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Proverbs

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unfoldingWord® Translation Notes

Proverbs

Introduction to Proverbs

Part 1: General Introduction

Outline of Proverbs

Solomon introduces his proverbs (1:1–7)

Collection of teachings (1:8–9:18)

Proverbs of Solomon (10:1–22:16)

Words of wise men (22:17–24:22)

More words of wise men (24:23–34)

More proverbs of Solomon (25:1–29:27)

The words of Agur (30:1–33)

The words of Lemuel (31:1–9)

A good wife praised (31:10–31)

What is the book of Proverbs about?

A proverb is a short statement that expresses some wisdom or truth. Most societies have their own proverbs. People that speak a given language can readily understand proverbs in that language.

The Book of Proverbs is a collection of proverbs. It also includes teachings about how to live wisely. Scholars refer to Proverbs, Psalms, Job, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs as wisdom literature. (See: [Proverbs](#))

How should the title of this book be translated?

The title of this book is often translated as “Proverbs.” A more general translation would be “Words for Wise People,” “Words that Give Wisdom,” or something similar.

Who wrote the book of Proverbs?

Proverbs begins with the words, “The Proverbs of Solomon, son of David and King of Israel.” But Solomon did not write all of the proverbs. Unnamed wise men may have written some of them. Agur the son of Jakeh (30:1) and King Lemuel (31:1) identify themselves as writing some of the proverbs.

Part 2: Important Religious and Cultural Concepts

What is meant by “wisdom” and “foolishness” in the Book of Proverbs?

“Wisdom” means the understanding and doing of what is true and morally right. A wise person understands and does what Yahweh would judge to be right. Anyone living in this way will also learn to live well with other people and to make good practical decisions in life. The book of Proverbs also acknowledges that it is important to maintain one’s honor or reputation in the opinion of other people. Those who fail to live in this way are called “foolish.” For this reason, it is possible for a person to be very intelligent and still be foolish. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#) and [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#))

Part 3: Important Translation Issues

What form do the individual proverbs have?

Most proverbs have two parts or two lines that are “parallel” to each other. The second part may strengthen the first, may give more details about the first, or may even say what seems the opposite of the first. Translators should take into account that each proverb is also part of a larger group of proverbs. (See: [Parallelism](#))

How should personification be represented in translation?

In Proverbs, certain qualities such as wisdom and understanding are often represented as if they were wise women, as in [Proverbs 3:15-18](#), [Proverbs 4:6-9](#), and elsewhere. In languages where it is possible for a woman figure to represent these qualities, the translator should translate in this way. However, in many languages this kind of direct translation is not possible. In such a case, the translator may be able to translate these personifications as similes instead. This means they would present wisdom or understanding as being like a wise woman whom people should obey. (See: [Personification](#))

Proverbs 1

Proverbs 1 General Notes

Structure and formatting

The first chapter of proverbs begins with a type of introduction in verses 1-7. It mentions Solomon, son of David. Verse 7 contains a foundational verse for the whole book. It defines wisdom.

Special concepts in this chapter

Parallelism

Proverbs are often written without any surrounding context and in two lines of text. Each line will have a certain relationship to the other line. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Proverbs 1:1

General Information:

Verses 2-33 are poetry. (See: [Poetry](#))

ULT

¹ The proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, the king of Israel:

UST

¹ These are the sayings that compare one example with another, to teach moral lessons and to make people wise, from Solomon the king of Israel, who was son of David.

Proverbs 1:2

to teach wisdom and instruction

This can be reworded so that the abstract nouns “wisdom” and “instruction” can be stated as adjectives or verbs. Alternate translation: “to teach you how to be wise and to instruct you about how to live moral lives” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

to teach words of insight

Alternate translation: “to help you understand wise teachings”

ULT

² To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of understanding;

UST

² The purpose of these sayings is to teach the meaning of wisdom and give examples of moral instruction, so wise teaching can guide you.

Proverbs 1:3

that you may receive

Here “you” refers to the readers. If it is more natural in your language you can state it as an inclusive “we.” Alternate translation: “that we may receive” (See: [Forms of You](#) and [Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’](#))

may receive instruction in order to live

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **instruction**, you could express the same idea with a verb. Alternate translation: “may be instructed how to live” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

³ to receive instruction of insight, righteousness and justice and equity;

UST

³ These sayings offer correction so you may live by wisdom, by the measures of what is right, what is just, and what is fair.

Proverbs 1:4

are also to give wisdom to the naive

This can be reworded so that If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **wisdom**, you could express the same idea with an adjective such as “wise.” This can also be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “also teach to those who are naive how to be wise” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

naive

inexperienced or immature

to give knowledge and discretion to young people

The abstract nouns “knowledge” and “discretion” can be stated as verbs. Alternate translation: “and to teach to young people what they need to know and how to discern the right thing to do” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

discretion

knowing what should be done in a particular situation

ULT

⁴ to give to naive ones prudence, to a young man knowledge and discretion

UST

⁴ They give wise teaching to those who have no experience and to instruct those who do not know how to live a moral life, and to give the young the knowledge they need and to teach them the understanding they do not have—

Proverbs 1:5

Let wise people listen and increase their learning

Alternate translation: "Let those who are wise pay attention and learn even more"

let discerning people get guidance

Alternate translation: "let people who have understanding learn from these proverbs how to make good decisions"

ULT

⁵ (a wise one will hear and increase learning, and one who discerns will get directions),

UST

⁵ so the wise may listen to these sayings and increase in their learning, and those who already have insight will gain more ways to live according to the lessons of wisdom.

Proverbs 1:6

riddles

sayings that one can understand only after thinking about them

ULT

⁶ to understand a proverb and a satire, the words of the wise and their riddles.

UST

⁶ They seek to understand the lessons of the proverbs and the meaning of the parables. These are the words of the wise and their difficult riddles.

Proverbs 1:7

General Information:

A father teaches his child.

Yahweh

This is the name of God that he revealed to his people in the Old Testament. See the translationWord page about Yahweh concerning how to translate this.

fools despise wisdom and instruction

Alternate translation: "those who do not value what is wise and instructive are fools"

ULT

⁷ The fear of Yahweh {is} the beginning of knowledge, fools despise wisdom and instruction.

UST

⁷ You must begin your search for knowledge by honoring Yahweh and respecting him, a fool who dishonors himself hates wisdom and fights against the one who corrects him.

Proverbs 1:8

do not lay aside

This is an idiom that means “do not ignore” or “do not reject” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

8 Hear, my son, the instruction of your father and do not forsake the teaching of your mother.

UST

8 My son, listen when your father teaches you and do not disobey the rules your mother set down.

Proverbs 1:9

they will be a graceful wreath for your head and pendants hanging from your neck

The rules and instructions that parents teach their children are so valuable and important that they are spoken of as if they were a beautiful wreath or pendant that a person wears. Alternate translation: “they will make you wise just as wearing a wreath on your head or a pendant around your neck makes you beautiful” (See: [Metaphor](#))

wreath

an woven circle made of leaves or flowers

pendants

jewelry that is worn around the neck

ULT

⁹ For, they {are} a wreath of favor for your head and necklace chains for your neck.

UST

⁹ Their teaching is a wreath upon your head, and beautiful necklaces around your neck, they are priceless gifts from your parents.

Proverbs 1:10

try to entice you into their sin

Alternate translation: "try to persuade you to sin as they do"

refuse to follow them

Alternate translation: "refuse them" or "do not listen to them"

ULT

10 My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.

UST

10 My son, as sinners try to draw you into their sin with smooth talk and flattery, do not listen to what they say and do not follow them.

Proverbs 1:11

If they say

Here the speaker gives an example of what sinners may try to entice someone to do. (See: [Hypothetical Situations](#))

lie in wait

Alternate translation: "hide and wait for the right time"

ULT

11 If they say, "Come with us! Let us lie in wait for blood. Let us lie hidden for the innocent without cause.

UST

11 They may say, "Come with us! Join us! We will hide in wait and we will take the life of one who passes by. We will hide ourselves and we will rise up and attack a person who has done us no wrong—that will be our sport.

Proverbs 1:12

General Information:

Verses 12-14 end the imagined statement of the sinners who are trying to entice others to sin.

Let us swallow them up alive, like Sheol takes away those who are healthy

The sinners speak of murdering innocent people as if they were Sheol and they would take a living and healthy person down to the place where dead people go. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Let us swallow ... like Sheol takes away

This speaks of the grave as if it were a person that swallows humans and takes them down to the place of the dead. (See: [Personification](#))

like Sheol takes away those who are healthy

The wicked expect to destroy their victims in the same way Sheol, the place of the dead, takes away even healthy people.

make them like those who fall into the pit

This could mean: (1) this refers to travelers who fall into a deep hole where no one will ever find them or (2) here "pit" is another word that means Sheol or the place where dead people go.

ULT

¹² Let us swallow them, the living ones, like Sheol, and the whole ones like those going down to a pit.

UST

¹² Like the grave has power to take even a healthy person and drag them to the place of the dead, we will take their life from them. We will make them like those who fall into the place where there is no hope of escape.

Proverbs 1:13

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹³ We will find every precious wealth.
We will fill our houses {with} spoil.

UST

¹³ We will find many valuable and expensive items, and we will fill our houses with what we stole from them!

Proverbs 1:14

Throw in your lot with us

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: "Join us" (See: [Idiom](#))

we will all have one purse together

Here "purse" represents everything that they steal. Alternate translation: "we will equally share everything that we steal" (See: [Metonymy](#))

purse

a bag for carrying money

ULT

14 Cause your lot to fall in our midst; one purse will be for all of us."

UST

14 So, come, be part of our team! We will split into equal shares, and give to each member of our team, from all the things we stole."

Proverbs 1:15

do not walk down that road with them; do not let your foot touch where they walk

To avoid behaving the same way as the sinners do is spoken of as if the son were to avoid walking on or even touching the roads that sinners walk on. Alternate translation: “do not go with the sinners or do what they do” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁵ My son, do not walk in the way with them; restrain your foot from their path.

UST

¹⁵ My son, do not walk that road with them! Do not put your foot down on the same path on which they walk!

Proverbs 1:16

their feet run to evil

The sinners having an eager interest in doing evil things is spoken of as if they were running to evil. Alternate translation: "they are eager to do wicked things" (See: [Metaphor](#))

their feet run

Here "feet" represents the whole person. Alternate translation: "they run" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

to shed blood

Here "blood" represents a person's life. To "shed blood" means to murder someone. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

16 For their feet run to evil, and they hurry to pour out blood.

UST

16 They run to the places where they do terrible things, They hurry so they can commit murder.

Proverbs 1:17

For it is useless to spread the net in the sight of any bird

This metaphor compares the wisdom of birds who avoid traps that they see to the foolishness of sinners who get caught in traps they make for themselves. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁷ Surely in vain {is} the net spread out in the eyes of any owner of wing,

UST

¹⁷ It is useless to put out a net to trap a bird while the bird is watching you.

Proverbs 1:18

These men lie in wait for their own blood— they set an ambush for their own lives

This finishes the comparison started in [Proverbs 1:17](#). The men destroying themselves by doing sinful things is spoken of as if they set a trap and kill themselves. Alternate translation: “But these men are more foolish than the birds. They kill themselves with their own traps” (See: [Metaphor](#))

These men lie in wait for their own blood

To lie in wait is to hide, ready to do something wicked. Alternate translation: “It is as if they are looking for an opportunity to kill themselves” or “They themselves will be killed because they try to kill others” (See: [Metaphor](#))

their own blood

Here “blood” is a metonym for a violent death. Alternate translation: “to kill themselves violently” (See: [Metonymy](#))

they set an ambush for their own lives

Here “their own lives” is a metonym for themselves. Alternate translation: “it is as if they are the ones who are waiting to suddenly attack and kill them” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹⁸ but they lie in wait for their blood, lie hidden for their lives.

UST

¹⁸ These men make plans that turn around and kill them. They set a trap and the trap catches them.

Proverbs 1:19

So are the ways of everyone

A person's fate or destiny is spoken of as if it were a road a person walks on. Alternate translation: "This is what happens to everyone" (See: [Metaphor](#))

unjust gain takes away the lives of those who hold on to it

A person destroying themselves by trying to gain wealth through violence, theft, and deceit is spoken of as if the unjust gains will kill those who take it. Alternate translation: "it is like the unjust gains will destroy those who hold on to it" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁹ So {are} the ways of all who unjustly gain unjust gain; it takes the life of its owner.

UST

¹⁹ These are the ways of all who gain their riches through theft and deceit; the things they stole destroy the lives of the thieves who cling to them.

Proverbs 1:20

General Information:

In 1:20-1:33 Wisdom is spoken of as if it were a woman speaking to the people. (See: [Personification](#))

Wisdom cries aloud

If your language does not allow you to treat wisdom as a woman shouting to the people in the city, you might try something like “Grandmother Wisdom cries aloud” or “Honored Miss Wisdom cries aloud” or “Wisdom is like a woman who cries aloud” (See: [Personification](#))

raises her voice

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “speaks with a loud voice” (See: [Idiom](#))

in the open places

This means places where there would be a lot of people. Alternate translation: “in the markets” or “in the town squares” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²⁰ Wisdom cries out in the street, she gives her voice in the plazas.

UST

²⁰ Wisdom is like a woman who cries out in the streets. Wisdom calls out to people in the plazas.

Proverbs 1:21

at the head of the noisy streets

This could mean: (1) "head" refers to the place where busy streets intersect or (2) "head" refers to the top of a wall where people on noisy streets could see and hear wisdom speaking.

ULT

21 At the head of the tumultuous streets she calls out; at the opening of the gates in the city she says her words,

UST

21 At the intersection of busy streets she cries out and at the entrance of city gates.

Proverbs 1:22

How long, you naive people, will you love being naive?

Wisdom uses this question to rebuke those who are not wise. Alternate translation: "You who are naive must stop loving being naive." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

naive

inexperienced or immature

How long, you mockers, will you delight in mockery, and how long, you fools, will you hate knowledge?

Wisdom uses this question to rebuke the mockers and the fools. Alternate translation: "You who mock must stop delighting in mockery, and you fools must stop hating knowledge." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

²² "Until when will the naive ones love naivety and mockers delight in mockery for themselves and fools hate knowledge?"

UST

²² She cries, "How long will you who have not been taught, will you love being enticed to do what will harm you? How long will you who think you know more than the wise, have so much joy in the little you know? How long will you fools refuse to learn?"

Proverbs 1:23

Pay attention

Alternate translation: "Listen carefully"

I will pour out my thoughts to you

Wisdom telling the people everything she thinks about them is spoken of as if her thoughts were a liquid that she would pour out. (See: [Metaphor](#))

I will make my words known to you

Alternate translation: "I will tell you what I think"

ULT

²³ Turn to my rebuke. Behold, I shall pour out my spirit to you, I shall cause you to know my words.

UST

²³ If you pay attention to me when I correct you, I will tell you all I am thinking. I will help you understand what I am saying to you.

Proverbs 1:24

I reached out with my hand

This phrase is an idiom that means to beckon someone or to invite a person to come. Alternate translation: "I invited you to come to me" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

24 Because I have called and you have refused, I have stretched forth my hand and there was no heeding,

UST

24 But when I called to you, you refused to listen. I beckoned you and stretched out my hands to you, but no one paid any attention.

Proverbs 1:25

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁵ and you have let go of all my counsel,
and you did not consent to my rebuke,

UST

²⁵ You refused to listen to my advice
and you did not listen when I corrected
you.

Proverbs 1:26

I will laugh

This can be stated with the word “therefore” to show that the woman wisdom laughs at them because they ignored her. Alternate translation: “Therefore I will laugh” (See: [Connecting Words and Phrases](#))

at your calamity

Alternate translation: “when bad things happen to you”

ULT

²⁶ I too will laugh in your disaster, I will mock when your terror comes,

UST

²⁶ I will laugh at you, when you are experiencing troubles, when you are terribly afraid, I will have contempt for you and not compassion.

Proverbs 1:27

when your fearful dread comes like a storm ... like a whirlwind ... come upon you

Terrible things happening to the people is compared to a storm hitting them and causing fear and suffering. (See: [Simile](#))

whirlwind

a very strong wind storm that causes damage

ULT

²⁷ when your terror comes like a storm and your disaster comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.

UST

²⁷ When troubles strike you like a powerful storm, and disasters hit you like a violent wind, when you experience distress and you go through difficulties, I will have contempt for you.

Proverbs 1:28

Wisdom continues speaking. (See: [Personification](#))

Then they will call upon me

Alternate translation: "Then those who ignored me will cry out to me for help"

ULT

²⁸ Then they will call out to me but I will not answer, they will diligently seek me but they will not find me,

UST

²⁸ When people call to me to help them, but I will not answer them. They will be desperate for my help, and search everywhere for me, but they will not find me.

Proverbs 1:29

Because they hate knowledge

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **knowledge**, you could express the same idea with the verb “learn.” Alternate translation: “Because they refused to learn to be wise” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

did not choose the fear of Yahweh

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **fear**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: “did not fear Yahweh” or “did not honor and respect Yahweh” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

²⁹ for the reason that they hate knowledge and did not choose the fear of Yahweh,

UST

²⁹ They reject what I say and they hate what I know, and they made a choice not to show respect to Yahweh.

Proverbs 1:30

would not follow my instruction

Alternate translation: "would not accept my instruction" or "rejected my advice"

ULT

³⁰ they did not consent to my counsel, and they despised my every rebuke.

UST

³⁰ They would not obey what I told them to do, and they did not pay attention when I tried to correct them.

Proverbs 1:31

General Information:

Verse 33 ends wisdom's statement that began in [Proverbs 1:22](#).

eat the fruit of their ways

Here a person's behavior is spoken of as if it were a way or road. Also, a person receiving the results of their behavior is spoken as if the person were eating the fruit of their behavior. Alternate translation: "experience the consequences of their actions" (See: [Metaphor](#))

with the fruit of their schemes they will be filled

"they will eat the fruit of their schemes until they are full." A person receiving the results of their own evil plans is spoken of as eating the fruit of their schemes. Alternate translation: "they will suffer the consequences of their own evil plans" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

31 And they will eat from the fruit of their ways, and from their schemes they will have their fill.

UST

31 So they will experience the consequences of their actions when they carry out their evil plans.

Proverbs 1:32

naive

inexperienced or immature

are killed when they turn away

A person rejecting wisdom is spoken of as if the person physically turns away from wisdom. 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: “die because they refuse to learn” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

the indifference of fools will destroy them

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **indifference**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: “fools will die because they do not care about what should be done” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

indifference

a lack of interest about something

ULT

³² For the turning away of the naive will slay them and ease will cause fools to perish.

UST

³² Those who have not been taught wisdom are foolish. Fools choose to make no decision about anything, but be sure of this: Their failure to make a decision will destroy their lives.

Proverbs 1:33

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³³ But the one who listens to me will dwell securely and will be at ease from the terror of evil.”

UST

³³ But those who pay attention to me will live in peace and safety, and they will rest and not be afraid of any disaster that may come.”

Proverbs 2

Proverbs 2 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 2 continues a collection of proverbs that ends in chapter nine.

Special concepts in this chapter

My Son

Occasionally, the author addresses a proverb to “my son.” This is not intended to restrict the words of that proverb to only males. Instead, it is simply a form used to pass on advice as a father does to his son.

Proverbs 2:1

General Information:

A father teaches his child using poetry. (See: [Parallelism](#))

if you receive my words

Alternate translation: "if you listen to what I am teaching you"

treasure up my commandments with you

Valuing what is commanded is spoken of as if the commandments were a treasure and the person were a safe place to store the treasure. Alternate translation: "consider my commands to be as valuable as a treasure" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹ My son, if you receive my words and store up my commandments with you—

UST

¹ My son, listen to what I say, and consider my commands to be as valuable as a treasure.

Proverbs 2:2

make your ears pay attention

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “force yourself to listen carefully” (See: [Idiom](#))

to wisdom

This abstract noun can be stated as an adjective. Alternate translation: “to the wise things I am teaching you” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

incline your heart to understanding

Here “heart” represents a person’s mind. The phrase “incline your heart” is an idiom that means to commit or fully dedicate one’s mind to a task. Alternate translation: “try hard to understand what is wise” or “fully dedicate yourself to understanding wise teachings” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Idiom](#))

ULT

² by causing your ear to be attentive to wisdom, you incline your heart to understanding—

UST

² Pay attention to wisdom and try hard to understand what is wise.

Proverbs 2:3

If you cry out for understanding and raise your voice for it

Both of these phrases have the same meaning. It is implied that the person is strongly asking Yahweh for understanding. Alternate translation: "If you urgently ask God and plead for understanding" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

raise your voice

This is an idiom that means to speak loudly or to shout. (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

³ indeed, if you call out for discernment, you lift up your voice for understanding,

UST

³ Call out to Yahweh to get insight, plead with him to help you understand more of what he wants you to know.

Proverbs 2:4

if you seek it like you would seek silver and search for understanding as you would seek hidden treasures

Both phrases have the same meaning. These similes emphasize the great effort a person should make to understand what is wise. Alternate translation: “if you seek understanding with as much effort as you search for a valuable object” (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Simile](#))

you seek it ... search for understanding

Trying very hard to understand what is wise is spoken of as if understanding were an object for which a person must search. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ if you seek it like silver and search for it like hidden treasures,

UST

⁴ Search eagerly for wisdom, like you would search for silver— like you would search for a treasure that someone has hidden.

Proverbs 2:5

you will find the knowledge of God

To succeed in knowing God is spoken of as if the knowledge of God were an object that a person finds after searching. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁵ then you will understand the fear of Yahweh and you will find the knowledge of God.

UST

⁵ If you do that, you will understand how to give Yahweh the respect he deserves, and you will succeed in knowing God.

Proverbs 2:6

from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding

Here “mouth” represents Yahweh himself or what he says. Alternate translation: “from Yahweh comes knowledge and understanding” or “Yahweh tells us what we need to know and understand” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁶ For Yahweh gives wisdom, knowledge and understanding {are} from his mouth.

UST

⁶ Yahweh is the one who gives us wisdom. He is the one who tells us things that we need to know and understand.

Proverbs 2:7

He stores up sound wisdom for those who please him

Yahweh teaching wisdom to people is spoken of as if wisdom were an item that Yahweh stores and gives to people. Alternate translation: “He teaches what is truly wise to those who please him” (See: [Metaphor](#))

sound

Alternate translation: “dependable”

he is a shield for those

Yahweh being able to protect his people is spoken of as if he were a shield. Alternate translation: “God protects those” (See: [Metaphor](#))

who walk in integrity

A person behaving with integrity is spoken of as if they were walking in integrity. Alternate translation: “who behave with integrity” or “who live their lives as they should” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁷ And he stores up prudence for the upright ones— a shield for those walking with integrity,

UST

⁷ He stores up good advice so he can give it to them who honor him by the way they live their lives. He protects those who do with their lives what they say with their lips.

Proverbs 2:8

he guards the paths of justice

This could mean: (1) justice itself is spoken of as if it were a path. Alternate translation: "God makes sure that people act justly" or (2) a person's life is spoken of as if it were a path. Alternate translation: "God protects those who act justly" (See: [Metaphor](#))

preserve the way of his faithful ones

A person's life is spoken of as if it were a way or road. Alternate translation: "protect those who are faithful to him" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁸ to guard the paths of justice, and he will keep the way of his faithful ones.

UST

⁸ He guards justice and works to see it is done, and he keeps safe those who are faithful to him.

Proverbs 2:9

equity

fairness

every good path

A behavior that is wise and pleases Yahweh is spoken of as if it were a good path. Alternate translation: “ways to live that are pleasing to God” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁹ Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity— every good track.

UST

⁹ You will understand what Yahweh sees is right and what Yahweh determines is just to do, and he will show you the best way to live.

Proverbs 2:10

wisdom will come into your heart

Here “heart” represents a person’s inner being. A person becoming wise is spoken of as if wisdom would enter into a person’s heart. Alternate translation: “you will gain much wisdom” or “you will learn how to be truly wise” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

pleasant to your soul

Here “soul” represents the whole person. Alternate translation: “pleasing to you” or “enjoyable to you” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

10 For wisdom will enter into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your spirit.

UST

10 Wisdom will fill your life; knowing what Yahweh wants you to know will cause you to be joyful.

Proverbs 2:11

Discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you

This speaks of “discretion” and “understanding” as if they were persons who could watch over someone else. Both statements mean basically the same thing. Alternate translation: “Because you think carefully and understand what is right and wrong you will be safe” (See: [Personification](#) and [Parallelism](#))

Discretion

the quality of being careful in actions and speech

watch over

to guard, protect or take care of someone or something

ULT

¹¹ Discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you,

UST

¹¹ You will learn to tell the difference between right and wrong and that will keep you safe.

Proverbs 2:12

They will rescue you from the way of evil

“They” refers to discretion and understanding, which are spoken of as if they were persons who could rescue someone else. Alternate translation: “You will know to stay away from what is evil” (See: [Personification](#))

from the way of evil

Evil behaviors are spoken of as if evil were a way or path on which a person walks. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹² to rescue you from the way of evil, from a man who speaks perverse things,

UST

¹² You will not do what Yahweh forbids you to do, and you will stay away from those who imagine horrible things and talk about them.

Proverbs 2:13

who abandon the right paths and walk in the ways of darkness

A person no longer doing what is right but deciding to do what is evil is spoken of as if the person stops walking on the correct path and chooses to walk down a dark path. (See: [Metaphor](#))

who abandon

The word “who” refers to the people who speak perverse things.

abandon

to leave and never return to someone or something

ULT

¹³ the ones who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness,

UST

¹³ They go the wrong way, and they walk where there is no light.

Proverbs 2:14

They rejoice

“They” refers to the same people as in [Proverbs 2:12](#).

delight in the perversities of evil

This means basically the same thing as the first part of the sentence. Alternate translation: “delight in doing what they know is evil” (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

14 the ones who are joyful to do evil,
they rejoice in perverse things of evil,

UST

14 They are glad when they do what is wrong, they twist good things into bad and enjoy doing what they know is wrong.

Proverbs 2:15

They follow crooked paths

People who lie to others are spoken of as if they walk on crooked or twisted paths. Alternate translation: "They deceive other people" (See: [Metaphor](#))

using deception they hide their tracks

People lying so that others will not find out what they did is spoken of as if they covered the tracks on a path so that no one could follow them. Alternate translation: "they lie so that no one will know what they have done" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁵ whose paths {are} crooked and who are devious in their tracks;

UST

¹⁵ They bend the truth and live by deception and their lies hide what they have done.

Proverbs 2:16

Wisdom and discretion will save you

The writer speaks of wisdom and discretion as if they were people who save the one who possesses them. Alternate translation: "If you have wisdom and discretion, you will save yourself" (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

16 to rescue you from a strange woman,
from a foreign woman who makes her
words smooth,

UST

16 Wisdom will keep you safe from the
adulterous woman, and you will not pay
attention when a strange woman invites
you to be with her.

Proverbs 2:17

the companion of her youth

This refers to her husband, whom she married when she was young.

the covenant of her God

This likely refers to the marriage covenant that she made with her husband in the presence of God.

ULT

17 the one who forsakes the companion of her youth and has forgotten the covenant of her God.

UST

17 Those women left the husbands they married when they were young, they forgot the promise they made to God to love only the one they married.

Proverbs 2:18

her house sinks down to death

This could mean: (1) “going to her house leads to death” or (2) “the road to her house is the road to death.”

her tracks will lead you

This could mean: (1) “the paths to her house will lead you.” This refers to the tracks or path that lead to her house, or (2) this is a metaphor that speaks of her way of life as if it were a path on which she walks. Alternate translation: “her way of life will lead you” (See: [Metaphor](#))

to those in the grave

This refers to the spirits of dead people and is a metonym for the place of the dead. Alternate translation: “to the grave” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

18 For her house sinks down to death and her tracks to the spirits of the dead.

UST

18 Those who enter her house are taken to their death, because the way to her house takes them where dead people are buried.

Proverbs 2:19

go in to her

This means to go into her house to sleep with her, as one would with a prostitute. (See: [Euphemism](#))

they will not find the paths of life

This could mean: (1) "they will not return to the land of the living" or (2) "they will never live a happy life again."

ULT

¹⁹ All who enter her will not return and they will not reach the paths of life.

UST

¹⁹ All who go to her to sleep with her have no way to get out of her house, they will be so lost they will never find the way back to life.

Proverbs 2:20

So

The writer tells the result of getting understanding and discretion.

you will walk in the way ... follow the paths

A person's conduct is spoken of as if it were walking on a path.

Alternate translation: "you will live in the way ... follow the example"

(See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

20 So you shall walk in the way of the good ones and you shall keep the paths of the righteous ones.

UST

20 You must live your life in the same way that good men are living. You should do the same things as those who do what is right.

Proverbs 2:21

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²¹ For the upright ones will dwell {in} the land, and the blameless ones will remain in it,

UST

²¹ Those who do what is right will receive the land as a gift from Yahweh, and only those who do what they have promised will stay in the land for a long time.

Proverbs 2:22

the wicked will be cut off from the land

The writer speaks of Yahweh removing people from the land as if he were cutting the people off, like a person might cut a branch from a tree. 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: "Yahweh will remove the wicked from the land" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

the wicked ... the faithless

These are nominal adjectives that can be stated as adjectives. Alternate translation: "those who are wicked ... those who are faithless" or "wicked people ... faithless people" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

the faithless will be cut off from it

The writer speaks of Yahweh removing people from the land as if he were cutting the people off, like a person might cut a branch from a tree. 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 will remove the faithless from it" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

22 but wicked ones will be cut off from the land, and those who act treacherously will be torn away from it.

UST

22 Those who do bad things will have no claim to this land, and people who take advantage of others and do not keep their word, they will never have even a small part of the land.

Proverbs 3

Proverbs 3 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 3 continues a collection of proverbs that ends in chapter nine.

Special concepts in this chapter

My Son

Occasionally, the author addresses a proverb to “my son.” This is not intended to restrict the words of that proverb to only males. Instead, it is simply a form used to pass on advice as a father does to his son.

Wisdom is feminine

You may notice that wisdom is referenced using a feminine pronoun. This is a feature that is carried in from the Hebrew language. This may apply well in your language but if it does not, follow the conventions of your language. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#))

Proverbs 3:1

General Information:

The writer speaks as a father teaching his child using poetry. (See: [Parallelism](#))

do not forget my commands

The word “commands” can be translated as a verb. Alternate translation: “do not forget what I command you” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

keep my teachings in your heart

This phrase says in positive terms what the previous phrase says in negative terms. Here the word “heart” represents the mind. The word “teachings” can be translated as a verb. Alternate translation: “always remember what I teach you” (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metonymy](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

¹ My son, do not forget my law, and let your heart keep my commandments.

UST

¹ My son, do not forget the lessons I have taught you. Keep my commands inside of you, as important guidance for how you will live,

Proverbs 3:2

for the length of your days and years of your life

These two phrases share similar meanings and refer to the duration of a person's life. Alternate translation: "all your life" or "as long as you live" (See: [Doublet](#) and [Idiom](#))

ULT

² For they will add to you length of days and years of life and peace.

UST

² because they will help you live a long life, measured in either days or years, and they will bring you peace in addition to all the lessons they teach you.

Proverbs 3:3

Do not let covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness ever leave you

The writer speaks of “covenant faithfulness” and “trustworthiness” as if they were people who could leave someone. The abstract nouns “faithfulness” and “trustworthiness” can be stated as “faithful” and “trustworthy.” And, the negative command can be stated positively. Alternate translation: “Always be trustworthy and be faithful to the covenant” (See: [Personification](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

tie them together about your neck

The writer speaks of faithfulness and trustworthiness as if they were objects that a person could tie around the neck like a necklace. The image suggests that these are valuable things that the person displays outwardly. Alternate translation: “display them proudly like one would wear a necklace” (See: [Metaphor](#))

write them on the tablet of your heart

Here the heart represents a person’s mind. The mind is spoken of as if it were a tablet upon which someone can write messages and commands. Alternate translation: “always remember them, as if you had written them permanently on a tablet” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³ Do not let covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness leave you, tie them on your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart,

UST

³ Treat others with tenderness and always speak the truth to them. Let tenderness and truth guide you in every relationship, as if they both were on a necklace you wear, a necklace that guides you in everything you say.

Proverbs 3:4

in the sight of God and man

Here sight represents judgment or evaluation. Alternate translation: "in the judgment of God and man" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ and you will find favor and good insight in the eyes of God and mankind.

UST

⁴ Then you will experience God's delight in you, and people will also approve of you.

Proverbs 3:5

all your heart

Here the word "heart" represents the inner person. Alternate translation: "your whole being" (See: [Metonymy](#))

do not lean on your own understanding

The writer speaks of relying on one's own understanding as if "understanding" were an object on which a person can lean. Alternate translation: "do not rely on your own understanding" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁵ Trust in Yahweh with all your heart and do not lean on your understanding;

UST

⁵ Put all your trust in Yahweh, and do not take action because you made up your mind what you should do;

Proverbs 3:6

in all your ways

The writer speaks of a person's actions as if they were paths on which the person walks. Alternate translation: "in everything you do" (See: [Metaphor](#))

he will make your paths straight

The writer speaks of Yahweh making a person's actions prosperous as if that person's actions were paths on which he walks and which Yahweh makes free of obstacles. Alternate translation: "he will give you success" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁶ in all your ways acknowledge him and he will straighten your paths.

UST

⁶ but in every choice and decision, look to Yahweh, and he will show you how you must live.

Proverbs 3:7

Do not be wise in your own eyes

The writer speaks of a person's opinion as if that person were seeing something with his eyes. Alternate translation: "Do not be wise in your own opinion" (See: [Metaphor](#))

turn away from evil

The writer speaks of not committing evil actions as if it were turning away from evil. Alternate translation: "do not commit evil" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁷ Do not be wise in your eyes, fear Yahweh and turn from evil.

UST

⁷ Do not think you are wise enough to direct your life, give Yahweh the reverence he deserves, and when evil invites you in, turn aside from it.

Proverbs 3:8

It will be healing to your flesh

The word “it” refers to the instructions that the writer gives in the previous verse. The full meaning of this can be made clear. The word “flesh” represents the whole body. Alternate translation: “If you do this, it will be healing for your body” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁸ It will be healing for your navel and refreshment for your bones.

UST

⁸ Giving Yahweh reverence will make your body healthy and it will give your bones the food it needs.

Proverbs 3:9

all your produce

Alternate translation: "all the food you harvest"

ULT

⁹ Honor Yahweh from your wealth and from the firstfruits of all your produce,

UST

⁹ When you gain money, honor Yahweh by giving him the tithe; give him the first portion of what you received, to remember it all came from him.

Proverbs 3:10

your storehouses will be filled up

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: "your storehouses will be full" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

storehouses

buildings or rooms where food is stored

your vats will be bursting

your storage containers will be extremely full, as if ready to break open.

ULT

¹⁰ and your storehouses will be full with plenty and your presses will burst open with new wine.

UST

¹⁰ If you honor Yahweh, your storerooms will be so full that they will overflow, and your barrels will be bursting with all the wine you have made.

Proverbs 3:11

General Information:

The writer writes as a father teaching his son.

ULT

11 The instruction of Yahweh, my son, do not reject, and do not abhor his rebuke.

UST

11 My son, do not hate it when Yahweh corrects you, and when he rebukes you, do not resent it,

Proverbs 3:12

a son who pleases him

“a son in whom he delights.” This refers to the father’s affection for the son, and not to the father’s approval of the son’s behavior. Alternate translation: “a son whom he loves” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

¹² For Yahweh rebukes whom he loves, and like a father he is pleased with a son.

UST

¹² for Yahweh only corrects those he loves, just like parents correct their children whom they love.

Proverbs 3:13

The one who finds wisdom

The writer speaks of “wisdom” as if it were an object that one finds.
Alternate translation: “The one who attains wisdom” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹³ Blessed {is} a man who finds wisdom
and a man who obtains understanding.

UST

¹³ Those who get wisdom are fortunate;
with her they also get understanding.

Proverbs 3:14

what silver will give in return

This refers to the profit that one can make from trading or investing silver.

ULT

14 For better {is} its gain than the gain of silver, and its produce than gold.

UST

14 Wisdom gives you a better profit than owning silver, and she will give you something that is much more valuable than gold.

Proverbs 3:15

General Information:

The author speaks of wisdom as if it were a woman. (See: [Personification](#))

more precious

Alternate translation: "more valuable"

ULT

15 She is more precious than corals, and all your desired things do not compare with her.

UST

15 Being wise is more precious than jewels and there is nothing you desire that is worth as much as wisdom.

Proverbs 3:16

She has the length of her days in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor

The writer speak of the benefits that one gains from having wisdom as if wisdom were a woman who held these qualities in her hands and offered them to people. Alternate translation: "Wisdom gives a person length of days and riches and honor" (See: [Personification](#) and [Metaphor](#))

length of her days

This idiom refers to the duration of person's life and may imply a long life. Alternate translation: "long life" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

¹⁶ Length of days {is} in her right hand, in her left hand {are} riches and honor.

UST

¹⁶ Wisdom can make you able to live a long life, if you do what she teaches; she is also ready to make you wealthy and to persuade other people to honor you.

Proverbs 3:17

Her ways are ways of kindness and all her paths are peace

The writer speaks of wisdom as if it were a woman and of the benefits that wisdom gives a person as if wisdom were leading that person along a path. Alternate translation: "Wisdom will always treat you kindly and give you peace" (See: [Personification](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁷ Her ways {are} ways of pleasantness and all her paths {are} peace.

UST

¹⁷ Wisdom is known by how kind she is, and she always directs you to the place where you will find peace.

Proverbs 3:18

She is a tree of life to those who take hold of it

The writer speaks of wisdom as if it were a tree that bears life-giving fruit and of a person who benefits from wisdom as if that person ate of the fruit. Alternate translation: "Wisdom is like a tree that sustains the life of those who eat of its fruit" (See: [Metaphor](#))

a tree of life

Alternate translation: "a tree that gives life" or "a tree whose fruit sustains life"

those who hold on to it

Alternate translation: "those who hold on to its fruit"

ULT

18 She {is} a tree of life to the ones who take hold of her, and those who grasp her {are} blessed.

UST

18 Wisdom is like a tree whose fruit gives life to those who hold on to it, and Yahweh gives happiness to those who hold on to it.

Proverbs 3:19

Yahweh founded the earth ... established the heavens

The writer speaks of Yahweh creating the earth and the heavens as if he were laying the foundation of a building. Alternate translation: "Yahweh created the earth ... made the heavens" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁹ Yahweh founded the earth by wisdom, established the heavens by understanding.

UST

¹⁹ By his wisdom Yahweh laid out the earth from the very beginning, and by his understanding he put everything in the heavens exactly where they should be.

Proverbs 3:20

the depths broke open

In ancient thought, water existed under the earth. This phrase refers to Yahweh causing that water to come out of the earth and make the oceans and rivers exist. Alternate translation: “he caused the rivers to flow” or “he caused the oceans to exist” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

dew

water that forms on the ground at night

ULT

²⁰ By his knowledge the depths broke open and the clouds dripped dew.

UST

²⁰ The deepest part of the oceans broke open according to Yahweh's design, and in the same way, he made the dew so it would fall from the clouds above.

Proverbs 3:21

do not lose sight of them

The writer speaks of not forgetting something as if it were always being able to see it. Alternate translation: “do not forget them” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

21 My son, do not let them depart from your eyes, guard prudence and discretion.

UST

21 My son, hold on to good sense in the decisions you make, and do not take your eye off of them.

Proverbs 3:22

They will be life to your soul

Here the word "soul" represents the person. Alternate translation: "They will be life for you" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

an adornment of favor to wear around your neck

The writer speaks of "sound judgment" and "discernment" as if they were objects that a person could tie around the neck like a necklace. The image suggests that these are valuable things that the person displays outwardly. Alternate translation: "a display of favor like one would adorn themselves with a necklace" (See: [Metaphor](#))

adornment of favor

This could mean: (1) "a favorable adornment" or (2) "an adornment that displays Yahweh's favor:"

ULT

²² And they will be life for your spirit and favor for your neck.

UST

²² They will bring life to you, and a sign of Yahweh's blessings on your life that people can see by your good judgment.

Proverbs 3:23

you will walk on your way in safety

The writer speaks of living one's life as if the person were walking along a path. Alternate translation: "you will live your life in safety" (See: [Metaphor](#))

your foot will not stumble

The word "foot" represents the whole person. The writer speaks of doing wrong as if a person stumbled over an object in his path. Alternate translation: "you will not do things that are wrong" (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²³ Then you will walk your way to security and your foot will not stumble.

UST

²³ Your good decisions will take you where you are going in safety, and they will keep you from taking a wrong step on the way.

Proverbs 3:24

when you lie down

It is implied that a person lies down in order to sleep. The meaning of this can be made clear. Alternate translation: “when you lie down to sleep” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

your sleep will be sweet

The writer speaks of sleep that is peaceful and refreshing as if it tasted sweet to the person sleeping. The word “sleep” can be translated as a verb. Alternate translation: “your sleep will be pleasant” or “you will sleep peacefully” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

24 When you lie down, you will not be in dread, and you will lie down and your sleep will be pleasant.

UST

24 When you lie down to sleep, you will not have any fear, and your sleep will be refreshing.

Proverbs 3:25

devastation caused by the wicked, when it comes

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 wicked cause devastation” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁵ Do not be afraid of sudden dread and of the devastation of the wicked ones when it comes.

UST

²⁵ Do not let a disaster fill you with terror, and do not let the wicked fill you with fear when they come for you.

Proverbs 3:26

Yahweh will be on your side

“Yahweh will be by your side.” A person standing by another person’s side is an idiom that means that the one person will help and support the other. Alternate translation: “Yahweh will support and defend you” (See: [Idiom](#))

will keep your foot from being caught in a trap

The writer speaks of a person experiencing harm from “terror” and “devastation” as if the person were caught in a trap. The word “foot” represents the whole person. Alternate translation: “will protect you from those who want to harm you” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

²⁶ For Yahweh will be at your loins, and he will keep your foot from capture.

UST

²⁶ Yahweh takes your side to defend you, he will not allow any trap to catch and hold you.

Proverbs 3:27

Do not withhold good

Alternate translation: "Do not withhold good things" or "Do not withhold good actions"

when it is in your power to act

Alternate translation: "when you are able to help"

ULT

²⁷ Do not withhold good from its owner, when it is in the power of your hand to act.

UST

²⁷ Give good gifts to those who deserve it, when you can, help them.

Proverbs 3:28

when you have the money with you

“when you have the money with you now.” The meaning here is that the person has the money to help today, but tells his neighbor to come back tomorrow.

ULT

²⁸ Do not say to your neighbor, “Go and return, and tomorrow I will give {it},” and it is with you.

UST

²⁸ Do not say to your neighbor, “Come back later; perhaps I will help you tomorrow,” when you have the money with you and can help them now.

Proverbs 3:29

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁹ Do not plot evil against your neighbor, and he who is dwelling safely with you.

UST

²⁹ Do not make plans to harm anyone you know, especially those who live close to you and trust you.

Proverbs 3:30

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³⁰ Do not contend with a man without cause, if he has not done evil to you.

UST

³⁰ If a person has done nothing to you, do not argue with him or say he has done something to you, when he has not.

Proverbs 3:31

Do not ... choose any of his ways

It is implied that he is not to choose to imitate the actions of the violent person. Alternate translation: "Do not ... choose to imitate any of his ways" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

³¹ Do not be envious of a man of violence and do not choose any of his ways.

UST

³¹ Do not envy a person who does violence to others, and do not imitate anything he does.

Proverbs 3:32

the devious person is detestable to Yahweh

Alternate translation: "Yahweh detests the devious person"

the devious person

the person who is dishonest or deceitful

he brings the upright person into his confidence

Yahweh shares his thoughts with the those who do right as with a close, trusted friend. Alternate translation: "Yahweh is a close friend to the upright" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

³² For the devious one {is} an abomination to Yahweh, but his counsel {is} the upright.

UST

³² A lying person is hated by Yahweh for what he does, but Yahweh is a close friend to anyone who lives rightly.

Proverbs 3:33

The curse of Yahweh is on the house of the wicked person

The writer speaks of Yahweh's curse as if it were an object that he placed on top of the wicked person's house. The word "house" is a metonym for family. Alternate translation: "Yahweh has cursed the family of the wicked person" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

he blesses the home of righteous people

The word "home" represents the family. Alternate translation: "he blesses the families of righteous people" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

³³ The curse of Yahweh {is} in the house of the wicked one, but he blesses the abode of the righteous ones.

UST

³³ Yahweh promises punishment to the families of those who do evil things. but he makes happy the families of the good.

Proverbs 3:34

he gives his favor to humble people

The writer speaks of Yahweh's favor as if it were an object that he gives to people. Alternate translation: "he shows his favor to humble people" or "he is gracious to humble people" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³⁴ Though to the mockers he mocks, yet to the humble he gives favor.

UST

³⁴ Yahweh makes fools of those who treat others with disrespect, but he gives his kindness to people who are humble.

Proverbs 3:35

Wise people inherit honor

The writer speaks of wise people obtaining a reputation of honor as if they inherited honor as a permanent possession. Alternate translation: "Wise people will obtain honor" or "Wise people will gain an honorable reputation" (See: [Metaphor](#))

fools will be lifted up in their shame

The writer speaks of Yahweh making the shame of fools evident to everyone as if Yahweh were lifting fools up for everyone to see 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: "Yahweh will cause everyone to see the shame of fools" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³⁵ The wise ones will inherit honor, but fools lift up dishonor.

UST

³⁵ Those who are wise will be honored, but foolish people will become well known for their dishonor.

Proverbs 4

Proverbs 4 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 4 continues a collection of proverbs that ends in chapter nine.

Special concepts in this chapter

My Son

Occasionally, the author addresses a proverb to “my son.” This is not intended to restrict the words of that proverb to only males. Instead, it is simply a form used to pass on advice as a father does to his son.

Wisdom is feminine

You may notice that wisdom is referenced using a feminine pronoun. This is a feature that is carried in from the Hebrew language. This may apply well in your language but if it does not, follow the conventions of your language. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#))

Proverbs 4:1

General Information:

The writer speaks as a father teaching his children.

pay attention

Alternate translation: "listen carefully"

you will know what understanding is

Alternate translation: "you will know how to understand" or "you will gain understanding"

ULT

¹ Hear, sons, the instruction of a father, and listen attentively in order to know understanding.

UST

¹ Listen, children, listen to what I am teaching you. If you pay attention, you will learn about what it means to understand.

Proverbs 4:2

I am giving you good instructions

Alternate translation: "What I am teaching you is good"

ULT

² For I give good instruction to you; do not forsake my law.

UST

² The lessons I give to you are good teaching, given in order. So do not refuse to learn the lessons I teach you.

Proverbs 4:3

When I was a son of my father

This refers to the time when the writer was a child still living under his father's care. Alternate translation: "When I was still a boy learning from my father" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

the tender and only child

Here the word "tender" refers to a young age at which the child is still weak. It forms a hendiadys with the word "only." Alternate translation: "the tender only child" (See: [Hendiadys](#))

ULT

³ When I was a son of my father, the tender and only one before the face of my mother,

UST

³ When I was my father's boy, and the only child of my mother,

Proverbs 4:4

Let your heart hold fast to my words

Here the word "heart" represents the person's mind. The writer speaks of remembering words as if the heart were holding on tightly to them. Alternate translation: "Always remember what I am teaching you" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ then he taught me and said to me, "Let your heart grasp my words; keep my commandments and live.

UST

⁴ my father told me, "Put my words deep within you, obey my orders to you, and you will have life.

Proverbs 4:5

Acquire wisdom

Alternate translation: "Work hard to gain for yourself wisdom" or "Get wisdom"

do not forget

Alternate translation: "remember"

do not reject

Alternate translation: "accept"

the words of my mouth

Here the word "mouth" represents the person who speaks. Alternate translation: "what I am saying" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁵ Acquire wisdom, acquire understanding; do not forget and do not turn from the words of my mouth.

UST

⁵ Hold on to what is wise and whatever helps you understand, and do not forget the lessons I taught you and do not throw away the insights I spoke to you.

Proverbs 4:6

do not abandon wisdom and she will watch over you; love her and she will keep you safe

The writer speaks of wisdom as if it were a woman who protects the person who is faithful to her. (See: [Personification](#) and [Metaphor](#))

do not abandon wisdom

This can be stated in positive form. Alternate translation: “hold tightly to wisdom” or “be faithful to wisdom”

love her

Alternate translation: “love wisdom”

ULT

⁶ Do not abandon her and she will keep you; love her and she will guard you.

UST

⁶ Do not run away from the lessons which the wise teach you, because if you become wise, wisdom will keep you safe. Love wisdom and it will guard your life.

Proverbs 4:7

General Information:

The father finishes teaching his children what his father taught him.

spend all you own so you can get understanding

Alternate translation: "value understanding more than all you own"

ULT

⁷ The beginning of wisdom: acquire wisdom! And in all your acquisition acquire understanding.

UST

⁷ The most important thing you can do is to study the principles of wisdom and spend all you own so you can grow more and more in your understanding.

Proverbs 4:8

Cherish wisdom and she will exalt you

The writer speaks of wisdom as if it were a woman and of wisdom giving great honor to a person as if wisdom lifted that person to a high position. Alternate translation: “If you cherish wisdom, she will give you great honor” (See: [Personification](#) and [Metaphor](#))

Cherish

to feel or show great love for someone or something

she will honor you when you embrace her

The writer speaks of wisdom as if it were a woman and of a person valuing wisdom as if the person placed his arms around her. Alternate translation: “if you love wisdom greatly, wisdom will cause people to honor you” (See: [Personification](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁸ Exalt her and she will raise you up; she will honor you when you embrace her.

UST

⁸ Wisdom is to be loved more than anything that is valuable, and she will raise you to a high position— and wisdom will honor you when you show how much you love it.

Proverbs 4:9

She will put a wreath of honor on your head

The writer speaks of the honor that a person will have from gaining wisdom as if wisdom placed a wreath upon that person's head. Alternate translation: "Wisdom will be like a wreath on your head that shows your great honor" (See: [Metaphor](#))

wreath

a woven circle made of leaves or flowers

she will give you a beautiful crown

The writer speaks of the honor that a person will have from gaining wisdom as if wisdom placed a crown upon that person's head. Alternate translation: "wisdom will be like a beautiful crown on your head" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁹ She will give a wreath of favor to your head; she will bestow to you a crown of splendor."

UST

⁹ When you have attained wisdom, it will be like a beautiful wreath of honor on your head; she will give you a beautiful crown."

Proverbs 4:10

pay attention to my words

Alternate translation: "listen carefully to what I teach you"

you will have many years in your life

Alternate translation: "you will live many years"

ULT

¹⁰ Listen, my son, and receive my words, and they will multiply for you the years of life.

UST

¹⁰ Hear, my son, listen and understand what I say to you— do this, and you will live a long life.

Proverbs 4:11

I direct you in the way of wisdom; I lead you down straight paths

The writer speaks of teaching his son to live wisely as if he were leading his son along the paths where one may find wisdom.
Alternate translation: "I am teaching you how to live wisely; I am explaining the right way to live" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹¹ I taught you in the way of wisdom; I caused you to tread in the tracks of uprightness.

UST

¹¹ I directed you in the way you should walk and to use the wisdom you were taught; I led you by the hand down the roads, roads that are the right way for you to go.

Proverbs 4:12

When you walk, no one will stand in your way and if you run, you will not stumble

These two lines share similar meanings. The writer speaks of the decisions and actions that a person makes as if that person were walking or running along a path and of the person being successful as if the path were free of obstacles that might make the person stumble. Alternate translation: "When you plan something, you will succeed in doing it" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Parallelism](#))

ULT

¹² When you walk, your step will not be restricted; and if you run, you will not stumble.

UST

¹² When you live, you do not have anyone to blame; if you live wisely, when you use all your effort, you will succeed.

Proverbs 4:13

Hold on to instruction, do not let it go

The writer speaks of a person remembering what he has learned as if “instruction” were an object that the person can hold tightly.

Alternate translation: “Continue to obey what I have taught you and never forget it” (See: [Metaphor](#))

for it is your life

The writer speaks of discipline preserving a person’s life as if it were that person’s life. Alternate translation: “for it will preserve your life” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹³ Take hold of instruction, do not let go; guard it, for it {is} your life.

UST

¹³ Remember the lessons that discipline taught you, and do not let them go. Guard them; for you live your life by them.

Proverbs 4:14

Do not follow the path of the wicked and do not go along the way of those who do evil

The writer speaks of a person's actions as if that person were walking along a path. Alternate translation: "Do not do what wicked people do and do not join in the actions of people who do evil" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁴ Do not enter in the path of wicked ones and do not advance in the way of evil ones.

UST

¹⁴ Do not do what wicked people do, nor be with them; do not be with people who do evil things.

Proverbs 4:15

Avoid it

Alternate translation: "Avoid the path of the wicked"

ULT

¹⁵ Avoid it, do not pass through it; turn aside from it and pass on.

UST

¹⁵ Stay far from those ways; turn another way and go on another road.

Proverbs 4:16

they cannot sleep until they do evil

They probably could literally sleep, but the writer uses an exaggeration to express how intensely they desire to commit evil actions. (See: [Hyperbole](#))

they are robbed of sleep

The writer speaks of people being unable to sleep as if sleep were an object that someone stole from them. They probably could literally sleep, but the writer uses an exaggeration to express how intensely they desire to commit evil actions. Alternate translation: “they are unable to sleep” (See: [Hyperbole](#) and [Metaphor](#))

until they cause someone to stumble

The writer speaks of causing harm to another person as if it were causing that person to stumble. Alternate translation: “until they harm someone” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

16 For they do not sleep if they do not do evil and their sleep is robbed if they do not cause stumbling.

UST

16 Evil people cannot rest until they have done something that Yahweh said they must not do. They will not rest until they force someone to fall, someone who was doing well until they came along.

Proverbs 4:17

they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence

This could mean: (1) this is a metaphor in which the writer speaks of these people constantly committing wickedness and violence as if they ate and drank them like one would drink bread and wine.

Alternate translation: "wickedness is like the bread that they eat and violence is like the wine that they drink" or (2) these people get their food and drink by committing wickedness and violence. Alternate translation: "they eat bread that they obtain by doing wicked things and drink wine that they obtain through violence" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁷ For they eat the bread of wickedness and they drink the wine of violent acts.

UST

¹⁷ They get their strength, and they are fed by doing what is wrong; and they are intoxicated by hurting others; they get drunk on it.

Proverbs 4:18

the path of righteous people

The writer speaks of the actions and lifestyles of righteous people as if they were a “path” or “way” upon which they walk. Alternate translation: “the lifestyle of righteous people” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the path of righteous people is like the first light that grows brighter

The writer compares the path of righteous people to the sunrise, meaning that they are safe because they have light to see where they are walking. Alternate translation: “righteous people walk along their path safely because the morning sun shines on it and grows brighter” (See: [Simile](#))

the first light

This refers to the dawn or sunrise.

until the fullness of the day comes

This refers to the time of day at which the sun shines the brightest. Alternate translation: “until the sun shines most brightly” or “until full daylight” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

18 But the path of the righteous ones {is} like a light of brightness, going and shining until the day {is} established.

UST

18 The path taken by those who do right grows brighter and brighter, like the rising of the sun at dawn, and it shines brighter and brighter until it is as full as the light of day.

Proverbs 4:19

The way of the wicked

The writer speaks of the actions and lifestyles of wicked people as if they were a “path” or “way” upon which they walk. Alternate translation: “The lifestyle of the wicked” (See: [Metaphor](#))

The way of the wicked is like darkness

The writer compares the way of wicked people to darkness, meaning that they are always in danger because they have no light to see where they are walking. Alternate translation: “Wicked people walk dangerously along their path because they have no light to be able to see” (See: [Simile](#))

they do not know what it is they stumble over

The writer speaks of experiencing harm as if it were stumbling over an object in the path along which the person walks. Alternate translation: “they do not know why they experience harm and misfortune” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

19 The way of the wicked {is} like the darkness; they do not know on what they stumble.

UST

19 The actions of the wicked are like the darkness— they stumble because they cannot see what makes them fall.

Proverbs 4:20

pay attention

Alternate translation: "listen carefully"

incline your ear to my sayings

Here the word "ear" represents the person who is listening. The writer speaks of listening attentively to someone as if it were leaning forward so that the ear is closer to the one speaking. The word "sayings" can be translated as a verb. Alternate translation: "listen attentively to the things that I am saying" (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

²⁰ My son, listen attentively to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.

UST

²⁰ My son, pay attention to what I am saying to you. Pay attention to these lessons I am teaching you.

Proverbs 4:21

Do not let them turn away from your eyes

The writer speaks of always thinking about something as if it were keeping it where one can see it. Alternate translation: "Do not stop thinking about them" (See: [Metaphor](#))

keep them in your heart

The writer speaks of remembering something as if it were keeping it within one's heart. Alternate translation: "always remember them" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²¹ Do not let them turn aside from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart.

UST

²¹ Keep reading them over and over, and keep them deep within you.

Proverbs 4:22

my words are life

The writer speaks of his words preserving a person's life as if they were that person's life. Alternate translation: "my words give life" or "the things I say give life" (See: [Metonymy](#))

to those who find them

The writer speaks of fully understanding his words as if the person searches for them and finds them. Alternate translation: "to those who understand and practice them" (See: [Metaphor](#))

health to their whole body

The word "their" refers to "those who find them." The subject for this phrase can be supplied from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: "my words will give health to the whole body of those who find them" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

²² For they {are} life to those who find them and healing to all of his flesh.

UST

²² For my words bring a message of life to those who pay attention to them, and their message brings health to the entire body.

Proverbs 4:23

Keep your heart safe and guard it

Here the word "heart" represents a person's mind and thoughts. Alternate translation: "Keep your mind safe and guard your thoughts" (See: [Metonymy](#))

with all diligence

with constant and earnest effort

from it flow the springs of life

The word "it" refers to the heart, which is a metonym for the mind and thoughts. The writer speaks of a person's life as if it were a flowing spring that originates from the heart. Alternate translation: "from your thoughts comes everything you say and do" or "your thoughts determine your course of life" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²³ Guard your heart more than all keeping, for from it {are} the sources of life.

UST

²³ Protect your heart with all your strength and guard what you love; guard it, for it becomes a fountain overflowing with life.

Proverbs 4:24

Put crooked speech away from you and put corrupt talk far from you

The writer speaks of lying or deceitful speech as if it were crooked and of a person not using this kind of language as if it were removing it far away from oneself. Alternate translation: "Do not lie and do not speak deceitfully" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁴ Remove the crookedness of mouth from you, and put far away from you the deviousness of lips.

UST

²⁴ Make it your aim to keep away from you any lying speech, and put any deceptive talk far away.

Proverbs 4:25

Let your eyes look straight ahead and fix your gaze straight before you

Here the word “eyes” represents the person who is looking. The writer speaks of a person being committed to doing the right thing as if that person were constantly looking forward without turning his head to look in another direction. Alternate translation: “Always look straight ahead and fix your gaze straight before you” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁵ Cause your eyes to look to the front, and cause your eyelids to be straight in front of you.

UST

²⁵ Look straight ahead because you are focused on what is good and right, and do not turn aside to the right or to the left.

Proverbs 4:26

Make a level path for your foot

Here the word “foot” represents the person who is walking. The writer speaks of a person’s actions as if he were walking along a path, and of planning those actions carefully as if it were making that path level. Alternate translation: “Make a level path to walk on” or “Prepare well what you want to do” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

a level path

Alternate translation: “a smooth path” or “an even path”

then all your ways will be secure

The writer speaks of a person’s actions as if the person were walking along a path and of those actions being successful as if the path were safe and secure. Alternate translation: “then everything that you do will be right” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁶ Make level the track of your foot and all your ways will be firm.

UST

²⁶ Take care about where you will go, and take care to be sure that the way is safe; then you will know what to expect along the way.

Proverbs 4:27

Do not turn aside to the right or to the left

The directions “right” and “left” form a merism, meaning that the person is not to leave the level path in any direction. Alternate translation: “Walk straight ahead and do not leave the level path” (See: [Merism](#))

turn your foot away from evil

Here the word “foot” represents the person who walks. The writer speaks of not committing evil actions as if the person were walking away from evil. Alternate translation: “turn away from evil” or “stay away from evil” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁷ Do not turn aside right or left; cause your foot to turn away from evil.

UST

²⁷ Do not leave the straight road by turning to the left or to the right, and do not follow the way that leads to evil.

Proverbs 5

Proverbs 5 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 5 continues a collection of proverbs that ends in chapter nine.

Special concepts in this chapter

My Son

Occasionally, the author addresses a proverb to “my son.” This is not intended to restrict the words of that proverb to only males. Instead, it is simply a form used to pass on advice as a father does to his son.

Adulteress

This chapter is unusual because it holds a theme about the adulteress and warns the young man to avoid her. An adulteress is a woman who commits adultery. (See: [adultery](#), [adulterous](#), [adulterer](#), [adulteress](#))

Proverbs 5:1

General Information:

The writer speaks as a father teaching his children.

incline your ears

Here the word "ears" represents the person who is listening. The writer speaks of listening attentively to someone as if it were leaning forward so that the ears are closer to the one speaking. See how you translated this in [Proverbs 4:20](#). Alternate translation: "listen attentively" (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹ My son, listen attentively to my wisdom, incline your ear to my understanding,

UST

¹ My son, learn the lessons I teach you about wisdom. I understand much about this, so listen very carefully to what I tell you.

Proverbs 5:2

discretion

Discretion is the quality of being careful with regard to one's actions and speech. See how you translated this in [Proverbs 1:4](#).

your lips may protect knowledge

Here the word "lips" represents the person who speaks. The writer speaks of a person being careful only to say what is true as if the person's lips were protecting knowledge. Alternate translation: "you will speak only what is true" (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

² in order to keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge.

UST

² If you do that, you will learn the difference between what is important and what is not, and you will not mix true knowledge with mistakes when you speak.

Proverbs 5:3

the lips of an adulteress drip with honey

This could mean: (1) the word “lips” represents the words of the adulteress and the writer speaks of the attractiveness of her words as if her lips dripped with honey. Alternate translation: “the words of an adulteress are sweet, as if dripping with honey” or (2) the writer speaks of the allure of kissing the adulteress as if her lips dripped with honey. Alternate translation: “the kisses of an adulteress are sweet, as if her lips dripped with honey” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

her mouth is smoother than oil

This could mean: (1) the word “mouth” represents the speech of the adulteress and the writer speaks of the persuasiveness of her speech as if her mouth were smoother than olive oil. Alternate translation: “her speech is persuasive and smoother than olive oil” or (2) the writer speaks of the pleasure of kissing the adulteress as if her mouth were smoother than oil. Alternate translation: “her kisses are smoother than olive oil” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³ For the lips of a strange woman drip fresh honey and her palate {is} smoother than oil,

UST

³ The woman who desires to commit adultery speaks with words that are sweet, and her kisses are smoother than oil,

Proverbs 5:4

but in the end she is as bitter as wormwood

The writer speaks of the harm that comes from having a relationship with an adulteress as if she tasted as bitter as wormwood. Alternate translation: “but in the end, she is like bitter-tasting wormwood and will cause you harm” (See: [Metaphor](#))

wormwood

a plant that tastes bitter

cutting like a sharp sword

The writer speaks of the pain that the adulteress will cause to the one who has a relationship with her as if she were a sharp weapon that cuts the person. Alternate translation: “she wounds a person, as if she were a sharp sword” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ but her end {is} bitter like wormwood, sharp like a two-edge sword.

UST

⁴ but in the end, she is so bitter you can taste it, and she cuts you like a sharp sword.

Proverbs 5:5

Her feet go down to death

Here “her feet” represent the adulteress as she walks. The writer speaks of her conduct as if she were walking along a path. Alternate translation: “She is walking along a path that leads to death” or “Her lifestyle leads to death” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

her steps go all the way to Sheol

The writer speaks of her conduct as if she were walking along a path. Alternate translation: “she walks all the way to Sheol” or “her conduct takes her all the way to Sheol” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁵ Her feet are going down to death; her steps take hold of Sheol.

UST

⁵ She walks down to the place of death; if you follow her, she will lead you all the way to the grave.

Proverbs 5:6

She gives no thought to the path of life

The writer speaks of behavior that gives a person long life as if it were a path that leads to life. Alternate translation: “She does not think about walking along the path that leads to life” or “She is not concerned about conduct that leads to life” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Her footsteps wander

This could mean: (1) “She wanders about as if she were lost” or (2) “She walks along the wrong path.”

ULT

⁶ Lest she make level the path of life, she does not know her ways {are} unstable.

UST

⁶ She does not want to take the path that will let her live for a long time. She goes here and there, but where she is going she does not know.

Proverbs 5:7

Now

Here the teacher shifts from warning about the adulteress to giving advice.

listen to me ... do not turn away from listening

These two phrases express the same idea to make the student pay attention. (See: [Parallelism](#))

do not turn away from listening

The writer speaks of stopping an action as if the person physically turned away from it. Alternate translation: “do not stop listening” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the words of my mouth

Here the word “mouth” represents the person who is speaking. Alternate translation: “my words” or “what I am saying” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁷ And now, sons, listen to me; and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.

UST

⁷ So now, my sons, pay attention to what I say, and do not forget or disobey the instruction I am giving you.

Proverbs 5:8

Keep your path far away from her

Here the word “path” represents the person’s daily conduct and circumstances. Alternate translation: “Keep yourself far away from her” or “Stay away from her” (See: [Metonymy](#))

do not come near the door of her house

Here “the door of her house” represents the house itself. It may be more appropriate to use the word “go” instead of “come” since the latter might imply that the speaker is at the door of her house. Alternate translation: “do not go near the door of her house” or “do not even go near her house” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Go and Come](#))

ULT

⁸ Keep your way far from her and do not come near to the opening of her house.

UST

⁸ Stay far away from the immoral woman; do not go near the door of her house.

Proverbs 5:9

In that way

“If you do this.” This phrase refers to what he has just said in previous verses.

you will not give away your honor to others

Possible meanings for the word **honor** are: (1) it refers to one's reputation. Alternate translation: “You will not lose your good reputation among other people” or (2) it refers to one's wealth and possessions. Alternate translation: “You will not give away your wealth to other people” or (3) it refers to strength and represents the prime years of one's life. Alternate translation: “You will not give away the best times of your life to other people”

or years of your life to a cruel person

The writer speaks of a person dying prematurely, possibly by murder, as if the years of his life were items that he gives away to another person. The verb may be supplied from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: “or give years of your life to a cruel person” or “or cause a cruel person to kill you while you are still young” (See: [Ellipsis](#) and [Metaphor](#))

a cruel person

This may refer to the husband of the adulteress, who will deal cruelly with the person who sleeps with her.

ULT

⁹ Lest you give your splendor to others and your years to a cruel one.

UST

⁹ If you go to her you will lose the respect of others, and you give your life to someone who will not have mercy on you.

Proverbs 5:10

strangers will not feast on your wealth

The writer speaks of people taking and enjoying another person's wealth as if they were feasting on the wealth. Alternate translation: "strangers will not take all of your wealth" (See: [Metaphor](#))

what you have worked for will not go into the house of strangers

Here the word "house" represents the person's family. Alternate translation: "the things that you have obtained will not end up belonging to the families of strangers" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹⁰ Lest strangers be satisfied with your strength and your toil {be} in the house of a foreigner,

UST

¹⁰ It may be that others will take all the wealth that you have earned, and it goes into the houses of people you do not know.

Proverbs 5:11

your flesh and your body waste away

The words “flesh” and “body” mean basically the same thing and represent the whole person. Alternate translation: “your body wastes away” or “you waste away” (See: [Doublet](#))

waste away

Alternate translation: “physically wear down” or “become weak and unhealthy”

ULT

11 and you groan at your end when your flesh and your body cease.

UST

11 And when you are about to die, you will groan because your flesh and your body are wasting away.

Proverbs 5:12

I hated instruction ... my heart despised correction

These two phrases express the same idea and emphasize how much this person disliked what the teacher had said. (See: [Parallelism](#))

How I hated instruction

The word "How" is an exclamation that emphasizes the strength of his hatred. The word "instruction" can be translated with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: "I hated it so much when someone would instruct me" (See: [Exclamations](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

my heart despised correction

Here the word "heart" represents the person and his emotions. The word "correction" can be translated with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: "I despised people when they corrected me" (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

¹² And you will say, "How I hated instruction and my heart despised rebuke!"

UST

¹² Then you will say, "I hated it when I was punished for doing wrong; I despised people when they told me how to live."

Proverbs 5:13

incline my ear to my instructors

Here the word “ear” represents the person who is listening. The writer speaks of listening attentively to someone as if it were leaning forward so that the ear is closer to the one speaking. See how you translated a similar phrase in [Proverbs 4:20](#). Alternate translation: “listen to those who instructed me” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

13 And I did not listen to the voice of my teachers and I did not incline my ear to those who taught me.

UST

13 I did not obey my teachers and I paid no attention to those who taught me.

Proverbs 5:14

in the midst of the assembly, among the gathering of the people

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and refer to the person's community that has gathered together either: (1) to worship God or (2) to judge him for his offense. (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

¹⁴ I was almost in all evil, in the midst of the assembly and the congregation."

UST

¹⁴ I was almost destroyed by bad things that happened to me; and this was known to everyone who came together to worship Yahweh."

Proverbs 5:15

water from your own cistern ... running water from your own well

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. The writer speaks of a man sleeping only with his wife as if he drank water only from his own cistern or well. (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

running water

The writer speaks of fresh or flowing water as if the water were running. Alternate translation: “fresh water” or “flowing water” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁵ Drink water from your cistern and flowing water from the midst of your well.

UST

¹⁵ Just as you drink water from your own cistern, be faithful to your own wife.

Proverbs 5:16

Should your springs ... your streams of water flow in the public squares?

The writer asks this rhetorical question to emphasize that his son should not do these things. Alternate translation: "Your springs should not ... your streams of water should not flow in the public squares." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Should your springs ... your streams of water flow in the public squares?

Here the words "springs" and "streams of water" are likely euphemisms for male reproductive fluids. Possible meanings for these metaphorical phrases are: (1) sleeping with women other than one's wife is spoken of as if it were allowing one's water to flow in the public streets or (2) having children with women other than one's wife is spoken of as if it were allowing one's water to flow in the public streets. (See: [Euphemism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

public squares

Open areas in a city or town where two or more streets meet. A common place for people to meet each other and talk.

ULT

¹⁶ Should your springs flow outside, streams of water in the plazas?

UST

¹⁶ You would not waste your own water by pouring it into the street, or let your water run into the public places.

Proverbs 5:17

Let them be

The word “them” refers to the “springs” and “streams of water” and what they stand for.

not for strangers with you

Alternate translation: “do not share them with strangers”

ULT

17 Let them be for you, for you alone, and not for strangers with you.

UST

17 Let both your water and your wife be for you alone to enjoy, and not for others to share with you.

Proverbs 5:18

May your fountain be blessed

The writer speaks of the son's wife as if she were a fountain. Here the word "blessed" refers to the sense of joy that the man has in his wife. Alternate translation: "May you always find joy with your wife" (See: [Metaphor](#))

the wife of your youth

This could mean: (1) "the wife whom you married when you were young" or (2) "your young wife."

ULT

18 May your fountain be blessed, and get joy from the wife of your youth.

UST

18 May your fountain be blessed; may you be happy with the woman you married when you were young.

Proverbs 5:19

she is a loving deer and a graceful doe

The writer speaks of the son's wife as if she were "a loving deer and a graceful doe." Here "deer" and "doe" mean a female deer. They were symbols of beauty both in their appearance and in their movements. Alternate translation: "she is as beautiful and graceful as a deer or a doe" or "she is as beautiful and graceful as a female deer" (See: [Metaphor](#))

graceful

This word does not mean "full of grace," but "beautiful while moving."

Let her breasts satisfy you

This could mean: (1) the wife's breasts excite the husband's sexual desire and possibly represent the wife's entire body. Alternate translation: "Let her breasts satisfy your desires" or "Let her body satisfy your desires" or (2) this is a metaphor in which the writer speaks of the wife's breasts satisfying the husband's desires as they would satisfy the thirst of a hungry baby. Alternate translation: "Let her breasts fill you with delight as a mother's breasts fill her child with food" (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

may you be continually intoxicated by her love

Intense excitement and joy from the romantic love of one's wife is spoken of as if he was drunk from that love. 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: "let her love control you as alcohol controls someone who is drunk" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

by her love

This could mean: (1) "by your love for her" or (2) "by her love for you."

ULT

¹⁹ A doe of loves and a mountain goat of grace, may her breasts drench you at every time; may you continually stagger in her love.

UST

¹⁹ She is as graceful as a loving deer and as graceful as a young doe. Let her breasts always satisfy your longings, so you are forever enraptured with her love.

Proverbs 5:20

For why should you, my son, be captivated by an adulteress; why should you embrace the breasts of an immoral woman?

The writer asks these rhetorical questions to emphasize that his son must not do these things. Alternate translation: "My son, do not be captivated by an adulteress! Do not embrace the breasts of an immoral woman!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

be captivated by an adulteress

Intense excitement that arises from the desire for a woman is spoken of as if he were being held captive by that woman. 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: "allow an adulteress to captivate you" or "allow an adulteress to fascinate you" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

why should you embrace the breasts of an immoral woman

Here the word "breasts" represents the immoral woman and her sexual attractiveness. Alternate translation: "why should you embrace an immoral woman" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

an immoral woman

This could mean: (1) "a woman who is not your wife" or (2) "a woman who is another man's wife."

ULT

²⁰ And why would you stagger with a strange woman, my son, and embrace the bosom of a foreign woman?

UST

²⁰ My son, why should you be caught up in the arms of an adulteress? Why should you caress the breasts of another man's wife?

Proverbs 5:21

sees everything ... watches all the paths

These two phrases mean the same thing and emphasize that God knows everything that everyone does. (See: [Parallelism](#))

all the paths he takes

The writer speaks of a person's actions or lifestyle as if it were a path on which the person walks. Alternate translation: "everywhere he goes" or "everything he does" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

21 For the ways of a man {are} in front of the eyes of Yahweh, and are making level all of his paths.

UST

21 Yahweh sees everything we do; nothing is hidden from him. He sees every path we take; he knows everywhere we go.

Proverbs 5:22

A wicked person will be seized by his own iniquities

The writer speaks of a wicked person being unable to avoid the consequences of his iniquities as if those iniquities were people who capture the wicked person. 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: "A wicked person's own iniquities will seize him" or "A wicked person will be unable to avoid the consequences of his iniquities" (See: [Personification](#) and [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

the cords of his sin will hold him tight

The writer speaks of a wicked person being unable to avoid the consequences of his sin as if that sin were a trap made of cords in which the person is caught. Alternate translation: "because of his sin, he will be like an animal caught in a trap" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²² His iniquities seize him, the wicked one; and he is grasped by the cords of his sin.

UST

²² An evil person's sinful desires take hold of him; his sins are like a trap that catches him.

Proverbs 5:23

he is led astray by his great foolishness

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: "his great foolishness leads him astray" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

by his great foolishness

Alternate translation: "because he is very foolish"

ULT

²³ He will die because there is no instruction; and he staggers in the abundance of his foolishness.

UST

²³ An evil man will die because he could not say, "No" to his desires; he gets lost because his foolishness has no limits.

Proverbs 6

Proverbs 6 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 6 continues a collection of proverbs that ends in chapter nine.

Special concepts in this chapter

My Son

Occasionally, the author addresses a proverb to “my son.” This is not intended to restrict the words of that proverb to only males. Instead, it is simply a form used to pass on advice as a father does to his son.

Adulteress

The latter part of this chapter comes back to the theme about the adulteress and warns the young man to avoid her. An adulteress is a woman who commits adultery. (See: [adultery](#), [adulterous](#), [adulterer](#), [adulteress](#))

Numbers

Occasionally, the author will mention a list of six things, or seven things, that Yahweh hates. These numbers are used to draw attention to the list of things. It is not important whether there are six or seven things in the list.

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Rhetorical questions

The author will use rhetorical questions to draw the reader’s attention to important points. (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Animals used as types

The gazelle and the ant have certain characteristics which the author uses to give wisdom. If your language does not recognize these characteristics in those animals, you could add a footnote to explain or possibly substitute another animal from your culture that would help explain the same concept. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#))

Proverbs 6:1

set aside your money

Implied here is that your promise and the circumstances forced you to save up your money. Alternate translation: “had to save up some of your money” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

a guarantee for your neighbor’s loan

This could mean: (1) your neighbor may come to you to ask for a loan or (2) your neighbor wants to take out a loan from someone else, but you promise to pay the lender back if your neighbor cannot.

neighbor

This same Hebrew word can also mean “friend.”

ULT

¹ My son, if you pledge to your neighbor, you clapped your palm for a stranger,

UST

¹ My son, if you provide a guarantee for a neighbor who takes out a loan, or if you give the promise that you will pay for a loan of a person you do not know,

Proverbs 6:2

you have laid a trap for yourself

This is a figure of speech saying that you are going to trap yourself. Alternate translation: “you have made a trap in which you yourself are caught” (See: [Idiom](#))

the words of your mouth

Alternate translation: “what you said” or “what you promised to do”

ULT

² you are ensnared by the words of your mouth, you are caught by the words of your mouth,

UST

² you laid a trap for yourself by making the promise, and you have been caught by agreeing to a contract for someone you did not know.

Proverbs 6:3

save yourself

Alternate translation: "protect yourself" or "help yourself out of these problems"

you have fallen into the hand of your neighbor

This is a figure of speech using the term "hand" to mean "harm."
Alternate translation: "your neighbor can bring harm to you if he wants to" or "your neighbor has power over you" (See: [Idiom](#))

neighbor

Alternate translation: "friend"

ULT

³ then do this, my son, and rescue yourself. Since you have come into the palm of your neighbor, go, humble yourself and importune your neighbor.

UST

³ Do this, my son, and deliver yourself from this difficulty: humbly go to your neighbor and beg him to cancel the agreement that you made.

Proverbs 6:4

Give your eyes no sleep and your eyelids no slumber

“Do not let your eyes sleep; do not let your eyelids slumber.” These two phrases mean the same thing and are repeated to emphasize how important it is not to be lazy. It is also stated negatively for even more emphasis. Alternate translation: “Stay awake, and do what you can” (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Litotes](#))

your eyes ... your eyelids

This is a figure of speech using parts of your face to mean your whole body. Alternate translation: “yourself ... yourself” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁴ Do not give sleep to your eyes and slumber to your eyelids.

UST

⁴ Do not sleep, and do not rest until you go and talk with him.

Proverbs 6:5

Save yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter

Alternate translation: "Escape from your neighbor like a gazelle that flees from a hunter"

gazelle

This is a big, lean animal that eats grass and that people often hunt for meat. It is famous for running away quickly.

from the hand of the hunter

The hand of the hunter refers to the hunter's control. Alternate translation: "from the control of the hunter" (See: [Metonymy](#))

like a bird from the hand of the fowler

Alternate translation: "and escape like a bird that flies away from a bird-hunter"

ULT

⁵ Rescue yourself like a gazelle from a hand, and like a bird from the hand of the trapper.

UST

⁵ Save yourself, like a deer that escapes from the hunter; or like a bird that flies away from the hand of one who hunts for birds.

Proverbs 6:6

Look at ... consider

Alternate translation: "Study ... think about" or "carefully observe ... ponder"

ant

An ant is a small insect that lives underground or in a self-built hill. They usually live in groups of thousands, and they can lift things that are much bigger than they are.

consider her ways

This is a figure of speech using the "ways" of an ant to refer to the behavior of the ant. Alternate translation: "consider how the ant behaves" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁶ Go to the ant, lazy one! See its ways and be wise,

UST

⁶ You lazy person, learn something from watching the ants. Become wise and watch what they do.

Proverbs 6:7

commander, officer, or ruler

These three words mean basically the same thing and are used to emphasize that no one has formal authority over an individual ant. (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

⁷ that without a commander, officer, or ruler for it,

UST

⁷ The ant has no commander, officer, or ruler telling him what to do,

Proverbs 6:8

it prepares its food in the summer ... during the harvest it stores up what it will eat

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and are repeated to show how responsible the ant is. (See: [Parallelism](#))

summer

Summer is the time of the year when some trees bear their fruit.

ULT

⁸ it prepares its bread in the summer, it gathers its food in the harvest.

UST

⁸ but during the summer it works hard, gathering and storing food to eat during the winter.

Proverbs 6:9

How long will you sleep ... When will you rise from your sleep?

The teacher uses these questions to scold the lazy person for sleeping too much. Alternate translation: "Wake up, you lazy person! Get out of your bed!" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

⁹ Until when, lazy one, will you lie down?
When will you rise from your sleep?

UST

⁹ But you lazy person, how long will you continue to sleep? When will you rise and go to work?

Proverbs 6:10

A little sleep ... of the hands to rest

These are the kinds of things that lazy people say.

A little sleep, a little slumber

Both of these statements mean the same thing. They can be stated as complete sentences. Alternate translation: "I will just sleep a little longer. Let me sleep lightly a little longer" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Ellipsis](#))

folding of the hands to rest

People often fold their hands while reclining in order to rest more comfortably. Alternate translation: "I will just cross my arms comfortably and rest a little" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹⁰ "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to lie down"—

UST

¹⁰ You sleep for a little time, and then you say, "A little more sleep, a little more resting in bed, a little more folding of the hands to take a nap."

Proverbs 6:11

and your poverty will come

This can be stated as a new sentence to make clear that this is a result of being lazy. Alternate translation: "If you continue to be lazy, your poverty will come" or "While you sleep, poverty will come" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

your poverty will come like a robber

The sudden way a lazy person becomes poor is like the sudden way a robber comes and steals things. Alternate translation: "you will suddenly become poor, just as if a robber came and stole everything you have" (See: [Simile](#))

and your needs like an armed soldier

The sudden way a lazy person becomes in need of things is like the sudden way an armed soldier takes things from a person. This can be stated as a complete sentence. Alternate translation: "and your needs will come to you like an armed soldier" or "and you will become needy just as if an armed soldier stole all your things" (See: [Simile](#) and [Ellipsis](#))

an armed soldier

Alternate translation: "a soldier who is holding a weapon" or "a man with a weapon"

ULT

11 and your poverty will come like one who walks and your need like a man of shield.

UST

11 Suddenly poverty will take over your life like a thief who steals everything from you.

Proverbs 6:12

A worthless person—a wicked man

These two words have the same meaning and emphasize how bad this person is. Alternate translation: "A person with no value—an evil man" (See: [Doublet](#))

lives by the crookedness of his speech

Here lies are spoken of as speech that is crooked. Alternate translation: "constantly tells lies" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹² A man of worthlessness, a man of iniquity, {is} one who walks {with} crookedness of mouth,

UST

¹² A worthless person — a person who does bad to others—he lives by the lies he speaks to others.

Proverbs 6:13

winking his eyes, making signals with his feet and pointing with his fingers

All three of these phrases describe a way in which the evil person communicates secretly to deceive other people.

winking his eyes

If someone winks, he closes one eye very briefly as a secret signal to another person. This might be a sign of trust, of approval, or of something else.

ULT

¹³ one who winks with his eyes, one who rubs with his foot, one who points with his fingers.

UST

¹³ They tell tales by winking their eyes and they give signals by moving their feet, and they make plans by pointing with their fingers.

Proverbs 6:14

He plots evil

Alternate translation: "He plans evil" or "He prepares to do evil deeds"

he always stirs up discord

Alternate translation: "he always causes discord" or "he is constantly looking for conflict and escalating it"

ULT

14 Perverse things {are} in his heart; plotting evil at every time, he sends forth quarrels.

UST

14 The one who does bad things lays out plans within himself; he stirs up constant conflict wherever he goes.

Proverbs 6:15

Therefore

Alternate translation: "For that reason"

his disaster will overtake him

This implies that the disaster is chasing him like a person or an animal, and that it will catch him soon. Alternate translation: "his disaster will catch him" (See: [Personification](#))

his disaster

This refers to the disaster that will happen to him, but also the disaster that he himself caused.

in an instant; in a moment

Both mean the same thing, and one or both of them can be replaced by "suddenly" or "very quickly."

ULT

15 Therefore his disaster will come suddenly, in a moment he will be broken and without healing.

UST

15 His own disaster will overtake him in a second; he will be crushed to the point that he cannot be healed.

Proverbs 6:16

six things that Yahweh hates, seven that

This whole verse is a parallelism that emphasizes that God hates several things and not just one. Alternate translation: “six things that Yahwah hates; seven things that” (See: [Parallelism](#))

that are disgusting to him

Alternate translation: “that make him feel disgust” or “that make you disgusting according to him”

ULT

16 Six {things} {are} they, Yahweh hates, and seven {things are} abominations of his spirit:

UST

16 There are six, even seven, things that Yahweh hates.

Proverbs 6:17

Connecting Statement:

This is the list of things that Yahweh hates that was introduced in [Proverbs 6:16](#).

eyes ... tongue ... hands

All of these body parts refer to a whole person. You can translate each of these with "people." (See: [Synecdoche](#))

shed the blood of

Alternate translation: "kill" or "murder"

ULT

¹⁷ uplified eyes, a tongue of falsehood, and hands pouring out innocent blood,

UST

¹⁷ Yahweh hates the eyes of the proud, the tongue that tells lies, the hands that shed the blood of the innocent,

Proverbs 6:18

heart ... feet

All of these body parts refer to a whole person. You can translate each of these with "people." (See: [Synecdoche](#))

wicked schemes

Alternate translation: "evil plans"

ULT

18 a heart devising plans of iniquity, feet hurrying to run to evil,

UST

18 a heart that plots and makes plans to do evil things to others,

Proverbs 6:19

breathes out lies

This figure of speech uses “breathes” to refer to lying constantly. Alternate translation: “constantly lies” (See: [Idiom](#))

discord

See how you translated this in [Proverbs 6:14](#).

one who sows discord

This figure of speech is using “sows” to refer to causing or bringing about discord. Alternate translation: “a person who causes discord” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

19 a witness of falsehood who breathes out lies and one who sends forth quarrels between brothers.

UST

19 the witness who breathes out lies when he gives testimony, and the one who causes strife between members of the same family.

Proverbs 6:20

obey the command of your father ... do not forsake the teaching of your mother

These two phrases on the one hand mean the same thing. On the other hand, the repeated emphasis on both “father” and “mother” explicitly includes women in the whole teaching-learning process. (See: [Parallelism](#))

do not forsake the teaching of your mother

This figure of speech is using the negative “forsake” to mean the positive “obey.” Alternate translation: “obey the teaching of your mother” (See: [Litotes](#))

ULT

²⁰ Guard, my son, the command of your father and do not forsake the teaching of your mother.

UST

²⁰ My son, obey the command of your father, and do not walk away from what your mother taught you.

Proverbs 6:21

bind them on your heart; tie them about your neck

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. They describe the commands and instructions as if they are written down so that you can put it in or on your body to remind yourself. (See: [Metaphor](#))

bind them on your heart

Alternate translation: "love them" or "think about them"

ULT

²¹ Bind them on your heart continually; tie them around your neck.

UST

²¹ Keep these lessons and tie them close inside as a part of yourself; tie them around your neck, to remind you how important they are to you.

Proverbs 6:22

When you walk ... when you sleep ... when you wake up

These three phrases are used together to emphasize that the lessons are valuable all the time. (See: [Parallelism](#))

they will guide you ... they will watch over you ... they will teach you

The repetition of these phrases is to show that the lessons are valuable for all sorts of things. It also speaks of those lessons as if they were people. (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Personification](#))

ULT

²² When you go about, it will guide you; when you lie down, it will watch over you; and you will wake up, it will talk with you.

UST

²² When you walk, those lessons will guide you. When you sleep, they will watch over you and protect you. When you wake up in the morning, they will teach you.

Proverbs 6:23

the commands ... the teaching ... the corrections that come by instruction

These three phrases mean basically the same thing, and together they show the various types of lessons a father and a mother teach. (See: [Parallelism](#))

a lamp ... a light ... the way of life

All three of these mean basically the same thing and are repeated to emphasize the fact that the lessons make life better and easier. Alternate translation: "as useful as a lamp ... as helpful as light in the darkness ... as necessary to follow as the way of life" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Parallelism](#))

the way of life

Alternate translation: "the way that leads to life" or "the way of living that God approves of"

ULT

²³ For the commandment {is} a lamp and the law {is} a light, and the rebukes of instruction {are} the way of life,

UST

²³ These commands are like a lamp for you, and what we teach you is like a light to guide you. When people correct you, this is to continually teach you the right way to live.

Proverbs 6:24

It keeps you from

Here the word "it" refers to the lessons taught by the father and mother in [Proverbs 6:20](#). Alternate translation: "It saves you from" or "It protects you from" (See: [First](#), [Second](#) or [Third Person](#))

the immoral woman ... an immoral woman

These two words mean basically the same thing. See how you translated the word "adulteress" in [Proverbs 5:3](#).

immoral

Alternate translation: "morally evil"

ULT

²⁴ to keep you from a woman of evil, from the smoothness of the tongue of a foreign woman.

UST

²⁴ These lessons keep you from the immoral woman, they tell you about her enticing words and warn you to be on guard.

Proverbs 6:25

do not let her capture you with her eyelashes

The writer speaks of the woman's eyelashes as if they were a trap into which the young man could fall. They are a synecdoche for her beauty and a metonym for the way the woman looks at the young man to make her want her. Alternate translation: "do not allow her to gain control over you by being beautiful and by the way she looks at you" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Synecdoche](#) and [Metonymy](#))

in your heart

Here "heart" represents the mind. Alternate translation: "in your thoughts" (See: [Metonymy](#))

her beauty

"what is beautiful about her." This can also be a metonym for the woman. Alternate translation: "her" (See: [Metonymy](#))

capture you

Alternate translation: "gain control over you"

her eyelashes

The "eyelashes" stand for the beautiful things about her body that she uses to catch a man's attention. Alternate translation: "her beautiful eyes" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

²⁵ Do not desire her beauty in your heart and do not let her take you with her eyelashes.

UST

²⁵ Do not throw your desires after such a woman, nor should you desire her beauty; do not let her capture you by the way she looks at you.

Proverbs 6:26

the price of a loaf of bread

This is talking about the material cost, not the spiritual cost or the moral cost. Alternate translation: "a little bit"

may cost you your very life

This could mean: (1) the wife of another man will destroy your life because she always wants more or (2) the husband of the other woman will hunt you down and kill you.

ULT

26 For the price of a prostitute woman {is} as much as a loaf of bread, but the wife of a man hunts a precious life.

UST

26 Sleeping with a prostitute may cost you only the price of a loaf of bread, but if you sleep with another man's wife, it may cost you your life.

Proverbs 6:27

Can a man carry a fire against his chest without burning his clothes?

This action would be very dangerous and would cause harm. The implied answer to the question is “no.” Alternate translation: “Every man who carries a fire in his chest will burn his clothes.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

without burning

Alternate translation: “without destroying” or “and not destroy”

his clothes

His clothes stand for him as a whole person. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²⁷ Will a man snatch up a fire in his chest and his clothes not be burned?

UST

²⁷ Can you carry hot coals in your pockets and not be burned?

Proverbs 6:28

Can a man walk on hot coals without scorching his feet?

Walking on hot coals will scorch a person's feet, so the implied answer is "no." Alternate translation: "Every man who walks on hot coals will have scorched feet." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

walk on hot coals

This stands for committing adultery. (See: [Metaphor](#))

walk

That is to slowly walk a long distance, without using tricks or magic.

scorching

Alternate translation: "burning"

ULT

²⁸ If a man walks on coals then will his feet not be burned?

UST

²⁸ Can you walk on burning coals and not scorch your feet?

Proverbs 6:29

the man who goes in to his neighbor's wife

This is a euphemism. Alternate translation: “the man who has sexual relations with his neighbor's wife” (See: [Euphemism](#))

ULT

²⁹ So is the one who enters into the wife of his neighbor: every one who touches her will not be free of guilt.

UST

²⁹ So is anyone who sleeps with another man's wife—he will suffer for doing that. It is certain he will be severely punished.

Proverbs 6:30

despise a thief

Alternate translation: "do not regard a thief with contempt" or "do not think a thief is evil"

ULT

³⁰ They do not despise the thief if he steals to satisfy his life when he is hungry.

UST

³⁰ We do not despise a thief if he steals some food because he is very hungry.

Proverbs 6:31

if he is caught

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: "if someone catches him" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

in his house

This figure of speech is saying that everything in his house is all that he owns. Alternate translation: "that he owns" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

³¹ But if he is found, he will restore sevenfold; he will give all the wealth of his house.

UST

³¹ But if he steals something and then is caught by others, he will have to pay back seven times as much as he stole, even if he must sell everything that is in his house to get enough money to repay what he stole.

Proverbs 6:32

The one

Alternate translation: "The person" or "The man"

ULT

³² One who commits adultery with a woman lacks heart; destroying his life, he does it.

UST

³² But a man who commits adultery has no good judgment because he is destroying his own self.

Proverbs 6:33

what he deserves

Alternate translation: “the appropriate punishment for what he has done”

his disgrace

This figure of speech is using the term “disgrace” to refer to the feeling of him acting shamefully. Alternate translation: “the memory of his shameful act” (See: [Metonymy](#))

will not be wiped away

This figure of speech is using the negative “will not be wiped away” to refer to it always being there. Alternate translation: “will always remain” (See: [Litotes](#))

ULT

³³ He will find a wound and dishonor and his shame will not be wiped out.

UST

³³ Wounds and shame will come to him; he will never forget how others disgraced him for his deed.

Proverbs 6:34

furious

very angry

he will show no mercy

The “he” is the neighbor whose wife has committed adultery with another man. Alternate translation: “he will not limit the pain he will cause you” or “he will hurt you as much as he can” (See: [Litotes](#))

when he takes his revenge

Alternate translation: “in the moment of his revenge” or “when the moment arrives when he can take his revenge”

takes his revenge

If a person takes revenge, it is to cause hurt to the person who hurt him first.

ULT

³⁴ For jealousy is the heat of a man, and he will not spare in the day of vengeance.

UST

³⁴ Because that woman's husband will be jealous, he will become furious, and when he gets revenge, he will not act mercifully toward that man.

Proverbs 6:35

compensation

payment by one who does wrong to the person to whom he has done wrong

he cannot be bought off

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: "you cannot pay him enough money to change his mind" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

off, though

Alternate translation: "off. This will be true even if"

ULT

³⁵ He will not lift up the face of any ransom, and he will not be willing if you increase the bribe.

UST

³⁵ And he will not accept any bribe to stop him.

Proverbs 7

Proverbs 7 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 7 continues a collection of proverbs that ends in chapter nine.

Special concepts in this chapter

Parallelism

Proverbs are often written without any surrounding context and in two lines of text. Each line will have a certain relationship to the other line. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Many of the proverbs are stated as promises or commands, but they are intended to be advice.

My Son

Occasionally the author addresses a proverb to “my son.” This is not intended to restrict the words of that proverb to only males, but is still given in the context of a father warning his son.

Adulteress

This chapter continues the theme about the adulteress and warns the young man to avoid her.

Proverbs 7:1

keep my words

Here keeping represents obeying. Alternate translation: “obey my words” (See: [Metaphor](#))

store up my commands within yourself

Here God’s commands are spoken of as if they were objects that someone could put into a storeroom. Alternate translation: “memorize my commands” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹ My son, keep my words and store up my commandments with you.

UST

¹ My son, obey the words I say to you; remember all my orders.

Proverbs 7:2

keep my instruction

Here keeping represents obeying. Alternate translation: “obey my instructions” (See: [Metaphor](#))

as the apple of your eye

The apple of the eye is the pupil inside the eye, which people normally instinctively protect when an object flies at their face. Here “the apple of the eye” represents whatever a person values and protects the most. Alternate translation: “as your most valuable possession” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

² Keep my commandments and live and my law as the pupil of your eyes.

UST

² If you obey my commands, you will live. Consider my commands to be the most precious thing you possess, and obey them.

Proverbs 7:3

Tie them on your fingers

This could mean: (1) that the writer wanted his son to engrave certain commands from God on a ring and wear it, or (2) that the writer wanted his son to always remember God's commands, as if he always wore a certain ring. (See: [Metaphor](#))

write them on the tablet of your heart

Here the heart represents a person's mind, and remembering something well is spoken of as if the person were writing it on a stone tablet. See how you translated this in [Proverbs 3:3](#). Alternate translation: "remember my commands well as if you were writing them in stone" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³ Tie them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart.

UST

³ Write down my commands and tie them to your fingers to remind you of them; let it be as if you had written them in your inner self.

Proverbs 7:4

Say to wisdom, “You are my sister

Here wisdom is spoken of as if it were a person. Alternate translation: “Value wisdom as you would love your sister” (See: [Personification](#))

call understanding your kinsman

Here the quality of understanding is spoken of as if it were a kinsman or relative. Alternate translation: “treat understanding as you would treat your kinsman” (See: [Personification](#))

kinsman

Alternate translation: “relative” or “family member”

ULT

⁴ Say to wisdom, “You {are} my sister,” and call to understanding, “Kinsman,”

UST

⁴ Think of wisdom as if it were a woman, one of your own sisters, whom you love; think of understanding as if it were a person, one of your own family, to whom you are loyal.

Proverbs 7:5

the adulterous woman

This refers to any woman to whom a man is not married. Alternate translation: “the woman whom you should have nothing to do with”

the immoral woman

This refers to any woman who is not known to a man.

with her smooth words

Words intended to deceive are spoken of as if they were smooth objects. Alternate translation: “who says pleasant things, but wants to deceive you”

ULT

⁵ in order to keep you from the strange woman, from the foreign woman who makes her words smooth.

UST

⁵ If you do this, you will be able to stay away from women whom you must not be with, random women who say nice things to you so that you will sin with them.

Proverbs 7:6

lattice

a covering over a window made of thin strips of wood that cross one another in a slanted pattern that forms square-shaped openings in the pattern

ULT

⁶ For in the window of my house, through the window lattice I looked down.

UST

⁶ Standing in my house, I looked out of a window, through the wooden shade,

Proverbs 7:7

naive

inexperienced or immature

ULT

⁷ And I saw among the naive, I discerned among the sons a young man lacking sense.

UST

⁷ and I saw some young men who had not yet learned how to live wisely. I especially saw a young man there who had no good judgment.

Proverbs 7:8

her corner

Here “her” refers to any female stranger, as referred to in [Proverbs 7:5](#). She was standing at a certain corner, waiting for a suitable man to pass by. Alternate translation: “the corner where a female stranger was standing”

corner

This refers to where two roads meet.

ULT

⁸ Passing through the street beside her corner, and he strode in the way of her house,

UST

⁸ He walked down the street near the house on the corner of the road, and he walked toward the house of the adultress.

Proverbs 7:9

twilight

the time of day when it is getting darker and about to become night

ULT

⁹ in the twilight, in the evening of the day, in the pupil of the night and darkness.

UST

⁹ It was the time of day when night and darkness were coming near.

Proverbs 7:10

with a false heart

Here “heart” represents intentions or plans. Alternate translation: “she planned to deceive someone” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

10 And behold, a woman to meet him, {with} the garment of a prostitute and guarded of heart.

UST

10 That was where the woman who was seeking an affair met the young man, and she greeted him. She was dressed as prostitutes dress, with seductive and enticing clothes, and she had secret plans.

Proverbs 7:11

She was loud and wayward

Alternate translation: "She talked loudly and acted in the ways she wished to"

her feet did not stay at home

The phrase "her feet" represent the woman. Alternate translation: "she did not stay at home" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

11 (She {is} a loud and rebellious one; her feet do not stay in her house.

UST

11 She was loud and wayward, attracting attention. She did not stay in her own home.

Proverbs 7:12

she waited in ambush

Here the woman is spoken of as if she were preparing to physically trap a person or an animal. Also, the idea of trapping someone here represents persuading someone to commit sin. Alternate translation: “she waited to trap someone” or “she waited to find someone she could persuade to sin” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹² At {one} time in the street, at {another} time in the plazas, and beside every corner she lies in ambush.)

UST

¹² She searched for a man as she walked along the streets one day; on another day she stood in the market place to find a man. At any street corner she waited for someone who would commit sin with her.

Proverbs 7:13

she

the woman who was introduced in [Proverbs 7:10](#)

grabbed him

Alternate translation: “took hold of him firmly”

with a strong face

Here “strong” represents “stubborn.” A “strong face” means a stubborn expression on a person’s face. This implies that the woman is acting in a stubborn way, that she is deliberately doing what she knows is wrong. Alternate translation: “with a shameless expression on her face” (See: [Idiom](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

13 And she grabbed him and kissed him, she strengthened her face and said to him,

UST

13 When she saw the young man, she firmly took hold of him, and then she kissed him. Without any shame and with great boldness, she said,

Proverbs 7:14

I paid my vows

Here “vows” represents what the person promised to sacrifice to God. Alternate translation: “I made the sacrifices I promised to God” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

14 “The sacrifices of fellowship offerings {were} on me; today I have completed my vows.

UST

14 “Today I have meat in my house, because I made a sacrifice in the temple to promise friendship with Yahweh. In this way I kept my vows to Yahweh,

Proverbs 7:15

seek your face

Here “face” represents the person and especially the person’s presence. Alternate translation: “look for you” or “find out where you are” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

15 Therefore, I came out to meet you, to diligently seek your face and I found you.

UST

15 and now I have come out here to meet you. I was looking for you, and now I have found you!

Proverbs 7:16

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁶ I have spread my bed {with} coverings, colored linen of Egypt.

UST

¹⁶ I have put on my bed sheets—the finest colored linen fabrics from Egypt.

Proverbs 7:17

sprinkled my bed with

Alternate translation: "scattered on my bed"

aloes

A type of wood from a tree that smells good.

cinnamon

This is a spice made from the bark of a tree that smells and tastes good.

ULT

¹⁷ I have sprinkled my bed {with} myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.

UST

¹⁷ I have sprinkled perfumes on my bed — myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.

Proverbs 7:18

let us drink our fill of love

Here the pleasures of romantic love are spoken of as if they were something good to drink. Alternate translation: "let us make love to each other as much as we want" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

18 Come, let us be saturated with loves until the morning; let us delight ourselves with loves.

UST

18 Come! Let us make love all night, until the morning comes. Let us enjoy ourselves with many ways of making love, as much as we want.

Proverbs 7:19

is not at his house

Alternate translation: "is not at home"

ULT

¹⁹ For the man is not in his house; he went on a road far away.

UST

¹⁹ My husband is not at home; he has gone away on a long journey.

Proverbs 7:20

full moon

The moon is said to be full when it is a perfectly round disk, shining at its brightest.

ULT

20 He took the bag of the silver in his hand; he will enter his house to the day of the full moon."

UST

20 He filled a bag with money and took it with him; he will not come back until the middle of the month."

Proverbs 7:21

she turned him

To persuade someone to act in a certain way is spoken of as if it were changing the direction that person was walking. Alternate translation: "she persuaded him" (See: [Metaphor](#))

her ... she ... him

The female is the married woman who wants to sleep with "him," the young man.

smooth lips

Here "lips" represents what a person says. When a person flatters someone else by saying things that are not sincere, these words are spoken of as if they were a smooth object. Alternate translation: "flattering, deceiving words" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

she misled him

Alternate translation: "she convinced him to sin with her"

ULT

²¹ She turned him with much of her teaching; with the smoothness of her lips she compelled him.

UST

²¹ So she she convinced the young man with her persuasive words; because of her smooth and convincing talk, he gave in to what she wanted to do.

Proverbs 7:22

He went after her suddenly

This seems to imply that the young man took very little time to think about what he should do. Alternate translation: "He quickly decided to go after her" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

like an ox going to slaughter ... a deer caught in a trap

The naive and unsuspecting way the young man follows the adulteress is compared to the way two animals are unaware of the danger they are in. (See: [Simile](#))

slaughter

This refers to killing an animal in order to eat its meat.

deer

See how you translated this word in [Proverbs 5:19](#).

ULT

²² Following after her suddenly, like an ox he came to slaughter, and like an anklet to the instruction of a fool,

UST

²² He suddenly decided to follow her inside. He followed her like an ox going to the place where its owner will slaughter it, or like a deer

Proverbs 7:23

like a bird rushing into a snare

The naive and unsuspecting way the young man follows the adulteress is compared to the way an animal is unaware of the danger he is in. (See: [Simile](#))

until an arrow pierces through its liver

This passage implies that a hunter has trapped the deer in order to shoot it with arrows. Alternate translation: “until a hunter shoots it in its most important part” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

liver

Here this organ represents a very important part of the deer’s body.

it would cost his life

This is a way of saying that this person will die as a result. Alternate translation: “it would kill him” or “he would die soon” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

²³ until an arrow split his liver, like a bird rushing into a trap, and he did not know that it {was} for his life.

UST

²³ caught in a trap, where the hunter kills it by shooting an arrow into its inner parts. He was like a bird that flies into a trap without knowing that it will die there.

Proverbs 7:24

Now

This is to focus the attention of the speaker's sons on the conclusion of this lesson.

ULT

²⁴ And now, sons, listen to me; and listen attentively to the words of my mouth.

UST

²⁴ My sons, listen to me, and pay careful attention to what I say to you.

Proverbs 7:25

May your heart not turn aside onto her paths

Here “ways” means the paths that a person chooses to walk on. It represents the person’s behavior, the things that he decides to do in life. Alternate translation: “Make your heart stay far away from the ways of the adulterous woman” or “Do not let your heart want to do the things that the adulterous woman does” (See: [Metaphor](#))

your heart

Here “heart” represents a person, emphasizing his desires. Alternate translation: “you” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

do not be led astray onto her paths

This means the same as the sentence before it. It strengthens the first warning. Alternate translation: “do not leave the right path in order to go on her paths” (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

²⁵ Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways; do not wander into her paths.

UST

²⁵ You must resist her from within you, from deep inside. Do not decide to do what you want and follow her. You must decide that you will never follow her where she goes.

Proverbs 7:26

She has caused many people to fall down pierced

Being pierced by spears or arrows represents being killed. Alternate translation: "She has caused many people to fall dead" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²⁶ For she has caused many pierced ones to fall, and numerous are all her slain ones.

UST

²⁶ She has caused many men to be ruined; truly, no one can count the men she destroyed—they are too many to count.

Proverbs 7:27

Her house is on the paths to Sheol ... they go down

Here “paths” represents the kinds of behavior that foolish people participate in. Sheol was the name for the world of the dead.

on the paths to Sheol ... down to the dark bedrooms of death

These two phrases basically mean the same thing and are repeated to emphasize that the woman’s victims will be destroyed. (See: [Parallelism](#))

the dark bedrooms of death

This expression pictures the dead as sleeping in many different rooms in Sheol. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁷ Her house {is} the ways of Sheol, descending to the rooms of death.

UST

²⁷ The road to her house is the road to the grave; it goes down to the place where the dead are kept.

Proverbs 8

Proverbs 8 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 8 continues a collection of proverbs that ends in chapter nine. These chapters operate more as a unit than many of the following chapters in this book.

Special concepts in this chapter

Wisdom calls out

The addressee of this chapter is broader than “my son,” but is personal like the previous chapters’ use of “my son.” In this case, Wisdom is calling out for all to come and learn of her, in contrast to the adulteress mentioned in chapters 5-7. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#))

Proverbs 8:1

General Information:

In chapter 8 wisdom is spoken of as a woman who teaches people how to be wise. Many verses in chapter 8 have parallelisms. (See: [Personification](#) and [Parallelism](#))

Does not Wisdom call out?

This question is used to remind the readers of something they should already know. Alternate translation: "Wisdom calls out" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Does not Wisdom call out?

Here wisdom is imagined as a woman. If a language does not allow this kind of metaphor, other possible translations are: (1) "Is not wisdom like a woman who calls out?" (2) "Does not a woman named Wisdom call out?" (See: [Personification](#))

Does not Understanding raise her voice?

Here "Understanding" means the same as "Wisdom." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

raise her voice

Alternate translation: "speak"

ULT

¹ Does not wisdom call out and understanding give her voice?

UST

¹ Listen to Wisdom calling; her voice sounds like that of a woman who shouting in the public square. Understanding raises her voice; she sounds like a woman who calls out to be heard.

Proverbs 8:2

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

² At the heads of the heights, on the road, the house of travelers, she stations herself.

UST

² On the top of the hills and where the roads come together, there Wisdom stands.

Proverbs 8:3

the gates at the entrance into the city

In ancient times, cities usually had outer walls with gates in them.

she calls out

This continues to refer to Wisdom, personified as a woman. (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

³ To the hand of the gates, to the mouth of the city, the entrance of the openings, she cries out.

UST

³ Wisdom also stands at the gates at the entrance to the city, and she calls out with a loud voice. Wisdom says:

Proverbs 8:4

General Information:

Wisdom speaks to the people in verses 4-36.

my voice is for the sons of mankind

Here “voice” represents the words that are spoken. Alternate translation: “my words are for the sons of mankind” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the sons of mankind

This is metonymy representing all human beings. Alternate translation: “all people” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁴ “To you, men, I call; and my voice {is} to the sons of mankind.

UST

⁴ “I am calling out to everyone; I am shouting to all people!

Proverbs 8:5

naive

inexperienced or immature

learn wisdom

The abstract word “wisdom” refers to what a wise person believes and to the way in which he acts. Alternate translation: “learn how a wise person acts” or “learn what it means to be wise” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

you must get an understanding mind

Alternate translation: “you must begin to understand things with your mind”

ULT

⁵ Understand prudence, naive ones, and fools, understand heart.

UST

⁵ You people who have no training, you must be taught how to live; you must learn so that you can understand completely.

Proverbs 8:6

when my lips open

Here “lips” represents a person’s mouth, with which he speaks. Alternate translation: “when I open my mouth to speak” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

upright

proper or just

ULT

⁶ Listen, for I will speak noble things, and the opening of my lips {will be} upright things.

UST

⁶ Listen to me, because I will explain to you some excellent things. I can teach you about what is right—

Proverbs 8:7

my mouth speaks

Here “mouth” represents a person who speaks. Alternate translation: “I speak” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

what is trustworthy

Alternate translation: “what people should believe”

wickedness is disgusting to my lips

Here “lips” represents a person who is speaking. Alternate translation: “wickedness is disgusting to me” or “saying wicked things would be disgusting to me” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

wickedness

Here, **wickedness** represents wicked speech. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **wickedness**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

7 For my palate will utter truth, and wickedness {is} an abomination to my lips.

UST

7 for I speak what is true; I detest evil things so much, I hate to even speak about them.

Proverbs 8:8

the words of my mouth

The “mouth” stands for the person who is speaking. Alternate translation: “The things I teach” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

nothing twisted

Twisting a message is a metaphor for changing a true message into a false one. Alternate translation: “nothing false” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

8 All the words of my mouth {are} in righteousness; there is nothing twisted or perverse in them.

UST

8 Everything that I say is right; I do not say anything that changes the meaning of what is good or that leads people away from it.

Proverbs 8:9

straight

honest and clear

my words are upright for those who find knowledge

This probably means that those who find knowledge will easily understand that the speaker's words are upright. Here "words" represent a message or teaching. Alternate translation: "those who know what is right and what is wrong consider what I teach to be right" (See: [Metonymy](#))

upright

true and honest

ULT

⁹ All of them {are} straightforward for the one who is discerning and upright for those who find knowledge.

UST

⁹ My words give good advice to the one who understands the meaning of what I say; those who have learned to tell good from evil will easily know that my words are right.

Proverbs 8:10

Acquire my instruction rather than silver

Alternate translation: "You should try much harder to understand my instructions than to get silver"

ULT

¹⁰ Receive my instruction and not silver, and knowledge more than choice gold.

UST

¹⁰ Choose what I teach you, instead of trying to get much silver; and choose the knowledge I will show you, for it is more valuable than gold.

Proverbs 8:11

For Wisdom is better than jewels; no treasure is equal to her

Here Wisdom, personified as a woman, is not speaking. However, it is possible to make Wisdom the speaker here as well. Alternate translation: "For I, Wisdom, am better than jewels; no treasure is equal to me" (See: [Direct and Indirect Quotations](#))

ULT

11 For wisdom is better than corals and all desired things do not compare with her.

UST

11 For I, Wisdom, am more precious than jewels; nothing is as valuable for you as I am.

Proverbs 8:12

I, Wisdom, live with Prudence

Prudence is also represented here as a person. (See: [Personification](#))

Prudence

caution or good judgment

I possess knowledge and discretion

The abstract ideas “knowledge” and “discrete” can be expressed in other ways. Alternate translation: “I am knowledgeable and discreet” or “I know many things, and I am careful” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

discretion

being careful about what we say and do; being cautious not to cause hurt or harm to others

ULT

¹² I, Wisdom, I dwell with prudence, I find knowledge and discretion.

UST

¹² I, Wisdom, live with Common Sense; we are like two people living in the same house. I know many things, and I act carefully.

Proverbs 8:13

perverted speech

Alternate translation: "wicked talk"

perverted

turned from what is right

ULT

¹³ The fear of Yahweh {is} hating evil. I hate pride and arrogance and the evil way and the mouth of perverse things.

UST

¹³ Everyone who honors Yahweh hates what is evil. I am Wisdom, and I hate it when people are proud, when they think they are more important than others. I hate it when people act in evil ways, and when they tell lies.

Proverbs 8:14

good advice

Alternate translation: "wise suggestions"

advice

counsel that is given to help someone

sound

good, reliable

I am insight

Here Wisdom is spoken of as if she were insight. Alternate translation: "I have insight" (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

14 Counsel and prudence are mine; I {am} understanding; strength is mine.

UST

14 I give good advice and I have the best wisdom; I have true understanding about the nature of things, and I have great strength.

Proverbs 8:15

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁵ By me kings reign and weighty ones decree righteousness.

UST

¹⁵ When kings are wise, they rule well; and when rulers are wise, they make laws that are just.

Proverbs 8:16

nobles

noblemen, leading members of important families in the nation

ULT

¹⁶ By me rulers rule, and nobles, all judges of righteousness.

UST

¹⁶ By me princes rule, noblemen, and all who govern with justice.

Proverbs 8:17

love

This refers to brotherly love or love for a friend or family member. This is natural human love between friends or relatives.

diligently

with careful and continued effort

ULT

¹⁷ I love those who love me, and those who diligently seek me will find me.

UST

¹⁷ I am Wisdom, and I love all who love me; those who work hard to find me will find me.

Proverbs 8:18

With me are riches and honor

Alternate translation: "I have riches and honor"

lasting wealth and righteousness

This explains what is meant by "riches and honor." This can be made clear with the connecting statement "therefore." Alternate translation: "therefore, I will give lasting wealth and righteousness to those who find me" (See: [Connecting Words and Phrases](#))

righteousness

Alternate translation: "the ability to live in a right way"

ULT

18 Riches and honor {are} with me, lasting wealth and righteousness.

UST

18 These people will have lasting riches, and they will live right, because I have riches and honor with me.

Proverbs 8:19

My fruit

what wisdom produces or causes

my produce

the benefit or gain that wisdom causes

ULT

¹⁹ My fruit {is} better than gold, and than refined gold, and my produce than choice silver.

UST

¹⁹ What I can give people is more valuable than fine gold and the best silver.

Proverbs 8:20

I walk in the path of righteousness

Living the right way is spoken of as walking on the right road.
Alternate translation: "I live right" or "I do what is right" (See: [Metaphor](#))

in the midst of the paths of justice

This tells more of what is meant by "the path of righteousness."
Alternate translation: "I do what is perfectly just" or "I only do what is just" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁰ I walk in the path of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of justice,

UST

²⁰ I always do what is right and just.

Proverbs 8:21

treasuries

storehouses for valuable things. Wisdom is spoken of as a woman who fills the storehouses of her followers with valuable things. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²¹ to cause those who love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasuries.

UST

²¹ I give wealth to those who love me, and I fill up their treasuries.

Proverbs 8:22

the first of his deeds then

Alternate translation: "I was the first of the things he created then"

ULT

²² Yahweh possessed me {at} the beginning of his way, before his works from then.

UST

²² Yahweh created me, Wisdom; he made me when he began to create the world; I was the first thing he created in the beginning.

Proverbs 8:23

In ages long ago

Alternate translation: "Very long ago"

ages

The word "age" refers to a general, extended period of time.

from the beginnings of the earth

The idea of beginnings can be translated in a less abstract way.

Alternate translation: "from when God created the earth" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

²³ From eternity I was installed, from the head, from the earliest times of the earth.

UST

²³ He made me long ago—at the very first, at the beginning of the earth.

Proverbs 8:24

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁴ When there were no depths, I was brought forth, when there were no springs made heavy with water.

UST

²⁴ I was born before the oceans were created, when there were no springs from which water flowed.

Proverbs 8:25

Before the mountains were settled

“Before the bases of the mountains were put into place.” This can also be put into active form. Alternate translation: “Before God made the foundations of the mountains and put them into their proper places” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁵ Before the mountains were settled, before the face of the hills, I was brought forth,

UST

²⁵ I was born before the hills and mountains were set in place.

Proverbs 8:26

I was born

This is wisdom speaking about herself. (See: [Personification](#))

was born

Alternate translation: "I was alive"

ULT

²⁶ before he made the earth or the outside places or the head of the dust of the world.

UST

²⁶ I am Wisdom and I was born before Yahweh made the earth, before he made the tiny particles of dust in the earth, I was there.

Proverbs 8:27

I was there

This is wisdom speaking about herself. (See: [Personification](#))

established

To establish something is to bring into being on a stable basis.
Alternate translation: "created" or "made"

when he drew a circle on the surface of the deep

This refers to setting a limit to how far someone in a ship at sea can see all around himself. Alternate translation: "when he marked on the ocean's surface how far a person at sea can see in every direction" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

the deep

Alternate translation: "the ocean"

ULT

²⁷ When he established the heavens, I {was} there, when he inscribed a circle over the face of the deep.

UST

²⁷ I was there when Yahweh put the heavens where they are, on the day when he marked on the ocean's surface how far a person at sea can see in every direction.

Proverbs 8:28

established

brought into permanent being

when the springs in the deep became fixed

This can be put into active form. Alternate translation: “when God fixed the springs in the deep” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the springs in the deep

The ancient Hebrews thought that the ocean got its water from springs at the bottom of the sea.

ULT

28 When he established the clouds above, when the springs of the deep became strong,

UST

28 I was there when Yahweh put the clouds above the earth, and when he made the springs at the bottom of the sea to give water to the oceans.

Proverbs 8:29

when he made his limit for the sea

“when he created the shorelines for the oceans. The “limit for the sea” divided the oceans from the dry land.

when there was set the limit for the foundations of the dry land

The Hebrew word for “earth” also often means “land.”

when there was set the limit for the foundations of the dry land

This can be put into active form. Alternate translation: “when God set the limit for the foundations of the earth” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁹ when he set for the sea its limit, so waters do not pass over its mouth, when he inscribed the foundations of the earth,

UST

²⁹ I was there when he fixed a boundary for the seas, so that the water in the seas would not go past those boundaries, and when he marked out the limits of the dry land.

Proverbs 8:30

I was beside him

This is still wisdom speaking. Wisdom now says she was right next to Yahweh, implying that she was his assistant in creating the world. (See: [Personification](#))

skilled craftsman

This is a person who has trained for years to make useful things very well, like furniture or houses.

I was his delight

“I was what made him happy.” The word “delight” is an abstract noun that can be stated as a verb. Alternate translation: “he was happy because of me” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

day after day

This is a way to express the idea of a habitual action or of a continuous condition. Alternate translation: “continually” or “the whole time” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

³⁰ then I was beside him faithfully, and I was a delight day {by} day, frolicking before his face at every time.

UST

³⁰ I was at Yahweh's side as his master craftsman; I made him happy every day, and I always rejoiced when I was with him.

Proverbs 8:31

his whole world

Alternate translation: “the whole world he created” or “everything he created”

the sons of mankind

This refers to human beings in general. Alternate translation: “the people he brought into existence” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

³¹ Frolicking in the world of his earth,
and my delight {was} the sons of man.

UST

³¹ I was delighted with the whole world
he created; I was happy with the people
he brought into existence, too.

Proverbs 8:32

Now

This is to focus the attention of the children to the conclusion of this lesson.

listen to me

This is still wisdom talking about herself. (See: [Personification](#))

those who keep my ways

Here “my ways” represents wisdom’s behavior. Alternate translation: “those who do what I teach” or “the people who follow my example” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³² And now, sons, listen to me, and blessed {are} they who keep my ways.

UST

³² So, you who are my children, listen to me. How fortunate are those who live as I live.

Proverbs 8:33

do not neglect

“do not disregard” Alternate translation: “be sure to pay attention to” or “be sure to follow” (See: [Litotes](#))

ULT

³³ Hear instruction, and be wise, and do not let go of it.

UST

³³ Listen to what I teach you and you will become wise. Do not reject what I have taught you.

Proverbs 8:34

watching every day at my doors, waiting beside the posts of my doors

These two phrases basically mean the same thing. Wisdom is described as having a home; possible meanings of **watching** are: (1) a wise person waits outside wisdom's home in the morning in order to serve her, or (2) a wise person waits outside wisdom's house for her to come and teach him. (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

³⁴ Blessed {is} the man who listens to me, watching over my doors day {by} day, keeping the doorposts of my entrance.

UST

³⁴ How fortunate are those who listen to me, those who wait for me outside my house every day.

Proverbs 8:35

finds me

This is still wisdom talking about herself. (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

³⁵ For those who find me {are} those who find life, and he obtains favor from Yahweh.

UST

³⁵ Those who find me will find life, and Yahweh will be pleased with them.

Proverbs 8:36

hate me

This is still wisdom talking about herself. (See: [Personification](#))

he who fails

The complete thought is, “he who fails to find me” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

his own life

Here “life” represents the person’s self. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

³⁶ But a sinner does violence to his life; all who hate me love death.”

UST

³⁶ But those who do not find me, they hurt themselves. All those who hate me love death.”

Proverbs 9

Proverbs 9 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 9 concludes a collection of proverbs that operate as a unit about wisdom. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#))

Special concepts in this chapter

Wisdom calls out

The addressee of chapters 8 and 9 is broader than “my son,” but is personal like the previous chapters’ use of “my son.” In this case, Wisdom is calling out for all to come and learn of her.

Proverbs 9:1

General Information:

These verses begin a parable in which wisdom is imagined to be a woman who is giving good advice to people. (See: [Personification](#))

Wisdom has built

The writer speaks about wisdom as if it were a woman who has built her own house. (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

¹ Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out her seven pillars.

UST

¹ Wisdom builds her own house, just like a woman who has built her home; she made seven pillars to support the roof of her house.

Proverbs 9:2

She has slaughtered her animals

This refers to animals whose meat will be eaten in the dinner that Wisdom will give. Alternate translation: "She has killed the animals for meat at dinner" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

mixed her wine

In ancient Israel, people often mixed wine with water. Alternate translation: "prepared her wine by mixing it with water" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

she has set her table

Alternate translation: "she has prepared her table"

ULT

² She has slaughtered her slaughter, she has mixed her wine, also she has set her table.

UST

² She prepared a meal and set her table; she prepared the animals and cooked them to serve for the dinner, and she made the wine ready for her guests.

Proverbs 9:3

General Information:

These verses begin to give the message of Wisdom, who is personified as a woman. (See: [Personification](#))

She has sent out her maids

These maids went out and invited people to come to the feast that Wisdom had prepared.

her maids

Young women or girls who are in the service of a respectable, adult woman, such as Wisdom.

she calls out

Alternate translation: "she loudly recites her invitation"

the highest points of the city

The invitation is shouted from the highest points so that it will be best heard by all the people.

ULT

³ She has sent out her female servants, she calls out on the tops of the heights of the city.

UST

³ Like a woman who sends out her maids to give the invitations to her guests, Wisdom calls out from the highest place in the city for all to hear, and she says:

Proverbs 9:4

Who is naive? Let ... the one lacking good sense

These two phrases describe the same group of people, those who need more wisdom in their lives. Here the question is addressed to all such people. Alternate translation: "Anyone who is naive, let ... anyone lacking good sense"

is naive

Alternate translation: "is inexperienced or immature"

turn aside here

Alternate translation: "leave his path and come into my house"

ULT

⁴ "Whoever {is} naive, let him turn aside here," she says to him lacking of heart.

UST

⁴ "If you are still immature, come here," and she gives the invitation to those who have no good judgment.

Proverbs 9:5

General Information:

These verses continue the message of Wisdom.

Come ... eat ... drink

All of these commands are plural; Wisdom is addressing many people at the same time. (See: [Forms of You](#))

the wine I have mixed

In ancient Israel, people often mixed wine with water. Alternate translation: “prepared her wine by mixing it with water” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁵ “Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine I have mixed.

UST

⁵ “Come and eat the food that I have prepared,” she says, “and drink the good wine that I have mixed.

Proverbs 9:6

Leave ... live ... walk

All of these commands are plural; Wisdom is addressing many people at the same time. (See: [Forms of You](#))

Leave your naive actions

Here naive actions are spoken of as if they were a place that a person could leave. Alternate translation: "Stop your naive behavior" (See: [Metaphor](#))

naive actions

Alternate translation: "inexperienced, immature actions"

the path of understanding

Here the process of understanding wisdom is spoken of as if it were a path that a person could follow. Alternate translation: "the manner of living that a wise person has" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁶ Forsake naive things and live; and go straight in the way of understanding.

UST

⁶ Leave your untrained ways behind you, and live, and I will show you how to walk on the road that will give you understanding.

Proverbs 9:7

General Information:

These verses continue the message of Wisdom.

Whoever disciplines ... whoever rebukes

These two phrases basically say the same thing. (See: [Parallelism](#))

a mocker

Someone who habitually mocks people. Alternate translation: “someone who says insulting things about other people” or “someone who likes to make other people look bad”

receives abuse

Alternate translation: “receives harsh treatment”

whoever rebukes

Alternate translation: “whoever corrects”

ULT

⁷ One who instructs a mocker receives shame for himself, and one who rebukes a wicked one, his injury.

UST

⁷ If you rebuke someone who says insulting things about other people, he will insult you, too. If you offer correction to an evil person, he will hurt you.

Proverbs 9:8

Do not reprove

Alternate translation: "Do not correct"

ULT

⁸ Do not rebuke a mocker, lest he hate you; rebuke a wise one and he will love you.

UST

⁸ A person who insults others will hate you if you tell him to stop. But if you rebuke a wise person, he will become your friend.

Proverbs 9:9

Give to a wise person, and he ... teach a righteous person, and he

These two commands actually represent conditional statements.
Alternate translation: "If you give to a wise person, he ... if you teach a righteous person, he"

Give to a wise person ... teach a righteous person

These two phrases basically say the same thing. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Give to a wise person

This refers to giving instruction to a wise person. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁹ Give to a wise one and he will become more wise; cause the righteous one to know and he will increase learning.

UST

⁹ If you give instruction to a wise person, he will become even more wise. And if you teach a person who does what is right, he will learn even more.

Proverbs 9:10

General Information:

These verses finish the message of Wisdom.

The fear of Yahweh

See how you translated this phrase in [Proverbs 1:7](#).

ULT

10 The beginning of wisdom {is} the fear of Yahweh and knowledge of the holy one {is} understanding.

UST

10 The first step in getting wisdom is to give Yahweh the respect he deserves, and knowing that Yahweh, the Holy One, is the one who gives understanding.

Proverbs 9:11

through me your days will be multiplied

This may be put into active form. Alternate translation: "I will multiply your days" or "I will cause you to live many more days" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

through me

Wisdom, personified as a woman, continues to speak here. (See: [Personification](#))

your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you

These two phrases basically mean the same thing and are used to emphasize the great benefits wisdom has. (See: [Parallelism](#))

years of life will be added to you

Wisdom speaks of years of life as if they were physical objects. 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: "I will add years of life to you" or "I will add years to your life" or "I will enable you to live longer" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

11 For by me your days will become many, and years of life will be added to you.

UST

11 If you become wise, your days will be filled full, and you will add years to your life.

Proverbs 9:12

If you are wise ... and if you mock

These two statements seem to mean that wise people gain advantages for themselves because of their wisdom, and mockers suffer because of their behavior.

you will carry it

This speaks of the consequence of one's bad behavior as if it were a heavy load that one had to carry on his back. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹² If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, and if you mock, you alone will bear it."

UST

¹² If you become wise, you will gain many benefits from it; if you ridicule other people, you will suffer by yourself."

Proverbs 9:13

General Information:

These verses begin to describe foolishness, which is also personified as a woman. (See: [Personification](#))

The woman of foolishness

It is possible to translate “foolishness” as a description such as “A foolish woman.” However, if a language allows wisdom to be personified, as in the previous part of this chapter, it may also allow foolishness to be personified. Alternate translation: “The woman Foolishness” (See: [Personification](#))

she is untaught and knows nothing

These two expressions basically mean the same thing, which is repeated to show how useless the foolish woman is. Alternate translation: “she does not know anything at all” (See: [Parallelism](#))

she is untaught

Alternate translation: “she has not learned from experience” or “she is young and naive”

ULT

¹³ The woman of foolishness {is} loud, naive, and she does not know anything.

UST

¹³ A foolish woman talks loudly; she is untaught in the subjects of wisdom and she knows very little.

Proverbs 9:14

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁴ And she sits at the opening of her house, on a seat, the heights of the city,

UST

¹⁴ She sits at the door of her house or on the highest place in the town,

Proverbs 9:15

walking straight on their way

This seems to be an idiom for “thinking only of their own affairs” or “minding their own business.” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

15 to call to those who pass over the way, the ones going straight on their paths.

UST

15 and she calls out to the men who are passing by, to those walking down the road, concerned only about where they are going.

Proverbs 9:16

is naive

Alternate translation: "is inexperienced or immature"

turn aside here

Alternate translation: "leave his path and come here"

she says

This is the foolish woman who was introduced in [Proverbs 9:13](#).

those who have no sense

Alternate translation: "those who do not have wisdom" or "those who are not wise"

ULT

16 "Whoever {is} naive, let him turn aside here!" And she says to him, the lacking of heart,

UST

16 "Any of you who have no experience, come here," she says to those who have no good judgment.

Proverbs 9:17

Stolen waters are sweet, and bread of secrecy is delicious

The foolish woman speaks of the pleasure of stolen waters and bread of secrecy to tell men that if they sleep with her, they will have pleasure. This can be stated clearly in a simile: "You can enjoy me just as you enjoy water that you have stolen or bread that is secret" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

17 "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread of secrecies is pleasant."

UST

17 "If you sleep with me, it will as sweet as drinking water that you have stolen, or eating delicious food all by yourself."

Proverbs 9:18

that the dead are there

Alternate translation: "that the men who have gone to her are now dead"

in the depths of Sheol

"Sheol" refers to the world of the dead.

ULT

18 And he does not know that the spirits of the dead {are} there; her called ones are in the depths of Sheol.

UST

18 Any man who accepts her invitation does not know that the dead are in her home, that those who accepted her invitation and went into her house are now in the world of the dead.

Proverbs 10

Proverbs 10 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 10 starts a new section of the book, which is attributed to Solomon and is filled mainly with short, individual proverbs.

Special concepts in this chapter

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often using contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, and wicked/righteous. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 10:1

General Information:

Many verses in Chapter 10 are contrasting parallelisms (See: [Parallelism](#))

The proverbs of Solomon

After the introduction of Chapters 1-9, Chapter 10 begins the collection of the proverbs; short sayings that teach wisdom.

ULT

1 The proverbs of Solomon: A wise son causes a father to rejoice but a foolish son {is} the grief of his mother.

UST

1 These are the proverbs of Solomon: A child who lives according to wisdom makes his father happy; but if a child does foolish things, he causes his mother to be very sad.

Proverbs 10:2

accumulated

acquired over time

ULT

² Treasures of wickedness do not profit, but righteousness delivers from death.

UST

² Riches that you got by being dishonest will not have any value; but when you do what is right, you will be protected from death.

Proverbs 10:3

Yahweh does not let the soul of the righteous person go hungry

Here "soul" refers to the person. This can be stated in positive form. Alternate translation: "Yahweh makes sure those who do what is right have food to eat" (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Litotes](#))

ULT

³ Yahweh does not let the life of the righteous one hunger but he thrusts away the desire of the wicked ones.

UST

³ Yahweh does not allow people who do right to starve, but he will make it impossible for wicked people to get what they want.

Proverbs 10:4

A lazy hand

“Hand” represents the strength and ability of a person. Alternate translation: “A person unwilling to work” (See: [Metonymy](#))

hand of the diligent

“Hand” represents the strength and ability of a person. Alternate translation: “person who works hard” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁴ A palm of slackness makes poverty, but the hand of diligent ones makes rich.

UST

⁴ A lazy person who will not work becomes poor; those who work hard become rich.

Proverbs 10:5

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁵ One who gathers in the summer {is} a son who acts prudently, but one who sleeps in the harvest {is} a son who causes shame.

UST

⁵ He is wise who harvests the crops when they are ready to be gathered; but it would be shameful for him to sleep while others are harvesting the crop.

Proverbs 10:6

are upon the head

The “head” represents the whole person. Alternate translation: “are given to” (See: [Idiom](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

mouth of the wicked

The “mouth” represents what a person says. Alternate translation: “words the wicked speak” (See: [Metonymy](#))

covers up

hides the truth

ULT

6 Blessings {are} for the head of the righteous one, but the mouth of the wicked ones covers violence.

UST

6 Those who do right will receive many good gifts from God; but those who do wicked things cover their violence so they cannot be seen.

Proverbs 10:7

name

The word “name” represents a person’s reputation. Alternate translation: “memory” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁷ The memory of the righteous one {is} for a blessing, but the name of the wicked ones will rot.

UST

⁷ When we remember those who do what is right, we get a blessing from Yahweh; but we cannot remember the names of the wicked.

Proverbs 10:8

come to ruin

Alternate translation: "be destroyed" or "be made useless"

ULT

⁸ The wise of heart receive commands
but the foolish of lips will be thrust
down.

UST

⁸ Wise people follow good instructions,
but a fool who talks too much will fail.

Proverbs 10:9

crooked

not straight; deformed; dishonest; deceitful

ULT

⁹ One who walks in integrity will walk securely, but one who causes his ways to be crooked will be known.

UST

⁹ An honest person lives his life and has nothing to hide; but one who is dishonest—his lies will be discovered.

Proverbs 10:10

He who winks the eye

“Winking the eye” represents a secretive sign for being cruel to someone else. Alternate translation: “He who makes a signal with a gesture” (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

will be thrown down

A person who is ruined is spoken of as if he were thrown down. Alternate translation: “others will ruin him” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

10 One who winks an eye gives pains, and the foolish of lips will be thrust down.

UST

10 The one who winks his eye signals others to help him do something that is wrong, and a fool will be ruined because he talks too much.

Proverbs 10:11

The mouth of the righteous

Here “mouth” represents what a person says. Alternate translation: “The speech of a righteous person” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the righteous

This refers to righteous people in general. Alternate translation: “righteous people” (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

is a water spring of life

This person’s speech is spoken of as if it preserved living animals or people, as a water spring would do in a dry land. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the mouth of the wicked covers up violence

That is, the wicked person appears to say harmless things, but plans to violent things against other people. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the mouth of the wicked

Here “mouth” represents what a person says. Alternate translation: “the speech of a wicked person” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the wicked

This refers to wicked people in general. Alternate translation: “wicked people” (See: [Generic Noun Phrases](#))

ULT

11 The mouth of the righteous one {is} a spring of life, but the mouth of the wicked ones covers violence.

UST

11 A person who does right is like a spring that gives life-saving water; but the wicked person hides his brutality by his words.

Proverbs 10:12

love covers over

Love acts like a person who quiets trouble between people instead of stirring it up. (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

¹² Hatred stirs up quarrels, but love covers all transgressions.

UST

¹² Hatred has the power to start many arguments; but love covers anything that may hurt us.

Proverbs 10:13

on the lips of a discerning person

“Lips” represents what a person says. Alternate translation: “in what a sensible person says” (See: [Metonymy](#))

a rod is for the back

“Rod” represents strong, physical punishment and “the back” represents the person who receives the punishment. Alternate translation: “a person who has no sense needs forceful punishment” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

13 Wisdom is found on the lips of one who is discerning, but a rod {is} for the back of the lacking of heart.

UST

13 Those who have good sense say what is wise, but people who do not have good judgment must be punished.

Proverbs 10:14

the mouth of a fool

“Mouth” represents what a person says. Alternate translation: “the words from a foolish person” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

14 Wise men store up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool {is} near ruin.

UST

14 Wise people continue to learn all that they can, but when foolish people speak, they will soon experience destruction.

Proverbs 10:15

his fortified city

This represents wealth as a safe place. Alternate translation: "his safety" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

15 The wealth of the rich one {is} the city of his strength; the ruin of lowly ones is their poverty.

UST

15 The wealth that rich people have protects them like a city is protected by a strong wall around it, but because people are poor, they have no one to help them.

Proverbs 10:16

The wage ... the profit

These terms normally refer to the money a worker earns. Here they represents the results of either doing what is right or doing what is wrong. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

16 The wage of the righteous one {is} to life; the income of the wicked one {is} to sin.

UST

16 If you do what is right, your reward will lead you to life, but all that sinful people gain is the ability to sin even more.

Proverbs 10:17

There is a path to life for the one who follows discipline

Alternate translation: "The person who obeys wise instruction will have a long and happy life"

but the one who rejects correction is led astray

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: "but the one who does not obey wise instruction will not have a good life" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁷ One who keeps instruction {is on} a path to life but one who rejects rebuke goes astray.

UST

¹⁷ Life can be found by the one who is trained by discipline; but the one who will not listen to correction wanders away.

Proverbs 10:18

has lying lips

“Lips” represent what a person says. Alternate translation: “tells lies”
(See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

18 One who covers hate {with} lips of falsehood and causes an evil report to go forth, he {is} a fool.

UST

18 Those who hide their hatred of others, must lie to cover it up, and those who repeat slander are foolish.

Proverbs 10:19

transgression is not lacking

This phrase uses a negative to emphasize a positive idea. Alternate translation: "there is much sin" (See: [Litotes](#))

ULT

19 With a multitude of words transgression does not cease, but one who restrains his lips {is} prudent.

UST

19 When people talk a lot, sin is sure to follow; if you are wise, you will always be careful about what you say.

Proverbs 10:20

The tongue of the righteous person

“Tongue” represents what a person says. Alternate translation: “Whatever a righteous person says” (See: [Metonymy](#))

is pure silver

“Silver” represents valuable sayings. Alternate translation: “is extremely valuable” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

20 The tongue of the righteous one {is} choice silver; the heart of the wicked ones {is} like little.

UST

20 The one who does right is like pure silver; there is little value in the heart of the one who does wicked things.

Proverbs 10:21

The lips of the righteous

“Lips” represents what a person says. Alternate translation: “The sayings of a righteous man” (See: [Metonymy](#))

nourish

cause them to develop or grow stronger

ULT

21 The lips of the righteous one shepherd many, but fools die for lacking heart.

UST

21 What those who do right say benefits many, but foolish people die because they lack good sense.

Proverbs 10:22

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²² The blessing of Yahweh, it causes to become rich, and he does not add pain with it.

UST

²² Yahweh gives good gifts that make some people wealthy, and he does not make them suffer for it.

Proverbs 10:23

Wickedness is a game a fool plays

A game is an activity people do for pleasure. Alternate translation: "Fools find pleasure in wickedness" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²³ Doing a wicked plan {is} like laughter for a fool, but wisdom {is} for a man of understanding.

UST

²³ Foolish people play games when they do what is wrong, but people with understanding enjoy wisdom.

Proverbs 10:24

overtake

overcome someone

ULT

²⁴ The terror of the wicked one, it will come to him, but the desire of the righteous ones will be given.

UST

²⁴ What the wicked fear will happen to them; those who do what is right will get what they hoped for.

Proverbs 10:25

The wicked are like the storm

Just as storm comes and sweeps everything away so wicked people will disappear. (See: [Simile](#))

is a foundation that lasts forever

“Foundation” represents the base or a beginning of something that people build over. Alternate translation: “is a start for something that lasts forever” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁵ Like the passing over of a whirlwind, there is no wicked one, but a righteous one {is} a foundation of eternity.

UST

²⁵ Wicked people are like the storm that comes and then it is gone. but those who do right are like a foundation that lasts forever.

Proverbs 10:26

Like vinegar on the teeth and smoke in the eyes, so is the sluggard to those who send him

“Vinegar” and “smoke” represent things that hurt a person’s teeth and eyes. Alternate translation: “Sending a lazy person to accomplish a task is irritating and unpleasant” (See: [Simile](#))

vinegar

a sour liquid used to flavor or preserve foods

ULT

²⁶ Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so {is} the lazy one to one who sends him.

UST

²⁶ Like vinegar in our mouths or smoke in our eyes, that is what the lazy man is like to the one who hired him.

Proverbs 10:27

the years of the wicked

“Years” represent the time a person lives. Alternate translation: “the lifetime of the evil person” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁷ The fear of Yahweh will increase days, but the years of the wicked ones will be short.

UST

²⁷ If you give Yahweh the respect he deserves, you will live for a long time; but wicked people die before they become old.

Proverbs 10:28

the years of wicked people

Here “years” represent the time a person lives. Alternate translation: “the lifetime of the evil person” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

28 The hope of the righteous ones {is} joy, but the expectation of the wicked ones will perish.

UST

28 Those who do right have hope in their joy, but the wicked can expect their lives to be short.

Proverbs 10:29

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁹ The way of Yahweh {is} a stronghold for the one with integrity, but ruin {is} for those who do iniquity.

UST

²⁹ Following Yahweh brings protection to those who keep their promises; but those who do not follow him find out he destroys those who do what is evil.

Proverbs 10:30

will never be overthrown

This can be stated as active and positive: Alternate translation: “will be secure” (See: [Litotes](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

30 A righteous one will not be shaken to eternity, but wicked ones will not dwell in the land.

UST

30 Those who do right will never be defeated, but wicked people will not have a home.

Proverbs 10:31

Out of the mouth of the righteous person

“Mouth” represents what a person says. Alternate translation: “From the righteous man’s words” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the perverse tongue will be cut out

“Tongue” represents what a person says. Alternate translation: “God will shut the mouths of people who say what is false” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

31 The mouth of the righteous one bears the fruit of wisdom, but the tongue of the perverse ones will be cut off.

UST

31 Wisdom is like a fruit that those who do right bear, but Yahweh will cut out the deceitful tongue.

Proverbs 10:32

lips of the righteous person know what is acceptable

“Lips” represent what a person says. Alternate translation: “righteous person knows how to speak acceptably” (See: [Metonymy](#))

mouth of the wicked

“Mouth” represents what a person says. Alternate translation: “the words of the wicked” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

³² The lips of the righteous one know favor, but the mouth of the wicked ones, perverse things.

UST

³² Those who do right know the words Yahweh permits them to speak, but wicked people say what Yahweh has forbidden.

Proverbs 11

Proverbs 11 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 11 continues the section of the book which is attributed to Solomon and is filled mainly with individual proverbs.

Special concepts in this chapter

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often using contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility, integrity/crookedness. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 11:1

General Information:

Many verses in Chapter 11 are contrasting parallelisms (See: [Parallelism](#))

Yahweh hates scales that are not accurate

“Scales” represent measuring accurately in negotiating. Alternate translation: “God hates deceiving scales” or “God hates it when people are deceitful” (See: [Metaphor](#))

but he delights in a precise weight

Here, **precise weight** represents accuracy in negotiating. Alternate translation: “but he delights in honest ways” or “but he is happy when people are honest”

ULT

¹ Scales of deceit {are} an abomination of Yahweh but a full stone {is} his delight.

UST

¹ When people use scales that are not correct; Yahweh is angry that they are stealing from their customers; he is delighted with those who use correct weights on the scales.

Proverbs 11:2

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

² When pride comes then disgrace comes, but {with} modest ones {is} wisdom.

UST

² People who are proud live in such a way that always ends in disgrace; people who are humble are the only ones who can learn about wisdom.

Proverbs 11:3

the treacherous

This nominal adjective can be stated as an adjective. Alternate translation: “treacherous people” or “those who are treacherous” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

ULT

³ The integrity of the upright ones will guide them but the crookedness of the treacherous ones will destroy them.

UST

³ People who keep their promises also make choices that lead them in the right way; those who cannot be trusted are destroyed by their own dishonesty.

Proverbs 11:4

Wealth is worthless on the day of wrath

The “day of wrath” represents a specific event, such as the “day of Yahweh” or “judgment day” or “last days.” Alternate translation: “A person’s wealth will do him no good when God comes to judge” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁴ Wealth will not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness will deliver from death.

UST

⁴ Your money will not help you on the day Yahweh judges the world; but if you do what is right, you will be kept safe from many dangers, even death.

Proverbs 11:5

makes his way straight

Alternate translation: "has clear direction"

the wicked

This nominal adjective can be stated as an adjective. Alternate translation: "those who are wicked" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

ULT

⁵ The righteousness of a blameless one will make his way straight, but a wicked one will fall by his wickedness.

UST

⁵ When people are honest and good, they know where they should go and what they should do; but those who do evil find that their wickedness will destroy them.

Proverbs 11:6

the treacherous

This nominal adjective can be stated as an adjective. Alternate translation: “those who are treacherous” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

the treacherous are trapped by their cravings

Alternate translation: “those who do evil are captured by their passions”

treacherous

ready to betray trust; traitorous; deceptive

ULT

6 The righteousness of the upright ones will deliver them, but treacherous ones will be captured by desire.

UST

6 God rescues those who do what is right, but those who do what is evil become slaves to their desires.

Proverbs 11:7

the hope that was in his strength

Alternate translation: "the confidence he has in his own power"

comes to nothing

Alternate translation: "disappears"

ULT

⁷ In the death of a wicked man hope will perish, and the expectation of strong ones perishes.

UST

⁷ When a wicked person dies, all he hoped for in the future is lost; what he wanted to accomplish with his strength, will never happen.

Proverbs 11:8

The righteous person is kept away from trouble

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 keeps away from trouble the person who does what is right" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

it comes

Alternate translation: "trouble comes"

ULT

⁸ A righteous one will be drawn away from distress, but a wicked one will enter instead of him.

UST

⁸ The one who does what is right, Yahweh delivers from trouble; and Yahweh gives that trouble to the wicked.

Proverbs 11:9

With his mouth the godless

“Mouth” represents what a person says. Alternate translation: “The words of the godless” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁹ With a mouth a godless one will destroy his neighbor, but with knowledge righteous ones will be delivered.

UST

⁹ A person who has no kind of religious faith uses his words to destroy his neighbor; but people who do right will be saved by the knowledge they have gathered.

Proverbs 11:10

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁰ In the good of the righteous ones a city will rejoice; and when wicked ones perish, a shout of joy.

UST

¹⁰ When things go well for those who do what is right, those in their city are happy, and shouts of joy are heard when wicked people die.

Proverbs 11:11

the city becomes great

“City” represents the community or people group. Alternate translation: “the people group prospers” or “the community becomes prosperous” (See: [Metonymy](#))

by the mouth of the wicked

“Mouth” represents what a person says. Alternate translation: “the words of evil people” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

11 With the blessing of the upright ones a city will be exalted, but with the mouth of the wicked ones it will be thrown down.

UST

11 When there are people in the city who please God and they give good gifts to others, the city becomes great; but the words spoken by the wicked tear down the city.

Proverbs 11:12

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹² One who despises his neighbor {is} lacking of heart, but a man of understanding will keep quiet.

UST

¹² The one who treats his friend with contempt has no good judgment; a person who has learned what is important says nothing.

Proverbs 11:13

keeps a matter covered

“Covered” represents keeping things concealed as much as possible.
Alternate translation: “does not tell” or “does not speak about the matter” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹³ One who goes about {in} slander is one who uncovers a secret, but one who is faithful of spirit {is} one who covers a matter.

UST

¹³ Those who spread gossip tell secrets to others, but a person you can trust will not talk about it.

Proverbs 11:14

advisors

those who give recommendations as a guide to action; counselors

ULT

14 When there are no directions a people will fall, but salvation is in an abundance of counsel.

UST

14 A nation will be destroyed if it does not have leaders who guide it wisely; but the nation will have victory when it listens to many advisors.

Proverbs 11:15

one who hates giving

Alternate translation: "one who refuses to give"

ULT

¹⁵ He will certainly be hurt if he pledges for a stranger, but one who hates hand claps {is} secure.

UST

¹⁵ If you promise to pay off a loan that is taken by a stranger, you will lose your money. You will be safe if you refuse to make any kind of agreement to pay someone else's debts.

Proverbs 11:16

ruthless people

people without pity or compassion; cruel people

grasp for wealth

Alternate translation: "are greedy for wealth"

ULT

16 A woman of grace will grasp honor,
but ruthless ones will grasp riches.

UST

16 A kindhearted woman earns respect;
but violent people take hold of riches.

Proverbs 11:17

one who

Alternate translation: "a person who"

ULT

17 A man of kindness {is} one who rewards his self, but a cruel one {is} one who troubles his flesh.

UST

17 By their kindness to others kind people give good gifts to themselves, but one who is cruel hurts himself by his cruelty.

Proverbs 11:18

sows what is right

To “sow” represents spreading out to gain more. Alternate translation: “spreads out what is right” (See: [Metaphor](#))

reaps the wages of truth

To “reap” represents acquiring or gathering in” Alternate translation: “will surely be rewarded” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

18 A wicked one makes a wage of falsehood, but one who sows righteousness, a wage of truth.

UST

18 Wicked people tell lies to make more money, but those who do what is right will be paid even more because they earned it.

Proverbs 11:19

the one who

Alternate translation: "the person who"

pursues evil

Alternate translation: "chases after evil" or "seeks to do evil"

ULT

¹⁹ Thus, righteousness {is} to life, but one who pursues evil {is} to his death.

UST

¹⁹ Those who do what is right will live, but those who do what is wrong will die.

Proverbs 11:20

whose hearts are perverse

“Heart” represents the feelings, attitudes and motivations of a person. Alternate translation: “who have wicked thoughts” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²⁰ The abomination of Yahweh {is} those perverse of heart, but his delight {is} those blameless of way.

UST

²⁰ Yahweh hates those who take good things and they twist them and they do bad things with them, but he is delighted with those who always do what is right.

Proverbs 11:21

will not go unpunished

This phrase uses a negative to emphasize a positive idea. Alternate translation: “will certainly be punished” (See: [Litotes](#))

ULT

21 Hand to hand wicked ones will not be free of guilt, but the seed of the righteous ones will slip away.

UST

21 It is certain that evil people will not escape their punishment. and the children of those who do right will be kept safe.

Proverbs 11:22

Like a gold ring ... without discretion

A beautiful woman without discretion is compared to a useless and unsuitable golden ring in a pig's nose. (See: [Simile](#))

without discretion

Alternate translation: "without common sense" or "who is foolish"

ULT

22 A ring of gold in the nose of a pig {is} a beautiful woman that turns away from discretion.

UST

22 If you see a gold ring in a pig's nose, that is very much like a beautiful woman who does not have good sense.

Proverbs 11:23

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²³ The desire of the righteous ones {is} only good; the hope of the wicked ones {is} fury.

UST

²³ Those who do what is right desire things that result in good, but the reward of the wicked is that they will experience Yahweh's wrath.

Proverbs 11:24

There is one who scatters—he will accumulate even more

This is a metaphor for a person who becomes more wealthy by being generous. Alternate translation: “Some people give freely to others and yet become more wealthy” (See: [Metaphor](#))

one who scatters

You may need to make explicit that the person scatters seeds for crops to grow. Alternate translation: “one who scatters much seed” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Metaphor](#))

will accumulate even more

Alternate translation: “will gain even more”

withholds what he should give

This refers to a person who thinks that he can become rich by refusing to be generous.

ULT

²⁴ There is one who scatters and increases more, but one who withholds more than {what is} right {is} only for poverty.

UST

²⁴ If a person sows seed, he can expect to harvest a crop; his few seeds will give him much more; another person does not plant a crop, and he becomes poor.

Proverbs 11:25

will prosper

Alternate translation: "will gain more"

the one who

Alternate translation: "the generous person who" or "anyone who"

ULT

²⁵ A life of blessing will be fattened, and the one who drenches, also he will be drenched.

UST

²⁵ Those who give generously to others will prosper; if you share your water with other people, you will have enough for yourself, too.

Proverbs 11:26

the man who refuses to sell

This describes the person who hoards his wealth instead of helping those in need.

good gifts crown the head of him who sells it

“Crown” represents the reward or award for the person who is willing to sell grain. Alternate translation: “good gifts are given as a crown of honor to him who sells it” or “the person who sells it is honored with many blessings” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

26 People will curse one who withholds grain, but a blessing {is} for the head of one who sells.

UST

26 People will curse the merchant who will not sell them grain, but they praise the one who sells it.

Proverbs 11:27

The one who diligently seeks

the one who seeks with careful and continued effort

ULT

²⁷ One who diligently seeks good seeks favor, but one who seeks evil, it will come to him.

UST

²⁷ If you work hard and go out to find what is good, you will also find good will. but if you look for evil, you will find it.

Proverbs 11:28

will fall

This is an idiom. Here “fall” represents destruction or failure. Alternate translation: “will be destroyed” or “awaits a bad future” (See: [Idiom](#))

like the leaf, righteous people will flourish

“Leaf” represents growth and prosperity. Alternate translation: “righteous people will prosper in the same way a healthy green leaf grows” (See: [Simile](#))

righteous people will flourish

This means that righteous people will thrive or prosper.

ULT

28 One who trusts in his riches, he will fall, but like a leaf righteous ones will flourish.

UST

28 Those who trust in their money will fall down, but those who do what is right will grow like a healthy tree.

Proverbs 11:29

inherit the wind

The “wind” is a metaphor for something that cannot be grasped or has no value. Alternate translation: “inherit nothing” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Idiom](#))

ULT

29 One who troubles his house will inherit wind, and a fool {will be} a servant to the wise of heart.

UST

29 Those who bring troubles to their families will inherit nothing, and those who do foolish things will become the servants of those who are wise.

Proverbs 11:30

The righteous person will be like a tree of life

A person who does what is right is compared to a tree that produces life as its fruit. Alternate translation: "Those who do right will bring life to themselves and others" (See: [Simile](#))

tree of life

See how you translated this in [Proverbs 3:18](#).

ULT

³⁰ The fruit of the righteous one {is} a tree of life, and a wise one gains lives.

UST

³⁰ Those who do what is right will be like a life giving tree, but acts of violence take away life.

Proverbs 11:31

how much more

Alternate translation: "even more so"

ULT

³¹ Behold, a righteous one in the land will be repaid, how much more a wicked one and one who sins!

UST

³¹ It is sure that those who do what is right will get what they truly deserve; but even more, the person who does bad things and the one who sins against Yahweh, will surely receive what they deserve.

Proverbs 12

Proverbs 12 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 12 continues the section of the book (Chapter 10-22) which is attributed to Solomon and is filled mainly with short, individual proverbs.

Special concepts in this chapter

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often using contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility and integrity/crookedness. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 12:1

General Information:

The author uses [Parallelism](#) throughout this chapter. Verses 1-15 contrast wisdom and foolishness.

Whoever

Alternate translation: "Any person who"

the one who hates correction

Alternate translation: "the person who does not want to be told what to do"

is stupid

Alternate translation: "is foolish" or "is unwise"

ULT

¹ One who loves instruction loves knowledge, but one who hates rebuke {is} stupid.

UST

¹ The one who wants to learn will welcome correction. But the one who does not want to be corrected will remain stupid.

Proverbs 12:2

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

² A good one obtains favor from Yahweh, but a man of schemes he will condemn.

UST

² Yahweh approves of those who are good, but he condemns those who make evil plans.

Proverbs 12:3

A person cannot be established by wickedness

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 become safe and secure by doing what is wicked" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

cannot be uprooted

"Uprooted" represents being pulled out of the ground like a plant or a tree. This cannot happen to those who do right. Alternate translation: "are as stable as a tree with deep roots" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³ A man will not be established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous ones will not be shaken.

UST

³ Wickedness is a bad foundation for a person's life. People who do well are as stable as a tree with deep roots.

Proverbs 12:4

A worthy wife is her husband's crown

A crown represents the greatest honor a person can receive. Alternate translation: "A good wife is a sign of great honor for her husband" (See: [Metaphor](#))

she who brings shame is like a disease that rots his bones

A disease that rots the bones represents the spoiling of a person's life. Alternate translation: "a wife's shameful acts destroy her husband's influence and happiness" (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

⁴ A wife of strength {is} the crown of her husband, but she who causes shame {is} like rottenness in his bones.

UST

⁴ A good wife brings praise to her husband, but a wife who brings shame home is like a disease that destroys his bones.

Proverbs 12:5

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁵ The thoughts of the righteous ones {are} justice; the directions of the wicked ones {are} deceit.

UST

⁵ People who do the right thing make plans that are fair and just. But advice given by wicked people are filled with lies.

Proverbs 12:6

The words of wicked people are an ambush waiting for a chance to kill

The deceitful things that wicked people say in order to harm other people are spoken of as if their words are waiting to kill someone by surprise. Alternate translation: "The deceitful things wicked people say are like a person who waits to kill someone by surprise" (See: [Metaphor](#))

the words of the upright keep them safe

Alternate translation: "the advice from an upright person keeps people safe"

the upright

Alternate translation: "the righteous person" or "the honest person" or "the just person"

ULT

⁶ The words of the wicked ones {are} an ambush of blood, but the mouth of the upright ones will deliver them.

UST

⁶ What wicked people say is like setting up a secret attack while planning to commit murder; but when those who please Yahweh speak, their words keep them out of danger.

Proverbs 12:7

Wicked people are overthrown

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 overthrow the wicked people" or "People will remove the wicked people from power" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

house

The term "house" is often used figuratively in the Bible to refer to a person's ancestors, descendants or other relatives. Alternate translation: "family" or "descendants" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁷ Wicked ones are overthrown and they are not, but the house of the righteous ones will stand.

UST

⁷ Wicked people are put out of power, and they are gone, but those who do what is right will have many generations and that family will continue for a long time.

Proverbs 12:8

A person is praised by how much wisdom he has

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 praise those who have wisdom" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the one who makes perverse choices 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 will hate the one who always thinks evil thoughts" or "people will hate the one who takes good things and twists them into bad" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁸ A man will be praised for the mouth of his insight, but one who is twisted of heart will be to contempt.

UST

⁸ A person will be praised according to how much wisdom he has; but one who takes good things and twists them into bad will be hated.

Proverbs 12:9

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁹ Better to be lightly esteemed and his servant than to honor oneself and {be} lacking of bread.

UST

⁹ It is better to be a humble person, just living your life as a servant to others, than to tell others how important you are, but you have nothing to eat.

Proverbs 12:10

is cruel

Alternate translation: "causes suffering"

ULT

¹⁰ A righteous one {is} one who knows the life of his animal, but the compassion of the wicked ones {is} cruel.

UST

¹⁰ People who do what is right care about the feeding and health of their animals, but even when the wicked try to do something for their animals, it becomes an act of cruelty.

Proverbs 12:11

worthless projects

Alternate translation: "worthless plans" or "worthless tasks"

ULT

11 Bread will satisfy one who works his ground, but one who pursues empty things {is} lacking of heart.

UST

11 The farmer who works hard in the fields will have enough food to eat, but those who have no good judgment take on projects that bring them nothing.

Proverbs 12:12

the fruit

This refers to a person's actions and thoughts. 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.

ULT

¹² A wicked one desires the snare of evil ones, but the root of the righteous ones will give.

UST

¹² Wicked people desire the things that evil people have—things they stole from others. But people who do what is right have what they have earned; it is their reward.

Proverbs 12:13

An evil person is trapped by his wicked talk

“Trapped” represents being caught in a snare or being tricked. 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 wicked things an evil person says will trap him” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

13 In the transgression of lips {is} the snare of the evil one, but a righteous one will go out from distress.

UST

13 An evil person is trapped by the wicked things he says, but those who do right stay away from much trouble.

Proverbs 12:14

just as the work of his hands rewards him

The phrase, “the work of his hands” represents work done by physical labor. Alternate translation: “just as the good work he does rewards him” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

14 From the fruit of the mouth of a man will he be satisfied with good, and the work of the hands of a man will return to him.

UST

14 The good words spoken by a person fill his life with good things, just as his hard work brings him a reward.

Proverbs 12:15

in his own eyes

This phrase represents the idea he has from his own observation, imagination or memory. Alternate translation: "in his own opinion" (See: [Idiom](#))

advice

wise suggestions

ULT

¹⁵ The way of a fool {is} right in his eyes, but a wise one listens to counsel.

UST

¹⁵ Foolish people think that what they are doing is always right; but wise people are willing to listen to advice.

Proverbs 12:16

is prudent

Alternate translation: "is wise" or "has good sense."

ULT

16 A fool, his anger is known on the day, but a prudent one covers dishonor.

UST

16 A foolish person quickly shows how angry he is; but those who have good sense ignore it when someone insults them.

Proverbs 12:17

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

17 Who breathes out faithfulness reports {what is} right, but a witness of falsehoods {is} deceitful.

UST

17 Speaking the truth is the same as saying what is right, but a dishonest person tell lies.

Proverbs 12:18

The words of one who speaks rashly are like the thrusts of a sword

The phrase, “thrusts of a sword” represents cruel words that hurt another. Alternate translation: “What a person says without thinking can hurt as much as if he stabbed with a sword” (See: [Simile](#))

the tongue of the wise

“Tongue” represents what a person says. Alternate translation: “what wise people say” (See: [Metonymy](#))

brings healing

Alternate translation: “comforts and heals”

ULT

¹⁸ There is one who speaks thoughtlessly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise ones is healing.

UST

¹⁸ When a person speaks without thinking, it is like they are taking stabs at you with a sword; but what wise people say helps to heal the hurts.

Proverbs 12:19

Truthful lips last forever

“Lips” represents what a person says. Alternate translation: “A truthful person endures forever” (See: [Metonymy](#))

a lying tongue is only for a moment

“Tongue” represents what a person says. Alternate translation: “the one who lies lasts only for a moment” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

19 A lip of truth will be established to perpetuity, but a tongue of falsehood until I blink.

UST

19 Speaking the truth will never be out of favor, but a lie is over in a moment.

Proverbs 12:20

advisors

those who give recommendations as a guide to action; counselors

ULT

²⁰ Deceit {is} in the heart of those who devise evil, but joy {is} for those who advise peace.

UST

²⁰ When evil is planned there must be lies within those who carry it out; but those who give advice that leads to peace, those advisors will celebrate.

Proverbs 12:21

No ill comes

The negative, “No” cancels out the idea of “ill” (bad things that happen). Alternate translation: “Good things come” (See: [Litotes](#))

ULT

²¹ Any iniquity will not be allowed to happen to the righteous one, but wicked ones are full of evil.

UST

²¹ Bad things do not happen to those who do what is right, but wicked people’s lives are filled up with troubles.

Proverbs 12:22

Yahweh hates lying lips

“Lips” represents what a person says. Alternate translation: “Yahweh detests those who tell lies” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

22 Lips of falsehood {are} an abomination of Yahweh, but those who do faithfulness {are} his delight.

UST

22 Yahweh detests those who tell lies, but he is delighted with those who live faithfully.

Proverbs 12:23

conceals his knowledge

Alternate translation: "does not tell everything he knows"

ULT

²³ A prudent man covers knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims folly.

UST

²³ Those with good sense do not reveal all that they know, but foolish people shout out their foolish thinking.

Proverbs 12:24

The hand of the diligent

“Hand” represents what a person does -- his works. Alternate translation: “Diligent people” (See: [Metonymy](#))

will be put to forced labor

“Forced labor” describes what a person must do who is not free to do what he wants. Alternate translation: “will become a slave” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

24 The hand of the diligent ones will rule but a slack one will become a forced laborer.

UST

24 Those who are known for their hard work will gain authority over others, but those who are lazy will be forced to work, even though they hate it.

Proverbs 12:25

Anxiety

uneasy feeling of fear or dread, worry

weighs him down

“Weighing down” represents the idea of putting a very heavy load on a person so he cannot move freely. This phrase means to make a person sad or depressed. Alternate translation: “causes him to become sad or depressed” (See: [Metaphor](#))

but a good word makes him glad

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **word**, you could express the same idea with the verb “speak.” Alternate translation: “but when others speak kindly to him, he is cheerful again” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

²⁵ Anxiety in the heart of a man weighs it down, but a good word causes it to rejoice.

UST

²⁵ When a person is anxious, it is like he is carrying a heavy load, but a good word makes him feel better.

Proverbs 12:26

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁶ A righteous one searches out from his neighbor, but the way of wicked ones will lead them astray.

UST

²⁶ The one who does right will be a good guide for his friend, but wicked people always get lost.

Proverbs 12:27

would not roast their own game

“Game” means animals caught and killed while hunting. And “roast” is a way of cooking food.

precious wealth

Alternate translation: “valuable treasure”

ULT

27 A negligent one will not roast his game, but the wealth of a man {is} precious for a diligent one.

UST

27 Lazy people do not even cook the animal they caught, but those who work hard will acquire wealth that is worth keeping.

Proverbs 12:28

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁸ In the path of righteousness {is} life,
and the way of the path {is} no death.

UST

²⁸ Those who walk in the right way find
life and on that road there is no death.

Proverbs 13

Proverbs 13 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 13 continues the section of the book which is attributed to Solomon and is filled mainly with short, individual proverbs.

Special concepts in this chapter

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often including contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility, integrity/crookedness. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 13:1

A wise son hears

Here “hears” represents listening in order to do it. Alternate translation: “A wise son obeys” (See: [Metonymy](#))

will not listen to rebuke

Here “listen” represents paying attention in order to do it. Alternate translation: “will not learn from rebuke” or “will not obey, despite rebuke” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹ A wise son, the instruction of a father, but a mocker does not listen to rebuke.

UST

¹ A wise child pays attention to the teaching his father gives him; but a stubborn child refuses to listen to correction.

Proverbs 13:2

From the fruit of his mouth

Here “fruit” represents what a person says. Alternate translation: “From the words of his mouth” or “From what he says” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the appetite

the desire or liking for something

the treacherous

This nominal adjective can be translated as an adjective. Alternate translation: “the treacherous person” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

ULT

² From the fruit of the mouth of a man he eats good, but the appetite of the treacherous ones {is} violence.

UST

² Good things come as the fruit of what one says, but the desire of the deceitful is to consume more and more violence.

Proverbs 13:3

his mouth

Here “mouth” represents what a person says. Alternate translation: “what he says” (See: [Metonymy](#))

opens wide his lips

Opening the lips represents speaking, and opening them wide represents speaking too often or too much. Alternate translation: “speaks a lot” or “talks too much” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³ One who guards his mouth {is} one who keeps his life; one who opens his lips {is} ruin for himself.

UST

³ The person who is very careful about what he says preserves his life; the one who talks too much ruins everything.

Proverbs 13:4

The appetite ... the appetite

See how you translated this in [Proverbs 13:2](#).

craves but gets nothing

Alternate translation: "strongly desires but gets nothing"

the appetite of diligent people will be richly satisfied

Here "appetite" represents desire. Alternate translation: "diligent people will have a richly satisfied life" or "being diligent will make people richly satisfied" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

diligent people

people who work with careful and continued effort

ULT

⁴ A lazy one, his appetite is craving and there is nothing, but the appetite of the diligent ones will be fattened.

UST

⁴ People who are lazy are hungry for everything, but they will not get anything. People who work hard will get more than they desired.

Proverbs 13:5

repugnant

causing a strong feeling of disgust

ULT

⁵ A righteous one hates a word of falsehood, but a wicked one causes a stink and causes shame.

UST

⁵ Anyone who does right hates it when other people tell lies, but a wicked person brings disgrace on himself.

Proverbs 13:6

Righteousness protects those

“Righteousness” represents a way of life approved by Yahweh. This quality acts like a person who protects. Alternate translation: “A way of life approved by Yahweh protects” (See: [Personification](#))

who are faultless in their path

Here “path” represents how a person directs his life. Alternate translation: “who are faultless in their way of living” or “who live lives of integrity” (See: [Metonymy](#))

wickedness turns away those who commit sin

Here “wickedness” represents an evil conduct of life. This quality acts like a person who turns away those who commit sin. Alternate translation: “wickedness turns sinners away from a successful path” or “wickedness ruins sinners’ lives” (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

6 Righteousness guards the blameless of way, but wickedness overthrows a sinful one.

UST

6 Anyone who does right always acts in ways that are respected, but the one who does what Yahweh has forbidden ruins his own wicked life.

Proverbs 13:7

who enriches himself

Alternate translation: "who makes himself rich"

ULT

⁷ There is one who pretends to be rich but there is nothing at all; one who pretends to be poor but {has} great wealth.

UST

⁷ Some people have many possessions, but they have nothing of value; but other people give all they have away, and yet have the best kind of riches.

Proverbs 13:8

does not hear a threat

This could mean: (1) no one will threaten to steal from him because he has nothing anyone would want to steal or (2) he will not listen when people correct him because he has nothing to lose if they punish him. Alternate translation: “does not listen to rebuke”

ULT

⁸ The ransom of the life of a man {is} his riches, but one who is poor does not hear a rebuke.

UST

⁸ A rich person may have to use his wealth to buy back his life from a criminal who holds him as a hostage, but a poor person does not listen even when he is threatened.

Proverbs 13:9

The light of righteous people rejoices

Here the light represents the righteous person's life or good behavior, and rejoicing represents causing people to rejoice. Alternate translation: "The life of a righteous person is like a light that causes people to rejoice" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

the lamp of wicked people will be put out

Here the lamp represents the life or behavior of wicked people, and "be put out" is an idiom that means that a fire is stopped. The lamp being put out represents either the person dying or the person's life not giving any joy. Alternate translation: "the lives of wicked people are like a lamp whose fire will be stopped" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁹ The light of the righteous ones will rejoice, but the lamp of the wicked ones will be extinguished.

UST

⁹ The one who does what is right shines like a light that gives joy, but wicked people are like a lamp that will be extinguished.

Proverbs 13:10

Pride only breeds conflict

Alternate translation: "Pride always causes conflict"

listen to

Alternate translation: "heed" or "follow"

good advice

suggestions that are helpful and profitable

ULT

¹⁰ Only with pride gives strife, but {with} those who are counseled, wisdom.

UST

¹⁰ Pride works within a person and it results in conflict and arguments, but those who listen to good advice find the wisdom they need.

Proverbs 13:11

Wealth dwindles away

Alternate translation: "Wealth decreases" or "Wealth slowly disappears"

working with his hand

The phrase "working with his hand" refers to physical work instead of only mental or other types of work. Many people give physical work a low value. Alternate translation: "working with physical strength" (See: [Metonymy](#))

make his money grow

Money is compared to a tree that grows. Alternate translation: "make his money increase" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

11 Wealth from vanity will dwindle, but one who gathers by hand will increase.

UST

11 People who think too much of themselves will spend all their money; the one who makes his money by working with his hands will find ways to make his money grow.

Proverbs 13:12

When hope is postponed

Here “hope” represents the thing a person hopes for. 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 a person hopes for something but does not receive it for a very long time” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

it breaks the heart

Breaking a person’s heart represents overwhelming that person with sadness. Alternate translation: “it causes intense sadness” (See: [Idiom](#))

a longing fulfilled is a tree of life

Someone receiving what they hoped for and becoming very happy is spoken of as if the fulfillment of their hope were a tree that gives life. Alternate translation: “a longing fulfilled is like a tree of life” (See: [Metaphor](#))

tree of life

“a tree that gives life” or “a tree whose fruit sustains life.” See how you translated this in [Proverbs 3:18](#).

ULT

¹² Hope delayed makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled {is} a tree of life.

UST

¹² When hope for the future is postponed, it makes you sick—you feel you will never receive what you long for, but if you receive what you desire, that will be like a tree that gives life.

Proverbs 13:13

he who respects the commandment will be rewarded

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 will reward the one who respects the command” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹³ One who despises a word will be pledged to it, but he who fears a command, he will be rewarded.

UST

¹³ Those who despise good advice bring the punishment for disobeying upon themselves; the one who pays attention to the instruction will receive honor.

Proverbs 13:14

fountain of life

A fountain is a good source of water and here represents a source of life. Alternate translation: “a bountiful source of life” (See: [Metaphor](#))

snare of death

Here “snare” represent dangers that will kill. Alternate translation: “traps that lead to death” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

14 The teaching of the wise {is} a fountain of life, to turn away from the snares of death.

UST

14 The lesson taught by the wise is like a fountain that gives life to all who drink from it, and they inform you about all the deadly dangers around you.

Proverbs 13:15

but the way of the treacherous is never-ending

Here a person's behavior or conduct is spoken of as if it were a way or path that a person walks. A person being ruined by their own treachery is spoken of as if they are on a way or path that never ends. Alternate translation: "but the behavior of the treacherous will cause their own destruction" (See: [Metaphor](#))

the treacherous

This nominal adjective can be stated as an adjective. Alternate translation: "the treacherous person" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

ULT

¹⁵ Good insight gives favor, but the way of those who act treacherously {is} permanent.

UST

¹⁵ Having a mind that understands right and wrong brings you respect, but the one who twists good gifts for bad purposes—he never reaches his destination.

Proverbs 13:16

a fool parades his folly

To “parade” means to display in front of everyone. Alternate translation: “a fool displays his foolishness to everyone” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

16 Every prudent one acts with knowledge, but a fool displays folly.

UST

16 Those who have good sense always take action from what they know is true; a foolish person proves his decisions are folly, and everyone sees it.

Proverbs 13:17

falls into trouble

Alternate translation: "is unreliable" or "does something evil"

a faithful envoy

Alternate translation: "a faithful messenger" or "a faithful diplomat"

ULT

17 A wicked messenger falls into evil, but an envoy of faithfulness {is} healing.

UST

17 A wicked messenger will not deliver the message, but bitter enemies are brought together when the messages are delivered by a dependable messenger.

Proverbs 13:18

learns from correction

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **correction**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: "learns when someone corrects him"
(See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

18 One who lets go of instruction, poverty and shame, but one who keeps a rebuke will be honored.

UST

18 The one who does not learn from the lessons of discipline will be poor, and he will know shame, but the one who takes the lessons of discipline and learns from them, honor will find him.

Proverbs 13:19

is sweet

Alternate translation: "is a delight" or "brings joy"

the appetite

the desire or liking for something

ULT

¹⁹ A desire that occurs will be pleasing to the self, but the abomination of fools is turning away from evil.

UST

¹⁹ When a longing comes true, it is sweet delight to the one with desires; and those who are foolish continue to turn toward evil again and again.

Proverbs 13:20

will suffer harm

Alternate translation: "will experience harm" or "will be ruined"

ULT

²⁰ One who walks {with} wise ones will be wise, but one who associates with fools will be hurt.

UST

²⁰ If you spend time with wise people, by their lives they will show you how you can be wise, as well.

Proverbs 13:21

Disaster runs after sinners

“Disaster” is given human characteristics like the ability to run. Alternate translation: “Sinners have trouble wherever they go” (See: [Personification](#))

righteous people are rewarded with good

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 rewards righteous people with good” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²¹ Evil will pursue sinners, but goodness will reward the righteous.

UST

²¹ Sinners run away and disasters chase after them, but those who do what is right find the good is their reward.

Proverbs 13:22

his grandchildren

Alternate translation: “the sons of his sons” or “the children of his children” or “his descendants”

a sinner’s wealth is stored up for the righteous person

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 one who does right will receive the wealth that a sinner has stored up” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

22 A good one will cause sons of sons to inherit, but the strength of the one who sins is being stored up for the righteous one.

UST

22 A good person sets apart money to give his grandchildren when he dies, but a sinful person will store up his wealth, not knowing that it will be given to the one who does right.

Proverbs 13:23

An unplowed field

Alternate translation: "A field that is not prepared for food production" or "An empty field not ready for planting"

but it is swept away by injustice

"Swept away" represents completely removing something. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "but injustice takes away that food" or "but unjust people take the food away" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²³ Much food {is} the unplowed field of those who are poor, but there is a being swept away without justice.

UST

²³ A field owned by a poor person can produce much food, but the poor are victims of injustice more than the rich, and the crop is not planted.

Proverbs 13:24

is careful to instruct him

Alternate translation: "makes sure to instruct him"

ULT

²⁴ One who withholds his rod hates his son, but one who loves him seeks him diligently with discipline.

UST

²⁴ A parent who does not train his child in how he should live does not show him any love, but the one who is careful to train the child in how he should live shows his great love.

Proverbs 13:25

he satisfies his appetite

Alternate translation: "he has satisfied himself" or "he fulfills his desires"

the stomach of the wicked is always hungry

Here "stomach" represents the desires of a person. Alternate translation: "the wicked person is always hungry for more" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

25 A righteous one eats to the satisfaction of his spirit, but the stomach of the wicked ones will be empty.

UST

25 Those who do what is right eat enough food to satisfy their hunger, but the wicked complain that they are always hungry.

Proverbs 14

Proverbs 14 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 14 continues the section of the book which is attributed to Solomon and is filled mainly with short, individual proverbs.

Special concepts in this chapter

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often including contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility, integrity/crookedness. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 14:1

builds her house

Alternate translation: "builds up her house" or "makes her house better"

house

This could mean: (1) this may refer to her actual house, that is the building she lives in or (2) this may refer to her family.

with her own hands

The woman is represented by her "hands." Alternate translation: "by herself" or "by the way she behaves" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

¹ The wise ones of women, she builds her house, but a foolish woman tears it down with her hands.

UST

¹ A wise woman holds her family together, but a foolish woman tears it apart by the foolish things she does.

Proverbs 14:2

The one who ... the one who

Alternate translation: "The person who ... the person who"

walks uprightly

"Walks" represents the conduct of life. Alternate translation: "conducts his life in a just and honest way" (See: [Metaphor](#))

despises him

Alternate translation: "grossly disrespects him" or "shows that he hates him"

in his ways despises him

The word "his" refers to the dishonest man and "him" refers to Yahweh.

ULT

² One who walks in his uprightness fears Yahweh but one who is crooked in his ways despises him.

UST

² The one who honors Yahweh in the way he lives, gives to Yahweh the respect he deserves; the dishonest person shows his disrespect, and he despises Yahweh.

Proverbs 14:3

the mouth of ... the lips of

The mouth and the lips both refer to what a person says. (See: [Metonymy](#))

a rod for his back

The rod with which people will punish the fool by hitting him on his back for his foolish words is a metonym for the words that come out of his mouth. Alternate translation: “words that will cause people to punish him” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the wise

This word is plural. “wise men” or “wise people”

will preserve them

Alternate translation: “will keep them from harm” or “will keep them safe”

ULT

³ In the mouth of a fool {is} a rod of pride, but the lips of the wise ones will preserve them.

UST

³ Pride grows out of the mouth of the fool, like an offshoot from a tree; but what wise people say preserves their lives.

Proverbs 14:4

the feeding trough

A “trough” is a container in which you put the food for animals.

an abundant crop

Alternate translation: “a good harvest”

by the strength of an ox

“Strength” represents the strong work an ox can do. Alternate translation: “because of the work an ox does” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁴ Where there are no cattle {is} a trough of grain, but an abundance of crops {is} by the strength of an ox.

UST

⁴ Where there are no cattle feeding in the barn, the feeding trough is clean; but if a farmer only has one ox, still he can grow a very great crop.

Proverbs 14:5

breathes out lies

This figure of speech uses “breathes” to refer to lying constantly. Alternate translation: “constantly lies” (See: [Idiom](#)) See how you translated this phrase in [Proverbs 6:19](#).

ULT

⁵ A witness of faithfulness will not lie, but a witness of falsehood breathes out lies.

UST

⁵ You can tell if a witness is reliable, if he tells the truth, but when a witness breathes out lie after lie, he is a false witness and cannot be depended on.

Proverbs 14:6

and there is none

Alternate translation: "and wisdom is not there" or "but he will not find wisdom"

comes easy to

Alternate translation: "is easily found by" or "acquires without difficulty"

the one who is discerning

Alternate translation: "the one who is wise" or "a person who has understanding"

ULT

6 A mocker seeks wisdom and there is none, but knowledge is easy for one who discerns.

UST

6 One who thinks he is better than others, he may seek wisdom, but he will not find it, but the one who has grown in knowledge can easily learn much more.

Proverbs 14:7

on his lips

The word “lips” represents what a person says. Alternate translation: “from his speech” or “with his comments” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁷ Go from before a man of foolishness, for you will not know lips of knowledge.

UST

⁷ Do not stay close to a foolish person: Walk away from him. There is no knowledge to be learned from him.

Proverbs 14:8

the prudent

a person who has good judgment or sense

his own way

The word “way” represents the conduct of life of a person. Alternate translation: “his conduct” or “how he lives” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the folly of fools is deception

The foolishness of fools is that they think they are wise, when they are not.

ULT

8 The wisdom of a prudent one informs his way, but the foolishness of fools {is} deceit.

UST

8 The one who has learned much knowledge applies it to his own life; that is wisdom. The foundation of all folly is the lie.

Proverbs 14:9

when the guilt offering is sacrificed

“at guilt” or “at the guilt offering” The meaning behind this phrase is that fools do not apologize to God or men for the things they do wrong.

but among the upright favor is shared

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: “but the upright enjoy favor together” or “but God’s favor is experienced together among the upright” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁹ Fools mock the guilt offering, but between upright ones {is} favor.

UST

⁹ Fools watch the guilt offering being sacrificed in the temple, and they make fun of it, but those who please Yahweh are glad to share his favor.

Proverbs 14:10

its own bitterness

Alternate translation: "its own sorrow" or "its own sadness"

no stranger

Alternate translation: "those who do not know him"

ULT

10 The heart knows the bitterness of itself, and in its joy a stranger will not share.

UST

10 A person keeps close inside all his bitterness and disappointment; and no stranger will ever know all the joy it contains.

Proverbs 14:11

the tent

The word “tent” represents everything that happens within it. Alternate translation: “the household” (See: [Metonymy](#))

flourish

The word “flourish” means vigorous blooming of flowers and so represents anything that grows strongly. Alternate translation: “to do well and last long” or “to be healthy” or “to be very successful” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

11 The house of the wicked ones will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright ones will flourish.

UST

11 The family of the wicked will be destroyed, but a little tent where the upright live will grow, like a tree grows into something grand.

Proverbs 14:12

There is a way that seems right to a man

The word “way” represents the conduct of life a person follows.
Alternate translation: “People think that the way they are living is the right way” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹² There is a right way before the face of a man, but its end {is} the ways of death.

UST

¹² A person sees a way, and it appears to be the right way for him to go, but he does not know that it only leads to death.

Proverbs 14:13

A heart can laugh

The word “heart” represents a person’s feelings, attitudes and motivations. Alternate translation: “A person’s feelings can show laughter” (See: [Metaphor](#))

be in pain

Alternate translation: “experience pain” or “hurt”

ULT

¹³ A heart may be in pain even in laughter, and the end of joy may be grief.

UST

¹³ A person can be in great pain and still be able to laugh; a time of great joy may end in grief.

Proverbs 14:14

The one who

Alternate translation: "The person who"

what his ways deserve

The word "ways" represents a person's conduct of life. Alternate translation: "what he deserves, based on how he lived" (See: [Metaphor](#))

what is his

Alternate translation: "what belongs to him" or "what he has a right to"

ULT

14 The turning away of heart will be satisfied from his ways, but a good man from on him.

UST

14 The faithless man will receive from Yahweh what he deserves; but Yahweh will give a good person what is his.

Proverbs 14:15

naive

inexperienced or immature

his steps

Here the idea of footsteps represents a person's behavior. Alternate translation: "his actions" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁵ The naive one believes every thing, but the prudent one discerns his step.

UST

¹⁵ Those who have had no instruction believe everything they are told, but the man who has learned some knowledge thinks about what he will do.

Proverbs 14:16

turns away from evil

Here evil is spoken of as if it were a place. Alternate translation: "avoids doing evil" (See: [Metaphor](#))

confidently dismisses

Alternate translation: "boldly ignores"

ULT

16 A wise one {is} one who fears and turns away from evil, but the fool {is} one who makes himself furious and {is} being confident.

UST

16 A wise person sees evil and is afraid of it, and he turns away from it; the foolish person boldly throws aside every warning.

Proverbs 14:17

is quick to become angry

Alternate translation: "becomes angry quickly"

ULT

17 One short of nostrils does foolishness, and a man of schemes is hated.

UST

17 Those who get angry quickly do foolish things; people hate those who make evil plans.

Proverbs 14:18

naive

inexperienced or immature

inherit foolishness

Here “inherit” represents having permanent possession of something. (See: [Metonymy](#))

foolishness

The word “foolishness” is an abstract noun that represents foolish thinking and foolish actions.

prudent people

Alternate translation: “wise people”

are crowned with knowledge

Here knowledge is spoken of as if it were a beautiful ornament worn on one’s head, such as a turban with jewels. Alternate translation: “wear knowledge as a turban” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

18 Naive ones inherit foolishness, but prudent ones will wear a crown of knowledge.

UST

18 Those who have not been instructed have foolishness handed to them; those who have learned a little knowledge are surrounded by it.

Proverbs 14:19

bow down

This means to bend over to humbly express respect and submission toward someone. (See: [Symbolic Action](#))

at the gates of the righteous

The word “gates” represents an entrance to meet with another. This means the wicked will have to wait for the righteous person and beg to enter his presence. Alternate translation: “to meet with the righteous person” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

19 Evil ones will bow down before the face of good ones, and wicked ones at the gates of the righteous one.

UST

19 Evil people will bow down before those who are good, and the wicked people will bow down at the gates of those who do right.

Proverbs 14:20

The poor person is hated even by his own companions

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: "Everyone hates the poor person even his own neighbors" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁰ One who is poor is hated even by his neighbor, but those who love the rich {are} many.

UST

²⁰ The poor are hated even by their own companions, but the rich have many friends.

Proverbs 14:21

The one ... the one

Alternate translation: "The person ... the person"

the poor

Alternate translation: "poor people"

ULT

²¹ One who sins despises his neighbor, but one who favors afflicted ones {is} blessed.

UST

²¹ It is sinful to have contempt for your neighbors; but how fortunate are those who do kind things for the poor.

Proverbs 14:22

Do not those who plot evil go astray?

The assumed answer to this question is “yes.” Alternate translation: “Those who plot evil will go astray.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

who plot evil

Alternate translation: “who make evil plans” or “who make plans to do evil things”

those who plan to do good will receive covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness

The abstract nouns “faithfulness” and “trustworthiness” can be stated as “faithful” and “trustworthy.” Alternate translation: “God will show himself to be trustworthy and faithful to his covenant to those who plan to do what is good” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

22 Do not those who plan evil go astray? But covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness {are to} those who plan good.

UST

22 Those who plot with evil plans, do they not go astray? But those who make plans for the good will receive love and faithfulness.

Proverbs 14:23

but when there is only talk

Alternate translation: "but if you only talk" or "but when all a person does is talking"

ULT

²³ With all toil is profit, but the word of lips {is} only for poverty.

UST

²³ If you work hard, you will make some money, but where there is only talk, it leads to poverty.

Proverbs 14:24

The crown of wise people

The word “crown” represents the highest achievement possible and visible to all. Alternate translation: “The reward of wise people” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the folly of fools

See how you translated this phrase in [Proverbs 14:8](#).

ULT

²⁴ The crown of the wise ones {is} their riches; the foolishness of fools {is} foolishness.

UST

²⁴ The reward of the wise is the wealth they have, but the folly of fools only brings them more foolishness.

Proverbs 14:25

breathes out lies

This figure of speech uses “breathes” to refer to lying constantly. See how you translated this phrase in [Proverbs 6:19](#). Alternate translation: “constantly lies” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

²⁵ A witness of truth rescues lives, but one who breathes out lies {is} deceitful.

UST

²⁵ A witness who tells the truth, saves the lives of the innocent; a lying witness is filled with deceit.

Proverbs 14:26

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁶ In the fear of Yahweh {is} the confidence of the strong, and he will be a refuge for his sons.

UST

²⁶ Those give Yahweh the honor he deserves have much confidence in him; giving honor to Yahweh will also protect your children.

Proverbs 14:27

fountain of life

A “fountain” is a bountiful source of water and represents here the source of life. Alternate translation: “source of life” (See: [Metaphor](#))

from the snares of death

A “snare” is a sort of trap used to hunt animals and represents something tricky and dangerous that will kill. Alternate translation: “from the trap that will kill” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

27 The fear of Yahweh {is} a fountain of life, to turn away from the snares of death.

UST

27 Giving Yahweh the honor he deserves is like having a fountain that gives life; so you can keep away from being trapped by death.

Proverbs 14:28

the great number of his people

Alternate translation: "how many people he rules"

the prince is ruined

Alternate translation: "the prince has nothing and his kingdom will fall"

ULT

²⁸ The splendor of a king {is} in the abundance of the people, but with the end of the populace the potentate {is} ruined.

UST

²⁸ A king measures his glory by the number of the people in his kingdom, but if the prince has no people, he is brought to ruin.

Proverbs 14:29

the quick-tempered

a person who is quick to become angry

ULT

²⁹ One long of nose {is} abundant {in} understanding, but one short of spirit is one who exalts foolishness.

UST

²⁹ Those who do not quickly become angry have much understanding; the quick-tempered praise foolishness.

Proverbs 14:30

A tranquil heart

Alternate translation: "A peaceful mindset" or "An attitude that is at peace"

rots the bones

The word "rots" represents the decay of a person and "bones" represents the whole person. Alternate translation: "causes a person to be unhealthy in body and spirit" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³⁰ A heart of healing {is} the life of the body, but envy {is} the decay of bones.

UST

³⁰ Being at peace is good for the whole body, but having evil within, rots the bones.

Proverbs 14:31

The one who ... the one who

Alternate translation: "The person who ... the person who"

curses

This means to express a desire that bad things will happen to someone.

the poor ... the needy

Alternate translation: "a poor person ... a needy person"

shows favor to

Alternate translation: "is kind to" or "helps"

ULT

³¹ One who oppresses a lowly one taunts his maker, but one showing favor {to} a needy one honors him.

UST

³¹ The one who oppresses a poor person curses Yahweh who made him, but those who show favor to a poor person honor Yahweh.

Proverbs 14:32

is brought down by his evil actions

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: "evil actions push over" or "evil actions destroy" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³² The wicked one will be thrust down by his evil, but the righteous one seeks refuge in his death.

UST

³² The wicked person is brought down by his evil actions, but those who do what is right have a safe home, even in death.

Proverbs 14:33

Wisdom rests in the heart

The word “heart” represents the feelings, attitudes and motivations of a person. Alternate translation: “Wisdom is in the attitude” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the discerning

Alternate translation: “a discerning person”

she lets herself be 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: “she makes sure people know her” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

she

The word “she” refers to wisdom. (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

33 Wisdom will rest in the heart of one who is discerning, but she will become known in the midst of fools.

UST

33 Wisdom finds a place to rest in someone who has discernment, but wisdom lets herself be known even among fools.

Proverbs 14:34

is a disgrace

Alternate translation: "brings shame upon to any people" or "should cause any people to be ashamed"

ULT

³⁴ Righteousness raises a nation, but sin {is} shame for peoples.

UST

³⁴ When a people do what is right, the nation does well, but sin brings disgrace upon any people.

Proverbs 14:35

who acts prudently

Alternate translation: "who acts wisely" or "who makes sure bad things do not happen"

the one who

Alternate translation: "the servant who"

ULT

³⁵ The delight of a king {is} for the servant who acts prudently but his fury will be {for} one who acts shamefully.

UST

³⁵ A king is pleased with a servant who does his work with good judgment, but the king is angry with any servant who brings shame to him.

Proverbs 15

Proverbs 15 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 15 continues the section of the book which is attributed to Solomon and is filled mainly with short, individual proverbs.

Special concepts in this chapter

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often including contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility, integrity/crookedness. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 15:1

A gentle answer turns away wrath

Causing a person to stop being angry is spoken of as if it were turning that person's wrath away. Alternate translation: "Answering a person gently will calm that person's wrath" (See: [Metaphor](#))

but a harsh word stirs up anger

Causing a person to become more angry is spoken of as if it were stirring up or awakening anger. Alternate translation: "but speaking harshly causes that person to become more angry" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹ A gentle answer turns back heat, but a word of pain lifts up a nose.

UST

¹ A gentle answer turns away anger, but a harsh reply stirs up anger even more.

Proverbs 15:2

The tongue of wise people compliments knowledge

Here the word “tongue” refers to the person who speaks. Alternate translation: “Wise people compliment knowledge when they speak” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

compliments knowledge

Alternate translation: “makes knowledge attractive” or “uses knowledge correctly”

the mouth of fools pours out folly

The writer speaks of fools’ mouths as if they were containers and of folly as if it were the liquid that filled them. When fools speak, their mouths pour out the liquid. The word “mouth” represents those who speak. Alternate translation: “fools are always speaking folly” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

² The tongue of the wise ones makes knowledge good, but the mouth of fools pours out foolishness.

UST

² When wise people speak, they give praise to the value of knowledge; foolish people continually say foolish things.

Proverbs 15:3

The eyes of Yahweh are everywhere

Here the word “eyes” represents Yahweh and emphasizes his ability to see everything. Alternate translation: “Yahweh sees everything” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

the evil and the good

The words “evil” and “good” refer to people. Alternate translation: “evil people and good people” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

ULT

³ The eyes of Yahweh {are} in every place, keeping watch {on} evil ones and good ones.

UST

³ Yahweh sees everything that is happening; he keeps account of the evil and of the good.

Proverbs 15:4

A healing tongue is a tree of life

The word “tongue” refers to speech. The writer speaks of the words of a person who says things that help and encourage others as if they were a tree that provides life-giving nourishment. Alternate translation: “Kind words are like a tree that gives life” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit

The phrase “a deceitful tongue” refers to speech that is deceitful or hurtful. The writer speaks of a person being hurt or in despair as if that person’s spirit were an object that words have crushed. Alternate translation: “deceitful speech causes a person to despair” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ A healing tongue {is} a tree of life, but deceit in it {is} a crushing in the spirit.

UST

⁴ A person who can give healing with what they say is like a tree that gives life; when someone lies to you, it can feel like they have crushed you.

Proverbs 15:5

he who learns from correction

The word “correction” can be translated as a verb. Alternate translation: “he who learns when someone corrects him” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

is prudent

Alternate translation: “is wise”

ULT

⁵ A fool spurns the instruction of his father, but one who keeps rebuke is prudent.

UST

⁵ A fool has contempt for his father when he disciplines him, but the one who learns from correction has insight.

Proverbs 15:6

the earnings of the wicked person give

The word “earnings” can be translated as a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: “the wealth that a wicked person earns gives” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

6 The house of the righteous one {is} much wealth, but the produce of the wicked one is being troubled.

UST

6 In the families of those who do right there are great treasures, but the wealth that the wicked have gives them great troubles.

Proverbs 15:7

The lips of wise people scatter knowledge about

The word “lips” represents what wise people say. The writer speaks of knowledge as if it were seeds that wise people scatter around when they speak. Alternate translation: “The speech of wise people spreads knowledge” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

not so the hearts of fools

This could mean: (1) the word “hearts” is synecdoche for the fools themselves and means that they do not scatter knowledge like wise people do. Alternate translation: “fools do not scatter knowledge about” or (2) fools do not have knowledge in their hearts, with “hearts” being a metonym for the thoughts. Alternate translation: “fools do not understand knowledge” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁷ The lips of the wise ones scatter knowledge, but the heart of fools {is} not so.

UST

⁷ The wise scatter knowledge about like the farmer scatters his seed, but the hearts of fools are not so generous.

Proverbs 15:8

upright people

Alternate translation: "people who live rightly"

is his delight

Alternate translation: "pleases him"

ULT

⁸ The sacrifice of the wicked ones {is} an abomination of Yahweh, but the prayer of the upright ones {is} his delight.

UST

⁸ Yahweh hates it when the wicked offer their sacrifices, but when those who please him pray, he is delighted.

Proverbs 15:9

Yahweh hates the way of wicked people

The lifestyles of wicked people are spoken of as if they are paths on which those people walk. Alternate translation: "Yahweh hates the way that wicked people live" (See: [Metaphor](#))

the one who pursues what is right

Being diligent to live rightly is spoken of as if it were chasing after right things. Alternate translation: "the person who strives to live rightly" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁹ An abomination of Yahweh {is} the way of the wicked one, but he loves one who pursues righteousness.

UST

⁹ Yahweh hates the way the wicked live, but he loves the one who runs after what is right.

Proverbs 15:10

anyone who forsakes the way

Here “the way” refers to the way of righteousness. A person who stops doing what is right is spoken of as if he has stopped walking on the correct path. Alternate translation: “anyone who stops living rightly” (See: [Metaphor](#))

he who hates correction

The word “correction” can be translated as a verb. Alternate translation: “the person who hates it when others correct him” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

10 Painful discipline {is} for one who forsakes the path; one who hates rebuke will die.

UST

10 Yahweh will discipline those who lose their way, and those who hate correction will die.

Proverbs 15:11

Sheol and destruction are open before Yahweh

The words “Sheol and destruction” both refer to the place of the dead. Yahweh knowing everything about the place of the dead is spoken of as if it were open before Yahweh. Alternate translation: “Yahweh knows everything about the place where dead people are” (See: [Doublet](#) and [Metaphor](#))

how much more the hearts of the sons of mankind?

This rhetorical question emphasizes that since Yahweh knows everything about the place of the dead, it is more obvious that he knows everything about the hearts of men. Alternate translation: “so he certainly knows the hearts of the sons of mankind!” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

the hearts of the sons of mankind

Here the word “hearts” represents the thoughts and motivations. The phrase “the sons of mankind” is an idiom for humanity. Alternate translation: “the thoughts of humans” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Idiom](#))

ULT

¹¹ Sheol and Abaddon {are} before Yahweh; how much more the hearts of the sons of mankind?

UST

¹¹ The places of death and destruction are known to Yahweh; how much more does Yahweh know everything within the minds of the people he has made?

Proverbs 15:12

The mocker resents correction

The word “correction” can be translated with a verbal form. Alternate translation: “The mocker hates when others correct him” (See:

[Abstract Nouns](#))

he will not go to the wise

It is implied that he will not go to the wise to seek their counsel or advice. Alternate translation: “he will not go to the wise to seek their counsel” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

¹² A mocker does not love rebuking of him; he will not go to the wise ones.

UST

¹² The one who thinks he is better than anyone, he resents being corrected by anyone; he thinks he is so smart, he will never talk with one who is wise.

Proverbs 15:13

A joyful heart makes the face cheerful

Here the word "heart" represents the person. Alternate translation: "When a person is joyful, his face is cheerful" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

crushes the spirit

The writer speaks of a person being discouraged as if that person's spirit were an object that is crushed. See how you translated this in [Proverbs 15:4](#). Alternate translation: "makes a person discouraged" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

13 A joyful heart makes a face glad, but by the pain of the heart a spirit {is} stricken.

UST

13 When people are happy, they have smiles on their faces, but sadness is so strong it crushes the person.

Proverbs 15:14

The heart of the discerning

Here the word "heart" represents the mind and thoughts. Alternate translation: "The mind of the discerning person" or "The discerning person" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

the mouth of fools feeds on folly

Here the word "mouth" represents the person. The writer speaks of fools desiring foolish things as if they ate foolish things. Alternate translation: "foolish people desire folly as if it were the food that they eat" (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

14 The heart of one who is discerning seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness.

UST

14 The longing of the one who is wise is to gain more knowledge, but foolish people only say foolish things.

Proverbs 15:15

All the days of oppressed people are miserable

Alternate translation: "Oppressed people are miserable all of their days"

a cheerful heart has an unending feast

Here the word "heart" represents the person. The writer speaks of a cheerful person enjoying life as if that person were celebrating a feast that does not end. Alternate translation: "the cheerful person enjoys life, as if he were celebrating an unending feast" (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

an unending feast

Alternate translation: "a feast that never ends"

ULT

15 All the days of the afflicted one {are} evil, but the good of heart {has} a feast continually.

UST

15 Every day for one who is oppressed is misery for him, but those who have a happy heart, for them life is a never-ending party.

Proverbs 15:16

with confusion

Alternate translation: "with anxiety"

ULT

16 Better {is} a little with the fear of Yahweh than much treasure and with it dismay.

UST

16 It is much better to have only a little and to give Yahweh the honor he deserves, than to have great wealth along with much confusion.

Proverbs 15:17

a meal with vegetables

The vegetables represent a small meal with very little food. Alternate translation: “a small meal” or “very little food” (See: [Metonymy](#))

where there is love

The word “love” can be translated with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: “where people love one another” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

a fatted calf served with hatred

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: “a fatted calf that someone serves with hatred” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

a fatted calf

This refers to a calf that has been fed a lot of food so that it will become fat. Here it represents a delicious meal or a feast. Alternate translation: “a luxurious meal” or “a feast” (See: [Metonymy](#))

with hatred

The word “hatred” can be translated with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: “where people hate one another” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

17 Better {is} a meal of vegetables and love {is} there than a fattened ox and with it hatred.

UST

17 It is better to have a simple meal with vegetables when there is love in the home, than to enjoy a delicious meal served by people who hate you.

Proverbs 15:18

stirs up arguments

Causing people to argue more is spoken of as if it were stirring up or awakening arguments. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **arguments**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form such as “argue.” Alternate translation: “causes people to argue more” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

18 A man of heat stirs up a quarrel, but the long of nostrils will quiet a dispute.

UST

18 When a person is angry, he stirs up more arguments, but one who does not quickly become angry, he is able to stop an argument and make peace.

Proverbs 15:19

The path of the sluggard ... the path of the upright

The writer speaks of a person's life as if it were a path on which the person walks. Alternate translation: "The life of the sluggard ... the life of the upright" (See: [Metaphor](#))

The path of the sluggard is like a place with a hedge of thorns

The writer compares the lifestyle of the sluggard with trying to walk through a hedge of thorns. Both cause the person to suffer pain. Alternate translation: "The life of the sluggard is like a person trying to walk through a hedge of thorns" (See: [Simile](#))

the path of the upright is a built-up highway

The writer speaks of the blessings that upright people experience in life as if they were walking on a smooth road. (See: [Metaphor](#))

built-up highway

This is a road that is wide, flat, and without obstacles or potholes.

ULT

¹⁹ The path of the lazy one {is} like a hedge of thorn bushes, but the path of the upright ones {is} a built-up one.

UST

¹⁹ The life of a lazy person is like someone trying to walk through a hedge of thorns, but those who do what pleases Yahweh are like those who are walking on a level highway.

Proverbs 15:20

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁰ A wise son causes a father to rejoice,
but a foolish man despises his mother.

UST

²⁰ A wise child brings happiness to his
father, but it is a foolish person who
despises his mother.

Proverbs 15:21

the one who has understanding walks a straight path

The writer speaks of a person doing the right thing as if he were walking straight ahead on a path. Alternate translation: “the person who has understanding does what is right” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²¹ Foolishness {is} a joy to the lacking of sense, but the man of understanding makes going straight.

UST

²¹ Foolish people enjoy their folly; those who have insight live a good life.

Proverbs 15:22

Plans go wrong

Alternate translation: "Plans fail"

where there is no advice

Alternate translation: "when there is no one to give advice"

advisors

people who give recommendations as a guide to action

they succeed

Alternate translation: "plans succeed"

ULT

²² Plans are broken with no counsel, but with a multitude of counselors it will stand.

UST

²² When there is no one giving advice, plans go wrong, but with many advisors, they will succeed.

Proverbs 15:23

a pertinent reply

Alternate translation: “a fitting reply” or “an appropriate answer”

how good is a timely word

This exclamation emphasizes that a word spoken at the right time is very good. Alternate translation: “a word that a person speaks at the right time is very good” (See: [Exclamations](#))

ULT

²³ Joy {is} for the man with the answer of his mouth, and how good {is} a word in its time.

UST

²³ People rejoice when they give a good answer, and how nice is the right word spoken at the right moment.

Proverbs 15:24

The path of life leads upward ... from Sheol beneath

The writer speaks of a lifestyle that results in life as if it were a path that goes upward towards life and of a lifestyle that results in death as if it were a path that leads down to the place of the dead. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁴ The path of life {is} upward for one who is prudent, in order to turn away from Sheol below.

UST

²⁴ The path leading to life goes up, away from death; he follows that way and turns from the place of the dead.

Proverbs 15:25

house

This is a synecdoche for the person's household, property, and wealth. (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

²⁵ Yahweh will tear down the house of the proud ones, but he will set up the boundary of the widow.

UST

²⁵ Yahweh destroys the generations of proud people, but he protects the little owned by a widow.

Proverbs 15:26

the words of kindness are pure

Alternate translation: "kind words are pure" or "pleasant words are pure"

ULT

²⁶ Thoughts of evil {are} an abomination of Yahweh, but words of pleasantness {are} pure ones.

UST

²⁶ Yahweh hates what wicked people are thinking about, but when people say what is kind, they are pure.

Proverbs 15:27

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁷ One who unjustly gains unjust gain {is} one who troubles his house, but one who hates bribes will live.

UST

²⁷ The thief brings many troubles to his family, but the one who refuses to accept bribes will live.

Proverbs 15:28

The heart of the righteous person ponders before it answers

Here the word “heart” is a metonym for the mind and thoughts. This represents the person who thinks. Alternate translation: “The person who does right ponders what to say before he answers” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

the mouth of wicked people pours out all its evil

The writer speaks of wicked people’s mouths as if they were containers and speaks of evil as if it were the liquid that filled them. When wicked people speak, their mouths pour out the liquid. The word “mouths” represents those who speak. Alternate translation: “wicked people are always saying evil things” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

the mouth of wicked people pours out all its evil

It may be more natural in you language to translate all these words as either singular or plural. Alternate translation: “the mouth of the wicked person pours out all its evil” or “the mouths of wicked people pour out all their evil”

ULT

²⁸ The heart of the righteous one considers how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked ones pours out evil.

UST

²⁸ The people who do right think carefully before they answer; it is like the wicked pour out of their mouths all kinds of evil when they talk.

Proverbs 15:29

Yahweh is far away from wicked people

The writer speaks of Yahweh not listening to wicked people as if he were physically far away from them. Alternate translation: “Yahweh does not listen to wicked people” or “Yahweh does not answer wicked people” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁹ Yahweh {is} far from wicked ones, but he hears the prayer of the righteous ones.

UST

²⁹ Yahweh is far away from wicked people, but he listens to the prayers of those who do what is right.

Proverbs 15:30

The light of the eyes

The writer speaks of an expression of joy on one's face as if the person's eyes emitted light. Alternate translation: "A cheerful expression" (See: [Metaphor](#))

brings joy to the heart

The word "heart" represents the person. This could mean: (1) the person who has a cheerful expression becomes joyful or (2) other people become joyful when they see someone with a cheerful expression. Alternate translation: "causes a person to be joyful" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

good news is health to the body

Here the word "body" represents the person. Alternate translation: "receiving good news makes a person feel good" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

³⁰ The luminary of the eyes causes the heart to rejoice; good news fattens the bone.

UST

³⁰ When people smile, it makes them happy, and good news brings healing to the body.

Proverbs 15:31

you will remain among wise people

This could mean: (1) people will continue to consider you to be a wise person or (2) you will continue to enjoy the company of wise people.

ULT

³¹ An ear that hears the rebuke of life will lodge among the wise.

UST

³¹ If you pay attention when someone corrects you, you will stay among those who are wise.

Proverbs 15:32

listens to correction

The word “correction” can be translated with a verbal phrase.
Alternate translation: “listens when others correct him” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

³² One who lets go of instruction {is} one who despises his life, but one who hears rebuke {is} one who acquires heart.

UST

³² The one who refuses to follow discipline, despises himself; the one who receives correction gains understanding as well.

Proverbs 15:33

The fear of Yahweh teaches wisdom

The words “fear” and “wisdom” can be translated with verbal phrases. Alternate translation: “When one fears Yahweh, he will learn to be wise” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

The fear of Yahweh

See how you translated this phrase in [Proverbs 1:7](#).

humility comes before honor

This means that a person must first learn humility before Yahweh will honor him.

ULT

³³ The fear of Yahweh {is} instruction of wisdom, and humility {is} before the face of honor.

UST

³³ The honor that Yahweh deserves will be the lesson that will teach you wisdom, and then humility comes before honor.

Proverbs 16

Proverbs 16 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 16 continues the section of the book which is attributed to Solomon and is filled mainly with short, individual proverbs.

Special concepts in this chapter

King and royalty

Some of these proverbs mention a king. As in other cases, this is intended to apply to all rulers.

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often including contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility, integrity/crookedness. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 16:1

The plans of the heart belong to a person

Here the word “heart” represents the person’s mind and thoughts. Alternate translation: “A person makes plans in his mind” (See: [Metonymy](#))

from Yahweh comes the answer from his tongue

This could mean: (1) Yahweh speaks his answer to a person’s plans, which is a metaphor meaning that Yahweh determines the outcome of that person’s plans or (2) Yahweh enables a person to speak words about the plans that he has made. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the answer from his tongue

The person is represented by his “tongue” to emphasize his speech. Alternate translation: “the answer that he speaks” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

¹ The plans of the heart {are} for a man, but the answer of the tongue {is} from Yahweh.

UST

¹ People make plans out of their longings deep within them, but it is Yahweh who tells him what will happen.

Proverbs 16:2

All of a person's ways are pure in his own eyes

The eyes represent seeing, and seeing represents thoughts or judgment. The writer speaks of what a person does as if that person were walking down a path. Alternate translation: "A person thinks that everything he does is pure" or "A person judges everything he does as pure" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Yahweh weighs the spirits

Here the word "spirits" represents people's desires and motives. The writer speaks of Yahweh discerning and judging a person's desires and motives as if he were weighing that person's spirit. Alternate translation: "Yahweh judges the person's motives" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

² All the ways of a man {are} pure in his eyes, but Yahweh weighs the spirits.

UST

² A person sees nothing wrong with what he does, but Yahweh measures every part of what a person does according to his purposes.

Proverbs 16:3

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³ Roll your works to Yahweh and your plans will be established.

UST

³ When you work, give all your ideas and your labor to Yahweh, and your plans will be successful.

Proverbs 16:4

even the wicked for the day of trouble

The verbal phrase may be supplied from the previous phrase.
Alternate translation: "he has made even the wicked for the day of trouble" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

⁴ Yahweh has made all for its answer and even the wicked one for the day of evil.

UST

⁴ When Yahweh made everything, he made them so they would all accomplish something for him. He has even made the wicked for the day when there is great trouble.

Proverbs 16:5

everyone who has an arrogant heart

Here the word "heart" represents the person. Alternate translation: "everyone who is arrogant" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

they will not go unpunished

The two negatives in this phrase strongly emphasize the positive. 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: "Yahweh will certainly punish them" (See: [Litotes](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁵ Every high one of heart {is} an abomination of Yahweh, hand to hand he will not be free of guilt.

UST

⁵ Yahweh hates those whose pride comes from deep within them. But you can be sure of this: They will still be punished for their pride.

Proverbs 16:6

By covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness iniquity is atoned for

The abstract nouns “faithfulness” and “trustworthiness” can be stated as “faithful” and “trustworthy.” 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) Alternate translation: “Because Yahweh is faithful to his covenant and trustworthy he forgives people’s sins” or (2) Alternate translation: “Yahweh will forgive the sins of those who are faithful to the covenant and trustworthy” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

people turn away from evil

The writer speaks of people no longer doing evil things as if they were turning away from evil. Alternate translation: “people stop doing evil things” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁶ By covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness is iniquity covered, and by the fear of Yahweh is turning away from evil.

UST

⁶ Love and faithfulness will cover over sin and forgive sin. When people give Yahweh the respect he deserves, they will be able to turn away from doing what is evil.

Proverbs 16:7

he makes

Alternate translation: "Yahweh makes"

ULT

⁷ When Yahweh is pleased with the ways of a man, he causes even his enemies to make peace with him.

UST

⁷ When a person pleases Yahweh by the way he lives his life, he even causes that person's enemies to get along with him.

Proverbs 16:8

a large income

Alternate translation: "earning a lot of money"

with injustice

Alternate translation: "with wrongdoing"

ULT

⁸ Better {is} a little with righteousness than much produce with no justice.

UST

⁸ It is better to have a little money and to follow what is right, than to have a large amount of money and to live by spreading injustice.

Proverbs 16:9

In his heart a person plans out his way

Here the word "heart" represents the mind and thoughts. The writer speaks of a person's actions as if the person were walking on a path. Alternate translation: "A person plans in his mind what he will do" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

Yahweh directs his steps

The writer speaks of Yahweh determining the outcome of a person's plans as if Yahweh were telling that person where to walk. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁹ The heart of man plans his way, but Yahweh establishes his step.

UST

⁹ From deep within a person come the plans he makes, but Yahweh leads the person in each step he takes.

Proverbs 16:10

Insightful decisions are on the lips of a king

Here the word “lips” is a metonym for what the king says. Alternate translation: “What a king says are insightful decisions” (See: [Metonymy](#))

his mouth should not betray justice

The word “mouth” represents the king himself. Alternate translation: “he should not speak deceitfully when he judges” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

¹⁰ Divination {is} on the lips of a king, in judgment his mouth will not act unfaithfully.

UST

¹⁰ A king can speak with inspired judgment; and when he makes a ruling, it is good and true.

Proverbs 16:11

Honest scales come from Yahweh

Yahweh requires justice and fairness when doing business. Dishonest people used heavier or lighter weights in their scales in order to gain more when buying or selling. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

all the weights in the bag are his work

Merchants carried their weights in bags. This could mean: (1) Yahweh has determined how much every weight must weigh or (2) Yahweh is concerned with every weight that a merchant uses.

ULT

11 A scale and balances of justice {are} for Yahweh; all the stones of the bag {are} his work.

UST

11 Honest scales come from Yahweh; it is he who decided how much each unit should weigh.

Proverbs 16:12

that is something to be 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: “that is something that people despise” or “that is something that Yahweh despises” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

for a throne is established by doing what is right

Here the word “throne” represents the king’s rule. 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: “for the king establishes his reign by doing what is right” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹² Doing wickedness {is} an abomination of kings, for by righteousness is a throne established.

UST

¹² We should hate it when kings do wicked things, for the throne is set on a firm foundation when the king does what is right.

Proverbs 16:13

lips that say what is right

Here the word "lips" represents the person who speaks. Alternate translation: "a person who speaks the truth" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

13 The delight of kings {are} lips of righteousness, and he loves one who speaks uprightly.

UST

13 A king is happy when he hears someone speaking what is right; and he loves the one who is direct when he talks.

Proverbs 16:14

A king's wrath is a messenger of death

The writer speaks of an angry king causing someone to die as if the king's wrath were a messenger that he sends out to kill someone.

Alternate translation: "An angry king can put people to death" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

14 The heat of a king {is} messengers of death, but a wise man will appease it.

UST

14 If a king becomes angry, his wrath is a danger that can kill; so wise people will try to calm him so that he is not too angry.

Proverbs 16:15

General Information:

Verse 15 contrasts with verse 14.

In the light of a king's face is life

The writer speaks of an expression of joy on the king's face as if his face emitted light. Alternate translation: "When the king is cheerful, people live" (See: [Metaphor](#))

his favor is like a cloud that brings a spring rain

The writer compares the king showing favor towards someone with a cloud that brings rain to make crops grow. Both promise blessing to those who receive them. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

15 In the light of the face of the king {is} life, and his favor {is} like a spring rain cloud.

UST

15 In a king's smile there is life; when he is happy, he is like the cloud that brings the spring rain.

Proverbs 16:16

How much better it is to get wisdom than gold

This exclamation emphasizes that having wisdom is much better than having gold. Alternate translation: "It is much better to get wisdom than to get gold" (See: [Exclamations](#))

To get understanding should be chosen more than silver

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: "A person should choose to get understanding more than to get silver" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

16 How better to acquire wisdom than gold, and to acquire understanding is more choice than silver.

UST

16 Becoming wise is better than having gold; getting good understanding is better than having silver.

Proverbs 16:17

The highway of upright people

The writer speaks of the lifestyle of upright people as if it were a well-built road, free of obstacles. Alternate translation: "The righteous way that upright people live" (See: [Metaphor](#))

turns away from evil

The writer speaks of avoiding or no longer doing evil things as if it were turning away from evil. Alternate translation: "keeps them from doing evil" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

17 The highway of the upright ones turns from evil; one who guards his life {is} one who protects his way.

UST

17 The one who lives in the way that is right will turn away from doing evil; whoever is careful about how he lives his life will preserve his life.

Proverbs 16:18

a haughty spirit

Here the word “spirit” represents the person’s attitude and temperament. Alternate translation: “an arrogant attitude” (See: [Metonymy](#))

a downfall

Alternate translation: “ruin” or “failure”

ULT

18 Pride {is} before the face of breaking, and a height of spirit {is} before the face of a stumbling.

UST

18 Pride happens to someone first, and then he perishes. If someone thinks he is better than others, he will have a terrible fall.

Proverbs 16:19

spoil

goods taken in battle

ULT

¹⁹ Better to be lowly of spirit {with} afflicted ones than to divide spoil {with} proud ones.

UST

¹⁹ It is better to be humble and live among the poor than to receive a portion of what proud people took by force.

Proverbs 16:20

what they are taught

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: “what someone has taught them” or “what they have learned” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

20 One who acts prudently concerning a matter will find good, and ones who trusts in Yahweh, blessed is he.

UST

20 Those who think about what they have been taught find many good things in the lesson; how fortunate are those who put their trust in Yahweh.

Proverbs 16:21

The one who is wise in heart is called discerning

This person will have a reputation of being a discerning person. 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 call the one who is wise in heart discerning" or "The one who is wise in heart will have a reputation of being a discerning person" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

The one who is wise in heart

Here the heart represents the mind and thoughts. Alternate translation: "The one who is wise" or "The one who is wise in his thinking" (See: [Metonymy](#))

sweetness of speech

The writer speaks of kind or pleasant speech as if it were something that tastes sweet. Alternate translation: "kind speech" or "pleasant speech" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²¹ One who is discerning will be called wise of heart, and the sweetness of lips increases learning.

UST

²¹ One who has wisdom deep inside him is given the title, "discerning," and those who speak in a way that can be understood and can motivate their hearers, teach well.

Proverbs 16:22

Understanding is a fountain of life

The writer speaks of “Understanding” as if it were a fountain that continuously flows with water and which sustains the life of those who drink from it. Alternate translation: “Understanding is like a fountain flowing with life-giving water” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²² The prudence of its owner {is} a fountain of life, but the instruction of fools {is} foolishness.

UST

²² When you understand, it is as if you have found a fountain of life within you; but fools find their punishment when their foolishness comes back to them.

Proverbs 16:23

The heart of a wise person gives

Here the word "heart" represents the mind and thoughts. Alternate translation: "The thoughts of a wise person gives" (See: [Metonymy](#))

gives insight to his mouth

Here the word "mouth" is a metonym for speech. Alternate translation: "makes his speech wise" (See: [Metonymy](#))

to his lips

Here the word "lips" is a metonym for speech. Alternate translation: "to what he says" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

23 The heart of the wise makes his mouth prudent, and on his lips it increases learning.

UST

23 From deep within him, the wise person speaks from the insight he has learned; and so when he speaks he has the power to persuade others.

Proverbs 16:24

sweet to the soul

Here, **soul** could mean: (1) it represents a person's inward desires and pleasures. Alternate translation: "sweet enough to make a person happy" or (2) it can mean "throat" and is a metonym for a person's tongue and ability to taste. Alternate translation: "sweet to a person's taste" (See: [Metonymy](#))

healing to the bones

Here the word "bones" represent a person's body. Alternate translation: "healing to the body" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

24 Words of pleasantness {are} a comb of honey, sweet to the self and healing to the bone.

UST

24 Kind words are like a honeycomb; they are sweet for us to take in, and they give healing to our bodies.

Proverbs 16:25

There is a way that seems right to a man

The writer speaks of a person's conduct or behavior as if it were a road on which the person is traveling. Alternate translation: "A person thinks that the way he is living is right" (See: [Metonymy](#))

but its end is the way to death

The word "its" refers to "way" in the previous line. This "way" is the road that leads to death.

ULT

²⁵ There is a right way before the face of a man and its end {is} the ways of death.

UST

²⁵ A person lives out his life and he thinks he is doing what is right, but when he comes to the end of his life, all he finds is death.

Proverbs 16:26

The laborer's appetite works for him

The writer speaks of the appetite as if it were a person who works on behalf of the laborer. This means that the person who labors is motivated by his desire to eat. Alternate translation: "The laborer works to satisfy his appetite" (See: [Personification](#))

his hunger urges him on

The writer speaks of "hunger" as if it were a person who urges the laborer to continue working. Alternate translation: "he keeps on working because he is hungry" (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

²⁶ The appetite of the laborer labors for him, for his mouth presses on him.

UST

²⁶ A worker's appetite drives him to work harder, his hunger urges him to keep working.

Proverbs 16:27

A worthless person digs up mischief

The writer speaks of a person trying to find ways to harm other people as if that person were digging in the ground to find something buried. Alternate translation: "A worthless person looks for mischief as if he were digging for something in the ground" (See: [Metaphor](#))

worthless

Alternate translation: "useless" or "wicked"

mischief

trouble

his speech is like a scorching fire

The writer compares the way this person's words hurt others with the way that fire burns things. Alternate translation: "he hurts people with his words, like a fire scorches the things it touches" (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

²⁷ A man of worthlessness digs up evil and on his lips {it is} like a scorching fire.

UST

²⁷ A worthless man digs and digs until he finds something he can use to embarrass someone and cause them trouble; and what he says about them is like a fire that burns the field.

Proverbs 16:28

a gossip

a person who gossips or spreads rumors

ULT

²⁸ A man of perverse things lets loose strife, and one who whispers {is} one who separates close friends.

UST

²⁸ A person who has no morals stirs up conflict between people; and those who spread rumors pull friends apart.

Proverbs 16:29

A man of violence lies to his neighbor

It is implied that this man lies to his neighbor in order to get his neighbor to join him in violent actions. Alternate translation: "A man of violence entices his neighbor" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

A man of violence

Alternate translation: "A violent man" or "A man who practices violence"

leads him down a path that is not good

The writer speaks of a person's actions as if they were a road on which the person walks. Alternate translation: "gets him to do things that are not good" (See: [Metaphor](#))

a path that is not good

The writer uses an understatement to emphasize how bad this path is. Alternate translation: "a very bad path" or "a terrible path" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²⁹ A man of violence persuades his neighbor, and he leads him in a way {that is} not good.

UST

²⁹ A violent person tells lies to his friend, and he leads him down a path that will never find what is good.

Proverbs 16:30

The one who winks the eye ... those who purse the lips

Both of these are facial gestures which people might use to signal their plans to others. See how you translated “winks the eye” in [Proverbs 10:10](#).

will bring evil to pass

Alternate translation: “will do evil things”

ULT

³⁰ One who winks his eyes plans perverse things; one who compresses his lips brings evil to completion.

UST

³⁰ The one who winks the eye is signaling to others it is time to begin their terrible plot; those who press their lips together, they do evil things.

Proverbs 16:31

Gray hair is a crown of glory

The writer speaks of gray hair as if it were a crown. "Gray hair" is a metonym for old age. Alternate translation: "A person who has lived long enough to have gray hair is like one who wears a glorious crown on his head" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

it is gained

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: "a person gains it" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³¹ Gray hair {is} a crown of splendor; it is found in the way of righteousness.

UST

³¹ Gray hair is like a glorious crown; it is given to those who live their lives by doing what is right.

Proverbs 16:32

one who rules his spirit

The writer speaks of a person being able to control his own temper and emotions as if he ruled over his spirit like a king rules his people. Alternate translation: “one who controls his temper” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³² Better {is} one long of nostrils than a mighty one, and one who rules his spirit than one who captures a city.

UST

³² The one who is slow to get angry is stronger than a warrior; the one who is self-controlled is mightier than one who conquers a city by force.

Proverbs 16:33

The lots are cast into the lap

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: "A person throws the lots into his lap" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the decision is from Yahweh

This could mean: (1) Yahweh decides how the lots will land or (2) it is not the lots, but Yahweh who determines what will happen.

ULT

³³ A lot is thrown down into the lap, but all its judgment {is} from Yahweh.

UST

³³ The stones making up the "lot" are thrown into a person's lap, but Yahweh decides on which side of the stones they will stop rolling.

Proverbs 17

Proverbs 17 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 17 continues the section of the book which is attributed to Solomon and is filled mainly with short, individual proverbs.

Special concepts in this chapter

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often including contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility, integrity/crookedness. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 17:1

to have quiet

Here “quiet” refers to “peace.” Alternate translation: “to have peace” (See: [Metonymy](#))

than a house full of feasting with strife

The words “to have” are understood from the previous phrase. They can be repeated. Alternate translation: “than to have a house full of feasting with strife” or “than to be in a house full of feasting where there is strife” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

¹ Better {is} a dry morsel and quietness with it than a house full of sacrifices of strife.

UST

¹ It is better to eat a dry piece of bread and not have strife than to live in a house where quarreling is as regular as feasting.

Proverbs 17:2

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

² A servant who acts prudently will rule over a son who acts shamefully and in the midst of brothers he will share an inheritance.

UST

² A slave who acts wisely will rule over the son of his master if that son does shameful things. That slave will receive a share of the inheritance and will be treated like one of his master's sons.

Proverbs 17:3

The crucible is for silver and the furnace is for gold

This refers to how gold and silver are refined. A metal is refined by heating it to a high temperature so that it melts and the impurities may be removed. Alternate translation: "The crucible is used to refine silver and the furnace is used to refine gold" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

crucible

a pot in which metals are melted at a very high temperature

Yahweh refines hearts

This speaks of Yahweh testing people to help them stop being evil and foolish as if their hearts were a metal that Yahweh was refining to remove everything that is impure. Alternate translation: "Yahweh tests peoples' hearts" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³ The melting-pot {is} for silver and the furnace {is} for gold, and Yahweh tests hearts.

UST

³ Silver is put into the crucible to be refined, and gold is put into the furnace to be made pure, but it is Yahweh who makes people pure.

Proverbs 17:4

wicked lips

The word **lips** can be translated as either: (1) a synecdoche for the person or (2) a metonym for the words that come out from those lips. Alternate translation: “a wicked person” or “wicked talk” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metonymy](#))

gives ear

This idiom means “listens.” (See: [Idiom](#))

destructive tongue

The word **tongue** can be translated as either: (1) a synecdoche for the person or (2) a metonym for the words that the tongue produces. Alternate translation: “a destructive person” or “destructive talk” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁴ One who does evil listens attentively to the lips of iniquity; a liar listens to a tongue of destruction.

UST

⁴ Those who do what is evil pay attention to the person who talks in wicked ways, and those who tell lies listen to those who speak in order to make trouble.

Proverbs 17:5

the poor

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

his Maker

This is a name that refers to Yahweh. This is also an abstract noun that can be written as a verb. Alternate translation: “the one who made him” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

at misfortune

This refers to the misfortune of others. Alternate translation: “at others’ misfortune” or “at other peoples’ troubles” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁵ One who mocks one who is poor taunts his maker; one rejoicing at calamity will not be free of guilt.

UST

⁵ The one who makes fun of those who are poor insults Yahweh who made him; Yahweh will punish those who are happy when someone else has troubles.

Proverbs 17:6

are the crown of

This speaks of older peoples' grandchildren being a sign of honor for them as if their grandchildren were a crown. Alternate translation: "bring honor and respect to" (See: [Metaphor](#))

the aged

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

ULT

⁶ The crown of old ones {is} sons of sons, and the splendor of sons {is} their fathers.

UST

⁶ Grandchildren bring honor and respect to the aged, and parents bring honor to their children.

Proverbs 17:7

Eloquent speech

Alternate translation: "Fine speech" or "Excellent speech"

much less are lying lips suitable for royalty

This describes people lying as if it were actually their "lips" that were lying. Alternate translation: "even more it is not suitable for royalty to lie" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

⁷ A lip of excess {is} not suitable for a fool; how much less a lip of falsehood for a noble.

UST

⁷ A fool is not able to give an eloquent speech; even more is it wrong to lie to someone with a royal title.

Proverbs 17:8

A bribe is like a magic stone to the one who gives it

This speaks of a person's bribe working by comparing it to a magical stone or amulet. Alternate translation: "A bribe works like a magical stone for the one who gives it" or "A bribe works like magic for the one who is giving the bribe" (See: [Simile](#))

wherever he turns

Here "turning" refers to the various things the person does. Specifically, this refers to the different things the person does by bribery. Alternate translation: "in whatever he does" or "in everything he tries to do by giving bribes" (See: [Idiom](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁸ A stone of favor {is} a bribe in the eyes of its owner; he succeeds to all that he turns.

UST

⁸ A bribe works like magic for the one who is giving the bribe; everything he tries to do by giving bribes succeeds.

Proverbs 17:9

an offense

an action or word that has hurt him

who repeats a matter

This refers to bringing up a past situation in which a friend was hurt or offended. Alternate translation: "who repeats a past offense" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

alienates close friends

Alternate translation: "causes people to stop being close friends" or "causes close friends to stop liking each other"

ULT

⁹ One who covers transgression {is} one who seeks love, but one who repeats a matter {is} one who separates close friends.

UST

⁹ You must learn not to be offended by the one you love, but if you bring up something to your friend that hurt you, and you do it over and over, that will pull the best of friends apart.

Proverbs 17:10

A rebuke goes deeper into a person ... than a hundred blows go into a fool

This compares how a rebuke effects a man of understanding to how a beating effects a fool. This speaks of the effect on these people as if it could be measured by the depth that it goes into them. Alternate translation: "A rebuke has more effect on a person ... than a hundred blows have on a fool" (See: [Metaphor](#))

a person who has understanding

"a person who has good judgment." The word "understand" can be expressed as a verb. Alternate translation: "a person who understands" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

a hundred blows go

Alternate translation: "a beating of a hundred blows goes"

ULT

¹⁰ A rebuke goes down into one who is discerning more than a hundred blows to a fool.

UST

¹⁰ A rebuke to someone with understanding goes deeper into him than trying to teach a fool by hitting him a hundred times with a stick.

Proverbs 17:11

seeks rebellion

The word “rebellion” can be expressed as a verb. Alternate translation: “seeks to rebel” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

a cruel messenger will be sent against him

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: “a cruel messenger will come against him” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

will be sent against him

To be “sent against” someone means to be sent to harm them. Alternate translation: “will be sent to harm him” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

11 An evil one seeks only rebellion, but a cruel messenger will be sent against him.

UST

11 An evil person is only interested in disobeying the rules; he deserves a messenger who will be cruel to him.

Proverbs 17:12

a bear robbed of her cubs

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: "a bear who has just lost her cubs" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

in his foolishness

The word "foolishness" can be expressed as an adjective. Alternate translation: "who is acting foolish" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

12 Meet a female bear robbed of offspring by a man and not a fool in his foolishness!

UST

12 You would be better off meeting a mother bear who had been robbed of her cubs than to meet a fool who is being foolish.

Proverbs 17:13

evil will never leave his house

Here “evil” is spoken of as if it were a person who would not leave the man’s house. Here the word “house” may be taken literally, but it is also a metonym for his family. Alternate translation: “bad things will continue to happen to him and his family” or “bad things will never stop happening to him and his family” (See: [Personification](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹³ One who returns evil for good, evil will not depart from his house.

UST

¹³ If someone gives back evil for the good that was given to him, evil will stay in his family.

Proverbs 17:14

The beginning of conflict is like one who releases water everywhere

This compares how easily a conflict spreads to how spilled water flows everywhere. Alternate translation: "Starting a conflict is like pumping water and letting it run everywhere" (See: [Simile](#))

has broken out

Alternate translation: "starts" or "begins"

ULT

¹⁴ The beginning of a quarrel {is} the releasing of water, so leave before the dispute breaks out.

UST

¹⁴ Starting a quarrel is like pumping water and letting it run everywhere; it is much better to walk away before it starts.

Proverbs 17:15

acquits

justifies, declares someone not guilty

ULT

¹⁵ One who declares the wicked one righteous and one who declares the righteous one wicked, even the two of them {are} an abomination of Yahweh.

UST

¹⁵ When a court sets the wicked free and condemns those who do what is right, Yahweh hates both of these actions.

Proverbs 17:16

Why should a fool pay money to learn about wisdom, when he has no ability to learn it?

This rhetorical question emphasizes that the fool should not do this. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "A fool should not pay money to learn about wisdom because he does not have the ability to learn it." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹⁶ Why {is} this: a price {is} in the hand of a fool to acquire wisdom but there is no heart?

UST

¹⁶ There is no benefit for a fool when he pays money to learn about wisdom; no matter how much he tries, he will not be able to learn about wisdom.

Proverbs 17:17

a brother is born for times of trouble

One of the purposes of a brother is to be there to help his brother or sister in times of trouble. Alternate translation: "a brother is there for times of trouble" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

17 At every time the friend {is} one who loves, and a brother is born for distress.

UST

17 A friend loves you all the time, and when you are in trouble, there is no one better than a brother to help you.

Proverbs 17:18

no sense

Alternate translation: "no good judgement"

binding promises

This refers to promises that must be kept and are often a burden on the person who made them.

ULT

18 A man lacking of heart {is} one who claps a palm, pledging a pledge before the face of his neighbor.

UST

18 One having no good judgment will make a contract he cannot pay, and he will even make a promise to pay the money his neighbor owes.

Proverbs 17:19

causes bones to be broken

This means that someone will trip on the threshold and break bones, probably in their foot. Alternate translation: “is sure to cause someone trip and break their the bones in their foot” or “is sure to cause someone to trip and injure himself” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

19 One who loves transgression {is} one who loves strife; one who makes his doorway high {is} one who seeks brokenness.

UST

19 The one who loves to have arguments, that person also loves the sin that lies behind the conflict; one thing leads to another: The one who makes the threshold of his door too high, it is sure to make someone break the bones in his foot.

Proverbs 17:20

who has a crooked heart

The “heart” represents a person’s feelings, attitudes and motivations. Alternate translation: “who is deceptive” or “who is dishonest” (See: [Metonymy](#))

has a perverse tongue

The “tongue” represents a person’s speech. Alternate translation: “speaks perversely” or “speaks wickedly” (See: [Metonymy](#))

falls into calamity

“falls into trouble” To “fall into” something means to get into that situation. Alternate translation: “will have calamity” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

²⁰ One perverse of heart will not find goodness, and one who is turned away in his tongue will fall into evil.

UST

²⁰ A person who is dishonest because of what is within him, he will never find what is good, and the one who tells lies will fall into trouble.

Proverbs 17:21

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²¹ One who begets a fool, {it is} to grief for him, and the father of a fool will not rejoice.

UST

²¹ The father who has a fool brings sadness into his life; the father of a fool cannot live a happy life.

Proverbs 17:22

A cheerful heart is good medicine

This speaks of a cheerful heart as being good medicine because it makes you feel better. Alternate translation: "A cheerful heart is like medicine that makes you feel better" (See: [Metaphor](#))

A cheerful heart

The "heart" represents a person's feelings, attitudes and motivations. Alternate translation: "Being cheerful" (See: [Metonymy](#))

a broken spirit

Here the "spirit" represents a person's feelings and emotional state. A broken spirit refers to a poor emotional state. Alternate translation: "depression" (See: [Metonymy](#))

dries up the bones

A person's bones represent their physical health and strength. If a person's bones dry up it means that they are very sick and unhealthy. Alternate translation: "makes a person unhealthy and weak" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²² A joyful heart will make healing good, but a broken spirit dries up bone.

UST

²² Being cheerful is like medicine that makes you feel better, but when you are crushed by sadness, it is as if every bone within you could break with only a touch.

Proverbs 17:23

to pervert the ways of justice

Alternate translation: "to prevent justice from being rendered" or "to pervert justice"

ULT

²³ A wicked one takes a bribe from the bosom to turn the paths of justice.

UST

²³ A wicked person accepts a bribe in such a way as no one could see him, so the bribe would change the verdict in his favor.

Proverbs 17:24

sets his face toward wisdom

This speaks of a person's focus on acting wisely as if he were looking at wisdom. Alternate translation: "focuses on acting wisely" (See: [Metaphor](#))

the eyes of a fool are

This refers to a fool by his eyes to emphasize what he is focusing on. Alternate translation: "the fool is" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

the ends of the earth

This speaks of a fool's impossible dreams as if they were the ends of the earth to emphasize that they are unrealistic. Alternate translation: "strive for things that are as far from him as the ends of the earth" or "focus on impossible things" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

24 Wisdom {is with} the face of one who is discerning, but the eyes of a fool {are} at the ends of the earth.

UST

24 The one who has begun to understand, he knows that he must also now go after wisdom. However, the foolish person has bold plans and impossible dreams, and he looks for them no matter how far away they may be.

Proverbs 17:25

A foolish son is a grief to his father

This speaks of a son causing his father grief as if the son himself were "grief." Alternate translation: "A foolish son brings grief to his father"

A foolish son ... and bitterness to the woman

This speaks of a son causing his mother bitterness as if the son himself were "bitterness." Alternate translation: "A foolish son ... and brings bitterness to the woman"

who bore him

Alternate translation: "who gave birth to him"

bitterness

emotional pain, sorrow

ULT

²⁵ A son of a fool {is} a grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him.

UST

²⁵ A foolish child brings a father great sadness, and regret to the mother who gave birth to him.

Proverbs 17:26

it is never good ... neither is it good

These statements can be written in positive form. Alternate translation: "it is always wrong ... and it is evil" (See: [Litotes](#))

the righteous person

Another possible meaning is "the innocent person," anyone whom others have accused of a crime that he did not commit.

flog

whip severely

who have integrity

The word "integrity" can be expressed with the adjective "honest." Alternate translation: "who are honest" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

²⁶ Even to fine the righteous {is} not good, to strike nobles {is} against uprightness.

UST

²⁶ It cannot be good to punish someone who does what is right, and if a good man with moral character is punished by the law, this can never be good.

Proverbs 17:27

uses few words

This refers to the way he speaks. Alternate translation: “speaks with few words” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

27 One who knows knowledge {is} one who restrains his words, and a man of understanding {is} cool of spirit.

UST

27 The one who has learned knowledge, learned to speak well using few words, and the one who has understanding, does not lose his temper.

Proverbs 17:28

Even a fool is thought to be wise

This can be written in active form. Alternate translation: "People even think a fool is wise" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

keeps his mouth shut

This means that he does not speak. Alternate translation: "does not speak" (See: [Idiom](#))

he is considered to be intelligent

This can be written in active form. Alternate translation: "people consider him to be intelligent" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

28 Even a fool who keeps silent will be considered wise; one who shuts his lips is being discerning.

UST

28 When a fool keeps silent, some may think he is very wise; when he keeps his mouth shut, even a fool looks intelligent.

Proverbs 18

Proverbs 18 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 18 continues the section of the book which is attributed to Solomon and is filled mainly with short, individual proverbs.

Special concepts in this chapter

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often including contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility, integrity/crookedness. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 18:1

isolates himself

Alternate translation: "keeps away from other people"

quarrels with all sound judgment

This speaks of a person disagreeing with sound judgment as if "sound judgment" were a person he fought with. Alternate translation: "he disagrees with all sound judgment" (See: [Personification](#))

sound judgment

Alternate translation: "good judgment" or "wise choices"

ULT

¹ One who separates himself seeks for desire; he bursts out against all prudence.

UST

¹ The one who keeps himself away from other people will only live for his own desires, and he never acts with good judgment.

Proverbs 18:2

A fool finds no pleasure in understanding, but only

“A fool does not care about understanding, but only about” This means the fool considers “understanding” the opposite of pleasure. Alternate translation: “A fool detests understanding and only finds pleasure in” (See: [Litotes](#))

but only in revealing what is in his own heart

This means that the fool only finds pleasure in telling other people what he feels and desires in his heart. Alternate translation: “but only in telling others what is in his own heart” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

what is in his own heart

The contents of a person’s heart refers to the person’s thoughts and feelings. Alternate translation: “what he thinks” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

² A fool does not delight in understanding but rather in his heart revealing itself.

UST

² A foolish person does not enjoy understanding anything; he only wants to tell others what he thinks.

Proverbs 18:3

contempt comes with him—along with shame and reproach

Here “contempt,” “shame,” and “reproach” are spoken of as if they are people who accompany a wicked man. This could mean: (1) people show contempt towards the wicked man and cause him to feel shame and reproach. Alternate translation: “people feel contempt for him along with shame and reproach” or (2) the wicked man shows contempt for others and causes them to feel shame and reproach. Alternate translation: “he shows his contempt for other people and causes them to feel shame and reproach” (See: [Personification](#))

shame and reproach

These two words have similar meaning and are used together to emphasize the “shame” felt by either the wicked man or other people. (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

³ When wickedness comes contempt also comes, and reproach with shame.

UST

³ A wicked person comes, and with them comes the contempt they have for other people— and then comes shame and disgrace following along.

Proverbs 18:4

The words of a man's mouth are deep waters;...the fountain of wisdom is a flowing stream

These two lines are parallel and it is implied that the man in the first line is a wise man. Alternate translation: "The words of a wise man's mouth are deep waters;...the fountain of wisdom is a flowing stream" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

The words of a man's mouth are deep waters

This speaks of a wise man's words being profound as if they were profound and as deep as deep waters. Alternate translation: "The words of a man's mouth are as profound as deep waters" or "The words of a man's mouth are deep and profound" (See: [Metaphor](#))

a man's mouth

Here the man is referred to by his mouth to emphasize what he says. Alternate translation: "of a man" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

the fountain of wisdom is a flowing stream

This speaks of the source of wisdom being plentiful as if it were a gushing spring. The gushing of the spring is spoken of as if it were a flowing stream. Alternate translation: "the source of wisdom is as plentiful as the water of a gushing spring" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ The words of the mouth of a man {are} deep waters; a spring of wisdom {is} a bubbling stream.

UST

⁴ The words a man speaks are like the deep waters of an ocean or a fountain that flows with wisdom.

Proverbs 18:5

It is not good to ... to the righteous person

These phrases can be written in positive form. Alternate translation: "It is good to treat the wicked person as he deserves, and to be just to the righteous person" (See: [Litotes](#))

ULT

⁵ {It is} not good to lift the face of the wicked one, to turn aside the righteous one in the judgment.

UST

⁵ When the wicked are treated with special honor, it is not good, and it is not good to refuse to give justice to those who do what is right.

Proverbs 18:6

A fool's lips bring

Here the fool is referred to by his "lips" to emphasize what he says. Alternate translation: "what a fool says brings" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

bring

Alternate translation: "cause"

his mouth invites a beating

This speaks of the fool saying things that cause people to want to beat him as if he were inviting them to beat him. Alternate translation: "his mouth makes people want to beat him" (See: [Metaphor](#))

his mouth

Here what the fool says is referred to as his "mouth." Alternate translation: "what he says" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁶ The lips of a fool enter into strife, and his mouth calls for blows.

UST

⁶ A foolish person says things that start arguments; he says things that make other people want to beat him with a stick.

Proverbs 18:7

A fool's mouth ... with his lips

Both of these phrases refer to what a fool says. Alternate translation: "What a fool says ... by what he says" (See: [Metonymy](#))

is his ruin

Alternate translation: "will ruin him"

he ensnares himself

This speaks of the man causing problems and trouble for himself as if he were trapping himself like a man traps an animal. Alternate translation: "he will cause problems for himself" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁷ The mouth of a fool {is} ruin for him, and his lips {are} a snare of his life.

UST

⁷ A foolish person brings himself to ruin by the things he says; his very words set a trap in which he will be caught.

Proverbs 18:8

The words of a gossip are like delicious morsels

This speaks of the words of a gossip being desirable to listen to as if they were delicious food to eat. Alternate translation: "The words of a gossip are desirable to listen to" or (See: [Simile](#))

The words of a gossip

This refers to what a gossiping person says. Alternate translation: "The words that a gossiping person speaks" (See: [Possession](#))

morsels

small bites of food

they go down into the inner parts of the body

This speaks of the words of a gossip going into a person's mind and affecting his thoughts as if they were food that was going into his stomach. Alternate translation: "and they enter a person's mind and affect his thoughts" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁸ The words of one who whispers {are} like things swallowed greedily, and they go down into the inner rooms of the belly.

UST

⁸ When a person gossips, his words are as sweet to other people as candy is in their mouths, and they love to listen to them.

Proverbs 18:9

one who is slack in his work is a brother to the one who destroys

This speaks of the one who is slack being similar to the one who destroys as if they were actually related. Alternate translation: “is closely related to” or “is very similar to” (See: [Metaphor](#))

is slack

Alternate translation: “is lazy” or “is not interested”

the one who destroys the most

Alternate translation: “the one who destroys everything” or “the one who is always destructive”

ULT

⁹ Also, one who is slack in his work, he {is} a brother to an owner of destruction.

UST

⁹ The person who does a poor job when he is working is a relative to the one who destroys everything.

Proverbs 18:10

The name of Yahweh is a strong tower

This speaks of Yahweh protecting his people as if he were a strong tower in which they could take refuge. Alternate translation: “Yahweh protects like a strong tower” or “Yahweh protects his people like a strong tower” (See: [Metaphor](#))

The name of Yahweh

Here Yahweh is referred to by his name. Alternate translation: “Yahweh” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the righteous

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

runs into it and is safe

This speaks of people seeking safety from Yahweh and Yahweh protecting them as if he were a strong tower that they ran into for safety. Alternate translation: “run to him and they are safe” or “seek him and they are safe” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

10 The name of Yahweh {is} a tower of strength; the righteous one runs into it and is set on high.

UST

10 The name of Yahweh is like a castle that can never be overrun; those who do what is right run for safety into it, and in the fortress of his name, they are safe.

Proverbs 18:11

The wealth of the rich is his fortified city

This speaks of a rich person depending on his wealth as if his wealth were a fortified wall that protects him. Alternate translation: "The wealthy person depends on his wealth as a city depends on its fortified wall" (See: [Metaphor](#))

the rich

This refers to people who are rich. Alternate translation: "the rich person" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

fortified city

a city with strong defenses like walls and towers

in his imagination it is like a high wall

This speaks of the rich person believing his wealth will keep him safe like a high wall keeps those inside a city safe. Alternate translation: "he thinks it protects him as well as a high wall" (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

11 The wealth of the rich {is} a city of his strength and like a wall set on high in his imagination.

UST

11 The wealthy person depends on his wealth as a city depends on its fortifications; he thinks it protects him as well as a high wall.

Proverbs 18:12

Before his downfall a person's heart is proud

Alternate translation: "First a person's heart is proud, but then comes his downfall"

downfall

This refers to a significant decline in a person's reputation or health.

a person's heart

Here a person is referred to by his heart to emphasize his thoughts and feelings. Alternate translation: "a person" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

humility comes before honor

The word "humility" may be expressed as an adjective and the word "honor" may be expressed as a verb. Alternate translation: "a person must be humble before he can be honored" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

12 Before the face of breaking the heart of a man is exalted, but before the face of honor {is} humility.

UST

12 When a person is about to be ruined, it is his proud heart that brings his destruction, but before a person can gain great honor, he must first learn to become humble.

Proverbs 18:13

it is his folly and shame

The abstract nouns “folly” and “shame” may be expressed as adjectives. Alternate translation: “it is foolish of him, and he should be ashamed” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

¹³ One who returns a word before he listens, it {is} folly to him and shame.

UST

¹³ A person who gives you an answer before he listens to you— there is nothing more foolish and nothing that gives him more shame.

Proverbs 18:14

A person's spirit will survive sickness

Here a person is referred to by his spirit to emphasize his attitude. Alternate translation: "A person who is hopeful will survive sickness" or "If a person is full of hope in his inner being, he will survive being sick" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

but a broken spirit who can bear it?

This is a rhetorical question, expecting the answer that few can bear it. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "but it is very hard to bear a broken spirit." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

a broken spirit

This refers to being depressed. Alternate translation: "being depressed" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

14 The spirit of a man will endure his illness, but a broken spirit, who can lift it?

UST

14 A person may survive a terrible sickness in his body, but if he feels his inner self is crushed, how can he survive?

Proverbs 18:15

The heart of the intelligent acquires

Here the intelligent person is referred to by his heart to emphasize his desires. Alternate translation: "The intelligent desire to acquire" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

the intelligent

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

acquires

Alternate translation: "gains" or "obtains"

the hearing of the wise seeks it out

Here the wise person is referred to by his hearing to emphasize what he desires to listen to. Alternate translation: "the wise seeks to learn about it" (See: [Metonymy](#))

the wise

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

seeks it out

Here the word "it" refers to "knowledge"

ULT

15 The heart of one who is discerning acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise ones seeks knowledge.

UST

15 Intelligent people have a desire to get more and more knowledge, and wise people will find someone to teach them even more knowledge.

Proverbs 18:16

may open the way

Here to “open the way” means to create an opportunity. Alternate translation: “may create an opportunity for him” (See: [Idiom](#))

bring him before

This means to be allowed to see someone. Alternate translation: “let him meet” or “let him be introduced to” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

16 The gift of a man will make room for him, and it will lead him before the face of great ones.

UST

16 If you take a gift to an important person, you will open the way to allow you to talk to him.

Proverbs 18:17

The first to plead his case

This refers to the person who pleads his case before his opponent pleads his case. Alternate translation: “The first person to plead his case” or “The person who pleads his case first” (See: [Ordinal Numbers](#) and [Nominal Adjectives](#))

ULT

17 The first one with his case {is} right, then his neighbor comes and examines him.

UST

17 The first person to present his case before a judge seems right until the other side comes and questions him.

Proverbs 18:18

Casting the lot

Alternate translation: "Casting lots"

separates strong opponents

This refers to people who are fighting harshly over a dispute. When they are separated, they are no longer fighting over their dispute.

Alternate translation: "causes opponents to stop fighting over their dispute" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

18 The lot causes quarrels to cease, and it makes a separation between mighty ones.

UST

18 When there are two strong people having a dispute, casting lots can help to settle the dispute.

Proverbs 18:19

An offended brother is harder to be won than a strong city

This speaks of the difficulty of making peace with a brother you have offended by comparing it to the difficulty of winning a war against a strong city. Alternate translation: "If you offend your brother, finding a way to have peace with him again may be harder than waging a battle to win a city" (See: [Metaphor](#))

quarreling is like the bars of a castle

This speaks of the difficulty of resolving quarreling by comparing it to the difficulty of breaking down the bars of a castle. Alternate translation: "resolving quarreling is as difficult as breaking down the bars of a castle" (See: [Simile](#))

castle

a fortified palace

ULT

¹⁹ A brother who has been offended {is worse} than a city of strength, and quarrels {are} like the gate bar of a fortress.

UST

¹⁹ If you offend your brother, finding a way to have peace with him again may be harder than waging a battle to win a city. and having an argument is more difficult to overcome than breaking down the bars of a castle.

Proverbs 18:20

From the fruit of his mouth one's stomach is filled; with the harvest of his lips he is satisfied

These two lines have the same meaning and are used together to emphasize what is said. They can be combined. Alternate translation: "A person is satisfied by the results of the good things that he says" (See: [Parallelism](#))

the fruit of his mouth

This speaks of the good things that a person says as if they were fruit that came from his mouth. Alternate translation: "his wise speech" or "his good words" (See: [Metaphor](#))

one's stomach is filled

This speaks of a person being satisfied or content by the result of what they have said as if they had eaten and become satisfied" Alternate translation: "a person is satisfied" (See: [Metaphor](#))

the harvest of his lips

This speaks of the good things that a person says as if they were fruit that is harvested. Alternate translation: "his wise speech" or "his good words" (See: [Metonymy](#))

he is satisfied

Alternate translation: "he is pleased"

ULT

²⁰ From the fruit of the mouth of a man his belly is satisfied; with the produce of his lips he is satisfied.

UST

²⁰ The words a person speaks can bring satisfaction to himself, like the food he eats satisfies his stomach.

Proverbs 18:21

Death and life are controlled by the tongue

This can be written in active form. Alternate translation: "The tongue can lead to life or death" or "What people say can lead to life or death" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

by the tongue ... love the tongue

Here the "tongue" refers to speech. Alternate translation: "by what people say ... love speaking" (See: [Metonymy](#))

will eat its fruit

This speaks of a person receiving the consequence for what he says as if the consequences were fruit that he receives. Alternate translation: "will receive its consequences" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²¹ Death and life {are} in the hand of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.

UST

²¹ People are able to kill others or keep them alive by means of what they say. And there is danger for those who love the power of their speaking.

Proverbs 18:22

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²² He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from Yahweh.

UST

²² The one who finds a wife, finds something so good it is a gift to bless his life, and it is Yahweh who gives him this wonderful gift.

Proverbs 18:23

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²³ One who is poor speaks pleas, but a rich one answers harshly.

UST

²³ A poor person desperately begs for mercy, but a rich person is rude when he answers.

Proverbs 18:24

many friends is brought to ruin 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: “many friends--they will bring him to ruin” or “many friends--his friends will destroy him” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

comes closer than

Alternate translation: “is more faithful than” or “stays more loyal than”

ULT

24 A man of companions {is} to be broken, but there is one who loves, clinging more than a brother.

UST

24 One person says that he has many friends, but his life is ruined by them; but there is a friend who stands with us through everything, and he is always close at our side, even closer than a brother.

Proverbs 19

Proverbs 19 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 19 continues the section of the book which is attributed to Solomon and is filled mainly with short, individual proverbs.

Special concepts in this chapter

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often including contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility, integrity/crookedness. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 19:1

Better is a poor person

Alternate translation: "It is better to be a poor person"

who walks in his integrity

This is an idiom. Here walking refers to living. Alternate translation: "who lives in his integrity" or "who lives an honest life" (See: [Idiom](#))

is perverse in speech

The word "speech" may be expressed as a verb. Alternate translation: "speaks perversely" or "speaks in an evil way" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

¹ Better {is} one who is poor who walks in his integrity than one who is perverse in his lips and he {is} a fool.

UST

¹ Compare a poor person who keeps his promises, with a fool who is full of lies.

Proverbs 19:2

to have desire without knowledge

This refers to people trying to do something without the knowledge for how to correctly do it. Alternate translation: “to work hard without knowing what you are doing” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

the one who runs too fast misses the path

This speaks of a person doing something too quickly and making mistakes as if running too quickly and missing the path. Alternate translation: “the one who acts too quickly makes mistakes” or “the one who acts too quickly makes poor choices” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

² Also, a life with no knowledge {is} not good, and the one who hurries with feet {is} one who misses.

UST

² And consider, having desire without knowledge is like running so fast that you miss the path you want to take.

Proverbs 19:3

his heart rages

Here a person is referred to by his “heart” to emphasize his emotions. Alternate translation: “he rages” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

³ The foolishness of a man will pervert his way, and his heart will rage against Yahweh.

UST

³ The folly of a fool destroys his life, but he becomes furious with Yahweh for his troubles.

Proverbs 19:4

Wealth adds many friends

This means that a person who is wealthy will have many friends because wealth attracts people. The full meaning of this can be made clear. Alternate translation: "Those who are wealthy easily find many friends" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

a poor person is separated from his friends

A poor person is separated from many of his friends because of his poverty. The meaning of this can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "poverty causes a person to lose his friends" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁴ Wealth adds many companions, but a lowly one is separated from his companions.

UST

⁴ Those who are wealthy easily find many friends, but a poor person will find that his poverty separates him from the one friend he had.

Proverbs 19:5

A false witness will not go unpunished

This can be written in positive and active form. Alternate translation: “They will certainly punish a false witness” (See: [Double Negatives](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

he who breathes out lies will not escape

This means that he will be captured. Alternate translation: “they will capture the one who breathes out lies” (See: [Litotes](#))

breathes out lies

This is an idiom. Here “breathes” refers to lying constantly. See how you translated this phrase in [Proverbs 6:19](#). Alternate translation: “constantly lies” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁵ A witness of falsehoods will not be free of guilt, and he who breathes out lies will not slip away.

UST

⁵ A person who lies in order to become a friend will be punished for taking advantage, just as the one whose every word he speaks is a lie, he will not escape.

Proverbs 19:6

a generous person

someone who often gives away things

everyone is a friend

The word “everyone” is an exaggeration. Alternate translation: “it seems that everyone is a friend” or “almost everyone is a friend” (See: [Hyperbole](#))

ULT

6 Many will appease the face of a noble one, and everyone {is} a friend of a man of gift.

UST

6 When a person is generous with their gifts, many people will ask for favors, it seems that everyone is a friend of the one who gives many gifts.

Proverbs 19:7

how much more do his friends who go far away from him!

This phrase is an exclamation to show that this is more likely than the previous phrase. Alternate translation: “therefore his friends will certainly hate him and go far away from him!” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁷ All the brothers of one who is poor hate him; how much more do his friends keep away from him! Pursuing with words, they are not.

UST

⁷ All the brothers of one who is poor hate him; and even more do his friends hate him, and they go far away from him; he calls out to them, but they have left.

Proverbs 19:8

loves his own life

Here the person is referred to by his “life” to emphasize himself being alive. Alternate translation: “loves himself” (See: [Metonymy](#))

keeps understanding

Alternate translation: “has understanding”

ULT

8 One who acquires heart {is} one who loves his life; one who keeps understanding {is} to find good.

UST

8 The one who makes every effort to learn about wisdom, loves himself; having understanding helps you know what is good and what is not.

Proverbs 19:9

A false witness will not go unpunished

This can be written in positive and active form. See how you translated this phrase in [Proverbs 19:5](#). Alternate translation: “They will certainly punish a false witness” (See: [Double Negatives](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

breathes out lies

This figure of speech uses “breathes” to refer to lying constantly. See how you translated this phrase in [Proverbs 6:19](#). Alternate translation: “constantly lies” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁹ A witness of falsehoods will not be free of guilt, and one who breathes out lies will perish.

UST

⁹ The ones who lie when they give testimony will be punished, but the one whose every word is a lie, he will die.

Proverbs 19:10

It is not fitting

Alternate translation: "It is not right"

much less for a slave

The words "it is" and "fitting" are understood from the previous phrase. They can be repeated. Alternate translation: "it is much less fitting for a slave" or "it is even worse for a slave" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

10 Luxury {is} not suitable for a fool; how much less for a slave to rule over officials.

UST

10 When a fool lives in luxury—it is not right, and it is even worse for a slave to rule over princes.

Proverbs 19:11

Discretion makes a person slow to anger

Alternate translation: "A person who has discretion is slow to become angry"

Discretion

This means to know what should be done in a particular situation. See how you translated this word in [Proverbs 1:4](#).

it is his glory to overlook

Alternate translation: "it will bring him glory to overlook" or "others will consider it honorable if he overlooks"

to overlook

to forget on purpose

ULT

11 The insight of a man makes his nose long, and his splendor {is} to pass over a transgression.

UST

11 A person with good sense is slow to get angry, and it is to his honor that he overlooks it when someone does him wrong.

Proverbs 19:12

The wrath of the king is like the roaring of a young lion

Here the lion's roaring refers to attacking. The wrath of a king is compared to the unpredictable and dangerous attack of a young lion. Alternate translation: "The wrath of the king is as dangerous as the attack of a young lion" (See: [Simile](#) and [Metonymy](#))

but his favor is like dew on the grass

The favor of the king is compared to the refreshing water that appears on grass in the morning. Alternate translation: "but his favor is refreshing like dew on grass" or "but his favor is refreshing like the dew on the ground in the morning" (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

¹² The rage of a king {is} a growling like the young lion, but his favor {is} like dew on vegetation.

UST

¹² What is the wrath of the king like? It is like the roaring of a young lion, but his kindness is like the dew on the grass.

Proverbs 19:13

is ruin to his father

Alternate translation: "will ruin a father"

a quarreling wife is a constant dripping of water

This speaks of an annoying wife as if she were the constant dripping of water. Alternate translation: "a quarreling wife is as annoying and distracting as a constant dripping of water" (See: [Metaphor](#))

a quarreling wife

Alternate translation: "an arguing wife" or "a disagreeing wife"

ULT

13 A son of a fool {is} destruction to his father, and the quarrels of a wife {are} a continuous dripping.

UST

13 A foolish child will ruin a father. A wife who is always quarreling will upset her husband like water that is constantly dripping.

Proverbs 19:14

A house and wealth are inherited from parents

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: "Children inherit a house and wealth from their parents" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

prudent

See how you translated this word in [Proverbs 12:23](#).

a prudent wife is from Yahweh

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: "Yahweh gives a prudent wife" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁴ A house and wealth {are} the inheritance of fathers, but a wife who acts prudently {is} from Yahweh.

UST

¹⁴ We can inherit houses and money from our parents, but a sensible wife is from Yahweh.

Proverbs 19:15

Laziness throws a person into a deep sleep

This speaks of how laziness causes a person to sleep a lot as if laziness forcefully throws the person into sleep. Alternate translation: "Laziness makes a person sleep a lot" or "A lazy person sleeps a lot" (See: [Personification](#))

go hungry

This is an idiom which means to not eat. Alternate translation: "not eat" or "be hungry" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

¹⁵ Laziness causes deep sleep to fall, and the appetite of slackness is hungry.

UST

¹⁵ The one who is lazy finds that sleep comes easily to him, but anyone who refuses to work will go hungry.

Proverbs 19:16

the command

Alternate translation: "the command that he was taught"

guards his life

Alternate translation: "protects his life"

his ways

This is an idiom which refers to how he lives. Alternate translation: "the way that he lives" or "how he lives" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

16 One who keeps a command {is} one who keeps his life; one who despises his ways will die.

UST

16 The one who follows the command he was taught puts a guard over his life, but the one who does not think about how he lives his life will die.

Proverbs 19:17

Whoever is kind to the poor lends to Yahweh

Yahweh considers kindness shown to the poor to be kindness shown to him. One of the ways people are kind to the poor is by giving. Alternate translation: "The person who gives to the poor is giving to Yahweh" (See: [Metaphor](#))

the poor

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

ULT

17 One who shows favor to the lowly {is} one who lends to Yahweh, and he will repay to him his recompense.

UST

17 One who is kind to the poor, it is as if he were lending to Yahweh; and Yahweh will pay him for what he did.

Proverbs 19:18

while there is hope

This refers to while the child is young and will still accept discipline and instruction. The full meaning of this can be made clear. Alternate translation: “while he is young” or “while he can still be taught” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

and do not set your desire on putting him to death

This could mean: (1) this phrase describes punishing your child. Alternate translation: “but do not punish him so severely that he might die” or (2) this phrase describes what it is like if you do not punish your child. Alternate translation: “for if you do not punish him you are helping him destroy himself” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

set your desire on putting him

This idiom means to be determined to cause something to happen. Alternate translation: “be determined to put him” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

18 Discipline your son when there is hope, and do not set your life to putting him to death.

UST

18 Train your children and give them discipline while it is still possible to rescue them; but do not allow them to offend you so much that you consider taking their lives.

Proverbs 19:19

A hot-tempered person

This idiom refers to a person who is easily angered. Alternate translation: “A person who does not control his temper” or “A person who becomes angry quickly” (See: [Idiom](#))

must pay the penalty

This refers to the person bearing the consequences for what happens when he gets angry. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. Alternate translation: “must bear the consequences of his anger” or “must bear the consequences of what he does in his anger” (See: [Idiom](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

if you rescue him

“if you save him.” This refers to rescuing him when he has acted out of his anger. The meaning of this can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “if you rescue him after he has had an outburst” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

a second time

“another time” or “again” (See: [Ordinal Numbers](#))

ULT

19 One great of heat {is} one who lifts up a fine; for if you rescue, then you will have to do so again.

UST

19 A hot-tempered person will pay a price for his anger; if you rescue him after he had has an outburst, you will have to do it again and again.

Proverbs 19:20

Listen to advice and accept instruction

These two phrases mean basically the same and are repeated to emphasize how important it is. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Listen to advice

This is an idiom. Here “listening” does not mean to merely listen, but to learn from the advice you are given and to follow it. Alternate translation: “Pay attention to advice” or “Follow advice” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

20 Listen to counsel and accept instruction, so that you will become wise in your end.

UST

20 Pay attention to good guidance and let others teach you so that you can become wise by the end of your life.

Proverbs 19:21

in a person's heart

Here the "heart" is used to refer to the "mind" to emphasize a person's desire. Alternate translation: "in a person's mind" or "that a person desires" (See: [Metonymy](#))

the purpose of Yahweh

Alternate translation: "Yahweh's purpose" or "Yahweh's plans"

that will stand

This idiom means to "happen." Alternate translation: "that will happen" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

21 Many are the plans in the heart of a man, but the counsel of Yahweh, it will stand.

UST

21 A person has many plans that come from within him, but Yahweh has his own plans, and he will carry them out.

Proverbs 19:22

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²² The desire of a man {is} covenant faithfulness, and better {is} one who is poor than a man of lying.

UST

²² A person wants loyalty, it is better to be poor than to tell a lie to a judge in court in order to get money.

Proverbs 19:23

Honor for Yahweh leads people to life; anyone who has it will be satisfied

This means that they will live a long time if they honor Yahweh. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. Alternate translation: "Those who honor Yahweh will live a long time; anyone who honors Yahweh will be satisfied" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

anyone who has it

Here the word "it" refers to "honor for Yahweh."

satisfied and not afflicted by harm

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: "satisfied; nothing will harm him" or "satisfied; he will be safe" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²³ The fear of Yahweh {is} to life and the satisfied one will stay overnight; he will not be visited by evil.

UST

²³ Anyone who has respect for Yahweh will live a long life; such a person who has this respect for Yahweh will be satisfied, and will come to no harm.

Proverbs 19:24

sluggard

See how you translated this word in [Proverbs 10:26](#).

buries his hand in the dish

“dips his hand in the dish” or “puts his hand in his plate.” In the Biblical culture people usually ate with their hands as people do in many cultures today.

he will not even bring it back up to his mouth

He does not bring his hand back to his mouth because he is too lazy. Alternate translation: “but he is too lazy to bring his hand up to his mouth to feed himself” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²⁴ A lazy one hides his hand in the dish; he will not even return it to his mouth.

UST

²⁴ The lazy person puts his hand in the dish; he is not able to raise his hand up to his mouth to eat.

Proverbs 19:25

Strike a mocker, and the naive person

Alternate translation: "If you strike a mocker, the naive person"

Strike a mocker

Alternate translation: "Punish a mocker"

naive person

Alternate translation: "inexperienced person" or "immature person"

prudent

See how you translated this word in [Proverbs 12:23](#).

discipline one who is discerning, and

Alternate translation: "if you discipline one who is discerning,"

he will gain knowledge

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **knowledge**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form such as "know." Alternate translation: "he will know more" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

²⁵ Strike a mocker and a naive one will become prudent, and rebuking {is} for one who is discerning, he will discern knowledge.

UST

²⁵ If you punish someone who mocks others, an uninstructed person will learn how to be prudent. If you correct someone who has understanding, he will gain more knowledge.

Proverbs 19:26

brings shame and reproach

This could mean: (1) he brings it to himself. Alternate translation: “brings shame and reproach to himself” or (2) he brings it to his family. Alternate translation: “brings shame and reproach to his family” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²⁶ One who does violence {to} a father, who causes a mother to flee, {is} a son who causes shame and causes disgrace.

UST

²⁶ Someone who steals from his father and alienates his mother brings shame and disgrace to himself.

Proverbs 19:27

If you cease to hear instruction

Here “listening and obeying” is spoken of as if it were “hearing.”
Alternate translation: “If you stop paying attention to instruction” or “If you stop obeying instruction” (See: [Metonymy](#))

you will stray from

Alternate translation: “you will abandon” or “you will turn your back on”

the words of knowledge

Alternate translation: “knowledge”

ULT

²⁷ My son, cease to hear instruction, stray from the words of knowledge.

UST

²⁷ My son, if you will not listen to the teaching, you will wander away from the words of knowledge.

Proverbs 19:28

the mouth of the wicked swallows iniquity

This speaks of how wicked people enjoy doing evil by saying that they swallow iniquity as easily as they swallow food. Alternate translation: “the wicked enjoy doing evil as much as they enjoy eating food” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the mouth of the wicked swallows

The phrase “the mouth of the wicked” represents wicked people. Alternate translation: “wicked people swallow” or “the wicked swallow” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

the wicked

This refers to wicked people. Alternate translation: “the wicked person” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

ULT

28 A witness of worthlessness mocks justice and the mouth of the wicked ones swallows iniquity.

UST

28 A lying witness laughs at anyone who acts justly, and wicked people act sinfully as easily as they eat food.

Proverbs 19:29

Condemnation is ready for mockers and flogging for

The words “condemnation” and “flogging” may be expressed as verbs. Alternate translation: “Yahweh is ready to condemn mockers and to flog” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

flogging for the backs of fools

The words “is ready” are understood from the previous phrase and may be repeated. Alternate translation: “flogging is ready for the backs of fools” or “he is ready to flog the backs” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

flogging

beating with a whip or stick

ULT

²⁹ Judgments are prepared for the mockers, and blows for the back of fools.

UST

²⁹ Yahweh is ready to punish those who make themselves out to be better than other people, and he is ready to flog the backs of fools.

Proverbs 20

Proverbs 20 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 20 continues the section of the book which is attributed to Solomon and is filled mainly with short, individual proverbs.

Special concepts in this chapter

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often including contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility, integrity/crookedness. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 20:1

Wine is a mocker and strong drink is a brawler

These two phrases mean basically the same thing and are combined to emphasize the danger of too much alcohol. (See: [Parallelism](#))

Wine is a mocker

Here “wine” refers to the person who is drunk with wine. Alternate translation: “A person who is drunk with wine mocks” (See: [Metonymy](#))

strong drink is a brawler

Here “strong drink” refers to a person who is drunk with strong drink. Alternate translation: “a person who is drunk with strong drink starts fights” (See: [Metonymy](#))

a brawler

a person who fights noisily, usually in a public place

whoever is led astray by drink is not wise

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: “whoever drinks until they can no longer think clearly” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

by drink

Here “drink” refers to alcoholic drinks

is not wise

This means the opposite of “wise” which is “foolish.” Alternate translation: “is foolish” (See: [Litotes](#))

ULT

¹ Wine {is} a mocker, intoxicating drink {is} one who is loud, and everyone who goes astray by it is not wise.

UST

¹ Wine makes you loud, and strong drink makes you foolish; whoever lets alcohol lead them to where they get lost is not wise.

Proverbs 20:2

The fear of a king is like the fear of a young lion that is roaring

This compares how people fear a king's wrath to how they fear a young roaring lion. Alternate translation: "The king's wrath makes people as afraid as if they were facing a young lion roaring at them" (See: [Simile](#))

makes him angry

Alternate translation: "makes the king angry"

forfeits his life

This refers to being killed. "Life" here refers to physical life. Alternate translation: "will die" (See: [Euphemism](#))

ULT

² The terror of a king {is} a growling like the young lion; one who infuriates him {is} one who forfeits his life.

UST

² The king's wrath makes people as afraid as if they were facing a young lion roaring at them; the person who makes a king angry is giving up his own life.

Proverbs 20:3

It is an honor

“It is honorable.” This means that a person will be honored.

every fool jumps into an argument

This speaks of entering an argument quickly as if the argument were something the fool physically jumped into. Alternate translation: “every fool quickly gets into an argument” or “every fool is quick to join an argument” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³ Cessation from strife {is} honor for a man, but every fool breaks out.

UST

³ It is an honor to stay out of an argument, but every fool is ready to join one.

Proverbs 20:4

plow

to prepare land for planting

in autumn

Alternate translation: "during the season for planting crops"

but will have nothing

This means that there will be nothing growing in his field for him to harvest. Alternate translation: "but will have nothing to harvest" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁴ A lazy one will not plow in winter, and he begs in the harvest but there is nothing.

UST

⁴ The lazy person is not willing to plow his crops again in autumn, and when it is harvest time, he looks, but there is nothing growing in his field.

Proverbs 20:5

The purpose in a human heart is like deep water

This speaks of how difficult it is to understand the reasons for a person's actions by comparing it to the difficulty of reaching the water in a deep well. Alternate translation: "It is as difficult to understand the purpose in the human heart as it is to reach the water in a deep well" or "The purpose of in the human heart is very difficult to understand" (See: [Simile](#))

someone with understanding

Alternate translation: "a person who has understanding"

will draw it out

This speaks of figuring out the purpose of the human heart as if it was water being drawn from a deep well. Alternate translation: "will cause the purpose to be known" or "will figure it out" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁵ Counsel in the heart of a man {is} deep waters, and a man of understanding will draw it out.

UST

⁵ The purposes within a person's life are like waters in a deep well, but a person who has understanding is able to draw them out.

Proverbs 20:6

is loyal

Alternate translation: "is faithful" or "is trustworthy"

but who can find one who is faithful?

The implicit answer is "few can find someone like that." This rhetorical question can be written as a statement. Alternate translation: "but few men can find a person who is faithful!" or "but it is hard to find a person who really is faithful!" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

6 Many a man proclaims, each man, his loyalty, but who can find a man of faithfulness?

UST

6 Many people proclaim that they can be trusted to do what they promise, but it is very difficult to find one who can really be trusted.

Proverbs 20:7

walks in his integrity

Here walking refers to living. See how you translated this phrase in [Proverbs 19:1](#). Alternate translation: “lives by his integrity” or “lives an honest life” (See: [Idiom](#))

his sons who follow after him

This simply means that they “follow after him” since they are younger than he and his children. If this phrase is awkward in your language it may be left to be implied. Alternate translation: “his sons after him” or “his sons” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁷ A righteous one {is} one who walks about in his integrity; blessed {are} his sons after him.

UST

⁷ The person who always does right—how fortunate will be his children who follow after him.

Proverbs 20:8

is winnowing with his eyes all the evil that is before him

This speaks of the king judging between various types of evil as if he were separating them as a person winnows grain. Alternate translation: "sees and sorts the different kinds of evils that are brought before him" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁸ A king who sits on the throne of judgment {is} one who scatters every evil with his eyes.

UST

⁸ A king who sits on his throne to act as a judge can distinguish between all the kinds of evil before him just by looking at them.

Proverbs 20:9

Who can say, “I have kept my heart pure; I am clean from my sin”?

The implicit answer to this question is, “No one can say that.” This rhetorical question can be written as a statement. Alternate translation: “No one can say that his heart is clean and that he is free from sin” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

my heart

Here a person’s “heart” refers to his thoughts and desires. Alternate translation: “my thoughts” (See: [Metonymy](#))

clean

A person who God considers spiritually acceptable is spoken of as if the person were physically clean. (See: [Metaphor](#))

I am clean from my sin

Alternate translation: “I am without sin” or “I have not sinned”

ULT

⁹ Who can say, “I have made my heart pure, I am clean from my sin”?

UST

⁹ No one can truthfully say, “I have kept my heart pure, and I am free from my sins.”

Proverbs 20:10

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁰ Stone and stone, ephah and ephah, even the two of them {are} an abomination of Yahweh.

UST

¹⁰ Uneven weights, improperly marked, and unequal measures, that favor the one who is selling, Yahweh hates both of them.

Proverbs 20:11

Even a youth is known by his actions

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 know a young man by his actions" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

whether his conduct is pure and upright

Alternate translation: "whether his conduct is pure and upright or not"

his conduct

Alternate translation: "his deeds" or "what he does"

pure and upright

These two words basically mean the same thing and emphasize how good this young person is. They can be combined into one word if necessary. Alternate translation: "pure" (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

11 Even a young man will cause himself to be recognized by his deeds, if pure and if upright {is} his work.

UST

11 Also, even a youth is known by what he does, it is clear whether what he does is pure and respectable or not.

Proverbs 20:12

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹² An ear that hears and an eye that sees, Yahweh made even the two of them.

UST

¹² Ears that hear and eyes that see—
Yahweh made them both.

Proverbs 20:13

come to poverty

The phrase “come to” here means to transition into a new situation; to become. Alternate translation: “become poor” (See: [Idiom](#))

open your eyes

Here “opening one’s eyes” is spoken of as “being awake.” Alternate translation: “stay awake” or “be alert” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

13 Do not love sleep lest you become impoverished; open your eyes, be satisfied with bread.

UST

13 If you love to sleep all the time, you will become poor; stay awake when you should be at work and you will have plenty to eat.

Proverbs 20:14

“Bad! Bad!” says the buyer, but when he goes away he boasts

Here a buyer is criticizing what someone is selling to get a low price from him. After he buys he boasts about the good price that he persuaded the seller to give him. The full meaning of this can be made clear. Alternate translation: “Bad! Bad!” says the buyer criticizing the seller’s wares, but after he buys he goes away he boasting about the low price that he paid” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

14 “Bad! Bad!” says the one who buys, but when he leaves him, then he boasts.

UST

14 “It is no good,” the buyer says when he is bargaining with you about the price. But after he buys it, he goes and boasts to his friends what a good price he bought it for.

Proverbs 20:15

lips of knowledge are a precious jewel

This speaks of the value of lips of knowledge by comparing them to a precious jewel. Alternate translation: “lips of knowledge are as valuable as an expensive jewel” (See: [Metaphor](#))

lips of knowledge

Here “words” are referred to as “lips.” Alternate translation: “wise words” or “words of knowledge” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

15 There is gold and an abundance of corals, but lips of knowledge {are} a vessel of preciousness.

UST

15 Consider the value of gold and many expensive jewels, but the words of the one who has knowledge are like precious jewels.

Proverbs 20:16

Take a garment of one who has put up security for a stranger

When lending money, the lender would take something from the borrower, such as a garment, as a guarantee of repayment. He would return it after the money was repaid. If the borrower was too poor, someone else could give something to the lender as a guarantee for him. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. Alternate translation: "Take a garment as security from the one who guarantees that what a stranger has borrowed will be paid back" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

puts up security

This is an idiom. It means that someone gives something to a lender as a guarantee that what was borrowed will be paid. Alternate translation: "guarantees that what has been borrowed will be paid back" or "promises to pay a loan" (See: [Idiom](#))

hold it in pledge

This is an idiom. To "hold something in pledge" means to hold on to something that someone has given as a pledge, or promise, that he will pay a debt. Alternate translation: "hold onto his coat as a guarantee of repayment" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

16 Take his garment when he has pledged for a stranger, and hold it in pledge for a foreign woman.

UST

16 Take the expensive coat of the person who guarantees a loan for a stranger, so it can be sold if the debt is not paid back. And if he makes a pledge for an immoral woman, hold his coat as a guarantee for the loan he makes.

Proverbs 20:17

Bread gained by deceit

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: "Bread that someone gained by deceit" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

by deceit

The word "deceit" can be expressed as a verb. Alternate translation: "by deceiving others" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

Bread

Here "bread" refers to food in general. Alternate translation: "Food" (See: [Metonymy](#))

tastes sweet

Alternate translation: "tastes good"

but afterward his mouth will be full of gravel

This speaks of the food tasting unpleasant as if his mouth were actually full of gravel instead of food. Alternate translation: "but afterwards it tastes like gravel in his mouth" or "but soon it tastes like sand in his mouth" (See: [Metaphor](#))

gravel

small pieces of rock

ULT

17 Bread of falsehood {is} sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel.

UST

17 Bread gotten by telling a lie, may taste sweet, but later his mouth will be like it was full of gravel, because of his lies.

Proverbs 20:18

Plans are established by advice

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 establish plans based on advice" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

18 Plans are established by counsel, and by deliberation make war.

UST

18 Good plans are made in consultation with good advisors, and only with wise advisors giving their advice should anyone go to war.

Proverbs 20:19

A gossip

This means someone who gossips a lot.

you should not associate with

Alternate translation: "you should not be friends with"

ULT

¹⁹ One who walks in slander {is} one who uncovers a secret, and do not associate yourself with one who opens his lips.

UST

¹⁹ A gossip tells secrets, so stay away from people who talk too much.

Proverbs 20:20

If a person curses

This means if a someone express a desire that bad things will happen to someone else.

his lamp will be snuffed out in the middle of darkness

This speaks of a person dying suddenly and unexpectedly as if his life were a lamp snuffed out in the dark. Alternate translation: "his life will end as suddenly as the light of a lamp that is snuffed out in the dark" or "he will die suddenly" (See: [Metaphor](#))

his lamp will be snuffed out

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: "his lamp will go out" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

his lamp

This refers to a lamp with a burning flame. Here the lamp's flame is referred to as the lamp itself. Alternate translation: "the flame of his lamp" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

snuffed out

to cause a flame to go out

ULT

²⁰ One who curses his father and his mother, his lamp will be extinguished in the pupil of darkness.

UST

²⁰ If a person curses his father or his mother, his life will be put out as a light that is snuffed out.

Proverbs 20:21

at the beginning

This refers to a person receiving his inheritance before he is supposed to receive it. The full meaning of this statement can be made clear. Alternate translation: “before the right time” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²¹ An inheritance gained quickly in the beginning, its end will not be blessed.

UST

²¹ An inheritance that comes to a person quickly, may do some good at the beginning, but later it will do less good for the person who received it.

Proverbs 20:22

I will pay you back

This means to do wrong to someone because they have done wrong to you. Alternate translation: "I will punish you" (See: [Idiom](#))

Wait for Yahweh

This means to have faith that Yahweh will deal with the situation. Alternate translation: "Have faith in Yahweh" or "Hope in Yahweh" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

²² Do not say, "I will repay evil." Wait for Yahweh and he will save you.

UST

²² Do not say, "I will pay you back for the wrong you did to me." Wait for Yahweh and he will take care of the matter.

Proverbs 20:23

Yahweh hates unequal weights and dishonest scales are not good

These two phrases basically mean the same thing and are combined to emphasize how bad this is. (See: [Parallelism](#))

ULT

²³ Stone and stone {are} an abomination of Yahweh, and scales of deceit {are} not good.

UST

²³ Yahweh detests those who use dishonest scales and weights that are not accurate.

Proverbs 20:24

A person's steps are directed by Yahweh

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: "Yahweh directs a person's steps" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

A person's steps

This refers to the various things a person does. Alternate translation: "A person's actions" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

how then can he understand his way?

The implicit answer is that he cannot understand it. This rhetorical question may be written as a statement. Alternate translation: "therefore, a person cannot understand his way" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

understand his way

This is an idiom. The phrase "his way" refers to the person's life. Alternate translation: "understand why some things happen in his life" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

24 The steps of a man {are} from Yahweh, and how can a man understand his way?

UST

24 Yahweh is the one who directs the way a person will go. So then, how can someone understand where he is going?

Proverbs 20:25

It is a snare

This speaks of something being dangerous as if it were a trap or a snare. Alternate translation: "It is dangerous" (See: [Metaphor](#))

to say rashly

to say something quickly and without careful consideration of what it might mean

making his vow

The person has made a vow declaring that something is holy and dedicated to Yahweh. Alternate translation: "dedicating it to Yahweh" or "declaring it holy" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²⁵ A snare of a man: he says rashly, "{It is} holy," and after vows considers.

UST

²⁵ It is dangerous to declare that something is holy to Yahweh, and it is worse to think about the meaning of holiness only after you have made a vow.

Proverbs 20:26

winnows the wicked

This speaks of the king separating the wicked people as if they were grain that he was winnowing. Alternate translation: “separates the wicked” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the wicked

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

he turns a threshing wheel over them

This speaks of the king punishing the wicked as if he were driving a threshing wheel over them. Alternate translation: “he severely punishes them” (See: [Metaphor](#))

threshing wheel

“threshing cart.” This is a tool used to crush grain and help separate it from the chaff.

ULT

26 A wise king {is} one who scatters the wicked, and he brings back a wheel over them.

UST

26 A king who is wise will separate the wicked from among his people; then he will severely punish those wicked people.

Proverbs 20:27

The spirit of a person is the lamp of Yahweh, searching all his inmost parts

This speaks of a person's spirit as if it were a lamp. A person's spirit helps him to understand his inner self. Alternate translation: "Yahweh has given us a spirit to understand our deepest selves, just as a lamp makes you see in the dark" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁷ The spirit of a man {is} the lamp of Yahweh, searching all the inner rooms of the belly.

UST

²⁷ The life-giving spirit within a man is the light shining from Yahweh within us, it shines deep within and shows what is hidden deep inside us.

Proverbs 20:28

Covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness preserve the king

The abstract nouns “faithfulness” and “trustworthiness” can be stated as “faithful” and “trustworthy.” This can also be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “The king preserves himself by being trustworthy and faithful to the covenant” (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

preserve the king

keep the king safe from harm

his throne is made secure by love

Here “throne” represents the king’s power to rule. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **love**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Also, 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: “a king ensures that he will rule for a long time by loving others” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁸ A king guards covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness, and his throne is sustained by covenant faithfulness.

UST

²⁸ Love and faithfulness preserve the life of the king; his throne is made strong by steadfast love.

Proverbs 20:29

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁹ The splendor of young men {is} their strength and the adornment of old ones {is} gray hair.

UST

²⁹ The honor of young people is seen in how strong they are, but the splendor of old people is in their gray hair.

Proverbs 20:30

Blows that make a wound cleanse away evil and beatings make the innermost parts clean

Both statements mean the same thing and are repeated for emphasis. Using physical punishment to correct a person is spoken of as if the evil were dirt and the beatings cleansed him. Alternate translation: "Beating a person who has done wrong will correct him and cause him to be a better person" (See: [Parallelism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³⁰ Strikes of a wound cleanse away evil and blows of the inner rooms of the belly.

UST

³⁰ When we are beaten, the wound that results may cleanse away evil, and beatings make our inmost self clean.

Proverbs 21

Proverbs 21 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 21 continues the section of the book which is attributed to Solomon and is filled mainly with short, individual proverbs.

Special concepts in this chapter

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often including contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility, integrity/crookedness. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 21:1

The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of Yahweh

The writer speaks of the king's heart as if it were an irrigation ditch in a dry area through which people direct water to plants that need it. Alternate translation: "Yahweh controls the king's heart as a man directs water for irrigation" (See: [Metaphor](#))

The king's heart

The heart is a metaphor for what a person thinks and what he wants to do. Alternate translation: "The king's thoughts and actions" or "What the king thinks and what he wants to do" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹ The heart of a king {is} channels of water in the hand of Yahweh; he turns it in accordance with all that he desires.

UST

¹ The motives of the king are directed like a stream of water by Yahweh; he diverts the king like he directs the flow of water, in any way he wants.

Proverbs 21:2

Every person's way is right in his own eyes

The eyes represent seeing, and seeing represents thoughts or judgment. The writer speaks of what a person does as if it that person were walking down a path. Alternate translation: "Every person thinks that what he does is good" or "Every person judges what he does as good" (See: [Metaphor](#))

who weighs the hearts

The writer speaks of Yahweh deciding whether a person desires to do what is right as if Yahweh were looking at a physical object and deciding whether it is of good quality. Alternate translation: "who will judge the motives" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

² Every way of a man {is} right in his eyes, but Yahweh weighs hearts.

UST

² When a person looks at his own life, everything he does may seem right to him, but what matters is what Yahweh thinks about what he does.

Proverbs 21:3

To do what is right

Alternate translation: "To do what Yahweh thinks is right"

To do what is ... just

Alternate translation: "To treat people the way Yahweh wants people to treat other people"

just is more acceptable to Yahweh

Alternate translation: "just—Yahweh wants this more"

ULT

³ To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to Yahweh than a sacrifice.

UST

³ Doing what is right and just is more acceptable to Yahweh than offering sacrifices to him.

Proverbs 21:4

Haughty eyes and a proud heart

The words “eyes” and “heart” are synecdoches for a person who considers himself better than other people and wants other people to know it. Alternate translation: “People who want others to think that they are better than other people” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Doublet](#))

Haughty eyes

This is a synecdoche for a person who wants others to know that he thinks he is better than they are. (See: [Synecdoche](#))

proud heart

This is a synecdoche for a person who thinks he is better than others. (See: [Synecdoche](#))

the lamp of the wicked

The things that help the wicked are spoken of as a lamp. Alternate translation: “the things that help a wicked person like a lamp helps to see in the dark” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ Height of eyes and broadness of heart, the lamp of wicked ones, {are} sin.

UST

⁴ When you show people that you think you are better than they, and add to that the pride you have within you—this shines like a light and it tells others you are a wicked person— they are examples of sin.

Proverbs 21:5

the diligent

This nominal adjective can be translated as a noun phrase. Alternate translation: “a diligent man” or “a man who works hard” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

comes only to poverty

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **poverty**, you could express the same idea with an adjective. Alternate translation: “only becomes poor” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

⁵ The plans of the diligent one {are} surely to abundance, but everyone who acts hastily {is} surely to poverty.

UST

⁵ Those who work hard and who carry out their plans will be successful, but everyone who takes action too quickly and with little planning, make themselves poor.

Proverbs 21:6

Acquiring riches

Alternate translation: "Gaining wealth"

a lying tongue

The tongue is a metonym for the words a person uses the tongue to speak. Alternate translation: "speaking lies" (See: [Metonymy](#))

a fleeting vapor

The writer likens the riches a person gains by lying to a mist that quickly goes away in the morning. Alternate translation: "a disappearing mist" (See: [Metaphor](#))

a snare that kills

The writer speaks of the riches that a person gains by lying as if it were the bait in a hunter's trap; the word "snare" is a metonym for the bait that attracts the animal into the snare. (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁶ Work of treasures by a tongue of falsehood {is} a fleeting vapor; those that seek death.

UST

⁶ When someone becomes rich because he tells lies, that wealth fades away like the mist; that wealth will kill him.

Proverbs 21:7

The violence of the wicked will drag them away

The writer speaks as though violence were a person who could drag other people away. God will punish wicked people who harm their innocent neighbors. (See: [Personification](#))

violence of the wicked

Here, **violence** refers to violent deeds or things people do to harm their innocent neighbors. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **violence**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. The word **wicked** is a nominal adjective that refers to wicked people. Alternate translation: "The violent actions of wicked people" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#) and [Nominal Adjectives](#))

drag them away

This phrase refers to dragging a net through water to catch fish. The wicked being destroyed by their own actions is spoken of as if their actions trapped them in a net like one would catch fish. AT "drag them away like fish" or "destroy them as easily as one catches fish in a net" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁷ The violence of wicked ones will sweep them away, for they refuse to do justice.

UST

⁷ When wicked people act with violence, they are destroyed by their own violence, because they refuse to do what is right.

Proverbs 21:8

The way of a guilty person is crooked

This compares the way one lives to a crooked road one may travel. This is also an idiom. Alternate translation: "The way a guilty person lives is crooked" (See: [Idiom](#) and [Metaphor](#))

crooked

Here "crooked" means bent or not straight. This is a metaphor for morally wrong. Alternate translation: "wrong" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁸ The way of a guilty man {is} crooked, but the pure one, his work {is} upright.

UST

⁸ A guilty person follows a path covered with lies, but the innocent chooses to do what is right.

Proverbs 21:9

a corner of the roof

Houses in those days had flat roofs. Ancient Israelites spent much time on their roofs, where it was often cooler than inside the house, and sometimes people would build a shelter large enough for a person to sleep in on one corner of the roof. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

quarrelsome wife

Alternate translation: "wife who often argues and complains"

ULT

⁹ Better to dwell on the corner of a roof than with a woman of quarrels and a house of companionship.

UST

⁹ It is better to live alone in the corner of a housetop than inside a house with a wife who always wants to argue with you.

Proverbs 21:10

The appetite of the wicked craves evil

The writer speaks of a person's appetite, the physical desire for food and drink, as if it were a person who could desire something. The word "wicked" is a nominal adjective that refers to evil people, and the word "evil" is a nominal adjective that refers to evil deeds. Alternate translation: "Evil people desire to do evil deeds just as they desire to eat and drink" (See: [Personification](#) and [Nominal Adjectives](#))

craves

desires strongly

his neighbor finds no favor in his eyes

The idiom to "find favor" means to have someone approve of and act kindly towards the one who finds favor. Also, the eyes represent seeing, and seeing represents a person's thoughts and attitude towards another person. Alternate translation: "his neighbor does not receive favor from him" or "he does not act kindly towards his neighbor" (See: [Idiom](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

10 The spirit of the wicked one craves evil; his neighbor is not shown favor in his eyes.

UST

10 The wicked man craves evil more than anything; and when he looks at his neighbor, the wicked man's eyes reveal that he is not going to be kind to his neighbor.

Proverbs 21:11

When the mocker is punished

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: “When someone punishes the mocker” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the naive

Alternate translation: “those who have no experience” or “those who are not mature”

the mocker

Alternate translation: “the person who mocks others”

when the wise person is instructed

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: “when someone instructs the wise person” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

lays hold of knowledge

Here knowledge is spoken of as if it were an object that someone could grasp and keep for himself. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

11 When fining a mocker a naive one becomes wise, and when instructing a wise one he acquires knowledge.

UST

11 When a person who acts like he is better than other people is punished, the simple—who do not know about right and wrong—are taught an important lesson, and if you teach one who is wise, they can learn even more.

Proverbs 21:12

The righteous

This could mean: (1) any righteous person or (2) “Yahweh the one who is righteous.”

watches the house

Alternate translation: “pays careful attention to the house” “looks to see what happens to the house”

he brings wicked people to disaster

Here disaster is spoken of as if it were a place that someone could be brought to. Alternate translation: “he destroys them” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

12 A righteous one considers the house of the wicked one; overturning wicked ones to calamity.

UST

12 One who does what is right watches the house where evil people live, and he confronts their wickedness and brings them to justice.

Proverbs 21:13

The one who shuts his ears to the cry of the poor

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “The one who will not listen when poor people ask for help” (See: [Idiom](#))

he will not be answered

The word “answered” is a metonym for a person hearing another person ask for help and acting to help. This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: “no one will do anything to help him” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹³ One who shuts his ears from the outcry of a lowly one, he also will cry out but will not be answered.

UST

¹³ When the poor cried out for help, there was a person who refused to listen to their cries, but when he cried out, because he covered his ears to their cries, no one heard his cries.

Proverbs 21:14

appeases anger

Alternate translation: "makes an angry person feel better so he is no longer angry"

ULT

14 A gift in secrecy subdues nose, and a bribe in the bosom, strong heat.

UST

14 Give a gift to a person who is angry with you, and it may turn away his anger; a secret gift may help a person who is angry at you to calm down.

Proverbs 21:15

When justice is done

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **justice**, you could express the same idea with a noun phrase. These words can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "When rulers do what is just" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

15 Doing justice {is} a joy for the righteous one, but a terror to those who do iniquity.

UST

15 When there is justice, those who love what is right are happy, but when there is justice, it brings great fear to those who do what is evil.

Proverbs 21:16

wanders from the way of understanding

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “no longer lives wisely” (See: [Idiom](#))

he will rest in the assembly of the dead

Alternate translation: “he will remain in the assembly of dead spirits”

ULT

16 A man wandering from the way of insight will rest in the assembly of the spirits of the dead.

UST

16 A person who does not understand right and wrong, will get lost when he tries to make decisions, he will only rest when he is dead.

Proverbs 21:17

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹⁷ A man of poverty {is} one who loves joy; one who loves wine and oil will not become rich.

UST

¹⁷ Love pleasure and it will make you poor; you cannot be rich and love to drink wine and eat expensive foods.

Proverbs 21:18

is ransom for

The word “ransom” is a metaphor for one person who takes the place of another person. Here the person who does what is wrong is punished instead of the person who does what is right. (See: [Metaphor](#))

the treacherous

a person who harms those who trust him by lying and otherwise dealing falsely

upright people

Alternate translation: “righteous people” or “honest people” or “just people”

ULT

18 A wicked one {is} a ransom for the righteous, and one who acts treacherously instead of upright ones.

UST

18 A person who does right is honored much more than a wicked man, and a good man is worth far more than one who never keeps his promise.

Proverbs 21:19

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

19 Better to dwell in a land of wilderness than {with} a wife of quarrels and vexation.

UST

19 It is better to live alone in a desert than with a wife who is always stirring up conflicts and never stops complaining.

Proverbs 21:20

wise

This nominal adjective can be translated as a noun phrase. Alternate translation: “wise person” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

swallows it all up

Alternate translation: “uses it all for no good purpose” or “wastes it”

ULT

20 Desirable treasure and oil {are} in the abode of a wise one, but a foolish man swallows it up.

UST

20 Those who are wise have very precious treasures and they live very well, but foolish people waste all they have.

Proverbs 21:21

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²¹ One who pursues righteousness and covenant faithfulness will find life, righteousness, and honor.

UST

²¹ A person who does right and is kind, lives a good life, makes wise decisions, and receives honor from others.

Proverbs 21:22

scales the city

Alternate translation: "climbs up and over the wall that surrounds the city"

the city of the mighty ones

Alternate translation: "a city in which mighty men are living" or "a city of mighty warriors"

he brings down

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: "he destroys" (See: [Idiom](#))

the stronghold in which they trusted

Alternate translation: "the walls and towers around the city that they did not think anyone would be able to get past into the city, so they felt safe"

ULT

22 A wise one ascends a city of mighty ones and he brings down the strength of its confidence.

UST

22 When a wise leader goes up against a city of mighty warriors, he knows how to bring down the defenses of the city and he conquers it.

Proverbs 21:23

Whoever guards his mouth and tongue

Both “mouth” and “tongue” refer to what a person says. Alternate translation: “Whoever is careful in what he says” (See: [Doublet](#) and [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²³ One who keeps his mouth and his tongue {is} one who keeps his life from distress.

UST

²³ Be careful, if you could put a guard to watch over the words that come out of your mouth and tongue, you would keep away from a lot of trouble.

Proverbs 21:24

The proud and haughty person ... acts with arrogant pride

Alternate translation: "You can expect a proud and haughty people to act with arrogant pride"

proud and haughty

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

"Mocker" is his name

The word "name" is a metonym for what people would call him. Alternate translation: "a mocker is what you should call him" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²⁴ An insolent, proud one, mocker {is} his name, acting in the overflow of insolence.

UST

²⁴ The mocker thinks he is better than other people, and his actions come from his pride and his arrogance.

Proverbs 21:25

The desire of the lazy kills him

The writer speaks of what a person wants as if it were a person who could kill a lazy person. Here the lazy person wants to be idle and not work. Alternate translation: "A lazy person only wants to be idle, and because of that he will die" or "A lazy person will die because he does not want to work" (See: [Personification](#) and [Nominal Adjectives](#))

his hands refuse

The hand is a synecdoche for the person. Alternate translation: "he refuses" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

²⁵ The desire of the lazy one causes him to die, for his hands refuse to work.

UST

²⁵ The things that the lazy person chooses to do will kill him; he refuses to work.

Proverbs 21:26

craves

desires strongly

gives and does not hold back

The phrase “does not hold back” can be stated positively, and what he gives can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “gives everything he should” or “gives generously” (See: [Litotes](#))

ULT

²⁶ All the day he desires desire for himself, but a righteous one gives and does not withhold.

UST

²⁶ All day long he desires things—he could not desire for more things— but whoever does right gives gifts to others, and he never holds back anything that is good.

Proverbs 21:27

The sacrifice of the wicked is detestable

The writer does not mention Yahweh here, as in [Proverbs 15:8](#), but the reader should understand that it is Yahweh who detests the sacrifice of the wicked.

the wicked

The nominal adjective “wicked” can be translated as a noun phrase. Alternate translation: “the wicked person” or “wicked people” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

it is even more detestable

Alternate translation: “Yahweh detests the sacrifice even more”

ULT

27 The sacrifice of the wicked ones {is} an abomination; how much more when he brings it with a scheme.

UST

27 When the wicked decide to give an offering to Yahweh, Yahweh hates it, and Yahweh hates it even more when the wicked man comes to worship Yahweh in order to get something for himself.

Proverbs 21:28

will speak for all time

This is because people will never forget what he said.

ULT

²⁸ A witness of falsehoods will perish, but the man who listens will speak to perpetuity.

UST

²⁸ Those who lie about other people, will die, but the one who takes time to listen—when he says something, people will remember it.

Proverbs 21:29

makes his face hard

This could mean: (1) “pretends to be courageous” or (2) “will not listen to correction.” (See: [Idiom](#))

is certain about his ways

A person’s actions are spoken of as if they were a path upon which the person walks. Alternate translation: “is certain about what he does” or “is confident about what he does” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

29 A man of wickedness makes firm with his face, but an upright one, he discerns his ways. ^[1]

UST

29 The wicked man acts as if he were strong, but an honest man has thought about what to do and is certain about it.

Proverbs 21:30

There is no wisdom, there is no understanding, and there is no advice that

The words “there is” are repeated to emphasize the abstract nouns “wisdom,” “understanding,” and “advice.” Yahweh is greater than anything that anyone can know or think or say. Your language may require that you not repeat “there is no.” The abstract nouns can be translated as adjectives or verbs. Alternate translation: “There is no wise person, there is no one who understands anything, and there is no one who tells others what to do who” or “There is no wisdom, understanding, or advice that” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

stand against Yahweh

Alternate translation: “defeat Yahweh” or “work against what Yahweh wants to do” or “show that he is right and Yahweh is wrong”

ULT

³⁰ There is no wisdom and there is no understanding and there is no counsel in opposition to Yahweh.

UST

³⁰ Can there be any wisdom, any understanding, or any advice, that is wiser than Yahweh?

Proverbs 21:31

The horse is prepared for the day of battle

These words can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "Soldiers prepare horses for the day of battle" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

the day of battle

The word "day" refers to time that may be longer or shorter than a day. Alternate translation: "when there is a battle" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

31 A horse is prepared for the day of battle, but the salvation belongs to Yahweh.

UST

31 The groomsman prepares the horse for the day of battle, but the outcome of the battle, the winner or the loser, is determined by Yahweh.

Proverbs 22

Proverbs 22 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 22 ends the section of the book which is attributed to Solomon and is filled mainly with short, individual proverbs.

The second half of this chapter and the first half of the next chapter are attributed to the "Wise Men." The exact identity of the men is unknown.

Special concepts in this chapter

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often including contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility, integrity/crookedness. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Rhetorical questions

With this new section of proverbs, the author begins to use many rhetorical questions. The obvious answers should convince the reader. (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Proverbs 22:1

A good name is to be chosen over great riches

These words can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "A person should choose a good name rather than great riches" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

A good name

Alternate translation: "To have others think that one is a good person"

ULT

¹ A name {is} to be chosen more than much riches; favor {is} better than silver and than gold.

UST

¹ Being a person who keeps his word is more important than having great riches, and being a person who everyone respects for doing right, is better than having silver and gold.

Proverbs 22:2

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

² A rich one and one who is poor meet together; Yahweh {is} the maker of all of them.

UST

² People who are rich and people who are poor have at least one thing in common— Yahweh made both of them.

Proverbs 22:3

A prudent man

"A man who is wise" or "A man who has good sense." See how you translated "prudent" in [Proverbs 12:16](#).

the naive

Alternate translation: "the inexperienced and immature"

ULT

³ A prudent one sees evil and hides himself, but naive ones pass on and they are fined.

UST

³ One who has good sense takes cover when he sees trouble coming, but those who have no experience or knowledge rush ahead into danger.

Proverbs 22:4

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁴ The reward of humility, the fear of Yahweh, {is} riches and honor and life.

UST

⁴ When a person is humble and gives Yahweh the respect he deserves, these are his rewards: Riches, and honor, and life.

Proverbs 22:5

Thorns and snares lie in the path of the perverse

The writer speaks of the way perverse people live as if it were a path on which the perverse will have trouble because of the natural “thorns” and man-made “snares.” (See: [Metaphor](#))

snares

traps to catch animals

the perverse

This nominal adjective can be translated as a noun phrase. Alternate translation: “perverse people” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

whoever guards his life

A person doing what he needs to do so he can live a long time is spoken of as if that person were keeping thieves away from a physical object. Alternate translation: “people who want to live a long time” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁵ Thorns, snares {are} in the way of the perverse one; one who guards his life will stay far from them.

UST

⁵ Where the perverse walk, their way is like a road covered with thorns, and there are traps in every step. When you guard your own life from evil, you will stay away from all these dangers.

Proverbs 22:6

the way he should go

How a person lives is spoken of as if it were a path on which he walks. Alternate translation: "how he should live" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

6 Train up the boy in accordance with the mouth of his way; even when he is old, he will not turn aside from it.

UST

6 A child must be shown the way to live and the direction he should go, and when he reaches old age, he will stay on that same path.

Proverbs 22:7

borrows ... lends

You may need to make explicit what it is that is borrowed or lent.
Alternate translation: "borrows money ... lends money" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁷ A rich one rules over those who are poor, and one who borrows {is} a slave to a man who lends.

UST

⁷ The fact is that the rich often have power over the poor, and one who borrows money is almost like a slave to the one who lends him the money.

Proverbs 22:8

He who sows injustice will reap trouble

The writer speaks of a ruler or other powerful person treating those less powerful unjustly as if he were planting seeds that will give birth to plants that bring trouble. Alternate translation: "If a person treats those less powerful than he is unjustly, they will cause him trouble later on" (See: [Metaphor](#))

the rod of his fury will fade away

The word "rod" is a metonym for power over other people. This could mean: (1) the unjust ruler will lose the power that he had that allowed him to treat other people unjustly or (2) when the people respond to the injustice he had done by harming him, he will have no power to stop them. Alternate translation: "he will no longer have the power that he had used to harm people" (See: [Metonymy](#))

rod of his fury

The word "rod" is a metonym for power over other people. The unjust man was harming innocent people as if he were very angry with them. Alternate translation: "the rod he had used as if he were punishing people" or "the power he used to harm others" (See: [Metonymy](#))

will fade away

The word translated "fade away" is also used of plants drying up.

ULT

⁸ One who sows injustice will reap trouble, and the rod of his fury will come to an end.

UST

⁸ If you plant the seeds of wickedness, you can expect a crop of trouble, and when you use a rod to discipline your child, but you use it when you are furious, it will do no good.

Proverbs 22:9

The one who has a generous eye will be blessed

These words can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "God will bless the one who has a generous eye" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

one who has a generous eye

The eye is a metonym for seeing what other people need, and the "generous eye" not only sees but gives what the other people need. The eye is also a synecdoche for the whole person. Alternate translation: "generous person" or "person who is willing to give things to other people" (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

bread

Since bread was the main food for many people in biblical times, it is often used to refer to food in general. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁹ The good of eye, he will be blessed, for he gives from his bread to the lowly.

UST

⁹ The one who looks for people to help, Yahweh will give many good gifts, because he considered it important to share his food with the poor.

Proverbs 22:10

disputes and insults will cease

The abstract nouns “disputes” and “insults” can be translated as verbs. Alternate translation: “people will no longer argue with each other or say things to hurt each other” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

¹⁰ Drive out a mocker and strife will go out, and judgment and dishonor will cease.

UST

¹⁰ If you throw out the conceited person, out will go all kinds of conflict with him. No one will quarrel or insult anyone else when he is gone.

Proverbs 22:11

loves a pure heart

It is his own heart that the person wants to be pure. The heart is a synecdoche for the person. Alternate translation: “loves having a pure heart” or “wants to be pure” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

is gracious

Alternate translation: “is kind”

ULT

11 One who loves a pure heart, his lips {are} gracious, the king {is} his friend.

UST

11 When a person loves to do something just because he wants to do what is good and right— he is sincere, and his speech is filled with kindness — the king will be his friend.

Proverbs 22:12

The eyes of Yahweh keep watch over

The eyes are a synecdoche for the person. The writer speaks as if Yahweh had physical eyes like a person. Alternate translation: "Yahweh keeps watch over" or "Yahweh guards knowledge" (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Personification](#))

keep watch over knowledge

Keeping watch is a metonym for protecting. Alternate translation: "protect knowledge" (See: [Metonymy](#))

he overthrows

Alternate translation: "he destroys"

the treacherous

The nominal adjective treacherous can be translated as a noun phrase. Translate "treacherous" as in [Proverbs 11:3](#). Alternate translation: "a treacherous person" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

ULT

¹² The eyes of Yahweh guard knowledge, and he overturns the words of one who is treacherous.

UST

¹² Yahweh gives protection to knowledge, to keep it safe, just as surely as he makes the lying promises of the betrayer fail.

Proverbs 22:13

The lazy person says

The quote that follows is a lie and an excuse for not working. If your language introduces false statements in a special way, you can use that here.

ULT

13 A lazy one says, "A lion {is} outside! I will be killed in the midst of the plazas!"

UST

13 A lazy person calls out, "There is a lion in the street! If I go out, I will be killed!"

Proverbs 22:14

The mouth of an adulteress is a deep pit

The word “mouth” is a metonym for the words that come out of the mouth. The writer speaks of a person being unable to escape having people punish him for evil deeds as if that person had fallen into a hole someone had dug in the ground from which he could not escape. Alternate translation: “The words spoken by an adulteress will draw you in, and it will be as if you have fallen into a deep and dangerous pit” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

an adulteress

See how you translated this in [Proverbs 5:3](#).

Yahweh’s anger is stirred up

Here “stirred up” means that his anger increased. Alternate translation: “Yahweh is angry” (See: [Idiom](#))

falls into it

Adultery is spoken of as if it is something that a person can fall into. Alternate translation: “sins because of the adulteress” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

14 The mouth of a strange woman {is} a deep pit; one who is cursed of Yahweh will fall there.

UST

14 The words spoken by an adulteress will draw you in, and it will be as if you have fallen into a deep and dangerous pit! All those who fall into that pit will be in trouble, but what is worse, they will experience Yahweh’s anger for what they have done.

Proverbs 22:15

Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child

Alternate translation: "The heart of a child is full of foolish things"

the rod of discipline

The writer speaks of a parent using any form of discipline as if that parent were hitting the child with a wooden rod. (See: [Metonymy](#))

drives it far away

The writer speaks as if foolishness were a person that another person could use a physical rod to drive away. Alternate translation: "will make a child wise" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a boy; the rod of discipline will cause it to be far from him.

UST

15 Stupid and silly things are bound up within a child, and they come out in foolishness; but correcting a child with discipline drives the folly far away.

Proverbs 22:16

to increase his wealth

Alternate translation: "to become richer" or "to gain more money"

gives to rich people

Alternate translation: "gives money to rich people"

will come to poverty

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: "will become poor" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

16 One who oppresses a lowly one to increase for himself, one who gives to a rich one, will surely be to poverty.

UST

16 The one who makes his money by taking advantage of the poor, or by giving more money to the wealthy, Yahweh will bring him into poverty.

Proverbs 22:17

General Information:

Verse 17 begins the introduction to a new section of the Book of Proverbs.

Incline your ear and listen

Here the word “ear” represents the person who is listening. The writer speaks of listening attentively to someone as if it were leaning forward so that the ear is closer to the one speaking. See how you translated “incline your ear” in [Proverbs 4:20](#). Alternate translation: “Pay attention and listen” or “Listen attentively” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

the words of the wise

Alternate translation: “what wise people say”

apply your heart to

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “do your best to understand and remember” (See: [Idiom](#))

my knowledge

The person speaking is probably the same as the father from [Proverbs 1:8](#). He may be speaking of “the words of the wise” as “my knowledge.” If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **knowledge**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form such as “know.” Alternate translation: “the knowledge I have, which I am sharing with you” or “what I know” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

17 Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise ones, and set your heart to my knowledge.

UST

17 Now listen to what those who are wise have said; give it all your attention and learn the knowledge you will need if you are to become wise.

Proverbs 22:18

all of them are ready on your lips

The person being ready to speak is spoken of as if it were the words that were ready. Alternate translation: “you are able to speak of them at any time” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

18 For {it will be} pleasant if you keep them in your belly, they are ready together on your lips.

UST

18 It will be good for you to make them the guiding principles you live by, and be able to repeat all of them to others.

Proverbs 22:19

today—even to you

“today. Yes, I am teaching you,” The speaker is emphasizing that it is the hearer, not someone else whom he is teaching, and he is teaching the hearer because the hearer needs to learn. If it is awkward in your language to emphasize in this way, you can emphasize in another way or the words “even to you” can be left untranslated.

ULT

19 Your trust {is} to be in Yahweh; I have caused you to know today, even you.

UST

19 The most important thing is for you to trust in Yahweh, and so I am teaching them to you, yes, even to you.

Proverbs 22:20

General Information:

These verses continue and end the introduction that began in [Proverbs 22:17](#).

thirty sayings

Some translations read, “excellent sayings.” (See: [Textual Variants](#))

ULT

²⁰ Have I not written for you thirty things with counsels and knowledge,

UST

²⁰ I have written thirty of these sayings for you to learn; sayings to give you advice and to teach you what you do not know.

Proverbs 22:21

to teach you ... who sent you?

These words end the rhetorical question that began with the words "Have I not written" in Proverbs 22:20. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. "You need to know that I have written ... to teach you ... who sent you." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

to those who sent you

This implies that the hearer is or will be one whom others send to gain and bring back information.

ULT

²¹ to cause you to know the truth of the words of trustworthiness, to return trustworthy words to one who sent you?

UST

²¹ These lessons show you what is true and they teach you with faithful lessons, so you may give reliable and true answers to those who sent you.

Proverbs 22:22

General Information:

These verses begin the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

Do not rob ... or crush

If your language has a way of showing that this is the way one person would speak strongly to another, different from a general rule that people are supposed to obey, you should use it here.

the poor

This nominal adjective can be translated as a noun phrase. Alternate translation: “any poor person” or “poor people” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

crush

grind into powder. This is a metaphor for “treat unjustly.” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the needy

This nominal adjective can be translated as a noun phrase. Alternate translation: “any needy person” or “any person who does not have what he needs to live” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

at the gate

The place where people bought and sold items and settled legal arguments is used as a metonym for business and legal activity. Alternate translation: “in court” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

22 Do not rob a lowly one because he {is} lowly, and do not crush an afflicted one at the gate.

UST

22 Anyone can rob a poor person. Do not do it. And do not hurt them who are begging at the city gate,

Proverbs 22:23

Yahweh will plead their case

The metaphor is of a lawyer defending the needy in front of a judge. Alternate translation: "Yahweh will defend the needy from those who oppress them" or "Yahweh will see that the needy receive justice" (See: [Metaphor](#))

he will rob of life those who robbed them

Yahweh is not a thief, but like a thief he will take life from those who do not choose to give it. Alternate translation: "he will destroy those who oppress poor people" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²³ For Yahweh will plead their dispute, and he will rob those who rob them of life.

UST

²³ for Yahweh stands to defend them, and he will take the life of those who stole from the poor.

Proverbs 22:24

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

someone who is ruled by anger

someone who is unable to control his anger (See: [Metaphor](#))

rages

shows violent anger

ULT

²⁴ Do not befriend a man of nose, and do not go {with} a man of heat,

UST

²⁴ Do not become a friend with one whose life is controlled by his anger, and do not associate with a person who rages in his terrible wrath,

Proverbs 22:25

you will take bait for your soul

A person who wants to be like an angry person is like an animal taking the bait in a trap. Alternate translation: “you will be like an animal that eats the bait that closes a trap and is unable to escape” (See: [Metaphor](#))

bait for your soul

The soul is a metonym for the person's life. Alternate translation: “bait that someone has put out so he can kill you” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²⁵ lest you learn his paths and you take a trap for your life.

UST

²⁵ or you will learn to be like him, and your anger will become like a trap, a trap that will take charge of your life.

Proverbs 22:26

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

strikes hands

A person would strike his hand against another person’s hand to bind himself to do what he had agreed to do. Here the speaker warns the hearer not to strike hands as a way to promise to pay off someone’s debts.

in making a pledge

Alternate translation: “and agree to pay what someone owes to another person”

ULT

26 Do not be among those who clap a palm, among those who pledge for loans.

UST

26 Be careful that you do not shake hands and promise to pay for the debts of others, and do not make or sign a pledge so another person can take out a loan.

Proverbs 22:27

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁷ If there is nothing for you to pay, why should he take away your bed from under you?

UST

²⁷ For if you cannot pay it back, they will surely come and take away everything from you, even your bed on which you sleep.

Proverbs 22:28

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

ancient

very old

boundary stone

a large stone that shows where one person’s land ends and another person’s land begins

fathers

ancestors

ULT

28 Do not remove the ancient boundary that your fathers made.

UST

28 The ancient boundary stones show where the property lines are. Do not take them away or move them. Your ancestors put them there. Leave them alone.

Proverbs 22:29

Do you see a man skilled at his work?

This rhetorical question is actually a command. Alternate translation: "Think of someone you know who is skilled at his work" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

stand before

This represents becoming a servant of the important person. Kings and other important people will think so highly of him that they will use his services. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

29 See a skilled man in his work; he will station himself before the face of kings; he will not station himself before the face of low ones.

UST

29 One who learns a trade and is skillful at it will become a servant of kings. Because of his achievements he will not serve mere ordinary people.

Proverbs 23

Proverbs 23 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 23 continues the section beginning in the previous chapter of the book and is filled mainly with short, individual proverbs.

The second half of this chapter and the first half of the next chapter are attributed to general sayings.

Special concepts in this chapter

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often including contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility, integrity/crookedness. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 23:1

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

ULT

¹ When you sit to eat {with} a ruler, consider carefully what {is} before your face,

UST

¹ When you sit down to eat a meal with ruler of a country, think carefully about what is in front of you.

Proverbs 23:2

put a knife to your throat

Possible meanings of this exaggeration are: (1) “be very careful not to eat too much” or (2) “do not eat anything at all” (See: [Hyperbole](#) and [Idiom](#))

ULT

² and put a knife at your throat if you {are} an owner of an appetite.

UST

² It is said, “put a knife to your throat” if you think of eating a lot of food, because it would be foolish to eat too much at such an important event.

Proverbs 23:3

Do not crave

“Do not strongly desire.” See how you translated “craves” in [Proverbs 21:9](#).

his delicacies

Alternate translation: “his special and expensive food”

it is the food of lies

This is an idiom. “he is giving it to you so he can deceive you” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

³ Do not desire his delicious morsels; for it {is} bread of falsehoods.

UST

³ Do not crave the special and expensive food the ruler enjoys; the food will deceive you.

Proverbs 23:4

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

Do not work too hard

Alternate translation: “Do not work so much that you are always tired”

ULT

⁴ Do not toil to gain riches; cease from your understanding.

UST

⁴ Do not work so much that you are always tired, so you can become rich; be wise and know when you should stop and rest.

Proverbs 23:5

light upon it

land like a bird upon the wealth (verse 4). This is a metaphor for looking at the wealth for a short time. (See: [Metaphor](#))

it will surely take up wings like an eagle and fly off

A person losing his wealth is spoken of as if the wealth were a bird. Alternate translation: “the wealth will disappear as quickly as an eagle can fly away” (See: [Metaphor](#))

wings like an eagle

wings like an eagle's wings

ULT

⁵ Will you cause your eyes to fly upon it, but it is not? For it will surely make wings for itself like an eagle; it will fly into the heavens.

UST

⁵ As soon as you look at the money, it will be gone; it will be as if it suddenly took up wings and flew up like an eagle, up into the sky.

Proverbs 23:6

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

do not crave

“do not strongly desire.” See how you translated “craves” in [Proverbs 21:9](#).

his delicacies

“his special and expensive food.” See how you translated this in [Proverbs 23:3](#).

ULT

⁶ Do not eat the bread of one evil of eye,
and do not desire his delicious morsels.

UST

⁶ Do not eat with an evil man—he will
gaze at your food for a long time— do
not desire his fine food,

Proverbs 23:7

his heart is not with you

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “he really does not want you to enjoy the meal” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁷ For like one who calculates in his spirit, so he {is}. “Eat and drink!” he will say to you, but his heart {is} not with you.

UST

⁷ because he will be thinking about how much your food cost him, and he will say to you, “Eat and drink,” but that is not what he will really be thinking.

Proverbs 23:8

You will vomit up the little you have eaten

This is an exaggeration for wishing one had not eaten anything. Alternate translation: "You will wish that you had not eaten anything" (See: [Hyperbole](#))

you will have wasted your compliments

Compliments are spoken of as if they were valuable objects. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **compliments**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: "he will not be happy even if you say good things about him and the food" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

⁸ You will vomit up your morsel you ate, and you will ruin your delightful words.

UST

⁸ When you realize what he is really thinking, you will want to vomit what you have eaten; and you will have wasted all the compliments you gave about the fine meal he prepared.

Proverbs 23:9

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

in the hearing of a fool

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **hearing**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: “where a fool can hear you” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

⁹ Do not speak in the ears of a fool, for he will despise the insight of your words.

UST

⁹ Do not waste time talking to a fool; he will only despise the wise things that you say.

Proverbs 23:10

ancient

very old. See how you translated this in [Proverbs 22:28](#).

boundary stone

This is a large stone to show where one person's land ends and another person's land begins. See how you translated this in [Proverbs 22:28](#).

encroach

This means to slowly take or begin to use land (or some thing) that belongs to someone else.

orphans

children whose parents are dead

ULT

10 Do not move an ancient boundary, and do not enter into the fields of orphans,

UST

10 Again, do not remove the ancient boundary stone. It is a marker for the property lines; and do not claim land that is set apart for orphans to work,

Proverbs 23:11

their Redeemer

Yahweh

he will plead their case against you

The metaphor is of a lawyer defending the needy in front of a judge.
Alternate translation: "he will defend the orphans against you" or "he will see that the orphans receive justice and punish you" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

11 for one who redeems them {is} strong; he will plead their dispute against you.

UST

11 because the One who redeems them is strong, and he will plead their case against you.

Proverbs 23:12

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

Apply your heart to

This is an idiom. See how you translated this in [Proverbs 22:17](#).
Alternate translation: “Do your best to understand and remember”
(See: [Idiom](#))

instruction

This could mean: (1) “what people who know what is right and what is wrong tell you” or (2) “what people say and do when they correct you.”

your ears

The ellipsis can be filled in. Alternate translation: “apply your ears” or “listen carefully” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

to words of knowledge

Alternate translation: “to me when I tell you what I know”

ULT

¹² Bring your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge.

UST

¹² Pay attention to what you are learning, and listen to the words of knowledge.

Proverbs 23:13

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

Do not withhold instruction from a child

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **instruction**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: “Do not neglect to instruct a child” or “Do not refuse to instruct a child” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

withhold

refuse to give something that one knows another person needs

ULT

13 Do not withhold discipline from a boy; if you strike him with the rod, he will not die.

UST

13 Do not refuse to discipline your children; if you punish them, they will not die,

Proverbs 23:14

rod

piece of wood

It is you who must beat him ... and save his soul

“You are the one who must beat him ... and save his soul.” No one else will do it. The hearer is responsible to save the child’s soul from Sheol, and the way to save him is to beat him.

save his soul from Sheol

If the hearer beats his children with the rod, they will not die young because they have done foolish or evil things. The word “soul” is a metonym for the person. Sheol is the world of the dead; going to the world of the dead is a euphemism for dying. Alternate translation: “you will keep him from the world of the dead” or “you will keep him from dying” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Euphemism](#))

ULT

14 You shall strike him with the rod and you will rescue his life from Sheol.

UST

14 and if you beat them with the rod of discipline, you may save their lives from death.

Proverbs 23:15

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

ULT

¹⁵ My son, if your heart {is} wise, my heart, even myself, will be glad,

UST

¹⁵ My son, if you have taken wisdom deep within yourself, I will be very happy,

Proverbs 23:16

when your lips speak

“Your lips” means the whole person. Alternate translation: “when you speak” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

¹⁶ and my kidneys will exult, when your lips speak upright things.

UST

¹⁶ and I will be sincerely glad when you say what is right.

Proverbs 23:17

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

Do not let your heart envy sinners

The word “heart” is a synecdoche for the whole person. Alternate translation: “Do not allow yourself to envy sinners” or “Make sure you do not envy sinners” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

17 Do not let your heart envy sinners, but rather the fear of Yahweh all the day.

UST

17 Do not envy sinful people; but give Yahweh the respect he deserves, all day long.

Proverbs 23:18

your hope will not be cut off

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "God will not allow anyone to cut off your hope" or "God will keep the promises he made to you" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

18 Surely there is an end and your hope will not be cut off.

UST

18 If you respect him, you will have a life in the future, and Yahweh will certainly do for you what you are confidently expecting him to do.

Proverbs 23:19

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

Hear—you!—my son

“Listen carefully, my son.” The speaker speaks an extra word to make sure the hearer is paying attention.

direct your heart in the way

Deciding to do what is right is spoken of as if one person were showing another person the correct path to follow. Alternate translation: “make sure you do what is wise” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

19 Listen, you my son, and be wise, and lead your heart in the way.

UST

19 My son, listen to me so you may become wise, and think about the way you live your life.

Proverbs 23:20

gluttonous eaters of meat

This could mean: (1) "people who eat more meat than they need to" or (2) "meat" represents food in general. Alternate translation: "people who eat more food than they need to" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

²⁰ Do not be among those who drink much wine, among those who squander meat for themselves.

UST

²⁰ Do not associate with those who get drunk with wine, or with those who are eat far too much food,

Proverbs 23:21

slumber will clothe them with rags

The word “slumber” is an exaggeration for a person spending so much time enjoying food and drink that he does not do necessary work. This activity is spoken of as if it were a parent putting clothes on a child. Alternate translation: “because they spend so much time eating and drinking, they will do no work and so will become poor” (See: [Personification](#) and [Hyperbole](#))

ULT

21 For one who drinks much and one who squanders will become poor, and slumber will clothe with rags.

UST

21 because drunkards and gluttons will become poor; and they will sleep so much that they will have nothing but rags to wear.

Proverbs 23:22

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

do not despise

This can be stated positively. Alternate translation: “show respect for”
(See: [Litotes](#))

ULT

22 Listen to your father, this {one} begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

UST

22 Pay attention to your father who brought you into the world, and do not hate your mother when she is old.

Proverbs 23:23

Buy the truth, but do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding

Another possible meaning is “Buy the truth, and do not sell wisdom, instruction, or understanding.” The words “truth,” “wisdom,” “instruction,” and “understanding” are abstract nouns that are spoken of as if they were physical items that a person can buy and sell in a market. They can be translated as verbs. Alternate translation: “Do what you need to do so you can know what is true, so you can be wise, so you can learn how to act, and so you can tell good from bad; never think of anything else as more important than these things” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²³ Buy truth and do not sell, wisdom and instruction and understanding.

UST

²³ When you study wisdom, think of it as buying truth, but never selling it; and the same for wisdom, and with discipline, and also with understanding; let it be as though you were buying them so you can keep them for the rest of your life.

Proverbs 23:24

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

The father of the righteous person will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise child will be glad in him

Another possible meaning is that the words “he that begets a wise child” explain who “the father of the righteous person” is. Alternate translation: “The father of the righteous person, he who begets a wise child, will greatly rejoice and will be glad in him”

will be glad in him

Alternate translation: “will be glad because of him”

ULT

24 The father of a righteous one will rejoice greatly, and one who begets a wise one, he will be glad in him.

UST

24 The father of a child who does what is right will be very happy; any man who has a wise son will be very happy because of him.

Proverbs 23:25

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁵ May your father and your mother be glad, and may she who bore you rejoice.

UST

²⁵ Make your father and mother proud, and let your mother be glad.

Proverbs 23:26

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

give me your heart

The word “heart” is a metonym for what a person thinks and decides to do. This could mean: (1) “pay careful attention” or (2) “trust me completely.” (See: [Metonymy](#))

let your eyes observe

The eyes are a synecdoche for the whole person. Alternate translation: “observe” or “look carefully at” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

26 My son, give your heart to me, and may your eyes watch my ways.

UST

26 My son, take what I say and put it deep within you, and pay attention to the way that I live.

Proverbs 23:27

prostitute ... immoral woman

There are two types of sexually immoral women. The “prostitute” is unmarried, “another man’s wife” is married. Together they form a merism for any kind of sexually immoral woman. (See: [Merism](#))

a prostitute is a deep pit

The word “pit” is a metaphor for what happens to men who sleep with prostitutes. Alternate translation: “sleeping with a prostitute is like falling into a deep pit” (See: [Metaphor](#))

prostitute

Here the word refers to any unmarried woman who engages in sexual activity, not only those who do so for money.

deep pit ... narrow well

These are two places easy to fall into and hard to get out of, the “pit” because it is “deep” and the “well” because it is “narrow.”

an immoral woman is a narrow well

Doing evil for which one will be punished is spoken of as falling into a narrow place from which one cannot escape. Alternate translation: “Sleeping with another man’s wife is like falling into a narrow well” (See: [Metaphor](#))

well

a hole in the ground that people have dug to get to water

ULT

²⁷ For a prostitute {is} a deep pit, and a foreign woman {is} a narrow well.

UST

²⁷ A prostitute is like a very deep pit, that is easy to fall into, but difficult to get out; another man’s wife is a narrow pit; just as dangerous as a deep pit, but of a different kind.

Proverbs 23:28

lies in wait

stays hidden, ready to attack when a victim approaches

the treacherous

This nominal adjective can be translated as an adjective or verb. Alternate translation: “treacherous people” or “those who harm others by deceiving them” (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

ULT

28 Also, she lies in ambush like a robber, and she increases those who act treacherously among man.

UST

28 The immoral woman is waiting for you, waiting like a robber waits for his victim; and they cause many men to become liars and traitors to those who love them.

Proverbs 23:29

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has fights? Who has complaining? Who has wounds for no reason? Who has bloodshot eyes?

The writer uses these questions to prepare the reader for the point he is about to make about a particular type of person. He does not expect an answer to each question. Your language may have a different way of introducing a lesson. Alternate translation: “Listen to me while I tell you what kind of person has woe, sorrow, fights, complaining, wounds for no reason, and bloodshot eyes.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

bloodshot eyes

Alternate translation: “eyes red, like the color of blood”

ULT

²⁹ For whom {is} woe? For whom {is} sorrow? For whom {are} quarrels? For whom {is} a lament? For whom {is} wounds without reason? For whom {is} dullness of eyes?

UST

²⁹ Who is it who had trouble? Who has sorrows? Who has conflicts and fights? Who has quarreling? Who is wounded for no reason? Whose eyes are always bloodshot because they drank too much or ate too much?

Proverbs 23:30

Those who linger over wine, those who try the mixed wine

These words answer the questions in verse 29 and describe people who drink too much wine.

linger over wine

spend much time drinking wine and so drink much wine (See: [Euphemism](#))

the mixed wine

This could mean: (1) different wines mixed together or (2) other drinks that are stronger than wine.

ULT

³⁰ For those who linger over wine, for those coming to search out mixed wine.

UST

³⁰ It is those who drink too much wine and those who drink the mixed wine.

Proverbs 23:31

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

ULT

³¹ Do not look at wine when it turns red, when its eye gives in the bag, it goes down with evenness.

UST

³¹ Do not look with pleasure at red wine when it sparkles in the cup, and it goes down the throat smoothly.

Proverbs 23:32

In the last

Alternate translation: "After you drink it"

it bites like a serpent ... it stings like an adder

The word "it" refers to "the wine when it is red." "Bites" and "stings" are metaphors for the way too much wine makes people feel.

Alternate translation: "it makes you feel as bad as if a serpent had bitten you or an adder had stung you" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Simile](#))

adder

a type of poisonous snake

ULT

³² Its end bites like a snake, and it stings like a viper.

UST

³² But, in the last, it bites you like a poisonous snake.

Proverbs 23:33

your heart will utter perverse things

The “heart” represents the person and emphasize what he thinks and decides to do. Alternate translation: “you will think about and decide to do perverse things” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

perverse things

things that God says are morally wrong and bad; things that are wicked

ULT

³³ Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will speak perverse things.

UST

³³ It makes you see strange things, and within you, you say perverse things when you are drunk.

Proverbs 23:34

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)). It is the continuation of the description of a drunk person.

lies on the top of a mast

The place on the mast where the person lies can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “lies in the basket near the top of a mast” (See: [Idiom](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

mast

the long wooden pole to which are attached the sails of a sailing ship

ULT

34 And you will be like one who lies down in the heart of the sea and like one who lies down at the head of a mast.

UST

34 You will think you are on a ship that is tossing on the sea; you will be like someone who is trying to sleep up on the rigging of the boat.

Proverbs 23:35

They hit me,...but I was not hurt. They beat me, but I did not feel it.

Because the drunk person is not thinking clearly, he is imagining that people are hitting and beating him, yet he feels no pain and cannot remember anything.

When will I wake up?

The drunk person is wondering when he will be sober again; when the effect of the wine will stop.

ULT

³⁵ "They hit me. I was not hurt. They beat me. I did not know. When I awake, I will do again, I will seek it again."

UST

³⁵ You will say, "I think that someone struck me, but he did not hurt me; They beat me, but I did not feel it. When will I wake up in order that I can drink some more wine?"

Proverbs 24

Proverbs 24 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 24 continues the section beginning in the previous chapter and is mainly filled with short, individual proverbs.

The second half of this chapter finishes the section.

Special concepts in this chapter

Lazy man story

Unlike much of Proverbs, verses 30-34 tell a short story about a lazy man, which ends in a very memorable proverb.

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often including contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility, integrity/crookedness. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 24:1

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

ULT

¹ Do not envy men of evil, and do not desire to be with them.

UST

¹ Do not want what evil people have; do not desire them for friends,

Proverbs 24:2

their hearts

The words “their hearts” refer to the whole person. Alternate translation: “they” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

their lips

The words “their lips” refer to the whole person. Alternate translation: “they” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

talk about trouble

Alternate translation: “talk about causing harm” or “talk about creating problems”

ULT

² For their heart murmurs violence, and their lips speak trouble.

UST

² because they are plotting to do violence; they talk about making trouble.

Proverbs 24:3

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

Through wisdom a house is built

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **wisdom**, you could express the same idea with an adjective. These words can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: “People need to be wise if they are to build a good house” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

by understanding it is established

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **understanding**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. These words can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: “People need to understand what is morally good and what is morally bad if they are to establish a house” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#) and [Active or Passive](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

it is established

The word “established” means made stable and strong. The word “house” is a metonym for the family that lives in the house, and the house being physically stable and strong is a metaphor for a family that lives in peace. (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³ A house is built by wisdom and by understanding it is established.

UST

³ It takes wisdom to build a house, and by understanding the builder exercises his craft, and a house is made solid on its foundation.

Proverbs 24:4

By knowledge the rooms are filled

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **knowledge**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. These words can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "People need to know what is precious and pleasant if they are to fill their rooms" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#) and [Active or Passive](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁴ And by knowledge the rooms are filled, all precious and pleasant wealth.

UST

⁴ It takes knowledge to fill the rooms of the house with all the beautiful and expensive decorations.

Proverbs 24:5

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

warrior of wisdom

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **wisdom**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form such as “wise.” Alternate translation: “wise warrior” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

a man of knowledge increases his strength

The abstract nouns “knowledge” and “strength” can be translated as the verb “know” and the adjective “strong.” Alternate translation: “a man who knows many things is stronger because he knows these things” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

⁵ A man of wisdom {is} with strength and a man of knowledge {is} one who strengthens power.

UST

⁵ A man who has wisdom has strength, and a person with knowledge is mightier than the one who is strong,

Proverbs 24:6

by wise direction

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **direction**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: "if you have wise people telling you what to do" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

wage your war

Alternate translation: "fight your war"

advisors

those who tell government officials what those officials should do

ULT

⁶ For with guidance you make war for yourself and salvation {is} with an abundance of counsel.

UST

⁶ for with wise guidance you can wage a war successfully, and by the advice of many advisors there will be victory.

Proverbs 24:7

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

too high for a fool

This is an idiom. “too difficult for a fool to understand” (See: [Idiom](#))

open his mouth

The mouth is a metonym for the words that come from the mouth.
Alternate translation: “speak” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁷ Wise things {are} too high for a fool; in the gate he will not open his mouth.

UST

⁷ Wisdom is something that a fool cannot understand; at the gate where the elders gather, the fool has nothing to say.

Proverbs 24:8

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

a master of schemes

one who is skillful at making evil plans. Alternate translation: “a mischievous person” or “a troublemaker”

ULT

8 One who plans to do evil, they will call him a master of schemes.

UST

8 There is a man who does evil and makes plots—he is called the Master of Schemes.

Proverbs 24:9

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁹ A plan of foolishness {is} sin, and a mocker {is} an abomination of mankind.

UST

⁹ A foolish plan is not only folly, it is sin; when people tell the truth, they hate those who are conceited and mock everyone.

Proverbs 24:10

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

your strength is small

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “you have very little strength” or “you are certainly weak” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

10 {If} you make yourself slack in the day of distress, your strength {is} narrow.

UST

10 When trouble comes, and you are terrified like a coward, then your strength is small.

Proverbs 24:11

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

those who are being taken away

These words can be translated in active form by using the term “they” which could be anyone, but are probably government officials. Alternate translation: “those whom they are taking away” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

taken away

Another possible meaning is “dragged away.”

staggering

walking unsteadily and almost falling. This word would also describe the way a person walks when he is being dragged away.

the slaughter

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **slaughter**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. The writer speaks as if those who take them away think of them as no better than animals. If your language has a word for killing animals that would fit here, you might want to use it. Alternate translation: “where people will kill them as they would kill animals” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

11 Rescue those who are taken for death, but do not hold back those who are staggering to the slaughter.

UST

11 Rescue the ones who are being carried away to the slaughter; they stagger and fall—hold them back from the one who would kill them.

Proverbs 24:12

If you say, “Behold,...this,” does

The writer is answering something that the reader may wrongly be thinking. Alternate translation: “You may say, ‘Behold,...this,’ but does”

Behold, we

Alternate translation: “Listen to us! We” or “But we” or “We have done nothing wrong, because we”

does not the one who weighs the heart understand what you are saying?

The writer assumes the readers know the answer and asks this for emphasis. Alternate translation: “the one who weighs the heart understands what you are saying.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

the one who

The writer expects the reader to know that “the one” is Yahweh. Alternate translation: “Yahweh, who” (See: [Euphemism](#))

weighs the heart

The word “heart” is a metonym for what a person thinks and desires. The writer speaks as if what a person thinks and desires were a physical object that a person could weigh, and weighing an object is a metaphor for looking closely at something to see how good it is. Alternate translation: “knows how good what people really think and desire is” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

The one who guards your life, does he not know it?

The writer assumes the readers know the answer and asks this for emphasis. Alternate translation: “The one who guards your life knows it.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Will God not give to each one what he deserves?

The writer assumes the readers know the answer and asks this for emphasis. Alternate translation: “God will give to each one what he deserves.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

¹² If you say, “Behold, we did not know this.” The one who weighs hearts, does he not understand, and the one who guards your life, does he know? And he will return to a man according to his work.

UST

¹² If you say, “I did not know that those people needed any help,” then think about this: God knows why we do everything, so he also knows why you said those people needed no help. God sees everything you do in this life, so he certainly understands why you said that about those people. He will certainly pay you back—and everyone else, too—for the harm they have done.

Proverbs 24:13

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

ULT

¹³ My son, eat honey because {it is} good and the fresh honey {is} sweet on your palate.

UST

¹³ My son, eat honey, because it tastes good; the honeycomb is sweet.

Proverbs 24:14

your hope will not be cut off

This could mean: (1) this is a simple passive that can be translated as in active form. Alternate translation: “no one will take your hope away” or (2) this is litotes that can be translated in positive form. Alternate translation: “your hope will surely continue” (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Litotes](#))

ULT

14 So know wisdom for your self; if you find it, then there will be a future and your hope will not be cut off.

UST

14 Wisdom is like the honeycomb, it feeds your life, if you can find it. If you can find it, you will have a future, and you will come to the future with hope that will not be cut short.

Proverbs 24:15

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

Do not lie in wait

The words “lie in wait” are an idiom. Translate “lie in wait” as in [Proverbs 1:11](#). Alternate translation: “Do not hide and wait for the right time” (See: [Idiom](#))

his home

the home of the righteous person

ULT

15 Do not lie in ambush like a wicked one for the abode of the righteous one; do not assault his resting-place.

UST

15 Do not be like wicked people who hide and wait to attack the home of those who do what is right. Do not commit a violent attack on the place where the good man rests!

Proverbs 24:16

rises again

Alternate translation: "gets back on his feet" or "stands up again"

wicked people are brought down by calamity

The writer speaks as if "calamity" were a person who could do bad things to other people. These words can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "God will use calamity to bring down the wicked people" (See: [Personification](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

are brought down

This is a metaphor of a person who was standing but someone has brought him down to the ground or made him fall. (See: [Metaphor](#))

calamity

times when bad things happen to people and their property

ULT

16 For a righteous one falls seven times and rises up, but wicked ones stumble in calamity.

UST

16 Even if good people fall down seven times, they always get back up, but when a disaster comes to the wicked, they are ruined by it.

Proverbs 24:17

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

your enemy falls

Alternate translation: “something bad happens to your enemy”

let not your heart be glad

This is a strong command. The word “heart” represents the person.
Alternate translation: “do not allow yourself to be glad” or “stop yourself from being glad” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

17 When your enemy falls, do not be glad, and when he stumbles do not let your heart rejoice,

UST

17 When your enemy falls, do not rejoice, and do not be happy when he stumbles,

Proverbs 24:18

turn away his wrath from him

The words “turn away his wrath” are an idiom for no longer being angry. What Yahweh would do instead can be made explicit. Alternate translation: “stop being angry with him and be angry with you instead” (See: [Idiom](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

18 lest Yahweh see, and {it is} evil in his eyes, and he turn back his nose from on him.

UST

18 for Yahweh will see how you treat your enemy, and if he disapproves how you treat him, Yahweh may turn his wrath from your enemy and put it on you.

Proverbs 24:19

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

ULT

¹⁹ Do not cause yourself to be hot at evildoers; do not envy wicked ones.

UST

¹⁹ Do not worry about those who do what is evil, and do not be jealous of them,

Proverbs 24:20

the lamp of wicked people will go out

The lamp is used as a metaphor for life. The life of wicked people will end just as a lamp goes out. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

20 For a future is not for an evil one, the lamp of the wicked ones will be extinguished.

UST

20 for there is no future for the wicked; they are like a lamp whose light will soon be put out.

Proverbs 24:21

General Information:

These verses continue the “thirty sayings” ([Proverbs 22:20](#)).

Fear

a deep respect and awe for a person in authority

ULT

²¹ My son, fear Yahweh and the king; do not associate with ones who change.

UST

²¹ My son, give to Yahweh and give to the king the respect each of them deserves, and do not associate with anyone who rebels against either Yahweh or the king;

Proverbs 24:22

who knows the extent of the destruction that will come from both of them?

The writer asks this question to emphasize the disaster. Alternate translation: "no one knows the extent of the destruction that will come from both of them." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

both of them

these words refer to Yahweh and the king

ULT

²² For suddenly their disaster will arise, and who {is} one who knows the destruction of the two of them?

UST

²² because disasters will suddenly come upon those rebels, and no one knows how terrible the disasters will be that will come from both Yahweh and from the king.

Proverbs 24:23

These also are sayings of the wise

This sentence starts a new collection of proverbs.

a case at law

a situation that is brought before a judge in which someone is accused of breaking the law

ULT

²³ These also {are} of the wise ones:
Recognizing faces in judgment {is} not good.

UST

²³ Here are more things that wise people have said: It is wrong for judges to decide matters unfairly.

Proverbs 24:24

Whoever says to the wicked person,...will be cursed by peoples and hated by nations

The word "nations" is a metonym for the people who live in the nations. These words can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "People will curse whoever says to the wicked person,..., and the people of other nations will hate him"

the wicked person ... a righteous person

This could mean: (1) people should never call any wicked person a righteous person or (2) no one should say of a person guilty of a crime that he is innocent. Alternate translation: "a person guilty of a crime ... innocent"

ULT

²⁴ One who says to the wicked one, "You {are} righteous," peoples will curse him, nations will denounce him.

UST

²⁴ If they say to people who are guilty, "You are innocent," they will be cursed by foreign peoples, and hated by nations.

Proverbs 24:25

will have delight

Alternate translation: "will be very happy"

gifts of goodness will come to them

Gifts are spoken of as if they were people who could move by themselves. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **goodness**, you could express the same idea with an adjective. Alternate translation: "people will give them good gifts" (See: [Personification](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

gifts of goodness

Alternate translation: "good things" or "blessings"

ULT

²⁵ But for those who rebuke it will be delightful, and a blessing of goodness will come over them.

UST

²⁵ But if judges say that guilty people must be punished, things will go well for those judges, and they will receive gifts of goodness.

Proverbs 24:26

gives a kiss on the lips

A kiss was a sign of respect and devotion in that culture. Alternate translation: “shows true friendship” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

²⁶ He kisses lips who returns honest words.

UST

²⁶ Answering honestly—that is the best thing a person can do.

Proverbs 24:27

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁷ Prepare your work outside, and make it ready for yourself in the field; and after you will build your house.

UST

²⁷ First, do the work that needs to be done outside, and prepare your fields; and after that, build your house.

Proverbs 24:28

with your lips

The lips are a metonym for the words a person speaks. Alternate translation: "by what you say" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

28 Do not be a witness without cause against your neighbor. And would you deceive with your lips?

UST

28 Do not give testimony against your neighbor if there is no reason for it, and do not deceive people when you are telling what you know.

Proverbs 24:29

pay him back

This is an idiom. "take revenge against him" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

²⁹ Do not say, "Just as it was done to me, so I will do to him; I will return to the man according to his deed."

UST

²⁹ Do not say, "I will do to him what he did to me; I will pay him back for what he did to me."

Proverbs 24:30

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³⁰ I passed over the field of a lazy man
and over the vineyard of the man
lacking of heart.

UST

³⁰ I walked by the field of a lazy man,
past the vineyard of a man who had no
good judgment.

Proverbs 24:31

Thorns

useless plants with sharp spines

nettles

plants that are covered with stinging leaves and hairs

was broken down

Alternate translation: "had fallen down"

ULT

³¹ And behold, all of it went up with thorns, its face was covered with nettles, and the wall of his stones was broken down.

UST

³¹ Thorns grew there and the stone wall had fallen down.

Proverbs 24:32

received instruction

Alternate translation: "learned a lesson"

ULT

³² And I myself looked, I set my heart, I saw, I received instruction.

UST

³² When I saw that, I thought about it, and I learned this:

Proverbs 24:33

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³³ A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of hands to lie down,

UST

³³ A little sleep, a little nap, a little folding of the hands to rest—and while you rest,

Proverbs 24:34

and poverty comes

This finishes a thought begun with the words “A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest” (Proverbs 24:33). You may need to fill in the omitted words. “You may say to yourself, ‘A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest,’ but then poverty will come” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

poverty comes marching upon you

Some translations read, “poverty comes upon you like a robber.” Poverty is spoken of as if it were a person or animal that can attack a lazy person. (See: [Personification](#))

your needs like an armed soldier

Needs are spoken of as if they were a person who could attack the lazy person. Alternate translation: “your needs will come to you like an armed soldier” (See: [Simile](#) and [Personification](#))

ULT

³⁴ and your poverty will come walking around, and your needs like a man of shield.

UST

³⁴ poverty will come to you like a thief who steals from you, and poverty will come like an armed soldier who attacks you.

Proverbs 25

Proverbs 25 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 25 begins the second section of the book (Chapter 25-29) which is attributed to Solomon.

Special concepts in this chapter

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often including contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility, integrity/crookedness. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 25:1

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹ These also {are} proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah the king of Judah copied.

UST

¹ Here are more wise sayings of Solomon that were written down by the men of Hezekiah, the king of Judah.

Proverbs 25:2

to conceal a matter

Alternate translation: "to keep some things secret"

but the glory

The ellipsis can be filled in. Alternate translation: "but it is the glory"
(See: [Ellipsis](#))

search it out

Alternate translation: "search that matter out" or "search for those things that God has concealed"

ULT

² {It is} the glory of God to hide a matter, but the glory of kings to search out a matter.

UST

² God honors himself when he hides something so people cannot know it. But it is to the honor of kings to search out the things that God has hidden.

Proverbs 25:3

Like the heavens are for height and the earth is for depth, so the heart of kings is unsearchable

The hearts of kings are compared to the size of the heavens and the earth. Alternate translation: "Just as no one can measure the height of the heavens or the depth of the earth, even so no one can understand the heart of kings" (See: [Simile](#))

heavens

This refers to everything we see above the earth, including the sun, moon, and stars.

ULT

³ Heavens for height and earth for depth, and the heart of kings is not searchable.

UST

³ What kings think is above the way peasants think; they are like the heavens, they are above us all; and all kings have the same deep burdens that others cannot understand.

Proverbs 25:4

dross

the material in a metal that people do not want and they remove by heating the metal

ULT

⁴ Remove dross from silver and a vessel goes out for the one who refines.

UST

⁴ Silver cannot be used by the metal worker, unless the silver is heated and dross is removed from it;

Proverbs 25:5

his throne will be established by doing

The throne is a metonym for the power to rule. These words can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: “the king will establish his throne by doing” or “he will have the power to rule because he does” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁵ Remove a wicked one before the face of the king, and his throne will be established by the righteous one.

UST

⁵ just as the dross is removed, even so, if wicked men are removed from the kings court, his throne will be more secure, and he will be able to do what is right.

Proverbs 25:6

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁶ Do not honor yourself before the face of the king, and do not stand in the place of the great ones.

UST

⁶ When you stand in front of a king, do not bring attention to yourself and do not stand in the place set aside for those the king is honoring.

Proverbs 25:7

It is better for him to say to you, “Come up here,” than

Here “up” means to move to a place at the table that is closer to the king. It is a great honor for a person to sit closer to the king. Alternate translation: “It is better for someone to invite you to sit closer to the king than” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

before a nobleman

Alternate translation: “in front of a nobleman”

ULT

⁷ For, better to say to you, “Come up here,” than to humiliate you before the face of a noble, whom your eyes have seen.

UST

⁷ It is better if someone important invites you, saying, “Come up and sit closer to the king,” than to embarrass you in front of an important nobleman by making you move so that you now sit far away from the king. When you witness something that gives you concern,

Proverbs 25:8

For what will you do in the end when your neighbor puts you to shame?

This question is asked to make the reader consider the possibility that he may have misunderstood the situation. The way in which the neighbor might put the reader to shame can be stated plainly.

Alternate translation: "For you will not know what to do in the end when your neighbor puts you to shame." or "For if your neighbor has an explanation, he will put you to shame, and you will have nothing to say to defend yourself." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁸ Do not go out hastily to dispute, or else what will you do in its end when your neighbor humiliates you?

UST

⁸ you should not quickly bring the matter to trial, unless you are very sure about it. because your neighbor may have a good explanation for what you saw.

Proverbs 25:9

your case

Alternate translation: "your disagreement"

do not disclose another's secret

Alternate translation: "do not share your neighbor's secret with other people"

ULT

⁹ Dispute your dispute {with} your neighbor and do not uncover another secret,

UST

⁹ If you and your neighbor are having a disagreement, settle it between yourselves, and do not tell others any secret you have learned about;

Proverbs 25:10

an evil report about you that cannot be silenced

Here “evil report” refers to harmful things that the person will tell others. The phrase “cannot be silenced” can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: “you will not be able to stop him from telling other people harmful things about you” or “he will tell people evil things about you and you will never have a good reputation again” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹⁰ lest one who hears reproaches you, and your evil report not turn back.

UST

¹⁰ for others might find out what you have done, and you would be ashamed; and from that time on, you will have a bad reputation.

Proverbs 25:11

Apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in the right situation

The goodness of “a word spoken at the right time” is spoken of as if it were the physical beauty of “apples of gold in settings of silver.” Most translations translate this metaphor as a simile and change the order of the phrases. Alternate translation: “A word spoken at the right time is beautiful like apples of gold in settings of silver” (See: [Metaphor](#))

Apples of gold in settings of silver

The ancient Israelites did not know the apples that most people know today. This could mean: (1) “apples” should be translated as “design.” Alternate translation: “a golden design carved into a silver bowl” or (2) “apples” refers to another type of fruit with a golden color that someone has placed on a silver plate or bowl. Alternate translation: “Golden colored fruit placed in a silver bowl”

is a word 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: “is a message that someone speaks” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

¹¹ Apples of gold in sculptures of silver {is} a word that is spoken in accordance with its circumstance.

UST

¹¹ Use the right words and a phrase put together to say exactly what you mean; this is as delightful as seeing designs of gold in a silver bowl.

Proverbs 25:12

A gold ring or jewelry made of fine gold is a wise rebuke to a listening ear

The value and importance of “a wise rebuke” is spoken of as if it had the beauty and value of gold. Most translations translate this metaphor as a simile and change the order of the phrases. Alternate translation: “A wise rebuke to a listening ear is beautiful and valuable like a golden ring or golden jewelry” (See: [Metaphor](#))

listening ear

The ear is a synecdoche for the whole person. Alternate translation: “person who is willing to listen” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

¹² A ring of gold and jewelry of fine gold {is} a wise rebuke on an ear that listens.

UST

¹² When a wise person rebukes someone who is willing to listen to him, it is as priceless as a gold ring or jewelry made of finest gold.

Proverbs 25:13

Like the cold of snow at harvest time is a faithful messenger

Here a faithful messenger is being compared to the cold of snow, because both are pleasant. (See: [Simile](#))

the cold of snow

Snow only fell on the tops of mountains, and the harvest took place in hot weather, so this is probably a metaphor for cool, fresh water from a clean stream. If your language has no word for snow, consider "cool, fresh, clean water." (See: [Metaphor](#))

snow

white flakes of ice that fall from the sky like rain

brings back the life of his masters

This means he makes his masters, who are weak and tired, to be strong and rested again.

ULT

¹³ Like the coolness of snow on the day of harvest {is} a faithful messenger for those who sent him and he brings back the life of his masters.

UST

¹³ A messenger who is reliable and on time, gives delight to those who sent him, to them he is like the cold of snow at harvest time, that refreshes the ground.

Proverbs 25:14

Clouds and wind without rain is the one who boasts ... not give

Most translations translate this metaphor as a simile and change the order of the phrases. Rain was important to the Israelites because only small amounts of it fell, so a cloud without rain was useless and brought disappointment to the Israelites. Alternate translation: "The one who boasts ... not give is like clouds and wind without rain" or "The one who boasts ... not give is useless and a disappointment, like clouds and wind without rain" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Simile](#))

ULT

14 Clouds and wind but without rain {is} the man who boasts of a gift of falsehood.

UST

14 When someone boasts about a gift he is going to give, but never gives it, he is like the clouds and the wind that do not bring rain.

Proverbs 25:15

With patience a ruler can be persuaded

These words can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "Someone who is patient can persuade a ruler" or "Someone who is patient can speak to a ruler and change his mind" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

a soft tongue can break a bone

The word "tongue" is a metonym for the words the person speaks using the tongue. The word "bone" is a metaphor for strong opposition. Alternate translation: "gentle speech can overcome strong opposition" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

15 With length of nostrils a ruler is persuaded, and a soft tongue breaks bone.

UST

15 With patient persuasion even a ruler's mind can be changed, like the proverb that says, 'a soft tongue can break a bone.'

Proverbs 25:16

General Information:

Verse 16 states a general principle, and verse 17 gives one specific example. The idea of eating too much honey and then vomiting it up is a metaphor for taking too much of any good thing and regretting it later. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

16 If you find honey, eat {what is} sufficient for you, lest you become satiated with it and you vomit it up.

UST

16 If you find some honey, eat just a little, because if you eat too much, you could vomit it up.

Proverbs 25:17

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

17 Make rare your foot from the house of your neighbor, lest he become satiated with you and hate you.

UST

17 Do not go to your neighbor's house too often; he may get tired of you, and if you do not stop, he could even grow to hate you.

Proverbs 25:18

A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is like a club used in war, or a sword, or a sharp arrow

A false witness is compared to three weapons that can hurt or kill people. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

¹⁸ A hammer and a sword and a sharp arrow {is} a man who answers a testimony of falsehood against his neighbor.

UST

¹⁸ To falsely accuse others in court is like attacking them with a club used in battle, or with a sword, or with sharp arrows.

Proverbs 25:19

An unfaithful man in whom you trust in a time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a foot that slips

A foolish man is compared to a part of the body that causes trouble for a person. Alternate translation: "Trusting in an unfaithful man in time of trouble will bring you pain like a bad tooth or a foot that slips" (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

¹⁹ A broken tooth and a shaky foot {is} confidence in one who acts treacherously in the day of distress.

UST

¹⁹ Depending on an unreliable person during times of trouble is like having a bad tooth or a foot that slips and makes you fall.

Proverbs 25:20

carbonate of soda

This is a kind of mineral that hisses and bubbles violently when it comes into contact with acids like vinegar. Many translations translate this phrase as “a wound.”

sings songs

You may need to make explicit what kind of songs the singer sings. Alternate translation: “sings happy songs” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

a heavy heart

The heart is a synecdoche for the whole person. Alternate translation: “a sad person” (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

20 One who removes a garment on a cold day, vinegar on natron, so {is} one who sings with songs over a heart of misery.

UST

20 Singing a song to someone who is feeling sad, it is as unhelpful as taking off a coat on a very cold day, or pouring vinegar into soda, making it bubble.

Proverbs 25:21

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²¹ If one who hates you {is} hungry, cause him to eat bread, and if thirsty, cause him to drink water;

UST

²¹ If your enemies are hungry, give them something to eat; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink;

Proverbs 25:22

shovel coals of fire on his head

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “cause him to have a guilty conscience and be ashamed of what he has done” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

²² for you are heaping coals on his head, and Yahweh will reward you.

UST

²² that will be the equal to pouring coals of fire on his head, without doing him any harm, and Yahweh will reward you for doing that.

Proverbs 25:23

the north wind

In Israel, wind from the north often brought rain. Translators are free to substitute different kinds of wind for the same effect, for example, "a cold wind."

a tongue that tells secrets

Some versions read "someone who tells secrets."

result in angry faces

The face is a synecdoche for the person. Alternate translation: "makes other people so angry you can see it in their faces" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

²³ The wind of the north brings forth rain, and faces {that} are angry, a tongue of secrecy.

UST

²³ When wind blows from the north, it will certainly rain; it is just as certain that someone who tells secrets about others will make people angry.

Proverbs 25:24

a corner of the roof

Houses in those days had flat roofs. Ancient Israelites spent much time on their roofs, where it was often cooler than inside the house, and sometimes people would build a shelter large enough for a person to sleep in on one corner of the roof. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

a quarreling wife

a wife who often argues or complains

ULT

24 Better to dwell on the corner of a roof than {with} a wife of quarrels and a house of companionship.

UST

24 It is better to live alone in the corner of a housetop than inside a house with a wife who always wants to argue with you.

Proverbs 25:25

Like cold waters to one who is thirsty, so is good news from a far country

Cold water is compared to good news that is both refreshing and delightful. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

²⁵ Cool water over a weary spirit, so {is} good news from a distant land.

UST

²⁵ When you receive news from a far away country, that is like giving cold water to a person who is thirsty.

Proverbs 25:26

Like a fouled spring or a ruined fountain is a righteous person tottering before wicked people

One expects a spring or fountain to have clear water, just as one expects a righteous man to stand for what he believes. A polluted spring or fountain is compared to a righteous man who falls. (See: [Simile](#))

tottering before wicked people

Tottering is a metaphor for either: (1) refusing to fight wicked people or (2) joining in their wickedness. Alternate translation: “who allows wicked people to do wickedness” or “who starts to do what wicked people do” (See: [Metaphor](#))

tottering

This is a metaphor for being unable to continue to do good. Alternate translation: “unable to stand” (See: [Metaphor](#))

before wicked people

This could mean: (1) “when wicked people attack him” or (2) “when wicked people urge him to do evil.” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

²⁶ A spring {that is} muddied by trampling and a fountain {that is} spoiled {is} a righteous one who shakes before the face of a wicked one.

UST

²⁶ A good person who falls before the wicked, that is as bad as a spring that becomes muddied or a fountain that becomes polluted.

Proverbs 25:27

It is not good to eat too much honey; that is like searching for honor after honor.

Both wanting others to honor you and eating honey are good, but you can eat too much honey, and you can try too hard to have people honor you. (See: [Simile](#))

It is not good

This can be stated positively. Alternate translation: "It is a bad thing" (See: [Litotes](#))

that is like searching for honor after honor

The meaning of the original language is uncertain. Some versions of the Bible translate this as "that is like speaking too many compliments to people." Alternate translation: "that is like always thinking about how others should honor you"

ULT

²⁷ To eat much honey {is} not good, and the searching out of their honor upon honor.

UST

²⁷ It is not good to eat too much honey; that is like searching for more honor when you already have honor.

Proverbs 25:28

A person without self-control is like a city breached and without walls.

Both a person without self-control and a city without walls are weak and vulnerable. (See: [Simile](#))

breached and without walls

Alternate translation: "whose walls an army has knocked down and destroyed"

ULT

²⁸ A breached city without a wall {is} a man who has no restraint for his spirit.

UST

²⁸ A person who cannot control himself is like a city with no way to keep out enemies; its walls have fallen down.

Proverbs 26

Proverbs 26 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 26 continues the second section of the book (Chapter 25-29) which is attributed to Solomon.

Special concepts in this chapter

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often including contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility, integrity/crookedness. Wisdom and folly are particularly prominent in this chapter.(See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 26:1

Like snow in summer or rain in harvest

Normally snow does not fall during the summer and rain does not fall during the harvest. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "Just as it would be very strange to have snow in summer or rain during the harvest" (See: [Simile](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

¹ Like the snow in the summer and like the rain in the harvest, so honor {is} not suitable for a fool.

UST

¹ When it snows in the summer, or when it rains in the harvest, that is what it is like when a fool gets honor— honor for him comes at the wrong time, and the wrong place.

Proverbs 26:2

so an undeserved curse does not alight

A curse that does not harm a person is spoken of as if it were a bird that does not land. Alternate translation: “so an undeserved curse does not land on its mark” (See: [Simile](#))

an undeserved curse

This can be stated with an active form. Alternate translation: “a curse on a person who does not deserve it” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

alight

land on someone or something

ULT

² As the bird with respect to fluttering, as the swallow with respect to flying, so an undeserved curse does not come.

UST

² A sparrow flies here and there flittering around, and a swallow darts back and forth when it flies, that is like someone speaking a curse against you—but it cannot land on you.

Proverbs 26:3

A whip is for the horse, a bridle is for the donkey and a rod is for the back of fools

A whip, a bridle, and a rod are things that people use to make the horse, donkey, and fool do what they want.

a bridle is for the donkey

A bridle is made of straps. People put it on a donkey's head and hold one of the straps to make the donkey go the way they want it to go.

a rod is for the back of fools

In the Bible, people would hit their children or their slaves with a wooden rod in order to discipline them.

ULT

³ A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools.

UST

³ A horse needs a whip to make it move, and a donkey must have a bridle in its mouth, or it will not carry its load. In the same way, a fool needs someone to beat him on his back to get him to do anything.

Proverbs 26:4

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁴ Do not answer a fool according to his foolishness, lest you become like him, also you.

UST

⁴ Do not reply to a fool when he is trying to draw you into his foolishness, or you will be just as much a fool as he is.

Proverbs 26:5

Answer a fool and join in on his folly

Joining in on a fool's folly when answering him represents answering him in a foolish way. Alternate translation: "Answer a fool according to his folly" or "Answer a fool foolishly"

so he will not become wise in his own eyes

The eyes represent seeing, and seeing represents thoughts or judgment. Alternate translation: "so that he will not become wise according to his judgement" or "so that he does not consider himself to be wise" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁵ Answer a fool according to his foolishness, lest he become wise in his eyes.

UST

⁵ Give a fool an answer that will be just as foolish as his question, and that may open his eyes so he can see that he is not as wise as he thinks.

Proverbs 26:6

Whoever sends a message by the hand of a fool

Here the hand represents the fool's responsibility to deliver the message. Alternate translation: "Whoever sends a fool to deliver a message" (See: [Metonymy](#))

cuts off his own feet

Cutting off one's own feet is an exaggeration for harming one's self. Alternate translation: "harms himself like a person who cuts off his own feet and drinks violence" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Hyperbole](#))

drinks violence

Violence is spoken of as if it were a poisonous liquid that someone might drink. Alternate translation: "harms himself by being violent" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁶ One who cuts off feet, one who drinks violence, {is} one who sends words by the hand of a fool.

UST

⁶ If you entrust an important message to be delivered by a fool, that would be as foolish as cutting of your own feet, and then taking a drink of poison.

Proverbs 26:7

Like the legs ... is a proverb in the mouth of fools

The phrases can be reordered. Alternate translation: "A proverb in the mouth of fools is like the legs of a paralytic which hang down" or "A proverb in the mouth of fools is as useless as the legs of a paralytic which hang down" (See: [Simile](#))

a paralytic

a person who is unable to move or feel all or part of his body

in the mouth of fools

Here "mouth" is a metonym for speaking. Alternate translation: "in the speech of fools" or "that fools say" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁷ Legs dangle from a lame man, so {is} a proverb in the mouth of fools.

UST

⁷ A lame man cannot use his legs; they hang down and are useless, as useless as when fools are reciting proverbs to one another that they do not understand..

Proverbs 26:8

tying a stone in a sling

In order to throw a stone very far, people put it into a sling and swing the sling so that the stone will fly from it very quickly. The result of tying a stone in a sling can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: “tying a stone in a sling so that it cannot be thrown” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

giving honor to a fool

Alternate translation: “honoring a fool”

ULT

⁸ Like tying a stone in a sling, so {is} one who gives honor to a fool.

UST

⁸ When you tie a stone into a sling so it cannot be thrown, that is like one who gives honor to a fool, for no matter how much you praise him, it will never do him any good.

Proverbs 26:9

Like a thorn ... is a proverb in the mouth of fools

How the two are alike can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "A proverb in the mouth of fools is as dangerous as a thorn that goes into the hand of a drunkard" (See: [Simile](#))

a thorn that goes into the hand of a drunkard

This could mean: (1) if a drunk person holds a thornbush, a thorn will prick his hand, or (2) if a drunk person is angry, he will pick up a thornbush and swing it at people. For the second meaning, the word "thorn" represents a thornbush. (See: [Synecdoche](#))

in the mouth of fools

Here "mouth" is a metonym for speaking. Alternate translation: "in the speech of fools" or "that fools say" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

⁹ A thorn goes up into the hand of a drunkard, so {is} a proverb in the mouth of fools.

UST

⁹ When a drunk man picks up a bush full of thorns and starts to swing it around at people, that is as helpful as a fool reciting proverbs, people stand back and try to get away from him.

Proverbs 26:10

hires a fool

Alternate translation: "gives a job to a fool"

ULT

10 An archer who pierces everyone, so {is} one who hires a fool and hires those passing by.

UST

10 An archer who aims and shoots arrows at people standing around him, is as dangerous as one who hires a fool or he takes so little care that he hires the next person who comes along.

Proverbs 26:11

As a dog returns to his own vomit

Alternate translation: "As a dog eats its own vomit"

ULT

11 Like a dog returning over its vomit {is} a fool who repeats his foolishness.

UST

11 When you see a dog return to his vomit, that is just like a fool who does the same foolish thing over and over again.

Proverbs 26:12

Do you see someone who is wise in his own eyes?

This question is used to lead the reader to think about someone who is wise in his own eyes. The phrase “is wise in his own eyes” means “thinks he is wise,” and here it implies that the person is not truly wise. Alternate translation: “Consider the person who thinks he is wise but is not.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Metaphor](#))

There is more hope for a fool than for him

Alternate translation: “A fool can become wise more easily than he can”

ULT

¹² See a man wise in his eyes, {there is} more hope for a fool than him.

UST

¹² Do you know someone who has this idea about himself— he thinks he is a very wise person? It is easier to teach a fool than him.

Proverbs 26:13

The lazy person says, “There is a lion ... between the open places!”

The lazy person lies and says that he cannot go outside and work because there is a lion on the road or between the open places.

There is a lion on the road

See how you translated this in [Proverbs 22:13](#).

the open places

This refers to the places in town where there is a lot of room for people to walk around or where people gather. Alternate translation: “the town plazas” or “the streets”

ULT

¹³ A lazy one says, “A young lion {is} in the road, a lion {is} between the plazas!”

UST

¹³ The lazy person has many reasons for not working— you might hear him say, “But there is a lion in the street!” or “Oh, there is a lion in the market!”

Proverbs 26:14

hinges

metal pieces that attach a door to something and allow it to open and close

As the door turns on its hinges, so is the lazy person upon his bed

Both the door and the lazy person move, but they do not go anywhere. (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

14 The door turns on its hinges, and a lazy one on his bed.

UST

14 When you see a door swing back and forth on its hinges, that is just like one who is lazy, when he is lying on his bed, turning back and forth.

Proverbs 26:15

puts his hand into the dish

Alternate translation: "puts his hand into the dish to get food" or "reaches for food"

he has no strength to lift it up to his mouth

This is an exaggeration for doing necessary work that would clearly do him good. (See: [Hyperbole](#))

ULT

¹⁵ A lazy one hides his hand in the dish; he is weary to return it to his mouth.

UST

¹⁵ One who is lazy might reach down with his hand to get some food, but he does not have the energy to put the food into his mouth.

Proverbs 26:16

The lazy person is wiser in his own eyes than seven men

The phrase “his own eyes” represents his thoughts. Alternate translation: “The lazy person thinks he is wiser than seven men” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹⁶ A lazy one {is} wiser in his eyes than seven who return discretion.

UST

¹⁶ The one who is lazy considers himself to be very wise, more wise than seven men who are known for their insight.

Proverbs 26:17

Like one who takes hold of the ears of a dog, is a passerby who becomes angry at a dispute that is not his own

This can be reordered. Alternate translation: "A passerby who becomes angry at some other people's dispute is like a person who grabs hold of a dog's ears" (See: [Simile](#))

Like one who takes hold of the ears of a dog

The implied information is that the dog will get angry and bite the person. Alternate translation: "Like a person who angers a dog by grabbing its ears" or "Like a person who grabs a dog's ears and is bitten by the dog" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

is a passerby who becomes angry at a dispute that is not his own

The implied information is that the passerby will start arguing, and the people who were fighting will get angry with him and hurt him. (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

¹⁷ One who grabs the ears of a dog passing by {is} one who infuriates himself over a dispute not for him.

UST

¹⁷ Someone who walks by a dog lying on the ground, who then reaches down and pulls its ears; he is like someone who hears an argument as he is walking by, and he gets involved, and becomes angry and then he takes sides and joins in— even though he had nothing to do with it.

Proverbs 26:18

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

18 Like a madman who shoots burning arrows and death,

UST

18-19 Who is like an insane person who shoots burning arrows in every direction? One who lies to his neighbor! He makes an excuse to his neighbor and tells him, "I was only joking;" but just like the madman's arrows, what he said has set everything on fire.

Proverbs 26:19

the one who deceives

Both the “madman” (Proverbs 26:18) and the one who deceives hurt people but do not take responsibility for it.

Was I not telling a joke?

The deceiver uses this question to imply that since he his joke was only for fun, he should not be blamed for any harm he has caused. Alternate translation: “I did nothing wrong. I was only telling a joke.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

19 so {is} the man who deceives his neighbor and says, “Was I not joking?”

UST

18-19 Who is like an insane person who shoots burning arrows in every direction? One who lies to his neighbor! He makes an excuse to his neighbor and tells him, “I was only joking;” but just like the madman’s arrows, what he said has set everything on fire.

Proverbs 26:20

gossiper

a person who gossips a lot

ULT

20 At the lack of wood a fire goes out,
and when there is no one who whispers
a quarrel is silenced.

UST

20 The fire goes out when there is no
more wood to burn; and so arguments
stop when no one is gossiping.

Proverbs 26:21

As charcoal is to burning coals and wood is to fire

What charcoal does to coals and what wood does to fire can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "As charcoal helps coals burn and as wood helps fire burn" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

kindling strife

To kindle something means to set it on fire. Setting strife on fire is a metaphor for causing people to fight or argue. Alternate translation: "causing people to fight" or "causing people to argue" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²¹ As charcoal {is} to burning coals and wood {is} to fire, so a man of quarrels {is} to kindling of a dispute.

UST

²¹ As charcoal can ignite into burning coal and a log of wood into a fire; so the one who argues sets anger ablaze.

Proverbs 26:22

The words of a gossip are like delicious morsels

This speaks of gossip being desirable to listen to as if it were delicious food to eat. Alternate translation: "The words of a gossip are desirable to listen to" or (See: [Simile](#))

they go down into the inner parts of the body

This speaks of the words that a gossip says going into a person's mind and affecting his thoughts as if they were food that was going into his stomach. This sentence is equivalent to [Proverbs 18:8](#).

Alternate translation: "and they enter a person's mind and affect his thoughts" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²² The words of one who whispers {are} like delicious morsels, and they go down into the inner rooms of the belly.

UST

²² The gossip tells stories that are like sweet treats to eat; people eat them like candy until they are filled.

Proverbs 26:23

Like the glaze overlaying an earthen vessel so are burning lips and an evil heart

This simile means that a person who says things to hide the evil in their heart are like an earthen vessel covered in glaze to make it look good. These phrases can be reordered. Alternate translation: "People who have burning lips and an evil heart are like an earthen vessel covered with glaze" (See: [Simile](#))

the glaze overlaying an earthen vessel

"the shiny glaze that covers a clay pot." A clay pot is cheap and common. So people covered it with a glaze to make it shiny and appear more expensive.

so are burning lips and an evil heart

This represents a person who has burning lips and an evil heart. Alternate translation: "so is a person who has burning lips and an evil heart" or "so is a person who says nice things but whose heart is evil" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

burning lips

The word "burning" is a metaphor for "strongly emotional" and the word "lips" is a metonym for "speech." Alternate translation: "emotional speech" or "saying nice things" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

an evil heart

The heart represents a person's thoughts, attitudes, desires, or feelings. Alternate translation: "evil thoughts" or "evil desires" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²³ Silver of dross covering over a clay pot {are} burning lips and a heart of evil.

UST

²³ A shining glaze applied with great heat, covers the clay pot, and that is like the fiery words that cover an evil heart.

Proverbs 26:24

disguises his feelings with his lips

Disguising his feelings represents keeping people from knowing what his feelings are. The phrase "his lips" is a metonym for what he says. Alternate translation: "hides his feelings with what he says" or "speaks in such a way that people cannot know his true feelings" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Metonymy](#))

he lays up deceit within himself

Being deceitful is spoken of as if he were storing deceit within himself. Possible meanings are that "deceit" refers to lies. Alternate translation: (1) "he likes his many lies" or (2) deceit refers secret plans to harm people. Alternate translation: "he secretly plans to harm people" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

24 One who hates disguises himself with his lips and he sets deceit in his inward part.

UST

24 The one who is filled with hate, by the words he speaks, he hides his true feelings; and he stores up more and more lies within himself.

Proverbs 26:25

but do not believe him

Alternate translation: "but do not believe what he says"

for there are seven abominations in his heart

The number seven represents completeness. This could mean: (1) "abominations" refers to attitudes that God hates. Alternate translation: "for his heart is completely filled with hateful things" or (2) "abominations" refers to his hatred for people. Alternate translation: "for his heart is completely filled with hatred" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁵ When he makes his voice gracious, do not trust in him, for seven abominations {are} in his heart.

UST

²⁵ He may speak kind words, but you should not believe them, because deep within him is everything that Yahweh despises.

Proverbs 26:26

Though his hatred is covered with deception

This can be stated actively. Alternate translation: "Though deception covers his hatred" or "Though he covers his hatred with deception" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Though his hatred is covered with deception

Keeping people from knowing that he hates them is spoken of as covering his hatred. Alternate translation: "Though he lies to keep people from knowing that he hates them" or "Though he lies so that people will not know that he hates them" (See: [Metaphor](#))

his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly

Being exposed represents being discovered or becoming known. Alternate translation: "his wickedness will become known in the assembly" or "the assembly will discover his wickedness" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

the assembly

Alternate translation: "the community of Israel"

ULT

²⁶ Hatred is covered by deception; his evil will be uncovered in the assembly.

UST

²⁶ Even though he covers up his hatred by his lies, everyone will realize how wicked he is.

Proverbs 26:27

Whoever digs a pit will fall into it

It is implied that the person digs the pit as a trap so that someone will fall into it. Alternate translation: "Whoever digs a pit to trap someone will fall into it" or "If someone digs a pit in order to trap someone, the one who dug it will fall into it" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

the stone will roll back on the one who pushed it

It is implied that the person pushed a large stone so that it would roll downhill and crush someone there. Alternate translation: "if someone pushed a stone so that it would roll downhill and crush someone, the stone will roll back on him instead" or "if someone made a stone roll so that it would hurt someone, the stone will crush him instead" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²⁷ One who digs a pit will fall into it and one who rolls a stone, it will come back to him.

UST

²⁷ One who digs a pit will fall into it; and a stone rolls back on the one who tried to push it up a hill.

Proverbs 26:28

A lying tongue hates the people it crushes

The phrase “a lying tongue” represents a person who tells lies. Crushing people represents causing them trouble. Alternate translation: “A liar hates those he hurts by his lies” (See: [Synecdoche](#) and [Metaphor](#))

a flattering mouth brings about ruin

The phrase “a flattering mouth” represents a person who flatters people. This could mean: (1) a person who flatters others causes trouble or (2) a person who flatters others ruins them (See: [Synecdoche](#))

flattering

praising someone in a manner that is not sincere, or praising someone about things that are not true

ULT

28 A tongue of falsehood hates its oppressed ones, and a smooth mouth makes ruin.

UST

28 The one who lies hates the people he destroys; just as much as the person who uses flattery causes terrible destruction.

Proverbs 27

Proverbs 27 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 27 continues the second section of the book (Chapter 25-29) which is attributed to Solomon.

Special concepts in this chapter

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often including contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility, integrity/crookedness. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 27:1

Do not boast about tomorrow

This is a warning not to brag about what you expect to happen tomorrow. This can be stated clearly. Alternate translation: "Do not speak proudly about your plans for tomorrow" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

what a day may bring

Something happening on a certain day is spoken of as if the day were to bring that event. Alternate translation: "what will happen on a day" or "what will happen tomorrow" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹ Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day will bring forth.

UST

¹ Do not boast about what will happen tomorrow, because you do not know what will come to you during that day.

Proverbs 27:2

and not your own mouth ... and not your own lips

The words “let praise you” are understood from the first phrase. They can be repeated. Here a person is represented by his “mouth” and “lips” because those are the parts of the body used to speak.

Alternate translation: “and do not let your own mouth praise you ... and do not let your own lips praise you” or “and do not praise yourself ... and do not praise yourself” (See: [Ellipsis](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

a stranger

The words “let praise you” are understood from the first phrase. The words can be repeated here. Alternate translation: “let a stranger praise you” (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

² Let a stranger praise you and not your mouth, a foreigner and not your lips.

UST

² Do not praise yourself; let someone else praise you. It is better for someone you do not know to praise you, than for you to praise yourself.

Proverbs 27:3

the provocation of a fool is heavier than both

The difficulty of being patient with a fool who provokes you is spoken of as if that difficulty were heavy. Alternate translation: “the provocation of a fool is harder to tolerate than either of them” or “It is harder to be patient when a fool provokes you than it is to be patient while carrying them” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the provocation of a fool

“the trouble caused by a fool.” “Provocation” means actions or words that cause anger or irritation.

ULT

³ The heaviness of a stone and the weight of sand, yet the vexation of a fool {is} heavier than the two of them.

UST

³ If you think about how heavy a stone can be, or how much sand can weigh—then you will understand that the trouble a fool causes is harder to carry than both of those things.

Proverbs 27:4

There is the cruelty of rage and the flood of anger, but who is able to stand before jealousy?

The abstract nouns “rage”, “anger” and “jealousy” can be translated as adjectives. Alternate translation: “A raging person is cruel and an angry person is overwhelming, but who can stand before a jealous person?” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

cruelty

Alternate translation: “harshness”

the flood of anger

“the destructiveness of anger.” Anger is spoken of here as if it were a powerful flood. (See: [Metaphor](#))

but who is able to stand before jealousy?

This question implies that no one can stand before jealousy. It can be reworded as a statement. Alternate translation: “but no one is able to stand before jealousy” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

to stand before jealousy

Here standing represents being strong and resisting being harmed by a jealous person who attacks. Alternate translation: “to resist a jealous person” or “to remain strong when a jealous person attacks him” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ Fierceness of heat and a flood of nose, but who will stand before the face of jealousy?

UST

⁴ If you think about how cruel can be people who rage at others, and how angry people can attack others like a flood of water, then think about how jealous people are even worse; no one can resist being harmed by a jealous person.

Proverbs 27:5

Better is an open rebuke

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **rebuke**, you could express the same idea with the verb “rebuke.” Alternate translation: “It is better to be openly rebuked” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

than hidden love

“than love that is not openly shown.” If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **love**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: “than to be loved secretly” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

⁵ Better {is} open rebuke than hidden love.

UST

⁵ It is better to offer a rebuke out in the open, than to have a love that is hidden.

Proverbs 27:6

Faithful are the wounds caused by a friend

“The wounds that a friend causes are trustworthy.” The word “wounds” here represents the pain and sadness that a person feels when a friend rebukes or corrects him. (See: [Metaphor](#))

Faithful are the wounds caused by a friend

The trustworthiness of a friend’s rebuke is spoken of as if the sadness that his rebuke causes is trustworthy. Alternate translation: “Though it causes sadness, a friend’s rebuke is trustworthy” (See: [Metonymy](#))

but an enemy may kiss you profusely

It can be stated clearly that the enemy’s kisses are not trustworthy. Alternate translation: “but the enemy’s many kisses are not trustworthy” or “but an enemy may try to deceive you by kissing you profusely” or (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

profusely

Alternate translation: “abundantly” or “too many times”

ULT

6 Faithful {are} the wounds of one who loves, but abundant {are} the kisses of one who hates.

UST

6 A wound from a friend is better than kisses from an enemy.

Proverbs 27:7

A person who has eaten to the full

Alternate translation: "A person who is satisfied" or "A person who has eaten enough to be full"

rejects even a honeycomb

A honeycomb would normally be desirable, but not to the person who has already eaten enough to be satisfied.

every bitter thing is sweet

Alternate translation: "everything that is bitter tastes sweet"

ULT

⁷ A satiated appetite tramples fresh honey, but for the appetite of a hungry one everything bitter {is} sweet.

UST

⁷ When a person is walking along and he has a full stomach, he may step on a honeycomb because he is not hungry; but if he were very hungry, even bitter things would taste sweet to him.

Proverbs 27:8

Like a bird that wanders from its nest is a man who strays from where he lives

The words “wanders” and “strays” mean the same thing in this verse.
(See: [Simile](#))

ULT

⁸ Like a bird wandering from its nest, so a man who wanders from his place.

UST

⁸ When a man wanders away from his home, he is acting like a bird that stays far from its nest.

Proverbs 27:9

Perfume

The word “perfume” here means a desirable oil or ointment.

make the heart rejoice

Here “the heart” represents the feelings or emotions of a person. Alternate translation: “make a person feel joyful” or “make a person glad” (See: [Metonymy](#))

the sweetness of a friend comes from his sincere counsel

This could mean: (1) “sweetness” represents kindness. Alternate translation: “we recognize our friend’s kindness by his counsel” or (2) “sweetness” represents what we appreciate about a person. Alternate translation: “what we appreciate about a friend is his advice” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁹ Oil and incense make the heart glad and the sweetness of his friend {is} from counsel of self.

UST

⁹ The aroma of perfume and the scent of incense can help to make a person feel happy; and we most appreciate friends who give us good advice.

Proverbs 27:10

your brother's house

Here the word "brother" is a general reference to relatives, such as members of the same tribe, clan, or people group.

calamity

extreme troubles and misfortune

ULT

¹⁰ Do not forsake your friend and the friend of your father, and do not enter the house of your brother on the day of your disaster. Better {is} a nearby inhabitant than a distant brother.

UST

¹⁰ Do not forget your friend or a friend of your father; and when you have a problem and you need help, do not go to your brother's home. When there is trouble, a neighbor who lives close by is better than a brother who lives far away.

Proverbs 27:11

make my heart rejoice

Here the "heart" represents the person's feelings or emotions. Alternate translation: "make me feel joyful" or "make me glad" (See: [Metonymy](#))

then I will give back an answer to the one who mocks me

Here "answer" does not mean to answer a question. It means to respond or to reply to someone who is mocking. How this relates to the clause before it can be made clear. AT "then I will reply to the one who mocks me by telling him about you" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

mocks

makes fun of someone, especially in a cruel way

ULT

11 Be wise, my son, and make my heart glad and I shall return a word to one who taunts me.

UST

11 My son, if you become wise, you will make me happy; so I will be able to give an answer to anyone who argues against me.

Proverbs 27:12

A prudent man sees trouble and hides himself, but the naive people go on and suffer because of it

See how you translated a similar phrase in [Proverbs 22:3](#).

A prudent man

Alternate translation: "A man who is wise" or "A man who has good sense"

the naive people

Alternate translation: "the inexperienced and immature people"

suffer

experience something very unpleasant, such as illness, pain, or other hardships

ULT

¹² A prudent one sees evil, he hides; naive ones pass on, they are fined.

UST

¹² One who has good sense takes cover when he sees trouble coming, but those who have no experience or knowledge rush ahead into danger.

Proverbs 27:13

Take a garment of one who has put up security for a stranger

When lending money, a lender would take something from the borrower, such as a garment, as a guarantee of repayment. He would return it after the money was repaid. If the borrower was too poor, someone else could give something to the lender as a guarantee for him. See how you translated this in [Proverbs 20:16](#). Alternate translation: “Take a garment as security from the one who guarantees that what a stranger has borrowed will be paid back” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

who has put up security

This means for someone to give something to a lender as a guarantee that what was borrowed will be paid. See how you translated this in [Proverbs 20:16](#). Alternate translation: “who has guaranteed that what has been borrowed will be paid back” or “who has promised to pay a loan” (See: [Idiom](#))

hold it in pledge

To “hold something in pledge” means to hold on to something that someone has given as a pledge, or promise, that he will pay a debt. See how you translated this in [Proverbs 20:16](#). Alternate translation: “hold onto his coat as a guarantee of repayment” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

¹³ Take his garment when he pledges for a stranger, and hold it in pledge on behalf of a foreign woman.

UST

¹³ Take a man's garment as security when he is guaranteeing a loan for a stranger. Hold the garment in pledge to protect yourself from losing your money when he puts up security for an adulteress.

Proverbs 27:14

Whoever gives his neighbor a blessing

Alternate translation: "If anyone gives his neighbor a blessing"

that blessing will be considered to be a curse

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 neighbor will consider that blessing to be a curse" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

14 One who blesses his neighbor with a great voice in the rising morning, it will be considered a curse to him!

UST

14 If you rise early in the morning and call out a greeting to your neighbor while he is still sleeping, he will consider it to be a curse, not a blessing.

Proverbs 27:15

quarreling

This means making people angry with each other or causing strong disagreements between people.

the constant dripping

The implied information is that it is rain that is constantly dripping. Alternate translation: "the constant dripping of rain" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

a rainy day

Alternate translation: "a day of continual rain"

ULT

15 Dripping continuing on a day of steady rain and a woman of quarrels {are} the same;

UST

15 A wife who continually argues with her husband is as annoying as the constant dripping of water on a rainy day;

Proverbs 27:16

restraining her is like restraining the wind, or trying to catch oil in your right hand

The implied information is that it is as difficult or useless to try and restrain her as it is to try to restrain the wind or catch oil in your hand (See: [Simile](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

restraining her

“holding her back” or “keeping her under control.” The implied information is that it is trying to stop her from quarreling. Alternate translation: “restraining her from quarreling” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

restraining the wind

Alternate translation: “holding back the wind” or “keeping the wind under control”

ULT

¹⁶ restraining her {is} restraining the wind and oil meets his right hand.

UST

¹⁶ and stopping her from arguing would be as difficult as restraining the wind, or trying to catch oil in one hand.

Proverbs 27:17

Iron sharpens iron; in the same way, a man sharpens his friend.

These two phrases are comparing how iron and a man can be improved. Alternate translation: "As iron can sharpen another piece of iron, so a man's character is improved by contact with his friend" (See: [Simile](#))

ULT

¹⁷ Iron sharpens against iron, and a man sharpens the face of his neighbor.

UST

¹⁷ Iron is used to sharpen an iron blade, just like a man makes his friend better.

Proverbs 27:18

who tends

Alternate translation: "who takes care of"

the one who protects his master will be honored

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: "a master will honor the one who protects him" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

18 One who watches a fig tree will eat its fruit and one who guards his master will be honored.

UST

18 The farmer who takes care of a fig tree will enjoy its fruit when it is ripe. This is just like the one who protects his master, he will get honor from his master.

Proverbs 27:19

a person's heart

Here this means a person's thoughts. Alternate translation: "what a person thinks" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹⁹ As the water {is} the face to the face, so {is} the heart of the man to the man.

UST

¹⁹ When a person looks in the water, he sees his own face; similarly when we look at what a person loves, we know what he is like deep inside.

Proverbs 27:20

Abaddon

This is a name that means “destroyer.” Alternate translation: “the Destroyer” (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

are never satisfied

Alternate translation: “are never filled up”

a man’s eyes

Here the “eyes” represent a man’s desires. Alternate translation: “a man’s desires” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²⁰ Sheol and Abaddon are not satisfied, and the eyes of man are not satisfied.

UST

²⁰ You know that the Place of the Dead and The Destroyer are never satisfied; and people, too, are never satisfied and always want more.

Proverbs 27:21

A crucible is for silver and a furnace is for gold

This refers to how gold and silver are refined. A metal is refined by heating it to a high temperature so that it melts and the impurities may be removed. See how you translated the very similar phrase in [Proverbs 17:3](#). Alternate translation: “A crucible is used to refine silver and a furnace is used to refine gold” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

crucible

a container used for heating substances to very high temperatures (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

furnace

an oven that can be made extremely hot (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

a person is tested when he is praised

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 one praises a person, they are also testing that person” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²¹ A melting-pot {is} for silver and a furnace {is} for gold, so {is} a man for the mouth of one who praises him.

UST

²¹ Silver is refined in a crucible, and gold is put into a furnace to be made pure; and how a person responds to the praise given to them will tell you what kind of person he is.

Proverbs 27:22

Even if you crush a fool ... yet his foolishness will not leave him

This means that even if a fool is made to suffer hardship or pain (being crushed is often a metaphor for suffering in Hebrew), he will remain foolish. (See: [Metaphor](#))

pestle

a hard tool with a rounded end, used for crushing things in a bowl (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

ULT

²² If you pound a fool in a mortar with a pestle, in the midst of grains, his foolishness will not turn aside from on him.

UST

²² Though you grind a fool as if you were grinding up grain, you will not be able to take his foolishness out of him.

Proverbs 27:23

Be sure you know the condition of your flocks and be concerned about your herds

These two phrases have basically the same meaning and are used together for emphasis. (See: [Parallelism](#))

your flocks

Alternate translation: "flocks of sheep"

your herds

Alternate translation: "herds of goats"

ULT

²³ Know well the face of your flock, set your heart to the livestock.

UST

²³ A good shepherd will know the condition of all his sheep and he will check on them every day.

Proverbs 27:24

Does a crown endure for all generations?

This question expects a negative answer to make the point that the reign of earthly rulers does not last forever. If your readers would misunderstand this question, you can express it as a statement. Alternate translation: "A crown does not endure for all generations" (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

a crown

Here "crown" is a metonym for a king's rule over his kingdom. Alternate translation: "a king's rule" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²⁴ For wealth {is} not to eternity, and a crown {is} not for generation and generation.

UST

²⁴ Wealth does not last forever. Does the crown of a king endure for all generations?

Proverbs 27:25

the new growth appears

Alternate translation: "the new sprouts appear" or "the new grass starts to grow"

ULT

²⁵ The grass is uncovered and fresh grass is seen, so the herbs of the mountains are gathered.

UST

²⁵ The grass dies out and then the new growth starts to grow; and on the mountains food for the cattle is stacked up in the barns.

Proverbs 27:26

Connecting Statement:

Verses 26 and 27 go together with verses 23 to 25 as one proverb.

Those lambs will provide your clothing

The implied information is that the wool (hair) from the lambs can be used to make clothing. Alternate translation: "The lambs' wool will provide you with clothing" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

the goats will provide the price of the field

The implied information is that the money received by selling the goats will be enough to buy a field. Alternate translation: "selling your goats will provide the price of the field" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²⁶ Like lambs {are} for your clothing, so male goats {are} the price of a field.

UST

²⁶ The lambs will give you warm clothing and the goats will give you enough to pay for the cost of the field.

Proverbs 27:27

nourishment for your servant girls

The implied information is that there will also be enough goats' milk to feed the servant girls. Alternate translation: "there will be goat's milk to nourish your servant girls" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

nourishment

Alternate translation: "food"

ULT

27 And {there will be} enough milk of female goats for your food, for the food of your house, and life for your female servants.

UST

27 There will be milk from the goats that you can drink—that will be food for everyone who lives in your house— and it is food to feed your servant girls, as well.

Proverbs 28

Proverbs 28 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 28 continues the second section of the book (Chapter 25-29) which is attributed to Solomon.

Special concepts in this chapter

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often including contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility, integrity/crookedness. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 28:1

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹ The wicked flee and there is not one who pursues, but the righteous ones are confident like a young lion.

UST

¹ A wicked person runs away even when no one is coming after him, but the one who does what is right is as brave as lions.

Proverbs 28:2

Because of the transgression of a land

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **transgression**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: “Because of how a land transgresses” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

the transgression of a land

This is a metonym for the sins of the people living in a land. Alternate translation: “the transgression of the people of a land” (See: [Metonymy](#))

with a man of understanding and knowledge

The implied information is that this man is a ruler or leader. The abstract nouns “understanding” and “knowledge” can be translated as verbs. Alternate translation: “with a man who understands and knows how to rule” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

² By the transgression of a land many {are} its rulers, but with a man who is discerning, who is knowledgeable, so it will endure.

UST

² The more sin there is in a country, the greater the number of rulers it will have; but when there is a ruler who has understanding and knowledge, the country can last a long time.

Proverbs 28:3

who oppresses

Alternate translation: "who severely mistreats"

like a beating rain that leaves no food

The poor man who oppresses other poor people is compared to a rain that falls so hard that it leaves no crop to harvest. (See: [Simile](#))

beating rain

This is a metaphor for a rain coming down hard enough to cause crops to be driven down. Alternate translation: "damaging rain" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

³ A man who is poor and who oppresses the lowly ones {is} a rain that washes away and there is no bread.

UST

³ When a poor person oppresses other poor people, it is like a hard rain that destroys the crops and leaves no food for anyone to eat.

Proverbs 28:4

forsake the law

Alternate translation: "forsake God's law"

those who keep the law

To "keep the law" means to do what God's law requires. Alternate translation: "those who obey God's law" (See: [Metaphor](#))

fight against them

"struggle against them." This means to strongly oppose or resist them. (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁴ Those who forsake instruction praise a wicked one, but those who keep instruction strive against them.

UST

⁴ Those who reject the law are the same people who speak well of those who are wicked; but those who obey the law fight against the wicked.

Proverbs 28:5

Evil men

Here “men” means people in general. Alternate translation: “People who do evil things” (See: [When Masculine Words Include Women](#))

do not understand justice

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **justice**, you could express the same idea with an adjective. Alternate translation: “do not understand what is just” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

those who seek Yahweh

Those who want to know Yahweh and please him are spoken of as if they are literally seeking to find Yahweh. (See: [Metaphor](#))

understand everything

The implied information is that those who seek Yahweh understand all about justice. Alternate translation: “completely understand what is just” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

⁵ Men of evil do not understand justice but those who seek Yahweh understand everything.

UST

⁵ As difficult as it is for evil people to understand what is just, even so those who want to find Yahweh understand everything that is important.

Proverbs 28:6

It is better for a poor person ... than for a rich person

Alternate translation: "It is better to be a poor person ... than it is to be a rich person"

walks in his integrity

This represents a person living a life of integrity. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **integrity**, you could express the same idea with an adverb. Alternate translation: "walks honestly" or "lives honestly" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

who is crooked in his ways

Rich people who are dishonest are spoken of as if they walk on crooked or twisted paths. Alternate translation: "who is not honest in what he does" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁶ One who is poor who walks in his integrity {is} better than one perverse of ways and he {is} rich.

UST

⁶ It is better to be honest and poor, than to be dishonest in all you do, and to be rich.

Proverbs 28:7

He who keeps the law

To “keep the law” means to do what God’s law requires. Alternate translation: “He who obeys God’s law” (See: [Metaphor](#))

a son who has understanding

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **understanding**, you could express the same idea with a verb. Alternate translation: “a son who understands” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

of gluttons

“of people who eat too much.” A “glutton” is a person who often eats and drinks excessively.

shames his father

Alternate translation: “puts his father to shame” or “dishonors his father”

ULT

7 One who keeps instruction {is} a son who is discerning, but one who associates with those who squander shames his father.

UST

7 The one who obeys the law is a child who has understanding of the ways of wisdom; but if children go around with friends who are only interested in eating too much, they put their father to shame.

Proverbs 28:8

makes his fortune

Alternate translation: "increases his wealth"

charging too much interest

Alternate translation: "charging extra money to borrow"

interest

money paid by a borrower for the use of someone else's money

gathers his wealth

Alternate translation: "brings his wealth together"

for another

Alternate translation: "for another person"

pity

a strong feeling of sadness or sympathy for someone

ULT

⁸ One who makes his wealth abundant by interest and usury gathers it for one who shows favor to lowly ones.

UST

⁸ The person who becomes rich by charging a high rate of interest, he does not know that he is gathering his money, and it will be given to someone who helps the poor and is kind to them.

Proverbs 28:9

If one

Alternate translation: "If a person"

turns away his ear from hearing the law

This represents the whole person turning away from and rejecting God's law. Alternate translation: "turns away from hearing and obeying the law" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

even his prayer is detestable

"even his prayer is offensive to God." This can be written in active form. Alternate translation: "God detests even his prayer" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

detestable

See how you translated this in [Proverbs 3:32](#).

ULT

⁹ One who turns his ear away from hearing instruction, even his prayer {is} an abomination.

UST

⁹ If you refuse to hear what the law says to you about how you should live; then Yahweh is offended by your prayers.

Proverbs 28:10

Whoever misleads the upright into an evil way

This is a metaphor for leading upright people in an evil direction. Alternate translation: "Whoever causes the upright to go in an evil direction" (See: [Metaphor](#))

Whoever misleads ... evil way will fall

Alternate translation: "If anyone misleads ... evil way, he will fall"

the upright

This refers to upright persons in general. Alternate translation: "upright persons" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

will fall into his own pit

"will fall into the trap that he has dug." This is a metaphor for ending up in the same bad place as others had been led toward. Alternate translation: "will end up in the same evil place toward which he guided other people" (See: [Metaphor](#))

the blameless

This refers to blameless persons in general. Alternate translation: "blameless persons" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

will have a good inheritance

Alternate translation: "will inherit what is good"

ULT

¹⁰ One who leads upright ones astray in the way of evil he will fall into his pits but blameless ones will inherit good.

UST

¹⁰ If someone tricks an honest person into doing what is bad, the one who did that will fall into his own trap, but those who have tried to do what is right will receive many good things.

Proverbs 28:11

be wise in his own eyes

The eyes represent seeing, and seeing represents thoughts or judgment. Alternate translation: “be wise in his own thoughts” or “think he is wise” (See: [Metaphor](#))

who has understanding

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **understanding**, you could express the same idea with a verb. Alternate translation: “who understands” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

will find him out

This is an idiom that means the poor person will be able to determine whether or not the rich person is really wise. Alternate translation: “will see his true nature” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

11 A rich man {is} wise in his eyes, but a lowly one who understands will search him out.

UST

11 A rich person can think of himself as being wise, but someone who is poor but who has good sense will be able to tell if the rich man is really wise.

Proverbs 28:12

When the righteous triumph

Alternate translation: "When righteous people succeed"

when the wicked arise

This is an idiom that means when the wicked gain power or start to rule. Alternate translation: "when the wicked rise to power" (See: [Idiom](#))

the wicked

This refers to wicked people in general. Alternate translation: "wicked people" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

people are sought out

You may need to make explicit that those who "are sought out" have hidden themselves to escape from the wicked. 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 seek people out" or "they seek out the people who hide from them" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

12 {There is} great splendor when righteous ones rejoice, but a man is searched for when wicked ones arise.

UST

12 When those who do what is right have a victory, it is a time to celebrate, but when those who are wicked rise up in victory, people run and hide.

Proverbs 28:13

hides his sins

“covers his sins.” This is the opposite of confessing and forsaking sins, and is spoken of as covering sins rather than bringing them into the open (See: [Metaphor](#))

will not prosper

Alternate translation: “will not succeed” or “will not advance”

the one who confesses them and forsakes them will be shown mercy

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 show mercy to the one who confesses and forsakes them” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

13 One who covers his transgressions will not prosper, but one who confesses and forsakes will be shown mercy.

UST

13 The one who tries to cover up his sins will be found out, but Yahweh will forgive those who tell their sins to him, and they turn away from doing them.

Proverbs 28:14

The one who always lives with reverence is blessed

This can be expressed in active form. Alternate translation: "God will bless the one who always lives with reverence" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

lives with reverence

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **reverence**, you could express the same idea with an adjective. Alternate translation: "lives a reverent life" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

reverence

This refers to deeply respecting Yahweh and showing that respect by obeying him.

whoever hardens his heart

Alternate translation: "the one who hardens his heart"

hardens his heart

This is an idiom that means to be stubborn or unwilling to obey God. Alternate translation: "refuses to obey God" (See: [Idiom](#))

will fall into trouble

This represents ending up in misery and distress. Alternate translation: "will end up in trouble" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

14 Blessed {is} a man who trembles continually, but one who hardens his heart will fall into evil.

UST

14 How fortunate are those who always honor Yahweh; but those who refuse to listen to him, who do not want to learn from him, will fall into trouble.

Proverbs 28:15

Like a roaring lion or a charging bear is a wicked ruler over poor people

Poor people who are helpless against an evil ruler are compared to people who have a lion roaring at them or a bear attacking them.

(See: [Simile](#))

a charging bear

A bear is a large, furry, dangerous animal that walks on four legs and has sharp claws and teeth. (See: [Translate Unknowns](#))

ULT

¹⁵ A lion growling and a bear charging {is} a wicked ruler over a lowly people.

UST

¹⁵ You know what a roaring lion or a charging bear is like; they are just like the wicked ruler who is tearing apart poor people.

Proverbs 28:16

The ruler who lacks understanding

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **understanding**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: “The ruler who does not understand” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

oppressor

a person who treats people harshly and makes their lives very difficult

the one who hates dishonesty

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **dishonesty**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: “the one who hates being dishonest” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

prolong his days

This could mean: (1) this is an idiom that means his living for more time. Alternate translation: “live longer” or (2) this is an idiom that means extending the length of his reign. Alternate translation: “rule for a longer time” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

16 A leader lacking understanding {is} with great oppressions; one who hates unjust gain will lengthen days.

UST

16 A king who does not have good sense thinks he is wise when he is cruel and he takes everything away from his people. but a person who hates getting anything by breaking the law, will live a long life.

Proverbs 28:17

he has shed someone's blood

Here "blood" represents a person's life. To "shed blood" means to murder someone. Alternate translation: "he has killed someone" or "he has murdered someone" (See: [Metonymy](#))

fugitive

a person who is running away to avoid being captured

until death

"until he dies." This means for the rest of his life. Alternate translation: "all of his life" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

17 A man who oppresses by the blood of life will flee as far as a pit; they will not support him.

UST

17 If a person is guilty of murdering another he will live like a fugitive until he dies; and no one will help him.

Proverbs 28:18

Whoever walks with integrity will be kept safe

This can be expressed in active form. Alternate translation: "God will keep safe anyone who walks with integrity" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

Whoever

Alternate translation: "Anyone who"

walks with integrity

This represents a person living a life of integrity. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word

integrity, you could express the same idea with an adverb. Alternate translation: "walks honestly" or "lives honestly" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

the one whose way is crooked

A dishonest person is spoken of as if he walks on crooked or twisted paths. Alternate translation: "the one who does not live honestly" (See: [Metaphor](#))

will suddenly fall

What will happen to a dishonest person is spoken of as if he suddenly fell down. Alternate translation: "will suddenly be ruined" or "will suddenly perish" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

18 One who walks blamelessly will be saved, but one who is crooked in ways will fall into one.

UST

18 When a person lives his life and is blameless, Yahweh will keep him safe; but one who lives by his lies will be suddenly ruined.

Proverbs 28:19

works his land

This means to till, sow, and care for his crops.

whoever follows

Alternate translation: "anyone who follows"

follows worthless pursuits

"chases after worthless projects." The person who is busy doing things that do not produce anything is spoken of as chasing after useless things. (See: [Idiom](#))

will have plenty of poverty

The person following worthless pursuits is spoken of as getting the opposite of plenty of food. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **poverty**, you could express the same idea with an adjective. Alternate translation: "will be very poor" (See: [Irony](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

¹⁹ One who works his land will be satisfied {with} bread, but one who pursues empty things will be satisfied {with} poverty.

UST

¹⁹ A farmer who works his field will have plenty of food to eat; but anyone who gives his time to worthless dreams, will be very poor.

Proverbs 28:20

the one who gets rich quickly will not go unpunished

The double negative “will not go unpunished” is used for emphasis. 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 certainly punish the one who gets rich quickly” (See: [Litotes](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

the one who gets rich quickly

The implied information is that this person gains wealth by unfaithful or dishonest means. Alternate translation: “the one who tries to get rich quickly” (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

²⁰ A man of faithfulness {has} an abundance of blessings, but one who hurries to become rich will not be free of guilt.

UST

²⁰ Yahweh will give good things to a faithful person; but he will certainly punish those who become rich quickly.

Proverbs 28:21

for a piece of bread a man will do wrong

“A piece of bread” here is an exaggeration for a very small bribe or reward. Alternate translation: “a man will sin for very little gain” (See: [Hyperbole](#))

do wrong

Alternate translation: “sin”

ULT

²¹ Recognizing faces {is} not good, but on account of a bit of bread a man will rebel.

UST

²¹ It is bad to give a favor to one person and not to another; some people will do what is wrong just to get a piece of bread.

Proverbs 28:22

A stingy man

"A selfish man." This is a person who does not like to share his possessions or spend money.

hurries after riches

The stingy man is spoken of as if he was chasing after wealth.
Alternate translation: "is greedy for riches" (See: [Idiom](#))

poverty will come upon him

The result of being stingy is spoken of as if poverty was overtaking the stingy person. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **poverty**, you could express the same idea with an adjective.
Alternate translation: "he will suddenly become poor" (See: [Idiom](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

22 A man of an evil eye {is} one who hurries to the wealth, but he does not know that poverty will come to him.

UST

22 A man who hates to spend his money will run to more, but he does not know that poverty is coming to him.

Proverbs 28:23

Whoever disciplines someone, afterward will find more favor from him than from the one who flatters him with his tongue

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. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **favor**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: "A person will favor the one who disciplines him more than he favors the person who flatters him with his tongue" (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

Whoever disciplines

Alternate translation: "If a person disciplines"

disciplines

trains people to obey a set of guidelines for moral behavior

flatters him with his tongue

The tongue here represents speaking. Alternate translation: "flatters him with words" (See: [Metonymy](#))

flatters

praises someone in a manner that is not sincere, or praises someone about things that are not true

ULT

²³ One who rebukes a man afterward will find favor more than one who makes the tongue smooth.

UST

²³ The one who rebukes a person will later be appreciated more than the one who says nice things just to flatter him.

Proverbs 28:24

Whoever robs

Alternate translation: "The one who robs"

says, "That is no sin," he

This can be expressed as an indirect quotation. Alternate translation: "says that it is not a sin, he" (See: [Direct and Indirect Quotations](#))

the companion of

Possible meanings are: (1) "the friend of" or (2) an idiom that means having the same character as. Alternate translation: "the same kind of person as" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

²⁴ One who robs his father and his mother and says, "There is no transgression," he {is} the companion of a man of destruction.

UST

²⁴ Anyone who steals things from his father or his mother and says "That is not sinful," he is friend of the one who destroys.

Proverbs 28:25

A greedy man

a person who selfishly wants more things, money or food than what he needs

stirs up conflict

The action of the greedy man is spoken of as if he were stirring up or awakening conflict. Alternate translation: "causes conflict" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁵ One wide of spirit stirs up strife, but one who trusts in Yahweh will be made fat.

UST

²⁵ A greedy person stirs up arguments between people; but the one who trusts in Yahweh will do well.

Proverbs 28:26

One who trusts in his own heart

Depending on one's self is spoken of as trusting in one's own heart. Alternate translation: "The person who relies on himself" (See: [Synecdoche](#))

whoever walks

Alternate translation: "any person who walks"

walks in wisdom

This could mean: (1) this is an idiom that means to live wisely. Alternate translation: "lives wisely" or (2) this is an idiom that means to follow the teachings of wise people. Alternate translation: "follows wise teachings" (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

²⁶ One who trusts in his heart, he {is} a fool, but one who walks in wisdom, he will slip away.

UST

²⁶ One who depends on himself is a fool, those who make wise decisions escape danger.

Proverbs 28:27

The one

Alternate translation: "The person"

the poor

This refers to poor people in general. Alternate translation: "poor people" (See: [Nominal Adjectives](#))

lack nothing

This double negative is used for emphasis. Alternate translation: "have everything they need" (See: [Litotes](#))

whoever closes his eyes to them will receive many curses

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) they will receive many curses from the poor. Alternate translation: "the poor will give many curses to whoever closes his eyes to them" or (2) they will receive many curses from people in general. Alternate translation: "people will give many curses to whoever closes his eyes to the poor" or (3) they will receive many curses from God. Alternate translation: "God will give many curses to whoever closes his eyes to the poor" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

whoever closes

Alternate translation: "anyone who closes"

closes his eyes to

Closing the eyes represents not responding to the needs of the poor. Alternate translation: "ignores" or "chooses not to help" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

²⁷ One who gives to the one who is poor has no need, but one who hides his eyes has an abundance of curses.

UST

²⁷ One who gives to help the poor, will not lack anything, but many curses will come to whoever turns away and ignores them.

Proverbs 28:28

When the wicked arise

This is an idiom that means when wicked people gain power or start to rule. Alternate translation: "When wicked people rise to power" (See: [Idiom](#))

people hide themselves

This is an exaggeration for doing everything they can to avoid having wicked people harm them. Alternate translation: "people go into hiding" (See: [Hyperbole](#) and [Reflexive Pronouns](#))

perish

This could mean: (1) "go away" or (2) "fall from power" or (3) "are destroyed."

increase

This could mean: (1) "multiply" or (2) "rise to power."

ULT

28 When wicked ones arise a man will hide himself, but when they perish righteous ones will increase.

UST

28 When wicked people get power, men and women hide; but when the wicked die, there will be more and more of those who do what is right.

Proverbs 29

Proverbs 29 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 29 concludes the second section of the book (Chapter 25-29) which is attributed to Solomon.

Special concepts in this chapter

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often including contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility, integrity/crookedness. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 29:1

who stiffens his neck

A person becoming stubborn is spoken of as if he stiffens his neck. Alternate translation: “who becomes stubborn” or “who refuses to listen” (See: [Metaphor](#))

will be broken in a moment

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 suddenly break him” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

beyond healing

“and no one will be able to heal him.” Sickness is a metaphor for any kind of bad situation. Alternate translation: “and no one will be able to help him” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹ A man of rebukes who stiffens the neck will suddenly be broken and there will be no healing.

UST

¹ When you rebuke a person who has rejected your words and who refused to listen to you, he will be crushed to the point that he cannot be healed.

Proverbs 29:2

the people sigh

The people let out long, loud breaths that show that they are weary and sad. Alternate translation: "the people will be weary and sad" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

² When the righteous ones increase, the people rejoice, but when a wicked man rules, the people groan.

UST

² When people live the right way, they become more numerous, but when a wicked ruler starts to govern, the people groan.

Proverbs 29:3

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³ A man who loves wisdom makes his father rejoice, but one who associates with prostitutes destroys wealth.

UST

³ A son who desires to learn about wisdom makes his father very happy; but the son who is a companion of prostitutes will lose all his money

Proverbs 29:4

by justice

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **justice**, you could express the same idea with a noun phrase. Alternate translation: “by doing what is just” or “by making just laws” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

⁴ The king by justice causes the land to stand, but a man of contributions tears it down.

UST

⁴ When a king rules with honest rules and good laws, he causes his nation to be strong, but anyone who asks for bribes ruins his nation.

Proverbs 29:5

flatters his neighbor

knowingly tells his neighbor things that are not true so that the neighbor will do what the speaker wants him to do

spreading a net for his feet

The writer compares the flattery of a person to setting that person up to being caught in a trap. Alternate translation: "setting a trap to catch that person" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁵ A man who makes smooth for his neighbor {is} one who spreads a net for his feet.

UST

⁵ One who praises his neighbor to get something from him, is like the one who listens for the sound of his footsteps, so he can catch him in a net.

Proverbs 29:6

In the sin of an evil person is a trap

When an evil person sins, it is as if he is stepping into a trap. He desires to do evil to other people, but God will use what he does to punish him. (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁶ A snare {is} in the transgression of an evil man, but the righteous one sings and rejoices.

UST

⁶ A bad person sets a trap with his sin; then he falls into it; but one who does right is full of songs and joy.

Proverbs 29:7

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁷ A righteous one {is} one who knows the cause of lowly ones; a wicked one does not understand knowledge.

UST

⁷ The one who does right stands up for the poor and defends them; but wicked people do not see the importance of standing up for the poor.

Proverbs 29:8

set a city on fire

Here the word “city” represents the people who live in the city. Mockers causing the people to experience turmoil and possibly to become violent is spoken of as if they set the city on fire. Alternate translation: “create turmoil for the people of a city” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Metaphor](#))

turn away wrath

This idiom means to cause angry people no longer to be angry. Alternate translation: “calm the wrath of angry people” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

⁸ Men of mockery inflame a city, but wise ones turn away nose.

UST

⁸ People who sneer and mock others are like those who set a city on fire; but those who help people get rid of their anger are wise.

Proverbs 29:9

has an argument with

Another possible meaning is "goes to court against."

he rages and laughs

The fool becomes very angry and tries to keep the wise person from speaking or the court judge from judging.

rages

This means to be loud and excited and to move with powerful movements like a strong storm. This is a negative word.

there will be no rest

Alternate translation: "they will not be able to settle the problem"

ULT

⁹ A wise man judges a foolish man, but he trembles and laughs and there is no rest.

UST

⁹ If a wise person has any conflict with a foolish person, the foolish person screams at him and then laughs at him, and it never ends.

Proverbs 29:10

seek the life of

This idiom means to “want to kill.” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

¹⁰ Men of bloodshed hate a blameless one, but upright ones seek his life.

UST

¹⁰ A murderer hates him who does everything right; and they seek to kill the one who has a good reputation.

Proverbs 29:11

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

11 A fool brings forth all his spirit, but a wise one soothes it backwards.

UST

11 A fool shows all his anger, but a person who is wise holds his anger, and he knows how to calm himself down.

Proverbs 29:12

pays attention

"listens." See how you translated this in [Proverbs 17:4](#).

all his officials will be wicked

The actions of the ruler are spoken of by stating the result they will cause. Alternate translation: "it is as if he is teaching his officials to be wicked" (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

¹² One who rules who listens attentively to a word of falsehood, all his servants {are} wicked.

UST

¹² If a ruler believes the lies that are told to him, he teaches all his officials to be wicked.

Proverbs 29:13

oppressor

a person who treats people harshly and makes their lives very difficult

Yahweh gives light to the eyes of them both

This idiom means “Yahweh makes both of them alive.” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

13 One who is poor and the man of oppression meet together; he who enlightens the eyes of them both {is} Yahweh.

UST

13 What do a poor person and one who takes advantage of people have in common? Yahweh gives life to both of them.

Proverbs 29:14

his throne

The throne is a metonym for the kingdom he rules from his throne.
Alternate translation: "his kingdom" (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

14 A king who judges lowly ones by truth, his throne will be established to perpetuity.

UST

14 If a king judges the poor by listening to the truth, he will build a kingdom that will continue forever.

Proverbs 29:15

The rod and reproof give wisdom

The writer speaks as if a rod and reproof were people who could give wisdom as a physical gift. Alternate translation: "If a parent uses the rod on his child and reproves him, the child will become wise" or "If parents discipline their child and tell him when he has done wrong, the child will learn to live wisely" (See: [Personification](#))

The rod

Parents in Israel used wooden rods as instruments to discipline children by striking them. Alternate translation: "discipline" (See: [Metonymy](#))

reproof

When a person gives reproof to another person, or reproves that person, he tells that person that he does not approve of what that other person is doing.

ULT

15 A rod and rebukes give wisdom but a boy who is sent away {is} one who causes his mother shame.

UST

15 If a child is punished, the gift of wisdom is given to him; but when a child is out of control, this brings shame to his mother.

Proverbs 29:16

transgression increases

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **transgression**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: “more people will transgress and their sins will become worse” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

the downfall of those wicked people

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **downfall**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form such as “fall,” which is a metaphor for losing the power to rule. Alternate translation: “those wicked people fall” or “those wicked people lose their power to rule” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

16 When wicked ones increase, transgression increases, but righteous ones will look at their overthrow.

UST

16 When wicked people have authority, lawbreaking is common; but those who do what is right will see the day when the wicked will lose their power.

Proverbs 29:17

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

17 Discipline your son and he will cause you to rest and he will give delights to your spirit.

UST

17 Discipline your child and he will help you and serve you; you will truly rejoice over him.

Proverbs 29:18

the one who keeps the law is blessed

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "God will bless the one who keeps the law" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

18 When there is no prophetic vision, the people are let loose, but one who keeps instruction, blessed is he.

UST

18 When no prophet receives any vision from Yahweh, the people go out of control, but those who obey the law are fortunate.

Proverbs 29:19

A slave will not be corrected by words

This can be translated in active form: "You will not be able to correct a slave simply by talking to him" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

19 A servant will not be corrected with words, for he understands but there is no answer.

UST

19 Talk to a slave as much as you want, but though he understands what you are saying, they have learned not to give you an answer.

Proverbs 29:20

See a man who is hasty in his words?

The writer is using a question to get the reader's attention. Alternate translation: "You should notice what happens to a man who is hasty in his words." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

ULT

²⁰ Do you see a man who hastens his words; {there is} more hope for a fool than him.

UST

²⁰ Do you see someone who is quick to speak, quick to give an opinion? Yahweh can give a fool more help in the future easier than he can help him who is quick to speak.

Proverbs 29:21

who pampers his slave

Alternate translation: "who allows his slave to avoid work and who treats his slave better than he treats other slaves"

at the end of it

Alternate translation: "at the end of the slave's youth" or "when the slave is grown"

there will be trouble

These words translate a Hebrew word whose meaning no one knows for sure. Some understand it to mean that the slave will be weak, others that the slave will rule the household.

ULT

²¹ {If} one pampers his servant from youth, then his end will be insolence.

UST

²¹ If a slave is excused from his labor and treated better than other slaves by his master from the time he is young; but when he is grown, that slave will give trouble to his master.

Proverbs 29:22

stirs up strife

Causing people to argue more is spoken of as if it were stirring up or awakening arguments. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **strife**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form such as “argue.” See how you translated similar words in [Proverbs 15:18](#). Alternate translation: “causes people to argue more” or “causes people to argue and fight” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

a master of rage

This idiom means “a person who becomes angry easily.” (See: [Idiom](#))

ULT

22 A man of nose stirs up strife and an owner of heat, much transgression.

UST

22 A person who cannot control his anger stirs up many quarrels and uses his rage to rule over others, and so he commits many sins.

Proverbs 29:23

one who has a humble spirit will be given honor

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: “men will give honor to a person who has a humble spirit” or “a person who has a humble spirit will receive honor from men” or “Yahweh will cause men to honor a person who has a humble spirit” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²³ The pride of a man will make him low, but one lowly of spirit will grasp honor.

UST

²³ Any person who is proud will be humbled; but the one who is humbled will be given honor.

Proverbs 29:24

hates his own life

Alternate translation: "becomes his own enemy"

he hears the curse and says nothing

This could mean: (1) people have put the "one who shares with a thief" under oath to tell the truth about what he knows about what the thief stole, and he knows he will be punished if he tells the truth. Alternate translation: "he does not dare to testify under oath" or (2) people do not know who the thief is but they call on God to curse the thief, and the "one who shares" is afraid to confess and so come out from under the curse because he is afraid of the thief. Alternate translation: "he says nothing even after people have cursed him" (See: [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

24 One who shares with a thief {is} one who hates his life; he will hear an oath but will not tell.

UST

24 A person who helps a thief, hates himself; he overhears the curse, but he does not say anything about it.

Proverbs 29:25

The fear of man makes a snare

Being afraid of what other people might do is spoken of as stepping into a trap. Alternate translation: "Anyone who is afraid of what other people might do to him is like a person who has become snared in a trap" (See: [Metaphor](#))

a snare

a trap that catches animals with ropes

the one who trusts in Yahweh will be protected

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "Yahweh will protect the one who trusts in him" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²⁵ The anxiety of a man gives a snare, but the one who trusts in Yahweh will be set on high.

UST

²⁵ When one is afraid of what people can do, it is like setting a trap for himself. but whoever trusts in Yahweh is safe.

Proverbs 29:26

Many are those who seek the face of the ruler

The word “face” is a metonym for the ruler listening to people telling him what they want him to do and then doing it. Alternate translation: “Many people want their ruler to pay attention to them” (See: [Metonymy](#))

from Yahweh is justice for a person

It is Yahweh, not human rulers, who will see that people treat a person justly. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **justice**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form such as “just.” Alternate translation: “it is Yahweh who is truly just towards a person” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

²⁶ Many {are} those who seek the face of a ruler, but justice of a man {is} from Yahweh.

UST

²⁶ Many people want to come before a ruler to get help from him, but Yahweh is the only one who gives him true justice.

Proverbs 29:27

detestable

a person who should be hated. See how you translated this in [Proverbs 3:32](#).

ULT

²⁷ A man of injustice {is} an abomination of righteous ones, but the upright of way {is} an abomination of a wicked one.

UST

²⁷ Those who do what is right detest a person who treats others in an unfair way; just as the wicked hate those who live good lives.

Proverbs 30

Proverbs 30 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 30 is a chapter in Proverbs attributed to Agur, who is a person otherwise unknown.

Special concepts in this chapter

Agur

His full title is Agur, Son of Jakeh. Agur comes from a Hebrew word that means “gatherer” and so some scholars believe this is not a real name, but possibly a way of referring to Solomon as a gatherer of proverbs. However, it is still prudent to simply use this as a name.

Three things and four

From verses 15 through 32, the author uses a specific technique to explain some things. He says there are three things and even four and lists items that exemplify a feature like “small and yet wise.” The numbering is not meant to be so literal, but as a memory device that introduces the items. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#))

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often including contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility, integrity/crookedness. (See: [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 30:1

Agur ... Jakeh ... Ithiel ... Ucal

These are the names of men. (See: [How to Translate Names](#))

Agur son of Jakeh

This is the literal son of Jakeh, not a grandchild.

the utterance

Alternate translation: "the message"

to Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ucal

Alternate translation: "to Ithiel—that is, to Ithiel and Ucal"

ULT

¹ The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, the burden: The declaration of the man to Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ucal:

UST

¹ These are sayings containing wisdom, the sayings of Agur son of Jakeh. Agur wrote them for Ithiel, yes, to Ithiel and to Ucal.

Proverbs 30:2

Surely

Alternate translation: "Certainly" or "There is no doubt that"

I do not have the understanding of a human being

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **understanding**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: "I do not understand anything the way human beings are supposed to understand them" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

² Surely, I {am} more stupid than a man, and the understanding of mankind {is} not mine.

UST

² I am more like an animal than any human being! I lack the understanding that a human being has!

Proverbs 30:3

nor do I have knowledge of the Holy One

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **knowledge**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: “nor do I really know anything about the Holy One” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

³ And I have not learned wisdom, nor do I know the knowledge of the holy one.

UST

³ I have not learned about wisdom; I do not know Yahweh, the Holy One.

Proverbs 30:4

Who has ... down? Who has ... hands? Who has ... cloak? Who has ... earth?

The writer asks these questions to get the reader thinking about how much greater Yahweh is than people. Alternate translation: “No person has ever ... down. No person has ever ... hands. No person has ever ... cloak. No person has ever ... earth.” or “Who has ... down? Who has ... hands? Who has ... cloak? Who has ... earth? No one has ever done any of these things.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

heaven

where God lives

gathered up the wind in the hollow of his hands

The writer speaks of the wind as if it were something that a person could catch and hold in his hand. Alternate translation: “has caught the wind in his hands” (See: [Metaphor](#))

the hollow of his hands

the way his hands are shaped when he is scooping up, for example, water or sand. “his cupped hands”

gathered up

brought small scattered objects into a pile so they can be lifted

has established all the ends of the earth

Alternate translation: “has set up the limits for where the earth ends” or “has marked the boundaries for the ends of the earth”

What is his name, and what is the name of his son?

The writer uses these questions to command the reader to give an answer. Alternate translation: “Tell me his name and the name of his son, if you know them.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Surely you know!

The writer uses irony to show that neither he nor the reader know any person who can do what the “who” in the earlier questions can do. Alternate translation: “I do not think you really know anyone who can do those things.” (See: [Irony](#))

ULT

⁴ Who has ascended {to} heaven and descended? Who has gathered the wind in the hollow of his hands? Who has bound up waters in a cloak? Who has raised up all the ends of the earth? What {is} his name and what {is} the name of his son? Surely you know!

UST

⁴ Who has ever gone up to heaven and come back down again? Who can catch the wind in his hand? Who can gather up the waters in an overcoat? Who set the limits to the size of the earth? What is his name? And what is the name of his son? Do you know?

Proverbs 30:5

is tested

Words are spoken of as if they were metals that need someone to clean the bad parts out of them. Alternate translation: “is like a precious metal from which someone has removed all the useless material” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

he is a shield to those who take refuge in him

The word “shield” is a metaphor for something that protects a person. Alternate translation: “he protects those who come and ask him to protect them” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

⁵ Every word of God is tested; he {is} a shield for those who take refuge in him.

UST

⁵ Every word of God is proven by a test that it is true; he is like a shield that protects those who run to him.

Proverbs 30:6

add to his words

say more than he has said

you will be proved to be

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "he will prove that you are" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

⁶ Do not add upon his words, lest he rebuke you and you be shown a liar.

UST

⁶ Be careful not to add to Yahweh's words more than he has said; if you do that, he will correct you and he will prove that you lied about what he said.

Proverbs 30:7

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

⁷ Two things I ask from with you, do not withhold from me before I die:

UST

⁷ I ask Yahweh for two things, and that he give them to me before I die.

Proverbs 30:8

Put vanity and lies far away from me

This could mean: (1) "Do not allow people to speak vanity and lies to me" or (2) "Do not allow me to speak vanity and lies" (See: [Metaphor](#))

vanity

false, useless words

Give me neither poverty nor riches

The writer speaks as if "poverty" and "riches" were physical objects that someone could give to another. They are also abstract nouns that can be stated as "poor" and "rich." Alternate translation: "Do not allow me to be either very poor or very rich" (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

⁸ Put emptiness and the word of a lie far away from me. Do not give to me poverty or riches, cause me to tear the bread of my portion.

UST

⁸ Put vain pride and lies far away from me; and do not give me poverty or riches, just give me the food I need every day.

Proverbs 30:9

if I have too much, I might deny you and say

This describes a hypothetical situation that has not happened but is possible if the writer becomes rich. (See: [Hypothetical Situations](#))

if I become poor, I might steal and profane

This describes a hypothetical situation that has not happened but is possible if the writer becomes poor. (See: [Hypothetical Situations](#))

I might steal and profane the name of my God

Alternate translation: "I might make people who know that I have stolen things think that there is no God" or "I might harm God's reputation by stealing"

ULT

⁹ Lest I be satiated and I deny and say, "Who {is} Yahweh?" And lest I become dispossessed and I steal and I seize the name of my God.

UST

⁹ For if I have too much money, it is possible that I will deny my God and say, "Who is Yahweh?" Or it is possible that I will become so poor that I steal from others and bring disgrace on the name of my God.

Proverbs 30:10

slander

Speak falsely about another person with the desire to harm him

he will curse

Alternate translation: "the servant will curse"

you will be held guilty

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "people will hold you guilty" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

10 Do not slander a slave to his master, lest he curse you and you be guilty.

UST

10 Do not speak badly about a slave when he is standing before his master; if you do, he will curse you, and you will be responsible; you brought it on yourself.

Proverbs 30:11

a generation that curses ... and does not bless

Alternate translation: "a generation of people who curse ... and do not bless"

generation

type or class or group

ULT

¹¹ {There is} a generation, it curses its father and does not bless its mother.

UST

¹¹ There are many people who curse their fathers and they do not praise their mothers or thank them;

Proverbs 30:12

a generation that is

Alternate translation: “a generation of people that are”

is pure in their own eyes

The eyes represent seeing, and seeing represents thoughts or judgment. Alternate translation: “considers themselves pure” or “believes they are pure” (See: [Metaphor](#))

they are not washed of their filth

The words “washed” and “filth” speak of God forgiving people who sin as if he were washing physical filth off of the people. This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: “God has not forgiven them of their sins” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Active or Passive](#))

filth

This should be translated with a polite term that includes human or animal vomit and waste.

ULT

¹² {There is} a generation pure in its eyes, but it is not washed from its filth.

UST

¹² those people think everything they do should not be criticized, but really they have never been cleansed from their filth.

Proverbs 30:13

eyes are raised up ... their eyelids lifted up

This describes people who think that they are better than other people. Their eyes show that they are proud, and the way they look at others shows that they think they are better than those other people. (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

¹³ {There is} a generation, how its eyes are raised up, and its eyelids are lifted up!

UST

¹³ These people show how proud they are in their eyes; they make people look at them and they show their pride in their faces!

Proverbs 30:14

There is a generation whose teeth are swords, and their jawbones are like knives, so they may devour the poor ... and the needy

The people of the generation who speak very harmful things is spoken of as if they were wild animals with teeth and jawbones made of swords and knives, and they eat the poor and needy. (See: [Metaphor](#))

jawbones

the bones of the face where teeth grow

ULT

¹⁴ {There is} a generation, its teeth {are} swords and its jaws {are} knives for devouring afflicted ones from the earth and poor ones from mankind.

UST

¹⁴ These people use their mouths to speak the most hurtful words, like they are cutting and tearing people apart; it is as if they are eating up the poor people from the earth, and swallowing up the needy from humanity.

Proverbs 30:15

The leech has two daughters

This is an example of something that always wants more. Alternate translation: "Greed has two daughters" (See: [Metaphor](#))

leech

a type of worm that attaches itself to the skin and sucks blood

Another possible meaning is "and they are both named Give Me."
Alternate translation: "Give and give"

There are three things that are never satisfied, four that never say, "Enough"

This use of the numbers "three" and "four" together here is likely a poetic device. Alternate translation: "There are four things that are never satisfied, who never say, 'Enough'" (See: [Poetry](#))

are never satisfied

This can be stated positively. Alternate translation: "always want more" (See: [Litotes](#))

ULT

15 Two daughters {are} for the leech, "Give! Give!" There are three, they are not satisfied; four, they do not say, "Enough":

UST

15 There are leeches that suck blood, imagine they had two daughters; they say, "Give to us! Give to us! There are four things that are never satisfied—they always want more:

Proverbs 30:16

land that is never satisfied with water

Land that is no longer producing food because there has been no rain is spoken of as if it were a person who does not have enough water to drink. (See: [Personification](#))

ULT

16 Sheol, and the barrenness of the womb, a land not satisfied with water, and a fire does not say, "Enough!"

UST

16 The grave, the place of the dead; the womb of a woman that never conceived a child; soil that badly needs to be watered; and a fire that burns hot and it never says, "The fire is hot enough!"

Proverbs 30:17

scorns obedience to a mother

The word “obedience” is a metonym for the mother herself. It is also an abstract noun that can be stated as “obey.” Alternate translation: “considers his mother worthless and will not obey her” (See: [Abstract Nouns](#) and [Metonymy](#))

his eyes ... the vultures

The writer says that the person will die by giving two pictures of what happens to people who die away from where people live.

his eyes will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: “the ravens of the valley will peck out his eyes” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ravens

large, shiny, black birds that eat plants and dead animals

he will be eaten by the vultures

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: “the vultures will eat him” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

vultures

any one of several large birds that eat dead animals and have small, featherless heads

ULT

17 An eye mocks a father and despises the obedience of a mother, the ravens of the valley will peck it out and the sons of the vulture will eat it.

UST

17 The one who dishonors his father, and who disrespects and disobeys his mother, such a person would be killed and have his eyes pecked out by crows, and would be devoured by the vultures.

Proverbs 30:18

There are three things that are ... four that I do not understand:

The use of the numbers “three” and “four” here is likely a poetic device. Alternate translation: “There are some things that are too wonderful for me that I do not understand—four of them are:”

ULT

¹⁸ Three things, they {are} too marvelous for me, and four, I do not understand them:

UST

¹⁸ There are three wonderful things I can mention; no, there are four that are too amazing and I cannot understand them.

Proverbs 30:19

in the heart of the sea

The “heart” refers to the middle. Alternate translation: “in the middle of the sea” or “on the open sea” (See: [Metaphor](#))

ULT

19 the way of the eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship in the heart of the sea; and the way of a man with a young woman.

UST

19 How eagles fly in the sky; how snakes move over a big rock, how ships can sail on the seas, and how a man is able to win the love of a woman.

Proverbs 30:20

she eats and she wipes her mouth

This seems to be both a euphemism and a metaphor for committing adultery and then taking a bath. (See: [Euphemism](#) and [Metaphor](#))

ULT

²⁰ Thus {is} the way of a woman who commits adultery: she devours and wipes her mouth and says, "I have not done iniquity."

UST

²⁰ This is what a woman is like who is not faithful to her husband: she eats and then wipes her mouth, and she says, "There is nothing wrong in what I have done."

Proverbs 30:21

Under three things the earth trembles, and under four it cannot bear up

The use of the numbers “three” and “four” here is likely a poetic device. “There are some things that make the earth tremble, that it cannot endure. Four of these are:”

ULT

²¹ Under three things the earth trembles, and under four it is not able to bear:

UST

²¹ There are four things that make the earth tremble:

Proverbs 30:22

a fool when he is filled with food

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: “a fool who has had enough to eat” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

²² under a slave when he becomes king,
and a fool when he is satisfied with
bread,

UST

²² the earth trembles with a slave
becomes a king; the earth trembles
when fool has eaten his food and is
filled;

Proverbs 30:23

a hated woman when she marries

That is, people rightly hated her before she married; once she marries, she will be worse than she was before she married. This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: “a woman whom good people have hated when she marries” or “an outcast woman when she marries” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

takes the place of her mistress

rules the household

ULT

²³ under a hated woman when she is married, and a female servant when she dispossesses her mistress.

UST

²³ the earth trembles when a woman who is hated by all, gets married, and the earth trembles, when the maid becomes the wife of her master.

Proverbs 30:24

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁴ Four things, they {are} small things of the earth but they {are} wise things being made wise:

UST

²⁴ There are four creatures on the earth that are small, but they are very wise.

Proverbs 30:25

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁵ The ants {are} not a strong nation, but they prepare their food in the summer.

UST

²⁵ Ants are not strong, but they store up food during the summer in order to have it during the winter.

Proverbs 30:26

rock badgers

an animal with small, rounded ears, short legs, and no tail

ULT

²⁶ Rock badgers {are} not a mighty nation, but they set their house in the rock.

UST

²⁶ Rock badgers also are not strong, but they make their homes among the rocks.

Proverbs 30:27

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

²⁷ There is no king for the locust, but all of them go out divided {into groups}.

UST

²⁷ Locusts do not have a king, but they march in rank like soldiers in the army.

Proverbs 30:28

lizard

a small reptile that has four legs, a long, slender body, and a tail

ULT

28 You can catch a lizard with hands, yet it {is} in the palaces of the king.

UST

28 Lizards are very small and you can hold them in your hand, but they get inside kings' palaces.

Proverbs 30:29

There are three things that are ... four that are stately in how they walk

The use of the numbers “three” and “four” here is likely a poetic device. Alternate translation: “There are some things that walk stately. Four of these are”

stately

majestic or dignified, like a king

ULT

²⁹ Three things, they are doing well of step, and four are doing well of walking:

UST

²⁹ There are four animals that walk with great pride and they are very impressive as they walk.

Proverbs 30:30

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³⁰ a lion {is} mighty among the animals
and it will not turn away from the face
of anything,

UST

³⁰ Lions, which are the strongest among
wild animals and are not afraid of any of
them.

Proverbs 30:31

strutting rooster

an adult male chicken that walks proudly

ULT

³¹ one girded of loins, or a male goat,
and a king against whom one does not
rise up.

UST

³¹ Strutting roosters, and male goats,
and kings who stand with their soldiers
beside them.

Proverbs 30:32

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

³² If you have been foolish by lifting up yourself, or if you have devised evil, a hand be to mouth!

UST

³² If you have acted foolishly, exalting yourself, or if you been planning to do something evil, put your hand over your mouth! Stop it!

Proverbs 30:33

churning

strongly stirring

butter

Animal milk that someone has stirred and made thick.

ULT

³³ For the squeezing of milk brings forth butter and the squeezing of the nose brings forth blood, and the squeezing of nostrils brings forth strife.

UST

³³ Just as when you churn milk, and it produces butter, even so, if you hit someone hard on his nose, the result is that his nose will bleed; and, in the same way, when people are angry, they will argue and fight.

Proverbs 31

Proverbs 31 General Notes

Structure and formatting

Chapter 31 begins with 9 verses from King Lemuel. The last portion of this chapter is a poem about a godly wife. (See: [godly](#), [godliness](#), [ungodly](#), [godless](#), [ungodliness](#), [godlessness](#))

King Lemuel

This person is unknown in Scripture, other than here. It is important to recognize that the words in this chapter are words of his mother addressed to him. They are formed like advice of a mother to her son.

Special concepts in this chapter

An acrostic poem

Verse 10 through 31 is tightly formed as a poem in the original language. There are 22 lines in the Hebrew language that each begin with a successive letter of the alphabet. However, each language will have a different set of letters. Therefore, it is important to realize this was a single composition with a single theme of a noble or godly wife.

Themes

There are individual proverbs that run along common themes, often including contrasting elements: wise/foolish, money, lazy/diligent, truth telling, wicked/righteous, sluggard, pride/humility, integrity/crookedness. (See: [wise](#), [wisdom](#), [fool](#), [foolish](#), [folly](#) and [evil](#), [wicked](#), [unpleasant](#) and [righteous](#), [righteousness](#), [unrighteous](#), [unrighteousness](#), [upright](#), [uprightness](#))

Proverbs 31:1

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹ The words of Lemuel the king, a burden that his mother had instructed him:

UST

¹ These are sayings of King Lemuel—an oracle his mother taught him.

Proverbs 31:2

What, my son? What is it, son of my womb? What do you want, son of my vows?

The rhetorical question **What** could mean: (1) "What are you doing?" or "You should not be doing what you are doing" or (2) "What shall I tell you?" or "Listen to what I am telling you" or (3) "Do not do the things I am about to warn you against." (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

my son ... son of my womb ... son of my vows

The speaker wants the hearer to notice carefully and to respect the one who is talking to him.

son of my womb

The womb is a synecdoche for the person. It is best to use a polite term for the body part in which babies grow before they are born.

son of my vows

Here, **vows** could mean: (1) the mother's marriage vows or (2) a vow after she married that if God allowed her to have a child she would dedicate him to God.

ULT

² Why, my son? And why, son of my womb? And why, son of my vows?

UST

² She says: You are my son; I carried you in my womb; you are the son, I made promises to Yahweh for you.

Proverbs 31:3

Do not give your strength to women

“Do not work hard trying to have sex with women,” either outside of marriage or with concubines.

or your ways to those who destroy kings

Alternate translation: “or allow those who destroy kings to advise you”

your ways

This could mean: (1) “the way you live your life” or (2) “the work you do”

those who destroy kings

probably the immoral “women” to whom he is not to give his strength

ULT

³ Do not give your strength to women or your ways to wipe out kings.

UST

³ Do not give your strength to women; and do not tell what your plans are, to the women who destroy kings.

Proverbs 31:4

Lemuel

This is the name of a man. See how you translated this in [Proverbs 31:1](#).

ULT

⁴ {It is} not for kings, Lemuel, {it is} not for kings to drink wine or for rulers, or intoxicating drink.

UST

⁴ Lemuel, kings should be careful about drinking wine; and a king should never ask, "Where is the strong drink?"

Proverbs 31:5

what has been decreed

This can be translated in active form. This could mean: (1) “what God has decreed” or (2) “what the kings themselves have decreed” (See: [Active or Passive](#))

pervert the rights of all the afflicted

Alternate translation: “deny afflicted people their legal rights”

pervert

exchange good for evil

all the afflicted

Alternate translation: “all those people whom others wrongfully harm”

ULT

⁵ Lest, he drink and forget {what} has been decreed and pervert the cause of all the sons of the afflicted one.

UST

⁵ They could drink but then they might forget that they made a decree of the king, and tear down the rights of those who have been taken advantage of.

Proverbs 31:6

and wine

The ellipsis can be filled in. Alternate translation: “and give wine”
(See: [Ellipsis](#))

in bitter distress

Alternate translation: “who’s souls are bitter” or “who are in misery”

ULT

6 Give intoxicating drink to one who is perishing and wine to those bitter of spirit.

UST

6 Give strong drink to those who are dying and to those who are grieving their loss.

Proverbs 31:7

his poverty

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **poverty**, you could express the same idea with an adjective. Alternate translation: "how poor he is" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

his trouble

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **trouble**, you could express the same idea with a clause. Alternate translation: "the bad things that are happening to him" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

ULT

⁷ He will drink and will forget his poverty and he will not remember his trouble again.

UST

⁷ One who drinks will forget he is poor, and he will not remember his trouble.

Proverbs 31:8

Speak for those who cannot speak

Speaking is a metonym for using words to defend innocent people. Alternate translation: "Defend those who cannot defend themselves" (See: [Idiom](#))

for the causes of all who are perishing

The cause represents the person whose cause it is. Alternate translation: "so that people will treat all who are perishing justly" (See: [Metonymy](#))

for the causes

The ellipsis can be filled in. Alternate translation: "speak for the causes" or "speak out for" (See: [Ellipsis](#))

ULT

⁸ Open your mouth for the mute, for the cause of all the sons of the passing away one.

UST

⁸ Speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, speak for those who are approaching death.

Proverbs 31:9

poor and needy people

These two words have basically the same meaning and are used together for emphasis. Alternate translation: “people who are poor and cannot get the things that they need” (See: [Doublet](#))

ULT

⁹ Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the afflicted one and poor one.

UST

⁹ Speak out and render judgment according to what is right; and plead for justice to come in the cases of the poor and the needy.

Proverbs 31:10

Who can find a capable wife?

The writer asks a question to show that he is beginning a new section. Alternate translation: “Not many men can find a capable wife.” or “Not many men can find a wife who is able to do many things well.” (See: [Rhetorical Question](#))

Her value is far more than jewels

Alternate translation: “She is more precious than jewels”

ULT

¹⁰ A woman of strength, who can find?
And her worth {is} far more than corals.

UST

¹⁰ Who can find a wife who is good at many things? Her value is much more than the jewels she could wear.

Proverbs 31:11

he will never be poor

This litotes can be stated positively. Alternate translation: "he will always have what he needs" (See: [Litotes](#))

ULT

11 The heart of her husband trusts in her and he will not lack spoil.

UST

11 Her husband completely trusts her, and because of her, he will never be poor.

Proverbs 31:12

(There are no notes for this verse.)

ULT

¹² She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.

UST

¹² She does good things for him and not evil, all the days of her life.

Proverbs 31:13

wool

sheep's hair that is used to make cloth

flax

a plant whose fiber is used to make linen

with the delight of her hands

Possible meanings are that the word **delight** describes: (1) how she feels as she works, "gladly with her hands," or (2) how she feels about the wool and flax, "with her hands on things that she enjoys working with"

ULT

¹³ She selects wool and linens and works with the delight of her palms.

UST

¹³ She finds wool and flax in the market, and she enjoys spinning it to make yarn and fabric.

Proverbs 31:14

merchant

someone who buys and sells

ULT

¹⁴ She is like the ships of one who travels about; she brings her food from far away.

UST

¹⁴ She is like the merchant ships because she brings her food to her home from far away.

Proverbs 31:15

distributes the work for her female servants

Alternate translation: "tells her female servants what work each of them is to do that day"

ULT

¹⁵ And she rises while still night and gives food to her house and a portion to her female servants.

UST

¹⁵ She gets up before dawn to prepare food for her family, and she gives each servant girl her duties for the day.

Proverbs 31:16

the fruit of her hands

The money she has earned from the work she did with wool and flax ([Proverbs 31:13](#)) is spoken of as if it were fruit growing off a tree. The hands are a synecdoche for the person. Alternate translation: “the money she has earned” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

ULT

16 She considers a field and gets it; from the fruit of her palms she plants a vineyard.

UST

16 She goes out and considers what field she will buy, and she buys it. With the money she has made in other ventures, she plants a vineyard.

Proverbs 31:17

She dresses herself with strength

Putting on clothes is a metonym for preparing for work. Alternate translation: "She prepares herself for hard physical work" (See: [Idiom](#))

makes her arms strong

Alternate translation: "she strengthens her arms by doing her work"

ULT

17 She girds her loins with strength and she makes her arms firm.

UST

17 She prepares herself with her strength, and her arms are strong, able to do hard work.

Proverbs 31:18

perceives

sees by looking carefully

all night long her lamp is not extinguished

This is probably an exaggeration: she works late into the night, but not from dusk to dawn. Alternate translation: "She burns a lamp through the night as she works" (See: [Hyperbole](#) and [Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information](#))

ULT

18 She perceives that her gain {is} good; her lamp does not go out in the night.

UST

18 She knows when she is getting a good profit from her business. She keeps a lamp burning all night long.

Proverbs 31:19

spindle

a thin rod or stick with pointed ends that is used in making thread

ULT

19 She stretches out her hands at the distaff and her palms grasp the spindle.

UST

19 She holds the spindle, and then she spins the thread that she will use.

Proverbs 31:20

reaches out with her hand to poor

The hand is a metonym for the help the woman uses her hand to give. Alternate translation: “helps poor” (See: [Metonymy](#))

reaches out with her hands to

These words translate the same words translated “puts her hands on” in [Proverbs 31:19](#).

ULT

20 She spreads out her palms to the afflicted one, and she stretches out her hands to the poor one.

UST

20 She gives an outstretched hand to help the poor.

Proverbs 31:21

are clothed in scarlet

Here “scarlet” does not refer to the color of the cloth, but that the clothing is expensive and warm. Alternate translation: “have expensive, warm clothing” (See: [Metonymy](#))

scarlet

The color red, but with a hint of orange.

ULT

21 She does not fear for her house because of the snow, for all her house is clothed {with} scarlet.

UST

21 She is not worried about the snow, for everyone in her house have the best winter coats.

Proverbs 31:22

linen

cloth made of flax yarn

ULT

²² She makes for herself coverings, fine linen and purple for her garment.

UST

²² She makes covers for the beds. She wears fine purple linen clothes—the color of royalty.

Proverbs 31:23

Her husband is known

This can be translated in active form. The verb “know” is a metonym for respect. Alternate translation: “People respect her husband” (See: [Active or Passive](#) and [Metonymy](#))

when he sits with the elders of the land

to make laws and settle arguments

ULT

²³ Her husband {is} one who is known at the gates, when he sits with the elders of the land.

UST

²³ Her husband is well known at the city gates, and there at the gates he sits with the other leaders of the town.

Proverbs 31:24

linen

cloth made from flax yarn

sashes

long pieces of cloth worn around the waist or over one shoulder

ULT

²⁴ She makes a linen garment and sells, and she gives a sash to the Canaanite.

UST

²⁴ She makes linen garments and she sells them. She sells sashes to shop owners.

Proverbs 31:25

She is clothed with strength and honor

Having strength and honor is spoken of as if the woman were wearing them. This can be translated in active form. The abstract nouns “strength” and “honor” can be translated by an adjective and a verb, respectively. Alternate translation: “Everyone can see that she is strong, and so they honor her” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

laughs at the time to come

This is probably an exaggeration to show that she is not afraid. Alternate translation: “is not afraid of what will happen in the future” (See: [Hyperbole](#))

ULT

²⁵ Strength and splendor {are} her clothing, and she laughs at a day to come.

UST

²⁵ She is strong in her character and respected, and she laughs at what will happen in the future.

Proverbs 31:26

opens her mouth with wisdom

The act of opening her mouth is a metonym for speaking. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **wisdom**, you could express the same idea with an adverb or an adjective. Alternate translation: “she speaks wisely” or “she speaks wise words” (See: [Metonymy](#) and [Abstract Nouns](#))

the law of kindness is on her tongue

The phrase “on her tongue” refers to her speaking, as the tongue is part of the mouth. The phrase “the law of kindness” refers to her teaching people to be kind. Alternate translation: “she teaches people to be kind” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

26 Her mouth opens with wisdom, and the instruction of covenant faithfulness {is} on her tongue.

UST

26 When she speaks, she says what is wise, and she lives by the law of kindness.

Proverbs 31:27

watches over the ways of her household

The word “ways” refers to the way people live. Alternate translation: “makes sure her whole family lives in a way that pleases God” (See: [Metaphor](#))

does not eat the bread of idleness

To “eat the bread of” something means to do something. Alternate translation: “she is not idle” (See: [Idiom](#))

idleness

doing nothing and being lazy

ULT

²⁷ Watching closely the goings on of her house, and she does not eat the bread of idleness.

UST

²⁷ She watches over everything that is done in her household, and nothing in her actions would be anything like laziness.

Proverbs 31:28

rise up and

This could mean: (1) literally “stand up and” or (2) as a metonym, “actively.” (See: [Metonymy](#))

call her blessed

saying that good things have happened to her because she has done good things. This can be translated as a direct quote. Alternate translation: “congratulate her” or “say, ‘Yay, Mom!’” (See: [Direct and Indirect Quotations](#))

ULT

²⁸ Her sons rise up and call her blessed; her husband also praises her.

UST

²⁸ Her children speak highly of her; her husband also praises her.

Proverbs 31:29

you surpassed

Alternate translation: "you have done better than"

ULT

²⁹ "Many daughters have done valiantly, but you have ascended over all of them."

UST

²⁹ He says to her, "There are many women who do admirable things, but you surpass them all!"

Proverbs 31:30

Elegance is deceptive

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **elegance**, you could express the same idea with an adjective. Alternate translation: "A gracious woman can deceive people" or "A woman with good manners could really be evil" See how you translated this in [Proverbs 11:16](#). (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

beauty is vain

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **beauty**, you could express the same idea with an adjective. Alternate translation: "a woman who is beautiful now will not always be beautiful" (See: [Abstract Nouns](#))

she will be praised

This can be translated in active form. Alternate translation: "people will praise her" (See: [Active or Passive](#))

ULT

³⁰ Charm {is} falsehood and beauty {is} vain; a woman fearful of Yahweh, she will be praised.

UST

³⁰ Elegance can deceive and make you think more highly of a person than you should; and beauty has no lasting value. But a woman who honors Yahweh will be praised for the person she is.

Proverbs 31:31

the fruit of her hands

The money she has earned from the work she did with wool and flax ([Proverbs 31:13](#)) is spoken of as if it were fruit growing off a tree. The hands are a synecdoche for the person. See how you translated this in [Proverbs 31:16](#). Alternate translation: “the money she has earned” (See: [Metaphor](#) and [Synecdoche](#))

let her works praise her in the gates

She will be praised for her works, not by her works. Those “in the gates” are the important people of the city who conduct business and legal affairs near the gates of the city. Alternate translation: “may the important people of the city praise her because of the works she has done” (See: [Metonymy](#))

ULT

³¹ Give to her from the fruit of her hands and let her works praise her in the gates.

UST

³¹ Give her what she has earned, and her works will praise her among the leaders of the town.



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Version 32

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: Proverbs 1:2; 1:3; 1:4; 1:29; 1:32; 2:2; 3:1; 3:3; 3:24; 4:20; 5:12; 8:5; 8:7; 8:12; 8:23; 8:30; 12:25; 13:18; 14:22; 15:5; 15:6; 15:10; 15:12; 15:17; 15:18; 15:32; 15:33; 16:6; 17:5; 17:10; 17:11; 17:12; 17:26; 18:12; 18:13; 19:1; 19:25; 19:29; 20:17; 20:28; 21:5; 21:7; 21:15; 21:30; 22:10; 22:17; 23:8; 23:9; 23:13; 23:23; 24:3; 24:4; 24:5; 24:6; 24:11; 24:25; 27:4; 27:5; 28:2; 28:5; 28:6; 28:7; 28:11; 28:14; 28:16; 28:18; 28:19; 28:22; 28:23; 29:4; 29:16; 29:22; 29:26; 30:2; 30:3; 30:8; 30:17; 31:7; 31:25; 31:26; 31:30)

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: Proverbs 1:4; 1:32; 2:22; 3:10; 3:25; 3:35; 5:19; 5:20; 5:22; 5:23; 6:31; 6:35; 8:25; 8:28; 8:29; 9:11; 10:10; 10:17; 10:30; 10:31; 11:8; 12:3; 12:7; 12:8; 12:13; 13:4; 13:12; 13:13; 13:21; 13:22; 13:23; 14:9; 14:20; 14:32; 14:33; 15:17; 16:5; 16:6; 16:12; 16:16; 16:20; 16:21; 16:31; 16:33; 17:11; 17:12; 17:28; 18:21; 18:24; 19:5; 19:9; 19:14; 19:23; 20:1; 20:11; 20:17; 20:18; 20:20; 20:24; 20:28; 21:11; 21:13; 21:15; 21:31; 22:1; 22:9; 23:18; 24:3; 24:4; 24:11; 24:14; 24:16; 25:5; 25:10; 25:11; 25:15; 26:2; 26:26; 27:14; 27:18; 27:21; 28:9; 28:12; 28:13; 28:14; 28:18; 28:20; 28:23; 28:27; 29:1; 29:18; 29:19; 29:23; 29:25; 30:6; 30:10; 30:12; 30:17; 30:22; 30:23; 31:5; 31:23; 31:30)

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: Proverbs 1:20; 2:3; 3:8; 3:12; 3:20; 3:24; 3:31; 3:32; 4:3; 6:1; 6:11; 7:22; 7:23; 8:27; 8:36; 9:2; 9:5; 9:9; 11:4; 11:24; 15:12; 16:11; 16:29; 17:3; 17:5; 17:8; 17:9; 17:17; 17:19; 17:27; 18:2; 18:4; 18:18; 19:2; 19:4; 19:7; 19:18; 19:19; 19:23; 19:24; 19:26; 20:4; 20:7; 20:14; 20:16; 20:21; 20:25; 21:7; 21:9; 22:7; 23:34; 24:3; 24:4; 24:18; 25:7; 25:8; 25:20; 25:24; 26:1; 26:8; 26:17; 26:19; 26:21; 26:27; 27:1; 27:6; 27:11; 27:13; 27:15; 27:16; 27:21; 27:26; 27:27; 28:2; 28:5; 28:12; 28:20; 29:24; 30:5; 31:18)

Connecting Words and Phrases

Description

This page answers the question: *How do connecting words work to join parts of the text in different ways?*

As humans, we write our thoughts in phrases and sentences. We usually want to communicate a series of thoughts that are connected to each other in different ways. **Connecting words and phrases** show how these thoughts are related to each other. For example, we can show how the following thoughts are related by using the Connecting Words in bold type:

- It was raining, **so** I opened my umbrella.
- It was raining, **but** I did not have an umbrella. **So** I got very wet.

Connecting words or phrases can connect phrases or clauses within a sentence. They can connect sentences to each other. They can also connect entire chunks to one another in order to show how the chunk before relates to the chunk after the connecting word. Very often, the connecting words that connect entire chunks to one another are either conjunctions or adverbs.

It was raining, but I did not have an umbrella, so I got very wet.

Now I must change my clothes. Then I will drink a cup of hot tea and warm myself by the fire.

In the above example, the word **now** connects the two short chunks of text, showing the relationship between them. The speaker must change his clothes, drink hot tea, and warm himself because of something that happened earlier (that is, he got wet in the rain).

Sometimes people might not use a connecting word because they expect the context to help the readers understand the relationship between the thoughts. Some languages do not use connecting words as much as other languages do. They might say:

- It was raining. I did not have an umbrella. I got very wet.

You (the translator) will need to use the method that is most natural and clear in the target language. But in general, using connecting words whenever possible helps the reader to understand the ideas in the Bible most clearly.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- You need to understand the relationship between paragraphs, between sentences, and between parts of sentences in the Bible, and how connecting words and phrases can help you to understand the relationship between the thoughts that they are connecting.
- Each language has its own ways of showing how thoughts are related.
- You need to know how to help readers understand the relationship between the thoughts in a way that is natural in your language.

Translation Principles

- You need to translate in a way that readers can understand the same relationship between thoughts that the original readers would have understood.
- Whether or not a connecting word is used is not as important as readers being able to understand the relationship between the ideas.

The Different Types of Connections

Listed below are different types of connections between ideas or events. These different types of connections can be indicated by using different connecting words. When we write or translate something, it is important to use the right connecting word so that these connections are clear for the reader. If you would like additional information, simply click the colored, hyperlinked word to be directed to a page containing definitions and examples for each type of connection.

- Sequential Clause — a time relationship between two events in which one happens and then the other happens.
- Simultaneous Clause — a time relationship between two or more events that occur at the same time.
- Background Clause — a time relationship in which the first clause describes a long event that is happening at the time when the beginning of the second event happens, which is described in the second clause.
- Exceptional Relationship — one clause describes a group of people or items, and the other clause excludes one or more items or people from the group.
- Hypothetical Condition — the second event will only take place if the first one takes place. Sometimes what takes place is dependent on the actions of other people.
- Factual Condition — a connection that sounds hypothetical but is already certain or true, so that the condition is guaranteed to happen.
- Contrary-to-Fact Condition — a connection that sounds hypothetical but is already certain that it is not true. See also: [Hypothetical Statements](#).
- Goal Relationship — a logical relationship in which the second event is the purpose or goal of the first.
- Reason and Result Relationship — a logical relationship in which one event is the reason for the other event, the result.
- Contrast Relationship — one item is being described as different or in opposition to another.

Examples from the Bible

I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood. I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me. **Instead**, I went to Arabia and then returned to Damascus. **Then** after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and I stayed with him 15 days. (Galatians 1:16b-18 ULT)

The word “instead” introduces something that contrasts with what was said before. The contrast here is between what Paul did not do and what he did do. The word “then” introduces a sequence of events. It introduces something that Paul did after he returned to Damascus.

Therefore, whoever breaks the least one of these commandments **and** teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. **But** whoever keeps them and teaches them, that one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19 ULT)

The word “therefore” links this section with the section before it, signaling that the section that came before gave the reason for this section. “Therefore” usually links sections larger than one sentence. The word “and” links only two actions within the same sentence, that of breaking commandments and teaching others. In this verse the word “but” contrasts what one group of people will be called in God’s kingdom with what another group of people will be called.

We place nothing as a stumbling block in front of anyone, **so that** our ministry might not be discredited. **Instead**, we commend ourselves in everything as God’s servants. (2 Corinthians 6:3-4 ULT)

Here the words “so that” connect what follows as the reason for what came before; the reason that Paul does not place stumbling blocks is that he does not want his ministry brought into disrepute. “Instead” contrasts what Paul does (prove by his actions that he is God’s servant) with what he said he does not do (place stumbling blocks).

General Translation Strategies

See each type of Connecting Word above for specific strategies

If the way the relationship between thoughts is shown in the ULT would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, then consider using it. If not, here are some other options.

- (1) Use a connecting word (even if the ULT does not use one).
- (2) Do not use a connecting word if it would be strange to use one and people would understand the right relationship between the thoughts without it.
- (3) Use a different connecting word.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use a connecting word (even if the ULT does not use one).

Jesus said to them, “Come follow me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.” Then immediately they left the nets and followed him. (Mark 1:17-18 ULT)

They followed Jesus because he told them to. Some translators may want to mark this clause with the connecting word “so.”

Jesus said to them, “Come follow me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.” **So**, immediately they left the nets and followed him.

- (2) Do not use a connecting word if it would be odd to use one, and if people would understand the right relationship between the thoughts without it.

Therefore, whoever breaks the least one of these commandments **and** teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. **But** whoever keeps them and teaches them, that one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19 ULT)

Some languages would prefer not to use connecting words here because the meaning is clear without them and using them would be unnatural. They might translate like this:

Therefore, whoever breaks the least one of these commandments, teaching others to do so as well, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever keeps them and teaches them, that one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood. I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me. **Instead**, I went to Arabia and then returned to Damascus. **Then** after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and I stayed with him 15 days. (Galatians 1:16b-18 ULT) (Galatians 1:16-18 ULT)

Some languages might not need the words “instead” or “then” here. They might translate like this:

I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who had become apostles before me. I went to Arabia and then returned to Damascus. After three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and I stayed with him 15 days.

- (3) Use a different connecting word.

Therefore, whoever breaks the least one of these commandments **and** teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. **But** whoever keeps them and teaches them, that one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19 ULT)

Instead of a word like “therefore,” a language might need a phrase to indicate that there was a section before it that gave the reason for the section that follows. Also, the word “but” is used here because of the contrast between the two groups of people. But in some languages, the word “but” would show that what comes after it is surprising because of what came before it. So “and” might be clearer for those languages. They might translate like this:

Because of that, whoever breaks the least one of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.
And whoever keeps them and teaches them, that one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

(Go back to: [Proverbs 1:26; 8:18](#))

Direct and Indirect Quotations

Description

There are two kinds of quotations: direct quotations and indirect quotations.

A direct quotation occurs when someone reports what another person said from the viewpoint of that original speaker. People usually expect that this kind of quotation will represent the original speaker's exact words. In the example below, John would have said "I" when referring to himself, so the narrator, who is reporting John's words, uses the word "I" in the quotation to refer to John. To show that these are John's exact words, many languages put the words between quotation marks: "".

- John said, "I do not know at what time I will arrive."

An indirect quotation occurs when a speaker reports what someone else said, but in this case, the speaker is reporting it from his own point of view instead and not from the original person's point of view. This kind of quotation usually contains changes in pronouns, and it often includes changes in time, in word choices, and in length. In the example below, the narrator refers to John as "he" in the quotation and uses the word "would" to replace the future tense, indicated by "will."

- John said that he did not know at what time he would arrive.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

In some languages, reported speech can be expressed by either direct or indirect quotations. In other languages, it is more natural to use one than the other. There may be a certain meaning implied by using one rather than the other. So for each quotation, translators need to decide whether it is best to translate it as a direct quotation or as an indirect quotation.

Examples From the Bible

The verses in the examples below contain both direct and indirect quotations. In the explanation below the verse, we have marked in bold the words that are quoted.

And he commanded him to tell no one, but, "Go, show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing, according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them."
(Luke 5:14 ULT)

- Indirect quote: He commanded him **to tell no one**,
- Direct quote: but told him, "**Go, show yourself to the priest ...**"

And being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with careful observation. Neither will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is among you." (Luke 17:20-21 ULT)

- Indirect quote: Being asked by the Pharisees **when the kingdom of God was coming**,
- Direct quote: he answered them and said, "**The kingdom of God is not coming with careful observation. Neither will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is among you.**"
- Direct quotes: Neither will they say, '**Look, here it is!**' or, '**There it is!**'

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]]

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:
[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-quotesinquotes\]\]](https://en.ta.man/translate/figs-quotesinquotes)

(Go back to: [Proverbs 8:11](#); [28:24](#); [31:28](#))

Double Negatives

A double negative occurs when a clause has two words that each express the meaning of “not.” Double negatives mean very different things in different languages. To translate sentences that have double negatives accurately and clearly, you need to know what a double negative means in the Bible and how to express this idea in your language.

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

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

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

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

Description

Negative words are words that have in them the meaning “not.” Examples in English are “no,” “not,” “none,” “no one,” “nothing,” “nowhere,” “never,” “nor,” “neither,” and “without.” Also, some words have prefixes or suffixes that mean “not,” such as the bolded parts of these words: “**un**happy,” “**im**possible,” and “use**less**.” Some other kinds of words also have a negative meaning, such as “lack” or “reject,” or even “fight” or “evil.”

A double negative occurs when a clause has two words that each have a negative meaning.

We did this **not** because we have **no** authority ... (2 Thessalonians 3:9a ULT)

And this was **not** done **without** an oath! (Hebrews 7:20a ULT)

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Double negatives mean very different things in different languages.

- In some languages, such as 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: [Proverbs 19:5](#); [19:9](#))

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: [Proverbs 3:2](#); [5:11](#); [6:7](#); [6:12](#); [15:11](#); [18:3](#); [20:11](#); [21:4](#); [21:23](#); [21:24](#); [31:9](#))

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

So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, and **sinners will not stand in the assembly** of the righteous.

Then when he had come near, he asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And so he said, “Lord, **that I might recover my sight**.” (Luke 18:40b-41 ULT)

Then when the man was near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, **I want you to heal me** that I might receive my sight.”

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf **and Sirion like a young ox**. (Psalm 29:6 ULT)

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and **he makes** Sirion **skip** like a young ox.

(Go back to: [Proverbs 4:22](#); [5:9](#); [6:10](#); [6:11](#); [16:4](#); [17:1](#); [19:10](#); [19:29](#); [23:12](#); [24:34](#); [25:2](#); [27:2](#); [31:6](#); [31:8](#))

Euphemism

Description

A euphemism is a mild or polite way of referring to something that is unpleasant, embarrassing, or socially unacceptable, such as death or activities usually done in private.

... they found Saul and his sons **fallen** on Mount Gilboa.
(1 Chronicles 10:8b ULT)

This means that Saul and his sons “were dead.” It is a euphemism because the important thing was not that Saul and his sons had fallen but that they were dead. Sometimes people do not like to speak directly about death because it is unpleasant.

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]]

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: [Proverbs 2:19](#); [5:16](#); [6:29](#); [20:2](#); [23:14](#); [23:30](#); [24:12](#); [30:20](#))

Exclamations

Description

Exclamations are words or sentences that show strong feeling such as surprise, joy, fear, or anger. In the ULT and UST, they usually have an exclamation mark (!) at the end. The mark shows that it is an exclamation. The situation and the meaning of what the people said helps us understand what feelings they were expressing. In the example below from Matthew 8, the speakers were terribly afraid. In the example from Matthew 9, the speakers were amazed, because something happened that they had never seen before.

This page answers the question: *What are ways of translating exclamations?*

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

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

Save us, Lord; we are about to die! (Matthew 8:25b ULT)

When the demon had been driven out, the mute man spoke. The crowds were astonished and said, "This has never been seen before in Israel!" (Matthew 9:33 ULT)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Languages have different ways of showing that a sentence communicates strong emotion.

Examples From the Bible

Some exclamations have a word that shows feeling. The sentences below have "Oh" and "Ah." The word "oh" here shows the speaker's amazement.

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! (Romans 11:33 ULT)

The word "Alas" below shows that Gideon was very frightened.

When Gideon saw that he was the angel of Yahweh, Gideon lamented, "**Alas**, O my Lord Yahweh, for because of this I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!" (Judges 6:22 ULT)

Some exclamations start with a question word such as "how" or "why," even though they are not questions. The sentence below shows that the speaker is amazed at how unsearchable God's judgments are.

How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways beyond discovering! (Romans 11:33b ULT)

Some exclamations in the Bible do not have a main verb. The exclamation below shows that the speaker is disgusted with the person he is speaking to.

You worthless person! (Matthew 5:22b ULT)

Translation Strategies

- (1) If an exclamation in your language needs a verb, add one. Often a good verb is "is" or "are."
- (2) Use an exclamation word from your language that shows the strong feeling.
- (3) Translate the exclamation word with a sentence that shows the feeling.
- (4) Use a word that emphasizes the part of the sentence that brings about the strong feeling.

(5) If the strong feeling is not clear in the target language, then tell how the person felt.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If an exclamation in your language needs a verb, add one. Often a good verb is “is” or “are.”

You worthless person! (Matthew 5:22b ULT)

“You **are** such a worthless person!”

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! (Romans 11:33b ULT)

“Oh, the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God **are** so deep!”

(2) Use an exclamation word from your language that shows the strong feeling. In the first suggested translation below, the word “wow” shows that they were astonished. In the second suggested translation, the expression “Oh no” shows that something terrible or frightening has happened.

They were extremely astonished, saying, “He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.” (Mark 7:37 ULT)

“They were extremely astonished, saying, “**Wow!** He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.””

Alas, oh my Lord Yahweh! For because of this I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face! (Judges 6:22b ULT)

“**Oh no,** Lord Yahweh! I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!”

(3) Translate the exclamation word with a sentence that shows the feeling.

“**Alas,** O my Lord Yahweh, for because of this I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!” (Judges 6:22 ULT)

“Lord Yahweh, **what will happen to me?** For I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!”

“**Help,** Lord Yahweh! For I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!”

(4) Use a word that emphasizes the part of the sentence that brings about the strong feeling.

How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways beyond discovering! (Romans 11:33b ULT)

“His judgments are **so** unsearchable and his ways are **far** beyond discovering!”

(5) If the strong feeling is not clear in the target language, then tell how the person felt.

When Gideon saw that he was the angel of Yahweh, Gideon lamented, “**Alas,** O my Lord Yahweh, for because of this I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!” (Judges 6:22 ULT)

Gideon understood that this was the angel of Yahweh. **He was terrified** and said, “**Alas,** Lord Yahweh! I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face!”

(Go back to: [Proverbs 5:12](#); [15:23](#); [16:16](#))

Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'

Description

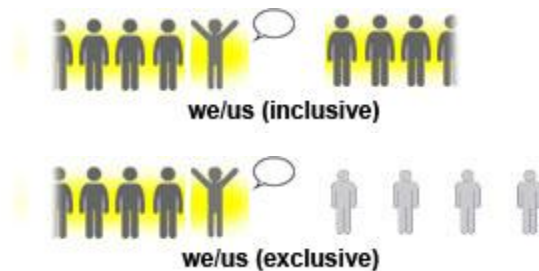
Some languages have more than one form of "we": an inclusive form that means "I and you" and an exclusive form that means "I and someone else but not you." The exclusive form excludes the person being spoken to. The inclusive form includes the person being spoken to and possibly others. This is also true for "us," "our," "ours," and "ourselves." Some languages have inclusive forms and exclusive forms for each of these. Translators whose language has separate exclusive and inclusive forms for these words will need to understand what the speaker meant so that they can decide which form to use.

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

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

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

See the pictures. The people on the right are the people that the speaker is talking to. The yellow highlight shows who the inclusive "we" and the exclusive "we" refer to.



Reason This Is a Translation Issue

The Bible was first written in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages. Like English, these languages do not have separate exclusive and inclusive forms for "we." If your language has separate exclusive and inclusive forms of "we," then you will need to understand what the speaker meant so that you can decide which form of "we" to use.

Examples From the Bible

Exclusive

They said, "There are not more than five loaves of bread and two fish with us—unless **we** go and buy food for all these people." (Luke 9:13 ULT)

In the second clause, the disciples are talking about some of them going to buy food. They were speaking to Jesus, but Jesus was not going to buy food. So languages that have inclusive and exclusive forms of "we" would use the **exclusive** form there.

We have seen it, and **we** bear witness to it. **We** are announcing to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and which has been made known to **us**. (1 John 1:2 ULT)

John is telling people who have not seen Jesus what he and the other apostles have seen. So languages that have inclusive and exclusive forms of "we" and "us" would use the **exclusive** forms in this verse.

Inclusive

The shepherds said one to each other, "Let **us** now go to Bethlehem, and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to **us**." (Luke 2:15b ULT)

The shepherds were speaking to one another. When they said "us," they were including the people they were speaking to, so languages that have inclusive and exclusive forms of "we" and "us" would use the **inclusive** form in this verse.

Now it happened that on one of those days, he indeed got into a boat with his disciples, and he said to them, "Let **us** go over to the other side of the lake." So they set sail. (Luke 8:22 ULT)

When Jesus said "us," he was referring to himself and to the disciples he was speaking to, so languages that have inclusive and exclusive forms of "we" and "us" would use the **inclusive** form in this verse.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[When Masculine Words Include Women](#)

(Go back to: [Proverbs 1:3](#))

First, Second or Third Person

Normally a speaker refers to himself as “I” and the person he is speaking to as “you.” Sometimes in the Bible a speaker refers to himself or to the person he is speaking to with terms other than “I” or “you.”

Description

- First person — This is how a speaker normally refers to himself. English uses the pronouns “I” and “we.” (Also: me, my, mine; us, our, ours)
- Second person — This is how a speaker normally refers to the person or people he is speaking to. English uses the pronoun “you.” (Also: your, yours)
- Third person — This is how a speaker refers to someone else. English uses the pronouns “he,” “she,” “it,” and “they.” (Also: him, his, her, hers, its; them, their, theirs) Noun phrases like “the man” or “the woman” are also third person.

This page answers the question: *What are first, second, and third person, and how do I translate when a third person form does not refer to the third person?*

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

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Sometimes in the Bible a speaker uses the third person to refer to himself or to the people he is speaking to. Readers might think that the speaker was referring to someone else. They might not understand that he meant “I” or “you.”

Examples From the Bible

Sometimes people used the third person instead of “I” or “me” to refer to themselves.

But David said to Saul, “**Your servant** used to keep **his** father’s sheep.” (1 Samuel 17:34 ULT)

David referred to himself in the third person as “your servant” and used “his.” He was calling himself Saul’s servant in order to show his humility before Saul.

Then Yahweh answered Job out of a fierce storm and said,
“... Do you have an arm like **God’s**? Can you thunder with a voice like **his**?” (Job 40:6, 9 ULT)

God referred to himself in the third person with the words “God’s” and “his.” He did this to emphasize that he is God, and he is powerful.

Sometimes people use the third person instead of “you” or “your” to refer to the person or people they are speaking to.

Abraham answered and said, “Look, I have undertaken to speak to my Lord, even though I am only dust and ashes!” (Genesis 18:27 ULT)

Abraham was speaking to the Lord, and referred to the Lord as “My Lord” rather than as “you.” He did this to show his humility before God.

So also my heavenly Father will do to you, if **each of you** does not forgive **his** brother from your heart. (Matthew 18:35 ULT)

After saying “each of you,” Jesus used the third person “his” instead of “your.”

Translation Strategies

If using the third person to mean “I” or “you” would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other options.

- (1) Use the third person phrase along with the pronoun “I” or “you.”
- (2) Simply use the first person (“I”) or second person (“you”) instead of the third person.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use the third person phrase along with the pronoun “I” or “you.”

But David said to Saul, “**Your servant** used to keep **his** father’s sheep.” (1 Samuel 17:34)

But David said to Saul, “**I, your servant**, used to keep **my** father’s sheep.”

- (2) Simply use the first person (“I”) or second person (“you”) instead of the third person.

Then Yahweh answered Job out of a fierce storm and said, “... Do you have an arm like **God’s**? Can you thunder with a voice like **his**?” (Job 40:6, 9 ULT)

Then Yahweh answered Job out of a fierce storm and said, “... Do you have an arm like **mine**? Can you thunder with a voice like **mine**?”

So also my heavenly Father will do to you if **each of you** does not forgive **his** brother from your heart. (Matthew 18:35 ULT)

So also my heavenly Father will do to you if **each of you** does not forgive **your** brother from your heart.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Forms of You](#)

(Go back to: [Proverbs 6:24](#))

Forms of You

Singular, Dual, and Plural

Some languages have more than one word for “you” based on how many people the word “you” refers to. The **singular** form refers to one person, and the **plural** form refers to more than one person. Some languages also have a **dual** form which refers to two people, and some languages have other forms that refer to three or four people.

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_younum.

Sometimes in the Bible a speaker uses a singular form of “you” even though he is speaking to a crowd.

- Singular Pronouns that Refer to Groups

Formal and Informal

Some languages have more than one form of “you” based on the relationship between the speaker and the person he is talking to. People use the **formal** form of “you” when speaking to someone who is older, or has higher authority, or is someone they do not know very well. People use the **informal** form when speaking to someone who is not older, or does not have higher authority, or is a family member or close friend.

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_youform.

For help with translating these, we suggest you read:

- Forms of “You” — Formal or Informal

(Go back to: [Proverbs 1:3](#); [9:5](#); [9:6](#))

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

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

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

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

Generic Noun Phrases

Description

Generic noun phrases refer to people or things in general rather than to specific individuals or things. This happens frequently in proverbs, because proverbs tell about things that are true about people in general.

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

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

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

Can **a man** walk on hot coals without scorching his feet?
So is **the man who goes in to his neighbor's wife;**
the one who touches her will not go unpunished. (Proverbs 6:28-29 ULT)

The phrases in bold above do not refer to a specific man. They refer to any man who does these things.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages have different ways of showing that noun phrases refer to something in general. You (the translator) should refer to these general ideas in ways that are natural in your language.

Examples From the Bible

The **righteous person** is kept away from trouble and it comes upon **the wicked** instead. (Proverbs 11:8 ULT)

The bold phrases above do not refer to a specific person but to anyone who does what is right or anyone who is wicked.

People curse **the man who refuses to sell grain**. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)

This does not refer to a particular man, but to any person who refuses to sell grain.

Yahweh gives favor to **a good man**, but he condemns **a man who makes evil plans**. (Proverbs 12:2 ULT)

The phrase "a good man" does not refer to a particular man, but to any person who is good. The phrase "a man who makes evil plans" does not refer to a particular man, but to any person who makes evil plans.

Translation Strategies

If your language can use the same wording as in the ULT to refer to people or things in general rather than to specific individuals or things, consider using the same wording. If not, here are some strategies you might use.

- (1) Use the word "the" in the noun phrase.
- (2) Use the word "a" in the noun phrase.
- (3) Use the word "any," as in "any person" or "anyone."
- (4) Use the plural form, as in "people."

(5) Use any other way that is natural in your language.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use the word “the” in the noun phrase.

Yahweh gives favor to **a good man**, but he condemns **a man who makes evil plans**. (Proverbs 12:2 ULT)

“Yahweh gives favor to **the good man**, but he condemns **the man who makes evil plans**.” (Proverbs 12:2)

(2) Use the word “a” in the noun phrase.

People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)

“People curse **a man** who refuses to sell grain.”

(3) Use the word “any,” as in “any person” or “anyone.”

People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)

“People curse **any man** who refuses to sell grain.”

(4) Use the plural form, as in “people” (or in this sentence, “men”).

People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)

“People curse **men** who refuse to sell grain”

(5) Use any other way that is natural in your language.

People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)

“People curse **whoever** refuses to sell grain.”

Next we recommend you learn about:

[When Masculine Words Include Women](#)

(Go back to: [Proverbs 10:11](#))

Go and Come

Description

This page answers the question: *What do I do if the word "go" or "come" is confusing in a certain sentence?*

Different languages have different ways of determining whether to use the words "go" or "come" and whether to use the words "take" or "bring" when talking about motion. For example, when saying that they are approaching a person who has called them, English speakers say "I'm coming," while Spanish speakers say "I'm going." You will need to study the context in order to understand what is meant by the words "go" and "come" (and also "take" and "bring"), and then translate those words in a way that your readers will understand which direction people are moving in.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages have different ways of talking about motion. The biblical languages or your source language may use the words "go" and "come" or "take" and "bring" differently than your language uses them. If these words are not translated in the way that is natural in your language, your readers may be confused about which direction people are moving.

Examples From the Bible

Yahweh said to Noah, "**Come**, you and all your household, into the ark." (Genesis 7:1 ULT)

In some languages, this would lead people to think that Yahweh was in the ark.

But you will be free from my oath if you **come** to my relatives and they will not give her to you. Then you will be free from my oath. (Genesis 24:41 ULT)

Abraham was speaking to his servant. Abraham's relatives lived far away from where he and his servant were standing and he wanted his servant to **go** to them, not **come** toward Abraham.

When you have **come** to the land that Yahweh your God gives you, and when you take possession of it and begin to live in it ... (Deuteronomy 17:14a ULT)

Moses is speaking to the people in the wilderness. They had not yet gone into the land that God was giving them. In some languages, it would make more sense to say, "When you have **gone** into the land ..."

They **brought** him up to the temple in Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. (Luke 2:22b ULT)

In some languages, it might make more sense to say that they **took** or **carried** Jesus to the temple.

Then see, there was a man whose name was Jairus, and he was a leader of the synagogue. And falling at the feet of Jesus, he begged him to come to his house. (Luke 8:41 ULT)

The man was not at his house when he spoke to Jesus. He wanted Jesus to **go** with him to his house.

What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? (Luke 7:24b ULT)

In some languages, it might make more sense to ask what did you come out to see.

Translation Strategies

If the word used in the ULT would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are other strategies.

- (1) Use the word “go,” “come,” “take,” or “bring” that would be natural in your language.
- (2) Use another word that expresses the right meaning.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use the word “go,” “come,” “take,” or “bring” that would be natural in your language.

But you will be free from my oath if you **come** to my relatives and they will not give her to you. (Genesis 24:41 ULT)

But you will be free from my oath if you **go** to my relatives and they will not give her to you.

What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? (Luke 7:24b ULT)

What did you come out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

- (2) Use another word that expresses the right meaning.

When you have **come** to the land that Yahweh your God gives you, and when you take possession of it and begin to live in it ... (Deuteronomy 17:14 ULT)

“When you have **arrived** in the land that Yahweh your God gives you, and when you take possession of it and begin to live in it ...”

Yahweh said to Noah, “**Come**, you and all your household, into the ark ...” (Genesis 7:1 ULT)

Yahweh said to Noah, “**Enter**, you and all your household, into the ark ...”

What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? (Luke 7:24b ULT)

What did you travel out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

(Go back to: [Proverbs 5:8](#))

Hendiadys

Description

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

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

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

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

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

... his own **kingdom and glory**. (1 Thessalonians 2:12b ULT)

Though “kingdom” and “glory” are both nouns, “glory” actually tells what kind of kingdom it is: it is a **kingdom of glory** or a **glorious kingdom**.

Two phrases connected by “and” can also be a hendiadys when they refer to a single person, thing, or event.

while we look forward to receiving **the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**. (Titus 2:13b ULT)

Titus 2:13 contains two hendiadyses. “The blessed hope” and “appearing of the glory” refer to the same thing and serve to strengthen the idea that the return of Jesus Christ is greatly anticipated and wonderful. Also, “our great God” and “Savior Jesus Christ” refer to one person, not two.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Often a hendiadys contains an abstract noun. Some languages may not have a noun with the same meaning.
- Many languages do not use the hendiadys, so people may not understand that the second word is further describing the first one.
- Many languages do not use the hendiadys, so people may not understand that only one person or thing is meant, not two.

Examples From the Bible

For I will give you **a mouth and wisdom** ... (Luke 21:15a ULT)

“A mouth” and “wisdom” are nouns, but in this figure of speech “wisdom” describes what comes from the mouth.

If you are willing and obedient ... (Isaiah 1:19a ULT)

“Willing” and “obedient” are adjectives, but “willing” describes “obedient.”

Translation Strategies

If the hendiadys would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are other options:

- (1) Substitute the describing noun with an adjective that means the same thing.
- (2) Substitute the describing noun with a phrase that means the same thing.
- (3) Substitute the describing adjective with an adverb that means the same thing.

(4) Substitute other parts of speech that mean the same thing and show that one word or phrase describes the other.

(5) If it is unclear that only one thing is meant, change the phrase so that this is clear.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Substitute the describing noun with an adjective that means the same thing.

For I will give you **a mouth and wisdom** ... (Luke 21:15a ULT)

For I will give you **wise words** ...

Walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you into **his own kingdom and glory**. (1 Thessalonians 2:12b ULT)

You should walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you to **his own glorious kingdom**.

(2) Substitute the describing noun with a phrase that means the same thing.

For I will give you **a mouth and wisdom** ... (Luke 21:15a ULT)

for I will give you **words of wisdom**.

You should walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you into **his own kingdom and glory**. (1 Thessalonians 2:12b ULT)

You should walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you to **his own kingdom of glory**.

(3) Substitute the describing adjective with an adverb that means the same thing.

If you are willing and obedient ... (Isaiah 1:19a ULT)

If you are **willingly obedient** ...

(4) Substitute other parts of speech that mean the same thing and show that one word or phrase describes the other.

If you are willing and obedient ... (Isaiah 1:19a ULT)

The adjective "obedient" can be substituted with the verb "obey."

if you **obey willingly** ...

(4) and (5) If it is unclear that only one thing is meant, change the phrase so that this is clear.

We look forward to receiving **the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**. (Titus 2:13b ULT)

The noun "glory" can be changed to the adjective "glorious" to make it clear that Jesus' appearing is what we hope for. Also, "Jesus Christ" can be moved to the front of the phrase and "great God and Savior" put into a relative clause that describes the one person, Jesus Christ.

We look forward to receiving **what we are longing for, the blessed and glorious appearing of Jesus Christ, who is our great God and Savior**.

Next we recommend you learn about:

(Go back to: [Proverbs 4:3](#))

How to Translate Names

Description

The Bible contains the names of many people, groups of people, and places. Some of these names may sound strange and be hard to say. Sometimes readers may not know what a name refers to, and sometimes they may need to understand what a name means. This page will help you see how you can translate these names and how you can help people understand what they need to know about them.

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

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

[Translate Unknowns](#)

Meaning of names

Most names in the Bible have meaning. Most of the time, names in the Bible are used simply to identify the people and places they refer to, but sometimes the meaning of a name is especially important.

For this **Melchizedek**, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, was the one who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him. (Hebrews 7:1 ULT)

Here the writer uses the name “Melchizedek” primarily to refer to a man who had that name, and the title “king of Salem” tells us that he ruled over a certain city.

His name first indeed means “king of righteousness,” and then also “king of Salem,” that is, “king of peace.” (Hebrews 7:2b ULT)

Here the writer explains the meanings of Melchizedek’s name and title because those things tell us more about the person. Other times, the writer does not explain the meaning of a name because he expects the reader to already know the meaning. If the meaning of the name is important to understand the passage, you can include the meaning in the text or in a footnote.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Readers may not know some of the names in the Bible. They may not know whether a name refers to a person or place or something else.
- Readers may need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand the passage.
- Some names may have different sounds or combinations of sounds that are not used in your language or are unpleasant to say in your language. For strategies to address this problem, see Borrow Words.
- Some people and places in the Bible have two names. Readers may not realize that two names refer to the same person or place.

Examples From the Bible

Then you crossed over the **Jordan** and came to **Jericho**, and the men of Jericho, and the **Amorites** ... fought against you, but I gave them into your hand. (Joshua 24:11 ULT)

Readers might not know that “Jordan” is the name of a river, “Jericho” is the name of a city, and “Amorites” is the name of a group of people.

She said, “Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?” Therefore, the well was called **Beer Lahai Roi**. (Genesis 16:13b-14a ULT)

Readers may not understand the second sentence if they do not know that “Beer Lahai Roi” means “Well of the Living One who sees me.”

And she called his name **Moses** and she said, “For out of the water I drew him.” (Exodus 2:10b ULT)

Readers may not understand why she said this if they do not know that the name Moses sounds like the Hebrew words “pull out.”

Saul was in agreement with his execution. (Acts 8:1a ULT)

But when the apostles, Barnabas and **Paul**, heard of it, they tore their clothing. (Acts 14:14a ULT)

Readers may not know that the names Saul and Paul refer to the same person.

Translation Strategies

- (1) If readers cannot easily understand from the context what kind of a thing a name refers to, you can add a word to clarify it.
- (2) If readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, copy the name and tell about its meaning either in the text or in a footnote.
- (3) Or if readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, and that name is used only once, translate the meaning of the name instead of copying the name.
- (4) If a person or place has two different names, use one name most of the time and the other name only when the text tells about the person or place having more than one name or when it says something about why the person or place was given that name. Write a footnote when the source text uses the name that is used less frequently.
- (5) Or if a person or place has two different names, then use whatever name is given in the source text, and add a footnote that gives the other name.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If readers cannot easily understand from the context what kind of a thing a name refers to, you can add a word to clarify it.

Then you crossed over the **Jordan** and came to **Jericho**, and the men of Jericho, and the **Amorites** ... fought against you, but I gave them into your hand. (Joshua 24:11 ULT)

You went over the **Jordan River** and came to the **city of Jericho**. The men of Jericho fought against you, along with **the tribe of the Amorites**.

At that hour, certain Pharisees approached, saying to him, “Leave and go away from here, because **Herod** wants to kill you.” (Luke 13:31 ULT)

At that hour, certain Pharisees approached, saying to him, “Go and leave here, because **King Herod** wants to kill you.”

- (2) If readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, copy the name and tell about its meaning either in the text or in a footnote.

And she called his name **Moses** and she said, "For out of the water I drew him." (Exodus 2:10b ULT)

She called his name **Moses (which sounds like 'drawn out')**, and she said, "For out of the water I drew him."

(3) Or if readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, and that name is used only once, translate the meaning of the name instead of copying the name.

She said, "Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?" Therefore, the well was called **Beer Lahai Roi**. (Genesis 16:13b-14a ULT)

She said, "Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?" Therefore, the well was called **Well of the Living One who sees me**.

(4) If a person or place has two different names, use one name most of the time and the other name only when the text tells about the person or place having more than one name or when it says something about why the person or place was given that name. Write a footnote when the source text uses the name that is used less frequently. For example, Paul is called "Saul" before Acts 13 and "Paul" after Acts 13. You could translate his name as "Paul" all of the time, except in Acts 13:9 where it talks about him having both names.

... a young man named **Saul**. (Acts 7:58b ULT)

... a young man named **Paul** 1

The footnote would look like:

[1] Most versions say "Saul" here, but most of the time in the Bible he is called "Paul."

Then later in the story, you could translate this way:

But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit; (Acts 13:9)

But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit;

(5) Or if a person or place has two names, use whatever name is given in the source text, and add a footnote that gives the other name. For example, you could write "Saul" where the source text has "Saul" and "Paul" where the source text has "Paul."

a young man named **Saul** (Acts 7:58 ULT)

a young man named **Saul**

The footnote would look like:

[1] This is the same man who is called Paul beginning in Acts 13.

Then later in the story, you could translate this way:

But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit; (Acts 13:9)

But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit;

Then after the story has explained the name change, you could translate this way.

It came about in Iconium that **Paul** and Barnabas entered together into the synagogue (Acts 14:1 ULT)

It came about in Iconium that **Paul**¹ and Barnabas entered together into the synagogue

The footnote would look like:

^[1] This is the same man who was called Saul before Acts 13.

Next we recommend you learn about:

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

(Go back to: [Proverbs 27:20; 30:1](#))

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: [Proverbs 4:16](#); [19:6](#); [23:2](#); [23:8](#); [23:21](#); [26:6](#); [26:15](#); [28:21](#); [28:28](#); [31:18](#); [31:25](#))

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: [Proverbs 1:11](#); [30:9](#))

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: Proverbs 1:8; 1:14; 1:20; 1:24; 2:2; 2:3; 3:2; 3:16; 3:26; 4:18; 6:2; 6:3; 6:19; 6:31; 7:2; 7:13; 7:23; 8:30; 8:31; 9:15; 10:6; 11:28; 11:29; 12:15; 13:9; 13:12; 14:5; 14:25; 15:11; 17:4; 17:8; 17:11; 17:20; 17:28; 18:14; 18:16; 19:1; 19:5; 19:9; 19:15; 19:16; 19:18; 19:19; 19:20; 19:21; 20:7; 20:13; 20:16; 20:22; 20:24; 21:8; 21:10; 21:13; 21:16; 21:22; 21:29; 21:31; 22:14; 22:16; 22:17; 23:2; 23:3; 23:7; 23:12; 23:34; 24:7; 24:10; 24:15; 24:18; 24:26; 24:29; 25:22; 25:26; 27:13; 28:11; 28:12; 28:14; 28:16; 28:17; 28:19; 28:22; 28:24; 28:26; 28:28; 29:6; 29:8; 29:10; 29:13; 29:22; 31:8; 31:17; 31:27)

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 worshipping them.

Can you lead light and darkness to their places of work?
Can you find the way back to their houses for them?
Undoubtedly you know, for you were born then; "the number of your days is so large!" (Job 38:20-21 ULT)

Job thought that he was wise. Yahweh used irony to show Job that he was not so wise. The two phrases in bold above are irony. They emphasize the opposite of what they say, because they are so obviously false. They

emphasize that Job could not possibly answer God's questions about the creation of light because Job was not born until many, many years later.

Already you are satisfied! Already you have become rich! **You began to reign** apart from us, and I wish you really did reign, so that we also might reign with you. (1 Corinthians 4:8 ULT)

The Corinthians considered themselves to be very wise, self-sufficient, and not in need of any instruction from the Apostle Paul. Paul used irony, speaking as if he agreed with them, to show how proudly they were acting and how far from being wise they really were.

Translation Strategies

If the irony would be understood correctly in your language, translate it as it is stated. If not, here are some other strategies.

(1) Translate it in a way that shows that the speaker is saying what someone else believes.

(2) The irony is **not** found in the literal words of the speaker, but instead the true meaning is found in the opposite of the literal meaning of the speaker's words.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Translate it in a way that shows that the speaker is saying what someone else believes.

How well you reject the commandment of God so that you may keep your tradition! (Mark 7:9a ULT)

You think that you are doing well when you reject God's commandment so you may keep your tradition!

You act like it is good to reject God's commandment so you may keep your tradition!

I did not come to call **the righteous**, but sinners to repentance. (Luke 5:32 ULT)

I did not come to call **people who think that they are righteous** to repentance, but to call sinners to repentance.

(2) Translate the actual, intended meaning of the statement of irony.

How well you reject the commandment of God so that you may keep your tradition! (Mark 7:9a ULT)

You are doing a terrible thing when you reject the commandment of God so you may keep your tradition!

"Present your case," says Yahweh; "present your best arguments for your idols," says the King of Jacob. "**Let them bring us their own arguments; have them come forward and declare to us what will happen, so we may know these things well. Have them tell us of earlier predictive declarations, so we can reflect on them and know how they were fulfilled.**" (Isaiah 41:21-22 ULT)

'Present your case,' says Yahweh; 'present your best arguments for your idols,' says the King of Jacob. Your idols **cannot bring us their own arguments or come forward to declare to us what will happen** so we may know these things well. We cannot hear them because **they cannot speak** to tell us their earlier predictive declarations, so we cannot reflect on them and know how they were fulfilled.

Can you lead light and darkness to their places of work?

Can you find the way back to their houses for them?

**Undoubtedly you know, for you were born then;
the number of your days is so large!** (Job 38:20-21 ULT)

Can you lead light and darkness to their places of work? Can you find the way back to their houses for them? **You act like you know how light and darkness were created, as if you were there; as if you are as old as creation, but you are not!**

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Litotes](#)

(Go back to: [Proverbs 28:19; 30:4](#))

Litotes

Description

Litotes is a figure of speech in which the speaker expresses a strong positive meaning by negating a word or phrase that means the opposite of the meaning that he intends. For example, someone could intend to communicate that something is extremely good by describing it as "not bad." The difference between a litotes and a **double negative** is that a litotes heightens the positive meaning beyond what a plain positive statement would do, and a double negative does not. In the example above, the literal meaning of "not bad," taken as a plain double negative, would be "acceptable" or even "good." But if the speaker intended it as a litotes, then the meaning is "very good" or "extremely good."

This page answers the question: *What is litotes?*

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages do not use litotes. People who speak those languages might not understand that a statement using litotes actually strengthens the positive meaning. Instead, they might think that it weakens or even cancels the positive meaning.

Examples From the Bible

For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was **not useless**, (1 Thessalonians 2:1 ULT)

By using litotes, Paul emphasized that his visit with them was **very** useful.

Now when it became day, there was **no small disturbance** among the soldiers over what therefore had happened to Peter. (Acts 12:18 ULT)

By using litotes, Luke emphasized that there was a **lot** of excitement or anxiety among the soldiers about what happened to Peter. (Peter had been in prison, and even though there were soldiers guarding him, he escaped when an angel let him out. So they were very agitated.)

But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are **not the least** among the leaders of Judah, for from you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel. (Matthew 2:6 ULT)

By using litotes, the prophet emphasized that Bethlehem would be a **very important city**.

Translation Strategies

If the litotes would be understood correctly, consider using it.

(1) If the meaning with the negative would not be clear, give the **positive** meaning in a strong way.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the meaning with the negative would not be clear, give the **positive** meaning in a strong way.

For you yourselves know, brothers, that our coming to you was **not useless**. (1 Thessalonians 2:1 ULT)

“For you yourselves know, brothers, our visit to you **did much good**.”

Now when it became day, there was **no small disturbance** among the soldiers over what therefore had happened to Peter. (Acts 12:18 ULT)

“Now when it became day, there was **great excitement** among the soldiers, regarding what had happened to Peter.”

or:

“Now when it became day, the soldiers were **very concerned** because of what had happened to Peter.”

(Go back to: Proverbs 6:4; 6:20; 6:33; 6:34; 8:33; 10:3; 10:19; 10:30; 11:21; 12:21; 16:5; 17:26; 18:2; 18:5; 19:5; 20:1; 21:26; 23:22; 24:14; 25:27; 28:20; 28:27; 30:15; 31:11)

Merism

Definition

Merism is a figure of speech in which a person refers to something by speaking of two extreme parts of it. By referring to the extreme parts, the speaker intends to include also everything in between those parts.

“I am **the alpha and the omega**,” says the Lord God,
“the one who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.” (Revelation 1:8 ULT)

I am **the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end**.
(Revelation 22:13, ULT)

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]]

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: [Proverbs 4:27](#); [23:27](#))

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: Proverbs 1:9; 1:12; 1:15; 1:16; 1:17; 1:18; 1:19; 1:23; 1:31; 1:32; 2:1; 2:4; 2:5; 2:7; 2:8; 2:9; 2:10; 2:12; 2:13; 2:15; 2:18; 2:20; 2:22; 3:3; 3:4; 3:5; 3:6; 3:7; 3:13; 3:16; 3:17; 3:18; 3:19; 3:21; 3:22; 3:23; 3:24; 3:26; 3:33; 3:34; 3:35; 4:4; 4:6; 4:8; 4:9; 4:11; 4:12; 4:13; 4:14; 4:16; 4:17; 4:18; 4:19; 4:20; 4:21; 4:22; 4:23; 4:24; 4:25; 4:26; 4:27; 5:1; 5:2; 5:3; 5:4; 5:5; 5:6; 5:7; 5:9; 5:10; 5:13; 5:15; 5:16; 5:18; 5:19; 5:21; 5:22; 6:12; 6:19; 6:21; 6:23; 6:25; 6:28; 7:1; 7:2; 7:3; 7:10; 7:12; 7:18; 7:21; 7:25; 7:27; 8:8; 8:20; 8:21; 8:32; 9:6; 9:11; 9:12; 9:17; 10:10; 10:11; 10:15; 10:16; 10:20; 10:23; 10:25; 10:27; 10:28; 11:1; 11:13; 11:18; 11:24; 11:26; 11:29; 12:3; 12:4; 12:6; 12:25; 13:3; 13:9; 13:11; 13:12; 13:14; 13:15; 13:16; 13:23; 14:2; 14:11; 14:12; 14:13; 14:14; 14:15; 14:16; 14:18; 14:24; 14:27; 14:30; 14:33; 15:1; 15:2; 15:4; 15:7; 15:9; 15:10; 15:11; 15:13; 15:14; 15:15; 15:18; 15:19; 15:21; 15:24; 15:28; 15:29; 15:30; 16:1; 16:2; 16:6; 16:9; 16:14; 16:15; 16:17; 16:21; 16:22; 16:27; 16:29; 16:31; 16:32; 17:3; 17:6; 17:10; 17:22; 17:24; 18:4; 18:6; 18:7; 18:8; 18:9; 18:10; 18:11; 18:19; 18:20; 18:21; 19:2; 19:13; 19:17; 19:28; 20:3; 20:5; 20:8; 20:9; 20:15; 20:17; 20:20; 20:25; 20:26; 20:27; 20:30; 21:1; 21:2; 21:4; 21:6; 21:7; 21:8; 21:10; 21:11; 21:12; 21:18; 21:29; 22:5; 22:6; 22:8; 22:14; 22:15; 22:17; 22:22; 22:23; 22:24; 22:25; 23:5; 23:8; 23:11; 23:19; 23:23; 23:27; 23:32; 24:3; 24:11; 24:12; 24:16; 24:20; 25:11; 25:12; 25:13; 25:14; 25:15; 25:16; 25:26; 26:5; 26:6; 26:12; 26:16; 26:21; 26:22; 26:23; 26:24; 26:25; 26:26; 26:28; 27:1; 27:3; 27:4; 27:6; 27:9; 27:22; 28:3; 28:4; 28:5; 28:6; 28:7; 28:10; 28:11; 28:13; 28:14; 28:18; 28:25; 29:1; 29:5; 29:8; 29:12; 29:16; 29:22; 29:25; 30:4; 30:5; 30:8; 30:12; 30:14; 30:15; 30:19; 30:20; 31:16; 31:25; 31:27; 31:31)

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: Proverbs 1:14; 1:16; 1:18; 2:2; 2:10; 2:18; 3:1; 3:3; 3:5; 3:8; 3:33; 4:4; 4:13; 4:22; 4:23; 5:3; 5:8; 5:10; 6:5; 6:6; 6:10; 6:25; 6:27; 6:33; 7:13; 7:14; 7:21; 7:26; 8:4; 8:9; 8:36; 9:2; 10:4; 10:6; 10:7; 10:11; 10:13; 10:14; 10:18; 10:20; 10:21; 10:31; 10:32; 11:9; 11:11; 11:20; 12:7; 12:13; 12:14; 12:18; 12:19; 12:22; 12:24; 13:1; 13:2; 13:3; 13:6; 13:9; 13:11; 13:12; 13:25; 14:3; 14:4; 14:7; 14:8; 14:11; 14:18; 14:19; 15:4; 15:7; 15:11; 15:14; 15:17; 15:28; 16:1; 16:2; 16:9; 16:10; 16:12; 16:18; 16:21; 16:23; 16:24; 16:25; 16:31; 17:1; 17:4; 17:13; 17:20; 17:22; 18:2; 18:6; 18:7; 18:10; 18:15; 18:20; 18:21; 19:8; 19:12; 19:21; 19:27; 20:1; 20:9; 20:13; 20:15; 20:17; 20:28; 21:1; 21:2; 21:6; 21:13; 21:23; 21:24; 22:8; 22:9; 22:12; 22:14; 22:15; 22:18; 22:22; 22:25; 22:29; 23:14; 23:26; 24:3; 24:7; 24:12; 24:28; 25:5; 26:6; 26:7; 26:9; 26:23; 26:24; 27:6; 27:9; 27:11; 27:19; 27:20; 27:24; 28:2; 28:17; 28:23; 28:27; 29:2; 29:8; 29:14; 29:15; 29:26; 30:13; 30:17; 31:8; 31:20; 31:21; 31:23; 31:26; 31:28; 31:31)

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: [Proverbs 2:22](#); [11:3](#); [11:5](#); [11:6](#); [13:2](#); [13:15](#); [15:3](#); [17:5](#); [17:6](#); [18:10](#); [18:11](#); [18:15](#); [18:17](#); [19:17](#); [19:28](#); [20:26](#); [21:5](#); [21:7](#); [21:10](#); [21:20](#); [21:25](#); [21:27](#); [22:5](#); [22:12](#); [22:22](#); [23:28](#); [28:10](#); [28:12](#); [28:27](#))

Ordinal Numbers

Description

Ordinal numbers are used in the Bible mainly to tell the position of something in a list.

And God has indeed appointed some in the church, **first** apostles, **second** prophets, **third** teachers, then miracles. (1 Corinthians 12:28a ULT)

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

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

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

This is a list of workers that God gave to the church in their order.

Ordinal Numbers in English

Most ordinal numbers in English simply have “-th” added to the end.

Numeral	Number	Ordinal Number
4	four	fourth
10	ten	tenth
100	one hundred	one hundredth
1,000	one thousand	one thousandth

Some ordinal numbers in English do not follow that pattern.

Numeral	Number	Ordinal Number
1	one	first
2	two	second
3	three	third
5	five	fifth
12	twelve	twelfth

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages do not have special numbers for showing the order of items in a list. There are different ways to deal with this.

Examples From the Bible

The **first** lot went to Jehoiarib, the **second** to Jedaiah, the **third** to Harim, the **fourth** to Seorim ... the **twenty-third** to Delaiah, and the **twenty-fourth** to Maaziah. (1 Chronicles 24:7-18 ULT)

The people cast lots and one went to each of these people in the order given.

You must place in it four rows of precious stones. The **first** row must have a ruby, a topaz, and a garnet. The **second** row must have an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. The **third** row must have a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst. The **fourth** row must have a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper. They must be mounted in gold settings. (Exodus 28:17-20 ULT)

This describes four rows of stones. The first row is probably the top row, and the fourth row is probably the bottom row.

Translation Strategies

If your language has ordinal numbers and using them would give the right meaning, consider using them. If not, here are some strategies to consider:

- (1) Use “one” with the first item and “another” or “the next” with the rest.
- (2) Tell the total number of items and then list them or the things associated with them.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Tell the total number of items, and use “one” with the first item and “another” or “the next” with the rest.

The first lot went to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah, the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim ... the twenty-third to Delaiah, and the twenty-fourth to Maaziah. (1 Chronicles 24:7-18 ULT)

There were **24** lots. **One lot** went to Jehoiarib, **another** to Jedaiah, **another** to Harim ... **another** to Delaiah, **and the last** went to Maaziah.

There were **24** lots. **One lot** went to Jehoiarib, **the next** to Jedaiah, **the next** to Harim ... **the next** to Delaiah, **and the last** went to Maaziah.

A river went out of Eden to water the garden. From there it divided and became **four** rivers. The name of **the first** is Pishon. It is the one which flows throughout the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. The gold of that land is good. There is also bdellium and the onyx stone there. The name of **the second** river is Gihon. This one flows throughout the whole land of Cush. The name of **the third** river is Tigris, which flows east of Asshur. **The fourth** river is the Euphrates. (Genesis 2:10-14 ULT)

A river went out of Eden to water the garden. From there it divided and became **four** rivers. The name of **one** is Pishon. It is the one which flows throughout the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. The gold of that land is good. There is also bdellium and the onyx stone there. The name of **the next** river is Gihon. This one flows throughout the whole land of Cush. The name of **the next** river is Tigris, which flows east of Asshur. **The last** river is the Euphrates.

- (2) Tell the total number of items and then list them or the things associated with them.

The **first** lot went to Jehoiarib, the **second** to Jedaiah, the **third** to Harim, the **fourth** to Seorim ... the **twenty-third** to Delaiah, and the **twenty-fourth** to Maaziah. (1 Chronicles 24:7-18 ULT)

They cast **24** lots. The lots went to Jerhoiarib, Jedaiah, Harim, Seorim ... Delaiah, and Maaziah.

Next we recommend you learn about:

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

(Go back to: [Proverbs 18:17; 19:19](#))

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: [Introduction to Proverbs](#); [Proverbs 1 General Notes](#); [2:1](#); [2:3](#); [2:4](#); [2:11](#); [2:14](#); [3:1](#); [4:12](#); [5:7](#); [5:12](#); [5:14](#); [5:15](#); [5:21](#); [6:4](#); [6:8](#); [6:9](#); [6:10](#); [6:16](#); [6:20](#); [6:22](#); [6:23](#); [Notes](#); [7:25](#); [7:27](#); [8:1](#); [8:34](#); [9:7](#); [9:9](#); [9:11](#); [9:13](#); [10:1](#); [11:1](#); [12:1](#); [18:4](#); [18:20](#); [19:20](#); [20:1](#); [20:23](#); [20:30](#); [27:23](#))

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:

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/figs-apostrophe]]
[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/bita-part1]]

(Go back to: [Introduction to Proverbs](#); [Proverbs 1:12](#); [1:20](#); [1:28](#); [2:11](#); [2:12](#); [2:16](#); [3:3](#); [3:15](#); [3:16](#); [3:17](#); [4:6](#); [4:8](#); [5:22](#); [6:15](#); [6:22](#); [7:4](#); [8:1](#); [8:3](#); [8:12](#); [8:14](#); [8:26](#); [8:27](#); [8:30](#); [8:32](#); [8:35](#); [8:36](#); [9:1](#); [9:3](#); [9:11](#); [9:13](#); [10:12](#); [13:6](#); [13:21](#); [14:33](#); [16:26](#); [17:13](#); [18:1](#); [18:3](#); [19:15](#); [21:7](#); [21:10](#); [21:25](#); [22:12](#); [23:21](#); [24:16](#); [24:25](#); [24:34](#); [29:15](#); [30:16](#))

Poetry

Description

Poetry is one of the ways that people use the words and sounds of their language to make their speech and writing more beautiful and to express strong emotion. Through poetry, people can communicate deeper emotion than they can through simple non-poetic forms. Poetry gives more weight and elegance to statements of truth, such as proverbs, and is also easier to remember than ordinary speech.

This page answers the question: *What is poetry and how do I translate it into my language?*

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

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

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

In poetry we commonly find:

- many figures of speech such as Apostrophe
- arrangements of clauses into particular patterns such as:
 - parallel lines (See [Parallelism](#))
 - acrostics (beginning lines with successive letters of the alphabet)
 - chiasms (in which the first line relates to the last line, the second to the next-to-last line, etc.):
 - > You should not give what is holy to the dogs,
 - >
 - >> and should not throw your pearls in front of the pigs.
 - >>
 - >> Otherwise they will trample them under their feet,
 - >
 - > and having turned, they might tear you to pieces. (Matt 7:6 ULT)

- repetition of some or all of a line:

Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts. Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars. (Psalm 148:2-3 ULT)

- lines of similar length:

Listen to my call to you,
Yahweh; think about my groanings.
Listen to the sound of my call, my King and my God,
for it is to you that I pray. (Psalm 5:1-2 ULT)

- the same sound used at the end or at the beginning of two or more lines:

“Twinkle, twinkle little **star**. How I wonder what you **are**.” (from an English rhyme)

- the same sound repeated many times:

“Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater” (from an English rhyme)

We also find:

- old words and expressions
- dramatic imagery
- different use of grammar — including:
 - incomplete sentences

- lack of connective words

Some places to look for poetry in your language

Songs, particularly old songs or songs used in children's games
 Religious ceremony or chants of priests or witch doctors
 Prayers, blessings, and curses
 Old legends

Elegant or fancy speech

Elegant or fancy speech is similar to poetry in that it uses beautiful language, but it does not use all of the language's features of poetry, and it does not use them as much as poetry does. Popular speakers in the language often use elegant speech, and this is probably the easiest source of text to study to find out what makes speech elegant in your language.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue:

- Different languages use poetry for different things. If a poetic form would not communicate the same meaning in your language, you may need to write it without the poetry.
- Different languages use different poetic devices. A poetic device that conveys elegance or emotion in a biblical language may be confusing or misunderstood in another language.
- In some languages, using poetry for a particular part of the Bible would make it much more powerful.

Examples From the Bible

The Bible uses poetry for songs, teaching, and prophecy. Almost all of the books of the Old Testament have poetry in them and many of the books are completely made up of poetry.

... for you saw my affliction; you knew the distress of my soul. (Psalm 31:7b ULT)

This example of [Parallelism](#) has two lines that mean the same thing.

Yahweh, judge the nations; vindicate me, Yahweh, because I am righteous and innocent, Most High. (Psalm 7:8 ULT)

This example of parallelism shows the contrast between what David wants God to do to him and what he wants God to do to the unrighteous nations. (See [Parallelism](#).)

Keep your servant also from arrogant sins; let them not rule over me. (Psalm 19:13a ULT)

This example of personification speaks of sins as if they could rule over a person. (See [Personification](#).)

Oh, give thanks to Yahweh; for he is good,
 for his covenant faithfulness endures forever.
 Oh, give thanks to the God of gods,
 for his covenant faithfulness endures forever.
 Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords,
 for his covenant faithfulness endures forever.

(Psalm 136:1-3 ULT)

This example repeats the phrases “give thanks” and “his covenant faithfulness endures forever.”

Translation Strategies

If the style of poetry that is used in the source text would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other ways of translating it.

- (1) Translate the poetry using one of your styles of poetry.
- (2) Translate the poetry using your style of elegant speech.
- (3) Translate the poetry using your style of ordinary speech.

If you use poetry it may be more beautiful.

If you use ordinary speech it may be more clear.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the advice of the wicked, or stand in the pathway with sinners, or sit in the assembly of mockers. But his delight is in the law of Yahweh, and on his law he meditates day and night. (Psalm 1:1-2 ULT)

The following are examples of how people might translate Psalm 1:1-2.

- (1) Translate the poetry using one of your styles of poetry. (The style in this example has words that sound similar at the end of each line.)

“Happy is the person not encouraged **to sin**, Disrespect for God he will not **begin**, To those who laugh at God he is **no kin**. God is his constant **delight**, He does what God says **is right**, He thinks of it all day **and night**.”

- (2) Translate the poetry using your style of elegant speech.

This is the kind of person who is truly blessed: the one who does not follow the advice of wicked people nor stop along the road to speak with sinners nor join the gathering of those who mock God. Rather, he takes great joy in Yahweh’s law, and he meditates on it day and night.

- (3) Translate the poetry using your style of ordinary speech.

The people who do not listen to the advice of bad people are really happy. They do not spend time with people who continually do evil things or join with those who do not respect God. Instead, they love to obey Yahweh’s law, and they think about it all the time.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/writing-symlanguage\]\]](#)

(Go back to: [Proverbs 1:1](#); [30:15](#))

Possession

Description

In English, the grammatical form that commonly indicates possession is also used to indicate a variety of relationships between people and objects or people and other people. In English, that grammatical relationship is shown by using the word “of,” by using **an apostrophe and the letter “s”**, or by using a **possessive pronoun**. The following examples are different ways to indicate that my grandfather owns a house.

- the house **of** my grandfather
- my grandfather **'s** house
- **his** house

Possession is used in Hebrew, Greek, and English for a variety of situations. Here are a few common situations that it is used for.

- Ownership — Someone owns something.
 - The clothes of me - my clothes — The clothes that I own
- Social Relationship — Someone has some kind of social relationship with another.
 - The mother of John — John's mother - the woman who gave birth to John, or the woman who cared for John
 - A teacher of Israel - Israel's teacher — a person who teaches Israel
- Association — A particular thing is associated with a particular person, place, or thing.
 - The sickness of David - David's sickness — the sickness that David is experiencing
 - the fear of the Lord — the fear that is appropriate for a human being to have when relating to the Lord
- Contents — Something has something in it.
 - a bag of clothes — a bag that has clothes in it, or a bag that is full of clothes
- Part and whole: One thing is part of another.
 - my head — the head that is part of my body
 - the roof of a house — the roof that is part of a house

In some languages there is a special form of possession, termed **inalienable possession**. This form of possession is used for things that cannot be removed from you, as opposed to things you could lose. In the examples above, *my head* and *my mother* are examples of inalienable possession (at least in some languages), while *my clothes* or *my teacher* would be alienably possessed. What may be considered alienable vs. inalienable may differ by language.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- You (the translator) need to understand the relationship between two ideas represented by the two nouns when one is in the grammatical relationship of possessing the other.
- Some languages do not use grammatical possession for all of the situations that your source text Bible might use it for.

Examples From the Bible

Ownership — In the example below, the son owned the money.

▮ The younger son ... wasted his wealth by living recklessly. (Luke 15:13b)

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

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

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

Social Relationship — In the example below, the disciples were people who learned from John.

Then **the disciples of John** came to him. (Matthew 9:14a ULT)

Association — In the example below, the gospel is the message associated with Paul because he preaches it.

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, from the seed of David, according to **my gospel**, (2 Timothy 2:8 ULT)

Material — In the example below, the material used for making the crowns was gold.

On their heads were something like **crowns of gold**. (Revelation 9:7b)

Contents — In the example below, the cup has water in it.

For whoever gives you **a cup of water** to drink ... will not lose his reward. (Mark 9:41 ULT)

Part of a whole — In the example below, the door was a part of the palace.

But Uriah slept at **the door of the king's palace**. (2 Samuel 11:9a ULT)

Part of a group — In the example below, “us” refers to the whole group and “each one” refers to the individual members.

Now to **each one of us** grace has been given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (Ephesians 4:7 ULT)

Events and Possession

Sometimes one or both of the nouns is an abstract noun that refers to an event or action. In the examples below, the abstract nouns are in **bold** print. These are just some of the relationships that are possible between two nouns when one of them refers to an event.

Subject — Sometimes the word after “of” tells who would do the action named by the first noun. In the example below, **John baptized people**.

The **baptism of John**, was it from heaven or from men? Answer me. (Mark 11:30)

In the example below, **Christ loves us**.

Who will separate us from the **love of Christ**? (Romans 8:35)

Object — Sometimes the word after “of” tells who or what something would happen to. In the example below, **people love money**.

For the **love of money** is a root of all kinds of evil. (1 Timothy 6:10a ULT)

Instrument — Sometimes the word after “of” tells how something would happen. In the example below, God would **punish people by sending enemies to attack them with swords**.

Then be afraid of the sword, because wrath brings **the punishment of the sword**. (Job 19:29a ULT)

Representation — In the example below, John was baptizing people who were repenting of their sins. They were being baptized to show that they were repenting. Their **baptism represented their repentance**.

John came, baptizing in the wilderness and preaching **a baptism of repentance** for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 1:4 ULT)

Strategies for learning what the relationship is between the two nouns

- (1) Read the surrounding verses to see if they help you to understand the relationship between the two nouns.
- (2) Read the verse in the UST. Sometimes it shows the relationship clearly.
- (3) See what the notes say about it.

Translation Strategies

If possession would be a natural way to show a particular relationship between two nouns, consider using it. If it would be strange or hard to understand, consider these.

- (1) Use an adjective to show that one noun describes the other.
- (2) Use a verb to show how the two are related.
- (3) If one of the nouns refers to an event, translate it as a verb.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use an adjective to show that one noun describes the other.

On their heads were something like **crowns of gold**. (Revelation 9:7b)

“On their heads were **gold crowns**”

- (2) Use a verb to show how the two are related.

Whoever gives you **a cup of water** to drink ... will not lose his reward. (Mark 9:41 ULT)

Whoever gives you a **cup that has water in it** to drink ... will not lose his reward.

Wealth is worthless on **the day of wrath**. (Proverbs 11:4a ULT)

Wealth is worthless on **the day when God shows his wrath**.

or:

Wealth is worthless on the **day when God punishes people because of his wrath**.

- (3) If one of the nouns refers to an event, translate it as a verb. (In the example below, there are two possession relationships, “punishment of Yahweh” and “your God.”)

Notice that I am not speaking to your children, who have not known or seen **the punishment of Yahweh your God**. (Deuteronomy 11:2a ULT)

Notice that I am not speaking to your children who have not known or seen **how Yahweh, the God whom you worship, punished the people of Egypt**.

You will only observe and see the **punishment of the wicked**. (Psalms 91:8 ULT)

You will only observe and see **how Yahweh punishes the wicked**.

You will receive **the gift of the Holy Spirit**. (Acts 2:38b ULT)

|| You will receive the **Holy Spirit, whom God will give to you.**

(Go back to: [Proverbs 18:8](#))

Proverbs

Description

Proverbs are short sayings that give wise advice or teach something that is generally true about life. People enjoy proverbs because they give a lot of wisdom in few words. Proverbs in the Bible often use metaphor and parallelism. Proverbs should not be understood as absolute and unchangeable laws. Rather, proverbs offer general advice to a person about how to live his life.

Hatred stirs up conflicts, but love covers over all offenses. (Proverbs 10:12 ULT)

Here is another example from the book of Proverbs.

Look at the ant, you lazy person, consider her ways, and be wise. It has no commander, officer, or ruler, yet it prepares its food in the summer, and during the harvest it stores up what it will eat. (Proverbs 6:6-8 ULT)

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

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

[Metaphor](#)

[Parallelism](#)

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Each language has its own ways of saying proverbs. There are many proverbs in the Bible. They need to be translated in the way that people say proverbs in your language so that people recognize them as proverbs and understand what they teach.

Examples From the Bible

A good name is to be chosen over great riches,
and favor is better than silver and gold. (Proverbs 22:1 ULT)

This means that it is better to be a good person and to have a good reputation than it is to have a lot of money.

Like vinegar on the teeth and smoke in the eyes,
so is the sluggard to those who send him. (Proverbs 10:26 ULT)

This means that a lazy person is very annoying to those who send him to do something.

The way of Yahweh protects those who have integrity,
but it is destruction for the wicked. (Proverbs 10:29 ULT)

This means that Yahweh protects people who do what is right, but he destroys those who are wicked.

Translation Strategies

If translating a proverb literally would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider doing that. If not, here are some options:

- (1) Find out how people say proverbs in your language, and use one of those ways.
- (2) If certain objects in the proverb are not known to many people in your language group, consider replacing them

with objects that people know and that function in the same way in your language.

(3) Substitute a proverb in your language that has the same teaching as the proverb in the Bible.

(4) Give the same teaching but not in a form of a proverb.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Find out how people say proverbs in your language, and use one of those ways.

A good name is to be chosen over great riches,
and favor is better than silver and gold. (Proverbs 22:1 ULT)

Here are some ideas for ways that people might say a proverb in their language.

It is better to have a good name than to have great riches,
and to be favored by people than to have silver and gold.

Wise people choose a good name over great riches,
and favor over silver and gold.

Try to have a good reputation rather than great riches.

Will riches really help you?

I would rather have a good reputation.

(2) If certain objects in the proverb are not known to many people in your language group, consider replacing them with objects that people know and that function in the same way in your language.

Like **snow in summer** or rain in harvest,
so a fool does not deserve honor. (Proverbs 26:1 ULT)

It is not natural for **a cold wind to blow in the hot season** or for it to rain
in the harvest season;

And it is not natural to honor a foolish person.

(3) Substitute a proverb in your language that has the same teaching as the proverb in the Bible.

Do not boast about tomorrow,
for you do not know what a day may bring. (Proverbs 27:1a ULT)

Do not count your chickens before they hatch.

(4) Give the same teaching but not in a form of a proverb.

There is a generation that curses their father
and does not bless their mother.
There is a generation that is pure in their own eyes,

and yet they are not washed of their filth. (Proverbs 30:11-12 ULT)

People who do not respect their parents think that they are righteous,
and they do not turn away from their sin.

(Go back to: [Introduction to Proverbs](#))

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: [Proverbs 28:28](#))

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: [Proverbs 1:22; 5:16; 5:20; Notes; 6:9; 6:27; 6:28; 8:1; 14:22; 15:11; 17:16; 18:14; 20:6; 20:9; 20:24; Notes; 22:21; 22:29; 23:29; 24:12; 24:22; 25:8; 26:12; 26:19; 27:4; 27:24; 29:20; 30:4; 31:2; 31:10](#))

Simile

Description

A simile is a comparison of two things that are not normally thought to be similar. The simile focuses on a particular trait the two items have in common, and it includes the words “like,” “as,” or “than.”

This page answers the question: *What is a simile?*

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

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

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were troubled and discouraged, **like sheep not having a shepherd**. (Matthew 9:36)

Jesus compared the crowds of people to sheep without a shepherd. Sheep grow frightened when they do not have a good shepherd to lead them in safe places. The crowds were like that because they did not have good religious leaders.

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**, so be as wise **as the serpents** and harmless **as the doves**. (Matthew 10:16 ULT)

Jesus compared his disciples to sheep and their enemies to wolves. Wolves attack sheep; Jesus’ enemies would attack his disciples.

For the word of God is living and active and sharper **than any two-edged sword**. (Hebrews 4:12a ULT)

God’s word is compared to a two-edged sword. A two-edged sword is a weapon that can easily cut through a person’s flesh. God’s word is very effective in showing what is in a person’s heart and thoughts.

Purposes of Simile

- A simile can teach about something that is unknown by showing how it is similar to something that is known.
- A simile can emphasize a particular trait, sometimes in a way that gets people’s attention.
- Similes help form a picture in the mind or help the reader experience what he is reading about more fully.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- People may not know how the two items are similar.
- People may not be familiar with both of the items being compared.

Examples From the Bible

Suffer hardship with me, **as a good soldier** of Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 2:3 ULT)

In this simile, Paul compares suffering with what soldiers endure, and he encourages Timothy to follow their example.

Just as the lightning flashing from a place under the sky shines to another place under the sky, so will the Son of Man be. (Luke 17:24b ULT)

This verse does not tell how the Son of Man will be like the lightning. But in context we can understand from the verses before it that just as lighting flashes suddenly and everyone can see it, the Son of Man will come suddenly and everyone will be able to see him. No one will have to be told about it.

Translation Strategies

If people would understand the correct meaning of a simile, consider using it. If they would not, here are some strategies you can use:

- (1) If people do not know how the two items are alike, tell how they are alike. However, do not do this if the meaning was not clear to the original audience.
- (2) If people are not familiar with the item that something is compared to, use an item from your own culture. Be sure that it is one that could have been used in the cultures of the Bible. If you use this strategy, you may want to put the original item in a footnote.
- (3) Simply describe the item without comparing it to another.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If people do not know how the two items are alike, tell how they are alike. However, do not do this if the meaning was not clear to the original audience.

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**. (Matthew 10:16a ULT) — This compares the danger that Jesus' disciples would be in with the danger that sheep are in when they are surrounded by wolves.

See, I send **you out among wicked people** and you will be in danger from them **as sheep are in danger when they are among wolves**.

For the word of God is living and active and sharper **than any two-edged sword**. (Hebrews 4:12a ULT)

For the word of God is living and active and **more powerful than a very sharp two-edged sword**.

- (2) If people are not familiar with the item that something is compared to, use an item from your own culture. Be sure that it is one that could have been used in the cultures of the Bible. If you use this strategy, you may want to put the original item in a footnote.

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**, (Matthew 10:16a ULT) — If people do not know what sheep and wolves are, or that wolves kill and eat sheep, you could use some other animal that kills another.

See, I send you out **as chickens in the midst of wild dogs**.

How often did I long to gather your children together, just **as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings**, but you were not willing! (Matthew 23:37b ULT)

How often I wanted to gather your children together, **as a mother closely watches over her infants**, but you refused!

If you have faith **as a grain of mustard** ... (Matthew 17:20)

If you have faith even as small **as a tiny seed**,

- (3) Simply describe the item without comparing it to another.

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**. (Matthew 10:16a ULT)

See, I send you out among **people who will want to harm you**.

How often did I long to gather your children together, just **as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings**, but you were not willing! (Matthew 23:37b ULT)

How often I wanted to **protect you**, but you refused!

Next we recommend you learn about:

Metaphor

[[rc://en/ta/man/translate/bita-part1]]

(Go back to: Proverbs 1:27; 2:4; 4:18; 4:19; 6:11; 7:22; 7:23; 10:25; 10:26; 11:22; 11:28; 11:30; 12:4; 12:18; 15:19; 16:15; 16:27; 17:8; 17:14; 18:8; 18:11; 18:19; 19:12; 20:2; 20:5; 23:32; 24:34; 25:3; 25:13; 25:14; 25:18; 25:19; 25:25; 25:26; 25:27; 25:28; 26:1; 26:2; 26:7; 26:9; 26:14; 26:17; 26:22; 26:23; 27:8; 27:16; 27:17; 28:3; 28:15)

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: [Proverbs 10:10](#); [14:19](#))

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: Proverbs 1:16; 2:6; 2:10; 3:22; 3:23; 3:26; 4:5; 4:20; 4:25; 4:26; 4:27; 5:1; 5:2; 5:5; 5:7; 5:8; 5:12; 5:13; 5:19; 5:20; 6:4; 6:17; 6:18; 6:25; 7:11; 7:15; 7:25; 8:6; 8:7; 8:8; 10:3; 10:6; 10:13; 14:1; 15:2; 15:3; 15:7; 15:13; 15:14; 15:15; 15:25; 15:28; 15:30; 16:1; 16:5; 16:10; 16:13; 16:24; 17:4; 17:7; 17:24; 18:4; 18:6; 18:12; 18:14; 18:15; 19:3; 19:28; 20:20; 20:24; 21:4; 21:25; 22:9; 22:11; 22:12; 22:17; 23:16; 23:17; 23:20; 23:26; 23:33; 24:2; 24:17; 25:12; 25:20; 25:23; 26:9; 26:23; 26:28; 27:2; 28:9; 28:26; 31:16; 31:31)

Textual Variants

Description

Thousands of years ago, people wrote the books of the Bible. Other people then copied them by hand and translated them. They did this work very carefully, and over the years many people made thousands of copies. However, people who looked at them later saw that there were small differences between them. Some copiers accidentally left out some words, or some mistook one word for another that looked like it. Occasionally, they added words or even whole sentences, either by accident or because they wanted to explain something. Modern Bibles are translations of the old copies. Some modern Bibles include some of these sentences that were added. In the ULT, these added sentences are usually written in footnotes.

Bible scholars have read many old copies and compared them with each other. For each place in the Bible where there was a difference, they have figured out which wordings are most likely correct. The translators of the ULT based the ULT on wordings that scholars say are most likely correct. Because people who use the ULT may have access to Bibles that are based on other copies, the ULT translators have sometimes included information about some of the differences between them, either in the ULT footnotes or in the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes.

Translators are encouraged to translate the text in the ULT and to write about added sentences in footnotes, as is done in the ULT. However, if the local church really wants those sentences to be included in the main text, translators may put them in the text and include a footnote about them.

This page answers the question: *Why does the ULT have missing or added verses, and should I translate them?*

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

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-source-text\]\]](#)

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

Examples From the Bible

Matthew 18:10-11 ULT has a footnote about verse 11.

¹⁰ See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I say to you that in heaven their angels always look on the face of my Father who is in heaven. ¹¹ ^[1]

^[1] Many authorities, some ancient, insert v. 11: **For the Son of Man came to save that which was lost.**

John 7:53-8:11 is not in the best earliest manuscripts. It has been included in the ULT, but it is marked off with square brackets ([]) at the beginning and end, and there is a footnote after verse 11.

53 [Then everyone went to his own house ... 11 She said, "No one, Lord." Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."] ^[2]

^[2] Some ancient manuscripts include John 7:53-8:11

Translation Strategies

When there is a textual variant, you may choose to follow the ULT or another version that you have access to.

- (1) Translate the verses as they are in the ULT and include the footnote that the ULT provides.
- (2) Translate the verses as another version has them, and change the footnote so that it fits this situation.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

The translation strategies are applied to Mark 7:14-16 ULT, which has a footnote about verse 16.

¹⁴ He called the crowd again and said to them, “Listen to me, all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man.” ¹⁶ ^[1]

^[1] Some ancient manuscripts include verse 16: **If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.**

(1) Translate the verses as they are in the ULT and include the footnote that the ULT provides.

¹⁴ He called the crowd again and said to them, “Listen to me, all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man.” ¹⁶ ^[1]

^[1] Some ancient manuscripts include verse 16: **If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.**

(2) Translate the verses as another version has them, and change the footnote so that it fits this situation.

¹⁴ He called the crowd again and said to them, “Listen to me, all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man. ¹⁶ If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.” ^[1]

^[1] Some ancient manuscripts do not include verse 16.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-chapverse\]\]](#)
[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-manuscripts\]\]](#)
[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-terms\]\]](#)
[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-original\]\]](#)

(Go back to: [Proverbs 22:20](#))

Translate Unknowns

While working to translate the Bible, you (the translator) might find yourself asking: “How do I translate words like lion, fig tree, mountain, priest, or temple when people in my culture have never seen these things and we do not have a word for them?”

This page answers the question: *How can I translate ideas that my readers are not familiar with?*

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

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

Description

Unknowns are things that occur in the source text that are not known to the people of your culture. The unfoldingWord® Translation Words pages and the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes will help you understand what they are. After you understand them, you will need to find ways to refer to those things so that people who read your translation will understand what they are.

They said to him, “We have nothing here except five loaves of **bread** and two fish.” (Matthew 14:17 ULT)

Bread is a particular food made by mixing finely crushed grains with oil, and then cooking the mixture so that it is dry. (Grains are the seeds of a kind of grass.) In some cultures people do not have bread and do not know what it is.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Readers may not know some of the things that are in the Bible because those things are not part of their own culture.
- Readers may have difficulty understanding a text if they do not know some of the things that are mentioned in it.

Translation Principles

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

Examples From the Bible

So I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **jackals**. (Jeremiah 9:11a ULT)

Jackals are wild animals like dogs that live in only a few parts of the world. So they are not known in many places.

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous **wolves**. (Matthew 7:15 ULT)

If wolves do not live where the translation will be read, the readers may not understand that they are fierce, wild animals like dogs that attack and eat sheep.

They offered him wine mixed with **myrrh**, but he did not drink it. (Mark 15:23 ULT)

People may not know what myrrh is and that it was used as a medicine.

... to him who made **great lights** ... (Psalm 136:7a ULT)

Some languages have terms for things that give light, like the sun and fire, but they have no general term for lights.

Your sins ... will be white like **snow**. (Isaiah 1:18b ULT)

People in many parts of the world have not seen snow, but they may have seen it in pictures.

Translation Strategies

Here are ways you might translate a term that is not known in your language:

- (1) Use a phrase that describes what the unknown item is, or what is important about the unknown item for the verse being translated.
- (2) Substitute something similar from your language if doing so does not falsely represent a historical fact.
- (3) Copy the word from another language, and add a general word or descriptive phrase to help people understand it.
- (4) Use a word that is more general in meaning.
- (5) Use a word or phrase that is more specific in meaning.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use a phrase that describes what the unknown item is, or what is important about the unknown item for the verse being translated.

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but are inwardly they are **ravenous wolves**. (Matthew 7:15 ULT)

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but **inwardly they are very hungry and dangerous animals**.

"Ravenous wolves" is part of a metaphor here, so the reader needs to know that they are very dangerous to sheep in order to understand this metaphor. (If sheep are also unknown, then you will need to also use one of the translation strategies to translate sheep, or change the metaphor to something else, using a translation strategy for metaphors. See [Translating Metaphors](#).)

"We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish." (Matthew 14:17 ULT)

We have nothing here except five **loaves of baked grain seeds** and two fish.

- (2) Substitute something similar from your language if doing so does not falsely represent a historical fact.

Your sins ... will be white like **snow**. (Isaiah 1:18b ULT) This verse is not about snow. It uses snow in a figure of speech to help people understand how white something will be.

Your sins ... will be white like **milk**.

Your sins ... will be white like **the moon**.

- (3) Copy the word from another language, and add a general word or descriptive phrase to help people understand it.

Then they tried to give Jesus wine that was mixed with **myrrh**. But he refused to drink it. (Mark 15:23 ULT) — People may understand better what myrrh is if it is used with the general word “medicine.”

Then they tried to give Jesus wine that was mixed with **a medicine called myrrh**. But he refused to drink it.

“We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish.” (Matthew 14:17 ULT) — People may understand better what bread is if it is used with a phrase that tells what it is made of (seeds) and how it is prepared (crushed and baked).

We have nothing here except five loaves of **baked crushed seed bread** and two fish.

(4) Use a word that is more general in meaning.

I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **jackals** (Jeremiah 9:11a ULT)

I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **wild dogs**

“We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish.” (Matthew 14:17 ULT)

We have nothing here except five **loaves of baked food** and two fish.

(5) Use a word or phrase that is more specific in meaning.

... to him who made **great lights** ... (Psalm 136:7a ULT)

to him who made **the sun and the moon**

Next we recommend you learn about:

[\[\[rc://en/ta/man/translate/translate-transliterate\]\]](#)
[How to Translate Names](#)

(Go back to: [Proverbs 27:21](#); [27:22](#); [28:15](#))

When Masculine Words Include Women

In the Bible, sometimes the words “men,” “brothers,” and “sons” refer only to men. At other times, those words include both men and women. In those places where the writer meant both men and women, you (the translator) need to translate it in a way that does not limit the meaning to men.

This page answers the question: *How do I translate “brother” or “he” when it could refer to anyone, male or female?*

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

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

[Generic Noun Phrases](#)

Description

In some languages a word that normally refers to men can also be used in a more general way to refer to both men and women. For example, the Bible sometimes says “brothers” when it refers to both brothers and sisters.

Also in some languages, the masculine pronouns “he” and “him” can be used in a more general way for any person if it is not important whether the person is a man or a woman. In the example below, the pronoun is “his,” but it is not limited to males.

A wise son makes **his** father rejoice
but a foolish son brings grief to **his** mother. (Proverbs 10:1 ULT)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- In some cultures words like “man,” “brother,” and “son” can only be used to refer to men. If those words are used in a translation in a more general way, people will think that what is being said does not apply to women.
- In some cultures, the masculine pronouns “he” and “him” can only refer to men. If a masculine pronoun is used, people will think that what is said does not apply to women.

Translation Principles

When a statement applies to both men and women, translate it in such a way that people will be able to understand that it applies to both.

Examples From the Bible

Now we want you to know, **brothers**, the grace of God that has been given to the churches of Macedonia. (2 Corinthians 8:1 ULT)

This verse is addressing the believers in Corinth, not only men, but **men and women**.

Then said Jesus to his disciples, “If anyone wants to follow me, **he** must deny **himself**, take up **his** cross, and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24 ULT)

Jesus was not speaking only of men, but of **men and women**.

Caution: Sometimes masculine words are used specifically to refer to men. Do not use words that would lead people to think that they include women. The words below are specifically about men.

Moses said, ‘If **someone** dies, not having children, **his brother** must marry **his** wife and have children for **his brother**.’ (Matthew 22:24 ULT)

Translation Strategies

If people would understand that that masculine words like “man,” “brother,” and “he” can include women, then consider using them. Otherwise, here are some ways for translating those words when they include women.

- (1) Use a noun that can be used for both men and women.
- (2) Use a word that refers to men and a word that refers to women.
- (3) Use pronouns that can be used for both men and women.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use nouns that can be used for both men and women.

The wise **man** dies just like the fool dies. (Ecclesiastes 2:16b ULT)

“The wise **person** dies just like the fool dies.”

“Wise **people** die just like fools die.”

- (2) Use a word that refers to men and a word that refers to women.

For we do not want you to be uninformed, **brothers**, about the troubles that happened to us in Asia. (2 Corinthians 1:8) — Paul was writing this letter to both men and women.

“For we do not want you to be uninformed, **brothers and sisters**, about the troubles that happened to us in Asia.”

- (3) Use pronouns that can be used for both men and women.

“If anyone wants to follow me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”
(Matthew 16:24 ULT)

English speakers can change the masculine singular pronouns, “he,” “himself,” and “his” to plural pronouns that do not mark gender, “they,” “themselves,” and “their” in order to show that it applies to all people, not just men.

>

“If **people** want to follow me, **they** must deny **themselves**, take up **their** cross, and follow me.”

(Go back to: [Proverbs 28:5](#))



unfoldingWord® Translation Words

Version 35

adultery, adulterous, adulterer, adulteress

Definition:

The term “adultery” refers to a sin that occurs when a married person has sexual relations with someone who is not that person’s spouse. Both of them are guilty of adultery. The term “adulterous” describes this kind of behavior or any person who commits this sin.

- The term “adulterer” refers generally to any person who commits adultery.
- Sometimes the term “adulteress” is used to specify that it was a woman who committed adultery.
- Adultery breaks the promises that a husband and wife made to each other in their covenant of marriage.
- God commanded the Israelites to not commit adultery.

Translation Suggestions:

- If the target language does not have one word that means “adultery,” this term could be translated with a phrase such as “having sexual relations with someone else’s wife” or “being intimate with another person’s spouse.”
- Some languages may have an indirect way of talking about adultery, such as “sleeping with someone else’s spouse” or “being unfaithful to one’s wife.” (See: [euphemism](#))

(See also: commit, covenant, sexual immorality, sleep with, faithful)

Bible References:

- Exodus 20:14
- Hosea 4:1-2
- Luke 16:18
- Matthew 5:28
- Matthew 12:39
- Revelation 2:22

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **13:6** “Do not commit **adultery**.”
- **28:2** Do not commit **adultery**.
- **34:7** “The religious leader prayed like this, ‘Thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like other men—such as robbers, unjust men, **adulterers**, or even like that tax collector.’”

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H5003, H5004, G34280, G34290, G34300, G34310, G34320

(Go back to: [Proverbs 5 General Notes; Notes](#))

evil, wicked, unpleasant

Definition:

In the Bible, the term “evil” can refer either to the concept of moral wickedness or emotional unpleasantness. The context will usually make it clear which meaning is intended in the specific instance of the term.

- While “evil” may describe a person’s character, “wicked” may refer more to a person’s behavior. However, both terms are very similar in meaning.
- The term “wickedness” refers to the state of being that exists when people do wicked things.
- The results of evil are clearly shown in how people mistreat others by killing, stealing, slandering and being cruel and unkind.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, the terms “evil” and “wicked” can be translated as “bad” or “sinful” or “immoral.”
- Other ways to translate these could include “not good” or “not righteous” or “not moral.”
- Make sure the words or phrases that are used to translate these terms fit the context that is natural in the target language.

(See also: disobey, sin, good, [righteous](#), demon)

Bible References:

- 1 Samuel 24:11
- 1 Timothy 6:10
- 3 John 1:10
- Genesis 2:17
- Genesis 6:5-6
- Job 1:1
- Job 8:20
- Judges 9:57
- Luke 6:22-23
- Matthew 7:11-12
- Proverbs 3:7
- Psalms 22:16-17

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **2:4** “God just knows that as soon as you eat it, you will be like God and will understand good and **evil** like he does.”
- **3:1** After a long time, many people were living in the world. They had become very **wicked** and violent.
- **3:2** But Noah found favor with God. He was a righteous man living among **wicked** people.
- **4:2** God saw that if they all kept working together to do **evil**, they could do many more sinful things.
- **8:12** “You tried to do **evil** when you sold me as a slave, but God used the **evil** for good!”
- **14:2** They (Canaanites) worshiped false gods and did many **evil** things.
- **17:1** But then he (Saul) became a **wicked** man who did not obey God, so God chose a different man who would one day be king in his place.
- **18:11** In the new kingdom of Israel, all the kings were **evil**.
- **29:8** The king was so angry that he threw the **wicked** servant into prison until he could pay back all of his debt.
- **45:2** They said, “We heard him (Stephen) speak **evil** things about Moses and God!”

- **50:17** He (Jesus) will wipe away every tear and there will be no more suffering, sadness, crying, **evil**, pain, or death.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0205, H0605, H1100, H1681, H1942, H2154, H2162, H2254, H2617, H3399, H3415, H4209, H4849, H5753, H5766, H5767, H5999, H6001, H6090, H7451, H7455, H7489, H7561, H7562, H7563, H7564, G00920, G01130, G04590, G09320, G09870, G09880, G14260, G25490, G25510, G25540, G25550, G25560, G25570, G25590, G25600, G26350, G26360, G41510, G41890, G41900, G41910, G53370

(Go back to: [Proverbs 10 General Notes](#); [Notes](#))

fool, foolish, folly

Definition:

The term “fool” refers to a person who often makes wrong choices, especially choosing to disobey. The term “foolish” describes a person or behavior that is not wise.

- In the Bible, the term “fool” usually refers to a person who does not believe or obey God. This is often contrasted to the wise person, who trusts in God and obeys God.
- In the Psalms, David describes a fool as a person who does not believe in God, one who ignores all the evidence of God in his creation.
- The Old Testament book of Proverbs also gives many descriptions of what a fool, or foolish person, is like.
- The term “folly” refers to an action that is not wise because it is against God’s will. Often “folly” also includes the meaning of something that is ridiculous or dangerous.

Translation Suggestions:

- The term “fool” could be translated as “foolish person” or “unwise person” or “senseless person” or “ungodly person.”
- Ways to translate “foolish” could include “lacking understanding” or “unwise” or “senseless.”

(See also: [wise](#))

Bible References:

- Ecclesiastes 1:17
- Ephesians 5:15
- Galatians 3:3
- Genesis 31:28
- Matthew 7:26
- Matthew 25:8
- Proverbs 13:16
- Psalms 49:13

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H0191, H0196, H0200, H1198, H1984, H2973, H3684, H3687, H3688, H3689, H3690, H5014, H5034, H5036, H5039, H5528, H5529, H5530, H5531, H6612, H8417, H8602, H8604, G04530, G04540, G07810, G08010, G08770, G08780, G27570, G31500, G31540, G34710, G34720, G34730, G34740, G39120

(Go back to: [Introduction to Proverbs](#); [Proverbs 10 General Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#); [Notes](#))

godly, godliness, ungodly, godless, ungodliness, godlessness

Definition:

The term “godly” is used to describe a person who acts in a way that honors God and shows what God is like. “Godliness” is the character quality of honoring God by doing his will.

- A person who has godly character will show the fruits of the Holy Spirit, such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and self control.
- The quality of godliness shows that a person has the Holy Spirit and is obeying him.

The terms “ungodly” and “godless” describe people who are in rebellion against God. Living in an evil way, without thought of God, is called “ungodliness” or “godlessness.”

- The meanings of these words are very similar. However, “godless” and “godlessness” may describe a more extreme condition in which people or nations do not even acknowledge God or his right to rule them.
- God pronounces judgment and wrath on ungodly people, on everyone who rejects him and his ways.

Translation Suggestions:

- The phrase “the godly” could be translated as “godly people” or “people who obey God.” (See: [nominaladj](#))
- The adjective “godly” could be translated as “obedient to God” or “righteous” or “pleasing to God.”
- The phrase “in a godly manner” could be translated as “in a way that obeys God” or “with actions and words that please God.”
- Ways to translate “godliness” could include “acting in a way that pleases God” or “obeying God” or “living in a righteous manner.”
- Depending on the context, the term “ungodly” could be translated as “displeasing to God” or “immoral” or “disobeying God.”
- The terms “godless” and “godlessness” literally mean that the people are “without God” or “having no thought of God” or “acting in a way that does not acknowledge God.”
- Other ways to translate “ungodliness” or “godlessness” could be “wickedness” or “evil” or “rebellion against God”.

(See also [evil](#), honor, obey, [righteous](#), [righteous](#))

Bible References:

- Job 27:10
- Proverbs 11:9
- Acts 3:12
- 1 Timothy 1:9-11
- 1 Timothy 4:7
- 2 Timothy 3:12
- Hebrews 12:14-17
- Hebrews 11:7
- 1 Peter 4:18
- Jude 1:16

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0430, H1100, H2623, H5760, H7563, G05160, G07630, G07640, G07650, G21240, G21500, G21520, G21530, G23160, G23170

(Go back to: [Proverbs 31 General Notes](#))

righteous, righteousness, unrighteous, unrighteousness, upright, uprightness

Definition:

The term “righteousness” refers to God’s absolute goodness, justice, faithfulness, and love. Having these qualities makes God “righteous.” Because God is righteous, he must condemn sin.

- These terms are also often used to describe a person who obeys God and is morally good. However, because all people have sinned, no one except God is completely righteous.
- Examples of people the Bible who were called “righteous” include Noah, Job, Abraham, Zachariah, and Elisabeth.
- When people trust in Jesus to save them, God cleanses them from their sins and declares them to be righteous because of Jesus’ righteousness.

The term “unrighteous” means to be sinful and morally corrupt. “Unrighteousness” refers to sin or the condition of being sinful.

- These terms especially refer to living in a way that disobeys God’s teachings and commands.
- Unrighteous people are immoral in their thoughts and actions.
- Sometimes “the unrighteous” refers specifically to people who do not believe in Jesus.

The terms “upright” and “uprightness” refer to acting in a way that follows God’s laws.

- The meaning of these words includes the idea of standing up straight and looking directly ahead.
- A person who is “upright” is someone who obeys God’s rules and does not do things that are against his will.
- Terms such as “integrity” and “righteous” have similar meanings and are sometimes used in parallelism constructions, such as “integrity and uprightness.” (See: [parallelism](#))

Translation Suggestions:

- When it describes God, the term “righteous” could be translated as “perfectly good and just” or “always acting rightly.”
- God’s “righteousness” could also be translated as “perfect faithfulness and goodness.”
- When it describes people who are obedient to God, the term “righteous” could also be translated as “morally good” or “just” or “living a God-pleasing life.”
- The phrase “the righteous” could also be translated as “righteous people” or “God-fearing people.”
- Depending on the context, “righteousness” could also be translated with a word or phrase that means “goodness” or “being perfect before God” or “acting in a right way by obeying God” or “doing perfectly good.”
- The term “unrighteous” could simply be translated as “not righteous.”
- Depending on the context, other ways to translate this could include “wicked” or “immoral” or “people who rebel against God” or “sinful.”
- The phrase “the unrighteous” could be translated as “unrighteous people.”
- The term “unrighteousness” could be translated as “sin” or “evil thoughts and actions” or “wickedness.”
- If possible, it is best to translate this in a way that shows its relationship to “righteous, righteousness.”
- Ways to translate “upright” could include “acting rightly” or “one who acts rightly” or “following God’s laws” or “obedient to God” or “behaving in a way that is right.”
- The term “uprightness” could be translated as “moral purity” or “good moral conduct” or “rightness.”
- The phrase “the upright” could be translated as “people who are upright” or “upright people.”

(See also: [evil](#), faithful, good, holy, integrity, just, law, law, obey, pure, [righteous](#), sin, unlawful)

Bible References:

- Deuteronomy 19:16
- Job 1:8
- Psalms 37:30
- Psalms 49:14
- Psalms 107:42
- Ecclesiastes 12:10-11
- Isaiah 48:1-2
- Ezekiel 33:13
- Malachi 2:6
- Matthew 6:1
- Acts 3:13-14
- Romans 1:29-31
- 1 Corinthians 6:9
- Galatians 3:7
- Colossians 3:25
- 2 Thessalonians 2:10
- 2 Timothy 3:16
- 1 Peter 3:18-20
- 1 John 1:9
- 1 John 5:16-17

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **3:2** But Noah found favor with God. He was a **righteous** man, living among wicked people.
- **4:8** God declared that Abram was **righteous** because he believed in God's promise.
- **17:2** David was a humble and **righteous** man who trusted and obeyed God.
- **23:1** Joseph, the man Mary was engaged to, was a **righteous** man.
- **50:10** Then the **righteous** ones will shine like the sun in the kingdom of God their Father.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0205, H1368, H2555, H3072, H3474, H3476, H3477, H3483, H4334, H4339, H4749, H5228, H5229, H5324, H5765, H5766, H5767, H5977, H6662, H6663, H6664, H6665, H6666, H6968, H8535, H8537, H8549, H8552, G00930, G00940, G04580, G13410, G13420, G13430, G13440, G13450, G13460, G21180, G37160, G37170

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