. Alternate translation: “he does not remember” or “he does not think about” (See: [Idiom](#))

the days of his life

This refers to the things that happened during his lifetime. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: “the things that have happened during his lifetime” (See: [Idiom](#))

keep busy

Alternate translation: “stay busy”

Translation Words - ULT

- [God](#)
- [with the pleasures of](#)
- [his heart](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [God](#)
- [at what they enjoy](#)
- [at what they enjoy](#)

ULT

20 For he does not remember much about the days of his lifetime, because [God](#) causes a response [with the pleasures of his heart](#).

UST

20 Those people do not think much about everything that has happened during their lifetime, because [God](#) makes sure that they keep working [at what they enjoy](#).

Ecclesiastes 6

Ecclesiastes 6 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with the poetry in 6:7-11.

Special concepts in this chapter

Satisfaction

While a person may be given a great many things, they are worthless and provide no sense of satisfaction or peace. It is assumed that only Yahweh can provide these things to man. Solomon is depressed that he had everything he could have ever wanted in life, but they were not enough to give him satisfaction or peace. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Ecclesiastes 6:1

it weighs heavy on men

Here evil is spoken of as something that is a heavy load to carry.

Alternate translation: "it causes hardship for people" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [an evil](#)
- [the human being](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [something else](#)
- [people](#)

ULT

¹ There is [an evil](#) that I have seen under the sun, and it is abundant on [the human being](#).

UST

¹ I have seen [something else](#) here on this earth that troubles [people](#).

Ecclesiastes 6:2

riches, wealth

These two words mean basically the same thing. They refer to money and the things that a person can buy with money. (See: [Doublet](#))

he lacks nothing

This is a double negative. Alternate translation: "he has everything" (See: [Double Negatives](#))

God gives him no ability

Alternate translation: "does not give him the ability"

vapor

The author speaks of useless and meaningless things as if they were mist. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: "as useless as vapor" or "meaningless" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- the true God
- the true God
- might...enable him
- disassociated
- will eat of it
- evil

Translation Words - UST

- God
- God
- sometimes does...allow them
- Someone else
- gets them and enjoys them
- and unfair

ULT

² A man who [the true God](#) might give to him wealth, and treasures, and distinction so that there is not for him a lacking for his being out of all that he might crave for himself, but [the true God](#) might not [enable him](#) to eat from it. Instead, a [disassociated](#) man [will eat of it](#). This is futility, and it is an [evil](#) agony.

UST

² [God](#) enables some people to receive a lot of money and possessions and to be honored by him. They have everything that they want. But [God sometimes does not allow them](#) to enjoy those things. [Someone else gets them and enjoys them](#). That seems senseless and unfair.

Ecclesiastes 6:3

fathers a hundred children

“fathers 100 children.” This is a hypothetical situation. This is also an exaggeration and is applicable to people with fewer than 100 children. Alternate translation: “fathers many children” (See: [Numbers](#) and [Hypothetical Situations](#) and [Hyperbole](#))

lives many years, so that the days of his years are many

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and are combined for emphasis. Alternate translation: “lives many years” (See: [Parallelism](#))

his heart is not satisfied with good

This refers to a man by his “heart” to emphasize his feelings. Alternate translation: “he is not content with good things” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

he is not buried

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. This could mean: (1) “no one buries him at all” or (2) he receives no honor, “no one buries him properly.” (See: [Active or Passive](#) or [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [he should live](#)
- [better](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [live](#)
- [is more fortunate](#)

ULT

³ If a man should father 100 and [he should live](#) many years, however abundant that the days of his years may be, but his being is not satisfied from the good, and also there is not a burial place for him, I say [better](#) than him is the miscarriage.

UST

³ Someone might have a hundred children and [live](#) for many years. But if he is not able to enjoy the things that he has acquired, and if he is not buried properly after he dies, I say that a child that is dead when it is born [is more fortunate](#).

Ecclesiastes 6:4

such a baby is born in futility

Alternate translation: “such a baby is born for nothing”

passes away in darkness

This speaks of the death of the baby being as unexplainable as “darkness.” Alternate translation: “dies unexplainably” (See: [Idiom](#))

its name remains hidden

This speaks of no one knowing the baby's name as if it were a hidden object. Alternate translation: “no one knows its name” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [he will go](#)
- [his name](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [even though it does not have a name](#)
- [and its brief life becomes only a sad memory in the future](#)

ULT

⁴ For in the futility he came and in the darkness [he will go](#), and in the darkness [his name](#) is being concealed.

UST

⁴ This is true, even though that dead baby's birth is meaningless—even [though it does not have a name](#), and its [brief life becomes only a sad memory in the future](#).

Ecclesiastes 6:5

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Translation Words - ULT

- he did...know

Translation Words - UST

- know anything

ULT

⁵ Even sunshine he did not see, but he did not know. There is a rest for this one more than that one.

UST

⁵ That baby does not live to see the sun or know anything. But even so, it finds more rest than rich people do who are alive.

Ecclesiastes 6:6

Even if a man should live for two thousand years

This is a hypothetical situation. This is also an exaggeration to show that it does not matter how long a person lives if he does not enjoy the good things in life. (See: [Hypothetical Situations](#) and [Hyperbole](#))

two thousand years

"2,000 years" (See: [Numbers](#))

he goes to the same place as everyone else

This means that he dies like all other people. Alternate translation: "he dies and go to the same place as everyone else" or "he goes to the grave just like everyone else" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [he should live](#)
- [but good](#)
- [is going](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [people should live for](#)
- [if they do...enjoy the things that God gives to them](#)
- [go](#)

ULT

⁶ Even if [he should live](#) 1,000 years twice, [but good](#) he did not see, is it not to one place that everyone [is going](#)?

UST

⁶ Even if [people should live for](#) two thousand years, [if they do not enjoy the things that God gives to them](#), it would have been better for them never to have been born. All people who live a long time certainly all [go](#) to the same place—to the grave.

Ecclesiastes 6:7

is for his mouth

Here putting food in a man's mouth represents feeding him.
Alternate translation: "is to put food in his mouth" or "is to feed him"
(See: [Metonymy](#))

his appetite is not satisfied

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "he does not satisfy his appetite"
(See: [Active or Passive](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [the man](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [People](#)

ULT

⁷ All the toil of [the man](#) is for his mouth, even though the being is not filled.

UST

⁷ [People](#) work hard to earn enough money to buy food to eat, but often they never get enough to eat.

Ecclesiastes 6:8

what advantage has the wise person over the fool?

The author uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that a wise person does not have any more lasting benefits than a fool. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: “it seems the wise person has no advantage over the fool.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

What advantage does the poor man have even if he knows how to act in front of other people?

The author uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that a poor man does not have any more lasting benefits than someone else. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: “The poor man has no advantage even if he knows how to act in front of other people.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

how to act

Alternate translation: “how to conduct himself”

Translation Words - ULT

- [is for the wise one](#)
- [knowing](#)
- [the living ones](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [wise people](#)
- [do not benefit from knowing how to conduct their lives](#)
- [do not benefit from knowing how to conduct their lives](#)

ULT

⁸ Indeed, what more [is for the wise one](#) over the fool? What is for the poor one [knowing](#) to go about before [the living ones](#)?

UST

⁸ So it seems that [wise people](#) do not receive more lasting benefits than foolish people do. And it seems that poor people [do not benefit from knowing how to conduct their lives](#).

Ecclesiastes 6:9

what the eyes see

A person can see these things because he already has them.
Alternate translation: "what a person has" (See: [Metonymy](#))

to desire what a wandering appetite craves

This refers to things that a person wants but does not have.
Alternate translation: "to want what he does not have" (See: [Metonymy](#))

vapor ... an attempt to shepherd the wind

These two phrases are both metaphors that emphasize the idea of things being useless and futile. (See: [Parallelism](#))

vapor

"mist." The author speaks of things as being useless and meaningless as if they were vapor. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: "as useless as vapor" or "meaningless" (See: [Metaphor](#))

an attempt to shepherd the wind

The author speaks of everything that people do as being useless as if they were trying to control the wind. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: "are as useless as trying to control the wind" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [Better](#)
- [a being](#)
- [wind](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [It is better](#)
- [than to constantly want more things](#)
- [the wind](#)

ULT

⁹ [Better](#) is a view from eyes than a going away of [a being](#), also this is futile as tending [wind](#).

UST

⁹ [It is better](#) to enjoy the things that we already have [than to constantly want more things](#). Continually wanting more things is senseless, like trying to control [the wind](#).

Ecclesiastes 6:10

Whatever has existed has already been given its name

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "People have already named everything that exists" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

what mankind is like has already been known

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "people already know what mankind is like" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the one who is the mighty judge

Alternate translation: "God, who is the mighty judge"

Translation Words - ULT

- it has been called
- its name
- and it is known
- is a man

Translation Words - UST

- have been given names
- have been given names
- Everyone knows
- people

ULT

¹⁰ Whatever that was, already it has been called its name, and it is known that he is a man. So he is not able to strive with who is the mightier than he.

UST

¹⁰ All the things that exist on the earth have been given names. Everyone knows what people are like, so it is useless to argue with God, who is stronger than we are.

Ecclesiastes 6:11

The more words that are spoken

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "The more words that people speak" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the more futility increases

The more a person speaks, the more likely he will speak about meaningless things. Alternate translation: "the more meaningless those words are"

futility

being useless, without profit

what advantage is that to a man?

The author uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that there is no advantage for a man to talk a lot. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "that is no advantage to a man." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [is for the man](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [us to talk a lot](#)

ULT

¹¹ For there are many matters increasing futility, what more [is for the man](#)?

UST

¹¹ The more that we talk, the more often we say things that are senseless, so it certainly does not benefit [us to talk a lot](#).

Ecclesiastes 6:12

For who knows what is good for man ... he passes like a shadow?

The author uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that no person truly knows what is good for man. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "No one knows what is good for man ... he passes like a shadow." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

in his life during his futile, numbered days through which he passes like a shadow

This speaks of how life passes quickly by saying that it is like a shadow that quickly disappears. The phrase "numbered days" emphasizes that a person's life is short. Alternate translation: "during his futile, short life, which he passes through as quickly as a shadow passes by" (See: [Simile](#))

Who can tell a man ... after he passes?

The author uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that no one knows what will happen after a person dies. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "No one can tell a man ... after he passes." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

what will come under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated "under the sun" in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: "what will happen on the earth" (See: [Idiom](#))

after he passes

This is a polite expression for death. Alternate translation: "after he dies" (See: [Euphemism](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [knows](#)
- [is good](#)
- [for the man](#)
- [to the man](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [can know](#)
- [good](#)
- [for himself](#)
- [Adam](#)

ULT

¹² For who [knows](#) what [is good for the man](#) during the lifetime, the number of the days of his futile life, that he will experience them like a shadow? For who will explain [to the man](#) what will be after him under the sun?

UST

¹² No human being [can know](#) everything that is [good for himself](#) in this life. People live for a few seemingly meaningless days. Life passes by quickly, like a shadow, and no one knows what is coming after we die.

Ecclesiastes 7

Ecclesiastes 7 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with the poetry in 7:1-26.

Special concepts in this chapter

Advice

This chapter gives a series of disconnected pieces of advice. Translators should not try to smooth the transitions between these pieces of advice. The advice in these statements do not apply in every situation. Therefore, they should be seen as “good ideas.”

Ecclesiastes 7:1

A good name

Here a person's "name" is used to represent their reputation.
Alternate translation: "A good reputation" (See: [Metonymy](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- A good
- fine
- name
- the death

Translation Words - UST

- It is better
- is better
- that other people honor us
- that we die

ULT

¹ A good name is better than fine oil,
and the day of the death is better than
the day of his being born.

UST

¹ It is better that other people honor us
than to have fine perfume. The day that
we die is better than the day that we are
born.

Ecclesiastes 7:2

must take this to heart

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “must think seriously about this” (See: [Idiom](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- It is better
- a house of
- a house of
- a drinking banquet
- mankind
- his heart

Translation Words - UST

- It is better
- a house where
- a house where
- people are feasting
- everyone
- should think about when they will die

ULT

² It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of a drinking banquet. by the reason that it is the end of the entirety of mankind, so the living should convey to his heart.

UST

² It is better to go to a house where people are mourning about someone who has died than to go to a house where people are feasting, because everyone will die some day, and people should think about when they will die.

Ecclesiastes 7:3

sadness of face

This refers to being sad. Alternate translation: “an experience that makes a person sad” (See: [Idiom](#))

gladness of heart

Here, the word **heart** refers to a person’s thoughts and emotions. **Gladness** describes either: (1) the state of the emotions of being happy and peaceful or (2) the ability to understand the truth. Alternate translation: “right thinking” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [is better](#)
- [faces](#)
- [a heart](#)
- [becomes better](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [It is better](#)
- [when we are sad](#)
- [we can think better about the things that will make us wise and happy](#)
- [we can think better about the things that will make us wise and happy](#)

ULT

³ Grief [is better](#) than laughter, for by sadness of [faces a heart becomes better](#).

UST

³ [It is better](#) to be sad than to be always laughing, because [when we are sad, we can think better about the things that will make us wise and happy](#).

Ecclesiastes 7:4

The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning

Here wise people are referred to by their "hearts." This speaks of the wise person mourning as being in a house of mourning. Alternate translation: "Wise people think deeply about death" (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

but the heart of fools is in the house of feasting

Here foolish people are referred to by their "hearts." This speaks of foolish people thinking only about what makes them happy as being in a house of feasting. Alternate translation: "but foolish people think only about enjoying themselves" (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

the house of mourning ... the house of feasting

These phrases refer to what happens in these places.

Translation Words - ULT

- A heart of
- wise ones
- is in a house of
- is in house of
- revelry

Translation Words - UST

- Wise people...think about the fact that some day they also will die
- Wise people...think about the fact that some day they also will die
- who go to where
- but foolish people do not think about that; they are always laughing
- but foolish people do not think about that; they are always laughing

ULT

⁴ A heart of wise ones is in a house of mourning, but a heart of fools is in house of revelry.

UST

⁴ Wise people who go to where others are mourning think about the fact that some day they also will die, but foolish people do not think about that; they are always laughing.

Ecclesiastes 7:5

to the rebuke of the wise

The word “rebuke” can be expressed as a verb. Alternate translation: “when wise people rebuke you” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

to listen to the song of fools

Alternate translation: “to listen to fools sing”

Translation Words - ULT

- [Better](#)
- [a wise one](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [It is better](#)
- [someone](#)

ULT

⁵ [Better](#) to heed a rebuke of [a wise one](#) than a man listening to a song of fools.

UST

⁵ [It is better](#) to pay attention to [someone](#) who is rebuking you than to listen to the songs of a foolish person.

Ecclesiastes 7:6

For like the crackling of thorns burning under a pot, so also is the laughter of fools

This speaks of how listening to fools talk and laugh will teach you nothing, as if their speech and laughter were the sound of burning thorns. Alternate translation: "For listening to the laughter of fools will not teach a man any more than if he were listening to the crackling of thorns burning under a pot" (See: [Simile](#))

vapor

The author speaks of useless and meaningless things as if they were mist. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: "as useless as vapor" or "meaningless" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁶ For like the sound of the thorns under the pot, so is the laughter of the fool. Indeed, even this is futility.

UST

⁶ By listening to foolish people laughing we will not learn anymore than by listening to the crackling of thorns being burned under a pot. Listening to fools is senseless.

Ecclesiastes 7:7

Extortion

This refers to forcing someone to give money or other valuable items to another so that the other person does not harm him. It is considered wrong.

makes a wise man foolish

This could mean: (1) “turns the wise man into a foolish man” or (2) “makes the advice of the wise man appear to be foolish advice.”

corrupts the heart

Here the word “heart” refers to the mind. Alternate translation: “ruins a person’s ability to think and judge rightly” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- a wise one
- and...destroys
- a heart

Translation Words - UST

- wise people
- become unable to do what is right
- become unable to do what is right

ULT

⁷ For the extortion makes a wise one foolish, and a gift destroys a heart.

UST

⁷ When wise people say to others, “You must pay me a lot of money for me to protect you,” that causes those wise people to become foolish. Those who accept bribes become unable to do what is right.

Ecclesiastes 7:8

the people patient in spirit are better than the proud in spirit

Here the word “spirit” refers to a person’s attitude. Alternate translation: “patient people are better than proud people” or “a patient attitude is better than a prideful attitude” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- Better
- Better
- spirit
- spirit

Translation Words - UST

- is better
- and...is better
- being patient
- than being proud

ULT

⁸ **Better** is an end of a matter than its beginning. **Better** is patient in **spirit** than proud in **spirit**.

UST

⁸ Finishing something **is better** than starting something, and **being patient is better than being proud**.

Ecclesiastes 7:9

Do not be quick to anger in your spirit

Here the word “spirit” refers to a person’s attitude. Alternate translation: “Do not become angry quickly” or “Do not have a bad temper” (See: [Metonymy](#))

anger resides in the hearts of fools

This speaks of a person being full of anger as if the anger lived inside him. This speaks of the anger being in the person’s heart because the “heart” is thought to be the source of a person’s emotions.

Alternate translation: “foolish people are full of anger” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁹ Do not hasten to anger [in your spirit](#), for anger [rests](#) in a bosom of fools.

UST

⁹ Do not quickly lose your temper, because [it is foolish people who become very angry](#).

Translation Words - ULT

- [in your spirit](#)
- [rests](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [it is foolish people who become very angry](#)
- [spirit, wind, breath](#)

Ecclesiastes 7:10

Why were the days of old better than these?

The person asks this rhetorical question in order to complain about the present time. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "Things were better in the past than they are now." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

it is not because of wisdom that you ask this question

Here the author uses irony to rebuke the person's question. Alternate translation: "if you were wise you would not ask this question" (See: [Irony](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [better](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [Things were a lot better previously](#)

ULT

¹⁰ Do not say, "What has happened that the former days were [better](#) than these?" For you did not ask about this out of wisdom.

UST

¹⁰ Do not say, "[Things were a lot better previously](#)," because it is only foolish people who say that.

Ecclesiastes 7:11

those who see the sun

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “those who are alive” (See: [Idiom](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [is good](#)
- [an inheritance](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [Being wise is like inheriting valuable things](#)
- [Being wise is like inheriting valuable things](#)

ULT

¹¹ Wisdom [is good](#) with [an inheritance](#), and an advantage to seers of the sun.

UST

¹¹ [Being wise is like inheriting valuable things](#). There are lasting benefits for anyone on earth who is wise.

Ecclesiastes 7:12

the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom gives life

This could mean: (1) that the writer uses the words “knowledge” and “wisdom” to mean the same thing, or (2) “the advantage of knowing wisdom is that it gives life.”

gives life to whoever has it

This speaks of how wisdom helps to preserve a person's life as if it gave life to that person. When a person is wise he makes good decisions that help him to live a more prosperous and longer life. Alternate translation: “preserves a person's life” or “helps a person to make good decisions and to live a longer life” (See: [Personification](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [the silver](#)
- [preserves](#)
- [her owners](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [by having a lot of money](#)
- [However, being wise is better than having a lot of money...because being wise prevents us from doing foolish things that would cause us to die](#)
- [However, being wise is better than having a lot of money...because being wise prevents us from doing foolish things that would cause us to die](#)

ULT

¹² For the wisdom is as a defense as the defense of [the silver](#), and an advantage of knowledge is the wisdom [preserves her owners](#).

UST

¹² We are sometimes protected by being wise, as we are sometimes protected [by having a lot of money](#). [However, being wise is better than having a lot of money, because being wise prevents us from doing foolish things that would cause us to die.](#)

Ecclesiastes 7:13

Who can straighten out anything he has made crooked?

The author uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that no one can change something that God has done. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "No one can straighten out anything he has made crooked." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [the true God](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [God](#)

ULT

¹³ See the handiwork of [the true God](#)! For who is able to straighten when he has made it crooked?

UST

¹³ Think carefully about what [God](#) has done. Certainly no one can cause to become straight the things that God has caused to be crooked.

Ecclesiastes 7:14

When times are good ... when times are bad

The word “times” is an idiom for “things happening.” Alternate translation: “When good things happen ... when bad things happen” (See: [Idiom](#))

live happily in that good

Alternate translation: “be happy about those good things”

both to exist side by side

The phrase “side by side” is an idiom that means “this one” and “this one.” Alternate translation: “both to exist” or “there to be both good and bad” (See: [Idiom](#))

anything that is coming after him

This could mean: (1) “anything that happens in the future” or (2) “anything that happens to him after he dies.”

Translation Words - ULT

- [is good](#)
- [is bad](#)
- [the true God](#)
- [the man](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [When things are going well for you](#)
- [and when things are not going well for you](#)
- [God is the one who...who](#)
- [God does...reveal to anyone](#)

ULT

¹⁴ When a day [is good](#), live in goodness, but when a day [is bad](#), see [the true God](#) has done even this along with that, by reason of because [the man](#) will not discover anything after it.

UST

¹⁴ [When things are going well for you](#), be happy, [and when things are not going well for you](#), remember that [God is the one who](#) causes good things to happen and [who](#) also causes disasters. Yet [God does](#) not [reveal to anyone](#) exactly what his future holds.

Ecclesiastes 7:15

in my meaningless days

Alternate translation: "in my meaningless life"

in spite of their righteousness

Alternate translation: "even though they are righteous"

in spite of their evil

Alternate translation: "even though they are evil"

Translation Words - ULT

- a righteous one
- perishing
- in his evil

Translation Words - UST

- righteous people
- die while they were still young
- in spite of their continuing to be wicked

ULT

¹⁵ I have seen the whole in the days of my futility. There is a righteous one perishing in his righteousness, and there is a wicked one living long in his evil.

UST

¹⁵ During all the time that I have been alive I have seen many things that seem senseless. I have seen righteous people die while they were still young, and I have seen wicked people remain alive for a very long time in spite of their continuing to be wicked.

Ecclesiastes 7:16

self-righteous, wise in your own eyes

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and are combined for emphasis. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Do not be self-righteous

Alternate translation: "Do not think that you are more righteous than you actually are"

wise in your own eyes

The eyes represent seeing, and seeing represents thoughts or judgment. Alternate translation: "being wise in your own opinion" or "being wise according to your own judgement" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Why should you destroy yourself?

The writer uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that being self-righteous destroys a person. Alternate translation: "There is no reason to destroy yourself." or "If you think this way you will destroy yourself." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [righteous](#)
- [should you put yourself to shame](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [you are...righteous](#)
- [you will destroy yourself](#)

ULT

16 Do not be overly [righteous](#), and do not show yourself as wise to excess. Why [should you put yourself to shame](#)?

UST

16 So do not think that [you are](#) very [righteous](#), and do not think that you are very wise, because if you think those things, [you will destroy yourself](#).

Ecclesiastes 7:17

Why should you die before your time?

The author uses this rhetorical question to emphasize that there is no reason for people to do things that will cause them to die early. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "There is no reason for you to die sooner than you should." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- Do...be...wicked

Translation Words - UST

- you do what is evil

ULT

¹⁷ Do not be increasingly **wicked** and do not be a fool. Why should you die when it is not your proper time?

UST

¹⁷ If **you do what is evil** or do what is foolish, you might die while you are still young.

Ecclesiastes 7:18

take hold of this wisdom

This speaks of striving to be wise as if “wisdom” were an object that a person could hold on to. Alternate translation: “commit yourself to this wisdom” (See: [Metaphor](#))

you should not let go of righteousness

This speaks of striving to be righteous as if “righteousness” were an object that a person could hold on to. Alternate translation: “you should not stop trying to be righteous” or “you should keep trying to be righteous” (See: [Metaphor](#))

will meet all his obligations

Alternate translation: “will do everything that God expects of him”

Translation Words - ULT

- [It is good](#)
- [your hand](#)
- [God](#)
- [will go forth](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [Continue to try to become wise](#)
- [do what is right](#)
- [God](#)
- [will show this by his behavior](#)

ULT

18 [It is good](#) that you should take hold of this, and also of that you should not let [your hand](#) go. For the fearer of [God](#) [will go forth](#) with all of them. ^[1]

UST

18 [Continue to try to become wise](#) and [do what is right](#). The person who always respects [God](#) [will show this by his behavior](#).

Ecclesiastes 7:19

Wisdom is powerful in the wise man, more than ten rulers in a city

Alternate translation: "Wisdom makes a man powerful; it makes him more powerful than ten rulers in a city"

Translation Words - ULT

- for the wise

Translation Words - UST

- If you are wise

ULT

¹⁹ The wisdom is strong for the wise, more than ten rulers who are in the city.

UST

¹⁹ If you are wise, you will be more powerful than the ten most powerful men in your city.

Ecclesiastes 7:20

does good and never sins

Alternate translation: "does good things and does not sin"

Translation Words - ULT

- mankind
- a righteous one
- good
- does...sin

Translation Words - UST

- one
- what is right
- sins
- righteous, righteousness, unrighteous, unrighteousness, upright, uprightness

ULT

²⁰ For mankind, there is not a righteous one on the earth who does good and does not sin.

UST

²⁰ There is no one in this world who always does what is right, who never sins.

Ecclesiastes 7:21

every word that is spoken

This can be written in active form. Alternate translation: “everything that people say” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [your heart](#)
- [your servant](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [Do...pay attention](#)
- [your servant](#)

ULT

²¹ Also, to all of the words that they might speak, do not convey to [your heart](#), that you will not hear [your servant](#) belittling you.

UST

²¹ Do not [pay attention](#) to everything that people say, because if you do that, you might hear [your servant](#) curse you.

Ecclesiastes 7:22

you know yourself

“you yourself know.” Here “yourself” is used to emphasize the phrase “you know.” (See: [Reflexive Pronouns](#))

in your own heart

Here a person’s thoughts are represented by their “heart.” Alternate translation: “in your own thoughts” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [your heart](#)
- [knows](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [yourself](#)
- [you...know](#)

ULT

²² For likewise, many times [your heart knows](#) that even you yourself have belittled others.

UST

²² After all, you [yourself know](#) very well that you have also cursed other people.

Ecclesiastes 7:23

All this have I proven

here the word “this” refers to all of the things the author has written about. Alternate translation: “All this that I have already written about have I proven” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

it was more than I could be

Alternate translation: “it was beyond my ability to understand” or “but I was not able to do it”

ULT

²³ All of this I have tested with wisdom. I said, “Let me be wise,” but it was far from me.

UST

²³ I said to myself that I would use my wisdom to study all the things that I have written about, but I was not able to do it.

Ecclesiastes 7:24

far off and very deep

This speaks of wisdom being difficult to understand as if it were something located far away or in a very deep place. Alternate translation: “difficult to understand” (See: [Idiom](#))

Who can find it?

The writer uses this rhetorical question to emphasize the difficulty in understanding wisdom. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: “No one can understand it.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

²⁴ Far away is what that has been, and deep, unfathomable. Who can discover it?

UST

²⁴ Wisdom seems to be far from me. There is no one who can truly understand everything.

Ecclesiastes 7:25

I turned my heart

Here the word "heart" refers to the mind. Also, here the word "turned" is an idiom. Alternate translation: "I directed my thoughts" or "I determined" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Idiom](#))

the explanations of reality

"the reason for things." This word "explanations" can be expressed as a verb. Alternate translation: "how to explain various things in life" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [and searching for](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [and by my wisdom try to understand](#)

ULT

25 I myself turned even my heart to know and to seek out [and searching for](#) wisdom and reason, and to know wickedness is foolish and folly is madness.

UST

25 But I decided to investigate things and by my wisdom try to understand the reason for everything. I also wanted to understand why people act wickedly and why they act very foolishly.

Ecclesiastes 7:26

any woman whose heart is full of snares and nets, and whose hands are chains

The writer says that the seductive woman is like traps that hunters use to catch animals. The author speaks of a woman being seductive as if she traps men like a hunter traps animals. Her “heart” represents her thoughts and emotions. Alternate translation: “any woman who traps men by seducing them” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

snares and nets

These two words both refer to ways in which people trap animals to emphasize how the woman traps men. (See: [Doublet](#))

whose hands are chains

Here the word “hands” refers to her power and control. This speaks of her being seductive as if hands were chains that she bound people with. Alternate translation: “from whom no one can escape” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

the sinner will be taken by her

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “she will capture the sinner” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [her heart](#)
- [her hands](#)
- [A good person](#)
- [the true God](#)
- [will be rescued](#)
- [but a sinner](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [tries](#)
- [If you allow her to put her arms around you](#)
- [sinful men](#)
- [but men who please](#)
- [God](#)
- [will escape](#)

ULT

²⁶ However, I myself found more bitter than death is the woman when [her heart](#), it is as snares and nets, [her hands](#) are chains. [A good person](#) before the faces of [the true God will be rescued](#) from her, [but a sinner](#) will be captured by her.

UST

²⁶ One thing I learned was that allowing a woman to seduce you is worse than dying. A woman who [tries](#) to seduce men is as dangerous as a trap. [If you allow her to put her arms around you](#), it will be as though she is fastening you with chains. Women like that will capture [sinful men](#), [but men who please God will escape](#) from such women.

Ecclesiastes 7:27

adding one discovery to another

The word “discovery” can be expressed as a verb. The word “adding” here is used as an idiom. Alternate translation: “discovering one thing after another” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#) and [Idiom](#))

in order to find an explanation of reality

This word “explanation” can be expressed as a verb. See how the phrase “explanations of reality” is translated in [Ecclesiastes 7:25](#). Alternate translation: “in order to be able to explain things in life” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

27 “See, this I have found out,” says Qohelet. “One by one in order to find reason.

UST

27 This is what I have learned. I tried to learn more and more about things to try to find out the reason for everything,

Ecclesiastes 7:28

one righteous man among a thousand

"1 righteous man among 1,000." Only one righteous man was found in a group of 1,000 people. (See: [Numbers](#))

a woman among all those

There were no righteous women found in a group of 1,000 people.

Translation Words - ULT

- [my being](#)
- [has sought](#)
- [man](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [I](#)
- [to try to learn more](#)
- [righteous man](#)

ULT

²⁸ What still [my being has sought](#), but I have not found: one [man](#) among a thousand I found. However a woman among all of those I did not find.

UST

²⁸ and [I](#) continued [to try to learn more](#), but I could not find all that I was searching for. But one thing that I found out was that among one thousand people I found one [righteous man](#), but I did not find even one righteous woman.

Ecclesiastes 7:29

they have gone away looking for many difficulties

This could mean: (1) “they have made many sinful plans” or (2) “they have made their own lives difficult.”

they have gone away

Here the word “they” refers to “humanity.” This speaks of humanity changing from being upright to not being upright as if they were going from one place to another. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- the true God
- the man
- upright
- they...have sought out

Translation Words - UST

- God
- people
- they were righteous
- have found

ULT

²⁹ Only see this I have found: that the true God made the man upright, but they themselves have sought out many inventions.”

7:18 ^[1], some modern versions have different interpretations of this difficult passage.

UST

²⁹ I have learned only this: That when God created people, they were righteous, but they have found many ways to complicate their own lives.

Ecclesiastes 8

Ecclesiastes 8 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with the poetry in 8:1 and 8:5-8.

Special concepts in this chapter

Wisdom

Solomon, known for his wisdom, gives a detailed description of wisdom. True wisdom is seeking to honor God. This is the only thing that lasts. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#))

Ecclesiastes 8:1

Who is a wise man? Who knows what the events in life mean?

The writer asks these as leading questions to provide the answer in what he says next.

causes his face to shine

This means that the person's face will show that he has wisdom.
Alternate translation: "shows on his face" (See: [Idiom](#))

the hardness of his face

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: "his harsh appearance" (See: [Idiom](#))

is changed

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "changes" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [knows](#)
- [a man](#)
- [his faces](#)
- [his faces](#)
- [and the strength of](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [they can explain why everything happens](#)
- [enables people](#)
- [to be happy](#)
- [and enables them to smile](#)
- [and enables them to smile](#)

ULT

¹ Who is like a wise one, and who [knows](#) an interpretation of a matter? Wisdom in [a man](#) enlightens [his faces](#), and the [strength of his faces](#) is altered.

UST

¹ I will tell you about those who are truly wise, with the result that [they can explain why everything happens](#). Being wise [enables people to be happy and enables them to smile](#).

Ecclesiastes 8:2

God's oath to protect him

Alternate translation: "the oath you made before God to protect him"

Translation Words - ULT

- observe
- a king
- the oath to
- God

Translation Words - UST

- You solemnly promised...that
- God
- you would obey
- the king

ULT

² Myself, **observe** the mouth of **a king**,
even for the sake of **the oath to God**.

UST

² You solemnly promised God that you
would obey what **the king** commands,
so do that.

Ecclesiastes 8:3

Do not hurry out of his presence

This could mean: (1) not to be hasty to physically leave the king's presence or (2) This is a metaphor that speaks of being loyal to the king as being in his presence. Alternate translation: "Do not abandon the king" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [you may go](#)
- [Do...stand](#)
- [an evil](#)
- [he delights](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [when it concerns the king](#)
- [do...join with](#)
- [those who want to rebel against him](#)
- [he wants to do](#)

ULT

³ Do not be disturbed, away from his faces [you may go](#). Do not [stand](#) on the side of [an evil](#) matter, for all that [he delights](#), he will do.

UST

³ Do not do anything rashly [when it concerns the king](#). And do not [join with those who want to rebel against him](#), because the king will do what [he wants to do](#).

Ecclesiastes 8:4

The king's word rules

Alternate translation: "What the king says is the law"

who will say to him

This rhetorical question emphasizes that no one will ask the king the following question. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "no one can say to him" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

What are you doing?

This rhetorical question is a rebuke. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "You should not be doing what you are doing." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- a king

Translation Words - UST

- the king

ULT

⁴ In that a word of a king is authoritative, so who may say to him, "What are you doing?"

UST

⁴ We need to obey what the king says more than we need to obey what anyone else says, for no one can say to the king, "Why are you doing that?"

Ecclesiastes 8:5

A wise man's heart recognizes

Here a man is represented by his "heart" to emphasize his thoughts.
Alternate translation: "A wise man recognizes" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

the proper course and time of action

Alternate translation: "the correct time to do things and the right way to do them"

Translation Words - ULT

- [A keeper of](#)
- [a command](#)
- [will...know](#)
- [will know](#) (2)
- [evil](#)
- [wise](#)
- [a...heart](#)
- [and judgment](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [If you obey](#)
- [what the king commands](#)
- [he will...harm you](#)
- [So...and know](#) (2)
- [he will...harm you](#)
- [be wise](#)
- [and the right way to do them](#)
- [heart](#)

ULT

⁵ [A keeper of a command](#) will not [know](#) anything [evil](#), and a [wise heart will know](#) a proper time [and judgment](#).

UST

⁵ [If you obey what the king commands](#), [he will](#) not [harm you](#). [So be wise](#), and [know](#) the correct time to do things [and the right way to do them](#).

Ecclesiastes 8:6

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Translation Words - ULT

- and a judgment
- the distress of
- the man

Translation Words - UST

- people
- experience...troubles
- a right way

ULT

⁶ Because for every delight there is a proper time and a judgment, therefore the distress of the man is abundant upon him.

UST

⁶ Although people experience many troubles, there is a right way to do them and a right time to do them.

Ecclesiastes 8:7

Who can tell him what is coming?

This rhetorical question emphasizes that no one knows what will happen in the future. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "No one can tell him what is coming." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [who knows](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [one knows](#)

ULT

⁷ For there is no one [who knows](#) what that will be, for just as it will be, who will explain to him?

UST

⁷ No [one knows](#) what will happen in the future, so there is no one who can tell him what is going to happen.

Ecclesiastes 8:8

No one is ruler over his breath so as to stop the breath ... no one has power over the day of his death

Just as no one has the ability to stop himself from breathing, no one can continue living when it is time to die. (See: [Simile](#))

No one is ruler

The word “ruler” can be expressed as a verb. Alternate translation: “No one has control”

the day of his death

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “when he will die” (See: [Idiom](#))

No one is discharged from the army

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: “No army discharges anyone” or “No army allows soldiers to leave” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

wickedness will not rescue those who are its slaves

This speaks of wickedness as if it were a master who had slaves. Alternate translation: “evil people will not be saved by doing what is evil” (See: [Personification](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- a man
- over his breath
- the death
- will...deliver
- its owners

Translation Words - UST

- We cannot
- our breathing
- die
- evil people
- will...be saved

ULT

⁸ There is not a man having power over his breath to hold back the breath, ^[1] and there is not a ruler over the day of the death. Also there is no discharge during the battle, and wickedness will not deliver its owners.

UST

⁸ We cannot control our breathing, and we cannot control when we will stop breathing and die. Soldiers are not permitted to go home during a battle, and evil people will not be saved by doing what is evil.

Ecclesiastes 8:9

I have applied my heart

Here the author refers to himself by his “heart” to emphasize his feelings. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:17](#). Alternate translation: “I applied myself” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

every kind of work that is done

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “every kind of work that people do” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: “on the earth” (See: [Idiom](#))

There is a time when a person oppresses another person to that person's hurt

Alternate translation: “Sometimes one person will oppress another, causing that person to be hurt”

Translation Words - ULT

- [my heart](#)
- [the man](#)
- [over a man](#)
- [has dominion](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [and I thought about](#)
- [people](#)
- [to others](#)
- [are able](#)

ULT

⁹ All this I have seen, and given [my heart](#) to every kind of action that has been done under the sun, a proper time when [the man has dominion over a man](#) for distress to him. ^[2]

UST

⁹ I thought about all those things, [and I thought about](#) all the other things that happen on this earth. I saw that sometimes [people are able](#) to do severe harm [to others](#).

Ecclesiastes 8:10

the wicked buried publicly

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Evil people that died were given honorable burials. Alternate translation: “people bury the wicked publicly” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

They were taken from the holy area and buried and were praised by people

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “People took them from the holy area and buried them and praised them” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- buried
- holy
- They would go about

Translation Words - UST

- they are highly honored at their funerals
- holy, holiness, unholy, sacred
- walk, walked

ULT

10 Indeed, when thus I have seen wicked ones [buried](#), even they used to go in and out from a [holy](#) place. [They would go about](#) but they are forgotten in the city where thus they had done. This also is futile. ^[3]

UST

10 I also saw that sometimes after evil people die, [they are highly honored at their funerals](#) by the people in the cities where they had done evil deeds. It was difficult to understand why that happens.

Ecclesiastes 8:11

When a sentence against an evil crime is not executed quickly

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "When people in authority do not quickly execute a sentence against an evil crime" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

entices the hearts of human beings

Here people are represented by their "hearts" to emphasize their will and desires. Alternate translation: "entices human beings" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- the sentence regarding
- evil
- evil
- the heart of
- the sons of
- the man

Translation Words - UST

- evil people
- evil things
- are...punished
- other people
- other people
- to also want

ULT

¹¹ When nothing is done about the sentence regarding the evil action quickly, on account of this the heart of the sons of the man is filled within them to do evil.

UST

¹¹ If evil people are not immediately punished, it causes other people to also want to do evil things.

Ecclesiastes 8:12

a hundred times

“100 times” (See: [Numbers](#))

it will be better for those who respect God

The phrase “it will be better” is an idiom. Alternate translation: “life will be better for those who respect God” (See: [Idiom](#))

who respect God ... who stand before him and show him respect

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and are combined to emphasize people respecting God. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- a sinner
- evil
- know
- better
- for the fearers of
- do fear
- the true God

Translation Words - UST

- sinful people
- a...crimes
- know
- better
- for those who honor
- and revere
- God

ULT

¹² Seeing that a sinner is doing evil a hundredfold yet living long in spite of it, truly also I know that it will be better for the fearers of the true God, who do fear from the standpoint of before his faces.

UST

¹² But even if sinful people commit a hundred crimes, and even if they live for a long time, I know that things will go better for those who honor and revere God.

Ecclesiastes 8:13

his life will not be prolonged

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "God will not prolong his life" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

His days are like a fleeting shadow

This speaks of how the wicked man's life passes quickly by saying that it is like a shadow that quickly disappears. Alternate translation: "His days will pass as quickly as a shadow disappears" (See: [Simile](#))

His days are

Alternate translation: "His life is"

Translation Words - ULT

- [God](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [God](#)

ULT

13 But it will not be well for a wicked one, and he will not lengthen days like the shadow, because he has no fearing at the standpoint of before the faces of [God](#).

UST

13 I also know that things will not go well for those who are evil, because they do not honor [God](#). Shadows do not last a long time. Similarly, evil people will not live a long time.

Ecclesiastes 8:14

something else that is done on the earth

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “something else that people do on the earth” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

this also is useless vapor

“this also is useless mist.” The author speaks of things as being useless and meaningless as if they were ‘vapor.’ See how you translated the word “vapor” in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: “this also is as useless as vapor” or “this also is meaningless” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [the earth](#)
- [righteous ones](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [this earth](#)
- [to righteous people](#)

ULT

¹⁴ There is futility that has been done on [the earth](#), that there are [righteous ones](#) who have happen to them as the experience of the wicked ones, and there are wicked ones who have happen to them as the experience of the righteous ones. I say that this too is futile.

UST

¹⁴ Another thing that sometimes happens on [this earth](#) is that bad things happen [to righteous people](#), and good things happen to evil people. It is difficult to understand why that happens.

Ecclesiastes 8:15

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: “on the earth” (See: [Idiom](#))

for all the days of his life that God has given him

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “for as long as God allows him to live” (See: [Idiom](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- the pleasure
- better
- for the man
- God

Translation Words - UST

- people...people
- be happy
- the best thing that...can do
- God

ULT

15 So I myself recommend the pleasure, for there is nothing better for the man under the sun except for to eat and to drink and to rejoice, and it will remain with him in his toiling the days of his life that God has given to him under the sun.

UST

15 So I decided that I would recommend that people be happy while they are alive, because the best thing that people can do here on this earth is to eat and drink and be happy. Enjoying those things will help people while they do their work, all the days that God has given to them to remain alive here on the earth.

Ecclesiastes 8:16

I applied my heart

Here the author refers to himself by his “heart” to emphasize his feelings. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:17](#). Alternate translation: “I applied myself” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

the work that is done on the earth

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “the work that people do on the earth” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

without sleep for the eyes

Here a person is represented by his “eyes.” Alternate translation: “without sleeping” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [my heart](#)
- [the earth](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [I thought](#)
- [this earth](#)

ULT

16 Just as I gave [my heart](#) to know wisdom and to see the travail that has been done on [the earth](#), for even in the day or in the night there was not sleep for him in his eyes seeing,

UST

16 [I thought](#) about being wise and about people who work very hard on [this earth](#), working day and night and not taking time to sleep.

Ecclesiastes 8:17

the work that is done under the sun

This could mean: (1) “the work that God does under the sun” or (2) “the work that God allows people to do under the sun.” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: “on the earth” (See: [Idiom](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- the true God
- the man
- the man
- to seek

Translation Words - UST

- God...God
- one
- Truly, people are...they
- to do that

ULT

17 however I saw every work of [the true God](#), that [the man](#) is not able to discover the work that has been done under the sun, in that whatsoever [the man](#) would toil [to seek](#), yet he would not find. Also, even if the wise one would claim to know, he is not able to find out.

8:8 ^[1].

8:9 ^[2]. The Hebrew passage can be interpreted either way.

8:10 ^[3]. Other versions have .

UST

17 Then I thought about everything that [God](#) has done, and I realized that no [one](#) can understand everything that happens here on this earth. [Truly](#), [people are](#) not able to fully understand everything that [God](#) does, even if [they](#) try hard [to do that](#). Even if wise people claim that they understand it all, they cannot.

Ecclesiastes 9

Ecclesiastes 9 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with the poetry in 9:2, 5-6, and 11-12.

Special concepts in this chapter

Judgment

This chapter explains that there is one thing that awaits all people: judgment. When people die, they will all face Yahweh's judgment. (See: [judge](#), [judgment](#))

Ecclesiastes 9:1

I thought about all this in my mind

Alternate translation: "I thought very deeply about all this"

They are all in God's hands

Here the word "they" refers to "the righteous and wise people" as well as "their deeds."

in God's hands

Here the word "hands" refers to power and authority. Alternate translation: "under God's control" (See: [Metonymy](#))

whether love or hate will come to someone

This speaks of "love" and "hate" as if they are people that may come to visit someone else. Alternate translation: "whether someone will experience love or hate" (See: [Personification](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [my heart](#)
- [are in the hand of](#)
- [the true God](#)
- [the man](#)
- [knowing](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [I thought about](#)
- [that God controls what happens to everyone](#)
- [that God controls what happens to everyone](#)
- [one](#)
- [knows](#)

ULT

¹ For all of this I have given to [my heart](#), and to examine all of this, because the righteous ones and the wise ones and their deeds [are in the hand of the true God](#). Even love, even hate, [the man](#) has no [knowing](#) the whole coming to their faces.

UST

¹ [I thought about](#) all those things, and I decided [that God controls what happens to everyone](#), even those who are wise and those who are righteous. No [one knows](#) whether others will love them or whether they will hate them.

Ecclesiastes 9:2

righteous people and wicked

This refers to all people, emphasizing the two opposites of righteous and wicked people. (See: [Merism](#))

wicked ... the good ... the clean and the unclean

All of these phrases refer to people. Alternate translation: "wicked people ... good people ... clean people and unclean people" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

the clean and the unclean

This refers to all people, emphasizing the two opposites of clean and unclean people. (See: [Merism](#))

the clean

A person who is acceptable for God's purposes is spoken of as if the person were physically clean. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the unclean

A person who is not acceptable for God's purposes is spoken of as if the person were physically unclean. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the one who sacrifices and the one who does not sacrifice

This refers to all people, emphasizing the two opposites of those who sacrifice and those who do not. (See: [Merism](#))

As good people ... so also will the sinner

This refers to all people, emphasizing the two opposites of good people and sinners. (See: [Merism](#))

will the sinner ... will the man who fears to make an oath

It is understood that this refers to people dying. Alternate translation: "the sinner will die ... the man who fears to make an oath will die" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

the one who swears ... so also will the man who fears to make an oath

This refers to all people, emphasizing the two opposites of those who swear oaths and those who do not. (See: [Merism](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [is...sacrificing](#)

ULT

² The entirety is the same as what is for everyone, one fate is for the righteous one and for the wicked one, for the good one, ^[1] and for the pure one, and for the unclean one, and for the one who is sacrificing and for one when he is not [sacrificing](#). As a good one, just as the sinner, the one who puts himself under an oath, just as [one fearing an oath](#).

UST

² But we know that some time in the future we will all die. It does not matter whether we act righteously or wickedly, whether we are good or whether we are bad, whether we are acceptable for worshiping God or whether we have done things to cause us to be unacceptable. It does not matter if we offer sacrifices to God or if we [do not](#). It does not matter if we do what we have promised God that we will do or if [we do not](#). We all die. The same thing will happen to good people and to sinful people, to those who solemnly promise to do things for God and [to those who are afraid to make such promises](#).

- one fearing
- an oath

Translation Words - UST

- do
- we do not...to make such promises
- to those who are afraid

Ecclesiastes 9:3

everything that is done

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “everything that happens” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: “on the earth” (See: [Idiom](#))

the same event

death

The hearts of human beings are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts

Here the word “hearts” refers to the thoughts and emotions. Alternate translation: “Human beings are full of evil, and their thoughts are of madness” (See: [Metonymy](#))

madness

Alternate translation: “folly”

they go to the dead

The phrase “the dead” refers to dead people. Here dead people represent the place where people go after they die. Alternate translation: “they go to the place where dead people are” or “they die and go to the grave” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#) and [Metonymy](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- is an evil
- evil
- the heart of
- the sons of
- the man
- the dead ones

Translation Words - UST

- It seems wrong...Everyone dies
- evil
- people's
- people's
- inner beings
- those who are dead

ULT

³ This [is an evil](#) among everything that has been done under the sun, that one fate is for everyone. Indeed, also [the heart of the sons of the man](#) is full of [evil](#), and foolishness is in their heart during their lives, then after it to [the dead ones](#).

UST

³ [It seems wrong](#) that the same thing happens to everyone on this earth. [Everyone dies](#). Furthermore, [people's inner beings](#) are full of [evil](#). People do foolish things while they are alive, and then they join [those who are dead](#).

Ecclesiastes 9:4

the living

This refers to people who are alive. Alternate translation: “who are alive” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

just as a living dog is better than a dead lion

A “dog” was considered a lowly animal while a lion was considered a noble animal. This speaks of it being better to be lowly and alive than to be considered noble and dead. Alternate translation: “It is better to be lowly like a dog and to be alive than to be noble like a lion and to be dead” (See: [Simile](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [the living ones](#)
- [living](#)
- [is better](#)
- [dead](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [While we are alive](#)
- [that is alive](#)
- [is better](#)
- [that is dead](#)

ULT

⁴ For whoever that has become joined to all [the living ones](#), there is hope, for a [living](#) dog, it [is better](#) than the [dead](#) lion. ^[2]

UST

⁴ [While we are alive](#), we can expect that good things will happen to us. We despise dogs, but it [is better](#) to be a dog [that is alive](#) than to be a majestic lion [that is dead](#).

Ecclesiastes 9:5

the dead

This refers to people who are dead. Alternate translation: “those who are dead” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

their memory is forgotten

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “people will forget them” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [the living ones](#)
- [know](#)
- [knowing](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [We who are alive](#)
- [know](#)
- [do...know](#)

ULT

⁵ For [the living ones know](#) that they will die, but the dead ones, there is not their [knowing](#) anything. Truly there is no longer for them a reward because their memory is forgotten.

UST

⁵ [We who are alive know](#) that some day we will die, but dead people do not [know](#) anything. Dead people do not receive any more rewards, and people soon forget them.

Ecclesiastes 9:6

Their love, hatred, and envy

This refers to the love, hatred, and envy that the dead people showed others when they were alive.

anything done

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “anything that people do” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: “on the earth” (See: [Idiom](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [has perished](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [but they stop doing any of that when they die](#)

ULT

⁶ Even their love, even their hate, even their jealousy [has perished](#) long ago. Thus there is not for them a portion any longer for forever in everything that has been done under the sun.

UST

⁶ While they were alive, they loved people, they hated people, they envied people, [but they stop doing any of that when they die](#). They will never again be a part of anything that happens here on the earth.

Ecclesiastes 9:7

eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a happy heart

These two phrases share similar meanings and emphasize the importance of enjoying the basic activities of life. (See: [Parallelism](#))

your bread

This refers to food in general. Alternate translation: “your food” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

drink your wine with a happy heart

Here the word “heart” refers to the emotions. Alternate translation: “drink your wine joyfully” (See: [Metonymy](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [Go](#)
- [eat](#)
- [your bread](#)
- [with joy](#)
- [your wine](#)
- [with a...heart](#)
- [happy](#)
- [the true God](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [So I say](#)
- [be joyful while](#)
- [be joyful while](#)
- [be joyful while](#)
- [you eat](#)
- [your food](#)
- [your wine](#)
- [God](#)

ULT

⁷ [Go](#), [eat your bread with joy](#), and drink [your wine with a happy heart](#), for [the true God](#) is already pleased with your actions.

UST

⁷ [So I say](#), [be joyful while you eat your food](#) and drink [your wine](#), because that is what [God](#) wants you to do.

Ecclesiastes 9:8

Let your clothes be always white and your head anointed with oil

Wearing white clothes and anointing one's head with oil were both signs of gladness and celebration. (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

your head anointed with oil

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "anoint your head with oil" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [and...oil](#)
- [your head](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [and cause...to have a good appearance](#)
- [your face](#)

ULT

⁸ At every time let your garments be white and may [oil](#) on [your head](#) not be lacking.

UST

⁸ Wear nice clothes [and cause your face to have a good appearance](#).

Ecclesiastes 9:9

Live happily with the wife whom you love

One should love the wife he has. Alternate translation: "Since you have a wife whom you love, live happily with her" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: "on the earth" (See: [Idiom](#))

your days

Alternate translation: "your lifetime"

That is your reward

The word "that" refers to living happily with his wife.

Translation Words - ULT

- [you love](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [you love](#)

ULT

⁹ See life with a wife whom [you love](#) all the days of your life of futility, that he has given to you under the sun, all your days of futility, because it is your portion among the living and during your toil that you toil under the sun.

UST

⁹ Enjoy living with your wife whom [you love](#), all during the time that God has given to you to be alive here on this earth. Even though it is difficult to understand why many things happen, this life with your wife is your reward for doing the work that you do here on this earth.

Ecclesiastes 9:10

Whatever your hand finds to do

Here a person is represented by his “hand” since a person often uses his hands to work. Alternate translation: “Whatever you are able to do” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

there is no work or explanation or knowledge or wisdom

The nouns “work,” “explanation,” and “knowledge” can be expressed as verbs. Alternate translation: “the dead do not work or explain or know or have wisdom” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [your hand](#)
- [in your strength](#)
- [are going](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [you are able](#)
- [with all your energy](#)
- [are going](#)

ULT

¹⁰ All that [your hand](#) should find to do, do [in your strength](#), because there is no deed or invention or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, where you [are going](#) to there.

UST

¹⁰ Whatever [you are able](#) to do, do it [with all your energy](#), because at some point you will die, and in the place of the dead where you [are going](#), no one works or plans to do anything or knows anything or has any wisdom.

Ecclesiastes 9:11

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: “on the earth” (See: [Idiom](#))

The race does not belong to ... The battle does not belong to

Alternate translation: “The race is not always won by ... The battle is not always won by”

Bread

Here “Bread” refers to food in general. Alternate translation: “Food” (See: [Metonymy](#))

time and chance affect them all

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “what happens and when it happens affect them all” (See: [Idiom](#))

affect them all

“affects all these things.” Here the words “them all” refer to race, battle, bread, riches, and favor.

Translation Words - ULT

- [I have turned](#)
- [bread](#)
- [is...for the wise ones](#)
- [favor](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [I...something else](#)
- [the wisest people](#)
- [do...have food](#)
- [are...honored by others](#)

ULT

¹¹ [I have turned](#) and certainly seen under the sun, that the race is not for the swift ones, and the battle is not for the strong ones, and even [bread](#) is not [for the wise ones](#), and even wealth is not for the ones who are intelligent, and even [favor](#) is not for the ones having understanding. Instead, time and chance will happen to all of them.

UST

¹¹ I have seen [something else](#) here on the earth: The person who runs fastest does not always win the race, the strongest soldiers do not always win the battle, [the wisest people](#) do not always [have food](#), the smartest people do not always become rich, and the people who have studied a lot are not always [honored by others](#). We cannot always control what things will happen to us and where they will happen.

Ecclesiastes 9:12

when his time will come

This refers to when a person dies. Alternate translation: “when he will die” or “when the time of his death will come” (See: [Euphemism](#))

fish are caught ... birds are caught ... the children of human beings are ensnared

This speaks of people dying when they do not expect it, in the same way that people catch animals and kill them when they do not expect it. (See: [Simile](#))

the children of human beings are ensnared by evil times

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Also, this speaks of people experiencing disaster and unfortunate times as if they were being imprisoned or trapped. Alternate translation: “evil times are coming upon the children of human beings” (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Metaphor](#))

that suddenly fall upon them

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “at times when they do not expect them to happen” or “that suddenly happen to them” (See: [Idiom](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- the man
- the man
- does...know
- evil
- an evil (2)
- the sons of

Translation Words - UST

- one
- people
- knows
- cruelly
- experience disasters (2)
- people

ULT

¹² Surely, also [the man](#) does not [know](#) his time. As the fish that are caught in a [evil](#) net, or as the birds that are caught in the snare, like them, [the sons of the man](#) are ensnared by [an evil](#) time as when it falls upon them suddenly.

UST

¹² No [one knows](#) when he will die. Fish are [cruelly](#) caught in a net, and birds are caught in snares. Similarly, [people experience disasters](#) at times when they do not expect them to happen.

Ecclesiastes 9:13

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: “on the earth” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

¹³ Also, this I have seen: wisdom under the sun, and great it is to me.

UST

¹³ Once I saw here on this earth something that a wise man did that impressed me.

Ecclesiastes 9:14

a great king came against it

Here the "king" represents himself and his whole army. Alternate translation: "a great king and his army" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

great siege ramps

This refers to dirt ramps the army built up against the city wall so that they could climb up and attack the city.

Translation Words - ULT

- [a...king](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [The army of a...king](#)

ULT

14 A small city with a few men in it, and a great [king](#) came against it and he surrounded it and he built mighty siege ramps against it.

UST

14 There was a small town, where only a few people lived. [The army of a](#) great [king](#) came to that town and surrounded it. They built dirt ramps up against the walls in order to climb up and attack the town.

Ecclesiastes 9:15

in the city was found a poor, wise man

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "in the city, people found a poor, wise man" or "a poor, wise man lived in the city" (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Idiom](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [wise](#)
- [Yet a man](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [but very wise](#)
- [but people](#)

ULT

¹⁵ Now he found in it a poor, [wise](#) man, and he delivered the city by his wisdom. [Yet a man](#) did not remember that poor man.

UST

¹⁵ In that town there was someone who was poor [but very wise](#). Because of what that person suggested, the town was saved, [but people](#) soon forgot about him.

Ecclesiastes 9:16

the poor man's wisdom is despised

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "people despise the poor man's wisdom" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

his words are not heard

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "they do not listen to what he says" or "they do not take his advice" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [Better](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [is better](#)

ULT

¹⁶ So I myself said, "[Better](#) is wisdom than strength, but the wisdom of the poor one is despised, and his words, they are not heeded."

UST

¹⁶ So I realized that although being wise [is better](#) than being strong, if you are poor, no one will appreciate what you do, and people will soon forget what you said.

Ecclesiastes 9:17

The words of wise people spoken quietly are heard better

Here “heard” represents understanding. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “It is easier to understand the words that wise people speak quietly” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [wise ones](#)
- [a ruler](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [A wise man](#)
- [a king who](#)

ULT

¹⁷ Words of [wise ones](#) in quietness are heeded more than an outcry of [a ruler](#) among the fools.

UST

¹⁷ [A wise man](#) who speaks quietly—people hear him better than they hear [a king who](#) is shouting to a foolish crowd.

Ecclesiastes 9:18

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Translation Words - ULT

- Better
- good (2)
- but...sinner
- can destroy

Translation Words - UST

- is more useful
- good (2)
- however, if a person does...foolish thing
- he might ruin

ULT

¹⁸ Better is wisdom than weapons of war, but one sinner can destroy much good.

9:2 ^[1] . In this way, they make the phrase complete. Translators may decide to imitate them.

9:4 ^[2] .

UST

¹⁸ Being wise is more useful than having a lot of weapons; however, if a person does just one foolish thing, he might ruin many good things that others have done.

Ecclesiastes 10

Ecclesiastes 10 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with the poetry in all of chapter 10.

Special concepts in this chapter

Advice

This chapter gives a series of disconnected pieces of advice. Translators should not try to smooth the transitions between these pieces of advice. The advice in these statements do not apply in every situation. Therefore, they should be seen as “good ideas.”

Ecclesiastes 10:1

As dead flies ... so a little folly

Just as flies can ruin perfume, so folly can ruin a person's reputation for wisdom and honor. This speaks of how a little folly can ruin a person's reputation in the same way that a few dead flies ruin perfume. (See: [Simile](#))

a little folly can overpower wisdom and honor

This speaks of how a person acting foolishly can ruin his reputation as if his "folly" and "wisdom and honor" were people and that his folly overpowered his wisdom and honor. Alternate translation: "committing a little folly can ruin a person's wisdom and honor" (See: [Personification](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- oil of

Translation Words - UST

- in a bottle of perfume

ULT

¹ Dead flies make precious oil of a perfumer give forth a stench, a little foolishness is more weightier than wisdom.

UST

¹ A few dead flies in a bottle of perfume cause all the perfume to stink. Similarly, a small amount of acting foolishly can have a greater effect than acting wisely.

Ecclesiastes 10:2

The heart of a wise person ... the heart of a fool

Here the word “heart” refers to the mind or will. Alternate translation: “The way a wise person thinks ... the way a fool thinks” (See: [Metonymy](#))

tends to the right ... tends to the left

Here the words “right” and “left” refer to what is right and wrong. Alternate translation: “tends to doing what is right ... tends to doing what is wrong” (See: [Idiom](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [A heart of](#)
- [a wise one](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [If people think sensibly](#)
- [If people think sensibly](#)

ULT

² [A heart of a wise one](#) is at his right hand, but a heart of a fool is at his left.

UST

² [If people think sensibly](#), it will lead them to do what is right; if they think foolishly, it causes them to do what is wrong.

Ecclesiastes 10:3

his thinking is deficient

This refers to the way that he acts. Alternate translation: “he is stupid” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- is going
- his heart

Translation Words - UST

- walk
- they show that they do not have good sense

ULT

³ Now even as soon as when the fool is going along a road, his heart is deficient, and he will say to everyone a fool he is.

UST

³ Even while foolish people walk along the road, they show that they do not have good sense. They show everyone that they are not wise.

Ecclesiastes 10:4

If the emotions of a ruler rise up against you

Here a ruler is represented by his "emotions" Alternate translation: "If a ruler becomes angry with you" (See: [Metonymy](#))

Calm can quiet down great outrage

Alternate translation: "By remaining calm you may cause an outraged person to become quiet"

Translation Words - ULT

- [the spirit of](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [is angry](#)

ULT

⁴ If [the spirit of](#) the ruler should rise up against you, do not leave your place, because restoration will settle down great offenses.

UST

⁴ Do not quit your job when a ruler [is angry](#) with you. If you remain calm, he will probably stop being angry.

Ecclesiastes 10:5

under the sun

This refers to things that are done on earth. See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#). Alternate translation: “on the earth” (See: [Idiom](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [an evil](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [evil, wicked, unpleasant](#)

ULT

⁵ There is [an evil](#) I have seen under the sun, like an error that comes forth from before the faces of the ruler.

UST

⁵ There is something else that I have seen here on this earth, something that rulers sometimes do that is wrong:

Ecclesiastes 10:6

Fools are given leadership positions

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Rulers give positions of leadership to fools" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

successful men are given low positions

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "they give low positions to successful men" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

low positions

This is an idiom. AT "unimportant positions" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁶ The fool is given into the many dignified positions, while rich ones are sitting in the humble rank.

UST

⁶ they appoint foolish people to have important positions, while they appoint rich people to have unimportant positions.

Ecclesiastes 10:7

successful men walking like slaves on the ground

This speaks of successful men walking like slaves walk, because slaves were usually forced to walk and were not permitted to ride.
(See: [Simile](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [slaves](#)
- [horses](#)
- [and princes](#)
- [walking](#)
- [the ground](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [slaves](#)
- [horses](#)
- [but...officials](#)
- [they force...to walk](#)
- [earth, land](#)

ULT

⁷ I have seen [slaves](#) on [horses](#), and [princes walking](#) like slaves on [the ground](#).

UST

⁷ They allow [slaves](#) to ride on [horses](#) like rich people usually do, [but they force officials to walk](#) like slaves usually do.

Ecclesiastes 10:8

a snake can bite him

This refers to a snake that was hiding inside the wall. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁸ Anyone digging a pit may fall into it, and anyone breaking down a hedge, a snake may strike him.

UST

⁸ It is possible that those who dig pits will fall into one of those pits. It is possible that someone who tears down a wall will be bitten by a snake that is in that wall.

Ecclesiastes 10:9

cuts out stones

This refers working in a quarry and cutting larger stones.

can be hurt by them

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “those stones can hurt him” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

is endangered by it

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “the wood may injure him” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁹ Anyone pulling out stones may be hurt by them, anyone splitting timbers may be endangered by them.

UST

⁹ If you work in a quarry, it is possible that a stone will fall on you and injure you. It is possible that men who split logs will be injured by one of those logs.

Ecclesiastes 10:10

wisdom provides an advantage for success

A wise person would have sharpened his blade and would not have had to work so hard.

Translation Words - ULT

- [surfaces](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [face](#), [facial](#)

ULT

¹⁰ If the iron blade is dull, and he does not whet [surfaces](#), then he must use greater strength, but an advantage is wisdom gives success.

UST

¹⁰ If your axe is not sharp, you will need to work harder to cut down a tree, but by using wisdom, you will succeed.

Ecclesiastes 10:11

before it is charmed

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “before the snake charmer charms it” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

11 If the snake should strike because there was no charming, then there is no advantage for the master of the tongue.

UST

11 If a snake bites a man before he charms it, his ability to charm snakes will not benefit him.

Ecclesiastes 10:12

The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious

Here the wise man's speech is represented by his "mouth." Alternate translation: "The things that a wise man says are gracious" (See: [Metonymy](#))

the lips of a fool consume him

Here the fool's speech is represented by his "lips." This speaks of the fool destroying himself by his speech as if it were eating him. Alternate translation: "The things that a foolish man says destroy him" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- a wise one
- are gracious

Translation Words - UST

- Wise people
- what is sensible, and because of that, people honor them

ULT

¹² Words of a mouth of a wise one are gracious, but lips of a fool will swallow him.

UST

¹² Wise people say what is sensible, and because of that, people honor them, but foolish people are destroyed by what they themselves say.

Ecclesiastes 10:13

As words begin to flow from a fool's mouth

A fool's speech is represented by his "mouth." Alternate translation: "As a fool begins to speak" (See: [Metonymy](#))

at the end his mouth flows with wicked madness

A fool's speech is represented by his "mouth." Alternate translation: "as he finishes talking, he speaks wicked madness" (See: [Metonymy](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [wicked](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [that are both wicked and foolish](#)

ULT

¹³ The beginning of the words of his mouth are foolishness, and at the end his mouth is [wicked](#) folly.

UST

¹³ When foolish people start to talk, they say foolish things, and they end by saying things [that are both wicked and foolish](#).

Ecclesiastes 10:14

multiplies words

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “keeps on talking” (See: [Idiom](#))

what is coming

Alternate translation: “what will happen in the future”

Who knows what is coming after him?

The writer asks this question to emphasize that no one knows what will happen in the future after one's death. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement.

Alternate translation: “No one knows what is coming after him.” or “No one knows what will happen after he dies.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹⁴ Moreover, the fool multiplies words, [the man](#) does not [know](#) what that will happen, or what will be beyond after him. Who can explain to him?

UST

¹⁴ They talk too much. [None of us](#) [knows](#) what will happen in the future, or what will happen after we die.

Translation Words - ULT

- [the man](#)
- [does...know](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [None of us](#)
- [knows](#)

Ecclesiastes 10:15

wearies them

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "Fools become weary by their toil" or "Fools feel tired by the work that they do" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

so that they do not even know the road to town

This could mean: (1) "so much that he is unable to find the road to town." That the foolish person becomes so tired from working too hard that he is unable to find his way anywhere, or (2) "because he does not even know the way to town." That the foolish person becomes tired from working too hard because he does not know enough to go home.

Translation Words - ULT

- [he does...know](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [they are even...to find](#)

ULT

¹⁵ The toil of the foolish ones makes him weary, so that [he does](#) not [know](#) to go to a city.

UST

¹⁵ Foolish people become very exhausted by the work that they do, with the result that [they are even](#) unable [to find](#) the road to their town.

Ecclesiastes 10:16

Woe to you, land

The writer is speaking to the people of the nation as if they were the land itself, and he is speaking to the land as if it were a person. (See: [Apostrophe](#) and [Personification](#))

if your king is a young boy

This means that the king is inexperienced or immature.

begin feasting in the morning

This implies that the leaders are more concerned with having a good time than with leading the nation. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [O land](#)
- [is a lad](#)
- [and your princes](#)
- [are feasting](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [of a nation](#)
- [is a foolish young person](#)
- [whose leaders](#)
- [eat](#)

ULT

¹⁶ Woe to you, [O land](#), when your king [is a lad](#), and your princes are feasting in the morning!

UST

¹⁶ Terrible things will happen to the people [of a nation](#) whose ruler [is a foolish young person](#), whose leaders continually [eat](#), all during the day, every day.

Ecclesiastes 10:17

blessed are you, land

The writer is speaking to the people of the nation as if they were the land itself, and he is speaking to the land as if it were a person. (See: [Apostrophe](#) and [Personification](#))

king is the son of nobles

This implies that the son has been trained by his elders in the customs of being a good king. Alternate translation: “king has trained by nobles” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

for strength, and not for drunkenness

This explains why the blessed leaders eat.

Translation Words - ULT

- O land
- is a son of
- noble ones
- and your princes
- are eating

Translation Words - UST

- is a nation
- comes from
- a noble family
- if its leaders...and if they
- feast...eat and drink

ULT

¹⁷ Blessed are you, O land, when your king is a son of noble ones, and your princes are eating at the proper time, for strength, and not for the drinking!

UST

¹⁷ But how fortunate is a nation if its ruler comes from a noble family, if its leaders feast only at the proper times, and if they eat and drink only to be strong, not to become drunk.

Ecclesiastes 10:18

Because of laziness the roof sinks in

A lazy person does not keep up on the regular house maintenance. Alternate translation: “Because a lazy person does not repair his house, the roof sinks in” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

because of idle hands

Here a person is represented by his “hands” Alternate translation: “because of an idle person” or “because the person is idle” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

the house leaks

Here the roof is represented by the whole house. Alternate translation: “the roof leaks” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [hands](#)
- [the house](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [If they do not repair the roof](#)
- [into the house](#)

ULT

18 Because of laziness the rafter will sag, and because of idleness of [hands](#) [the house](#) will drip.

UST

18 Some men are very lazy and do not repair the beams of their roof, with the result that the roof sags and collapses. [If they do not repair the roof](#), water will leak [into the house](#) when it rains.

Ecclesiastes 10:19

People prepare food for laughter

The word “laughter” can be expressed as a verb. Alternate translation: “People prepare food in order to laugh” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

wine brings enjoyment to life

The word “enjoyment” can be expressed as a verb. Alternate translation: “wine helps people to enjoy life” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

money fills the need for everything

This could mean: (1) “money provides for every need” or (2) “money provides for both food and wine”

Translation Words - ULT

- bread
- and wine
- gladdens
- but the silver
- will answer

Translation Words - UST

- Eating food
- and drinking wine
- and be happy
- If you have enough money
- you can buy

ULT

¹⁹ For laughter they prepare bread, and wine gladdens life, but the silver will answer the whole thing.

UST

¹⁹ Eating food and drinking wine makes us laugh and be happy. If you have enough money, you can buy everything you need.

Ecclesiastes 10:20

not even in your mind

A person's thoughts are represented by the person's "mind."
Alternate translation: "not even in your thoughts" (See: [Metonymy](#))

rich people in your bedroom

"rich people when you are in your bedroom." This means that you should not curse rich people even when you are in a private place where no one else will hear.

For a bird of the sky ... can spread the matter

These two lines mean basically the same thing and are combined for emphasis. This speaks of people finding out what you have said as if a small bird would hear what you say and tell other people. Alternate translation: "For a bird may hear what you say and tell the matter to other people" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- a king
- the heavens
- will carry

Translation Words - UST

- the king
- will hear
- heaven, sky, heavens, heavenly

ULT

²⁰ Even in your thinking, do not curse a king, and in the chambers of your bed, do not curse a rich one. For a bird of the heavens will carry the voice, and an owner of wings will expose a matter.

UST

²⁰ Do not even think about cursing the king, or about cursing rich people, even when you are alone in your bedroom. It is always possible that a little bird will hear what you are saying and tell those people what you said about them.

Ecclesiastes 11

Ecclesiastes 11 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with the poetry in all of chapter 11.

Special concepts in this chapter

Advice

This chapter gives a series of disconnected pieces of advice. Translators should not try to smooth the transitions between these pieces of advice. The advice in these statements do not apply in every situation. Therefore, they should be seen as “good ideas.”

Ecclesiastes 11:1

Send out your bread on the waters, for you will find it again after many days

This could mean: (1) this is a metaphor that means a person should be generous with his possessions and will then receive generously from others , or (2) that a person should invest his resources overseas and will make a profit from it. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [your bread](#)
- [the surfaces of](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [Give generously to others some of the money that you have](#)
- [Give generously to others some of the money that you have](#)

ULT

¹ Let [your bread](#) go out over [the surfaces of](#) the waters, for in the multitude of the days you will find it.

UST

¹ Give generously to others some of the [money that you have](#); if you do that, later you will get back an equal amount.

Ecclesiastes 11:2

Share it with seven, even eight people

This could mean: (1) to share your possessions with many people, or (2) to invest your resources in multiple places.

seven, even eight people

“7, even 8 people.” This is an idiom that means “numerous” people. Alternate translation: “numerous people” or “multiple people” (See: [Numbers](#) and [Idiom](#))

what disasters are coming on the earth

Disasters happening is spoken of as if disasters were something that come to a place. Here “on the earth” may imply that these disasters happen to the person who is commanded to share. Alternate translation: “what disasters may happen in the world” or “what bad things may happen to you” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [you do...know](#)
- [evil](#)
- [the earth](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [you do...know](#)
- [when you will experience a disaster and will need their help](#)
- [when you will experience a disaster and will need their help](#)

ULT

² Give a portion to seven, or even to eight, for [you do](#) not [know](#) what [evil](#) will happen upon [the earth](#).

UST

² Share some of what you have with seven or eight others, because [you do](#) not [know when you will experience a disaster and will need their help](#).

Ecclesiastes 11:3

the clouds are full of rain

Alternate translation: "the clouds are dark with rain"

empty themselves on the earth

Alternate translation: "empty themselves on the ground"

toward the south or toward the north

Here "south" and "north" represent any direction. Alternate translation: "in any direction" (See: [Merism](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [the earth](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [the earth](#)

ULT

³ If the dark clouds are filled with rain, they will empty out upon [the earth](#), but if a tree should fall toward the south or even toward the north, any place where the tree should fall, there it will remain.

UST

³ It is true that when clouds are full of water, they pour rain on [the earth](#). Similarly, wherever a tree falls on the ground, that is where it will remain.

Ecclesiastes 11:4

Anyone who watches the wind might not plant

This could mean: (1) “Any farmer who pays attention to the wind will not plant when the wind is blowing in the wrong direction” or (2) “Any farmer who pays too much attention to the wind will never plant”

anyone who watches the clouds might not harvest

This could mean: (1) “Any farmer who pays attention to the clouds will not harvest when it is about to rain” or (2) “Any farmer who pays too much attention to the clouds will never harvest”

Translation Words - ULT

- A watcher of
- wind
- might...harvest

Translation Words - UST

- If farmers see
- in what direction the wind is blowing
- they will...try to harvest their crops on that day

ULT

⁴ A watcher of wind might not sow, and one who stares at the dark clouds might not harvest.

UST

⁴ If farmers see in what direction the wind is blowing, they will know whether it is wise at that time to plant things or not. It is also true that if farmers look at the clouds and see that they are blowing from the west and will bring rain, they will not try to harvest their crops on that day.

Ecclesiastes 11:5

As you do not know the path of the wind

This speaks of wind blowing as if wind traveled on a path. Alternate translation: “As you do not know where the wind comes from or where it goes” (See: [Metaphor](#))

how a baby’s bones grow

This could mean: (1) Here “bones” is a synecdoche representing the baby as a whole. Alternate translation: “how a baby grows” or (2) literally, “how the bones of a baby grow” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [knowing](#)
- [you do...know](#)
- [the true God](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [We do...know...we do...know](#)
- [we...fully understand](#)
- [God is the one...he](#)

ULT

⁵ Just as it is not for you [knowing](#) what is the path of the wind, so the bones being in the womb of the full one, ^[1] so likewise [you do](#) not [know](#) the work of [the true God](#), who is doing everything.

UST

⁵ [We do](#) not [know](#) where the wind comes from or where it goes, and [we do](#) not [know](#) how bodies are formed in a woman’s womb. Similarly, [God is the one](#) who makes everything, and we cannot [fully understand](#) what [he](#) does.

Ecclesiastes 11:6

work with your hands

Here “hands” represents the whole person. Alternate translation: “keep on working” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

whether morning or evening, or this or that

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and emphasize that the person’s work may prosper, no matter what time he has done it. Alternate translation: “whether the seed that you planted in the morning or the seed that you planted in the evening” (See: [Doublet](#) and [Ellipsis](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [your seed](#)
- [your hand](#)
- [knowing](#)
- [would be better](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [your seeds...them](#)
- [do...stop planting](#)
- [you do...know](#)
- [will grow well](#)

ULT

⁶ In the morning sow [your seed](#), and until the evening, do not let [your hand](#) rest, for it is not for you [knowing](#) whether this will prosper. Will it be this or that, or whether the two of them as one [would be better](#)?

UST

⁶ Start planting [your seeds](#) in the morning, and do not [stop planting them](#) until the evening, because [you do](#) not [know](#) which ones will grow better, the ones you plant in the morning or the ones you plant later in the day, or whether both [will grow well](#).

Ecclesiastes 11:7

light is sweet

Here the word “light” refers to being able to see the sun and therefore being alive. And, this speaks of the joy of being alive as if the light had a sweet taste. Alternate translation: “it is a joy to be able to see the sun” or “being alive is delightful” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

for the eyes to see the sun

The “eyes” represent the whole person. This phrase means basically the same thing as the previous phrase. Alternate translation: “for a person to see the sun” or “to be alive” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Parallelism](#))

ULT

⁷ Truly the light is sweet, and it is a good thing for the eyes to see the sun.

UST

⁷ It is very delightful to be alive and see the sun rise every morning.

Ecclesiastes 11:8

happy in all of them

Here the word “them” refers to the years that a person is alive.

the coming days of darkness

Future time is spoken of as if the “days are coming” And, here the word “darkness” refers to death. Alternate translation: “how many days that he will be dead” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Euphemism](#))

for they will be many

Here the word “they” refers to the “days of darkness” Alternate translation: “for he will be dead for many more days than he is alive” or “for he will be dead forever”

Everything to come is vanishing vapor

Here “vanishing vapor” is a metaphor. This could mean: (1) Alternate translation: “No one knows what will happen after he dies” or (2) Alternate translation: “Everything to come is meaningless” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Everything to come

This could mean: (1) “Everything that happens after death” or (2) “Everything that happens in the future”

Translation Words - ULT

- [the man](#)
- [should live](#)
- [let him rejoice](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [people](#)
- [live for](#)
- [they should enjoy](#)

ULT

⁸ Even if [the man should live](#) many years, in all of them [let him rejoice](#). But let him remember the days of darkness, for they will be many. Everything that comes will be futility.

UST

⁸ Even if [people live for](#) many years, [they should enjoy](#) all of them. But they should not forget that some day they will die and then they will never be able to see any light again, and they do not know what will happen to them after they die.

Ecclesiastes 11:9

Take joy, young man, in your youth, and let your heart be joyful in the days of your youth

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and are combined to emphasize that the man should be happy while he is young. (See: [Parallelism](#))

let your heart be joyful

Here the word "heart" represents the emotions. Alternate translation: "be joyful" (See: [Metonymy](#))

Pursue the good desires of your heart

Here the word "heart" may represent the mind or emotions. Alternate translation: "Pursue the good things that you desire" or "Pursue the good things that you have determined to pursue" (See: [Metonymy](#))

whatever is within the sight of your eyes

Here "eyes" represent the whole person. Alternate translation: "whatever you see that you desire" or "whatever you see to be best" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

God will bring you into judgment for all these things

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **judgment**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form such as "judge" or "make you account" Alternate translation: "God will judge you for all these things" or "God will make you account for all of your actions" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- Rejoice
- your heart
- your heart
- But, know
- the true God

Translation Words - UST

- be happy
- be happy
- Enjoy doing the things that you want to do
- But do not forget
- God

ULT

⁹ Rejoice, young man, in your childhood times, and let **your heart** gladden you in the days of your youthful times. So, go out in the ways of **your heart**, and with the the sights of your eyes. **But, know** that on account of all these things, **the true God** will bring you into the judgment.

UST

⁹ You young people, **be happy** while you are still young. **Enjoy doing the things that you want to do. But do not forget** that **God** will judge you one day concerning all the things that you do.

Ecclesiastes 11:10

Drive anger away from your heart

Refusing to be angry is spoken of as if anger were something that can be forced away. Also, “heart” represents a person’s emotions. Alternate translation: “Refuse to be angry” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

because youth and its strength are vapor

The authors speaks of things as being useless and meaningless as if they were “vapor” Just as vapor disappears and does not last, the author speaks of things having no lasting value. See how you translated “vapor” in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: “because youth and its strength will not last forever” or “because you will not be young and strong forever” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [from your heart](#)
- [and keep away](#)
- [sorrow](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [So when you are young, do not worry about anything](#)
- [and do not pay attention to](#)
- [the pains that you have](#)

ULT

10 So remove anger [from your heart](#), [and keep away sorrow](#) from your flesh, because the childhood and the youth is futility.
11:5 ^[1].

UST

10 [So when you are young, do not worry about anything, and do not pay attention to the pains that you have](#) in your body, because we will not remain young and strong forever.

Ecclesiastes 12

Ecclesiastes 12 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Some translations set each line of poetry farther to the right than the rest of the text to make it easier to read. The ULT does this with the poetry in 12:1-7 and 12:13-14.

Special concepts in this chapter

Advice

This chapter gives a series of disconnected pieces of advice. Translators should not try to smooth the transitions between these pieces of advice. The advice in these statements do not apply in every situation. Therefore, they should be seen as “good ideas.”

Yahweh

At the end of a very impressive life, Solomon looks back and sees that the only real lasting thing in this world is Yahweh. The purpose of his life was to honor Yahweh, something he should have done far more throughout his life. Therefore, he felt that his life was wasted. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

Ecclesiastes 12:1

call to mind

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “remember” (See: [Idiom](#))

before the days of difficulty come

Future time is spoken of as if the “days are coming” Alternate translation: “before you experience difficult times” or “before bad things happen to you” (See: [Metaphor](#))

before the years arrive when you say, “I have no pleasure in them,”

Future time is spoken of as if “years arrive” Alternate translation: “before you become old when you say, ‘I no longer enjoy being alive,’” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [the evil](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [before you are old and you experience many troubles](#)

ULT

¹ Now remember your Creator in the days of your youthful times, even when the days of [the evil](#) have not come, but years will arrive when you will say, “There is not delight for me in them,”

UST

¹ While you are still young, keep thinking about God, who created you. Do that [before you are old and you experience many troubles](#), during the years when you say, “I no longer enjoy being alive.”

Ecclesiastes 12:2

do this before the light of the sun ... after the rain

Growing old and dying is spoken of as if the sun and moon go dark and dark clouds return. Alternate translation: “do this before it seems to you that the light of the sun ... after the rain” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [and...return](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [and it will seem that...return quickly](#)

ULT

² as long as that the sun is not dark, nor the light of the moon, or the stars, and the dark clouds [return](#) after the rain.

UST

² When you become old, the light from the sun and moon and stars will seem dim to you, [and it will seem that](#) the rain clouds always [return quickly](#) after it rains.

Ecclesiastes 12:3

General Information:

The writer describes a house in which various activities stop. This appears to be a metaphor for the human body as it becomes old. (See: [Metaphor](#))

strong men are bent over

Alternate translation: "strong men become weak"

the women who grind cease because they are few

Alternate translation: "the women who grind grain stop grinding grain because there are few of them"

Translation Words - ULT

- [the guards of](#)
- [the house](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [your arms that you use to protect yourself...and your legs that support your body will become weak](#)
- [your arms that you use to protect yourself...and your legs that support your body will become weak](#)

ULT

³ On the day it will happen that [the guards of the house](#) will tremble, and the men of strength will be stooped over, and the women grain millers will cease from labor because they are few, and the seeing through the latticework will grow dim.

UST

³ Then [your arms that you use to protect yourself, and your legs that support your body will become weak](#). Many of the teeth that you use to grind your food will fall out, and your eyes that you use to look out of windows will not see clearly.

Ecclesiastes 12:4

the doors are shut in the street

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “people shut the doors that lead to the street” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

when men are startled at the voice of a bird

It is implied that the voice of the birds startle the men awake. If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “when the voice of a bird startles men awake” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

the singing of girls' voices fades away

Here “girls” may be a metaphor for the birds. Alternate translation: “the songs of the birds fade away” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [doors](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [Your ears will no longer hear the noise](#)

ULT

⁴ Then [doors](#) will be shut along the street, when the sound of the handmill becomes quiet, when they rise up at the sound of the bird, and all the daughters of the song are weakened.

UST

⁴ [Your ears will no longer hear the noise](#) in the streets, and you will no longer be able to hear clearly the sound of people grinding grain with millstones. You will be awakened in the morning by hearing the birds singing, but you will not be able to hear well the songs that the birds sing.

Ecclesiastes 12:5

when the almond tree blossoms

The “almond tree” is a tree that blossoms in the winter with white flowers. (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

when grasshoppers drag themselves along

A grasshopper is a large, straight-winged insect with long, jointed back legs that give it the ability to jump a long way. Here it can only drag itself because it has gotten old and weak. (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

when natural desires fail

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **desires**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: “when people no longer desire what they once did naturally” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Then man goes to his eternal home

This refers to death. Alternate translation: “Then man goes to the place of the dead forever” or “Then a person dies and never returns to life” (See: [Euphemism](#))

the mourners go down the streets

This could mean: (1) that mourners go down the streets to attend a funeral, or (2) that mourners go down the streets to the house of the person who is about to die.

Translation Words - ULT

- [They will...be afraid](#)
- [the man](#)
- [is going](#)
- [home](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [You will be afraid](#)
- [you will die and go to your eternal home](#)
- [you will die and go to your eternal home](#)
- [you will die and go to your eternal home](#)

ULT

⁵ [They will](#) even [be afraid](#) of height and terrors along the road. Although the almond tree might blossom, yet the locusts fatten themselves and the caperberry frustrates. For [the man is going](#) to his eternal [home](#) and the mourners will surround in the street.

UST

⁵ [You will be afraid](#) to be in high places and afraid of dangers on the roads that you walk on. Your hair will become white like the flowers of almond trees. When you try to walk, you will drag yourself along like grasshoppers, and you will no longer desire a woman at all. Then [you will die and go to your eternal home](#), and the people who will mourn for you will be in the streets.

Ecclesiastes 12:6

Call to mind

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “Remember” (See: [Idiom](#))

before the silver cord is cut ... or the water wheel is broken at the well

The writer speaks of dying as if it were one of these various broken items. Death will break the body just as suddenly as people accidentally break these items while they are using them. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the silver cord is cut

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “someone cuts the silver cord” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the golden bowl is crushed

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “someone crushes the golden bowl” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the pitcher is shattered

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “someone shatters the pitcher” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the water wheel is broken

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “someone breaks the water wheel” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [silver](#)
- [gold](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [like silver](#)
- [golden](#)

ULT

⁶ Until that the cord of [silver](#) has not been fastened, or the bowl of [gold](#) gets crushed, then a jar is shattered at the fountain, and the wheel crushes at the well,

UST

⁶ Think much about God now, because soon our lives will end, [like silver](#) chains or [golden](#) bowls that break easily, or like pitchers that are broken at the water fountain, or like broken pulleys at a well.

Ecclesiastes 12:7

dust returns to the earth

Here the word “dust” refers to the human body that has decomposed. (See: [Metonymy](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- Likewise...will return
- the earth
- will return
- the true God

Translation Words - UST

- Then our corpses will decay and become
- will return
- God
- earth, land

ULT

⁷ Likewise the dust will return to the earth as what it was, and the spirit will return to the true God who gave it.

UST

⁷ Then our corpses will decay and become dirt again, and our spirits will return to God, the one who gave us our spirits.

Ecclesiastes 12:8

A mist of vapor ... everything is vanishing vapor

The Teacher speaks of things as being useless and meaningless as if they were “vapor.” Just as vapor disappears and does not last, the author speaks of things having no lasting value. See how you translated “vapor” in [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#). Alternate translation: “Temporary and useless ... everything is temporary and useless” or “Meaningless ... everything is meaningless” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the Teacher

See how you translated this in [Ecclesiastes 1:1](#).

ULT

⁸ “Most futile of futile things,” says the Qohelet, “the entirety is futile.”

UST

⁸ So I, the Teacher, say again that everything is temporary and useless.

Ecclesiastes 12:9

contemplated and set in order

Alternate translation: "thought much about and arranged" or "thought much about and wrote down"

Translation Words - ULT

- wise
- the people

Translation Words - UST

- a very wise man
- the people

ULT

⁹ Moreover also because Qohelet was wise continually he taught the people knowledge. Also he pondered and he examined. He composed many proverbs.

UST

⁹ I, the Teacher, was considered to be a very wise man, and I taught the people many things. I assembled and wrote down many proverbs, and I carefully thought about them and put them in order.

Ecclesiastes 12:10

using vivid ... words

The Teacher wanted the words to be pleasurable to the listener. They bring pleasure because they are well written, not because they are comforting.

Translation Words - ULT

- sought
- truth

Translation Words - UST

- searched for
- and true

ULT

¹⁰ Qohelet **sought** to discover words of delight, and upright words of **truth** were written.

UST

¹⁰ I **sought for** words that would be pleasing to hear, and what I have written is reliable **and true**.

Ecclesiastes 12:11

The words of wise people ... taught by one shepherd

The writer speaks of the teacher who uses his words to instruct people as if the teacher were a shepherd who uses his tools to lead his flock. (See: [Metaphor](#))

The words of wise people are like goads

This is a simile. Alternate translation: "Wise people encourage people to act, like a sharp stick encourages an animal to move" (See: [Simile](#))

Like nails driven deeply are the words of the masters in collections of their proverbs

This is a simile. Alternate translation: "Like you can depend on a nail that a person drives firmly into a piece of wood, so you can depend on the words of the masters in collections of their proverbs" (See: [Simile](#))

the words of the masters in collections of their proverbs

Alternate translation: "the wise words collected in their proverbs" or "the sayings of the wise"

which are taught by one shepherd

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "which one shepherd teaches" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [wise ones](#)
- [are masters of](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [I and other wise people](#)
- [The sayings...are like](#)

ULT

¹¹ Words of [wise ones](#) are like goads, and like pegs implanted [are masters of](#) collections given by one shepherd.

UST

¹¹ The things that [I and other wise people](#) say give directions, and they are like nails that fix things together and last a long time. When people follow clear and understandable directions, they know what is right, and, so then they can do it. [The sayings](#) of the wise [are like](#) our shepherd who guides us where we need to go.

Ecclesiastes 12:12

the making of many books, which has no end

The noun phrase “the making” can be stated as a verb. Alternate translation: “people will never stop making many books”

brings weariness to the body

Here “body” represents the whole person. Alternate translation: “makes the person tired” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- [my son](#)
- [flesh](#)

Translation Words - UST

- [my son](#)
- [will be an endless task](#)

ULT

¹² Furthermore also, from them, [my son](#), be enlightened: making many scrolls, there is no end and much study is wearying to [flesh](#).

UST

¹² So, [my son](#), pay careful attention to what I have written, and choose carefully what you read that others have written. This work of writing many books is endless. Trying to study them all [will be an endless task](#).

Ecclesiastes 12:13

The end of the matter

Alternate translation: "The final conclusion on the matter"

after everything has been heard

If your language does not use the passive form in this way, you can state this in active form or in another way that is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "after you have heard everything" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- fear
- the true God
- keep
- his commandments
- the man

Translation Words - UST

- Revere
- God
- obey
- his commandments
- that people should do

ULT

13 The end of the matter is the whole has been heard: [fear the true God](#) and [keep his commandments](#), for this is the entirety of [the man](#).

UST

13 Now you have heard all that I have told you, and here is the conclusion: [Revere God](#), and [obey his commandments](#), because those commandments summarize everything [that people should do](#).

Ecclesiastes 12:14

along with every hidden thing

Things done in secret is spoken of as if they were an object that was hidden. Alternate translation: “along with everything that people do in secret” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Translation Words - ULT

- the true God
- good
- evil

Translation Words - UST

- God
- good things
- bad things

ULT

¹⁴ On account of every deed, the true God will bring into judgment, along with anything having been hidden, whether good or whether evil.

UST

¹⁴ And do not forget that God will judge everything that we do, good things and bad things, even things that we do secretly.



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Version 29

Abstract Nouns

Description

Abstract nouns are nouns that refer to attitudes, qualities, events, or situations. These are things that cannot be seen or touched in a physical sense, such as happiness, weight, unity, friendship, health, and reason. This is a translation issue because some languages may express a certain idea with an abstract noun, while others would need a different way to express it.

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

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

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

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

Remember that nouns are words that refer to a person, place, thing, or idea. Abstract nouns are the nouns that refer to ideas. These can be attitudes, qualities, events, situations, or even relationships between those ideas. These are things that cannot be seen or touched in a physical sense, such as joy, peace, creation, goodness, contentment, justice, truth, freedom, vengeance, slowness, length, weight, and many, many more.

Some languages, such as Biblical Greek and English, use abstract nouns a lot. They provide a way of giving names to actions or qualities. With names, people who speak these languages can talk about the concepts as though they were things. For example, in languages that use abstract nouns, people can say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sin."

But some languages do not use abstract nouns very much. In these languages, speakers may not have the two abstract nouns "forgiveness" and "sin," but they would express the same meaning in other ways. For example, they would express, "I believe that God is willing to forgive people after they have sinned," by using verb phrases instead of nouns for those ideas.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

The Bible that you translate from may use abstract nouns to express certain ideas. Your language might not use abstract nouns for some of those ideas. Instead, it might use phrases to express those ideas. Those phrases will use other kinds of words such as adjectives, verbs, or adverbs to express the meaning of the abstract noun. For example, "What is its **weight**?" could be expressed as "How much does it **weigh**?" or "How **heavy** is it?"

Examples From the Bible

From **childhood** you have known the sacred writings ... (2 Timothy 3:15a ULT)

The abstract noun "childhood" refers to when someone was a child.

But **godliness** with **contentment** is great **gain**. (1 Timothy 6:6 ULT)

The abstract nouns "godliness" and "contentment" refer to being godly and content. The abstract noun "gain" refers to something that benefits or helps someone.

Today **salvation** has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. (Luke 19:9 ULT)

The abstract noun "salvation" here refers to being saved.

The Lord does not move slowly concerning his promises, as some consider **slowness** to be (2 Peter 3:9a ULT)

The abstract noun "slowness" refers to the lack of speed with which something is done.

He will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the **purposes** of the heart. (1 Corinthians 4:5b ULT)

The abstract noun “purposes” refers to the things that people want to do and the reasons they want to do them.

Translation Strategies

If an abstract noun would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here is another option:

(1) Reword the sentence with a phrase that expresses the meaning of the abstract noun. Instead of a noun, the new phrase will use a verb, an adverb, or an adjective to express the idea of the abstract noun.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Reword the sentence with a phrase that expresses the meaning of the abstract noun. Instead of a noun, the new phrase will use a verb, an adverb, or an adjective to express the idea of the abstract noun. Alternative translations are indented below the Scripture example.

... from **childhood** you have known the sacred writings ... (2 Timothy 3:15a ULT)

Ever since **you were a child** you have known the sacred writings.

But **godliness** with **contentment** is great **gain**. (1 Timothy 6:6 ULT)

But **being godly** and **content** is very **beneficial**. But we **benefit** greatly when we **are godly** and **content**. But we **benefit** greatly when we **honor and obey God** and when we are **happy with what we have**.

Today **salvation** has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. (Luke 19:9 ULT)

Today the people in this house **have been saved** ... Today God **has saved** the people in this house ...

The Lord does not move slowly concerning his promises, as some consider **slowness** to be. (2 Peter 3:9a ULT)

The Lord does not move slowly concerning his promises, as some consider **moving slowly** to be.

He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the **purposes** of the heart. (1 Corinthians 4:5b ULT)

He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal **the things that people want to do and the reasons that they want to do them**.

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 2:1](#); [2:3](#); [2:10](#); [4:4](#); [5:9](#); [5:11](#); [5:17](#); [7:5](#); [7:25](#); [7:27](#); [9:10](#); [10:19](#); [11:9](#); [12:5](#))

Active or Passive

Some languages use both active and passive sentences. In active sentences, the subject does the action. In passive sentences, the subject is the one that receives the action. Here are some examples with their subjects bolded:

- Active: **My father** built the house in 2010.
- Passive: **The house** was built in 2010.

Translators whose languages do not use passive sentences will need to know how they can translate passive sentences that they find in the Bible. Other translators will need to decide when to use a passive sentence and when to use the active form.

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

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

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

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

Description

Some languages have both active and passive forms of sentences.

- In the active form, the subject does the action and is always mentioned.
- In the passive form, the action is done to the subject, and the one who does the action is not always mentioned.

In the examples of active and passive sentences below, we have bolded the subject.

- active: **My father** built the house in 2010.
- passive: **The house** was built by my father in 2010.
- passive: **The house** was built in 2010. (This does not tell who did the action.)

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

All languages use active forms. Some languages use passive forms, and some do not. Some languages use passive forms only for certain purposes, and the passive form is not used for the same purposes in all of the languages that use it.

Purposes for the Passive

- The speaker is talking about the person or thing the action was done to, not about the person who did the action.
- The speaker does not want to tell who did the action.
- The speaker does not know who did the action.

Translation Principles Regarding the Passive

- Translators whose language does not use passive forms will need to find another way to express the idea.
- Translators whose language has passive forms will need to understand why the passive is used in a particular sentence in the Bible and decide whether or not to use a passive form for that purpose in his translation of the sentence.

Examples From the Bible

Then their shooters shot at your soldiers from off the wall, and some of the king's servants **were killed**, and your servant Uriah the Hittite **was killed** too. (2 Samuel 11:24 ULT)

This means that the enemy's shooters shot and killed some of the king's servants, including Uriah. The point is what happened to the king's servants and Uriah, not who shot them. The purpose of the passive form here is to keep the focus on the king's servants and Uriah.

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

The men of the town saw what had happened to the altar of Baal, but they did not know who broke it down. The purpose of the passive form here is to communicate this event from the perspective of the men of the town.

It would be better for him if a millstone **were put** around his neck and he **were thrown** into the sea. (Luke 17:2a ULT)

This describes a situation in which a person ends up in the sea with a millstone around his neck. The purpose of the passive form here is to keep the focus on what happens to this person. Who does these things to the person is not important.

Translation Strategies

If your language would use a passive form for the same purpose as in the passage that you are translating, then use a passive form. If you decide that it is better to translate without a passive form, here are some strategies that you might consider.

- (1) Use the same verb in an active sentence and tell who or what did the action. If you do this, try to keep the focus on the person receiving the action.
- (2) Use the same verb in an active sentence, and do not tell who or what did the action. Instead, use a generic expression like "they" or "people" or "someone."
- (3) Use a different verb.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use the same verb in an active sentence and tell who did the action. If you do this, try to keep the focus on the person receiving the action.

A loaf of bread **was given** him every day from the street of the bakers. (Jeremiah 37:21b ULT)

The king's servants gave Jeremiah a loaf of bread every day from the street of the bakers.

- (2) Use the same verb in an active sentence, and do not tell who did the action. Instead, use a generic expression like "they" or "people" or "someone."

It would be better for him if a millstone **were put** around his neck and he **were thrown** into the sea. (Luke 17:2a ULT)

It would be better for him if **they were to put** a millstone around his neck and **throw** him into the sea.

It would be better for him if **someone were to put** a heavy stone around his neck and **throw** him into the sea.

- (3) Use a different verb in an active sentence.

A loaf of bread **was given** him every day from the street of the bakers. (Jeremiah 37:21 ULT)

He **received** a loaf of bread every day from the street of the bakers.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Abstract Nouns](#)

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

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:9](#); [1:10](#); [1:11](#); [1:14](#); [1:15](#); [2:6](#); [2:16](#); [2:17](#); [3:14](#); [4:12](#); [5:8](#); [5:13](#); [5:14](#); [6:3](#); [6:7](#); [6:10](#); [6:11](#); [7:21](#); [7:26](#); [8:1](#); [8:8](#); [8:9](#); [8:10](#); [8:11](#); [8:13](#); [8:14](#); [8:16](#); [8:17](#); [9:3](#); [9:5](#); [9:6](#); [9:8](#); [9:12](#); [9:15](#); [9:16](#); [9:17](#); [10:6](#); [10:9](#); [10:11](#); [10:15](#); [12:4](#); [12:6](#); [12:11](#); [12:13](#))

Apostrophe

Description

An apostrophe is a figure of speech in which a speaker turns his attention away from his listeners and speaks to someone or something that he knows cannot hear him. He does this to tell his listeners his message or feelings about that person or thing in a very strong way.

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

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Many languages do not use apostrophe, and readers could be confused by it. They may wonder who the speaker is talking to, or think that the speaker is crazy to talk to things or people who cannot hear.

Examples from the Bible

Mountains of Gilboa, let there not be dew or rain on you. (2 Samuel 1:21a ULT)

King Saul was killed on Mount Gilboa, and David sang a sad song about it. By telling these mountains that he wanted them to have no dew or rain, he showed how sad he was.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those sent to you. (Luke 13:34a ULT)

Jesus was expressing his feelings for the people of Jerusalem in front of his disciples and a group of Pharisees. By speaking directly to Jerusalem as though its people could hear him, Jesus showed how deeply he cared about them.

He cried against the altar by the word of Yahweh: “**Altar, altar!** This is what Yahweh says, ‘See, ... on you they will burn human bones.’” (1 Kings 13:2 ULT)

The man of God spoke as if the altar could hear him, but he really wanted the king, who was standing there, to hear him.

Translation Strategies

If apostrophe would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. But if this way of speaking would be confusing to your people, let the speaker continue speaking to the people that are listening to him as he tells **them** his message or feelings about the people or thing that cannot hear him. See the example below.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

He cried against the altar by the word of Yahweh: “**Altar, altar!** This is what Yahweh says, ‘See, ... on you they will burn human bones.’” (1 Kings 13:2 ULT)

He said this about the altar: “This is what Yahweh says **about this altar**. ‘See, ... they will burn people’s bones on **it**.’”

Mountains of Gilboa, let there not be dew or rain on **you**. (2 Samuel 1:21a ULT)

As for these mountains of Gilboa, let there not be dew or rain on **them**.

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 10:16; 10:17](#))

Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

Assumed knowledge is whatever a speaker assumes his audience knows before he speaks and gives them some kind of information. The speaker does not give the audience this information because he believes that they already know it.

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

When the speaker does give the audience information, he can do so in two ways. The speaker gives explicit information in what he states directly. Implicit Information is what the speaker does not state directly because he expects his audience to be able to learn it from other things he says.

Description

When someone speaks or writes, he has something specific that he wants people to know or do or think about. He normally states this directly. This is explicit information.

The speaker assumes that his audience already knows certain things that they will need to think about in order to understand this information. Normally he does not tell people these things, because they already know them. This is called assumed knowledge.

The speaker does not always directly state everything that he expects his audience to learn from what he says. Implicit information is information that he expects people to learn from what he says even though he does not state it directly.

Often, the audience understands this implicit information by combining what they already know (assumed knowledge) with the explicit information that the speaker tells them directly.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

All three kinds of information are part of the speaker's message. If one of these kinds of information is missing, then the audience will not understand the message. Because the target translation is in a language that is very different from the biblical languages and is made for an audience that lives in a very different time and place than the people in the Bible, many times the assumed knowledge or the implicit information is missing from the message. In other words, modern readers do not know everything that the original speakers and hearers in the Bible knew. When these things are important for understanding the message, it is helpful if you include this information in the text or in a footnote.

Examples From the Bible

Then a scribe came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus said to him, "Foxes **have holes**, and the birds of the sky **have nests**, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:19-20 ULT)

Jesus did not say what foxes and birds use holes and nests for, because he assumed that the scribe would have known that foxes sleep in holes in the ground and birds sleep in their nests. This is **assumed knowledge**.

Jesus did not directly say here "I am the Son of Man" but, if the scribe did not already know it, then that fact would be **implicit information** that he could learn because Jesus referred to himself that way. Also, Jesus did not state explicitly that he travelled a lot and did not have a house that he slept in every night. That is **implicit information** that the scribe could learn when Jesus said that he had nowhere to lay his head.

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the mighty deeds had been done in **Tyre and Sidon** which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But

I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the **day of judgment** than for you.
(Matthew 11:21-22 ULT)

Jesus assumed that the people he was speaking to knew that Tyre and Sidon were very wicked, and that the day of judgment is a time when God will judge every person. Jesus also knew that the people he was talking to believed that they were good and did not need to repent. Jesus did not need to tell them these things. This is all **assumed knowledge**.

An important piece of **implicit information** here is that the people he was speaking to would be judged more severely than the people of Tyre and Sidon would be judged **because** they did not repent.

Why do your disciples violate the traditions of the elders? For **they do not wash their hands when they eat bread**. (Matthew 15:2 ULT)

One of the traditions of the elders was a ceremony in which people would wash their hands in order to be ritually clean before eating. People thought that in order to be righteous, they had to follow all the traditions of the elders. This was **assumed knowledge** that the Pharisees who were speaking to Jesus expected him to know. By saying this, they were accusing his disciples of not following the traditions, and thus not being righteous. This is **implicit information** that they wanted him to understand from what they said.

Translation Strategies

If readers have enough assumed knowledge to be able to understand the message, along with any important implicit information that goes with the explicit information, then it is good to leave that knowledge unstated and leave the implicit information implicit. If the readers do not understand the message because one of these is missing for them, then follow these strategies:

(1) If readers cannot understand the message because they do not have certain assumed knowledge, then provide that knowledge as explicit information.

(2) If readers cannot understand the message because they do not know certain implicit information, then state that information clearly, but try to do it in a way that does not imply that the information was new to the original audience.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If readers cannot understand the message because they do not have certain assumed knowledge, then provide that knowledge as explicit information.

Jesus said to him, "Foxes **have holes**, and the birds of the sky **have nests**, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:20 ULT)

The assumed knowledge was that the foxes slept in their holes and birds slept in their nests.

Jesus said to him, "Foxes **have holes to live in**, and the birds of the sky **have nests to live in**, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head and sleep."

It will be more tolerable for **Tyre and Sidon** at the day of judgment than for you (Matthew 11:22 ULT)

The assumed knowledge was that the people of Tyre and Sidon were very, very wicked. This can be stated explicitly.
>

At the day of judgment, it will be more tolerable for **those cities of Tyre and Sidon, whose people were very wicked**, than it will be for you. or At

the day of judgment, It will be more tolerable for those **wicked cities, Tyre and Sidon**, than for you.

Why do your disciples violate the traditions of the elders? For **they do not wash their hands** when they eat bread. (Matthew 15:2 ULT)

The assumed knowledge was that one of the traditions of the elders was a ceremony in which people would wash their hands in order to be ritually clean before eating, which they must do to be righteous. It was not to remove germs from their hands to avoid sickness, as a modern reader might think.

Why do your disciples violate the traditions of the elders? For **they do not go through the ceremonial handwashing ritual of righteousness** when they eat bread.

(2) If readers cannot understand the message because they do not know certain implicit information, then state that information clearly, but try to do it in a way that does not imply that the information was new to the original audience.

Then a scribe came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:19-20 ULT)

The implicit information is that Jesus himself is the Son of Man. Other implicit information is that if the scribe wanted to follow Jesus, then, like Jesus, he would have to live without a house.

Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but **I, the Son of Man**, have **no home to rest in. If you want to follow me, you will live as I live.**"

It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you (Matthew 11:22 ULT)

The implicit information is that God would not only judge the people; he would punish them. This can be made explicit.

At the day of judgment, God will **punish Tyre and Sidon**, cities whose people were very wicked, **less severely than he will punish you.**
or:

At the day of judgment, God will **punish you more severely** than Tyre and Sidon, cities whose people were very wicked.

Modern readers may not know some of the things that the people in the Bible and the people who first read it knew. This can make it hard for them to understand what a speaker or writer says, and to learn things that the speaker left implicit. Translators may need to state some things explicitly in the translation that the original speaker or writer left unstated or implicit.

Next we recommend you learn about:

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

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1 General Notes](#); [1:13](#); [Notes](#); [2:3](#); [2:8](#); [2:9](#); [3:20](#); [4:3](#); [4:8](#); [4:11](#); [4:14](#); [5:4](#); [5:16](#); [Notes](#); [6:3](#); [6:6](#); [7:23](#); [9:9](#); [10:3](#); [10:8](#); [10:16](#); [10:17](#); [10:18](#); [11:2](#); [Notes](#); [12:4](#))

Direct and Indirect Quotations

Description

There are two kinds of quotations: direct quotations and indirect quotations.

A direct quotation occurs when someone reports what another person said from the viewpoint of that original speaker. People usually expect that this kind of quotation will represent the original speaker's exact words. In the example below, John would have said "I" when referring to himself, so the narrator, who is reporting John's words, uses the word "I" in the quotation to refer to John. To show that these are John's exact words, many languages put the words between quotation marks: "".

- John said, "I do not know at what time I will arrive."

An indirect quotation occurs when a speaker reports what someone else said, but in this case, the speaker is reporting it from his own point of view instead and not from the original person's point of view. This kind of quotation usually contains changes in pronouns, and it often includes changes in time, in word choices, and in length. In the example below, the narrator refers to John as "he" in the quotation and uses the word "would" to replace the future tense, indicated by "will."

- John said that **he** did not know at what time **he** would arrive.

This page answers the question: *What are direct and indirect quotations?*

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

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

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

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/writing-quotations\]\]](#)

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: [Ecclesiastes 2:2](#))

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:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-parts-of-speech\]\]](#)

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

Description

Negative words are words that have in them the meaning “not.” Examples in English are “no,” “not,” “none,” “no one,” “nothing,” “nowhere,” “never,” “nor,” “neither,” and “without.” Also, some words have prefixes or suffixes that mean “not,” such as the bolded parts of these words: “**un**happy,” “**im**possible,” and “**useless**.” Some other kinds of words also have a negative meaning, such as “lack” or “reject,” or even “fight” or “evil.”

A double negative occurs when a clause has two words that each have a negative meaning.

We did this **not** because we have **no** authority ... (2 Thessalonians 3:9a ULT)

And this was **not** done **without** an oath! (Hebrews 7:20a ULT)

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Double negatives mean very different things in different languages.

- In some languages, such as English, a second negative in a clause cancels the first one, creating a positive sentence. So, “He is not unintelligent” means “He is intelligent.”
- In some languages, such as French and Spanish, two negative words in a clause do not cancel each other to become a positive. The Spanish sentence, “No vi a nadie,” literally says “I did not see no one.” It has both the word ‘no’ next to the verb and ‘nadie,’ which means “no one.” The two negatives are seen as in agreement with each other, and the sentence means, “I did not see anyone.”
- In some languages, a double negative creates a stronger negative statement.
- In some languages, a double negative creates a positive sentence, but it is a weak statement. So, “He is not unintelligent” means, “He is somewhat intelligent.”
- In some languages, including the languages of the Bible, a double negative can produce a stronger positive meaning than a simple positive statement. So, “He is not unintelligent” can mean “He is very intelligent.” In this case, the double negative is actually the figure of speech called [litotes](#).

Biblical Greek can do all of the above. So to translate sentences with double negatives accurately and clearly in your language, you need to know what each double negative means in the Bible and how to express the same idea in your language.

Examples From the Bible

The Greek of John 15:5 says:

χωρὶς ἐμοῦ οὐ δύνασθε ποιεῖν οὐδέν

Without me **not** you can do **nothing**

We cannot reproduce this double negative in the English ULT because in English, a second negative in a clause cancels the first one. In English, and perhaps in your language, we need to choose only one of the negatives and say either:

Without me, you can do **nothing**.

or:

Without me, you **cannot** do anything.

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

This means "in order to be fruitful."

A prophet is **not without** honor (Mark 6:4 ULT)

This means "a prophet is honored."

I do **not** want you to be **ignorant**. (1 Corinthians 12:1)

This means "I want you to be knowledgeable."

Translation Strategies

If the way that the double negative is used in the Bible is natural and has the same meaning as in your language, consider using it in the same way. Otherwise, you could consider these strategies:

- (1) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a positive statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove the two negatives so that it is positive.
- (2) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a negative statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove one of the two negatives.
- (3) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a stronger negative statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove one of the two negatives and add a strengthening word.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a positive statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove the two negatives so that it is positive.

For we do **not** have a high priest who **cannot** feel sympathy for our weaknesses. (Hebrews 4:15a ULT)

"For we have a high priest who can feel sympathy for our weaknesses."

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

"... so that they may be fruitful."

- (2) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a negative statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove one of the two negatives.

χωρὶς ἐμοῦ οὐ δύνασθε ποιεῖν οὐδέν

Without me **not** you can do **nothing** (John 15:5)

Without me, you can do **nothing**.

or:

Without me, you **cannot** do anything.

(3) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a stronger negative statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove one of the two negatives and add a strengthening word.

...ἰῶτα ἓν ἢ μία κεραία **οὐ μὴ** παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου (Matthew 5:18)

...iota one or one serif **not not** may pass away from the law

...**not even** one iota or one serif may pass away from the law

or:

...**certainly no** iota or serif may pass away from the law

Next we recommend you learn about:

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

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 6:2](#))

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: [Ecclesiastes 1:13](#); [1:17](#); [2:5](#); [2:12](#); [2:23](#); [3:17](#); [5:8](#); [5:18](#); [5:19](#); [6:2](#); [7:26](#); [11:6](#))

Ellipsis

Description

An ellipsis¹ occurs when a speaker or writer leaves out one or more words that normally should be in the sentence. The speaker or writer does this because he knows that the hearer or reader will understand the meaning of the sentence and supply the words in his mind when he hears or reads the words that are there. For example:

So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, **nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.**
(Psalm 1:5 ULT)

There is ellipsis in the second part because “nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous” is not a complete sentence. The speaker assumes that the hearer will understand what it is that sinners will not do in the assembly of the righteous by filling in the action from the previous clause. With the action filled in, the complete sentence would read:

So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor **will** sinners **stand** in the assembly of the righteous.

[¹] English has a punctuation symbol which is also called an ellipsis. It is a series of three dots (...) used to indicate an intentional omission of a word, phrase, sentence or more from text without altering its original meaning. This translationAcademy article is not about the punctuation mark, but about the concept of omission of words that normally should be in the sentence.

Two Types of Ellipsis

A Relative Ellipsis happens when the reader has to supply the omitted word or words from the context. Usually the word is in the previous sentence, as in the example above.

An Absolute Ellipsis happens when the omitted word or words are not in the context, but the phrases are common enough in the language that the reader is expected to supply what is missing from this common usage or from the nature of the situation.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Readers who see incomplete sentences or phrases may not know that there is information missing that the writer expects them to fill in. Or readers may understand that there is information missing, but they may not know what information is missing because they do not know the original biblical language, culture, or situation as the original readers did. In this case, they may fill in the wrong information. Or readers may misunderstand the ellipsis if they do not use ellipsis in the same way in their language.

Examples From the Bible

Relative Ellipsis

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf **and Sirion like a young ox.** (Psalm 29:6 ULT)

The writer wants his words to be few and to make good poetry. The full sentence with the information filled in would be:

This page answers the question: *What is ellipsis ?*

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

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

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

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf and **he makes** Sirion **skip** like a young ox.

Watch carefully, therefore, how you walk—**not as unwise but as wise**. (Ephesians 5:15b ULT)

The information that the reader must understand in the second parts of these sentences can be filled in from the first parts:

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

Absolute Ellipsis

Then when he had come near, he asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And so he said, “Lord, **that I might recover my sight**.” (Luke 18:40b-41 ULT)

It seems that the man answered in an incomplete sentence because he wanted to be polite and not directly ask Jesus for healing. He knew that Jesus would understand that the only way he could receive his sight would be for Jesus to heal him. The complete sentence would be:

“Lord, **I want you to heal me so** that I might receive my sight.”

To Titus, a true son in our common faith. Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. (Titus 1:4 ULT)

The writer assumes that the reader will recognize this common form of a blessing or wish, so he does not need to include the full sentence, which would be:

To Titus, a true son in our common faith. **May you receive** grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Translation Strategies

If ellipsis would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here is another option:

(1) Add the missing words to the incomplete phrase or sentence.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Add the missing words to the incomplete phrase or sentence.

So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor **sinner in the assembly** of the righteous. (Psalm 1:5 ULT)

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

Then when he had come near, he asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And so he said, “Lord, **that I might recover my sight**.” (Luke 18:40b-41 ULT)

Then when the man was near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, **I want you to heal me** that I might receive my sight.”

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf **and Sirion like a young ox**. (Psalm 29:6 ULT)

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and **he makes** Sirion **skip** like a young ox.

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:11](#); [2:7](#); [4:6](#); [4:11](#); [9:2](#); [11:6](#))

Euphemism

Description

A euphemism is a mild or polite way of referring to something that is unpleasant, embarrassing, or socially unacceptable, such as death or activities usually done in private.

This page answers the question: *What is a euphemism?*

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

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

... they found Saul and his sons **fallen** on Mount Gilboa.
(1 Chronicles 10:8b ULT)

This means that Saul and his sons “were dead.” It is a euphemism because the important thing was not that Saul and his sons had fallen but that they were dead. Sometimes people do not like to speak directly about death because it is unpleasant.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages use different euphemisms. If the target language does not use the same euphemism as in the source language, readers may not understand what it means and they may think that the writer means only what the words literally say.

Examples From the Bible

... where there was a cave. Saul went inside to **cover his feet**. (1 Samuel 24:3b ULT)

The original hearers would have understood that Saul went into the cave to use it as a toilet, but the writer wanted to avoid offending or distracting them, so **he did not say specifically** what Saul did or what he left in the cave.

But Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I have not **known a man?**” (Luke 1:34 ULT)

In order **to be polite**, Mary uses a euphemism to say that she has never had sexual intercourse with a man.

Translation Strategies

If euphemism would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are other options:

- (1) Use a euphemism from your own culture.
- (2) State the information plainly without a euphemism if it would not be offensive.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use a euphemism from your own culture.

... where there was a cave. Saul went inside to **cover his feet**. (1 Samuel 24:3b ULT) — Some languages might use euphemisms like these:

“... where there was a cave. Saul went into the cave to **dig a hole**”

“... where there was a cave. Saul went into the cave to **have some time alone**”

But Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I have not **known a man?**” (Luke 1:34 ULT)

But Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I have not **slept with a man?**"

(2) State the information plainly without a euphemism if it would not be offensive.

They found Saul and his sons **fallen** on Mount Gilboa. (1 Chronicles 10:8b ULT)

"They found Saul and his sons **dead** on Mount Gilboa."

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 5:15](#); [6:12](#); [9:12](#); [11:8](#); [12:5](#))

Hyperbole

Description

A speaker or writer can use exactly the same words to say something that he means as completely true, or as generally true, or as a hyperbole. This is why it can be hard to decide how to understand a statement. For example, the sentence below could mean three different things.

It rains here every night.

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

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

The speaker means this as a **hyperbole** if he wants to say that it rains more than it actually does, usually in order to express a strong attitude toward the amount or frequency of rain, such as being annoyed or being happy about it.

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

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

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

Hyperbole

In hyperbole, a figure of speech that uses exaggeration, a speaker deliberately describes something with an extreme or even unreal statement, usually to show his strong feeling or opinion about it. He expects people to understand that he is exaggerating.

They will not leave **stone upon stone in you**. (Luke 19:44b ULT)

This is an exaggeration. It means that the enemies will completely destroy Jerusalem.

Moses was educated in **all the wisdom of the Egyptians**. (Acts 7:22a ULT)

This hyperbole means that he had learned everything an Egyptian education could offer.

Generalization

This is a statement that is true most of the time or in most situations that it could apply to.

The one who ignores instruction **will have poverty and shame**, but **honor will come** to him who learns from correction. (Proverbs 13:18)

These generalizations tell about what normally happens to people who ignore instruction and what normally happens to people who learn from correction. There may be some exceptions to these statements, but they are generally true.

And when you pray, do not make useless repetitions as **the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words**. (Matthew 6:7)

This generalization tells about what Gentiles were known for doing. Many Gentiles did this. It does not matter if a few did not. The point was that the hearers should not join in this well-known practice.

Even though a hyperbole or a generalization may have a strong-sounding word like "all," "always," "none," or "never," it does not necessarily mean **exactly** "all," "always," "none," or "never." It simply means "most," "most of the time," "hardly any," or "rarely."

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

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

If readers realize that a statement is not literally true, they need to be able to understand whether it is a hyperbole, a generalization, or a lie. (Though the Bible is completely true, it tells about people who did not always tell the truth.)

Examples From the Bible

Examples of Hyperbole

If your hand causes you to stumble, **cut it off**. It is better for you to enter into life maimed ... (Mark 9:43a ULT)

When Jesus said to cut off your hand, he meant that we should **do whatever extreme things** we need to do in order not to sin. He used this hyperbole to show how extremely important it is to try to stop sinning.

The Philistines gathered together to fight against Israel with 3,000 chariots, 6,000 men to drive the chariots, and troops **as numerous as the sand on the seashore**. (1 Samuel 13:5a ULT)

The bolded phrase is an exaggeration for the purpose of expressing the emotion that the Philistine army was overwhelming in number. It means that there were **many, many** soldiers in the Philistine army.

But as his anointing teaches you **everything** and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, remain in him. (1 John 2:27b ULT)

This is a hyperbole. It expresses the assurance that God's Spirit teaches us about **all things that we need to know**. God's Spirit does not teach us about everything that it is possible to know.

When they found him, they also said to him, "**Everyone** is looking for you." (Mark 1:37 ULT)

The disciples probably did not mean that everyone in the city was looking for Jesus, but that **many people** were looking for him, or that all of Jesus' closest friends there were looking for him. This is an exaggeration for the purpose of expressing the emotion that they and many others were worried about him.

Examples of Generalization

Can **any good thing** come out of Nazareth? (John 1:46b ULT)

This rhetorical question is meant to express the generalization that there is nothing good in Nazareth. The people there had a reputation for being uneducated and not strictly religious. Of course, there were exceptions.

One of them, of their own prophets, has said, "**Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy bellies**." (Titus 1:12 ULT)

This is a generalization that means that Cretans had a reputation to be like this because, in general, this is how Cretans behaved. It is possible that there were exceptions.

A lazy hand causes a person to be poor, but the hand of the diligent person gains riches. (Proverbs 10:4 ULT)

This is generally true, and it reflects the experience of most people. It is possible that there are exceptions in some circumstances.

Caution

- Do not assume that something is an exaggeration just because it seems to be impossible. God does miraculous things.

They saw Jesus **walking on the sea** and coming near the boat. (John 6:19b ULT)

This is not hyperbole. Jesus really walked on the water. It is a literal statement.

- Do not assume that the word “all” is always a generalization that means “most.”

> Yahweh is righteous in **all** his ways
> and gracious in **all** he does. (Psalms 145:17 ULT)

Yahweh is always righteous. This is a completely true statement.

Translation Strategies

If the hyperbole or generalization would be natural and people would understand it and not think that it is a lie, consider using it. If not, here are other options.

- (1) Express the meaning without the exaggeration.
- (2) For a generalization, show that it is a generalization by using a phrase like “in general” or “in most cases.”
- (3) For a hyperbole or a generalization, add a word like “many” or “almost” to show that the hyperbole or generalization is not meant to be exact.
- (4) For a hyperbole or a generalization that has a word like “all,” “always,” “none,” or “never,” consider deleting that word.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Express the meaning without the exaggeration.

The Philistines gathered together to fight against Israel: 3,000 chariots, 6,000 men to drive the chariots, and troops **as numerous as the sand on the seashore**. (1 Samuel 13:5a ULT)

The Philistines gathered together to fight against Israel: 3,000 chariots, 6,000 men to drive the chariots, and **a great number of troops**.

- (2) For a generalization, show that it is a generalization by using a phrase like “in general” or “in most cases.”

The one who ignores instruction will have poverty and shame. (Proverbs 13:18a ULT)

In general, the one who ignores instruction will have poverty and shame

When you pray, do not make useless repetitions as the **Gentiles do**, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. (Matthew 6:7 ULT)

And when you pray, do not make useless repetitions as the Gentiles **generally** do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.

- (3) For a hyperbole or a generalization, add a word like “many” or “almost” to show that the hyperbole or generalization is not meant to be exact.

The **whole** country of Judea and **all** the people of Jerusalem went out to him. (Mark 1:5a ULT)

Almost all the country of Judea and **almost all** the people of Jerusalem went out to him.
or:

Many of the country of Judea and **many** of the people of Jerusalem went out to him.

(4) For a hyperbole or a generalization that has a word like “all,” “always,” “none,” or “never,” consider deleting that word.

The **whole** country of Judea and **all** the people of Jerusalem went out to him. (Mark 1:5a ULT)

The country of Judea and the people of Jerusalem went out to him.

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 4:16](#); [6:3](#); [6:6](#))

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: [Ecclesiastes 6:3](#); [6:6](#))

Idiom

An idiom is a figure of speech made up of a group of words that, as a whole, has a meaning that is different from what one would understand from the meanings of the individual words. Someone from outside of the culture usually cannot understand an idiom without someone inside the culture explaining its true meaning. Every language uses idioms. Some English examples are:

- You are pulling my leg. (This means, “You are teasing me by telling me something that is not true.”)
- Do not push the envelope. (This means, “Do not take a matter to its extreme.”)
- This house is under water. (This means, “The debt owed for this house is greater than its actual value.”)
- We are painting the town red. (This means, “We are going around town tonight celebrating very intensely.”)

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

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

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

Description

An idiom is a phrase that has a special meaning to the people of the language or culture who use it. Its meaning is different than what a person would understand from the meanings of the individual words that form the phrase.

He **set his face** to go to Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51b ULT)

The words “set his face” is an idiom that means “decided.”

Sometimes people may be able to understand an idiom from another culture, but it might sound like a strange way to express the meaning.

I am not worthy that you would **come under my roof**. (Luke 7:6b ULT)

The phrase “come under my roof” is an idiom that means “enter my house.”

Put these words **into your ears**. (Luke 9:44a ULT)

This idiom means “Listen carefully and remember what I say.”

Purpose: An idiom is probably created in a culture somewhat by accident when someone describes something in an unusual way. But, when that unusual way communicates the message powerfully and people understand it clearly, other people start to use it. After a while, it becomes a normal way of talking in that language.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- People can easily misunderstand idioms in the original languages of the Bible if they do not know the cultures that produced the Bible.
- People can easily misunderstand idioms that are in the source language Bibles if they do not know the cultures that made those translations.
- It is useless to translate idioms literally (according to the meaning of each word) when the target language audience will not understand what they mean.

Examples From the Bible

Then all Israel came to David at Hebron and said, “Look, we are your **flesh and bone**.” (1 Chronicles 11:1 ULT)

This means, “We and you belong to the same race, the same family.”

■ The children of Israel went out **with a high hand**. (Exodus 14:8b ASV)

This means, "The Israelites went out defiantly."

■ the one who **lifts up my head** (Psalm 3:3b ULT)

This means, "the one who helps me."

Translation Strategies

If the idiom would be clearly understood in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other options.

- (1) Translate the meaning plainly without using an idiom.
- (2) Use a different idiom that people use in your own language that has the same meaning.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Translate the meaning plainly without using an idiom.

■ Then all Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Look, we are your **flesh and bone**." (1 Chronicles 11:1 ULT)

■ Look, we all **belong to the same nation**.

■ Then he **set his face** to go to Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51b ULT)

■ He started to travel to Jerusalem, **determined to reach it**.

■ I am not worthy that you would come **under my roof**. (Luke 7:6b ULT)

■ I am not worthy that you should enter **my house**.

- (2) Use an idiom that people use in your own language that has the same meaning.

■ Put these words **into your ears**. (Luke 9:44a ULT)

■ **Be all ears** when I say these words to you.

■ My **eyes grow dim** from grief. (Psalm 6:7a ULT)

■ I am crying my **eyes out**

(Go back to: Ecclesiastes 1:3; 1:9; 1:14; 2:9; 2:11; 2:14; 2:17; 2:19; 2:22; 2:23; 3:1; 3:16; 4:1; 4:3; 4:7; 4:15; 5:8; 5:13; 5:18; 5:20; 6:4; 6:12; 7:2; 7:3; 7:11; 7:14; 7:24; 7:25; 7:27; 8:1; 8:8; 8:9; 8:12; 8:15; 8:17; 9:3; 9:6; 9:9; 9:11; 9:12; 9:13; 9:15; 10:2; 10:5; 10:6; 10:14; 11:2; 12:1; 12:6)

Irony

Description

Irony is a figure of speech in which the sense that the speaker intends to communicate is actually the opposite of the literal meaning of the words. Sometimes a person does this by using someone else's words, but in a way that communicates that he does not agree with them. People do this to emphasize how different something is from what it should be, or how someone else's belief about something is wrong or foolish. It is often humorous.

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

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

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

Then Jesus answered and said to them, "People who are well do not have need of a physician, but those who have sickness. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."
(Luke 5:31-32 ULT)

When Jesus spoke of "righteous people," he was not referring to people who were truly righteous, but to people who wrongly believed that they were righteous. By using irony, Jesus communicated that they were wrong to think that they were better than others and did not need to repent.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

If someone does not realize that a speaker is using irony, he will think that the speaker actually believes what he is saying. He will understand the passage to mean the opposite of what it was intended to mean.

Examples From the Bible

How well you reject the commandment of God so that you may keep your tradition! (Mark 7:9b ULT)

Here Jesus praises the Pharisees for doing something that is obviously wrong. Through irony, he communicates the opposite of praise: He communicates that the Pharisees, who take great pride in keeping the commandments, are so far from God that they do not even recognize that their traditions are breaking God's commandments. The use of irony makes the Pharisee's sin more obvious and startling.

"Present your case," says Yahweh; "present your best arguments for your idols," says the King of Jacob. **"Let them bring us their own arguments; have them come forward and declare to us what will happen, so we may know these things well. Have them tell us of earlier predictive declarations, so we can reflect on them and know how they were fulfilled."** (Isaiah 41:21-22 ULT)

People worshiped idols as if their idols had knowledge or power, and Yahweh was angry at them for doing that. So he used irony and challenged their idols to tell what would happen in the future. He knew that the idols could not do this, but by speaking as if they could, he mocked the idols, making their inability more obvious, and rebuked the people for worshiping them.

Can you lead light and darkness to their places of work?
Can you find the way back to their houses for them?
Undoubtedly you know, for you were born then; "the number of your days is so large!" (Job 38:20-21 ULT)

Job thought that he was wise. Yahweh used irony to show Job that he was not so wise. The two phrases in bold above are irony. They emphasize the opposite of what they say, because they are so obviously false. They

emphasize that Job could not possibly answer God's questions about the creation of light because Job was not born until many, many years later.

Already you are satisfied! Already you have become rich! **You began to reign** apart from us, and I wish you really did reign, so that we also might reign with you. (1 Corinthians 4:8 ULT)

The Corinthians considered themselves to be very wise, self-sufficient, and not in need of any instruction from the Apostle Paul. Paul used irony, speaking as if he agreed with them, to show how proudly they were acting and how far from being wise they really were.

Translation Strategies

If the irony would be understood correctly in your language, translate it as it is stated. If not, here are some other strategies.

(1) Translate it in a way that shows that the speaker is saying what someone else believes.

(2) The irony is **not** found in the literal words of the speaker, but instead the true meaning is found in the opposite of the literal meaning of the speaker's words.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Translate it in a way that shows that the speaker is saying what someone else believes.

How well you reject the commandment of God so that you may keep your tradition! (Mark 7:9a ULT)

You think that you are doing well when you reject God's commandment so you may keep your tradition!

You act like it is good to reject God's commandment so you may keep your tradition!

I did not come to call **the righteous**, but sinners to repentance. (Luke 5:32 ULT)

I did not come to call **people who think that they are righteous** to repentance, but to call sinners to repentance.

(2) Translate the actual, intended meaning of the statement of irony.

How well you reject the commandment of God so that you may keep your tradition! (Mark 7:9a ULT)

You are doing a terrible thing when you reject the commandment of God so you may keep your tradition!

"Present your case," says Yahweh; "present your best arguments for your idols," says the King of Jacob. **"Let them bring us their own arguments; have them come forward and declare to us what will happen, so we may know these things well. Have them tell us of earlier predictive declarations, so we can reflect on them and know how they were fulfilled."** (Isaiah 41:21-22 ULT)

'Present your case,' says Yahweh; 'present your best arguments for your idols,' says the King of Jacob. Your idols **cannot bring us their own arguments or come forward to declare to us what will happen** so we may know these things well. We cannot hear them because **they cannot speak** to tell us their earlier predictive declarations, so we cannot reflect on them and know how they were fulfilled.

Can you lead light and darkness to their places of work?

Can you find the way back to their houses for them?

**Undoubtedly you know, for you were born then;
the number of your days is so large!** (Job 38:20-21 ULT)

Can you lead light and darkness to their places of work? Can you find the way back to their houses for them? **You act like you know how light and darkness were created, as if you were there; as if you are as old as creation, but you are not!**

Next we recommend you learn about:

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

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 4 General Notes; 7:10](#))

Merism

Definition

Merism is a figure of speech in which a person refers to something by speaking of two extreme parts of it. By referring to the extreme parts, the speaker intends to include also everything in between those parts.

This page answers the question: *What does the word merism mean and how can I translate phrases that have it?*

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

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

"I am **the alpha and the omega**," says the Lord God,
"the one who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." (Revelation 1:8 ULT)

I am **the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end**.
(Revelation 22:13, ULT)

Alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. This is a merism that includes everything from the beginning to the end. It means eternal.

... I praise you, Father, Lord of **heaven and earth** ..., (Matthew 11:25b ULT)

Heaven and earth is a merism that includes everything that exists.

Reason This is a Translation Issue

Some languages do not use merism. The readers of those languages may think that the phrase only applies to the items mentioned. They may not realize that it refers to those two things and everything in between.

Examples From the Bible

From the rising of the sun to its setting, Yahweh's name should be praised. (Psalm 113:3 ULT)

This bolded phrase is a merism because it speaks of the east and the west and everywhere in between. It means "everywhere."

He will bless those who honor him, both **young and old**. (Psalm 115:13)

The bolded phrase is merism because it speaks of old people and young people and everyone in between. It means "everyone."

Translation Strategies

If the merism would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are other options:

- (1) Identify what the merism refers to without mentioning the parts.
- (2) Identify what the merism refers to and include the parts.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Identify what the merism refers to without mentioning the parts.

I praise you, Father, Lord of **heaven and earth**. (Matthew 11:25b ULT)

I praise you, Father, Lord of **everything**.

From the rising of the sun to its setting, Yahweh's name should be praised. (Psalm 113:3 ULT)

In all places, people should praise Yahweh's name.

(2) Identify what the merism refers to and include the parts.

I praise you, Father, Lord of **heaven and earth**. (Matthew 11:25b ULT)

I praise you, Father, Lord of **everything, including both what is in heaven and what is on earth**.

He will bless those who honor him, both **young and old**. (Psalm 115:13 ULT)

He will bless **all those** who honor him, regardless of whether they are **young or old**.

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 3:1](#); [3:8](#); [3:11](#); [9:2](#); [11:3](#))

Metaphor

Description

A metaphor is a figure of speech in which someone speaks of one thing as if it were a different thing because he wants people to think about how those two things are alike.

For example, someone might say, “The girl I love is a red rose.”

A girl and a rose are very different things, but the speaker considers that they are alike in some way. The hearer’s task is to understand in what way they are alike.

This page answers the question: *What is a metaphor and how can I translate a Bible passage that has one?*

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

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

[Simile](#)

The Parts of a Metaphor

The example above shows us that a metaphor has three parts. In this metaphor, the speaker is talking about “the girl I love.” This is the **Topic**. The speaker wants the hearer to think about what is similar between her and “a red rose.” The red rose is the **Image** to which he compares the girl. Most probably, he wants the hearer to consider that they are both beautiful. This is the **Idea** that the girl and the rose both share, and so we may also call it the **Point of Comparison**.

Every metaphor has three parts:

- The **Topic**, the item being immediately discussed by the writer/speaker.
- The **Image**, the physical item (object, event, action, etc.) which the speaker uses to describe the topic.
- The **Idea**, the abstract concept or quality that the physical **Image** brings to the mind of the hearer when he thinks of how the **Image** and the **Topic** are similar. Often, the **Idea** of a metaphor is not explicitly stated in the Bible, but it is only implied from the context. The hearer or reader usually needs to think of the **Idea** himself.

Using these terms, we can say that a metaphor is a figure of speech that uses a physical **Image** to apply an abstract **Idea** to the speaker’s **Topic**.

Usually, a writer or speaker uses a metaphor in order to express something about a **Topic**, with at least one **Point of Comparison (Idea)** between the **Topic** and the **Image**. Often in metaphors, the **Topic** and the **Image** are explicitly stated, but the **Idea** is only implied. The writer/speaker often uses a metaphor in order to invite the readers/listeners to think about the similarity between the **Topic** and the **Image** and to figure out for themselves the **Idea** that is being communicated.

Speakers often use metaphors in order to strengthen their message, to make their language more vivid, to express their feelings better, to say something that is hard to say in any other way, or to help people remember their message.

Sometimes speakers use metaphors that are very common in their language. However, sometimes speakers use metaphors that are uncommon, and even some metaphors that are unique. When a metaphor has become very common in a language, often it becomes a “passive” metaphor, in contrast to uncommon metaphors, which we describe as being “active.” Passive metaphors and active metaphors each present a different kind of translation problem, which we will discuss below.

Passive Metaphors

A passive metaphor is a metaphor that has been used so much in the language that its speakers no longer regard it as one concept standing for another. Linguists often call these “dead metaphors.” Passive metaphors are extremely common. Examples in English include the terms “table **leg**,” “family **tree**,” “book **leaf**” (meaning a page in

a book), or the word “crane” (meaning a large machine for lifting heavy loads). English speakers simply think of these words as having more than one meaning. Examples of passive metaphors in Biblical Hebrew include using the word “hand” to represent “power,” using the word “face” to represent “presence,” and speaking of emotions or moral qualities as if they were “clothing.”

Patterned Pairs of Concepts Acting as Metaphors

Many ways of metaphorical speaking depend on pairs of concepts, where one underlying concept frequently stands for a different underlying concept. For example, in English, the direction “up” (the Image) often represents the concepts of “more” or “better” (the Idea). Because of this pair of underlying concepts, we can make sentences such as “The price of gasoline is going **up**,” “A **highly** intelligent man,” and also the opposite kind of idea: “The temperature is going **down**,” and “I am feeling very **low**.”

Patterned pairs of concepts are constantly used for metaphorical purposes in the world’s languages because they serve as convenient ways to organize thought. In general, people like to speak of abstract qualities (such as power, presence, emotions, and moral qualities) as if they were body parts, or as if they were objects that could be seen or held, or as if they were events that could be watched as they happened.

When these metaphors are used in normal ways, it is rare that the speaker and audience regard them as figurative speech. Examples of metaphors in English that go unrecognized are:

- “Turn the heat **up**.” More is spoken of as up.
- “Let us **go ahead** with our debate.” Doing what was planned is spoken of as walking or advancing.
- “You **defend** your theory well.” Argument is spoken of as war.
- “A **flow** of words.” Words are spoken of as liquids.

English speakers do not view these as metaphorical expressions or figures of speech, so it would be wrong to translate them into other languages in a way that would lead people to pay special attention to them as figurative speech. For a description of important patterns of this kind of metaphor in biblical languages, please see Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns and the pages it will direct you to.

When translating something that is a passive metaphor into another language, do not treat it as a metaphor. Instead, just use the best expression for that thing or concept in the target language.

Active Metaphors

These are metaphors that people recognize as one concept standing for another concept, or one thing for another thing. Metaphors make people think about how the one thing is like the other thing, because in most ways the two things are very different. People also easily recognize these metaphors as giving strength and unusual qualities to the message. For this reason, people pay attention to these metaphors. For example,

But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.
(Malachi 4:2a ULT)

Here, God speaks about his salvation as if it were the sun rising in order to shine its rays on the people whom he loves. He also speaks of the sun’s rays as if they were wings. Also, he speaks of these wings as if they were bringing medicine that would heal his people. Here is another example:

And he said to them, “Go and tell that fox ...” (Luke 13:32a ULT)

Here, “that fox” refers to King Herod. The people listening to Jesus certainly understood that Jesus was intending for them to apply certain characteristics of a fox to Herod. They probably understood that Jesus intended to communicate that Herod was evil, either in a cunning way or as someone who was destructive, murderous, or who took things that did not belong to him, or all of these.

Active metaphors require the translator's special care to make a correct translation. To do so, you need to understand the parts of a metaphor and how they work together to produce meaning.

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me will not be hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." (John 6:35 ULT)

In this metaphor, Jesus called himself the bread of life. The **Topic** is "I" (meaning Jesus himself) and the **Image** is "bread." Bread was the primary food that people ate in that place and time. The similarity between bread and Jesus is that people need both to live. Just as people need to eat food in order to have physical life, people need to trust in Jesus in order to have eternal life. The **Idea** of the metaphor is "life." In this case, Jesus stated the central Idea of the metaphor, but often the Idea is only implied.

Purposes of Metaphor

- One purpose of metaphor is to teach people about something that they do not know (the **Topic**) by showing that it is like something that they already do know (the **Image**).
- Another purpose is to emphasize that something (the **Topic**) has a particular quality (the **Idea**) or to show that it has that quality in an extreme way.
- Another purpose is to lead people to feel the same way about the **Topic** as they would feel about the **Image**.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- People may not recognize that something is a metaphor. In other words, they may mistake a metaphor for a literal statement, and thus, misunderstand it.
- People may not be familiar with the thing that is used as an image, and so, not be able to understand the metaphor.
- If the topic is not stated, people may not know what the topic is.
- People may not know the points of comparison that the speaker wants them to understand. If they fail to think of these points of comparison, they will not understand the metaphor.
- People may think that they understand the metaphor, but they do not. This can happen when they apply points of comparison from their own culture, rather than from the biblical culture.

Translation Principles

- Make the meaning of a metaphor as clear to the target audience as it was to the original audience.
- Do not make the meaning of a metaphor more clear to the target audience than you think it was to the original audience.

Examples From the Bible

Listen to this word, **you cows of Bashan**, (Amos 4:1q ULT)

In this metaphor Amos speaks to the upper-class women of Samaria ("you," the Topic) as if they were cows (the Image). Amos does not say what similarity(s) he intends between these women and cows. He wants the reader to think of them, and he fully expects that readers from his culture will easily do so. From the context, we can see that he means that the women are like cows in that they are fat and interested only in feeding themselves. If we were to apply similarities from a different culture, such as that cows are sacred and should be worshiped, we would get the wrong meaning from this verse.

NOTE: Amos does not actually mean that the women are cows. He speaks to them as human beings.

Yet, Yahweh, you are our father; **we are the clay. You are our potter**; and we all are the work of your hand. (Isaiah 64:8 ULT)

The example above has two related metaphors. The Topic(s) are “we” and “you,” and the Image(s) are “clay” and “potter.” The similarity between a potter and God is the fact that both make what they wish out of their material. The potter makes what he wishes out of the clay, and God makes what he wishes out of his people. The Idea being expressed by the comparison between the potter’s clay and “us” is that **neither the clay nor God’s people have a right to complain about what they are becoming**.

Jesus said to them, “Take heed and beware of **the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees**.” The disciples reasoned among themselves and said, “It is because we did not take bread.” (Matthew 16:6-7 ULT)

Jesus used a metaphor here, but his disciples did not realize it. When he said “yeast,” they thought he was talking about bread, but “yeast” was the Image in his metaphor, and the Topic was the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Since the disciples (the original audience) did not understand what Jesus meant, it would not be good to state clearly here what Jesus meant.

Translation Strategies

If people would understand the metaphor in the same way that the original readers would have understood it, go ahead and use it. Be sure to test the translation to make sure that people do understand it in the right way.

If people do not or would not understand it, here are some other strategies.

- (1) If the metaphor is a common expression in the source language or expresses a patterned pair of concepts in a biblical language (that is, it is a passive metaphor), then express the **Idea** in the simplest way preferred by your language.
- (2) If the metaphor seems to be an active metaphor, you can translate it literally **if you think that the target language also uses this metaphor in the same way to mean the same thing as in the Bible**. If you do this, be sure to test it to make sure that the language community understands it correctly.
- (3) If the target audience does not realize that it is a metaphor, then change the metaphor to a simile. Some languages do this by adding words such as “like” or “as.” See [Simile](#).
- (4) If the target audience would not know the **Image**, see [Translate Unknowns](#) for ideas on how to translate that image.
- (5) If the target audience would not use that **Image** for that meaning, use an image from your own culture instead. Be sure that it is an image that could have been possible in Bible times.
- (6) If the target audience would not know what the **Topic** is, then state the topic clearly. (However, do not do this if the original audience did not know what the Topic was.)
- (7) If the target audience would not know the intended similarity (the **Idea**) between the topic and the image, then state it clearly.
- (8) If none of these strategies is satisfactory, then simply state the **Idea** plainly without using a metaphor.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the metaphor is a common expression in the source language or expresses a patterned pair of concepts in a biblical language (that is, a passive metaphor), then express the Idea in the simplest way preferred by your language.

Then, see, one of the leaders of the synagogue, named Jairus, came, and when he saw him, **fell at his feet**. (Mark 5:22 ULT)

Then one of the leaders of the synagogue, named Jairus, came, and when he saw him, **immediately bowed down in front of him**.

(2) If the metaphor seems to be an active metaphor, you can translate it literally **if you think that the target language also uses this metaphor in the same way to mean the same thing as in the Bible**. If you do this, be sure to test it to make sure that the language community understands it correctly.

But Jesus said to them, "He wrote this commandment to you because of your **hardness of heart**." (Mark 10:5 ULT)

It was because of your **hard hearts** that he wrote you this law.

We made no change to this one, but it must be tested to make sure that the target audience correctly understands this metaphor.

(3) If the target audience does not realize that it is a metaphor, then change the metaphor to a simile. Some languages do this by adding words such as "like" or "as."

Yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we **are the clay**. You **are our potter**; and we all are the work of your hand. (Isaiah 64:8 ULT)

And yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are **like** clay. You are **like** a potter; and we all are the work of your hand.

(4) If the target audience would not know the **Image**, see [Translate Unknowns](#) for ideas on how to translate that image.

Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you **to kick against a goad**. (Acts 26:14b ULT)

Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to **kick against a pointed stick**.

(5) If the target audience would not use that **Image** for that meaning, use an image from your own culture instead. Be sure that it is an image that could have been possible in Bible times.

Yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are the **clay**. You are our **potter**; and we all are the work of your hand. (Isaiah 64:8 ULT)

"And yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are the **wood**. You are our **carver**; and we all are the work of your hand."

"And yet, Yahweh, you are our father; we are the **string**. You are the **weaver**; and we all are the work of your hand."

(6) If the target audience would not know what the **Topic** is, then state the topic clearly. (However, do not do this if the original audience did not know what the topic was.)

Yahweh lives; may **my rock** be praised. May the God of my salvation be exalted. (Psalm 18:46 ULT)

Yahweh lives; **He is my rock**. May he be praised. May the God of my salvation be exalted.

(7) If the target audience would not know the intended similarity between the Topic and the Image, then state it clearly.

Yahweh lives; may **my rock** be praised. May the God of my salvation be exalted. (Psalm 18:46 ULT)

Yahweh lives; may he be praised because he is the rock **under which I can hide from my enemies**. May the God of my salvation be exalted.

Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you **to kick against a goad**. (Acts 26:14 ULT)

Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? You **fight against me and hurt yourself like an ox that kicks against its owner's pointed stick**.

(8) If none of these strategies are satisfactory, then simply state the idea plainly without using a metaphor.

I will make you to become **fishers of men**. (Mark 1:17b ULT)

I will make you to become **people who gather men**.
Now you gather fish. I will make you **gather people**.

To learn more about specific metaphors, see Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns.

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1 General Notes](#); [1:14](#); [1:17](#); [2:1](#); [2:3](#); [2:11](#); [2:14](#); [2:15](#); [2:17](#); [2:19](#); [2:21](#); [2:26](#); [3:19](#); [4:4](#); [4:5](#); [4:6](#); [4:7](#); [4:12](#); [4:16](#); [5:7](#); [5:10](#); [5:11](#); [5:12](#); [5:15](#); [5:16](#); [5:17](#); [6:1](#); [6:2](#); [6:4](#); [6:9](#); [7:4](#); [7:6](#); [7:9](#); [7:16](#); [7:18](#); [7:26](#); [7:29](#); [8:3](#); [8:14](#); [9:2](#); [9:12](#); [10:12](#); [10:20](#); [11:1](#); [11:2](#); [11:5](#); [11:7](#); [11:8](#); [11:10](#); [12:1](#); [12:2](#); [12:3](#); [12:4](#); [12:6](#); [12:8](#); [12:11](#); [12:14](#))

Metonymy

Description

Metonymy is a figure of speech in which an item (either physical or abstract) is called not by its own name, but by the name of something closely associated with it. A metonym is a word or phrase used as a substitute for something that it is associated with.

This page answers the question: *What is a metonymy?*

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

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

... and **the blood** of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin. (1 John 1:7b ULT)

The blood represents Christ's death.

And he took **the cup** in the same way after supper, saying, "**This cup** is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:20 ULT)

The cup represents the wine that is in the cup.

Metonymy can be used

- as a shorter way of referring to something
- to make an abstract idea more meaningful by referring to it with the name of a physical object associated with it

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

The Bible uses metonymy very often. Speakers of some languages are not familiar with metonymy and they may not recognize it when they read it in the Bible. If they do not recognize the metonymy, they will not understand the passage or, worse yet, they will get a wrong understanding of the passage. Whenever a metonym is used, people need to be able to understand what it represents.

Examples From the Bible

The Lord God will give to him **the throne** of his father David. (Luke 1:32b ULT)

A throne represents the authority of a king. "Throne" is a metonym for "kingly authority," "kingship," or "reign." This means that God would make him become a king who would follow King David.

Then immediately his **mouth** was opened (Luke 1:64a ULT)

The mouth here represents the power to speak. This means that he was able to talk again.

Who warned you to flee from **the wrath** that is coming? (Luke 3:7b ULT)

The word "wrath" or "anger" is a metonym for "punishment." God was extremely angry with the people and, as a result, he would punish them.

Translation Strategies

If people would easily understand the metonym, consider using it. Otherwise, here are some options.

(1) Use the metonym along with the name of the thing it represents.

(2) Use only the name of the thing the metonym represents.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use the metonym along with the name of the thing it represents.

And he took the cup in the same way after the supper, saying, “**This cup** is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.” (Luke 22:20 ULT)

He took the cup in the same way after supper, saying, “**The wine in this cup** is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”

This verse also contains a second metonym: The cup, (representing the wine it contains) also represents the new covenant made with the blood Christ shed for us.

(2) Use the name of the thing the metonym represents.

The Lord God will give him **the throne** of his father David. (Luke 1:32b ULT)

“The Lord God will give him **the kingly authority** of his father, David.”

or:

“The Lord God will **make him king** like his ancestor, King David.”

Who warned you to flee from **the wrath** that is coming? (Luke 3:7b ULT)

“Who warned you to flee from God’s coming **punishment**?”

To learn about some common metonymies, see Biblical Imagery — Common Metonymies.

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 2:3](#); [2:4](#); [2:5](#); [2:6](#); [2:8](#); [2:19](#); [2:23](#); [2:24](#); [3:11](#); [4:1](#); [4:13](#); [5:1](#); [5:6](#); [5:14](#); [5:15](#); [5:17](#); [6:7](#); [6:9](#); [7:1](#); [7:3](#); [7:7](#); [7:8](#); [7:9](#); [7:22](#); [7:25](#); [7:26](#); [9:1](#); [9:3](#); [9:7](#); [9:11](#); [10:2](#); [10:4](#); [10:12](#); [10:13](#); [10:20](#); [11:7](#); [11:9](#); [11:10](#); [12:7](#))

Nominal Adjectives

Description

In some languages an adjective can be used to refer to a class of things that the adjective describes. When it does, it acts like a noun. For example, the word “rich” is an adjective. Here are two sentences that show that “rich” is an adjective.

The rich man had huge numbers of flocks and herds.
(2 Samuel 12:2 ULT)

The adjective “rich” comes before the word “man” and describes “man.”

He will not be rich; his wealth will not last. (Job 15:29a ULT)

The adjective “rich” comes after the verb “be” and describes “He.”

Here is a sentence that shows that “rich” can also function as a noun.

The rich must not give more than the half shekel, and **the poor** must not give less. (Exodus 30:15b ULT)

In Exodus 30:15, the word “rich” acts as a noun in the phrase “the rich,” and it refers to rich people. The word “poor” also acts as a noun and refers to poor people.

This page answers the question: *How do I translate adjectives that act like nouns?*

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Many times in the Bible adjectives are used as nouns to describe a group of people.
- Some languages do not use adjectives in this way.
- Readers of these languages may think that the text is talking about one particular person when it is really talking about the group of people whom the adjective describes.

Examples From the Bible

The scepter of wickedness must not rule in the land of **the righteous**. (Psalms 125:3a ULT)

“The righteous” here are people who are righteous, not one particular righteous person.

Blessed are **the meek**. (Matthew 5:5a ULT)

“The meek” here are all people who are meek, not one particular meek person.

Translation Strategies

If your language uses adjectives as nouns to refer to a class of people, consider using the adjectives in this way. If it would sound strange, or if the meaning would be unclear or wrong, here is another option:

- (1) Use the adjective with a plural form of the noun that the adjective describes.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use the adjective with a plural form of the noun that the adjective describes.

The scepter of wickedness must not rule in the land of **the righteous**. (Psalms 125:3a ULT)

The scepter of wickedness must not rule in the land of **righteous people**.

Blessed are **the meek**. (Matthew 5:5a ULT)

Blessed are **people who are meek**.

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 3:17](#); [4:2](#); [5:8](#); [9:2](#); [9:3](#); [9:4](#); [9:5](#))

Numbers

Description

There are many numbers in the Bible. They can be written as words ("five") or as numerals ("5"). Some numbers are very large, such as "two hundred" (200), "twenty-two thousand" (22,000), or "one hundred million" (100,000,000). Some languages do not have words for all of these numbers. Translators need to decide how to translate numbers and whether to write them as words or numerals.

This page answers the question: *How do I translate numbers?*

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

[Translate Unknowns](#)

Some numbers are exact and others are rounded.

Abram was **86** years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram. (Genesis 16:16 ULT)

Eighty-six (86) is an exact number.

That day about **3,000** of the people died. (Exodus 32:28b ULT)

Here the number three thousand (3,000) is a round number. It may have been a little more than that or a little less than that. The word "about" shows that it is not an exact number.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages do not have words for some of these numbers.

Translation Principles

- Exact numbers should be translated as closely and specifically as they can be.
- Rounded numbers can be translated more generally.

Examples From the Bible

When Jared had lived **162** years, he became the father of Enoch. After he became the father of Enoch, Jared lived **800** years. He became the father of more sons and daughters. Jared lived **962** years, and then he died. (Genesis 5:18-20 ULT)

The numbers 162, 800, and 962 are exact numbers and should be translated with something as close to those numbers as possible.

Our sister, may you be the mother of **thousands of ten thousands**. (Genesis 24:60b ULT)

This is a rounded number. It does not say exactly how many descendants she should have, but it was a huge number of them.

Translation Strategies

- (1) Write numbers using numerals.
- (2) Write numbers using your language's words or the Gateway Language words for those numbers.
- (3) Write numbers using words, and put the numerals in parentheses after them.

(4) Combine words for large numbers.

(5) Use a very general expression for very large rounded numbers and write the numeral in parentheses afterward.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

We will use the following verse in our examples:

Now, see, at great effort I have prepared for Yahweh's house **100,000** talents of gold, **1,000,000** talents of silver, and bronze and iron in large quantities. (1 Chronicles 22:14a ULT)

(1) Write numbers using numerals.

I have prepared for Yahweh's house **100,000** talents of gold, **1,000,000** talents of silver, and bronze and iron in large quantities.

(2) Write numbers using your language's words or the Gateway Language words for those numbers.

I have prepared for Yahweh's house **one hundred thousand** talents of gold, **one million** talents of silver, and bronze and iron in large quantities.

(3) Write numbers using words, and put the numerals in parenthesis after them.

I have prepared for Yahweh's house one **hundred thousand (100,000)** talents of gold, **one million (1,000,000)** talents of silver, and bronze and iron in large quantities.

(4) Combine words for large numbers.

I have prepared for Yahweh's house **one hundred thousand** talents of gold, **a thousand thousand** talents of silver, and bronze and iron in large quantities.

(5) Use a very general expression for very large rounded numbers and write the numeral in parentheses afterward.

I have prepared for Yahweh's house **a great amount of gold (100,000 talents), ten times that amount of silver (1,000,000 talents)**, and bronze and iron in large quantities.

Consistency

Be consistent in your translations. Decide how the numbers will be translated, using numbers or numerals. There are different ways of being consistent.

- Use words to represent numbers all of the time. (You might have very long words.)
- Use numerals to represent numbers all of the time.
- Use words to represent the numbers that your language has words for and use numerals for the numbers that your language does not have words for.
- Use words for low numbers and numerals for high numbers.
- Use words for numbers that require few words and numerals for numbers that require more than a few words.
- Use words to represent numbers, and write the numerals in parentheses after them.

Consistency in the ULT and UST

The *unfoldingWord® Literal Text* (ULT) and the *unfoldingWord® Simplified Text* (UST) use words for the numbers one through ten and use numerals for all numbers above ten.

When Adam had lived **130** years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image, and he called his name Seth. After Adam became the father of Seth, he lived **800** years. He became the father of more sons and daughters. Adam lived **930** years, and then he died.
(Genesis 5:3-5 ULT)

Next we recommend you learn about:

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

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

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 6:3](#); [6:6](#); [7:28](#); [8:12](#); [11:2](#))

Parallelism

Description

Parallelism is a poetic device in which two phrases or clauses that are similar in structure or idea are used together. The following are some of the different kinds of parallelism.

- The second clause or phrase means the same as the first. This is called synonymous parallelism.
- The second clarifies or strengthens the meaning of the first.
- The second completes what is said in the first.
- The second says something that contrasts with the first, but adds to the same idea.

Parallelism is most commonly found in Old Testament poetry, such as in the books of Psalms and Proverbs. It also occurs in Greek in the New Testament, both in the four gospels and in the apostles' letters.

This article will only discuss synonymous parallelism, the kind in which the two parallel phrases mean the same thing, because that is the kind that presents a problem for translation. Note that we use the term "synonymous parallelism" for long phrases or clauses that have the same meaning. We use the term "doublet" for words or very short phrases that mean basically the same thing and are used together.

In the poetry of the original languages, synonymous parallelism has several effects:

- It shows that something is very important by saying it more than once and in more than one way.
- It helps the hearer to think more deeply about the idea by saying it in different ways.
- It makes the language more beautiful and raises it above the ordinary way of speaking.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages would not use synonymous parallelism. They would either think it odd that someone said the same thing twice, or, since it is in the Bible, they would think that the two phrases must have some difference in meaning. For them it would be confusing, rather than beautiful. They would not understand that the repetition of the idea in different words serves to emphasize the idea.

Examples From the Bible

Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light for my path. (Psalm 119:105 ULT)

Both parts of the sentence are metaphors saying that God's word teaches people how to live. That is the single idea. The words "lamp" and "light" are similar in meaning because they refer to light. The words "my feet" and "my path" are related because they refer to a person walking. Walking is a metaphor for living.

You make him to rule over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet (Psalm 8:6 ULT)

Both lines say that God made man the ruler of everything. "To rule over" is the same idea as putting things "under his feet," and "the works of your [God's] hands" is the same idea as "all things."

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]]

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](#)

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#); [2:11](#); [2:17](#); [2:22](#); [2:26](#); [3:1](#); [3:16](#); [4:2](#); [4:4](#); [4:5](#); [4:15](#); [4:16](#); [5:2](#); [6:3](#); [6:9](#); [7:16](#); [8:12](#); [9:7](#); [10:20](#); [11:7](#); [11:9](#))

Personification

Description

Personification is a figure of speech in which someone speaks of something as if it could do things that animals or people can do. People often do this because it makes it easier to talk about things that we cannot see:

Such as wisdom:

Does not Wisdom call out? (Proverbs 8:1a ULT)

Or sin:

Sin crouches at the door. (Genesis 4:7b ULT)

People also use personification because it is sometimes easier to talk about people's relationships with non-human things such as wealth as if they were relationships between people.

You cannot serve God and wealth. (Matthew 6:24b ULT)

In each case, the purpose of the personification is to highlight a certain characteristic of the non-human thing. As in metaphor, the reader needs to think of the way that the thing is like a certain kind of person.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Some languages do not use personification.
- Some languages use personification only in certain situations.

Examples From the Bible

You cannot **serve** God and wealth. (Matthew 6:24b ULT)

Jesus speaks of wealth as if it were a master whom people might serve. Loving money and basing one's decisions on it is like serving it as a slave would serve his master.

Does not Wisdom **call** out? Does not Understanding **raise her voice**? (Proverbs 8:1 ULT)

The author speaks of wisdom and understanding as if they were woman who calls out to teach people. This means that they are not something hidden, but something obvious that people should pay attention to.

Translation Strategies

If the personification would be understood clearly, consider using it. If it would not be understood, here are some other ways for translating it.

- (1) Add words or phrases to make the human (or animal) characteristic clear.
- (2) In addition to Strategy (1), use words such as "like" or "as" to show that the sentence is not to be understood literally.
- (3) Find a way to translate it without the personification.

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]]

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:

[Apostrophe](#)

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/bita-part1]]

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:5](#); [2:3](#); [4:10](#); [5:12](#); [7:12](#); [8:8](#); [9:1](#); [10:1](#); [10:16](#); [10:17](#))

Reflexive Pronouns

Description

All languages have ways of showing that the same person fills two different roles in a sentence. English does this by using reflexive pronouns. These are pronouns that refer to someone or something that has already been mentioned in a sentence. In English the reflexive pronouns are: “myself,” “yourself,” “himself,” “herself,” “itself,” “ourselves,” “yourselves,” and “themselves.” Other languages may have other ways to show this.

This page answers the question: *What are reflexive pronouns?*

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

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Languages have different ways of showing that the same person fills two different roles in a sentence. For those languages, translators will need to know how to translate the English reflexive pronouns.
- The reflexive pronouns in English also have other functions.

Uses of Reflexive Pronouns

- To show that the same person or things fills two different roles in a sentence
- To emphasize a person or thing in the sentence
- To show that someone did something alone
- To show that someone or something was alone

Examples From the Bible

Reflexive pronouns are used to show the same person or thing fills two different roles in a sentence.

If **I** should testify about **myself**, my testimony would not be true. (John 5:31 ULT)

Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and **many** went up to Jerusalem from the country before the Passover in order to purify **themselves**. (John 11:55 ULT)

Reflexive pronouns are used to emphasize a person or thing in the sentence.

Jesus himself was not baptizing, but his disciples were. (John 4:2 ULT)

So they left the crowd, taking Jesus with them, just as he was, in the boat. There also were other boats with him. Then a violent windstorm arose and the waves were breaking into the boat so that the boat was already full of water. But **Jesus himself** was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. (Mark 4:36-38a ULT)

Reflexive pronouns are used to show that someone did something alone.

When Jesus realized that they were about to come and seize him by force to make him king, he withdrew again up the mountain **by himself**. (John 6:15 ULT)

Reflexive pronouns are used to show that someone or something was alone.

He saw the linen cloths lying there and the cloth that had been on his head. **It** was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a place **by itself**. (John 20:6b-7 ULT)

Translation Strategies

If a reflexive pronoun would have the same function in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other strategies.

- (1) In some languages people put something on the verb to show that the object of the verb is the same as the subject.
- (2) In some languages people emphasize a certain person or thing by referring to it in a special place in the sentence.
- (3) In some languages people emphasize a certain person or thing by adding something to that word or putting another word with it.
- (4) In some languages people show that someone did something alone by using a word like “alone.”
- (5) In some languages people show that something was alone by using a phrase that tells about where it was.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) In some languages people modify the verb to show that the object of the verb is the same as the subject.

If I should testify about **myself** alone, my testimony would not be true. (John 5:31)

“If I should **self-testify** alone, my testimony would not be true.”

Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem from the country before the Passover in order to **purify themselves**. (John 11:55)

“Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out from country before the Passover in order to **self-purify**.”

- (2) In some languages people emphasize a certain person or thing by referring to it in a special place in the sentence.

He himself took our sickness and bore our diseases. (Matthew 8:17 ULT)

“**It was he who** took our sickness and bore our diseases.”

Jesus himself was not baptizing, but his disciples were. (John 4:2)

“**It was not Jesus who** was baptizing, but his disciples were.”

- (3) In some languages people emphasize a certain person or thing by adding something to that word or putting another word with it. English adds the reflexive pronoun.

But Jesus said this to test Philip, for he **himself** knew what he was going to do. (John 6:6)

- (4) In some languages people show that someone did something alone by using a word like “alone.”

When Jesus realized that they were about to come and seize him by force to make him king, he withdrew again up the mountain **by himself**. (John 6:15)

“When Jesus realized that they were about to come and seize him by force to make him king, he withdrew again **alone** up the mountain.”

- (5) In some languages people show that something was alone by using a phrase that tells about where it was.

He saw the linen cloths lying there and the cloth that had been on his head. It was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a place **by itself**. (John 20:6b-7 ULT)

“He saw the linen cloths lying there and the cloth that had been on his head. It was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up and lying **in its own place.**”

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 7:22](#))

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 original 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: [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#); [1:10](#); [2:2](#); [2:12](#); [2:15](#); [2:19](#); [2:22](#); [2:25](#); [3:9](#); [3:19](#); [3:21](#); [3:22](#); [4:11](#); [5:6](#); [5:11](#); [5:16](#); [6:8](#); [6:11](#); [6:12](#); [7:10](#); [7:13](#); [7:16](#); [7:17](#); [7:24](#); [8:4](#); [8:7](#); [10:14](#))

Simile

Description

A simile is a comparison of two things that are not normally thought to be similar. The simile focuses on a particular trait the two items have in common, and it includes the words “like,” “as,” or “than.”

This page answers the question: *What is a simile?*

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

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

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were troubled and discouraged, **like sheep not having a shepherd**. (Matthew 9:36)

Jesus compared the crowds of people to sheep without a shepherd. Sheep grow frightened when they do not have a good shepherd to lead them in safe places. The crowds were like that because they did not have good religious leaders.

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**, so be as wise **as the serpents** and harmless **as the doves**. (Matthew 10:16 ULT)

Jesus compared his disciples to sheep and their enemies to wolves. Wolves attack sheep; Jesus' enemies would attack his disciples.

For the word of God is living and active and sharper **than any two-edged sword**. (Hebrews 4:12a ULT)

God's word is compared to a two-edged sword. A two-edged sword is a weapon that can easily cut through a person's flesh. God's word is very effective in showing what is in a person's heart and thoughts.

Purposes of Simile

- A simile can teach about something that is unknown by showing how it is similar to something that is known.
- A simile can emphasize a particular trait, sometimes in a way that gets people's attention.
- Similes help form a picture in the mind or help the reader experience what he is reading about more fully.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- People may not know how the two items are similar.
- People may not be familiar with both of the items being compared.

Examples From the Bible

Suffer hardship with me, **as a good soldier** of Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 2:3 ULT)

In this simile, Paul compares suffering with what soldiers endure, and he encourages Timothy to follow their example.

Just as the lightning flashing from a place under the sky shines to another place under the sky, so will the Son of Man be. (Luke 17:24b ULT)

This verse does not tell how the Son of Man will be like the lightning. But in context we can understand from the verses before it that just as lightning flashes suddenly and everyone can see it, the Son of Man will come suddenly and everyone will be able to see him. No one will have to be told about it.

Translation Strategies

If people would understand the correct meaning of a simile, consider using it. If they would not, here are some strategies you can use:

- (1) If people do not know how the two items are alike, tell how they are alike. However, do not do this if the meaning was not clear to the original audience.
- (2) If people are not familiar with the item that something is compared to, use an item from your own culture. Be sure that it is one that could have been used in the cultures of the Bible. If you use this strategy, you may want to put the original item in a footnote.
- (3) Simply describe the item without comparing it to another.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If people do not know how the two items are alike, tell how they are alike. However, do not do this if the meaning was not clear to the original audience.

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**. (Matthew 10:16a ULT) — This compares the danger that Jesus' disciples would be in with the danger that sheep are in when they are surrounded by wolves.

See, I send **you out among wicked people** and you will be in danger from them **as sheep are in danger when they are among wolves**.

For the word of God is living and active and sharper **than any two-edged sword**. (Hebrews 4:12a ULT)

For the word of God is living and active and **more powerful than a very sharp two-edged sword**.

- (2) If people are not familiar with the item that something is compared to, use an item from your own culture. Be sure that it is one that could have been used in the cultures of the Bible. If you use this strategy, you may want to put the original item in a footnote.

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**. (Matthew 10:16a ULT) — If people do not know what sheep and wolves are, or that wolves kill and eat sheep, you could use some other animal that kills another.

See, I send you out **as chickens in the midst of wild dogs**.

How often did I long to gather your children together, just **as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings**, but you were not willing! (Matthew 23:37b ULT)

How often I wanted to gather your children together, **as a mother closely watches over her infants**, but you refused!

If you have faith **as a grain of mustard** ... (Matthew 17:20)

If you have faith even as small **as a tiny seed**,

- (3) Simply describe the item without comparing it to another.

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**. (Matthew 10:16a ULT)

See, I send you out among **people who will want to harm you**.

How often did I long to gather your children together, just **as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings**, but you were not willing! (Matthew 23:37b ULT)

How often I wanted to **protect you**, but you refused!

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Metaphor](#)

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/bita-part1]]

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:2](#); [2:13](#); [3:18](#); [6:12](#); [7:6](#); [8:8](#); [8:13](#); [9:4](#); [9:12](#); [10:1](#); [10:7](#); [12:11](#))

Symbolic Action

Description

A symbolic action is something that someone does in order to express a certain idea. For example, in some cultures people nod their heads up and down to mean “yes” or turn their heads from side to side to mean “no.” Symbolic actions do not mean the same things in all cultures. In the Bible, sometimes people perform symbolic actions and sometimes they only refer to the symbolic action.

This page answers the question: *What is a symbolic action and how do I translate it?*

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

[Translate Unknowns](#)

Examples of symbolic actions

- In some cultures people shake hands when they meet to show that they are willing to be friendly.
- In some cultures people bow when they meet to show respect to each other.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

An action may have a meaning in one culture and a different meaning or no meaning at all in another culture. For example, in some cultures raising the eyebrows means “I am surprised” or “What did you say?” In other cultures it means “yes.”

In the Bible, people did things that had certain meanings in their culture. When we read the Bible, we might not understand what someone meant if we interpret the action based on what it means in our own culture today.

You (the translator) need to understand what people in the Bible meant when they used symbolic actions. If an action does not mean the same thing in your own culture, then you need to figure out how to translate what the action meant.

Examples From the Bible

And behold, a man came whose name was Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue. And **falling at the feet of Jesus**, he begged him to come to his house. (Luke 8:41 ULT)

Meaning of symbolic action: He did this to show great respect to Jesus.

Look, I am standing at the door and am knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and will eat with him, and he with me. (Revelation 3:20 ULT)

Meaning of symbolic action: When people wanted someone to welcome them into their home, they stood at the door and knocked on it.

Translation Strategies

If people would correctly understand what a symbolic action meant to the people in the Bible, consider using it. If not, here are some strategies for translating it.

- (1) Tell what the person did and why he did it.
- (2) Do not tell what the person did, but tell what he meant.

(3) Use an action from your own culture that has the same meaning. Do this only in poetry, parables, and sermons. Do not do this when there actually was a person who did a specific action.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Tell what the person did and why he did it.

And **falling at the feet of Jesus** (Luke 8:41 ULT)

Jairus fell down at Jesus' feet in order to show that he greatly respected him.

Look, I am **standing at the door and am knocking**. (Revelation 3:20 ULT)

Look, I stand at the door and knock on it, asking you to let me in.

(2) Do not tell what the person did, but tell what he meant.

And **falling at the feet of Jesus** (Luke 8:41 ULT)

Jairus showed Jesus great respect.

Look, I am **standing at the door and am knocking**. (Revelation 3:20 ULT)

Look, I stand at the door and ask you to let me in.

(3) Use an action from your own culture that has the same meaning.

And **falling at the feet of Jesus** (Luke 8:41 ULT) — Since Jairus actually did this, you should not substitute an action from your own culture.

Look, I am **standing at the door and am knocking**. (Revelation 3:20 ULT) — Jesus was not standing at a real door. Rather he was speaking about wanting to have a relationship with people. So in cultures where it is polite to clear one's throat when wanting to be let into a house, you could use that.

Look, I stand at the door and clear my throat.

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 4:5](#); [9:8](#))

Synecdoche

Description

Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a speaker uses a part of something to refer to the whole thing, or uses the whole to refer to a part.

■ **My soul** magnifies the Lord. (Luke 1:46b ULT)

Mary was very happy about what the Lord was doing, so she said “my soul,” which means the inner, emotional part of herself, to refer to her whole self.

■ So **the Pharisees** said to him, “Look, why are they doing that which is not lawful?” (Mark 2:24a ULT)

The Pharisees who were standing there did not all say the same words at the same time. Instead, it is more likely that one man representing the group said those words.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Some readers may not recognize the synecdoche and thus misunderstand the words as a literal statement.
- Some readers may realize that they are not to understand the words literally, but they may not know what the meaning is.

Example From the Bible

■ Then I looked on all the deeds that **my hands** had accomplished. (Ecclesiastes 2:11a ULT)

“My hands” is a synecdoche for the whole person because clearly the arms and the rest of the body and the mind were also involved in the person’s accomplishments. The hands are chosen to represent the person because they are the parts of the body most directly involved in the work.

Translation Strategies

If the synecdoche would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here is another option:

(1) State specifically what the synecdoche refers to.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) State specifically what the synecdoche refers to.

■ **“My soul** magnifies the Lord.” (Luke 1:46b ULT)

■ **“I** magnify the Lord.”

So **the Pharisees** said to him ... (Mark 2:24a ULT)

■ **A representative of the Pharisees** said to him ...

Then I looked on all the deeds that **my hands** had accomplished. (Ecclesiastes 2:11a ULT)

This page answers the question: *What is a synecdoche, and how can I translate such a thing into my language?*

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

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

I looked on all the deeds that I had accomplished

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Metonymy](#)

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/bita-part2]]

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:8](#); [1:13](#); [1:16](#); [1:17](#); [2:1](#); [2:10](#); [2:11](#); [2:15](#); [2:20](#); [3:17](#); [3:18](#); [4:8](#); [5:2](#); [5:6](#); [6:3](#); [7:4](#); [8:5](#); [8:9](#); [8:11](#); [8:16](#); [9:7](#); [9:10](#); [9:14](#); [10:18](#); [11:5](#); [11:6](#); [11:7](#); [11:9](#); [12:12](#))

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:

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

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

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 12:5](#))

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:

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

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: [Ecclesiastes 5:16](#))



unfoldingWord® Translation Words

Version 32

Adam

Facts:

Adam was the first person whom God created. He and his wife Eve were made in the image of God.

- God formed Adam from dirt and breathed life into him.
- Adam's name sounds similar to the Hebrew word for "red dirt" or "ground."
- The name "Adam" is the same as the Old Testament word for "mankind" or "human being."
- All people are descendants of Adam and Eve.
- Adam and Eve disobeyed God. This separated them from God and caused sin and death to come into the world.

(Translation suggestions: How to Translate Names)

(See also: [death](#), descendant, Eve, image of God, [life](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Timothy 2:14
- Genesis 3:17
- Genesis 5:1
- Genesis 11:5
- Luke 3:38
- Romans 5:15

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **1:9** Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image to be like us."
- **1:10** This man's name was **Adam**. God planted a garden where **Adam** could live, and put him there to care for it.
- **1:12** Then God said, "It is not good for man to be alone." But none of the animals could be **Adam's** helper.
- **2:11** And God clothed **Adam** and Eve with animal skins.
- **2:12** So God sent **Adam** and Eve away from the beautiful garden.
- **49:8** When **Adam** and Eve sinned, it affected all of their descendants.
- **50:16** Because **Adam** and Eve disobeyed God and brought sin into this world, God cursed it and decided to destroy it.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0120, G00760

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:3](#); [1:13](#); [2:3](#); [2:8](#); [2:12](#); [2:18](#); [2:21](#); [2:22](#); [2:24](#); [2:26](#); [3:10](#); [3:11](#); [3:13](#); [3:18](#); [3:19](#); [3:21](#); [3:22](#); [5:19](#); [6:1](#); [6:7](#); [6:10](#); [6:11](#); [6:12](#); [7:2](#); [7:14](#); [7:20](#); [7:28](#); [7:29](#); [8:1](#); [8:6](#); [8:8](#); [8:9](#); [8:11](#); [8:15](#); [8:17](#); [9:1](#); [9:3](#); [9:12](#); [9:15](#); [10:14](#); [11:8](#); [12:5](#); [12:13](#))

alien, foreigner, sojourn

Definition:

The term “foreigner” refers to a person living in a country that is not his own. Another name for a foreigner is an “alien.” To sojourn is to live temporarily as a foreigner.

- In the Old Testament, this term especially refers to anyone who came from a different people group than the people he was living among.
- A foreigner is also a person whose language and culture is different from those of a particular region.
- For example, when Naomi and her family moved to Moab, they were foreigners there. When Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth later moved to Israel, Ruth was called a “foreigner” there because she was not originally from Israel.
- A sojourner is another word for a temporary foreign resident.
- The apostle Paul told the Ephesians that before they knew Christ, they were “foreigners” to God’s covenant.
- Sometimes “foreigner” is translated as “stranger,” but it should not refer only to someone who is unfamiliar or unknown.

Bible References:

- 2 Chronicles 2:17
- Acts 7:29-30
- Deuteronomy 1:15-16
- Genesis 15:12-13
- Genesis 17:27
- Luke 17:18
- Matthew 17:24-25

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H0312, H0628, H0776, H1471, H1481, H1616, H2114, H3937, H4033, H5236, H5237, H6154, H8453, G02410, G02450, G05260, G09150, G18540, G35810, G39270, G39410

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 6:2](#))

amazed, amazement, astonished, marvel, marveled, marvelous, wonder, dumbfounded

Definition:

All these terms refer to being very surprised because of something extraordinary that happened.

- Some of these words are translations of Greek expressions that mean “struck with amazement” or “standing outside of (oneself).” These expressions show how very surprised or shocked the person was feeling. Other languages might also have ways to express this.
- Usually the event that caused the wonder and amazement was a miracle, something only God could do.
- The meaning of these terms can also include feelings of confusion because what happened was totally unexpected.
- Other ways to translate these words could be “extremely surprised” or “very shocked.”
- Related words include “marvelous” (amazing, wonderful), “amazement,” and “astonishment.”
- In general, these terms are positive and express that the people were happy about what had happened.

(See also: miracle, sign)

Bible References:

- Acts 8:9-11
- Acts 9:20-22
- Galatians 1:6
- Mark 2:10-12
- Matthew 7:28
- Matthew 15:29-31
- Matthew 19:25

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0926, H2865, H3820, H4159, H6313, H6381, H6382, H6383, H6395, H8074, H8429, H8539, H8540, H8541, G06390, G15680, G15690, G16050, G16110, G18390, G22840, G22850, G22960, G22970, G22980, G40230, G45920, G50590

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 7:16](#))

appoint, appointed

Definition:

The terms “appoint” and “appointed” refer to choosing someone to fulfill a specific task or role.

- To “be appointed” can also refer to being “chosen” to receive something, as in “appointed to eternal life.” That people were “appointed to eternal life” means they were chosen to receive eternal life.
- The phrase “appointed time” refers to God’s “chosen time” or “planned time” for something to happen.
- The word “appoint” may also mean to “command” or “assign” someone to do something.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, ways to translate “appoint” could include “choose” or “assign” or “formally choose” or “designate.”
- The term “appointed” could be translated as “assigned” or “planned” or “specifically chose.”
- The phrase “be appointed” could also be translated as “be chosen.”

Bible References:

- 1 Samuel 8:11
- Acts 3:20
- Acts 6:2
- Acts 13:48
- Genesis 41:33-34
- Numbers 3:9-10

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H0561, H0977, H2163, H2296, H2706, H2708, H2710, H3198, H3245, H3259, H3677, H3983, H4150, H4151, H4152, H4483, H4487, H4662, H5324, H5344, H5414, H5567, H5975, H6310, H6485, H6565, H6635, H6680, H6923, H6942, H6966, H7760, H7896, G03220, G06060, G12990, G13030, G19350, G25250, G27490, G42870, G42960, G43840, G49290, G50210, G50870

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:4](#); [2:9](#); [4:12](#); [4:15](#); [8:3](#))

beast

Facts:

In the Bible, the term “beast” is often just another way of saying “animal.”

- A wild beast is a type of animal that lives freely in the forest or fields and has not been trained by people.
- A domestic beast is an animal that lives with people and is kept for food or for performing work, such as plowing fields. Often the term “livestock” is used to refer to this kind of animal.
- The Old Testament book of Daniel and the New Testament book of Revelation describe visions which have beasts that represent evil powers and authorities that oppose God. (See: [Metaphor](#))
- Some of these beasts are described as having strange features, such as several heads and many horns. They often have power and authority, indicating that they may represent countries, nations, or other political powers.
- Ways to translate this could include “creature” or “created thing” or “animal” or “wild animal,” depending on the context.

(See also: authority, Daniel, livestock, nation, [power](#), reveal, Beelzebul)

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 15:32
- 1 Samuel 17:44
- 2 Chronicles 25:18
- Jeremiah 16:1-4
- Leviticus 7:21
- Psalms 49:12-13

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0338, H0929, H1165, H2123, H2416, H2423, H2874, H3753, H4806, H7409, G22260, G23410, G23420, G29340, G49680, G50740

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 3:18](#))

bind, bond, bound

Definition:

The term “bind” means to tie something or fasten it securely. Something that is tied or joined together is called a “bond.” The term “bound” is the past tense of this term.

- To be “bound” means to have something tied or wrapped around something else.
- In a figurative sense, a person can be “bound” to a vow, which means he is “required to fulfill” what he promised to do.
- The term “bonds” refers to anything that binds, confines, or imprisons someone. It usually refers to physical chains, fetters or ropes that keep a person from being free to move.
- In Bible times, bonds such as ropes or chains were used to attach prisoners to the wall or floor of a stone prison.
- The term “bind” can also be used to talk about wrapping cloth around a wound to help it heal.
- A dead person would be “bound” with cloth in preparation for burial.
- The term “bond” is used figuratively to refer to something, such as sin, that controls or enslaves someone.
- A bond can also be a close relationship between people in which they support each other emotionally, spiritually and physically. This applies to the bond of marriage.
- For example, a husband and wife are “bound” or tied to each other. It is a bond that God does not want broken.

Translation Suggestions:

- The term “bind” could also be translated as “tie” or “tie up” or “wrap (around).”
- Figuratively, it could be translated as to “restrain” or to “prevent” or to “keep from (something).”
- A special use of “bind” in Matthew 16 and 18 means “forbid” or “not permit.”
- The term “bonds” could be translated as “chains” or “ropes” or “shackles.”
- Figuratively the term “bond” could be translated as “knot” or “connection” or “close relationship.”
- The phrase “bond of peace” means “being in harmony, which brings people in closer relationship to each other” or “the tying together that peace brings.”
- To “bind up” could be translated as “wrap around” or “put a bandage on.”
- To “bind” oneself with a vow could be translated as “promise to fulfill a vow” or “commit to fulfill a vow.”
- Depending on the context, the term “bound” could also be translated as “tied” or “tied up” or “chained” or “obligated (to fulfill)” or “required to do.”

(See also: fulfill, [peace](#), prison, [servant](#), vow)

Bible References:

- Leviticus 8:7

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0247, H0481, H0519, H0615, H0631, H0632, H0640, H1366, H1367, H1379, H2280, H2706, H3256, H3533, H3729, H4147, H4148, H4205, H4562, H5650, H5656, H5659, H6029, H6123, H6616, H6696, H6872, H6887, H7194, H7405, H7573, H7576, H8198, H8244, H8379, G02540, G03310, G03320, G11950, G11960, G11980, G11990, G12100, G13970, G13980, G14010, G14020, G26110, G26150, G37340, G37840, G38140, G40190, G40290, G43850, G48860, G48870, G52650

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 7:12](#); [8:8](#); [12:11](#))

bless, blessed, blessing

Definition:

To “bless” someone or something means to cause good and beneficial things to happen to the person or thing that is being blessed.

- Blessing someone also means expressing a desire for positive and beneficial things to happen to that person.
- In Bible times, a father would often pronounce a formal blessing on his children.
- When people “bless” God or express a desire that God be blessed, this means they are praising him.
- The term “bless” is sometimes used for consecrating food before it is eaten, or for thanking and praising God for the food.

Translation Suggestions:

- To “bless” could also be translated as to “provide abundantly for” or to “be very kind and favorable toward.”
- “God has brought great blessing to” could be translated as “God has given many good things to” or “God has provided abundantly for” or “God has caused many good things to happen to”.
- “He is blessed” could be translated as “he will greatly benefit” or “he will experience good things” or “God will cause him to flourish.”
- “Blessed is the person who” could be translated as “How good it is for the person who.”
- Expressions like “blessed be the Lord” could be translated as “May the Lord be praised” or “Praise the Lord” or “I praise the Lord.”
- In the context of blessing food, this could be translated as “thanked God for the food” or “praised God for giving them food” or “consecrated the food by praising God for it.”

(See also: praise)

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 10:16
- Acts 13:34
- Ephesians 1:3
- Genesis 14:20
- Isaiah 44:3
- James 1:25
- Luke 6:20
- Matthew 26:26
- Nehemiah 9:5
- Romans 4:9

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **1:7** God saw that it was good and he **blessed** them.
- **1:15** God made Adam and Eve in his own image. He **blessed** them and told them, “Have many children and grandchildren and fill the earth.”
- **1:16** So God rested from all he had been doing. He **blessed** the seventh day and made it holy, because on this day he rested from his work.
- **4:4** “I will make your name great. I will **bless** those who **bless** you and curse those who curse you. All families on earth will be **blessed** because of you.”
- **4:7** Melchizedek **blessed** Abram and said, “May God Most High who owns heaven and earth **bless** Abram.”

- **7:3** Isaac wanted to give his **blessing** to Esau.
- **8:5** Even in prison, Joseph remained faithful to God, and God **blessed** him.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0833, H0835, H1288, H1289, H1293, G17570, G21270, G21280, G21290, G31060, G31070, G31080, G60500

(Go back to: [Introduction to Ecclesiastes](#))

bread

Definition:

Bread is a food made from flour mixed with water and oil to form a dough. The dough is then shaped into a loaf and baked.

- When the term “loaf” occurs by itself, it means “loaf of bread.”
- Bread dough is usually made with something that makes it rise, such as yeast. However, bread can also be made without yeast so that it does not rise. This is called “unleavened bread” in the Bible. The ancient Israelites ate “unleavened bread” during the passover meal.
- Since bread was the main food for many people in biblical times, this term is also used in the Bible to refer to food in general. (See: [Synecdoche](#)) Many times the term “bread” can be translated more generally as “food.”
- The phrase “bread of the presence” refers to twelve loaves of bread that were placed on a golden table in the tabernacle or temple building as a sacrifice to God. These loaves represented the twelve tribes of Israel and were only for the priests to eat. This could be translated as “bread showing that God lived among them.”
- The term “bread from heaven” refers to the special white food called “manna” that God provided for the Israelites when they were wandering through the desert. Jesus also called himself the “bread that came down from heaven” and the “bread of life.”

(See also: Passover, tabernacle, [temple](#), unleavened bread, yeast)

Bible References:

- Acts 2:46
- Acts 27:35
- Exodus 16:15
- Luke 9:13
- Mark 6:38
- Matthew 4:4
- Matthew 11:18

Word Data:

- Strong's: H2557, H3899, H4635, H4682, G01060, G07400, G42860

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 9:7](#); [9:11](#); [10:19](#); [11:1](#))

brother

Definition:

The term “brother” refers to a male sibling who shares at least one biological parent.

- In the Old Testament, the term “brothers” is also used as a general reference to relatives or associates, such as members of the same tribe, clan, occupation, or people group. When used in this way, the term can refer to both men and women.
- In the New Testament, the apostles often use the term “brothers” to refer to fellow Christians, including both men and women.
- A few times in the New Testament, the apostles used the term “sister” when referring specifically to a fellow Christian who was a woman, or to emphasize that both men and women are being included. For example, James emphasizes that he is talking about all believers when he refers to “a brother or sister who is in need of food or clothing.”

Translation Suggestions:

- It is best to translate this term with the literal word that is used in the target language to refer to a natural or biological brother, unless this would give wrong meaning.
- In the Old Testament especially, when “brothers” is used very generally to refer to members of the same family, clan, or people group, possible translations could include “relatives” or “clan members” or “fellow Israelites.”
- In the context of referring to a fellow believer in Christ, this term could be translated as “brother in Christ” or “spiritual brother.”
- If both males and females are being referred to and “brother” would give a wrong meaning, then a more general kinship term could be used that would include both males and females.
- Other ways to translate this term so that it refers to both male and female believers could be “fellow believers” or “Christian brothers and sisters.”
- Make sure to check the context to determine whether only men are being referred to, or whether both men and women are included.

(See also: [apostle](#), [God the Father](#), [sister](#), [spirit](#))

Bible References:

- Acts 7:26
- Genesis 29:10
- Leviticus 19:17
- Nehemiah 3:1
- Philippians 4:21
- Revelation 1:9

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0251, H0252, H0264, H1730, H2992, H2993, H2994, H7453, G00800, G00810, G23850, G24550, G25000, G46130, G53600, G55690

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 4:8](#))

bury, buried, burial

Definition:

The term “bury” refers to putting an object (usually a dead body) into a hole or other burial place and then covering it with dirt or stones, etc. The term “burial” is the act of burying something, or it can be used to describe a place where something has been buried.

- Often people bury a dead body by placing it into a deep hole in the ground and then covering it with dirt.
- Sometimes the dead body is placed in a box-like structure, such as a coffin, before burying it.
- In Bible times, dead people were often buried in a cave or similar place. After Jesus died, his body was wrapped in cloths and placed in a stone tomb that was sealed with a large boulder.
- The terms “burial place” or “burial room” or “burial chamber” or “burial cave” always refer to a place where a dead body is buried.
- Other things can also be buried, such as when Achan buried silver and other things that he had stolen from Jericho.
- The phrase “buried his face” usually means “covered his face with his hands.”
- Sometimes the word “hide” can mean “bury” as when Achan hid things in the ground that he had stolen from Jericho. This meant he buried them in the ground.

(See also: Jericho, tomb)

Bible References:

- 2 Kings 9:9-10
- Genesis 35:4-5
- Jeremiah 25:33
- Luke 16:22
- Matthew 27:7
- Psalm 79:1-3

Word Data:

- Strong's: H6900, H6912, H6913, G17790, G17800, G22900, G49160, G50270

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 8:10](#))

call, call out

Definition:

The terms “call” and “call out” usually mean to speak loudly, but the term “call” can also mean to name or summon a person. There are also some other meanings.

- To “call out” to someone means to shout, to announce, or to proclaim. It can also mean to ask someone for help, especially God.
- Often in the Bible, “call” has a meaning of “summon” or “command to come” or “request to come.”
- God calls people to come to him and be his people. This is their “calling.”
- When God “calls” people, it means that God has appointed or chosen people to be his children, to be his servants and proclaimers of his message of salvation through Jesus.
- This term is also used in the context of naming someone. For example, “His name is called John,” means “He is named John” or “His name is John.”
- To be “called by the name of” means that someone is given the name of someone else. God says that he has called his people by his name.
- A different expression, “I have called you by name” means that God has specifically chosen that person.

Translation Suggestions:

- The term “call” could be translated by a word that means “summon,” which includes the idea of being intentional or purposeful in calling.
- The expression “call out to you” could be translated as “ask you for help” or “pray to you urgently.”
- When the Bible says that God has “called” us to be his servants, this could be translated as “specially chose us” or “appointed us” to be his servants.
- “You must call his name” can also be translated as “you must name him.”
- “His name is called” could also be translated as “his name is” or “he is named.”
- To “call out” could be translated as “say loudly” or “shout” or “say with a loud voice.” Make sure the translation of this does not sound like the person is angry.
- The expression “your calling” could be translated as “your purpose” or “God’s purpose for you” or “God’s special work for you.”
- To “call on the name of the Lord” could be translated as “seek the Lord and depend on him” or “trust in the Lord and obey him.”
- To “call for” something could be translated by “demand” or “ask for” or “command.”
- The expression “you are called by my name” could be translated as “I have given you my name, showing that you belong to me.”
- When God says, “I have called you by name,” this could be translated as “I know you and have chosen you.”

(See also: pray, cry)

Bible References:

- 1 Kings 18:24
- 1 Thessalonians 4:7
- 2 Timothy 1:9
- Ephesians 4:1
- Galatians 1:15
- Matthew 2:15
- Philippians 3:14

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0559, H2199, H4744, H6817, H7121, H7123, H7769, H7773, G01540, G03630, G14580, G15280, G19410, G19510, G20280, G20460, G25640, G28210, G28220, G28400, G29190, G30040, G31060, G33330, G33430, G36030, G36860, G36870, G43160, G43410, G43770, G47790, G48670, G54550, G55370, G55810

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 6:10](#))

children, child, offspring

Definition:

The term “child” (plural “children”) refers to the offspring of a man and woman. The term is often used more generally to refer to anyone who is young in age and is not yet a fully grown adult. The term “offspring” is a general reference to the biological descendants of people or animals.

- In the Bible, disciples or followers are sometimes called “children.”
- Often the term “children” is used to refer to a person’s descendants.
- Often in the Bible, “offspring” has the same meaning as “children” or “descendants.”
- The term “seed” is sometimes used figuratively to refer to offspring.
- The phrase “children of” can refer to being characterized by something. Some examples of this would be:
 - children of the light
 - children of obedience
 - children of the devil
- This term can also refer to the Church. For example, sometimes the New Testament refers to people who believe in Jesus as “children of God.”

Translation Suggestions:

- The term “children” could be translated as “descendants” when it is referring to a person’s great-grandchildren or great-great-grandchildren, etc.
- Depending on the context, “children of” could be translated as “people who have the characteristics of” or “people who behave like.”
- If possible, the phrase, “children of God” should be translated literally since an important biblical theme is that God is our heavenly Father. A possible translation alternate would be, “people who belong to God” or “God’s spiritual children.”
- When Jesus calls his disciples “children,” this could also be translated as “dear friends” or “my beloved disciples.”
- When Paul and John refer to believers in Jesus as “children,” this could also be translated as “dear fellow believers.”
- The phrase, “children of the promise” could be translated as “people who have received what God promised them.”

(See also: descendant, [seed](#), promise, [son](#), [spirit](#), believe, beloved)

Bible References:

- 1 John 2:28
- 3 John 1:4
- Galatians 4:19
- Genesis 45:11
- Joshua 8:34-35
- Nehemiah 5:5
- Acts 17:29
- Exodus 13:11-13
- Genesis 24:7
- Isaiah 41:8-9
- Job 5:25
- Luke 3:7
- Matthew 12:34

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1069, H1121, H1123, H1129, H1323, H1397, H1580, H2029, H2030, H2056, H2138, H2145, H2233, H2945, H3173, H3205, H3206, H3208, H3211, H3243, H3490, H4392, H5209, H5271, H5288, H5290, H5759, H5764, H5768, H5953, H6185, H6363, H6529, H6631, H7908, H7909, H7921, G07300, G08150, G10250, G10640, G10810, G10850, G14710, G34390, G35150, G35160, G38080, G38120, G38130, G38160, G50400, G50410, G50420, G50430, G50440, G52060, G52070, G53880

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 4:15](#))

comfort, comforts, comforter, uncomforted

Definition:

The terms “comfort” and “comforter” refer to helping someone who is suffering physical or emotional pain.

- A person who comforts someone is called a “comforter.”
- In the Old Testament, the term “comfort” is used to describe how God is kind and loving to his people and helps them when they are suffering.
- In the New Testament, it says that God will comfort his people through the Holy Spirit. Those who receive the comfort are then enabled to give the same comfort to others who are suffering.
- The expression “comforter of Israel” referred to the Messiah who would come to rescue his people.
- Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as the “Comforter” who helps believers in Jesus.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, “comfort” could also be translated as “ease the pain of” or “help (someone) overcome grief” or “encourage” or “console.”
- A phrase such as “our comfort” could be translated as “our encouragement” or “our consoling of (someone)” or “our help in times of grieving.”
- The term “comforter” could be translated as “person who comforts” or “someone who helps ease pain” or “person who encourages.”
- When the Holy Spirit is called “the Comforter” this could also be translated as “the Encourager” or “the Helper” or “the One who helps and guides.”
- The phrase “comforter of Israel” could be translated as “the Messiah, who comforts Israel.”
- An expression like, “they have no comforter” could also be translated as “No one has comforted them” or “There is no one to encourage or help them.”

(See also: encourage, Holy Spirit)

Bible References:

- 1 Thessalonians 5:8-11
- 2 Corinthians 1:4
- 2 Samuel 10:1-3
- Acts 20:11-12

Word Data:

- Strong's: H2505, H5150, H5162, H5165, H5564, H8575, G03020, G38700, G38740, G38750, G38880, G38900, G39310

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

command, commandment

Definition:

The term "command" means to order someone to do something. The term "commandment" refers to the thing that a person is commanded to do.

- The term "commandment" sometimes refers to certain commands of God which are more formal and permanent, such as the "Ten Commandments."
- A command can be positive ("Honor your parents") or negative ("Do not steal").
- To "take command" means to "take control" or "take charge" of something or someone.

Translation Suggestions

- It is best to translate this term differently from the term, "law." Also compare with the definitions of "decree" and "statute."
- Some translators may prefer to translate "command" and "commandment" with the same word in their language.
- Others may prefer to use a special word for commandment that refers to lasting, formal commands that God has made.

(See [decree](#), [statute](#), law, Ten Commandments)

Bible References:

- Luke 1:6
- Matthew 1:24
- Matthew 22:38
- Matthew 28:20
- Numbers 1:17-19
- Romans 7:7-8

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0559, H0560, H0565, H1296, H1696, H1697, H1881, H2706, H2708, H2710, H2941, H2942, H2951, H3027, H3982, H3983, H4406, H4662, H4687, H4929, H4931, H4941, H5057, H5713, H5749, H6213, H6310, H6346, H6490, H6673, H6680, H7101, H7218, H7227, H7262, H7761, H7970, H8269, G12630, G12910, G12960, G12970, G12990, G16900, G17780, G17810, G17850, G20030, G20040, G20080, G20360, G27530, G30560, G37260, G38520, G38530, G43670, G44830, G44870, G55060

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 8:5](#); [12:13](#))

confirm, confirmation, legal

Definition:

The term “confirm” refers to verifying that something is true or legally certifying that a transaction has occurred.

- When a king is “confirmed” it means that the decision to make him king has been agreed upon and supported by the people.
- To confirm what someone wrote means to verify that what was written is true.
- The “confirmation” of the gospel means teaching people about the good news of Jesus in such a way that it shows that it is true.
- To give an oath “as confirmation” means to solemnly state or swear that something is true or trustworthy.
- Ways to translate “confirm” could include, “state as true” or “prove to be trustworthy” or “agree with” or “assure” or “promise,” depending on the context.

(See also: covenant, [oath](#), trust)

Bible References:

- 1 Chronicles 16:15-18
- 2 Corinthians 1:21
- 2 Kings 23:3
- Hebrews 6:16-18

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0559, H1396, H3045, H3559, H4390, H4672, H5414, H5975, H6213, H6965, G09500, G09510, G33150, G49720

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 4:10](#))

cow, bull, calf, cattle, heifer, ox

Definition:

The terms “cow,” “bull,” “heifer,” “ox,” and “cattle” all refer to a kind of large, four-legged bovine animal that eats grass.

- The female of this kind of animal is called a “cow,” the male is a “bull,” and their offspring is a “calf.”
- In the Bible, cattle were among the “clean” animals that the people could eat and use for sacrifice. They were primarily raised for their meat and milk.

A “heifer” is an adult female cow that has not yet given birth to a calf.

An “ox” is a type of cattle that is specifically trained to do agricultural work. The plural of this term is “oxen.” Usually oxen are male and have been castrated.

- Throughout the Bible, oxen were depicted as animals tied together by a yoke to pull a cart or a plow.
- Having oxen work together under a yoke was such a common occurrence in the Bible that the phrase to “be under a yoke” became a metaphor for hard work and labor.
- A bull is also a male type of cattle, but it has not been castrated and has not been trained as a work animal.

(See also: [How to Translate Unknowns](#))

(See also: yoke)

Bible References:

- Genesis 15:9-11
- Exodus 24:5-6
- Numbers 19:1-2
- Deuteronomy 21:3-4
- 1 Samuel 1:24-25
- 1 Samuel 15:3
- 1 Samuel 16:2-3
- 1 Kings 1:9
- 2 Chronicles 11:15
- 2 Chronicles 15:10-11
- Matthew 22:4
- Luke 13:15
- Luke 14:5
- Hebrews 9:13

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0047, H0441, H0504, H0929, H1165, H1241, H4399, H4735, H4806, H5695, H5697, H6499, H6510, H6629, H7214, H7716, H7794, H7921, H8377, H8450, G10160, G11510, G23530, G29340, G34470, G34480, G41650, G50220

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 2:7](#))

David

Facts:

David was the second king of Israel and he loved and served God. He was the main writer of the book of Psalms.

- When David was still a young boy caring for his family's sheep, God chose him to become the next king of Israel.
- David became a great fighter and led the Israelite army in battles against their enemies. His defeat of Goliath the Philistine is well known.
- King Saul tried to kill David, but God protected him, and made him king after Saul's death.
- David committed a terrible sin, but he repented and God forgave him.
- Jesus, the Messiah, is called the "Son of David" because he is a descendant of King David.

(Translation suggestions: How to Translate Names)

(See also: Goliath, Philistines, Saul (OT))

Bible References:

- 1 Samuel 17:12-13
- 1 Samuel 20:34
- 2 Samuel 5:2
- 2 Timothy 2:8
- Acts 2:25
- Acts 13:22
- Luke 1:32
- Mark 2:26

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **17:2** God chose a young Israelite named **David** to be king after Saul. **David** was a shepherd from the town of Bethlehem. ... **David** was a humble and righteous man who trusted and obeyed God.
- **17:3** **David** was also a great soldier and leader. When **David** was still a young man, he fought against a giant named Goliath.
- **17:4** Saul became jealous of the people's love for **David**. Saul tried many times to kill him, so **David** hid from Saul.
- **17:5** God blessed **David** and made him successful. **David** fought many battles and God helped him defeat Israel's enemies.
- **17:6** **David** wanted to build a temple where all the Israelites could worship God and offer him sacrifices.
- **17:9** **David** ruled with justice and faithfulness for many years, and God blessed him. However, toward the end of his life he sinned terribly against God.
- **17:13** God was very angry about what **David** had done, so he sent the prophet Nathan to tell **David** how evil his sin was. **David** repented of his sin and God forgave him. For the rest of his life, **David** followed and obeyed God, even in difficult times.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1732, G11380

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:1](#))

decree, decreed

Definition:

The term “decree” means to give an order that must be obeyed. The order itself can also be called a “decree.”

- A “decree” is similar to a “law,” but is generally used more often to refer to something spoken rather than written.
- The term “decree” could be translated as to “order” or to “command” or to “formally require” or to “publicly make a law.”
- God’s laws are also called decrees, statutes, or commandments.
- An example of a decree by a human ruler was the proclamation by Caesar Augustus that everyone living in the Roman Empire must go back to their hometown in order to be counted in a census.

(See also: [command](#), declare, law)

Bible References:

- 1 Chronicles 15:13-15
- 1 Kings 8:57-58
- Acts 17:5-7
- Daniel 2:13
- Esther 1:22
- Luke 2:1

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H0559, H0633, H1697, H5715, H1504, H1510, H1881, H1882, H1696, H2706, H2708, H2710, H2711, H2782, H2852, H2940, H2941, H2942, H3791, H3982, H4055, H4406, H4687, H4941, H5407, H5713, H6599, H6680, H7010, H8421, G13780

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 8:11](#))

delight

Definition:

The term "delight" means great pleasure or great joy.

- To "delight in" something means to "to take pleasure in" or "take joy in" or "be happy about" it. If a person "delights in" something, it means that he enjoys it very much.
- When something is very agreeable or pleasing it is called "delightful."
- The expression "my delight is in the law of Yahweh" could be translated as "the law of Yahweh gives me great joy" or "I love to obey the laws of Yahweh" or "I am happy when I obey Yahweh's commands."
- The phrases "take no delight in" and "have no delight in" could be translated as "not at all pleased by" or "not happy about."
- The phrase "delight himself in" means "he enjoys doing" something or "he is very happy about" something or someone.
- The term "delights" refers to things that a person enjoys. This could be translated as "pleasures" or "things that give joy."
- An expression such as "I delight to do your will" could also be translated as "I enjoy doing your will" or "I am very happy when I obey you."

Bible References:

- Proverbs 8:30
- Psalm 1:2
- Psalms 119:69-70
- Song of Songs 1:3

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1523, H2530, H2531, H2532, H2654, H2655, H2656, H2836, H4574, H5276, H5727, H5730, H6026, H6027, H7306, H7381, H7521, H7522, H8057, H8173, H8191, H8588, H8597

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 8:3](#))

destroy, destruction, annihilate

Definition:

The term “destroy” means to completely make an end to something, so that it no longer exists.

- The term “destroyer” means “a person who destroys.”
- This term is often used in the Old Testament as a general reference to anyone who destroys other people, such as an invading army.
- When God sent the angel to kill all the firstborn males in Egypt, that angel was referred to as “the destroyer of the firstborn.” This could be translated as “the one (or angel) who killed the firstborn males.”
- In the book of Revelation about the end times, Satan or some other evil spirit is called “the Destroyer.” He is the “one who destroys” because his purpose is to destroy and ruin everything God created.

(See also: angel, Egypt, firstborn, Passover)

Bible References:

- Exodus 12:23
- Hebrews 11:28
- Jeremiah 6:26
- Judges 16:24

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0006, H0007, H0622, H0398, H1104, H1197, H1820, H1826, H1942, H2000, H2015, H2026, H2040, H2254, H2255, H2717, H2718, H2763, H2764, H3238, H3341, H3381, H3423, H3582, H3615, H3617, H3772, H3807, H4191, H4229, H4591, H4658, H4889, H5218, H5221, H5307, H5362, H5420, H5422, H5428, H5595, H5642, H6365, H6789, H6979, H7665, H7667, H7703, H7722, H7760, H7843, H7921, H8045, H8074, H8077, H8316, H8552, G03550, G03960, G06220, G08530, G13110, G18420, G20490, G25060, G25070, G26470, G26730, G27040, G30890, G36450, G41990, G53510, G53560

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 3:6](#); [5:14](#); [7:7](#))

devour

Definition:

The term "devour" means to eat or consume in an aggressive manner.

- Using this word in a figurative sense, Paul warned believers to not devour one another, meaning to not attack or destroy each other with words or actions (Galatians 5:15).
- Also in a figurative sense, the term "devour" is often used with a meaning of "completely destroy" as when talking about nations devouring each other or a fire devouring buildings and people.
- This term could also be translated as "completely consume" or "totally destroy."

(See also: consume)

Bible References:

- 1 Peter 5:8
- Amos 1:10
- Exodus 24:17
- Ezekiel 16:20
- Luke 15:30
- Matthew 23:13-15
- Psalms 21:9

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0398, H0399, H0400, H0402, H1104, H1105, H3216, H3615, H3857, H3898, H7462, H7602, G20680, G26660, G27190, G53150

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 2:25](#); [4:5](#); [5:11](#); [5:12](#); [5:17](#); [6:2](#); [9:7](#); [10:16](#); [10:17](#))

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: [Ecclesiastes 3:2](#); [3:3](#); [4:2](#); [7:1](#); [8:8](#); [9:3](#); [9:4](#))

dominion

Definition:

The term "dominion" refers to power, control, or authority over people, animals, or land.

- Jesus Christ is said to have dominion over all the earth, as prophet, priest, and king.
- Satan's dominion has been defeated forever by Jesus Christ's death on the cross.
- At creation, God said that man is to have dominion over fish, birds, and all creatures on the earth.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, other ways to translate this term could include "authority" or "power" or "control."
- The phrase "have dominion over" could be translated as "rule over" or "manage."

(See also: authority, [power](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Peter 5:10-11
- Colossians 1:13
- Jude 1:25

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1166, H4474, H4475, H4896, H4910, H4915, H7287, H7300, H7980, H7985, G26340, G29040, G29610, G29630

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 9:17](#))

dream

Definition:

A dream is something that people see or experience in their minds while they are sleeping.

- Dreams often seem like they are really happening, but they are not.
- Sometimes God causes people to dream about something so they can learn from it. He may also speak directly to people in their dreams.
- In the Bible, God gave special dreams to certain people to give them a message, often about something that would happen in the future.
- A dream is different from a vision. Dreams happen while a person is asleep, but visions usually happen when a person is awake.

(See also: vision)

Bible References:

- Acts 2:16-17
- Daniel 1:17-18
- Daniel 2:1
- Genesis 37:6
- Genesis 40:4-5
- Matthew 2:13
- Matthew 2:19-21

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **8:2** Joseph's brothers hated him because their father loved him most and because Joseph had **dreamed** that he would be their ruler.
- **8:6** One night, the Pharaoh, which is what the Egyptians called their kings, had two **dreams** that disturbed him greatly. None of his advisors could tell him the meaning of the **dreams**.
- **8:7** God had given Joseph the ability to interpret **dreams**, so Pharaoh had Joseph brought to him from the prison. Joseph interpreted the **dreams** for him and said, "God is going to send seven years of plentiful harvests followed by seven years of famine."
- **16:11** So that night, Gideon went down to the camp and heard a Midianite soldier telling his friend about something he had **dreamed**. The man's friend said, "This **dream** means that Gideon's army will defeat the Midianite army!"
- **23:1** He (Joseph) did not want to shame her (Mary), so he planned to quietly divorce her. Before he could do that, an angel came and spoke to him in a **dream**.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1957, H2472, H2492, H2493, G17970, G17980, G36770

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 5:7](#))

earth, land

Definition:

The term "earth" refers to the world on which human beings and other living things live. In the Bible, this term is sometimes translated as "land" when used in a general way to refer to the ground or the soil, or when used in a specific way to refer to a particular geographical area, usually a country or nation.

- In the Bible, the term "earth" is often paired with the term "heaven" as a way of indicating the abode of humankind on the earth in contrast with the abode of God in heaven.
- This term is usually translated "land" when paired with the name of people group to denote the territory belonging to those people, such as "the land of Canaan."
- The term "earthly" is sometimes used to refer to things that are physical and/or visible in contrast to things that are non-physical and/or invisible.
- This term can be used figuratively to refer to the people who live on the earth or what the earth contains, such as in "let the earth be glad" and "he will judge the earth."

Translation Suggestions:

- This term can be translated by the word or phrase that the local language or nearby national languages use to refer to the planet earth on which we live.
- Depending on the context, "earth" could also be translated as "world" or "land" or "dirt" or "soil."
- When used figuratively, "earth" could be translated as "people on the earth" or "people living on earth" or "everything on earth."
- Ways to translate "earthly" could include "physical" or "things of this earth" or "visible."

(See also: world, [heaven](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Kings 1:38-40
- 2 Chronicles 2:11-12
- Daniel 4:35
- Luke 12:51
- Matthew 6:10
- Matthew 11:25
- Zechariah 6:5

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0127, H0772, H0776, H0778, H2789, H3007, H3335, H6083, H7494, G10930, G19190, G27090, G28860, G36250, G45780, G55170

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 5:2](#); [5:9](#); [8:14](#); [8:16](#); [10:7](#); [10:16](#); [10:17](#); [11:2](#); [11:3](#); [12:7](#))

elder, older, old

Definition:

The term “elder” or “older” refers to people (in the Bible, usually men) who have grown old enough to become mature adults and leaders within a community. For example, elders might have gray hair, have adult children, or perhaps even have grandchildren or great-grandchildren.

- The term “elder” came from the fact that elders were originally older men who, because of their age and experience, had greater wisdom.
- In the Old Testament, the elders helped lead the Israelites in matters of justice and the Law of Moses.
- In the New Testament, Jewish “elders” continued to be leaders in their communities and also were judges for the people.
- In the early Christian churches, Christian “elders” gave spiritual leadership to the local assemblies of believers. Elders in these churches sometimes included young men who were spiritually mature.
- This term could be translated as “older men” or “spiritually mature men leading the church.”

Bible References:

- 1 Chronicles 11:1-3
- 1 Timothy 3:1-3
- 1 Timothy 4:14
- Acts 5:19-21
- Acts 14:23
- Mark 11:28
- Matthew 21:23-24

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1419, H2205, H7868, G10870, G31870, G42440, G42450, G48500

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 4:13](#))

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 Ecclesiastes](#); [Ecclesiastes 1:13](#); [2:17](#); [4:3](#); [4:8](#); [5:1](#); [5:13](#); [5:14](#); [5:16](#); [6:1](#); [6:2](#); [7:14](#); [7:15](#); [7:17](#); [8:3](#); [8:5](#); [8:6](#); [8:11](#); [8:12](#); [9:3](#); [9:12](#); [10:5](#); [10:13](#); [11:2](#); [11:10](#); [12:1](#); [12:14](#))

face, facial

Definition:

The word “face” literally refers to the front part of a person’s head. This term also has several figurative meanings in the Bible.

- In the Bible, the term “face” is often used figuratively to mean a person’s presence, the front of an object, or the surface of something.
- When referring to a person, the term “face” is often used figuratively to mean the action of seeing, which can represent that person’s knowledge, perception, notice, attention, or judgment.
- In a physical sense, to “face” someone or something means to look in the direction of that person or thing.
- To “face each other” means to “look directly at each other.”
- Being “face to face” means that two people are seeing each other in person, at a close distance.
- When Jesus “steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,” it means that he very firmly decided to go.
- To “set one’s face against” people or a city means to firmly decide to no longer support, or to reject that city or person.
- The expression “face of the land” refers to the surface of the earth and often is a general reference to the whole earth. For example, a “famine covering the face of the earth” refers to a widespread famine affecting many people living on earth.
- The figurative expression “do not hide your face from your people” means “do not reject your people” or “do not desert your people” or “do not stop taking care of your people.”

Translation Suggestions:

- If possible, it is best to keep the expression or use an expression in the project language that has a similar meaning.
- The term to “face” could be translated as to “turn toward” or to “look at directly” or to “look at the face of.”
- The expression “face to face” could be translated as “up close” or “right in front of” or “in the presence of.”
- Depending on the context, the expression “before his face” could be translated as “ahead of him” or “in front of him” or “before him” or “in his presence.”
- The expression “set his face toward” could be translated as “began traveling toward” or “firmly made up his mind to go to.”
- The expression “hide his face from” could be translated as “turn away from” or “stop helping or protecting” or “reject.”
- To “set his face against” a city or people could be translated as “look at with anger and condemn” or “refuse to accept” or “decide to reject” or “condemn and reject” or “pass judgment on.”
- The expression “say it to their face” could be translated as “say it to them directly” or “say it to them in their presence” or “say it to them in person.”
- The expression “on the face of the land” could also be translated as “throughout the land” or “over the whole land” or “living throughout the land.”

Bible References:

- Deuteronomy 5:4
- Genesis 33:10

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H0600, H0639, H5869, H6440, H8389, G37990, G43830, G47500

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 7:3](#); [8:1](#); [10:10](#); [11:1](#))

faithful, faithfulness, trustworthy

Definition:

To be “faithful” to God means to consistently live according to God’s teachings. It means to be loyal to him by obeying him. The state or condition of being faithful is “faithfulness.”

- A person who is faithful can be trusted to always keep his promises and to always fulfill his responsibilities to other people.
- A faithful person perseveres in doing a task, even when it is long and difficult.
- Faithfulness to God is the consistent practice of doing what God wants us to do.

Translation Suggestions:

- In many contexts, “faithful” can be translated as “loyal” or “dedicated” or “dependable.”
- In other contexts, “faithful” can be translated by a word or phrase that means “continuing to believe” or “persevering in believing and obeying God.”
- Ways that “faithfulness” could be translated could include “persevering in believing” or “loyalty” or “trustworthiness” or “believing and obeying God.”

(See also: believe, faith, believe)

Bible References:

- Genesis 24:49
- Leviticus 26:40
- Numbers 12:7
- Joshua 2:14
- Judges 2:16-17
- 1 Samuel 2:9
- Psalm 12:1
- Proverbs 11:12-13
- Isaiah 1:26
- Jeremiah 9:7-9
- Hosea 5:7
- Luke 12:46
- Luke 16:10
- Colossians 1:7
- 1 Thessalonians 5:24
- 3 John 1:5

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **8:5** Even in prison, Joseph remained **faithful** to God, and God blessed him.
- **14:12** Even so, God was still **faithful** to His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- **15:13** The people promised to remain **faithful** to God and follow his laws.
- **17:9** David ruled with justice and **faithfulness** for many years, and God blessed him. However, toward the end of his life he sinned terribly against God.
- **35:12** “The older son said to his father, ‘All these years I have worked **faithfully** for you!’”
- **49:17** But God is **faithful** and says that if you confess your sins, he will forgive you.
- **50:4** “If you remain **faithful** to me to the end, then God will save you.”

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0529, H0530, H0539, H0540, H0571, H0898, H2181, H4603, H4604, H4820, G05690, G05710, G41030

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 12:10](#))

favor, favorable, favoritism

Definition:

The term “favor” generally means approval. Someone who favors another person regards that person positively and approves of them.

- Jesus grew up “in favor with” God and men. This means that both God and others approved of his character and behavior.
- The expression “find favor” with someone means that someone is approved of by that person.
- When a king shows favor to someone, it often means that he approves of that person’s request and grants it.
- A “favor” can also be a gesture or action towards or for another person for their benefit.
- The term “favoritism” means an attitude of acting favorably toward some people but not others. It means the inclination to pick one person over another or one thing over another because the person or item is preferred. Generally, favoritism is considered unfair.

Translation Suggestions:

- Other ways to translate the term “favor” could include “approval” or “blessing” or “benefit.”
- The “favorable year of Yahweh” could be translated as “the year (or time) when Yahweh will bring great blessing.”
- The term “favoritism” could be translated as “partiality” or “being prejudiced” or “unjust treatment.” This word is related to the word “favorite,” which means to prefer above all others.

Bible References:

- 1 Samuel 2:25-26
- 2 Chronicles 19:7
- 2 Corinthians 1:11
- Acts 24:27
- Genesis 41:16
- Genesis 47:25
- Genesis 50:5

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H0995, H1156, H1293, H1779, H1921, H2580, H2603, H2896, H5278, H5375, H5414, H5922, H6213, H6437, H6440, H7521, H7522, H7965, G11840, G36850, G43800, G43820, G54850, G54860

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 7:3](#); [9:11](#); [10:12](#))

fear, afraid, frighten

Definition:

The terms "fear" refers to the unpleasant emotion a person feels when experiencing a potential threat to their safety or well-being. In the Bible, however, the term "fear" can also mean an attitude of worship, respect, awe, or obedience toward another person, usually someone powerful such as God or a king.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, the term "fear" can be translated in various ways. Some possibilities include: "be afraid;" "deeply respect;" or "deep respect;" "revere;" or "reverence;" or perhaps "be in awe of."
- The phrase "fear not" could also be translated as "do not be afraid" or "stop being afraid."
- The sentence "The fear of God fell on all of them" might be translated in various ways. Some possibilities include: "Suddenly they all felt a deep awe and respect for God;" or "Immediately, they all felt very amazed and revered God deeply;" or "Right then, they all felt very afraid of God (because of his great power)."

(See also: awe, Yahweh, Lord, [marvel](#), [power](#))

Bible References:

- 1 John 4:18
- Acts 2:43
- Acts 19:15-17
- Genesis 50:21
- Isaiah 11:3-5
- Job 6:14
- Jonah 1:9
- Luke 12:5
- Matthew 10:28
- Proverbs 10:24-25

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0367, H0926, H1204, H1481, H1672, H1674, H1763, H2119, H2296, H2727, H2729, H2730, H2731, H2844, H2849, H2865, H3016, H3025, H3068, H3372, H3373, H3374, H4032, H4034, H4035, H4116, H4172, H6206, H6342, H6343, H6345, H6427, H7264, H7267, H7297, H7374, H7461, H7493, H8175, G08700, G11670, G11680, G11690, G16300, G17190, G21240, G21250, G29620, G53980, G53990, G54000, G54010

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 5:7](#); [8:12](#); [9:2](#); [12:5](#); [12:13](#))

feast, feasting

Definition:

The term “feast” is a very general term that refers to an event where people gather to celebrate something by eating a large meal together. In biblical times, a feast sometimes lasted for several days or more.

- Often there are special kinds of food that are eaten at a certain feast.
- The religious festivals that God commanded the Jews to celebrate usually included having a feast together. For this reason the festivals are often called “feasts.”
- In biblical times, kings and other rich and powerful people often gave feasts to entertain their family or friends.
- In the story about the lost son, the father had a special feast prepared to celebrate the return of his son.
- The term to “feast” could also be translated as to “eat lavishly” or to “celebrate by eating lots of food” or to “eat a special, large meal.”
- Depending on the context, “feast” could be translated as “celebrating together with a large meal” or “a meal with a lot of food” or “a celebration meal.”

(See also: festival, banquet)

Bible References:

- 2 Peter 2:12-14
- Genesis 26:30
- Genesis 29:22
- Genesis 40:20
- Jude 1:12-13
- Luke 2:43
- Luke 14:7-9
- Matthew 22:1

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0398, H2077, H2282, H3899, H3900, H4150, H4797, H4960, H7646, H8057, H8354, G00260, G10620, G11730, G18590, G21650, G49100

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 7:2](#))

flesh

Definition:

In the Bible, the term “flesh” literally refers to the soft tissue of the physical body of a human being or animal.

- The Bible also uses the term “flesh” in a figurative way to refer to all human beings or all living creatures.
- In the New Testament, the term “flesh” is used to refer to the sinful nature of human beings. This is often used in contrast to their spiritual nature.
- The expression “own flesh and blood” refers to someone who is biologically related to another person, such as a parent, sibling, child, or grandchild.
- The expression “flesh and blood” can also refer to a person’s ancestors or descendants.
- The expression “one flesh” refers to the physical uniting of a man and woman in marriage.

Translation Suggestions:

- In the context of an animal’s body, “flesh” could be translated as “body” or “skin” or “meat.”
- When it is used to refer generally to all living creatures, this term could be translated as “living beings” or “everything that is alive.”
- When referring in general to all people, this term could be translated as “people” or “human beings” or “everyone who lives.”
- The expression “flesh and blood” could also be translated as “relatives” or “family” or “kinfolk” or “family clan.” There may be contexts where it could be translated as “ancestors” or “descendants.”
- Some languages may have an expression that is similar in meaning to “flesh and blood.”
- The expression “become one flesh” could be translated as “unite sexually” or “become as one body” or “become like one person in body and spirit.” The translation of this expression should be checked to make sure it is acceptable in the project language and culture. (See: [euphemism](#)). It should also be understood that this is figurative, and does not mean that a man and a woman who “become one flesh” literally become one person.

Bible References:

- 1 John 2:16
- 2 John 1:7
- Ephesians 6:12
- Galatians 1:16
- Genesis 2:24
- John 1:14
- Matthew 16:17
- Romans 8:8

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H0829, H1320, H1321, H2878, H3894, H4207, H7607, H7683, G29070, G45590, G45600, G45610

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 2:3](#); [4:5](#); [5:6](#); [12:12](#))

flock, herd

Definition:

In the Bible, “flock” refers to a group of sheep or goats and “herd” refers to a group of cattle or pigs.

- Different languages may have different ways of naming groups of animals or birds.

Translation Suggestions

- Consider what terms are used in your language to refer to different groups of animals, and use the appropriate term for each kind of animal.
- If your language uses the same word to refer to both groups of sheep and cattle, then you may need to say “groups of sheep” where the Bible says only “flocks,” and “groups of cattle” where the Bible says only “herds.” Alternatively, if the Biblical context does not demand differentiation (if the text simply says “flocks and herds,” meaning all their domesticated animals) you may just use the one word once.

(See also: goat, [cow](#), pig, sheep)

Bible References:

- 1 Kings 10:28-29
- 2 Chronicles 17:11
- Deuteronomy 14:22-23
- Luke 2:8-9
- Matthew 8:30
- Matthew 26:31

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0951, H1241, H2835, H4029, H4735, H4830, H5349, H5739, H6251, H6629, H7399, H7462, G00340, G41670, G41680

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 2:7](#))

fruit, fruitful, unfruitful

Definition:

The term “fruit” literally refers to the part of a plant that can be eaten. Something that is “fruitful” has a lot of fruit. These terms are also used figuratively in the Bible.

- The Bible often uses “fruit” to refer to a person’s actions. Just as fruit on a tree shows what kind of tree it is, in the same way a person’s words and actions reveal what his character is like.
- A person can produce good or bad spiritual fruit, but the term “fruitful” always has the positive meaning of producing much good fruit.
- The term “fruitful” is also used figuratively to mean “prosperous.” This often refers to having many children and descendants, as well as having plenty of food and other wealth.
- In general, the expression “fruit of” refers to anything that comes from or that is produced by something else. For example, the “fruit of wisdom” refers to the good things that come from being wise.
- The expression “fruit of the land” refers generally to everything that the land produces for people to eat. This includes not only fruits such as grapes or dates, but also vegetables, nuts, and grains.
- The figurative expression “fruit of the Spirit” refers to godly qualities that the Holy Spirit produces in the lives of people who obey him.
- The expression “fruit of the womb” refers to “what the womb produces”—that is children.

Translation Suggestions:

- It is best to translate this term using the general word for “fruit” that is commonly used in the project language to refer to the edible fruit of a fruit tree. In many languages it may be more natural to use the plural “fruits” whenever it refers to more than one fruit.
- Depending on the context, the term “fruitful” could be translated as “producing much spiritual fruit” or “having many children” or “prosperous.”
- The expression “fruit of the land” could also be translated as “food that the land produces” or “food crops that are growing in that region.”
- When God created animals and people, he commanded them to “be fruitful and multiply,” which refers to having many offspring. This could also be translated as “have many offspring” or “have many children and descendants” or “have many children so that you will have many descendants.”
- The expression “fruit of the womb” could be translated as “what the womb produces” or “children a woman gives birth to” or just “children.” When Elizabeth says to Mary “blessed is the fruit of your womb,” she means “blessed is the child you will give birth to.” The project language may also have a different expression for this.
- Another expression “fruit of the vine,” could be translated as “vine fruit” or “grapes.”
- Depending on the context, the expression “will be more fruitful” could also be translated as “will produce more fruit” or “will have more children” or “will be prosperous.”
- The apostle Paul’s expression “fruitful labor” could be translated as “work that brings very good results” or “efforts that result in many people believing in Jesus.”
- The “fruit of the Spirit” could also be translated as “works that the Holy Spirit produces” or “words and actions that show that the Holy Spirit is working in someone.”

(See also: descendant, grain, grape, Holy Spirit, vine, womb)

Bible References:

- Galatians 5:23
- Genesis 1:11
- Luke 8:15
- Matthew 3:8

- Matthew 7:17

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0004, H1061, H1063, H1069, H2233, H2981, H3581, H3759, H3899, H3978, H4022, H5108, H6509, H6529, H7019, H8393, H8570, G10810, G25900, G25920, G25930, G37030, G50520, G53520

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 2:5](#))

gate, gate bars, gatekeeper, gateposts, gateway

Definition:

The term “gate” refers to an access point in a fence, wall, or other kind of barrier that surrounds a house, property, city, etc.

- A city gate could be opened to allow people, animals, and cargo to travel in and out of the city.
- To protect the city, its walls and gates were thick and strong. Gates were closed and locked with a metal or wooden bar to prevent enemy soldiers from entering the city.
- A “bar” for a gate refers to a wood or metal bar that can be moved into place so that the doors of the gate cannot be opened from the outside.
- In Bible times, a city gate was often the social center for that town or city. It was a place where news of current events was exchanged between people, where business transactions occurred, and where civil judgments were made.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, other ways to translate “gate” could be “door” or “wall opening” or “barrier” or “entranceway.”
- The phrase “bars of the gate” could be translated as “gate bolts” or “wooden beams to lock the gate” or “metal locking rods of the gate.”

Bible References:

- Acts 9:24
- Acts 10:18
- Deuteronomy 21:18-19
- Genesis 19:1
- Genesis 24:60
- Matthew 7:13

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1817, H5592, H6607, H8179, G23740, G44390, G44400

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 12:4](#))

generation

Definition:

The term “generation” generally refers to a group of people who are all alive at the same time. They are all born in the same general time period and are therefore about the same age.

- A generation can also refer to a span of time. In Bible times, a generation was usually considered to be about 40 years.
- Parents and their children are from two different generations.
- In the Bible, the term “generation” is also used figuratively to refer generally to people who share common characteristics.

Translation Suggestions

- The phrase “this generation” or “people of this generation” could be translated as “the people living now” or “you people.”
- “This wicked generation” could also be translated as “these wicked people living now.”
- The expression “from generation to generation” or “from one generation to the next” could be translated as “people living now, as well as their children and grandchildren” or “people in every time period” or “people in this time period and future time periods” or “all people and their descendants.”
- “A generation to come will serve him; they will tell the next generation about Yahweh” could also be translated as “Many people in the future will serve Yahweh and will tell their children and grandchildren about him.”

(See also: descendant, [evil](#), ancestor)

Bible References:

- Acts 15:19-21
- Exodus 3:13-15
- Genesis 15:16
- Genesis 17:7
- Mark 8:12
- Matthew 11:16
- Matthew 23:34-36
- Matthew 24:34

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1755, H1859, H8435, G10740

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

God

Definition:

In the Bible, the term “God” refers to the eternal being who created the universe out of nothing. God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God’s personal name is “Yahweh.”

- God has always existed; he existed before anything else existed, and he will continue to exist forever.
- He is the only true God and has authority over everything in the universe.
- God is perfectly righteous, infinitely wise, holy, sinless, just, merciful, and loving.
- He is a covenant-keeping God, who always fulfills his promises.
- People were created to worship God and he is the only one they should worship.
- God revealed his name as “Yahweh,” which means “he is” or “I am” or “the One who (always) exists.”
- The Bible also teaches about false “gods,” which are nonliving idols that people wrongly worship.

Translation Suggestions:

- Ways to translate “God” could include “Deity” or “Creator” or “Supreme Being” or “Supreme Creator” or “Infinite Sovereign Lord” or “Eternal Supreme Being.”
- Consider how God is referred to in a local or national language. There may also already be a word for “God” in the language being translated. If so, it is important to make sure that this word fits the characteristics of the one true God as described above.
- Many languages capitalize the first letter of the word for the one true God, to distinguish it from the word for a false god. Another way to make this distinction would be to use different terms for “God” and “god.”
NOTE: In the biblical text, when a person who does not worship Yahweh speaks about Yahweh and uses the word “god,” it is acceptable to render the term without a capital letter in reference to Yahweh (see Jonah 1:6, 3:9).
- The phrase “I will be their God and they will be my people” could also be translated as “I, God, will rule over these people and they will worship me.”

(Translation suggestions: How to Translate Names)

(See also: create, [false god](#), God the Father, Holy Spirit, [false god](#), Son of God, Yahweh)

Bible References:

- 1 John 1:7
- 1 Samuel 10:7-8
- 1 Timothy 4:10
- Colossians 1:16
- Deuteronomy 29:14-16
- Ezra 3:1-2
- Genesis 1:2
- Hosea 4:11-12
- Isaiah 36:6-7
- James 2:20
- Jeremiah 5:5
- John 1:3
- Joshua 3:9-11
- Lamentations 3:43
- Micah 4:5
- Philippians 2:6
- Proverbs 24:12

- Psalms 47:9

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **1:1 God** created the universe and everything in it in six days.
- **1:15 God** made man and woman in his own image.
- **5:3** "I am **God** Almighty. I will make a covenant with you."
- **9:14 God** said, "I AM WHO I AM. Tell them, 'I AM has sent me to you.' Also tell them, 'I am Yahweh, the **God** of your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is my name forever.'"
- **10:2** Through these plagues, **God** showed Pharaoh that he is more powerful than Pharaoh and all of Egypt's gods.
- **16:1** The Israelites began to worship the Canaanite gods instead of Yahweh, the true **God**.
- **22:7** "You, my son, will be called the prophet of the **Most High God** who will prepare the people to receive the Messiah!"
- **24:9** There is only one **God**. But John heard **God** the Father speak, and saw Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit when he baptized Jesus.
- **25:7** "Worship only the Lord your **God** and only serve him."
- **28:1** "There is only one who is good, and that is **God**."
- **49:9** But **God** loved everyone in the world so much that he gave his only Son so that whoever believes in Jesus will not be punished for his sins, but will live with **God** forever.
- **50:16** But some day **God** will create a new heaven and a new earth that will be perfect.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0136, H0305, H0410, H0426, H0430, H0433, H2486, H2623, H3068, H3069, H3863, H4136, H6697, G01120, G05160, G09320, G09350, G10960, G11400, G20980, G21240, G21280, G21500, G21520, G21530, G22990, G23040, G23050, G23120, G23130, G23140, G23150, G23160, G23170, G23180, G23190, G23200, G33610, G37850, G41510, G52070, G53770, G54630, G55370, G55380

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:13](#); [2:24](#); [2:26](#); [3:10](#); [3:11](#); [3:13](#); [3:14](#); [3:17](#); [3:18](#); [5:1](#); [5:2](#); [5:4](#); [5:6](#); [5:7](#); [5:18](#); [5:19](#); [5:20](#); [6:2](#); [7:13](#); [7:14](#); [7:18](#); [7:26](#); [7:29](#); [8:2](#); [8:12](#); [8:13](#); [8:15](#); [8:17](#); [9:1](#); [9:7](#); [11:5](#); [11:9](#); [12:7](#); [12:13](#); [12:14](#))

god, false god, goddess, idol, idolater, idolatrous, idolatry

Definition:

A false god is something that people worship instead of the one true God. The term “goddess” refers specifically to a female false god.

- These false gods or goddesses do not exist. Yahweh is the only God.
- People sometimes make objects into idols to worship as symbols of their false gods.
- In the Bible, God’s people frequently turned away from obeying him in order to worship false gods.
- Demons often deceive people into believing that the false gods and idols they worship have power.
- Baal, Dagon, and Molech were three of the many false gods that were worshiped by people in Bible times.
- Asherah and Artemis (Diana) were two of the goddesses that ancient peoples worshiped.

An idol is an object that people make so they can worship it. Something is described as “idolatrous” if it involves giving honor to something other than the one true God.

- People make idols to represent the false gods that they worship.
- These false gods do not exist; there is no God besides Yahweh.
- Sometimes demons work through an idol to make it seem like it has power, even though it does not.
- Idols are often made of valuable materials like gold, silver, bronze, or expensive wood.
- An “idolatrous kingdom” means a “kingdom of people who worship idols” or a “kingdom of people who worship earthly things.”
- The term “idolatrous figure” is another word for a “carved image” or an “idol.”

Translation Suggestions:

- There may already be a word for “god” or “false god” in the language or in a nearby language.
- The term “idol” could be used to refer to false gods.
- In English, a lower case “g” is used to refer to false gods, and upper case “G” is used to refer to the one true God. Other languages also do that.
- Another option would be to use a completely different word to refer to the false gods.
- Some languages may add a word to specify whether the false god is described as male or female.

(See also: [God](#), Asherah, Baal, Molech, demon, image, kingdom, worship)

Bible References:

- Genesis 35:2
- Exodus 32:1
- Psalms 31:6
- Psalms 81:8-10
- Isaiah 44:20
- Acts 7:41
- Acts 7:43
- Acts 15:20
- Acts 19:27
- Romans 2:22
- Galatians 4:8-9
- Galatians 5:19-21
- Colossians 3:5
- 1 Thessalonians 1:9

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **10:2** Through these plagues, God showed Pharaoh that he is more powerful than Pharaoh and all of Egypt's **gods**.
- **13:4** Then God gave them the covenant and said, "I am Yahweh, your God, who saved you from slavery in Egypt. Do not worship other **gods**."
- **14:2** They (Canaanites) worshiped false **gods** and did many evil things.
- **16:1** The Israelites began to worship the Canaanite **gods** instead of Yahweh, the true God.
- **18:13** But most of Judah's kings were evil, corrupt, and they worshiped idols. Some of the kings even sacrificed their children to false **gods**.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0205, H0367, H0410, H0426, H0430, H0457, H1322, H1544, H1892, H2553, H3649, H4656, H4906, H5236, H5566, H6089, H6090, H6091, H6456, H6459, H6673, H6736, H6754, H7723, H8163, H8251, H8267, H8441, H8655, G14930, G14940, G14950, G14960, G14970, G22990, G27120

(Go back to: [Introduction to Ecclesiastes](#))

gold, golden

Definition:

Gold is a yellow, high quality metal that was used for making jewelry and religious objects. It was the most valuable metal in ancient times.

- In Bible times, many different kinds of objects were made out of solid gold or were covered with a thin layer of gold.
- These objects included earrings and other jewelry, and idols, altars, and other objects used in the tabernacle or temple, such as the ark of the covenant.
- In Old Testament times, gold was used as a means of exchange in buying and selling. It was weighed on a scale to determine its value.
- Later on, gold and other metals such as silver were used to make coins to use in buying and selling
- When referring to something that is not solid gold, but only has a thin covering of gold, the term “golden” or “gold-covered” or “gold-overlaid” could also be used.
- Sometimes an object is described as “gold-colored,” which means it has the yellow color of gold, but may not actually be made of gold.

(See also: altar, ark of the covenant, [false god](#), [silver](#), tabernacle, [temple](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Peter 1:7
- 1 Timothy 2:8-10
- 2 Chronicles 1:15
- Acts 3:6
- Daniel 2:32

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1220, H1722, H2091, H2742, H3800, H5458, H6884, H6885, G55520, G55530, G55540, G55570

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 2:8](#); [12:6](#))

good, right, pleasant, better, best

Definition:

The term “good” generally refers to a positive evaluation of the quality of something or someone, often in a moral or emotional sense. However, the term conveys various nuances throughout the Bible depending on the context.

- Something that is “good” could be emotionally pleasant, morally right, excellent, helpful, suitable, or profitable.
- In the Bible, the general meaning of “good” is often contrasted with “evil.”

Translation Suggestions:

- The general term for “good” in the target language should be used wherever this general meaning is accurate and natural, especially in contexts where it is contrasted to evil.
- Depending on the context, other ways to translate this term could include “kind” or “excellent” or “pleasing to God” or “righteous” or “morally upright” or “profitable.”
- “Good land” could be translated as “fertile land” or “productive land”; a “good crop” could be translated as a “plentiful harvest” or “large amount of crops.”
- The phrase “do good to” means to do something that benefits others and could be translated as “be kind to” or “help” or “benefit” someone or “cause someone to prosper.”
- To “do good on the Sabbath” means to “do things that help others on the Sabbath.”
- Depending on the context, ways to translate the term “goodness” could include “blessing” or “kindness” or “moral perfection” or “righteousness” or “purity.”

(See also: [righteous](#), [prosper](#), [evil](#))

Bible References:

- Galatians 5:22-24
- Genesis 1:12
- Genesis 2:9
- Genesis 2:17
- James 3:13
- Romans 2:4

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **1:4** God saw that what he had created was **good**.
- **1:11** God planted the tree of the knowledge of **good** and evil.
- **1:12** Then God said, “It is not **good** for man to be alone.”
- **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.”
- **8:12** “You tried to do evil when you sold me as a slave, but God used the evil for **good**!”
- **14:15** Joshua was a **good** leader because he trusted and obeyed God.
- **18:13** Some of these kings were **good** men who ruled justly and worshiped God.
- **28:1** “**Good** teacher, what must I do to have eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me ‘**good**?’ There is only one who is **good**, and that is God.”

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0117, H0145, H0155, H0202, H0239, H0410, H1580, H1926, H1935, H2532, H2617, H2623, H2869, H2895, H2896, H2898, H3190, H3191, H3276, H3474, H3788, H3966, H4261, H4399, H5232, H5750, H6287, H6643, H6743, H7075, H7368, H7399, H7443, H7999, H8231, H8232, H8233, H8389, H8458, G00140, G00150, G00180, G00190, G05150, G07440, G08650, G09790, G13800, G20950, G20970, G21060, G21070, G21080, G21090, G21140, G21150, G21330, G21400, G21620, G21630, G21740, G22930, G25650, G25670, G25700, G25730, G28870, G29860, G31400, G36170, G37760, G41470, G46320, G46740, G48510, G52230, G52240, G53580, G55420, G55430, G55440

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 2:3](#); [2:24](#); [3:12](#); [3:13](#); [3:22](#); [4:6](#); [4:9](#); [4:13](#); [5:5](#); [5:18](#); [6:3](#); [6:9](#); [6:12](#); [7:1](#); [7:2](#); [7:3](#); [7:5](#); [7:8](#); [7:10](#); [7:11](#); [7:14](#); [7:18](#); [7:20](#); [7:26](#); [8:12](#); [8:15](#); [9:4](#); [9:7](#); [9:16](#); [9:18](#); [11:6](#); [12:14](#))

hand

Definition:

The word “hand” refers to the part of the body at the end of the arm. This term is often used figuratively to refer to a person’s power, control, or action, whether it be in reference to God or in reference to a human person.

Some of the various uses of the term “hand” include the following:

- The term “hand” can be used figuratively to refer to the position of being “beside” a person, an object, or a location.
- To “lay a hand on” means to “harm.” To “save from the hand of” means to prevent someone from being harmed by another person.
- The position of being “on the right hand” means “on the right side” or “to the right.”
- The expression “by the hand of” someone means “by” or “through” the action of that person. For example, the phrase “by the hand of the Lord” means that God caused something to happen.
- Expressions such as “hand over to” or “deliver into the hands of” refer to causing someone to be under the control or power of someone else.
- The term “laying on of hands” can refer to placing a hand on a person in order to dedicate that person to God’s service, to pray for healing, or to ask God to bless that person.
- When Paul says “written by my hand,” it means that he himself wrote that part of the letter rather than speaking it to someone else to write down.

Translation Suggestions

- These expressions and other figures of speech could be translated using other figurative expressions that have the same meaning. Or the meaning could be translated using direct, literal language (see examples above).
- The expression “handed him the scroll” could also be translated as “gave him the scroll” or “put the scroll in his hand.” It was not given to him permanently, but just for the purpose of using it at that time.
- An expression such as “delivered them into the hands of their enemies” or “handed them over to their enemies,” could be translated as “allowed their enemies to conquer them” or “caused them to be captured by their enemies” or “empowered their enemies to gain control over them.”
- To “die by the hand of” could be translated as “be killed by.”
- The expression “on the right hand of” could be translated as “on the right side of.”
- In regard to Jesus being “seated at the right hand of God,” if this does not communicate in the language that it refers to a position of high honor and equal authority, a different expression with that meaning could be used. Or a short explanation could be added: “on the right side of God, in the position of highest authority.”

(See also: [power](#), right hand, honor, [bless](#))

Bible References:

- Acts 7:25
- Acts 8:17
- Acts 11:21
- Genesis 9:5
- Genesis 14:20
- John 3:35
- Mark 7:32
- Matthew 6:3

Word Data:

- Strong's: H2026, H2651, H2947, H2948, H3027, H3028, H3225, H3231, H3233, H3709, H7126, H7138, H8040, H8042, H8168, G07100, G11880, G14480, G14510, G21760, G29020, G40840, G44740, G54950, G54960, G54970

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 2:11](#); [2:24](#); [4:5](#); [4:6](#); [5:6](#); [5:14](#); [5:15](#); [7:18](#); [7:26](#); [9:1](#); [9:10](#); [10:18](#); [11:6](#))

harvest, reap

Definition:

The term “harvest” refers to the gather the ripe fruits, vegetables, seeds, or grains from the plants on which they were growing. The term “reap” means to harvest crops.

- The harvest time normally happens at the end of a growing season.
- The Israelites held a “Festival of Harvest” or “Festival of Ingathering” to celebrate the reaping of the food crops. God commanded them to offer the first fruits of these crops as a sacrifice to him.
- In biblical times, reapers usually harvested crops by hand, either pulling up the plants or cutting them with a sharp cutting tool.

Translation Suggestions:

- It is best to translate the concept with the word that is commonly used in the language to refer to the harvesting of crops.
- The event of harvesting could be translated as “time of gathering in” or “crop gathering time” or “fruit picking time.”
- The verb to “harvest” could be translated as to “gather in” or to “pick up” or to “collect.”

(See also: firstfruits, festival, good news)

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 9:9-11
- 2 Samuel 21:7-9
- Galatians 6:9-10
- Isaiah 17:11
- James 5:7-8
- Leviticus 19:9
- Matthew 9:38
- Ruth 1:22
- Galatians 6:9-10
- Matthew 6:25-26
- Matthew 13:30
- Matthew 13:36-39
- Matthew 25:24

Word Data:

- Strong's: H2758, H4395, H4672 H7105, H7114, H7938, G02700, G23250, G23260, G23270

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 11:4](#))

head

Definition:

The word “head” refers to the uppermost body part of a human body, above the neck. This term is often used figuratively to mean many different things, including “top,” “first,” “beginning,” “source,” and other concepts.

Some examples of various uses of the term “head” include:

- The expression “no razor will ever touch his head” means that he should never cut or shave his hair.
- The expression “let their blood be on his own head” means that the man is responsible for their deaths and will receive the punishment for that.
- The expression “heads of grain” refers to the top part of wheat or barley plants that contains the seeds. Similarly, the expression “head of a mountain” refers to the top part of the mountain.
- The term “head” can also refer to the beginning or source of something, or the first in a series of things (can be objects or people).
- Often the term “head” refers to the most important person in a group or to a person who is in authority over others. For example, the phrase “You have made me the head over nations” means “You have made me the ruler...” or “You have given me authority over....”

Translation Suggestions

- Depending on the context, the term “head” could be translated as “authority” or “ruler” or “the one who is responsible for.”
- The expression “will be on his own head” could be translated as “will be on him” or “he will be punished for” or “he will be held responsible for” or “he will be considered guilty for.”
- Depending on the context, some other ways to translate this term might include “top” or “beginning” or “source” or “leader.”

(See also: chief, grain)

Bible References:

- 1 Chronicles 1:51-54
- 1 Kings 8:1-2
- 1 Samuel 9:22
- Colossians 2:10
- Colossians 2:19
- Numbers 1:4

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0441, H1270, H1538, H3852, H4425, H4761, H4763, H5110, H5324, H6285, H6287, H6797, H6915, H6936, H7139, H7144, H7146, H7217, H7226, H7218, H7541, H7636, H7641, H7872, G03460, G07550, G27750, G27760, G47190

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 2:14](#); [3:11](#); [9:8](#))

heart

Definition:

The term “heart” refers to the internal bodily organ that pumps blood throughout the body in people and animals. However, in the Bible the term “heart” is often used figuratively to refer to a person’s thoughts, emotions, desires, or will.

- To have a “hard heart” is a common expression that means a person stubbornly refuses to obey God.
- The expressions “with all my heart” or “with my whole heart” mean to do something with complete sincerity, commitment, or willingness, holding nothing back.
- The expression “take it to heart” means to treat something seriously and apply it to one’s life.
- The term “brokenhearted” describes a person who is very sad. That person has been deeply hurt emotionally.

Translation Suggestions

- Some languages use a different body part such as “stomach” or “liver” to refer to these ideas.
- Other languages may use one word to express some of these concepts and another word to express others.
- If “heart” or other body part does not have this meaning, some languages may need to express this literally with terms such as “thoughts” or “emotions” or “desires.”
- Depending on the context, “with all my heart” or “with my whole heart” could be translated as “with all my energy” or “with complete dedication” or “completely” or “with total commitment.”
- The expression “take it to heart” could be translated as “treat it seriously” or “carefully think about it.”
- The expression “hard-hearted” could also be translated as “stubbornly rebellious” or “refusing to obey” or “continually disobeying God.”
- Ways to translate “brokenhearted” could include “very sad” or “feeling deeply hurt.”

(See also: hard)

Bible References:

- 1 John 3:17
- 1 Thessalonians 2:4
- 2 Thessalonians 3:13-15
- Acts 8:22
- Acts 15:9
- Luke 8:15
- Mark 2:6
- Matthew 5:8
- Matthew 22:37

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H1079, H2436, H2504, H2910, H3519, H3629, H3820, H3821, H3823, H3824, H3825, H3826, H4578, H5315, H5640, H7130, H7307, H7356, H7907, G06740, G12820, G12710, G21330, G25880, G25890, G46410, G46980, G55900

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:13](#); [1:16](#); [1:17](#); [2:1](#); [2:3](#); [2:10](#); [2:15](#); [2:20](#); [2:22](#); [2:23](#); [3:11](#); [3:17](#); [3:18](#); [5:20](#); [7:2](#); [7:3](#); [7:4](#); [7:7](#); [7:21](#); [7:22](#); [7:26](#); [8:5](#); [8:9](#); [8:11](#); [8:16](#); [9:1](#); [9:3](#); [9:7](#); [10:2](#); [10:3](#); [11:9](#); [11:10](#))

heaven, sky, heavens, heavenly

Definition:

The term that is translated as “heaven” usually refers to where God lives. The same word can also mean “sky,” depending on the context.

- The term “heavens” refers to everything we see above the earth, including the sun, moon, and stars. It also includes the heavenly bodies, such as far-off planets, that we can’t directly see from the earth.
- The term “sky” refers to the blue expanse above the earth that has clouds and the air we breathe. Often the sun and moon are also said to be “up in the sky.”
- In some contexts in the Bible, the word “heaven” could refer to either the sky or the place where God lives.

Translation Suggestions:

- For “kingdom of heaven” in the book of Matthew, it is best to keep the word “heaven” since this is distinctive to Matthew’s gospel.
- The terms “heavens” or “heavenly bodies” could also be translated as “sun, moon, and stars” or “all the stars in the universe.”
- The phrase, “stars of heaven” could be translated as “stars in the sky” or “stars in the galaxy” or “stars in the universe.”

(See also: kingdom of God)

Bible References:

- 1 Kings 8:22-24
- 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10
- 1 Thessalonians 4:17
- Deuteronomy 9:1
- Ephesians 6:9
- Genesis 1:1
- Genesis 7:11
- John 3:12
- John 3:27
- Matthew 5:18
- Matthew 5:46-48

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **4:2** They even began building a tall tower to reach **heaven**.
- **14:11** He (God) gave them bread from **heaven**, called “manna.”
- **23:7** Suddenly, the skies were filled with angels praising God, saying, “Glory to God in **heaven** and peace on earth to the people he favors!”
- **29:9** Then Jesus said, “This is what my **heavenly** Father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”
- **37:9** Then Jesus looked up to **heaven** and said, “Father, thank you for hearing me.”
- **42:11** Then Jesus went up to **heaven**, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H1534, H6160, H6183, H7834, H8064, H8065, G09320, G20320, G33210, G37700, G37710, G37720

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:13](#); [2:3](#); [3:1](#); [5:2](#); [10:20](#))

holy, holiness, unholy, sacred

Definition:

The terms “holy” and “holiness” refer to the character of God that is totally set apart and separated from everything that is sinful and imperfect.

- Only God is absolutely holy. He makes people and things holy.
- A person who is holy belongs to God and has been set apart for the purpose of serving God and bringing him glory.
- An object that God has declared to be holy is one that he has set apart for his glory and use, such as an altar that is for the purpose of offering sacrifices to him.
- People cannot approach him unless he allows them to, because he is holy and they are merely human beings, sinful and imperfect.
- In the Old Testament, God set apart the priests as holy for special service to him. They had to be ceremonially cleansed from sin in order to approach God.
- God also set apart as holy certain places and things that belonged to him or in which he revealed himself, such as his temple.

Literally, the term “unholy” means “not holy.” It describes someone or something that does not honor God.

- This word is used to describe someone who dishonors God by rebelling against him.
- A thing that is called “unholy” could be described as being common, profane or unclean. It does not belong to God.

The term “sacred” describes something that relates to worshiping God or to the pagan worship of false gods.

- In the Old Testament, the term “sacred” was oftentimes used to describe the stone pillars and other objects used in the worship of false gods. This could also be translated as “religious.”
- “Sacred songs” and “sacred music” refer to music that was sung or played for God’s glory. This could be translated as “music for worshiping Yahweh” or “songs that praise God.”
- The phrase “sacred duties” referred to the “religious duties” or “rituals” that a priest performed to lead people in worshiping God. It could also refer to the rituals performed by a pagan priest to worship a false god.

Translation Suggestions:

- Ways to translate “holy” might include “set apart for God” or “belonging to God” or “completely pure” or “perfectly sinless” or “separated from sin.”
- To “make holy” is often translated as “sanctify” in English. It could also be translated as “set apart (someone) for God’s glory.”
- Ways to translate “unholy” could include “not holy” or “not belonging to God” or “not honoring to God” or “not godly.”
- In some contexts, “unholy” could be translated as “unclean.”

(See also: Holy Spirit, consecrate, sanctify, set apart)

Bible References:

- Genesis 28:22
- 2 Kings 3:2
- Lamentations 4:1
- Ezekiel 20:18-20
- Matthew 7:6

- Mark 8:38
- Acts 7:33
- Acts 11:8
- Romans 1:2
- 2 Corinthians 12:3-5
- Colossians 1:22
- 1 Thessalonians 3:13
- 1 Thessalonians 4:7
- 2 Timothy 3:15

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **1:16** He (God) blessed the seventh day and made it **holy**, because on this day he rested from his work.
- **9:12** "You are standing on **holy** ground."
- **13:1** "If you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my prized possession, a kingdom of priests, and a **holy** nation."
- **13:5** "Always be sure to keep the Sabbath day **holy**."
- **22:5** "So the baby will be **holy**, the Son of God."
- **50:2** As we wait for Jesus to return, God wants us to live in a way that is **holy** and that honors him.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0430, H2455, H2623, H4676, H4720, H6918, H6922, H6942, H6944, H6948, G00370, G00380, G00400, G00400, G00410, G00420, G04620, G18590, G21500, G24120, G24130, G28390, G37410, G37420

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 8:10](#))

horse, warhorse, horseback

Definition:

A horse is a large, four-legged animal that in Bible times was mostly used for war and for transporting people.

- Some horses were used to pull carts or chariots, while others were used to carry individual riders.
- In the Bible, horses were considered to be valuable possessions and a measure of wealth, mainly because of their use in war. For example, part of King Solomon's great wealth was the thousands of horses and chariots that he had.
- Animals that are similar to the horse are the donkey and the mule.
- Horses often wear a bit and bridle on their heads so they can be guided.

(See also: chariot, donkey, Solomon)

Bible References:

- 1 Chronicles 18:4
- 2 Kings 2:11
- Exodus 14:23-25
- Ezekiel 23:5-7
- Zechariah 6:8

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0047, H5483, H5484, H6571, H7409, G24620

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 10:7](#))

house, household

Definition:

The term “house” refers to a small building, shelter, or tent, usually the place where a family sleeps. The term is often used figuratively in the Bible to mean various concepts such as “household” or “descendants,” etc.

- Sometimes the term “house” means “household,” referring to all the people who live together in one house or multi-structure home compound (whether buildings or tents), including family members and all their servants.
- Sometimes the term “house” means “family” or “descendants,” referring to all the people related to or descended from a particular person. For example, the phrase “house of David” refers to all the descendants of King David.
- The terms “house of God” and “house of Yahweh” refer to the tabernacle or temple. These expressions can also refer generally to a central place where Yahweh was worshipped.
- The phrase “house of Israel” can refer generally to the entire nation of Israel or more specifically to the tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel.

Translation Suggestions

- Depending on the context, “house” could be translated as “household” or “people” or “family” or “descendants” or “temple” or “dwelling place.”
- The phrase “house of David” could be translated as “clan of David” or “family of David” or “descendants of David.” Related expressions could be translated in a similar way.
- Different ways to translate “house of Israel” could include “people of Israel” or “Israel’s descendants” or “Israelites.”
- The phrase “house of Yahweh” could be translated as “Yahweh’s temple” or “place where Yahweh is worshiped” or “place where Yahweh meets with his people” or “where Yahweh dwells.” The phrase “house of God” could be translated in a similar way.

(See also: descendant, house of God, tabernacle, [temple](#), house of David, kingdom of Israel)

Bible References:

- Acts 7:42
- Acts 7:49
- Genesis 39:4
- Genesis 41:40
- Luke 8:39
- Matthew 10:6
- Matthew 15:24

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H1004, H1005, G36090, G36130, G36140, G36240

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 2:4](#); [2:7](#); [4:14](#); [5:1](#); [7:2](#); [10:18](#); [12:3](#); [12:5](#))

inherit, inheritance, heir

Definition:

The term “inherit” refers to receiving something valuable from a parent after a parent dies. The term can also refer to receiving something valuable from some other person because of a special relationship with that person. An “inheritance” is the things that are received, and an “heir” is a person who receives an inheritance.

- A physical inheritance that is received may be money, land, or other kinds of property.
- God promised Abraham and his descendants that they would inherit the land of Canaan, that it would belong to them forever.

Translation Suggestions:

- As always, consider first whether there are already terms in the target language for the concept of an heir or an inheritance, and use those terms.
- Depending on the context, other ways that the term “inherit” could be translated might include “receive” or “possess” or “come into possession of.”
- Ways to translate “inheritance” could include “promised gift” or “secure possession.”
- The term “heir” could be translated with a word or phrase that means “privileged child who receives the father’s possessions.”
- The term “heritage” could be translated as “inherited blessings.”

(See also: heir, Canaan, Promised Land, possess)

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 6:9
- 1 Peter 1:4
- 2 Samuel 21:3
- Acts 7:4-5
- Deuteronomy 20:16
- Galatians 5:21
- Genesis 15:7
- Hebrews 9:15
- Jeremiah 2:7
- Luke 15:11
- Matthew 19:29
- Psalm 79:1

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **4:6** When Abram arrived in Canaan God said, “Look all around you. I will give to you and your descendants all the land that you can see as an **inheritance**.”
- **27:1** One day, an expert in the Jewish law came to Jesus to test him, saying, “Teacher, what must I do to **inherit** eternal life?”
- **35:3** “There was a man who had two sons. The younger son told his father, ‘Father, I want my **inheritance** now!’ So the father divided his property between the two sons.”

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H2490, H2506, H3423, H3425, H4181, H5157, H5159, G28160, G28170, G28190, G28200

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 7:11](#))

Israel, Israelites

Facts:

The term "Israel" is the name that God gave to Jacob. Often it refers to the nation that is descended from him.

- The name Israel probably means "He struggles with God."
- The descendants of Jacob became known as the "sons of Israel" or the "people of Israel" or the "nation of Israel" or the "Israelites."
- God formed his covenant with the people of Israel. They were his chosen people.
- The nation of Israel consisted of twelve tribes.
- Soon after King Solomon died, Israel was divided into two kingdoms: the southern kingdom, called "Judah," and the northern kingdom, called "Israel."
- Often the term "Israel" can be translated as "the people of Israel" or "the nation of Israel," depending on the context.

(See also: Jacob, kingdom of Israel, Judah, nation, twelve tribes of Israel)

Bible References:

- 1 Chronicles 10:1
- 1 Kings 8:2
- Acts 2:36
- Acts 7:24
- Acts 13:23
- John 1:49-51
- Luke 24:21
- Mark 12:29
- Matthew 2:6
- Matthew 27:9
- Philippians 3:4-5

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **8:15** The descendants of the twelve sons became the twelve tribes of **Israel**.
- **9:3** The Egyptians forced the **Israelites** to build many buildings and even whole cities.
- **9:5** A certain **Israelite** woman gave birth to a baby boy.
- **10:1** They said, "This is what the God of **Israel** says, 'Let my people go!'"
- **14:12** But despite all this, the people of *_Israel_* complained and grumbled against God and against Moses.
- **15:9** God fought for **Israel** that day. He caused the Amorites to be confused and he sent large hailstones that killed many of the Amorites.
- **15:12** After this battle, God gave each tribe of **Israel** *its own section of the Promised Land. Then God gave _Israel_ peace along all its borders.*
- **16:16** So God punished *_Israel_* again for worshipping idols.
- **43:6** "Men of **Israel**, Jesus was a man who did many mighty signs and wonders by the power of God, as you have seen and already know."

Word Data:

- Strong's: H3478, H3479, H3481, H3482, G09350, G24740, G24750

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:12](#))

Jerusalem

Facts:

Jerusalem was originally an ancient Canaanite city that later became the most important city in Israel. It is located about 34 kilometers west of the Salt Sea and just north of Bethlehem. It is still the capital city of Israel today.

- The name "Jerusalem" is first mentioned in the book of Joshua. Other Old Testament names for this city include "Salem" "city of Jebus," and "Zion." Both "Jerusalem" and "Salem," have the root meaning of "peace."
- Jerusalem was originally a Jebusite fortress called "Zion" which King David captured and made into his capital city.
- It was in Jerusalem that David's son Solomon built the first temple in Jerusalem, on Mount Moriah, which was the mountain where Abraham had offered his son Isaac to God. The temple was rebuilt there after it was destroyed by the Babylonians.
- Because the temple was in Jerusalem, the major Jewish festivals were celebrated there.
- People normally referred to going "up" to Jerusalem since it is located in the mountains.

(See also: Babylon, Christ, [David](#), Jebusites, Jesus, Solomon, [temple](#), Zion)

Bible References:

- Galatians 4:26-27
- John 2:13
- Luke 4:9-11
- Luke 13:5
- Mark 3:7-8
- Mark 3:20-22
- Matthew 3:6
- Matthew 4:23-25
- Matthew 20:17

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **17:5** David conquered **Jerusalem** and made it his capital city.
- **18:2** In **Jerusalem**, Solomon built the Temple for which his father David had planned and gathered materials.
- **20:7** They (Babylonians) captured the city of **Jerusalem**, destroyed the Temple, and took away all the treasures of the city and the Temple.
- **20:12** So, after seventy years in exile, a small group of Jews returned to the city of **Jerusalem** in Judah.
- **38:1** About three years after Jesus first began preaching and teaching publicly, Jesus told his disciples that he wanted to celebrate this Passover with them in **Jerusalem**, and that he would be killed there.
- **38:2** After Jesus and the disciples arrived in **Jerusalem**, Judas went to the Jewish leaders and offered to betray Jesus to them in exchange for money.
- **42:8** "It was also written in the scriptures that my disciples will proclaim that everyone should repent in order to receive forgiveness for their sins. They will do this starting in **Jerusalem**, and then go to all people groups everywhere."
- **42:11** Forty days after Jesus rose from the dead, he told his disciples, "Stay in **Jerusalem** until you receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you."

Word Data:

- Strong's: H3389, H3390, G24140, G24150, G24190

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:1](#); [1:12](#); [1:16](#); [2:7](#); [2:9](#))

joy, joyful, rejoice, glad

Definition:

joy

The term “joy” refers to a feeling of delight or deep satisfaction. The related term “joyful” describes a person who feels very glad and is full of deep happiness.

- A person feels joy when he has a deep sense that what he is experiencing is very good.
- God is the one who gives true joy to people.
- Having joy does not depend on pleasant circumstances. God can give people joy even when very difficult things are happening in their lives.
- Sometimes places are described as joyful, such as houses or cities. This means that the people who live there are joyful.

rejoice

The term “rejoice” means to be full of joy and gladness.

- This term often refers to being very happy about the good things that God has done.
- It could be translated as “be very happy” or “be very glad” or “be full of joy.”
- When Mary said “my soul rejoices in God my Savior,” she meant “God my Savior has made me very happy” or “I feel so joyful because of what God my Savior has done for me.”

Translation Suggestions:

- The term “joy” could also be translated as “gladness” or “delight” or “great happiness.”
- The phrase, “be joyful” could be translated as “rejoice” or “be very glad” or it could be translated “be very happy in God’s goodness.”
- A person who is joyful could be described as “very happy” or “delighted” or “deeply glad.”
- A phrase such as “make a joyful shout” could be translated as “shout in a way that shows you are very happy.”
- A “joyful city” or “joyful house” could be translated as “city where joyful people live” or “house full of joyful people” or “city whose people are very happy.” (See: [metonymy](#))

Bible References:

- Nehemiah 8:10
- Psalm 48:2
- Isaiah 56:6-7
- Jeremiah 15:15-16
- Matthew 2:9-10
- Luke 15:7
- Luke 19:37-38
- John 3:29
- Acts 16:32-34
- Romans 5:1-2
- Romans 15:30-32
- Galatians 5:23
- Philippians 4:10-13

- 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16
- Philemon 1:4-7
- James 1:2
- 3 John 1:1-4

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **33:7** "The rocky ground is a person who hears God's word and accepts it with **joy**."
- **34:4** "The kingdom of God is also like hidden treasure that someone hid in a field.. Another man found the treasure and then buried it again. He was so filled with **joy**, that he went and sold everything he had and used the money to buy that field."
- **41:7** The women were full of fear and great **joy**. They ran to tell the disciples the good news.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1523, H1524, H1525, H2302, H2304, H2305, H2654, H2898, H4885, H5937, H5947, H5965, H5970, H6342, H6670, H7440, H7442, H7444, H7445, H7797, H7832, H8055, H8056, H8057, H8342, H8643, G00200, G00210, G21650, G21670, G27440, G46400, G47960, G49130, G54630, G54790

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 2:1](#); [2:10](#); [2:26](#); [3:22](#); [4:16](#); [5:20](#); [7:4](#); [8:15](#); [9:7](#); [10:19](#); [11:8](#); [11:9](#))

judge, judgment

Definition:

The terms “judge” and “judgment” often refer to making a decision about whether or not something is good, wise, or right. However, these terms can also refer to actions performed by a person as the result of a decision, usually in the context of deciding that something is bad, wrong, or evil.

- The terms “judge” and “judgment” can also mean “to cause harm to” (usually because God has decided a person or nation’s actions are wicked).
- The “judgment of God” often refers to his decision to condemn something or someone as sinful.
- God’s judgment usually includes punishing people for their sin.
- The term “judge” can also mean “condemn.” God instructs his people not to judge each other in this way.
- Another meaning is “arbitrate between” or “judge between,” as in deciding which person is right in a dispute between them.
- In some contexts, God’s “judgments” are what he has decided is right and just. They are similar to his decrees, laws, or precepts.
- “Judgment” can refer to wise decision-making ability. A person who lacks “judgment” does not have the wisdom to make wise decisions.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, ways to translate to “judge” could include to “decide” or to “condemn” or to “punish” or to “decree.”
- The term “judgment” could be translated as “punishment” or “decision” or “verdict” or “decree” or “condemnation.”
- In some contexts, the phrase “in the judgment” could also be translated as “on judgment day” or “during the time when God judges people.”

(See also: [decree](#), judge, judgment day, [just](#), law, law)

Bible References:

- 1 John 4:17
- 1 Kings 3:9
- Acts 10:42-43
- Isaiah 3:14
- James 2:4
- Luke 6:37
- Micah 3:9-11
- Psalm 54:1

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **19:16** The prophets warned the people that if they did not stop doing evil and start obeying God, then God would **judge** them as guilty, and he would punish them.
- **21:8** A king is someone who rules over a kingdom and **judges** the people. The Messiah would come would be the perfect king who would sit on the throne of his ancestor David. He would reign over the whole world forever, and who would always **judge** honestly and make the right decisions.
- **39:4** The high priest tore his clothes in anger and shouted to the other religious leaders, “We do not need any more witnesses! You have heard him say that he is the Son of God. What is your **judgment**?”

- **50:14** But God will **judge** everyone who does not believe in Jesus. He will throw them into hell, where they will weep and grind their teeth in anguish forever.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0148, H0430, H1777, H1778, H1779, H1780, H1781, H1782, H2940, H4055, H4941, H6414, H6415, H6416, H6417, H6419, H6485, H8196, H8199, H8201, G01440, G03500, G09680, G11060, G12520, G13410, G13450, G13480, G13490, G29170, G29190, G29200, G29220, G29230, G42320

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 5:8](#); [Notes](#))

just, justice, unjust, injustice, justify, justification

Definition:

“Just” and “justice” refer to treating people fairly according to God’s laws. Human laws that reflect God’s standard of right behavior toward others are also just.

- To be “just” is to act in a fair and right way toward others. It also implies honesty and integrity to do what is morally right in God’s eyes.
- To act “justly” means to treat people in a way that is right, good, and proper according to God’s laws.
- To receive “justice” means to be treated fairly under the law, either being protected by the law or being punished for breaking the law.
- Sometimes the term “just” has the broader meaning of “righteous” or “following God’s laws.”

The terms “unjust” and “unjustly” refer to treating people in an unfair and often harmful manner.

- An “injustice” is something bad that is done to someone that the person did not deserve. It refers to treating people unfairly.
- Injustice also means that some people are treated badly while others are treated well.
- Someone who is acting in an unjust way is being “partial” or “prejudiced” because he is not treating people equally.

The terms “justify” and “justification” refer to causing a guilty person to be righteous. Only God can truly justify people.

- When God justifies people, he forgives their sins and makes it as though they have no sin. He justifies sinners who repent and trust in Jesus to save them from their sins.
- “Justification” refers to what God does when he forgives a person’s sins and declares that person to be righteous in his sight.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, other ways to translate “just” could include “morally right” or “fair.”
- The term “justice” could be translated as “fair treatment” or “deserved consequences.”
- To “act justly” could be translated as “treat fairly” or “behave in a just way.”
- In some contexts, “just” could be translated as “righteous” or “upright.”
- Depending on the context, “unjust” could also be translated as “unfair” or “partial” or “unrighteous.”
- The phrase “the unjust” could be translated as “the unjust ones” or “unjust people” or “people who treat others unfairly” or “unrighteous people” or “people who disobey God.”
- The term “unjustly” could be translated as “in an unfair manner” or “wrongly” or “unfairly.”
- Ways to translate “injustice” could include, “wrong treatment” or “unfair treatment” or “acting unfairly.” (See: [abstractnouns](#))
- Other ways to translate “justify” could include “declare (someone) to be righteous” or “cause (someone) to be righteous.”
- The term “justification” could be translated as “being declared righteous” or “becoming righteous” or “causing people to be righteous.”
- The phrase “resulting in justification” could be translated as “so that God justified many people” or “which resulted in God causing people to be righteous.”
- The phrase “for our justification” could be translated as “in order that we could be made righteous by God.”

(See also: forgive, guilt, [judge](#), [righteous](#), [righteous](#))

Bible References:

- Genesis 44:16
- 1 Chronicles 18:14
- Isaiah 4:3-4
- Jeremiah 22:3
- Ezekiel 18:16-17
- Micah 3:8
- Matthew 5:43-45
- Matthew 11:19
- Matthew 23:23-24
- Luke 18:3
- Luke 18:8
- Luke 18:13-14
- Luke 21:20-22
- Luke 23:41
- Acts 13:38-39
- Acts 28:4
- Romans 4:1-3
- Galatians 3:6-9
- Galatians 3:11
- Galatians 5:3-4
- Titus 3:6-7
- Hebrews 6:10
- James 2:24
- Revelation 15:3-4

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **17:9** David ruled with **justice** and faithfulness for many years, and God blessed him.
- **18:13** Some of these kings (of Judah) were good men who ruled **justly** and worshiped God.
- **19:16** They (the prophets) all told the people to stop worshiping idols and to start showing **justice** and mercy to others.
- **50:17** Jesus will rule his kingdom with peace and **justice**, and he will be with his people forever.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0205, H2555, H3477, H4941, H5765, H5766, H5767, H6662, H6663, H6664, H6666, H8003, H8264, H8636, G00910, G00930, G00940, G13420, G13440, G13450, G13460, G13470, G17380

(Go back to: [Introduction to Ecclesiastes](#); [Ecclesiastes 7:29](#))

king, kingship

Definition:

In the Bible, the term “king” refers to a man who is the supreme ruler of a particular group of people or a particular region of land (or both).

- In biblical times, a king was usually chosen to rule on the basis of family relation to the previous king(s). When a king died, usually his oldest son became the next king.
- The Bible often refers to God as a king who rules over the entire universe (in a general sense) and over his people (in a specific sense).
- The New Testament refers to Jesus as a king in various ways, including: “king of the Jews;” “king of Israel;” and “king of kings.”
- Depending on the context, the term “king” might also be translated as “supreme chief” or “sovereign ruler.”
- The phrase “king of kings” might be translated as “king who rules over all other kings” or “supreme ruler who has authority over all other rulers.”

(See also: authority, Herod Antipas, kingdom, kingdom of God)

Bible References:

- 1 Timothy 6:15-16
- 2 Kings 5:18
- 2 Samuel 5:3
- Acts 7:9-10
- Acts 13:22
- John 1:49-51
- Luke 1:5
- Luke 22:24-25
- Matthew 5:35
- Matthew 14:9

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **8:6** One night, the Pharaoh, which is what the Egyptians called their kings, had two dreams that disturbed him greatly.
- **16:1** The Israelites had no **king**, so everyone did what they thought was right for them.
- **16:18** Finally, the people asked God for a **king** like all the other nations had.
- **17:5** Eventually, Saul died in battle, and David became **king** of Israel. He was a good **king**, and the people loved him.
- **21:6** God’s prophets also said that the Messiah would be a prophet, a priest, and a **king**.
- **48:14** David was the **king** of Israel, but Jesus is the **king** of the entire universe!

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H4427, H4428, H4430, G09350, G09360

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:1](#); [1:12](#); [2:8](#); [2:12](#); [5:9](#); [8:2](#); [8:4](#); [9:14](#); [10:20](#))

know, knowledge, unknown, distinguish

Definition:

The term “know” and “knowledge” means generally to understand something or someone. It can also mean to be aware of a fact or to be familiar with a person. The expression “to make known” means to tell information.

- The term “knowledge” refers to information that people know. It can apply to knowing physical concepts or abstract concepts.
- To “know about” God means to understand facts about him because of what he has revealed to us.
- To “know” God means to have a relationship with him. This also applies to knowing people.
- To know God’s will means to be aware of what he has commanded, or to understand what he wants a person to do.
- To “know the Law” means to be aware of what God has commanded or to understand what God has instructed in the laws he gave to Moses.
- Sometimes “knowledge” is used as a synonym for “wisdom,” which includes living in a way that is pleasing to God.
- The “knowledge of God” is sometimes used as a synonym for the “fear of Yahweh.”
- When used of a man and a woman to “know” is often an euphemism that refers to having sexual intercourse.

Translation Suggestions

- Depending on the context, ways to translate “know” could include “understand” or “be familiar with” or “be aware of” or “be acquainted with” or “be in relationship with.”
- In the context of understanding the difference between two things, the term is usually translated as “distinguish.” When used in this way, the term is often followed by the preposition “between.”
- Some languages have two different words for “know,” one for knowing facts and one for knowing a person and having a relationship with him.
- The term “make known” could be translated as “cause people to know” or “reveal” or “tell about” or “explain.”
- To “know about” something could be translated as “be aware of” or “be familiar with.”
- The expression “know how to” means to understand the process or method of getting something done. It could also be translated as “be able to” or “have the skill to.”
- The term “knowledge” could also be translated as “what is known” or “wisdom” or “understanding,” depending on the context.

(See also: law, reveal, understand, [wise](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 2:12-13
- 1 Samuel 17:46
- 2 Corinthians 2:15
- 2 Peter 1:3-4
- Deuteronomy 4:39-40
- Genesis 19:5
- Luke 1:77

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1843, H1844, H1847, H1875, H3045, H3046, H4093, H4486, H5046, H5234, H5475, H5869, G00500, G00560, G10970, G11070, G11080, G14920, G19210, G19220, G19870, G24670, G25890, G42670, G48940

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:17](#); [2:14](#); [2:19](#); [3:12](#); [3:14](#); [3:21](#); [4:13](#); [4:14](#); [5:1](#); [5:15](#); [6:5](#); [6:8](#); [6:10](#); [6:12](#); [7:18](#); [7:22](#); [8:1](#); [8:5](#); [8:7](#); [8:12](#); [9:1](#); [9:5](#); [9:12](#); [10:14](#); [10:15](#); [11:2](#); [11:5](#); [11:6](#); [11:9](#))

lament, lamentation

Definition:

The terms “lament” and “lamentation” refer to a strong expression of mourning, sorrow, or grief.

- Sometimes this includes deep regret for sin, or compassion for people who have experienced disaster.
- A lamentation could include moaning, weeping, or wailing.

Translation Suggestions:

- The term to “lament” could be translated as to “deeply mourn” or to “wail in grief” or to “be sorrowful.”
- A “lamentation” (or a “lament”) could be translated as “loud wailing and weeping” or “deep sorrow” or “sorrowful sobbing” or “mournful moaning.”

Bible References:

- Amos 8:9-10
- Ezekiel 32:1-2
- Jeremiah 22:18
- Job 27:15-17
- Lamentations 2:5
- Lamentations 2:8
- Micah 2:4
- Psalm 102:1-2
- Zechariah 11:2

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0056, H0421, H0578, H0592, H1058, H4553, H5091, H5092, H5594, H6088, H6969, H7015, H8567, G23540, G23550, G28700, G28750

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 4 General Notes](#))

life, live, living, alive

Definition:

The term “life” refers to being physically alive as opposed to being physically dead.

1. Physical life

- A “life” can also refer to an individual person as in “a life was saved”.
- Sometimes the word “life” refers to the experience of living as in, “his life was enjoyable.”
- It can also refer to a person’s lifespan, as in the expression, “the end of his life.”
- The term “living” may refer to being physically alive, as in “my mother is still living.” It may also refer to dwelling somewhere as in, “they were living in the city.”
- In the Bible, the concept of “life” is often contrasted with the concept of “death.”

2. Eternal life

- A person has eternal life when he believes in Jesus. God gives that person a transformed life with the Holy Spirit living in him.
- The opposite of eternal life is eternal death, which means being separated from God and experiencing eternal punishment.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, “life” can be translated as “existence” or “person” or “soul” or “being” or “experience.”
- The term “live” could be translated by “dwell” or “reside” or “exist.”
- The expression “end of his life” could be translated as “when he stopped living.”
- The expression “spared their lives” could be translated as “allowed them to live” or “did not kill them.”
- The expression “they risked their lives” could be translated as “they put themselves in danger” or “they did something that could have killed them.”
- When the Bible text talks about eternal life, the term “life” could be translated in the following ways: “eternal life” or “God making us alive in our spirits” or “new life by God’s Spirit” or “being made alive in our inner self.”
- Depending on the context, the expression “give life” could also be translated as “cause to live” or “give eternal life” or “cause to live eternally.”

(See also: [death](#), everlasting)

Bible References:

- 2 Peter 1:3
- Acts 10:42
- Genesis 2:7
- Genesis 7:22
- Hebrews 10:20
- Jeremiah 44:2
- John 1:4
- Judges 2:18
- Luke 12:23
- Matthew 7:14

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **1:10** So God took some dirt, formed it into a man, and breathed **life** into him.
- **3:1** After a long time, many people were *_living_* in the world.
- **8:13** When Joseph's brothers returned home and told their father, Jacob, that Joseph was still **alive**, he was very happy.
- **17:9** However, toward the end of his [David's] **life** he sinned terribly before God.
- **27:1** One day, an expert in the Jewish law came to Jesus to test him, saying, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal **life**?"
- **35:5** Jesus replied, "I am the Resurrection and the **Life**."
- **44:5** "You are the ones who told the Roman governor to kill Jesus. You killed the author of **life**, but God raised him from the dead."

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1934, H2416, H2417, H2421, H2425, H5315, G01980, G02220, G02270, G08060, G05900

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 2:24](#); [4:2](#); [4:8](#); [4:15](#); [6:3](#); [6:6](#); [6:8](#); [6:9](#); [7:12](#); [7:28](#); [9:4](#); [9:5](#); [11:8](#))

love, beloved

Definition:

To love another person is to care for that person and do things that will benefit him. There are different meanings for "love" some languages may express using different words:

The kind of love that comes from God is focused on the good of others even when it doesn't benefit oneself. This kind of love cares for others, no matter what they do. God himself is love and is the source of true love.

- Jesus showed this kind of love by sacrificing his life in order to rescue us from sin and death. He also taught his followers to love others sacrificially.
- When people love others with this kind of love, they act in ways that show they are thinking of what will cause the others to thrive. This kind of love especially includes forgiving others.
- In the ULT, the word "love" refers to this kind of sacrificial love, unless a Translation Note indicates a different meaning.

Another word in the New Testament refers to brotherly love, or love for a friend or family member.

- This term refers to natural human love between friends or relatives.
- The term can also be used in such contexts as, "They love to sit in the most important seats at a banquet." This means that they "like very much" or "greatly desire" to do that.

The word "love" can also refer to romantic love between a man and a woman.

Translation Suggestions:

- Unless indicated otherwise in a Translation Note, the word "love" in the ULT refers to the kind of sacrificial love that comes from God.
- Some languages may have a special word for the kind of unselfish, sacrificial love that God has. Ways to translate this might include, "devoted, faithful caring" or "care for unselfishly" or "love from God." Make sure that the word used to translate God's love can include giving up one's own interests to benefit others and loving others no matter what they do.
- Sometimes the English word "love" describes the deep caring that people have for friends and family members. Some languages might translate this with a word or phrase that means "like very much" or "care for" or "have strong affection for."
- In contexts where the word "love" is used to express a strong preference for something, this could be translated by "strongly prefer" or "like very much" or "greatly desire."
- Some languages may also have a separate word that refers to romantic or sexual love between a husband and wife.
- Many languages must express "love" as an action. So for example, they might translate "love is patient, love is kind" as, "when a person loves someone, he is patient with him and kind to him."

(See also: covenant, [death](#), [sacrifice](#), [save](#), [sin](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 13:7
- 1 John 3:2
- 1 Thessalonians 4:10
- Galatians 5:23
- Genesis 29:18
- Isaiah 56:6
- Jeremiah 2:2

- John 3:16
- Matthew 10:37
- Nehemiah 9:32-34
- Philippians 1:9
- Song of Songs 1:2

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **27:2** The law expert replied that God's law says, "**Love** the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. And **love** your neighbor as yourself."
- **33:8** "The thorny ground is a person who hears God's word, but, as time passes, the cares, riches, and pleasures of life choke out his **love** for God."
- **36:5** As Peter was talking, a bright cloud came down on top of them and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son whom I **love**."
- **39:10** "Everyone who **loves** the truth listens to me."
- **47:1** She (Lydia) **loved** and worshiped God.
- **48:1** When God created the world, everything was perfect. There was no sin. Adam and Eve **loved** each other, and they **loved** God.
- **49:3** He (Jesus) taught that you need to **love** other people the same way you love yourself.
- **49:4** He (Jesus) also taught that you need to **love** God more than you **love** anything else, including your wealth.
- **49:7** Jesus taught that God **loves** sinners very much.
- **49:9** But God **loved** everyone in the world so much that he gave his only Son so that whoever believes in Jesus will not be punished for his sins, but will live with God forever.
- **49:13** God **loves** you and wants you to believe in Jesus so he can have a close relationship with you.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0157, H0158, H0159, H0160, H2245, H2617, H2836, H3039, H4261, H5689, H5690, H5691, H7355, H7356, H7453, H7474, G00250, G00260, G53600, G53610, G53620, G53630, G53650, G53670, G53680, G53690, G53770, G53810, G53820, G53830, G53880

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 3:8](#); [5:10](#); [9:9](#))

name

Definition:

The term “name” refers to the word by which a specific person or thing is called. In the Bible, however, the term “name” is used in several different ways to refer to several different concepts.

- In some contexts, “name” could refer to a person’s reputation, as in “let us make a name for ourselves.”
- The term “name” could also refer to the memory of something. For example, “cut off the names of the idols” means to destroy those idols so that they are no longer remembered or worshiped.
- Speaking “in the name of God” meant speaking with his power and authority, or as his representative.
- The “name” of someone could refer to the entire person, as in “there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.” (See: [metonymy](#))

Translation Suggestions:

- An expression like “his good name” could be translated as “his good reputation.”
- Doing something “in the name of” could be translated as “with the authority of” or “with the permission of” or “as the representative of” that person.
- The expression “make a name for ourselves” could be translated “cause many people to know about us” or “make people think we are very important.”
- The expression “call his name” could be translated as “name him” or “give him the name.”
- The expression “those who love your name” could be translated as “those who love you.”
- The expression “cut off the names of idols” could be translated as “get rid of pagan idols so that they are not even remembered” or “cause people to stop worshiping false gods” or “completely destroy all idols so that people no longer even think about them.”

(See also: [call](#))

Bible References:

- 1 John 2:12
- 2 Timothy 2:19
- Acts 4:7
- Acts 4:12
- Acts 9:27
- Genesis 12:2
- Genesis 35:10
- Matthew 18:5

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H5344, H7121, H7761, H8034, H8036, G25640, G36860, G36870, G51220

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 6:4](#); [6:10](#); [7:1](#))

noble, nobleman, royal official

Definition:

The term “noble” refers to something that is excellent and of high quality. A “nobleman” is a person who belongs to a high political or social class. A man “of noble birth” is one who was born a nobleman.

- A nobleman was often an officer of the state, a close servant to the king.
- The term “nobleman” could also be translated by, “king’s official” or “government officer.”

Bible References:

- 2 Chronicles 23:20-21
- Daniel 4:36
- Ecclesiastes 10:17
- Luke 19:12
- Psalm 16:1-3

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H0117, H1419, H2715, H3358, H3513, H5057, H5081, H6440, H6579, H7261, H8282, H8269, G09370, G21040

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 10:17](#))

oath, swear, swearing, swear by

Definition:

The term "oath" in the Bible refers to a formal promise, usually made in a legal or religious context, in which the person making the oath accepts some kind of accountability or punishment if he does not fulfill his promise. In the Bible, the term "swear" means to make an oath.

- In a court of law, a witness often gives an oath to promise that whatever he says will be true and factual.
- In modern times, one meaning of the word "swear" is to use foul or vulgar language. This is never its meaning in the Bible.
- The term "swear by" means to use the name of something or someone as the basis or power on which the oath is made.
- Abraham and Abimelech swore an oath when they made a covenant together concerning the use of a well.
- Abraham told his servant to swear (formally promise) that he would find Isaac a wife from among Abraham's relatives.
- God also made oaths in which he made promises to his people.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, "an oath" could also be translated as "a pledge" or "a solemn promise."
- To "swear" could be translated as to "formally promise" or to "pledge" or to "commit to do something."
- Other ways to translate "swear by my name" could include "make a promise using my name to confirm it."
- To "swear by heaven and earth" could be translated as to, "promise to do something, stating that heaven and earth will confirm it."
- Make sure the translation of "swear" or "oath" does not refer to cursing. In the Bible it does not have that meaning.

(See also: Abimelech, covenant, vow)

Bible References:

- Genesis 21:23
- Genesis 24:3
- Genesis 31:51-53
- Genesis 47:31
- Luke 1:73
- Mark 6:26
- Matthew 5:36
- Matthew 14:6-7
- Matthew 26:72

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0422, H0423, H3027, H5375, H7621, H7650, G03320, G36600, G37270, G37280

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 8:2](#); [9:2](#))

oil

Definition:

Oil is a thick, clear liquid that can be taken from certain plants. In Bible times, oil usually came from olives.

- Olive oil was used for cooking, anointing, sacrifice, lamps, and medicine.
- In ancient times, olive oil was highly prized, and the possession of oil was considered a measurement of wealth.
- Make sure the translation of this term refers to the kind of oil that can be used in cooking, not motor oil. Some languages have different words for these different kinds of oil.

(See also: [olive](#), [sacrifice](#))

Bible References:

- 2 Samuel 1:21
- Exodus 29:2
- Leviticus 5:11
- Leviticus 8:1-3
- Mark 6:12-13
- Matthew 25:7-9

Word Data:

- Strong's: H2091, H3323, H4887, H6671, H7246, H8081, G16370, G34640

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 9:8](#))

olive

Definition:

The olive is the small, oval fruit from an olive tree, which is mostly grown in the regions surrounding the Mediterranean Sea.

- Olive trees are a type of large evergreen shrub with tiny white flowers. They grow best in hot weather and can survive well with little water.
- The olive tree's fruit starts out green and changes to black as they ripen. Olives were useful for food and for the oil that could be extracted from them.
- Olive oil was used for cooking in lamps and for religious ceremonies.
- In the Bible, olive trees and branches are sometimes used figuratively to refer to people.

(See also: lamp, the sea, Mount of Olives)

Bible References:

- 1 Chronicles 27:28-29
- Deuteronomy 6:10-12
- Exodus 23:10-11
- Genesis 8:11
- James 3:12
- Luke 16:6
- Psalms 52:8

Word Data:

- Strong's: H2132, H3323, H8081, G00650, G16360, G16370, G25650

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 10:1](#))

oppress, oppressed, oppression, oppressor, dominate

Definition:

The terms “oppress” and “oppression” refer to treating people harshly. An “oppressor” is a person who oppresses people.

- The term “oppression” especially refers to a situation where people of greater strength mistreat or enslave people who are under their power or rule.
- The term “oppressed” describes the people who are being harshly treated.
- Often enemy nations and their rulers were oppressors to the people of Israel.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, “oppress” could be translated as “severely mistreat” or “cause to be heavily burdened” or “put under miserable bondage” or “rule harshly.”
- Ways to translate “oppression” could include “heavy suppression and bondage” or “burdensome control.”
- The phrase “the oppressed” could be translated as “oppressed people” or “people in terrible bondage” or “those who are treated harshly.”
- The term “oppressor” could be translated as “person who oppresses” or “nation who controls and rules harshly” or “persecutor.”

(See also: [bind](#), [enslave](#), [persecute](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Samuel 10:17-19
- Deuteronomy 26:7
- Ecclesiastes 4:1
- Job 10:3
- Judges 2:18-19
- Nehemiah 5:14-15
- Psalms 119:134

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1790, H1792, H2541, H2555, H3238, H3905, H3906, H4642, H5065, H6031, H6125, H6184, H6206, H6216, H6217, H6231, H6233, H6234, H6693, H7429, H7533, H7701, G26160, G26690

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 4 General Notes](#))

ordinance, regulations, requirements, strict law, customs

Definition:

An ordinance is a public regulation or law that gives rules or instructions for people to follow. This term is related to the term “ordain.”

- Sometimes an ordinance is a custom that has become well established through years of practice.
- In the Bible, an ordinance was something that God commanded the Israelites to do. Sometimes he commanded them to do it forever.
- The term “ordinance” could be translated as “public decree” or “regulation” or “law,” depending on the context.

(See also: [command](#), [decree](#), law, ordain, [statute](#))

Bible References:

- Deuteronomy 4:13-14
- Exodus 27:20-21
- Leviticus 8:31-33
- Malachi 3:6-7

Word Data:

- Strong's: H2706, H4687, H4931, H4941

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 3:16](#))

peace, peaceful, peacemakers

Definition:

The term “peace” refers to a state of being or a feeling of having no conflict, anxiety, or fearfulness. A person who is “peaceful” feels calm and assured of being safe and secure.

- In the Old Testament, the term “peace” often means a general sense of a person’s welfare, wellness, or wholeness.
- “Peace” can also refer to a time when people groups or countries are not at war with each other. These people are said to have “peaceful relations.”
- To “make peace” with a person or a group of people means to take actions to cause fighting to stop.
- A “peacemaker” is someone who does and says things to influence people to live at peace with each other.
- To be “at peace” with other people means being in a state of not fighting against those people.
- A good or right relationship between God and people happens when God saves people from their sin. This is called having “peace with God.”
- The greeting “grace and peace” was used by the apostles in their letters to their fellow believers as a blessing.
- The term “peace” can also refer to being in a good relationship with other people or with God.

Bible References:

- 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3
- Acts 7:26
- Colossians 1:18-20
- Colossians 3:15
- Galatians 5:23
- Luke 7:50
- Luke 12:51
- Mark 4:39
- Matthew 5:9
- Matthew 10:13

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **15:6** God had commanded the Israelites not to make a **peace** treaty with any of the people groups in Canaan.
- **15:12** Then God gave Israel **peace** along all its borders.
- **16:3** Then God provided a deliverer who rescued them from their enemies and brought **peace** to the land.
- **21:13** He (Messiah) would die to receive the punishment for other people’s sin. His punishment would bring **peace** between God and people.
- **48:14** David was the king of Israel, but Jesus is the king of the entire universe! He will come again and rule his kingdom with justice and **peace**, forever.
- **50:17** Jesus will rule his kingdom with **peace** and justice, and he will be with his people forever.

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H5117, H7961, H7962, H7965, H7999, H8001, H8002, H8003, H8252, G02690, G15140, G15150, G15160, G15170, G15180, G22720

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 3:8](#))

people, people group

Definition:

The terms “people” and “people group” refer to some group of people that shares a common language and culture. The term “the people” often refers to a gathering of people in a certain place or at a specific event.

- In Bible times, the members of a people group usually had the same ancestors and lived together in a particular country or area of land.
- Depending on the context, the term “people” can refer to a “people group” or “family” or “relatives” or “army.”
- In plural form, the term “peoples” often refers to all people groups on the earth. Sometimes it refers more specifically to people who are not Israelites or who do not serve Yahweh. In some English Bible translations, the term “nations” is also used in this way.

Translation Suggestions:

- The term “people group” could be translated by a word or phrase that means “large family group” or “clan” or “ethnic group.”
- A phrase such as “my people” could be translated as “my relatives” or “my fellow Israelites” or “my family” or “my people group,” depending on the context.
- The expression “scatter you among the peoples” could also be translated as “cause you to go live with many different people groups” or “cause you to separate from each other and go live in many different regions of the world.”
- The term “the peoples” or “the people” could also be translated as “the people in the world” or “people groups,” depending on the context.
- The phrase “the people of” could be translated as “the people living in” or “the people descended from” or “the family of,” depending on whether it is followed by the name of a place or a person.
- “All the peoples of the earth” could be translated as “everyone living on earth” or “every person in the world” or “all people.”
- The phrase “a people” could also be translated as “a group of people” or “certain people” or “a community of people” or “a family of people.”

(See also: descendant, nation, tribe, world)

Bible References:

- 1 Kings 8:51-53
- 1 Samuel 8:7
- Deuteronomy 28:9
- Genesis 49:16
- Ruth 1:16

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **14:2** God had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that he would give the Promised Land to their descendants, but now there were many **people groups** living there.
- **21:2** God promised Abraham that through him all **people groups** of the world would receive a blessing. This blessing would be that the Messiah would come sometime in the future and provide the way of salvation for people from all the **people groups** of the world.

- **42:8** "It was also written in the scriptures that my disciples will proclaim that everyone should repent in order to receive forgiveness for their sins. They will do this starting in Jerusalem, and then go to all **people groups** everywhere."
- **42:10** "So go, make disciples of all **people groups** by baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and by teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."
- **48:11** Because of this New Covenant, anyone from any **people group** can become part of God's people by believing in Jesus.
- **50:3** He (Jesus) said, "Go and make disciples of all **people groups**!" and, "The fields are ripe for harvest!"

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0249, H0523, H0524, H0776, H1121, H1471, H3816, H5712, H5971, H5972, H6153, G10740, G10850, G12180, G14840, G25600, G29920, G37930

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 4:16](#); [12:9](#))

perish

Definition:

The term “perish” means to die or be destroyed, usually as the result of violence or disaster. In the New Testament, it often has the spiritual meaning of being lost or separated from the people of God.

Spiritual Meaning of “Perish:”

- People who are “perishing” are those who have refused to trust in Jesus for their salvation.
- Those who “perish” will not live eternally with God in heaven. Instead, they will live eternally in hell under God’s punishment.
- Everyone will die physically, but only those who do not trust in Jesus for their salvation will perish eternally.
- When “perish” is used in a spiritual sense, make sure that your translation expresses this differently than dying physically.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, ways to translate this term could include “be lost from God’s people,” “die eternally,” “be punished in hell,” or “be destroyed.”
- Try to use a term or expression that does not only mean “die physically” or “cease to exist.”

(See also: [death](#), everlasting)

Bible References:

- 1 Peter 1:23
- 2 Corinthians 2:16-17
- 2 Thessalonians 2:10
- Jeremiah 18:18
- Psalms 49:18-20
- Zechariah 9:5-7
- Zechariah 13:8

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H0006, H0007, H0008, H1478, H1820, H1826, H5486, H5595, H6544, H8045, G05990, G06220, G06840, G08530, G13110, G27040, G48810, G53560

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 7:15](#); [9:6](#); [9:18](#))

persecute

Definition:

The terms “persecute” and “persecution” refer to continually treating a person or a certain group of people in a harsh way that causes harm to them.

- Persecution can be against one person or many people and usually involves repeated, persistent attacks.
- The Israelites were persecuted by many different people groups Who attacked them, captured them, and stole things from them.
- People often persecute other people who have different religious beliefs or who are weaker.
- The Jewish religious leaders persecuted Jesus because they did not like what he was teaching.
- After Jesus went back to heaven, the Jewish religious leaders and the Roman government persecuted his followers.
- The term “persecute” could also be translated as “keep oppressing” or “treat harshly” or “continually mistreat.”
- Ways to translate “persecution” could include, “harsh mistreatment” or “oppression” or “persistent hurtful treatment”

(See also: Christian, church, [oppress](#), Rome)

Bible References:

- Acts 7:52
- Acts 13:50
- Galatians 1:13-14
- John 5:16-18
- Mark 10:30
- Matthew 5:10
- Matthew 5:43-45
- Matthew 10:22
- Matthew 13:20-21
- Philippians 3:6

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **33:7** “The rocky ground is a person who hears God’s word and accepts it with joy. But when he experiences hardship or **persecution**, he falls away.”
- **45:6** That day many people in Jerusalem started **persecuting** the followers of Jesus, so the believers fled to other places.
- **46:2** Saul heard someone say, “Saul! Saul! Why do you **persecute** me?” Saul asked, “Who are you, Master?” Jesus replied to him, “I am Jesus. You are **persecuting** me!”
- **46:4** But Ananias said, “Master, I have heard how this man has **persecuted** the believers.”

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H1814, H7291, H7852, G13750, G13760, G13770, G15590, G23470

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 3:15](#))

power, powerful, powerfully

Definition:

The term “power” refers to the ability to do things or make things happen, often using great strength. “Powers” refers to people or spirits who have great ability to cause things to happen.

- The “power of God” refers to God’s ability to do everything, especially things that are not possible for people to do.
- God has complete power over everything that he has created.
- God gives his people power to do what he wants, so that when they heal people or do other miracles, they do this by the power of God.
- Because Jesus and the Holy Spirit are also God, they have this same power.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, the term “power” could also be translated as “ability” or “strength” or “energy” or “ability to do miracles” or “control.”
- Possible ways to translate the term “powers” could include “powerful beings” or “controlling spirits” or “those who control others.”

(See also: [strength](#), Holy Spirit, Jesus, miracle)

Bible References:

- 1 Thessalonians 1:5
- Colossians 1:11-12
- Genesis 31:29
- Jeremiah 18:21
- Jude 1:25
- Judges 2:18
- Luke 1:17
- Luke 4:14
- Matthew 26:64
- Philippians 3:21
- Psalm 80:2

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **22:5** The angel explained, “The Holy Spirit will come to you, and the **power** of God will overshadow you. So the baby will be holy, the Son of God.”
- **26:1** After overcoming Satan’s temptations, Jesus returned in the **power** of the Holy Spirit to the region of Galilee where he lived.
- **32:15** Immediately Jesus realized that **power** had gone out from him.
- **42:11** Forty days after Jesus rose from the dead, he told his disciples, “Stay in Jerusalem until my Father gives you **power** when the Holy Spirit comes on you.”
- **43:6** “Men of Israel, Jesus was a man who did many mighty signs and wonders by the **power** of God, as you have seen and already know.”
- **44:8** Peter answered them, “This man stands before you healed by the **power** of Jesus the Messiah.”

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0410, H1369, H1370, H2220, H2393, H2428, H2429, H2632, H3027, H3028, H3581, H4475, H4910, H5794, H5797, H5808, H6184, H7786, H7980, H7981, H7983, H7989, H8280, H8592, H8633, G14110, G14150, G17540, G17560, G18490, G18500, G21590, G24780, G24790, G29040, G31680

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 8:1](#))

preach, preaching, preacher, proclaim, proclamation

Definition:

To “preach” means to speak to a group of people, teaching them about God and urging them to obey him. To “proclaim” means to announce or declare something publicly and boldly.

- Often preaching is done by one person to a large group of people. It is usually spoken, not written.
- “Preaching” and “teaching” are similar, but are not exactly the same.
- “Preaching” mainly refers to publicly proclaiming spiritual or moral truth, and urging the audience to respond. “Teaching” is a term that emphasizes instruction, that is, giving people information or teaching them how to do something.
- The term “preach” is usually used with the word “gospel.”
- What a person has preached to others can also be referred to in general as his “teachings.”
- Often in the Bible, “proclaim” means to announce publicly something that God has commanded, or to tell others about God and how great he is.
- In the New Testament, the apostles proclaimed the good news about Jesus to many people in many different cities and regions.
- The term “proclaim” can also be used for decrees made by kings or for denouncing evil in a public way.
- Other ways to translate “proclaim” could include “announce” or “openly preach” or “publicly declare.”
- The term “proclamation” could also be translated as “announcement” or “public preaching.”

(See also: declare, good news, Jesus, kingdom of God)

Bible References:

- 2 Timothy 4:1-2
- Acts 8:4-5
- Acts 10:42-43
- Acts 14:21-22
- Acts 20:25
- Luke 4:42
- Matthew 3:1-3
- Matthew 4:17
- Matthew 12:41
- Matthew 24:14
- Acts 9:20-22
- Acts 13:38-39
- Jonah 3:1-3
- Luke 4:18-19
- Mark 1:14-15
- Matthew 10:26

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **24:2** He (John) **preached** to them, saying, “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near!”
- **30:1** Jesus sent his apostles to **preach** and to teach people in many different villages.
- **38:1** About three years after Jesus first began **preaching** and teaching publicly, Jesus told his disciples that he wanted to celebrate this Passover with them in Jerusalem, and that he would be killed there.
- **45:6** But in spite of this, they **preached** about Jesus everywhere they went.
- **45:7** He (Philip) went to Samaria where he preached about Jesus and many people were saved.
- **46:6** Right away, Saul began **preaching** to the Jews in Damascus, saying, “Jesus is the Son of God!”
- **46:10** Then they sent them off to **preach** the good news of Jesus in many other places.

- **47:14** Paul and other Christian leaders traveled to many cities, **preaching** and teaching people the good news about Jesus.
- **50:2** When Jesus was living on earth he said, "My disciples will **preach** the good news about the kingdom of God to people everywhere in the world, and then the end will come."

Word Data:

- Strong's:
 - preach: H1319, H7121, H7150, G12290, G20970, G26050, G27820, G27830, G27840, G29800, G42830
 - proclaim: H1319, H1696, H1697, H2199, H3045, H3745, H4161, H5046, H5608, H6963, H7121, H7440, H8085, G51800, G59100, G12290, G18610, G20970, G26050, G27820, G27840, G29800, G31420, G41350

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 11:10](#))

prince, princess, governors, provincial governors, officials, noblemen, nobility

Definition:

A “prince” is the son of a king. A “princess” is a daughter of a king.

- The term “prince” is often used figuratively to refer to a leader, ruler, or other powerful person.
- Because of Abraham’s wealth and importance, he was referred to as a “prince” by the Hittites he was living among.
- In the book of Daniel, the term “prince” is used in the expressions “prince of Persia” and “prince of Greece,” which in those contexts probably refer to powerful evil spirits who had authority over those regions.
- The archangel Michael is also referred to as a “prince” in the book of Daniel.
- Sometimes in the Bible Satan is referred to as “the prince of this world.”
- Jesus is called the “Prince of Peace” and the “Prince of Life.”
- In Acts 2:36, Jesus is referred to as “Lord and Christ” and in Acts 5:31 he is referred to as “Prince and Savior,” showing the parallel meaning of “Lord” and “Prince.”

Translation Suggestions:

- Ways to translate “prince” could include, “king’s son” or “ruler” or “leader” or “chieftain” or “captain.”
- When referring to angels, this could also be translated as “spirit ruler” or “leading angel.”
- When referring to Satan or other evil spirits, this term could also be translated as “evil spirit ruler” or “powerful spirit leader” or “ruling spirit,” depending on the context.

(See also: angel, authority, Christ, demon, lord, [power](#), [ruler](#), Satan, Savior, [spirit](#))

Bible References:

- Acts 5:29-32
- Genesis 12:15
- Genesis 49:26
- Luke 1:52

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H0001, H0117, H0324, H2831, H3548, H4502, H5057, H5081, H5139, H5257, H5387, H5633, H5993, H6579, H7261, H7333, H7786, H8269, H8282, H8323, G07470, G07580, G14130, G31750

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 10:7](#); [10:16](#); [10:17](#))

prosper, prosperity, prosperous

Definition:

The term “prosper” generally refers to living well, whether it be physically, morally, emotionally, etc. This term often expresses the idea of being wealthy or successful in life.

- The term “prosperous” often refers to success in owning money and property or in producing everything needed for people to live well.
- In the Bible, the term “prosperous” also includes good health and being blessed with children.
- A “prosperous” city or country is one that has many people, good production of food, and businesses that bring in plenty of money.
- The Bible teaches that a person will prosper spiritually when he obeys God’s teachings. He will also experience the blessings of joy and peace. God does not always give people a lot of material wealth, but he will always prosper them spiritually as they follow his ways.
- Depending on the context, the term “prosper” could also be translated as “succeed spiritually” or “be blessed by God” or “experience good things” or “live well.”
- The term “prosperous” could also be translated as “successful” or “wealthy” or “spiritually fruitful.”
- “Prosperity” could also be translated as “well-being” or “wealth” or “success” or “abundant blessings.”

(See also: [bless](#), [good](#), [fruit](#), [spirit](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Chronicles 29:22-23
- Deuteronomy 23:6
- Job 36:11
- Leviticus 25:26-28
- Psalms 1:3

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H1129, H1767, H1878, H1879, H2428, H2896, H2898, H3027, H3190, H3444, H3498, H3787, H4195, H5381, H6500, H6509, H6555, H6743, H6744, H7230, H7487, H7919, H7951, H7961, H7963, H7965

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 6:6](#))

proud, pride, prideful

Definition:

The terms “proud” and “prideful” refer to a person thinking too highly of himself, and especially, thinking that he is better than other people.

- A proud person often does not admit his own faults. He is not humble.
- Pride can lead to disobeying God in other ways.
- The terms “proud” and “pride” can also be used in a positive sense, such as being “proud of” what someone else has achieved and being “proud of” your children. The expression “take pride in your work” means to find joy in doing your work well.
- Someone can be proud of what he has done without being prideful about it. Some languages have different words for these two different meanings of “pride.”
- The term “prideful” is always negative, with the meaning of being “arrogant” or “conceited” or “self-important.”

Translation Suggestions:

- The noun “pride” could be translated as “arrogance” or “conceit” or “self-importance.”
- In other contexts, “pride” could be translated as “joy” or “satisfaction” or “pleasure.”
- To be “proud of” could also be translated as “happy with” or “satisfied with” or “joyful about (the accomplishments of).”
- The phrase “take pride in your work” could be translated as “find satisfaction in doing your work well.”
- The expression “take pride in Yahweh” could also be translated as “be delighted about all the wonderful things Yahweh has done” or “be happy about how amazing Yahweh is.”

(See also: arrogant, humble, [joy](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Timothy 3:6-7
- 2 Corinthians 1:12
- Galatians 6:3-5
- Isaiah 13:19
- Luke 1:51

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **4:2** They were very **proud**, and they did not care about what God said.
- **34:10** Then Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, God heard the tax collector’s prayer and declared him to be righteous. But he did not like the prayer of the religious leader. God will humble everyone who is **proud**, and he will lift up whoever humbles himself.”

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H1341, H1343, H1344, H1346, H1347, H1348, H1349, H1361, H1362, H1363, H1364, H1396, H1466, H1467, H1984, H2086, H2087, H3093, H3238, H3513, H4062, H1431, H4791, H5965, H7295, H7312, H7342, H7311, H7830, H8597, G13910, G13920, G27440, G27450, G27460, G31730, G51870, G52290, G52430, G52440, G53080, G53090, G54260

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:16; 2:4](#))

province, provincial

Definition:

The term “province” refers to a large area into which a nation or empire might be divided for the purposes of government. The term “provincial” describes something that is related to a province, such as a provincial governor.

- For example, the ancient Persian Empire was divided up into provinces such as Media, Persia, Syria, and Egypt.
- During the time of the New Testament, the Roman Empire was divided up into provinces such as Macedonia, Asia, Syria, Judea, Samaria, Galilee, and Galatia.
- Each province had its own ruling authority, who was subject to the king or ruler of the empire. This ruler was sometimes called a “provincial official” or “provincial governor.”
- The terms “province” and “provincial” could also be translated as “region” and “regional.”

(See also: Asia, Egypt, Esther, Galatia, Galilee, Judea, Macedonia, Medes, Rome, Samaria, Syria)

Bible References:

- Acts 19:30
- Daniel 3:2
- Daniel 6:2
- Ecclesiastes 2:8

Word Data:

- Strong's: H4082, H4083, H5675, H5676, G18850

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 5:8](#))

redeem, redeemer, redemption

Definition:

The term “redeem” refers to buying back something or someone that has been previously owned or held captive. A “redeemer” is someone who redeems something or someone.

- God gave laws to the Israelites about how to redeem people or things. For example, someone could redeem a person who was in slavery by paying the price so that the slave could go free. The word “ransom” also refers to this practice.
- If someone’s land had been sold, a relative of that person could “redeem” or “buy back” that land so that it would stay in the family.
- These practices show how God redeems people who are in slavery to sin. When he died on the cross, Jesus paid the full price for people’s sins and redeemed all those who trust in him for salvation. People who have been redeemed by God are set free from sin and its punishment.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, the term “redeem” could also be translated as “buy back” or “pay to free (someone)” or “ransom.”
- The term “redemption” could be translated as “ransom” or “freedom payment” or “buying back.”
- The words “ransom” and “redeem” have basically the same meaning, so some languages may have only one term to translate both these words. The word “ransom,” however, can also mean the payment necessary to “redeem” something or someone. The term “redeem” never refers to the actual payment itself.

(See also: free, ransom)

Bible References:

- Colossians 1:13-14
- Ephesians 1:7-8
- Ephesians 5:16
- Galatians 3:13-14
- Galatians 4:5
- Luke 2:38
- Ruth 2:20

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H1350, H1353, H6299, H6302, H6304, H6306, H6561, H7069, G00590, G06290, G18050, G30840, G30850

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 2:7](#))

reign, rule

Definition:

The term to “reign” means to rule over the people of a particular country or kingdom. The reign of a king is the time period during which he is ruling.

- The term “reign” is also used to refer to God reigning as king over the entire world.
- God allowed human kings to reign over Israel after the people rejected him as their king.
- When Jesus Christ returns, he will openly reign as king over the whole world, and Christians will reign with Him.
- This term could also be translated as “absolute rule” or “rule as king.”

(See also: kingdom)

Bible References:

- 2 Timothy 2:11-13
- Genesis 36:34-36
- Luke 1:30-33
- Luke 19:26-27
- Matthew 2:22-23

Word Data:

- Strong's: H3427, H4427, H4437, H4438, H4467, H4468, H4475, H4791, H4910, H6113, H7287, H7786, G07570, G09360, G22310, G48210

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 4:14](#))

rest, rested, restless

Definition:

The term “rest” generally means to stop working in order to relax or regain strength. However, the term can refer to various kinds of rest besides only rest from working. For example, a person might rest from fighting, rest from speaking, or rest from moving, etc.

- An object can be said to be “resting” somewhere, which means it is “standing” or “sitting” there.
- Something that “comes to rest” somewhere has “stopped” there.
- When a person or animals rest, they are sitting or lying down in order to refresh themselves.
- God commanded the Israelites to rest on the seventh day of the week. This day of not working was called the “Sabbath” day.
- To rest an object on something means to “place” or “put” it there.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, to “rest (oneself)” could also be translated as to “stop working” or to “refresh himself” or to “stop carrying burdens.”
- To “rest” an object on something could be translated as to “place” or “put” or “set” that object on something.
- When Jesus said, “I will give you rest,” this could also be translated as “I will cause you to stop carrying your burden” or “I will help you be at peace” or “I will empower you to relax and trust in me.”
- God said, “they will not enter my rest,” and this statement could be translated as “they will not experience my blessings of rest” or “they will not experience the joy and peace that comes from trusting in me.”
- The term “the rest” could be translated as “those that remain” or “all the other people” or “everything that is left.”

(See also: remnant, Sabbath)

Bible References:

- 2 Chronicles 6:41
- Genesis 2:3
- Jeremiah 6:16-19
- Matthew 11:29
- Revelation 14:11

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0014, H1824, H1826, H2308, H3498, H3499, H4494, H4496, H4771, H5117, H5118, H5183, H5564, H6314, H7258, H7280, H7599, H7604, H7605, H7606, H7611, H7673, H7677, H7901, H7931, H7954, H8058, H8172, H8252, H8300, G03720, G03730, G04250, G15150, G18790, G19540, G19810, G22700, G26630, G26640, G26810, G28380, G30620, G45200

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 7:9](#))

restore, restoration

Definition:

The terms “restore” and “restoration” refer to causing something to return to its original place or condition.

- When a diseased body part is restored, this means it has been “healed.”
- A broken relationship that is restored has been “reconciled.” God restores sinful people and brings them back to himself.
- If people have been restored to their home country, they have been “brought back” or “returned” to that country.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, ways to translate “restore” could include “renew” or “repay” or “return” or “heal” or “bring back.”
- Other expressions for this term could be “make new” or “make like new again.”
- When property is “restored,” it has been “repaired” or “replaced” or “given back” to its owner.
- Depending on the context, “restoration” could be translated as “renewal” or “healing” or “reconciliation.”

Bible References:

- 2 Kings 5:10
- Acts 3:21
- Acts 15:15-18
- Isaiah 49:5-6
- Jeremiah 15:19-21
- Lamentations 5:22
- Leviticus 6:5-7
- Luke 19:8
- Matthew 12:13
- Psalm 80:1-3

Word Data:

- Strong's: H7725, H7999, H8421, G06000, G26750

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:6](#); [1:7](#); [3:20](#); [5:15](#); [9:11](#); [12:7](#))

return, turn back

Definition:

The term “return” means to go back or to give something back.

- To “return to” something means to start doing that activity again. To “return to” a place or person means to go back to that place or person again.
- When the Israelites returned to their worship of idols, they were starting to worship them again.
- When they returned to Yahweh, they repented and were worshiping Yahweh again.
- To return land or things that were taken or received from someone else means to give that property back to the person it belongs to.

(See also: turn)

Bible References:

Word Data:

- Strong's: H5437, H7725, H7729, H8421, H8666, G03440, G03600, G03900, G18770, G18800, G19940, G52900

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 4:1](#); [4:7](#); [12:2](#); [12:7](#))

righteous, righteousness, unrighteous, unrighteousness, upright, uprightness

Definition:

The term “righteousness” refers to God’s absolute goodness, justice, faithfulness, and love. Having these qualities makes God “righteous.” Because God is righteous, he must condemn sin.

- These terms are also often used to describe a person who obeys God and is morally good. However, because all people have sinned, no one except God is completely righteous.
- Examples of people the Bible who were called “righteous” include Noah, Job, Abraham, Zachariah, and Elisabeth.
- When people trust in Jesus to save them, God cleanses them from their sins and declares them to be righteous because of Jesus’ righteousness.

The term “unrighteous” means to be sinful and morally corrupt. “Unrighteousness” refers to sin or the condition of being sinful.

- These terms especially refer to living in a way that disobeys God’s teachings and commands.
- Unrighteous people are immoral in their thoughts and actions.
- Sometimes “the unrighteous” refers specifically to people who do not believe in Jesus.

The terms “upright” and “uprightness” refer to acting in a way that follows God’s laws.

- The meaning of these words includes the idea of standing up straight and looking directly ahead.
- A person who is “upright” is someone who obeys God’s rules and does not do things that are against his will.
- Terms such as “integrity” and “righteous” have similar meanings and are sometimes used in parallelism constructions, such as “integrity and uprightness.” (See: [parallelism](#))

Translation Suggestions:

- When it describes God, the term “righteous” could be translated as “perfectly good and just” or “always acting rightly.”
- God’s “righteousness” could also be translated as “perfect faithfulness and goodness.”
- When it describes people who are obedient to God, the term “righteous” could also be translated as “morally good” or “just” or “living a God-pleasing life.”
- The phrase “the righteous” could also be translated as “righteous people” or “God-fearing people.”
- Depending on the context, “righteousness” could also be translated with a word or phrase that means “goodness” or “being perfect before God” or “acting in a right way by obeying God” or “doing perfectly good.”
- The term “unrighteous” could simply be translated as “not righteous.”
- Depending on the context, other ways to translate this could include “wicked” or “immoral” or “people who rebel against God” or “sinful.”
- The phrase “the unrighteous” could be translated as “unrighteous people.”
- The term “unrighteousness” could be translated as “sin” or “evil thoughts and actions” or “wickedness.”
- If possible, it is best to translate this in a way that shows its relationship to “righteous, righteousness.”
- Ways to translate “upright” could include “acting rightly” or “one who acts rightly” or “following God’s laws” or “obedient to God” or “behaving in a way that is right.”
- The term “uprightness” could be translated as “moral purity” or “good moral conduct” or “rightness.”
- The phrase “the upright” could be translated as “people who are upright” or “upright people.”

(See also: [evil](#), [faithful](#), [good](#), [holy](#), integrity, [just](#), law, law, obey, pure, [righteous](#), [sin](#), unlawful)

Bible References:

- Deuteronomy 19:16
- Job 1:8
- Psalms 37:30
- Psalms 49:14
- Psalms 107:42
- Ecclesiastes 12:10-11
- Isaiah 48:1-2
- Ezekiel 33:13
- Malachi 2:6
- Matthew 6:1
- Acts 3:13-14
- Romans 1:29-31
- 1 Corinthians 6:9
- Galatians 3:7
- Colossians 3:25
- 2 Thessalonians 2:10
- 2 Timothy 3:16
- 1 Peter 3:18-20
- 1 John 1:9
- 1 John 5:16-17

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **3:2** But Noah found favor with God. He was a **righteous** man, living among wicked people.
- **4:8** God declared that Abram was **righteous** because he believed in God's promise.
- **17:2** David was a humble and **righteous** man who trusted and obeyed God.
- **23:1** Joseph, the man Mary was engaged to, was a **righteous** man.
- **50:10** Then the **righteous** ones will shine like the sun in the kingdom of God their Father.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0205, H1368, H2555, H3072, H3474, H3476, H3477, H3483, H4334, H4339, H4749, H5228, H5229, H5324, H5765, H5766, H5767, H5977, H6662, H6663, H6664, H6665, H6666, H6968, H8535, H8537, H8549, H8552, G00930, G00940, G04580, G13410, G13420, G13430, G13440, G13450, G13460, G21180, G37160, G37170

(Go back to: [Introduction to Ecclesiastes](#); [Ecclesiastes 7:15](#); [7:16](#); [7:20](#); [8:14](#))

rule, reign, ruler, prefect, official, leader

Definition:

The term “ruler” is a general reference to a person who has authority over other people, such as a leader of a country, kingdom, or religious group. A ruler is one who “rules,” and his authority is his “rule.”

- In the Old Testament, a king was sometimes referred to generally as a “ruler,” as in the phrase “appointed him ruler over Israel.”
- God was referred to as the ultimate ruler, who rules over all other rulers.
- In the New Testament, the leader of a synagogue was called a “ruler.”
- Another type of ruler in the New Testament was a “governor.”
- Depending on the context, “ruler” could be translated as “leader” or “person who has authority over.”
- The action to “rule” means to “lead” to “have authority over.” It means the same thing as “reign” when it refers to the ruling of a king.

(See also: authority, governor, [king](#), synagogue)

Bible References:

- Acts 3:17-18
- Acts 7:35-37
- Luke 12:11
- Luke 23:35
- Mark 10:42
- Matthew 9:32-34
- Matthew 20:25
- Titus 3:1

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0995, H1166, H1167, H1404, H2708, H2710, H3027, H3548, H3920, H4043, H4410, H4427, H4428, H4438, H4467, H4474, H4475, H4623, H4910, H4941, H5057, H5065, H5387, H5401, H5461, H5715, H6113, H6213, H6485, H6957, H7101, H7218, H7287, H7300, H7336, H7786, H7860, H7980, H7981, H7985, H7989, H7990, H8199, H8269, H8323, H8451, G07460, G07520, G07550, G07570, G07580, G09320, G09360, G10180, G12030, G12990, G17780, G17850, G18490, G22320, G22330, G25250, G25830, G28880, G29610, G35450, G38410, G41650, G41730, G42910

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 6:2](#); [8:9](#))

sacrifice, sacrifices, offering

Definition:

In the Bible, the terms “sacrifice” and “offering” refer to special gifts given to God as an act of worshiping him. People also offered sacrifices to false gods.

sacrifice

- Sacrifices to God often involved the killing of an animal.
- Only the sacrifice of Jesus, God’s perfect sinless Son, can completely cleanse people from sin; animal sacrifices could never do that.

offering

- The word “offering” generally refers to anything that is offered or given. The term “sacrifice” refers to something that is given or done at great cost to the giver.
- Offerings to God were specific things that he commanded the Israelites to give in order to express devotion and obedience to him.
- The names of the different offerings, such as “burnt offering” and “peace offering,” indicated what kind of offering was being given.

Translation Suggestions

- The term “offering” could also be translated as “a gift to God” or “something given to God” or “something valuable that is presented to God.”
- Depending on the context, the term “sacrifice” could also be translated as “something valuable given in worship” or “a special animal killed and presented to God.”
- The action to “sacrifice” could be translated as to “give up something valuable” or to “kill an animal and give it to God.”
- Another way to translate “present yourself as a living sacrifice” could be “as you live your life, offer yourself to God as completely as an animal is offered on an altar.”

(See also: altar, burnt offering, drink offering, [false god](#), fellowship offering, freewill offering, peace offering, priest, sin offering, worship)

Bible References:

- 2 Timothy 4:6
- Acts 7:42
- Acts 21:25
- Genesis 4:3-5
- James 2:21-24
- Mark 1:43-44
- Mark 14:12
- Matthew 5:23

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **3:14** After Noah got off the boat, he built an altar and **sacrificed** some of each kind of animal which could be used for a **sacrifice**. God was happy with the **sacrifice** and blessed Noah and his family.
- **5:6** "Take Isaac, your only son, and kill him as a **sacrifice** to me." Again Abraham obeyed God and prepared to **sacrifice** his son.
- **5:9** God had provided the ram to be the **sacrifice** instead of Isaac.
- **13:9** Anyone who disobeyed God's law could bring an animal to the Tent of Meeting as a **sacrifice** to God. A priest would kill the animal and burn it on the altar. The blood of the animal that was **sacrificed** covered the person's sin and made that person clean in God's sight.
- **17:6** David wanted to build a temple where all the Israelites could worship God and offer him **sacrifices**.
- **48:6** Jesus is the Great High Priest. Unlike other priests, he offered himself as the only **sacrifice** that could take away the sin of all the people in the world.
- **48:8** But God provided Jesus, the Lamb of God, as a **sacrifice** to die in our place.
- **49:11** Because Jesus **sacrificed** himself, God can forgive any sin, even terrible sins.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0801, H0817, H0819, H1685, H1890, H1974, H2076, H2077, H2281, H2282, H2398, H2401, H2402, H2403, H2409, H3632, H4394, H4503, H4504, H5066, H5068, H5071, H5257, H5258, H5261, H5262, H5927, H5928, H5930, H6453, H6944, H6999, H7133, H7311, H8002, H8426, H8548, H8573, H8641, G02660, G03340, G10490, G14350, G14940, G23780, G23800, G36460, G43760, G54850

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 5:1](#); [9:2](#))

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: [Ecclesiastes 7:26; 8:8](#))

seed, semen

Definition:

A “seed” is the part of a plant that gets planted in the ground to reproduce more of the same kind of plant. However, in the Bible the term “seed” is used figuratively to mean several different things.

- The term “seed” is used figuratively and euphemistically to refer to the tiny cells inside a man that combine with cells of a woman to cause a baby to grow inside her. A collection of these cells is called “semen.”
- Related to this, “seed” is also used to refer to a person’s offspring or descendants.
- This word often has a plural meaning, referring to more than one seed grain or more than one descendant.
- In the parable of the farmer planting seeds, Jesus compared his seeds to the Word of God, which is planted in people’s hearts in order to produce good spiritual fruit.
- The apostle Paul also uses the term “seed” to refer to the Word of God.

Translation Suggestions:

- For a literal seed, it is best to use the literal term for “seed” that is used in the target language for what a farmer plants in his field.
- The literal term should also be used in contexts where it refers figuratively to God’s Word.
- For the figurative use that refers to people who are of the same family line, it may be more clear to use the word “descendant” or “descendants” instead of “seed.” Some languages may have a word that means “children and grandchildren.”
- For a man or woman’s “seed,” consider how the target expresses this in a way that will not offend or embarrass people. (See: [euphemism](#))

(See also: [children](#), descendant)

Bible References:

- 1 Kings 18:32
- Genesis 1:11
- Jeremiah 2:21
- Matthew 13:8

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H2232, H2233, H3610, H6507, G46150, G46870, G46900, G47010, G47030

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 11:6](#))

seek, search, look for

Definition:

The term “seek” means to look for something or someone. In the past tense, the verb is “sought.” This term is sometimes used figuratively, meaning to “attempt” or “make an effort” to do something or to ask for something.

- To “seek” or “look for” an opportunity to do something can mean to “try to find a time” to do it.
- To “seek Yahweh” means to “spend time and energy getting to know Yahweh and learning to obey him.”
- To “seek protection” means to “try to find a person or place that will protect you from danger.”
- To “seek justice” means to “make an effort to see that people are treated justly or fairly.”
- To “seek the truth” means to “make an effort to find out what the truth is.”
- To “seek favor” means to “urgently ask for favor” or to “do things to cause someone to help you.”

(See also: [just](#), true)

Bible References:

- 1 Chronicles 10:14
- Acts 17:26-27
- Hebrews 11:6
- Luke 11:9
- Psalms 27:8

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0579, H1156, H1239, H1243, H1245, H1556, H1875, H2470, H2603, H2658, H2664, H3289, H7125, H7592, H7836, H8446, G03270, G15670, G19340, G20520, G22120

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:13](#); [3:6](#); [3:15](#); [7:25](#); [7:28](#); [7:29](#); [8:17](#); [12:10](#))

servant, serve, slave, young man, young women

Definition:

A “servant” or “slave” refers to a person who works for (or obeys) another person, either by choice or by force. A servant was under his master's control. In the Bible, “servant” and “slave” are mostly interchangeable terms. The term “serve” generally means to do work for someone, and the concept can be applied in a wide variety of contexts.

- A slave was a kind of servant who was the property of the person he worked for. The person who bought a slave was called his “owner” or “master.” Some masters treated their slaves cruelly. Other masters treated their slaves well, like a valued member of the household. The term “slavery” means the state of being a slave.
- A person could be a slave temporarily, for instance while working to repay a debt to his owner.
- The words “young man” or “young woman” often mean “servant” or “slave.” This meaning will be discerned from context. One indicator of this situation is if the possessive is used, eg. “her young women” could be translated as “her servants” or “her slaves.”
- The term “enslave” means “to cause to be a slave” (usually by force).
- The New Testament speaks of human beings as “slaves of sin” until Jesus frees them from its control and power. When a person receives new life in Christ, he stops being a slave to sin and becomes a slave to righteousness.

Translation Suggestions

- The term “serve” can also be translated as “minister to” or “work for” or “take care of” or “obey,” depending on the context.
- The term “enslave” could be translated as “cause to not be free” or “force to serve others” or “put under the control of others.”
- The phrase “enslaved to” or “in bondage to” could be translated as “forced to be a slave of” or “forced to serve” or “under the control of.”
- To “serve God” can be translated as to “worship and obey God” or to “do the work that God has commanded.”
- In the Old Testament, God’s prophets and other people who worshiped God were often called his “servants.”
- In the New Testament, people who obeyed God through faith in Christ were often called his “servants.”
- To “serve tables” means to bring food to people who are sitting at tables, or more generally, to “distribute food.”
- In the context of a person serving guests, this term means “care for” or “serve food to” or “provide food for.” When Jesus told the disciples to “serve” the fish to the people, this could be translated as, “distribute” or “hand out” or “give.”
- People who teach others about God are said to serve both God and the ones they are teaching.
- The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians about how they used to “serve” the old covenant. This refers to obeying the laws of Moses. Now they “serve” the new covenant. That is, because of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, believers in Jesus are enabled by the Holy Spirit to please God and live holy lives.
- Paul talks about their actions in terms of their “service” to either the old or new covenant. This could be translated as “serving” or “obeying” or “devotion to.”
- Often, when a person referred to himself as “your servant” he was showing respect to the person addressed. That person may have had higher social status, or the speaker may be showing humility. It did not mean that the person speaking was an actual servant.

(See also: [bondage](#), works, obey, [house](#), lord)

Bible References:

- Genesis 15:13
- Genesis 21:10-11
- Genesis 25:23
- Deuteronomy 24:7
- Jeremiah 30:8-9
- Matthew 4:10-11
- Matthew 6:24
- Matthew 10:24-25
- Matthew 13:27-28
- Mark 8:7-10
- Mark 9:33-35
- Luke 4:8
- Luke 12:37-38
- Luke 12:47-48
- Luke 22:26-27
- Acts 4:29-31
- Acts 6:2-4
- Acts 10:7-8
- Galatians 4:3
- Galatians 4:24-25
- Colossians 1:7-8
- Colossians 3:22-25
- 2 Timothy 2:3-5

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **6:1** When Abraham was very old and his son, Isaac, had grown to be a man, Abraham sent one of his **servants** back to the land where his relatives lived to find a wife for his son, Isaac.
- **8:4** The **slave** traders sold Joseph as a **slave** to a wealthy government official.
- **9:13** "I (God) will send you (Moses) to Pharaoh so that you can bring the Israelites out of their **slavery** in Egypt."
- **19:10** Then Elijah prayed, "O Yahweh, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, show us today that you are the God of Israel and that I am your **servant**."
- **29:3** "Since the **servant** could not pay the debt, the king said, 'Sell this man and his family as **slaves** to make payment on his debt.'"
- **35:6** "All my father's **servants** have plenty to eat, and yet here I am starving."
- **47:4** The **slave** girl kept yelling as they walked, "These men are servants of the Most High God."
- **50:4** Jesus also said, "A **servant** is not greater than his master."

Word Data:

- (Servant) Strong's: H0519, H5288, H5647, H5649, H5650, H5657, H7916, H8198, H8334, G12490, G14010, G14020, G23240, G34070, G34110, G36100, G38160, G49830, G52570
- (Serve) H3547, H4929, H4931, H5647, H5656, H5673, H5975, H6213, H6399, H6402, H6440, H6633, H6635, H7272, H8104, H8120, H8199, H8278, H8334, G12470, G12480, G13980, G14020, G14380, G19830, G20640, G22120, G23230, G29990, G30000, G30090, G43370, G43420, G47540, G50870, G52560
- (Enslave) H3533, G26150

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 2:7](#); [5:9](#); [7:21](#); [10:7](#); [10:16](#))

silver

Definition:

Silver is a shiny, gray precious metal used to make coins, jewelry, containers, and ornaments.

- The various containers that are made include silver cups and bowls, and other things used for cooking, eating, or serving.
- Silver and gold were used in the building of the tabernacle and the temple. The temple in Jerusalem had containers made of silver.
- In Bible times, a shekel was a unit of weight, and a purchase was often priced at a certain number of shekels of silver. By New Testament times there were silver coins of various weights that were measured in shekels.
- Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave for twenty shekels of silver.
- Judas was paid thirty silver coins for betraying Jesus.

(See also: tabernacle, [temple](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Chronicles 18:9-11
- 1 Samuel 2:36
- 2 Kings 25:13-15
- Acts 3:6
- Matthew 26:15

Word Data:

- Strong's: H3701, H3702, H7192, G06930, G06940, G06950, G06960, G14060

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 2:8](#); [5:10](#); [7:12](#); [10:19](#); [12:6](#))

sin, sinful, sinner, sinning

Definition:

The term “sin” refers to actions, thoughts, and words that are against God’s will and laws. Sin can also refer to not doing something that God wants us to do.

- Sin includes anything we do that does not obey or please God, even things that other people don’t know about.
- Thoughts and actions that disobey God’s will are called “sinful.”
- Because Adam sinned, all human beings are born with a “sinful nature,” a nature that controls them and causes them to sin.
- A “sinner” is someone who sins, so every human being is a sinner.
- Sometimes the word “sinners” was used by religious people like the Pharisees to refer to people who didn’t keep the law as well as the Pharisees thought they should.
- The term “sinner” was also used for people who were considered to be worse sinners than other people. For example, this label was given to tax collectors and prostitutes.

Translation Suggestions:

- The term “sin” could be translated with a word or phrase that means “disobedience to God” or “going against God’s will” or “evil behavior and thoughts” or “wrongdoing.”
- To “sin” could also be translated as to “disobey God” or to “do wrong.”
- Depending on the context “sinful” could be translated as “full of wrongdoing” or “wicked” or “immoral” or “evil” or “rebellious against God.”
- Depending on the context the term “sinner” could be translated with a word or phrase that means “person who sins” or “person who does wrong things” or “person who disobeys God” or “person who disobeys the law.”
- The term “sinners” could be translated by a word or phrase that means “very sinful people” or “people considered to be very sinful” or “immoral people.”
- Ways to translate “tax collectors and sinners” could include “people who collect money for the government, and other very sinful people” or “very sinful people, including (even) tax collectors.”
- Make sure the translation of this term can include sinful behavior and thoughts, even those that other people don’t see or know about.
- The term “sin” should be general, and different from the terms for “wickedness” and “evil.”

(See also: disobey, [evil](#), [flesh](#), tax collector)

Bible References:

- 1 Chronicles 9:1-3
- 1 John 1:10
- 1 John 2:2
- 2 Samuel 7:12-14
- Acts 3:19
- Daniel 9:24
- Genesis 4:7
- Hebrews 12:2
- Isaiah 53:11
- Jeremiah 18:23
- Leviticus 4:14
- Luke 15:18
- Matthew 12:31

- Romans 6:23
- Romans 8:4

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **3:15** God said, "I promise I will never again curse the ground because of the evil things people do, or destroy the world by causing a flood, even though people are **sinful** from the time they are children."
- **13:12** God was very angry with them because of their **sin** and planned to destroy them.
- **20:1** The kingdoms of Israel and Judah both **sinned** against God. They broke the covenant that God made with them at Sinai.
- **21:13** The prophets also said that the Messiah would be perfect, having no **sin**. He would die to receive the punishment for other people's **sin**.
- **35:1** One day, Jesus was teaching many tax collectors and other **sinner**s who had gathered to hear him.
- **38:5** Then Jesus took a cup and said, "Drink this. It is my blood of the New Covenant that is poured out for the forgiveness of **sins**."
- **43:11** Peter answered them, "Every one of you should repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ so that God will forgive your **sins**."
- **48:8** We all deserve to die for our **sins**!
- **49:17** Even though you are a Christian, you will still be tempted to **sin**. But God is faithful and says that if you confess your **sins**, he will forgive you. He will give you strength to fight against **sin**.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0817, H0819, H2398, H2399, H2400, H2401, H2402, H2403, H2408, H2409, H5771, H6588, H7683, H7686, G02640, G02650, G02660, G02680, G03610, G37810, G39000, G42580

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 7:20](#); [7:26](#); [8:12](#); [9:18](#))

son

Definition:

The male offspring of a man and a woman is called their “son” for his entire life. He is also called a son of that man and a son of that woman. An “adopted son” is a male who has been legally placed into the position of being a son.

- The phrase “son of” can be used to identify a person’s father, mother, or an ancestor from some previous generation. This phrase is used in genealogies and many other places.
- The “sons of Israel” are usually the Israelite nation (after Genesis).
- Using “son of” to give the name of the father frequently helps distinguish people who have the same name. For example, “Azariah son of Zadok” and “Azariah son of Nathan” in 1 Kings 4, and “Azariah son of Amaziah” in 2 Kings 15 are three different men.
- The phrase “son of” can be used to associate the person with whatever person or concept comes next. The meaning is then greatly determined by context. It can be positive (eg. 2 Kings 2:16: “sons of ability”), negative (eg. 2 Samuel 7:10: “sons of wickedness”), denote membership in a group, express contempt by not naming the person (eg. “you sons of Zeruiah”), etc.

Translation Suggestions:

- In most occurrences of this term, it is best to translate “son” by the literal term in the language that is used to refer to a son.
- When translating the term “Son of God,” the project language’s common term for “son” should be used.
- Sometimes “sons” can be translated as “children,” when both males and females are being referred to. For example, “sons of God” could be translated as “children of God” since this expression also includes girls and women.

(See also: descendant, ancestor, Son of God, sons of God)

Bible References:

- 1 Chronicles 18:15
- 1 Kings 13:2
- 1 Thessalonians 5:5
- Galatians 4:7
- Hosea 11:1
- Isaiah 9:6
- Matthew 3:17
- Matthew 5:9
- Matthew 8:12
- Nehemiah 10:28

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **4:8** God spoke to Abram and promised again that he would have a **son** and as many descendants as the stars in the sky.
- **4:9** God said, “I will give you a **son** from your own body.”
- **5:5** About a year later, when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90, Sarah gave birth to Abraham’s **son**.
- **5:8** When they reached the place of sacrifice, Abraham tied up his **son** Isaac and laid him on an altar. He was about to kill his **son** when God said, “Stop! Do not hurt the boy! Now I know that you fear me because you did not keep your only **son** from me.”

- **9:7** When she saw the baby, she took him as her own **son**.
- **11:6** God killed every one of the Egyptians' firstborn **sons**.
- **18:1** After many years, David died, and his **son** Solomon began to rule.
- **26:4** "Is this the **son** of Joseph?" they said.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1060, H1121, H1123, H1248, H3173, H3206, H3211, H4497, H5209, H5220, G38160, G50430, G52070

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:1](#); [1:13](#); [2:3](#); [2:7](#); [2:8](#); [3:10](#); [3:18](#); [3:19](#); [3:21](#); [4:8](#); [5:14](#); [8:11](#); [9:3](#); [9:12](#); [10:17](#); [12:12](#))

spirit, wind, breath

Definition:

The term “spirit” refers to the non-physical part of a person which cannot be seen. In biblical times, the concept of a person’s spirit was closely related to the concept of a person’s breath. The term can also refer to wind, that is, the movement of air in the natural world.

- The term “spirit” can refer to a being that does not have a physical body, such as an evil spirit.
- In general, the term “spiritual” describes things in the non-physical world.
- The term “spirit of” can also mean “having the characteristics of,” such as in “spirit of wisdom” or “in the spirit of Elijah.” Sometimes the Bible applies this term in the context of a person’s attitude or emotional state, such as “spirit of fear” and “spirit of jealousy.”
- Jesus said that God is a spirit.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, some ways to translate “spirit” might include “non-physical being” or “inside part” or “inner being.”
- In some contexts, the term “spirit” could be translated as “evil spirit” or “evil spirit being.”
- Sometimes the term “spirit” is used to express the feelings of a person, as in “my spirit was grieved in my inmost being.” This could also be translated as “I felt grieved in my spirit” or “I felt deeply grieved.”
- The phrase “spirit of” could be translated as “character of” or “influence of” or “attitude of” or “thinking (that is) characterized by.”
- Depending on the context, “spiritual” could be translated as “non-physical” or “from the Holy Spirit” or “God’s” or “part of the non-physical world.”
- The phrase “spiritual maturity” could be translated as “godly behavior that shows obedience to the Holy Spirit.”
- The term “spiritual gift” could be translated as “special ability that the Holy Spirit gives.”
- Sometimes this term can be translated as “wind” when referring to the simple movement of air or “breath” when referring to air movement caused by living beings.

(See also: soul, Holy Spirit, demon, breath)

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 5:5
- 1 John 4:3
- 1 Thessalonians 5:23
- Acts 5:9
- Colossians 1:9
- Ephesians 4:23
- Genesis 7:21-22
- Genesis 8:1
- Isaiah 4:4
- Mark 1:23-26
- Matthew 26:41
- Philippians 1:27

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **13:3** Three days later, after the people had prepared themselves **spiritually**, God came down on top of Mount Sinai with thunder, lightning, smoke, and a loud trumpet blast.
- **40:7** Then Jesus cried out, "It is finished! Father, I give my **spirit** into your hands." Then he bowed his head and gave up his **spirit**.
- **45:5** As Stephen was dying, he cried out, "Jesus, receive my **spirit**."
- **48:7** All the people groups are blessed through him, because everyone who believes in Jesus is saved from sin, and becomes a **spiritual** descendant of Abraham.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0178, H1172, H5397, H7307, H7308, G41510, G41520, G41530, G53260, G54270

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:14](#); [1:17](#); [2:11](#); [2:17](#); [2:26](#); [3:19](#); [3:21](#); [4:4](#); [4:6](#); [4:16](#); [6:9](#); [7:8](#); [7:9](#); [8:8](#); [10:4](#); [11:4](#))

statute

Definition:

A statute is a specific written law that provides guidance for people to live by.

- The term “statute” is similar in meaning to “ordinance” and “command” and “law” and “decree.” All these terms involve instructions and requirements that God gives to his people or rulers give to their people.
- King David said that he delighted himself in Yahweh’s statutes.
- The term “statute” could also be translated as “specific command” or “special decree.”

(See also: [command](#), [decree](#), law, [ordinance](#), Yahweh)

Bible References:

- 1 Kings 11:11-13
- Deuteronomy 6:20-23
- Ezekiel 33:15
- Numbers 19:2

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H2706, H2708, H7010, G13450

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 8:5](#); [8:6](#))

strength, strengthen, strong

Facts:

The term “strength” refers to physical, emotional, or spiritual power. To “strengthen” someone or something means to make that person or object stronger.

- “Strength” can also refer to the power to withstand some kind of opposing force.
- A person has “strength of will” if he is able to avoid sinning when tempted.
- One writer of the Psalms called Yahweh his “strength” because God helped him to be strong.
- If a physical structure like a wall or building is being “strengthened,” people are rebuilding the structure, reinforcing it with more stones or brick so that it can withstand an attack.

Translation Suggestions

- In general, the term “strengthen” can be translated as “cause to be strong” or “make more powerful.”
- In a spiritual sense, the phrase “strengthen your brothers” could also be translated as “encourage your brothers” or “help your brothers to persevere.”
- The following examples show the meaning of these terms, and therefore how they can be translated, when they are included in longer expressions.
 - “puts strength on me like a belt” means “causes me to be completely strong, like a belt that completely surrounds my waist.”
 - “in quietness and trust will be your strength” means “acting calmly and trusting in God will make you spiritually strong.”
 - “will renew their strength” means “will become stronger again.”
 - “by my strength and by my wisdom I acted” means “I have done all this because I am so strong and wise.”
 - “strengthen the wall” means “reinforce the wall” or “rebuild the wall.”
 - “I will strengthen you” means “I will cause you to be strong”
 - “in Yahweh alone are salvation and strength” means “Yahweh is the only one who saves us and strengthens us.”
 - “the rock of your strength” means “the faithful one who makes you strong”
 - “with the saving strength of his right hand” means “he strongly rescues you from trouble like someone who holds you safely with his strong hand.”
 - “of little strength” means “not very strong” or “weak.”
 - “with all my strength” means “using my best efforts” or “strongly and completely.”

(See also: [faithful](#), persevere, right hand, [save](#))

Bible References:

- 2 Kings 18:19-21
- 2 Peter 2:11
- Luke 10:27
- Psalm 21:1

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0193, H0202, H0353, H0360, H0386, H0410, H0553, H0556, H1369, H1396, H2220, H2388, H2391, H2392, H2393, H2428, H3027, H3028, H3559, H3581, H3811, H3955, H4581, H5326, H5331, H5582, H5797, H5807, H5810, H5934, H5975, H6106, H6109, H6697, H6965, H7292, H7307, H8003, H8443, H8632, H8633,

G04610, G09500, G14110, G14120, G17430, G17650, G18400, G19910, G24790, G24800, G29010, G29040,
G36190, G37560, G45990, G47320, G47330, G47410

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 4:1](#); [9:10](#))

temple, house, house of God

Facts:

The temple was a building surrounded by walled courtyards where the Israelites came to pray and to offer sacrifices to God. It was located on Mount Moriah in the city of Jerusalem.

- Often the term “temple” referred to the whole temple complex, including the courtyards that surrounded the main building. Sometimes it referred only to the building.
- The temple building had two rooms, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.
- God referred to the temple as his dwelling place.
- King Solomon built the Temple during his reign. It was supposed to be the permanent place of worship in Jerusalem.
- In the New Testament, the term “temple of the Holy Spirit” is used to refer to believers in Jesus as a group, because the Holy Spirit lives in them.

Translation Suggestions:

- Usually when the text says that people were “in the temple,” it is referring to the courtyards outside the building. This could be translated as “in the temple courtyards” or “in the temple complex.”
- Where it refers specifically to the building itself, some translations translate “temple” as “temple building,” to make it the reference clear.
- Ways to translate “temple” could include, “God’s holy house” or “sacred worship place.”
- Often in the Bible, the temple is referred to as “the house of Yahweh” or “the house of God.”

(See also: [sacrifice](#), Solomon, Babylon, Holy Spirit, tabernacle, courtyard, Zion, [house](#))

Bible References:

- Acts 3:2
- Acts 3:8
- Ezekiel 45:18-20
- Luke 19:46
- Nehemiah 10:28
- Psalm 79:1-3

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **17:6** David wanted to build a **temple** where all the Israelites could worship God and offer him sacrifices.
- **18:2** In Jerusalem, Solomon built the **Temple** for which his father David had planned and gathered materials. Instead of at the Tent of Meeting, people now worshiped God and offered sacrifices to him at the **Temple**. God came and was present in the **Temple**, and he lived there with his people.
- **20:7** They (Babylonians) captured the city of Jerusalem, destroyed the **Temple**, and took away all the treasures.
- **20:13** When the people arrived in Jerusalem, they rebuilt the **Temple** and the wall around the city of the city and the **Temple**.
- **25:4** Then Satan took Jesus to the highest point on the **Temple** and said, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, ‘God will command his angels to carry you so your foot does not hit a stone.’”
- **40:7** When he died, there was an earthquake and the large curtain that separated the people from the presence of God in the **Temple** was torn in two, from the top to the bottom.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1004, H1964, H1965, G14930, G24110, G34850

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 7:4](#))

testimony, testify, witness, eyewitness, evidence

Definition:

When a person gives “testimony” he makes a statement about something he knows, claiming that the statement is true. To “testify” is to give “testimony.”

- In some places in the Old Testament, “Testimony” refers specifically to the tablets of stone on which Yahweh wrote his ten commandments. From that use it came to refer to God’s law more broadly.
- Often a person “testifies” about something he has experienced directly.
- A witness who gives “false testimony” does not tell the truth about what happened.
- Sometimes the term “testimony” refers to a prophecy that a prophet has stated.
- In the New Testament, this term was often used to refer to how Jesus’ followers testified about the events of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.

The term “witness” refers to a person who has personally experienced something that happened. Usually a witness is also someone who testifies about what they know is true. The term “eyewitness” emphasizes that the person was actually there and saw what happened.

- To “witness” something means to see it happen.
- At a trial, a witness “gives witness” or “bears witness.” This has the same meaning as “testify.”
- Witnesses are expected to tell the truth about what they have seen or heard.
- A witness who does not tell the truth about what happened is called a “false witness.” He is said to “give false witness” or to “bear false witness.”
- The expression “be a witness between” means that something or someone will be evidence that a contract has been made. The witness will make sure each person does what he has promised to do.

Translation Suggestions:

- The term “testify” or “give testimony” could also be translated as “tell the facts” or “tell what was seen or heard” or “tell from personal experience” or “give evidence” or “tell what happened.”
- Ways to translate “testimony” could include, “report of what happened” or “statement of what is true” or “evidence” or “what has been said” or “prophecy.”
- Ways to translate “Testimony” could include, “the stone slabs on which I wrote my commands” or “God’s law” or “God’s commands” or “the record of the agreement between Yahweh and Israel.”
- The phrase, “as a testimony to them” could be translated as to “show them what is true” or to “prove to them what is true.”
- The phrase, “as a testimony against them” could be translated as “which will show them their sin” or “exposing their hypocrisy” or “which will prove that they are wrong.”
- To “give false testimony” could be translated as “say false things about” or “state things that are not true.”
- The term “witness” or “eyewitness” could be translated with a word or phrase that means “person seeing it” or “the one who saw it happen” or “those who saw and heard (those things).”
- Something that is “a witness” could be translated as “guarantee” or “sign of our promise” or “something that testifies that this is true.”
- The phrase “you will be my witnesses” could also be translated as “you will tell other people about me” or “you will teach people the truth that I taught you” or “you will tell people what you have seen me do and heard me teach.”
- To “witness to” could be translated as to “tell what was seen” or to “testify” or to “state what happened.”
- To “witness” something could be translated as to “see something” or to “experience something happen.”

(See also: ark of the covenant, guilt, [judge](#), prophet, true)

Bible References:

- Deuteronomy 31:28
- Micah 6:3
- Matthew 26:60
- Mark 1:44
- John 1:7
- John 3:33
- Acts 4:32-33
- Acts 7:44
- Acts 13:31
- Romans 1:9
- 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12
- 1 Timothy 5:19-20
- 2 Timothy 1:8
- 2 Peter 1:16-18
- 1 John 5:6-8
- 3 John 1:12
- Revelation 12:11

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **39:2** Inside the house, the Jewish leaders put Jesus on trial. They brought many **false witnesses** who lied about him.
- **39:4** The high priest tore his clothes in anger and shouted, "We do not need any more **witnesses**. You have heard him say that he is the Son of God. What is your judgment?"
- **42:8** "It was also written in the scriptures that my disciples will proclaim that everyone should repent in order to receive forgiveness for their sins. They will do this starting in Jerusalem, and then go to all people groups everywhere. You are **witnesses** of these things."
- **43:7** "We are **witnesses** to the fact that God raised Jesus to life again."

Word Data:

- Strong's: H5707, H5713, H5715, H5749, H6030, H8584, G02670, G12630, G19570, G26490, G31400, G31410, G31420, G31430, G31440, G43030, G48280, G49010, G55750, G55760, G55770, G60200

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 10:19](#))

vineyard

Definition:

A vineyard is a large garden area where grapevines are grown and grapes are cultivated.

- A vineyard often has a wall around it to protect the fruit from thieves and animals.
- God compared the people of Israel to a vineyard that did not bear good fruit. (See: [Metaphor](#))
- Vineyard could be also translated as "grapevine garden" or "grape plantation."

(See also: [grape](#), [Israel](#), [vine](#))

Bible References:

- Genesis 9:20-21
- Luke 13:6
- Luke 20:15
- Matthew 20:2
- Matthew 21:40-41

Word Data:

- Strong's: H1612, H3754, H3755, H8284, G02900

(**Go back to:** [Ecclesiastes 2:4](#))

walk, walked

Definition:

The term “walk” is often used in a figurative sense to mean “live.”

- “Enoch walked with God” means that Enoch lived in a close relationship with God.
- To “walk by the Spirit” means to be guided by the Holy Spirit so that we do things that please and honor God.
- To “walk in” God’s commands or God’s ways means to “live in obedience to” his commands, that is, to “obey his commands” or “do his will.”
- When God says he will “walk among” his people, it means that he is living among them or closely interacting with them.
- To “walk contrary to” means to live or behave in a way that is against something or someone.
- To “walk after” means to seek or pursue someone or something. It can also mean to act in the same way as someone else.

Translation Suggestions:

- It is best to translate “walk” literally, as long as the correct meaning will be understood.
- Otherwise, figurative uses of “walk” could also be translated by “live” or “act” or “behave.”
- The phrase “walk by the Spirit” could be translated by, “live in obedience to the Holy Spirit” or “behave in a way that is pleasing to the Holy Spirit” or “do things that are pleasing to God as the Holy Spirit guides you.”
- To “walk in God’s commands” could be translated by “live by God’s commands” or “obey God’s commands.”
- The phrase “walked with God” could be translated as “lived in close relationship with God by obeying and honoring him.”

(See also: Holy Spirit, honor)

Bible References:

- 1 John 1:7
- 1 Kings 2:4
- Colossians 2:7
- Galatians 5:25
- Genesis 17:1
- Isaiah 2:5
- Jeremiah 13:10
- Micah 4:2

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H1869, H1980, H1981, H3212, H4108, G17040, G40430, G41980, G47480

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 1:4](#); [1:6](#); [1:7](#); [2:1](#); [2:14](#); [3:20](#); [5:1](#); [5:16](#); [6:4](#); [6:6](#); [8:3](#); [8:10](#); [9:7](#); [9:10](#); [10:3](#); [10:7](#); [10:20](#); [12:5](#))

watch, guard, keep, take heed, beware

Definition:

The term “watch” means to look at something very closely and carefully. It also has several figurative meanings. A “watchman” was someone whose job was to guard a city by looking carefully all around him for any danger or threat to the people in the city.

- The command to “watch your life and doctrine closely” means to be careful to live wisely and to not believe false teachings.
- To “watch out” is a warning to be careful to avoid a danger or harmful influence.
- To “watch” or “keep watch” means to always be alert and on guard against sin and evil. It can also mean to “be ready.”
- To “keep watch over” or “keep close watch” can mean to guard, protect or take care of someone or something.
- Other ways of translating “watch” could include “pay close attention to” or “be diligent” or “be very careful” or “be on guard.”
- Other words for “watchman” are “sentry” or “guard.”

Bible References:

- 1 Thessalonians 5:6
- Hebrews 13:17
- Jeremiah 31:4-6
- Mark 8:15
- Mark 13:33-34
- Matthew 25:10-13

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0821, H2370, H4929, H4931, H5027, H5341, H6486, H6822, H6836, H6974, H7462, H7789, H7919, H8104, H8108, H8245, G00690, G09910, G11270, G14920, G23340, G28920, G35250, G37080, G39060, G43370, G46480, G50830, G54380

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 5:1](#); [5:8](#); [5:13](#); [8:2](#); [8:5](#); [11:4](#); [12:3](#); [12:13](#))

wine, wineskin, new wine

Definition:

In the Bible, the term “wine” refers to a kind of fermented drink made from the juice of a fruit called grapes. Wine was stored in “wineskins,” which were containers made out of animal skin.

- The term “new wine” referred to grape juice that had just been taken from the grape and was not fermented yet. Sometimes the term “wine” also referred to unfermented grape juice.
- To make wine, grapes are crushed in a winepress so that the juice comes out. The juice eventually ferments and alcohol forms in it.
- In Bible times, wine was the normal drink with meals. It did not have as much alcohol as present-day wine has.
- Before wine was served for a meal, it was often mixed with water.
- A wineskin that was old and brittle would get cracks in it, which allowed the wine to leak out. New wineskins were soft and flexible, which meant they did not tear easily and could store the wine safely.
- If wine is unknown in your culture, it could be translated as “fermented grape juice” or “fermented drink made from a fruit called grapes” or “fermented fruit juice.” (See: [How to Translate Unknowns](#))
- Ways to translate “wineskin” could include “bag for wine” or “animal skin wine bag” or “animal skin container for wine.”

(See also: grape, vine, [vineyard](#), winepress)

Bible References:

- 1 Timothy 5:23
- Genesis 9:21
- Genesis 49:12
- John 2:3-5
- John 2:10
- Matthew 9:17
- Matthew 11:18

smashed

Word Data:

- Strong's: H2561, H2562, H3196, H4469, H4997, H5435, H6025, H6071, H8492, G10980, G36310, G38200, G39430

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 2:3](#); [9:7](#); [10:19](#))

wise men, advisor

Definition:

The term “wise men” simply means people who are wise. In the Bible, however, the term “wise men” often refers to men with unusual knowledge and abilities who served in a king’s royal court as advisors to the king or other high officials.

Old Testament

- Sometimes the term “wise men” is explained in the text as “prudent men” or “men with understanding.” This refers to men who act wisely and righteously because they obey God.
- The “wise men” who served pharaohs or other kings were often scholars who studied the stars, especially looking for special meanings for the patterns that the stars made in their positions in the sky. Sometimes “wise men” also practiced divination of performed acts of magic, probably by the power of evil spirits.
- Often wise men were expected to explain the meanings of dreams. For example, King Nebuchadnezzar demanded that his wise men describe his dreams and tell him what they meant, but none of them was able to do this, except Daniel who had received this knowledge from God.

New Testament

- The group of men who came from eastern regions to worship Jesus were called “magi,” which is often translated as “wise men,” since this probably refers to scholars who served a ruler of an eastern country.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, the term “wise men” could be translated using the term “wise” or with a phrase such as “gifted men” or “educated men” or some other term that refers to men who have an important job working for a ruler.
- When the term “wise men” simply means people who are wise, the word “wise” should be translated in the same or similar way to how it is translated elsewhere in the Bible.

(See also: Babylon, Daniel, divination, magic, Nebuchadnezzar, [ruler](#), [wise](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Chronicles 27:32-34
- Daniel 2:1-2
- Daniel 2:10-11

Word Data:

- Strong's: H2445, H2450, H3778, H3779, G46800

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 2:16](#); [6:8](#); [7:4](#); [7:5](#); [7:7](#); [7:19](#); [8:5](#); [9:11](#); [9:15](#); [9:17](#); [10:2](#); [10:12](#); [12:9](#); [12:11](#))

wise, wisdom

Definition:

The term “wise” describes someone who understands what is the right and moral thing to do and then does that. “Wisdom” is the understanding and practice of what is true and morally right.

- Being wise includes the ability to make good decisions, especially choosing to do what pleases God.
- People become wise by listening to God and humbly obeying his will.
- A wise person will show the fruits of the Holy Spirit in his life, such as joy, kindness, love, and patience.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, other ways to translate “wise” could include “obedient to God” or “sensible and obedient” or “God-fearing.”
- “Wisdom” could be translated by a word or phrase that means “wise living” or “sensible and obedient living” or “good judgment.”
- It is best to translate “wise” and “wisdom” in such a way that they are different terms from other key terms like righteous or obedient.

(See also: obey, [fruit](#))

Bible References:

- Acts 6:3
- Colossians 3:15-17
- Exodus 31:6
- Genesis 3:6
- Isaiah 19:12
- Jeremiah 18:18
- Matthew 7:24

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **2:5** She also wanted to be **wise**, so she picked some of the fruit and ate it.
- **18:1** When Solomon asked for **wisdom**, God was pleased and made him the **wisest** man in the world.
- **23:9** Some time later, **wise** men from countries far to the east saw an unusual star in the sky.
- **45:1** He (Stephen) had a good reputation and was full of the Holy Spirit and of **wisdom**.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0998, H1350, H2445, H2449, H2450, H2451, H2452, H2454, H2942, H3820, H3823, H6195, H6493, H6912, H7535, H7919, H7922, H8454, G46780, G46790, G46800, G49200, G54280, G54290, G54300

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 8 General Notes](#))

wrath, fury

Definition:

Wrath is an intense anger that is sometimes long-lasting. The Bible describes both people and God as experiencing intense anger. When speaking about God's "wrath," make sure the word or phrase used to translate this term does not refer to a sinful fit of rage (which might be true of a human person).

- In the Bible, "wrath" often refers to God's righteous judgment of sin and punishment of people who rebel against him.
- The "wrath of God" can also refer to his judgment and punishment for sin.
- God's wrath is the righteous penalty for those who do not repent of their sin.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, other ways this term could be translated include "intense anger" or "righteous judgment" or "anger."
- God's wrath is just and holy. When talking about God's wrath, make sure the word or phrase used to translate this term does not refer to a sinful human rage.

(See also: [judge](#), [sin](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10
- 1 Timothy 2:8-10
- Luke 3:7
- Luke 21:23
- Matthew 3:7
- Revelation 14:10
- Romans 1:18
- Romans 5:9

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0639, H2197, H2528, H2534, H2740, H3707, H3708, H5678, H7107, H7109, H7110, H7265, H7267, G23720, G37090, G39490, G39500

(Go back to: [Ecclesiastes 5:17](#))

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