



# **unfoldingWord® Translation Notes**

**1 Timothy**

**Version 73**

[en]

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## **unfoldingWord® Translation Notes**

**Date:** 2023-05-31

**Version:** 73

**Published by:** unfoldingWord

## **unfoldingWord® Literal Text**

**Date:** 2023-02-11

**Version:** 45

**Published by:** unfoldingWord

## **unfoldingWord® Simplified Text**

**Date:** 2023-02-11

**Version:** 44

**Published by:** unfoldingWord

## **unfoldingWord® Hebrew Bible**

**Date:** 2022-10-11

**Version:** 2.1.30

**Published by:** unfoldingWord

## **unfoldingWord® Greek New Testament**

**Date:** 2022-10-11

**Version:** 0.30

**Published by:** unfoldingWord

## **unfoldingWord® Translation Academy**

**Date:** 2023-01-25

**Version:** 36

**Published by:** unfoldingWord®

## **unfoldingWord® Translation Words**

**Date:** 2023-02-10

**Version:** 40

**Published by:** unfoldingWord

## **unfoldingWord® Translation Words Links**

**Date:** 2023-05-31

**Version:** 24

**Published by:** unfoldingWord

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# Table of Contents

<b>unfoldingWord® Translation Notes</b>	<b>6</b>
1 Timothy	6
Introduction to 1 Timothy	7
1 Timothy 1	9
1 Timothy 2	31
1 Timothy 3	48
1 Timothy 4	66
1 Timothy 5	83
1 Timothy 6	110
<b>unfoldingWord® Translation Academy</b>	<b>133</b>
Abstract Nouns	134
Active or Passive	136
Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information	139
Connect — Contrast Relationship	142
Connect — Exception Clauses	144
Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship	146
Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship	149
Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding	151
Double Negatives	154
Doublet	157
Ellipsis	159
Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'	161
Forms of You	163
Forms of 'You' — Singular	164
Go and Come	166
Hendiadys	168
How to Translate Names	171
Hyperbole	175
Idiom	179
Litotes	181
Merism	183
Metaphor	185
Metonymy	191
Nominal Adjectives	193
Parallelism	195
Personification	198
Poetry	200
Quote Markings	203
Rhetorical Question	206
Simile	209
Statements — Other Uses	212
Symbolic Action	214
Synecdoche	216
Textual Variants	218
Translate Unknowns	220
Translating Son and Father	223
When Masculine Words Include Women	225

<b>unfoldingWord® Translation Words</b>	<b>227</b>
disciple	228
prophet, prophecy, prophesy, seer, prophetess	230
<b>Contributors</b>	<b>232</b>
unfoldingWord® Translation Notes Contributors	232
unfoldingWord® Literal Text Contributors	238
unfoldingWord® Simplified Text Contributors	239
unfoldingWord® Translation Academy Contributors	240
unfoldingWord® Translation Words Contributors	240
unfoldingWord® Translation Words Links Contributors	241



## **unfoldingWord® Translation Notes**

### **1 Timothy**

## Introduction to 1 Timothy

### Part 1: General Introduction

#### Outline of the Book of 1 Timothy

In this letter, Paul alternates between personal commands to Timothy that empower him to act as his representative and with his authority, and instructions for how followers of Jesus should live in community.

Greetings (1:1-2)

Paul commands Timothy to tell people not to teach false doctrines (1:3-20)

Paul gives instructions about how to re-establish order and decency in the church (2:1-15)

Paul gives instructions about how to ensure that elders and deacons are properly qualified (3:1-13)

Paul commands Timothy regarding his own personal conduct (3:14-5:2)

Paul gives instructions to ensure church support for worthy widows (5:3-16) and elders (5:17-20)

Paul commands Timothy that he must be impartial (5:21-25)

Paul gives instructions to ensure order in master-servant relationships (6:1-2a)

Paul commands Timothy regarding how he should teach and conduct himself (6:2b-16)

Paul gives instructions for how people who are rich should live (6:17-19)

Paul commands Timothy to guard what has been entrusted to his care (6:20-21a)

Closing blessing to the whole church (6:21b)

#### Who wrote the Book of 1 Timothy?

A man named Paul wrote 1 Timothy. Paul was from the city of Tarsus. He had been known as Saul in his early life. Before becoming a Christian, Paul was a Pharisee. He persecuted Christians. After he became a Christian, he traveled several times throughout the Roman Empire telling people about Jesus.

Paul may have written other letters to Timothy, but this is the earliest one that we still have. That is why it is known as 1 Timothy or First Timothy. Timothy was Paul's disciple and close friend. Paul probably wrote this letter near the end of his life.

#### What is the Book of 1 Timothy about?

Paul had left Timothy in the city of Ephesus to help the believers there. Paul wrote this letter to instruct Timothy about various matters. The topics he addressed included church worship, qualifications for church leaders, and warnings against false teachers. This letter shows how Paul was training Timothy to be a leader among the churches while Timothy himself trained other leaders.

#### How should the title of this book be translated?

Translators may choose to call this book by its customary title, "1 Timothy" or "First Timothy." Or they may choose a different title, such as "Paul's First Letter to Timothy." (See: **How to Translate Names (p.171)**)

### Part 2: Important Religious and Cultural Concepts

#### What is discipleship?

Discipleship is the process of making people to be disciples of Christ. The goal of discipleship is to encourage other Christians to be more like Christ. This letter gives many instructions about how a leader should train a less mature Christian. (See: **disciple (p.228)**)

## Part 3: Important Translation Issues

### What did Paul mean by the expression “in Christ”?

Paul meant to express the idea of a very close union with Christ and the believers. Please see the introduction to the Book of Romans for more details about this kind of expression.

### What are the major textual issues in the text of the book of 1 Timothy?

In [6:5](#), the oldest Greek manuscripts differ from later Greek manuscripts. Modern translations may also differ depending on the Greek manuscript that they translate from. The ULT text translates the Greek from the oldest manuscripts and puts the differences from later manuscripts in a footnote. If a translation of the Bible exists in the general region, translators should consider following the decision in that translation. If not, translators are advised to follow the oldest Greek manuscripts as reflected in the ULT text. (See: **Textual Variants (p.218)**)



# 1 Timothy 1

## 1 Timothy 1 General Notes

### Structure and formatting

Paul formally introduces this letter in verses 1-2. Writers often began letters in this way in the ancient Near East.

### Special concepts in this chapter

#### Spiritual children

In this chapter, Paul calls Timothy a “son” and his “child.” Paul disciplined Timothy as a Christian and a church leader. Paul may also have led him to believe in Christ. Therefore, Paul called Timothy his “son in the faith.” (See: [\[\[rc:///tw/dict/bible/kt/disciple\]\]](#), [\[\[rc:///tw/dict/bible/kt/faith\]\]](#) and [\[\[rc:///tw/dict/bible/kt/spirit\]\]](#) and [\[\[rc:///ta/man/translate/figs-metaphor\]\]](#))

#### Metaphor

In this chapter Paul speaks figuratively of people who are not fulfilling the purpose of their faith as if they had “missed the mark” that they were aiming at, as if they had “turned away” down a wrong path, and as if they had been “shipwrecked.” He speaks figuratively of following Jesus faithfully as “fighting the good fight.”

## 1 Timothy 1:1

### Paul

In the culture of this time, letter writers would give their own names first. Your language may have a particular way of introducing the author of a letter, and if it would be helpful to your readers, you could use it here. Immediately after introducing the writer, you might also want to indicate to whom the letter was written. Alternate translation: "I, Paul, am the one writing this letter to you, Timothy"

### by {the} command of God

Alternate translation: "by the authority of God"

### of God our Savior

Alternate translation: "God, who saves us"

### of {the} Lord Jesus Christ our hope

Here, **our hope** refers figuratively to the person in whom we have hope. Alternate translations: "Christ Jesus, the one in whom we have confidence" or "Christ Jesus, whom we trust" (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**) (See: **Metonymy (p. 191)**)

## 1 Timothy 1:2

### a true son

Paul speaks of his close relationship to Timothy as though they were father and **son**. This shows Paul's sincere love and approval of Timothy. It is also likely that Paul personally led Timothy to trust in Christ. That would be another reason why Paul considered him to be like his own child, since Timothy entered his new life as a follower of Jesus because of Paul. Alternate translation: "who is truly like a son to me" (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### Grace, mercy, peace

In this culture, letter writers would offer a good wish for the recipient before introducing the main business of the letter. Alternate translation: "I hope you are experiencing God's kindness, mercy, and peace"

### God {the} Father

Here, **Father** is an important title for God. Alternate translation: "God, who is our Father" (See: **Translating Son and Father (p.223)**) (See: **Translating Son and Father (p.223)**)

### Christ Jesus our Lord

Alternate translation: "Christ Jesus, who is our Lord"

## 1 Timothy 1:3

### As I urged you

Alternate translation: “as I told you”

### you

In this letter, with one exception, the words **you**, **your**, and **yourself** refer to Timothy and so are singular. A note will discuss the one exception in [6:21](#). (See: **Forms of ‘You’ — Singular (p.164)**) (See: **Forms of ‘You’ — Singular (p.164)**)

### remain in Ephesus

Alternate translation: “wait for me there in the city of Ephesus”

### Ephesus

**Ephesus** is the name of a city. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.171)**) (See: **How to Translate Names (p.171)**)

### certain ones

Alternate translation: “certain people”

### to teach differently

The implication is that these people were not teaching in a different way, but teaching different things than what Paul and Timothy taught. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could state that explicitly. Alternate translation: “a different doctrine from what we teach” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

## 1 Timothy 1:4

### myths

These **myths** were fanciful stories of some kind, perhaps about the supposed exploits of various spiritual beings. But since we no longer know exactly what these stories were about, it would probably be best to use a general term for them. Alternate translation: “made-up stories”

### endless genealogies

Paul uses the term **endless** as an exaggeration to emphasize that these are very long. Alternate translation: “lists of names that seem as if they will never end” (See: **Hyperbole (p.175)**) (See: **Hyperbole (p.175)**)

### genealogies

Usually, the term **genealogies** refers to a record of a person’s ancestors. However, in this case it could also mean a record of the supposed ancestors of spiritual beings. Alternate translation: “lists of names”

### which promote arguments

The people were debating about these stories and lists of names, but no one could know for certain whether they were true. Alternate translation: “these make people disagree angrily”

### the} stewardship of God

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea behind this phrase behind the abstract noun **stewardship** with a concrete noun such as “plan” or “work.” Alternate translations: “helping us to understand God’s plan to save us” or “helping us to do God’s work” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

### which is} by faith

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea behind the word **faith** behind the abstract noun **faith** with a verb such as “trust” or “believe.” Alternate translations: “which we learn by believing in God” or “which we do by trusting in God” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

## 1 Timothy 1:5

### Now

Paul here uses the word **Now** to introduce background information that will help Timothy understand the purpose of what he is commanding him. You can translate it with a word or phrase in your language that introduces background information.

### Now the goal of {this} command is

Here Paul is expressing to Timothy the **goal** or the outcome that he desires from the commands that Paul gave him. Alternate translation: "I am commanding these things in order to get this result" (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.146)**) (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.146)**)

### of {this} command

Here, **this command** refers to the instructions that Paul has given Timothy in [1:3](#) and [1:4](#).

### is love

That God's people would show **love** is the goal of the command. If it is necessary to include the object of "love," you could state "each other" or "others." This may also include love for God. Alternate translation: "is that God's people would love others" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### from a pure heart

Here the **heart** figuratively represents a person's thoughts and inclinations. Alternate translation: "from a desire for only what is good" (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### from a pure heart

Here, **pure** figuratively indicates that the person wants only good things and does not have mixed motives that also include some bad ones. Alternate translation: "from a desire for only what is good" (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**)

### a good conscience

Your translation should make it clear that love is the one goal of the command and is followed by three things that lead to this love. This is the second thing, after "a pure heart." Alternate translation: "and from a conscience that leads a person to choose right instead of wrong"

### a sincere faith

Paul presents **a sincere faith** as the third thing that leads to love, which is the one goal of the command. It is not a third goal of the command. Alternate translations: "and from faith that is genuine" or "and from faith that is without hypocrisy"

## a sincere faith

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea behind the phrase **a sincere faith** behind the abstract noun **faith** with a verb such as “trust” or “believe.” Here, **faith** could refer to: (1) trust in God. (2) belief in true teaching about God. Alternate translations: “firmly trusting in God” or “sincerely believing the true message about God” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

## 1 Timothy 1:6

### some, having missed the mark

Paul speaks figuratively of faith in Christ as if it were a target that people should aim at. Paul means that some people are not fulfilling the purpose of their faith, which is to love, as he has just explained. Alternate translation: "some people, who are not fulfilling the purpose of faith in Jesus" (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### have turned away to

Here, **turned away** figuratively means these people have stopped doing what God has commanded. Alternate translation: "are no longer doing what God commands. Instead of that, they just engage in" (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)



## 1 Timothy 1:7

### teachers of the law

Here, **law** refers specifically to the law of Moses. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could state that explicitly, as in the UST. (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### not understanding

If the contrast is not clear in your language between what these people want to be (teachers of the law) and their ability to do it, you may want to mark the contrast. Alternate translations: “but not understanding” or “and yet they do not understand” (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.142)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.142)**)

### not & either & or

Paul uses a triple negative in Greek for emphasis here, “not ... neither ... nor.” None of these negatives cancel each other to create a positive meaning. Instead, the negative meaning is retained throughout. If your language uses double negatives for emphasis that do not cancel one another, it would be appropriate to use that construction here. (See: **Double Negatives (p.154)**) (See: **Double Negatives (p.154)**)

### what they are saying or about which they make confident affirmations

These two phrases mean similar things. Paul uses the repetition for emphasis. You do not need to put both phrases in your translation if that might be confusing for your readers. Alternate translation: “the things that they say so confidently are true” (See: **Parallelism (p.195)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.195)**)

## 1 Timothy 1:8

### But we know that the law (is) good

Alternate translations: “we understand that the law is useful” or “we understand that the law is beneficial”

#### we know

In this letter, Paul uses the words **we**, **us**, and **our** to refer either to Timothy and himself, or else to all believers, which would also include the two of them. So generally, these words include the addressee. A note will discuss the one possible exception in [4:10](#). (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.161)**) (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p. 161)**)

#### if one uses it lawfully

Alternate translations: “if a person uses it correctly” or “if a person uses it in the way that God intended”

## 1 Timothy 1:9

### knowing this

Alternate translation: “we also know this”

### law is not made for {the} righteous

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who did the action. Alternate translation: “God did not make the law for people who are righteous” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### for {the} righteous

Paul is using the adjective **righteous** as a noun, to refer to a class of people that it describes. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this term by translating it with a noun phrase. Alternate translation: “for people who are righteous” (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.193)**) (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.193)**)

### but for {the} lawless and {the} rebellious, {the} ungodly and {the} sinful, {the} godless and {the} profane

Paul is also using these adjectives as nouns to refer to the classes of people that they describe. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this phrase by translating each of these adjectives with a noun phrase. Alternate translation: “people who break the law, people who defy authority, people who do not honor God, people who commit sins, people who live as if God did not matter, people who live as if nothing was sacred” (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.193)**) (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.193)**)

### father-killers and mother-killers, man-slayers

In this list Paul uses several compound words to express his meaning concisely and vividly. In each case the first term in the compound, a noun, is the object of the second term in the compound, a verb. Three of these compound words are in this verse, and two more are in the next verse. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express these terms by translating them either with single terms or with phrases. Alternate translations: “patricides and matricides, murders” or “people who kill other people, even their own fathers and mothers”

### man-slayers

Paul uses the term **man** here in a generic sense that includes both men and women. Alternate translation: “murderers” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

## 1 Timothy 1:10

### the} immoral

Paul is using the adjective **immoral** as a noun to refer to a class of people that it describes. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this term by translating it with a noun phrase. Alternate translation: “people who have sexual relations outside of marriage” (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.193)**) (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.193)**)

### male-liers

The term **male-liers** is the fourth compound word on the list. The term “lie” figuratively means to have sexual relations. Alternate translation: “men who have sexual relations with other males” (See: **Idiom (p.179)**) (See: **Idiom (p.179)**)

### man-stealers

The term **man-stealers** is the fifth and last compound word on the list. Paul uses the term **man** here in a generic sense that includes both men and women. Alternate translation: “people who kidnap other people to sell them as slaves” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

### and if anything else is contrary to the healthy teaching

Here Paul leaves out some of the words that, in many languages, a sentence would need to be complete. He means that if anything else is contrary to healthy teaching, then the law is made for people who do that, too. Alternate translation: “and for people who do anything else that is against wholesome teaching”

### the healthy teaching

The phrase **healthy teaching** is a figurative way to say that the teaching is good and reliable in every way and has no defect or corruption. A person with a healthy mind would recognize this teaching as correct. Alternate translation: “correct teaching” (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**)

## 1 Timothy 1:11

### the gospel of the glory of the blessed God

This phrase could mean one of two things. Alternate translations: "the gospel about the glory that belongs to the blessed God" or "the glorious gospel about the blessed God"

### with} which I have been entrusted

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express what had been entrusted to Paul with an active form, and you could state who did the action. Alternate translation: "for which God made me responsible" (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

## **1 Timothy 1:12**

### **I have gratitude**

Alternate translation: "I thank"

### **he considered me trustworthy**

Alternate translation: "he believed that he could rely on me"

### **placing me into service**

Paul speaks of the task of serving God as if it were a location that one could be placed in. Alternate translations: "he assigned me to serve him" or "he appointed me as his servant" (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

## 1 Timothy 1:13

### being a blasphemer

Paul is referring to his character before he believed in Jesus. He is probably referring to how he used to say that Jesus was not the Messiah and that people should not believe in him. Alternate translation: “I was a person who said wrong things about Jesus” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### a persecutor

Paul is referring to his character before he believed in Jesus. Alternate translation: “a person who persecuted those who believed in Jesus” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### an aggressor

Paul is referring to his character before he believed in Jesus. Alternate translations: “a violent person” or “a person who used violence against those who believed in Jesus” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### I was shown mercy because not knowing, I acted in unfaithfulness

If it would be helpful in your language, you could change the order of these phrases since the second phrase, “not knowing,” gives the reason for the action that the first phrase, “I was shown mercy,” describes. Alternate translation: “I did not act the way God would have trusted me to act, but that was because I did not know what I was doing, and so Jesus had mercy on me” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.149)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.149)**)

### I was shown mercy

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express who showed mercy to Paul with an active form, and you could state who did the action. Alternate translation: “Jesus had mercy on me” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

## 1 Timothy 1:14

### Indeed

Paul here uses the word **indeed** to introduce an expanded description of the way Jesus treated him mercifully even though he persecuted the followers of Jesus. This description will help Timothy and the other believers in Ephesus to understand how great the mercy of Jesus is. Alternate translation: “in fact”

### the grace of our Lord overflowed

Paul speaks of the **grace** of Jesus as if it were a liquid that fills a container until it flows over the top. Alternate translation: “Jesus showed me unlimited grace” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### with faith and love {that are} in Christ Jesus

This could refer to: (1) faith and love that he received from Jesus when he became **in** him, which would mean figuratively “in relationship with” him. Alternate translation: “and enabled me to trust him and love him” (2) the faith and love that Jesus himself possesses and could be saying that these were the basis of the mercy that Jesus showed him. Alternate translation: “because he believed in me and loved me” (See: **Idiom (p.179)**) (See: **Idiom (p.179)**)



## 1 Timothy 1:15

### This} word {is} trustworthy

In this context, the term **word** refers to an entire statement. Alternate translation: “this statement is dependable”

### and worthy of all acceptance

If it would be helpful in your language, you could state explicitly who does this action. Alternate translations: “and we should believe it without any doubt” or “and we should have full confidence in it”

### Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners

Paul uses this phrase as a direct quotation. It may be helpful to your readers if you indicate this by setting off the words that follow, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” with quotation marks or with whatever other punctuation or convention your language may use to indicate a quotation. (See: **Quote Markings (p.203)**) (See: **Quote Markings (p.203)**)

### of whom I am first

Here the term **first** has the sense of the superlative example of a class, in this case a negative class. Alternate translation: “and I am the worst one of all”

## 1 Timothy 1:16

### I was shown mercy

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express who showed mercy to Paul with an active form, and you could state who did the action. Alternate translation: "Jesus had mercy on me" (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### so that in me, {the} first

Alternate translation: "so that through me, the worst sinner of all"

## 1 Timothy 1:17

### Now

Paul here uses the word **Now** to introduce a change in what he is writing. As a result of what he has been teaching Timothy, he now writes a blessing to and about God. Use a word to indicate this change in your language, such as "so" or "now."

### be} honor and glory

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the abstract nouns **honor** and **grace** by stating the ideas behind the them with verbs. Alternate translation: "may people honor and glorify" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

## 1 Timothy 1:18

### This command I am placing before you

Paul speaks of his instructions as if he could physically put them in front of Timothy. Alternate translations: “I am entrusting you with this command” or “this is what I am commanding you” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### my} child

Paul speaks of his close relationship to Timothy as though they were father and **child**. This shows Paul’s sincere love and approval of Timothy. It is also likely that Paul personally led Timothy to trust in Christ, and that would be another reason why Paul considered him to be like his own child. Alternate translation: “you who are like my very own child” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### in accordance with the earlier prophecies about you

If it would be helpful in your language, you could state explicitly how these prophecies happened and who did this action. Alternate translation: “in agreement with what other believers prophesied about you”

### you might fight the good fight

Paul speaks figuratively about Timothy doing his best for the Lord as if he were a soldier fighting a battle. Alternate translation: “continue to do your best on behalf of the Lord” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

## 1 Timothy 1:19

### holding faith

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could express the idea behind the abstract noun **faith** with a phrase that uses a verb such as “trust” or “believe.” Here, **faith** could refer to: (1) a relationship with Jesus. Alternate translation: “continue trusting in Jesus” (2) a belief in the message about Jesus. Alternate translation: “keep believing the true teaching” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

### a good conscience

See how you translated this phrase in 1:5. Alternate translation: “continuing to choose to do what is right instead of what is wrong” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

### some, & have shipwrecked regarding the faith

Paul speaks figuratively of these people as if they were a ship that had sunk. He means that these people no longer believe in Jesus and no longer live as his followers. You could use this same figure, or a similar one from your culture, if your readers would understand this meaning. Otherwise, you could state as an alternative translation, “no longer belong to Jesus” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### regarding the faith

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could express the idea behind the abstract noun **faith**. Here, **faith** could refer to: (1) a relationship with Jesus (or God). Alternate translation: “their relationship with Jesus” (2) the teachings about Jesus. Alternate translation: “the message about Jesus” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

## 1 Timothy 1:20

### Hymenaeus & Alexander

**Hymenaeus** and **Alexander** are names of two men. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.171)**) (See: **How to Translate Names (p.171)**)

### whom I have given over to Satan

Paul speaks figuratively as if he physically took hold of these men and handed them **to Satan**. If this does not make sense in your language, you could state it plainly. Alternate translation: "I have allowed Satan to command them" (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### whom I have given over to Satan

This probably means that Paul expelled them from the community of believers. Since they are no longer a part of the community, Satan has access to them and can harm them. If it would be helpful to your readers, you may want to include this information in a footnote. Alternate translation: "I have allowed Satan to make them suffer" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### so that they may be taught

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who would do the action. Alternate translation: "so that God may teach them" (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

## **1 Timothy 2**

### **1 Timothy 2 General Notes**

### **Special concepts in this chapter**

#### **Peace**

Paul encourages Christians to pray for everyone. They should pray for rulers so that Christians can live peacefully, in a godly and dignified way.

#### **Women in the church**

Scholars are divided over how to understand this passage in its historical and cultural context. Some scholars believe that God created men and women to serve in distinctly different roles in marriage and the church. Other scholars believe that God wants women to use the gifts He gives them on an equal basis with men. Translators should be careful not to let how they understand this issue affect how they translate this passage.

## 1 Timothy 2:1

### first of all

As in 1:15, the term **first** figuratively means the superlative example of a class. Alternate translation: “most importantly” (See: **Idiom (p.179)**) (See: **Idiom (p.179)**)

### I urge

Alternate translation: “I encourage” or “I exhort”

### for requests, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings to be made

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who would do the action and who would receive the action. Alternate translation: “I urge all believers to make requests, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings to God” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### men

Paul uses the term **men** here in a generic sense that includes both men and women. Alternate translation: “people” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)



## 1 Timothy 2:2

### a peaceful and quiet life

The terms **peaceful** and **quiet** mean the same thing. Paul uses them together for emphasis. He wants all believers to be able to live their lives without having trouble with the authorities. If it would be helpful in your language, you could combine these terms. Alternate translation: “an undisturbed life” (See: **Doublet (p.157)**) (See: **Doublet (p.157)**)

### in all godliness and dignity

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could express the idea behind the abstract nouns **godliness** and **dignity** with phrases that use verbs such as “honor” and “respect.” Alternate translation: “that honors God and that other people will respect” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

## 1 Timothy 2:3

### is} good and acceptable before God

The terms **good** and **acceptable** mean similar things. Paul may be using them together for emphasis. If you think that having both terms in your translation might be confusing for your readers, you could combine them. Alternate translation: “very pleasing to God” (See: **Doublet (p.157)**) (See: **Doublet (p.157)**)

## 1 Timothy 2:4

### who desires all men to be saved

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form. Alternate translation: “who wants to save everyone” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### all men

Paul uses the term **men** here in a generic sense that includes both men and women. Alternate translation: “everyone” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

### to come to knowledge of {the} truth

Paul speaks of learning the truth about God as if it were a place where people could **come**. Alternate translation: “to know and accept what is true” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

## 1 Timothy 2:5

### and one mediator of God and of men

A **mediator** is a person who helps negotiate a peaceful settlement between two parties who disagree with each other. Alternate translation: “and one person who is able to reconcile God and people” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.220)**) (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.220)**)

### of men

Paul uses the term **men** here in a generic sense that includes both men and women. Alternate translation: “people” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

### the} man Christ Jesus

Paul is likely using the term **man** in a generic sense to refer to the humanity of Jesus. Alternate translation: “Christ Jesus, who is also human” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

## 1 Timothy 2:6

### having given himself

Alternate translation: “sacrificed himself” or “died willingly”

### as} a ransom for all

Alternate translation: “as the price of freedom for everyone”

### the testimony

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could make it explicit that this demonstrated specifically that God wants to save all people. Alternate translation: “as the proof that God wants to save all people” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### in its own times

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “at the time that God had chosen” (See: **Idiom (p.179)**) (See: **Idiom (p.179)**)

## 1 Timothy 2:7

### for which

Here, **which** refers back to the testimony about God in the previous verse. Alternate translation: “of this testimony”

### I was made a herald and an apostle

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who did the action. Alternate translation: “Jesus has made me, Paul, a preacher and a representative for him” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### a herald

A **herald** is someone who is sent out to announce a message. If your language does not have a similar term and your readers would not know what a herald is, you can use a general expression for this. Alternate translations: “an announcer” or “a messenger” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.220)**) (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.220)**)

### a herald

Paul compares himself to a **herald** because God has sent him out to announce the gospel message. Alternate translation: “a preacher” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### in Christ

Alternate translation: “as a follower of Christ”

### I am speaking {the} truth in Christ, I am not lying

In order to emphasize what he is saying, Paul says the same thing twice, first positively and then negatively. If this is confusing in your language, you can express this once. Alternate translation: “I am telling you the truth as a follower of Christ”

### a teacher of {the} Gentiles in faith and truth

Here, **faith and truth** could mean: (1) the content of what Paul teaches. Alternate translation: “I teach the Gentiles the message of faith and truth” (2) Paul’s character as a teacher. Alternate translation: “a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles”

### a teacher of {the} Gentiles in faith and truth

If this phrase has the second meaning that the previous note discusses, Paul may be using the two terms **faith** and **truth** together to express one idea. Alternate translation: “I teach the Gentiles about the true faith” (See: **Hendiadys (p.168)**) (See: **Hendiadys (p.168)**)

### of {the} Gentiles

This word **Gentiles** is the name for people groups that are not Jewish. Alternate translation: “of non-Jewish people groups” (See: **How to Translate Names (p.171)**) (See: **How to Translate Names (p.171)**)

## 1 Timothy 2:8

### the men in every place

Here the word **men** refers specifically to males. The term is not generic, since Paul addresses women next. Alternate translations: “the males in all places” or “men everywhere” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

### lifting up holy hands

It was the customary posture in this culture for people to raise their **hands** while praying. You could translate this in a way that would make that clear. Alternate translation: “reverently lifting up their hands in the customary way” (See: **Symbolic Action (p.214)**) (See: **Symbolic Action (p.214)**)

### to pray, lifting up holy hands

Paul describes one part of the person, the **hands**, as holy to indicate that the entire person is to be holy. Alternate translation: “lifting up their hands to pray in holiness” (See: **Synecdoche (p.216)**) (See: **Synecdoche (p.216)**)

### without anger and argument

Here Paul expresses a single idea by using two words connected with **and**. The word **anger** tells what kind of **argument** the men should avoid. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this meaning with an equivalent phrase. Alternate translation: “without angry arguments” (See: **Hendiadys (p.168)**) (See: **Hendiadys (p.168)**)

## 1 Timothy 2:9

### likewise

Here Paul leaves out some of the words that a sentence would ordinarily need in order to be complete. Alternate translation: “in the same way, I also want” (See: **Ellipsis (p.159)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.159)**)

### not in braids

During this time, many Roman women braided their hair lavishly to try to make themselves attractive. If your readers would not be familiar with the practice of braiding hair, you could express this idea in a more general way. Alternate translations: “they should not have fancy hairstyles” or “they should not have elaborate hairstyles that attract attention” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.220)**) (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.220)**)

### not in braids

Paul mentions **braids** and **gold** as ways a woman could give undue attention to her hair. At the time, women would make elaborate braided hairstyles, often weaving in chains of gold. Alternate translations: “not with fancy hairstyles” or “not by means of elaborate hairstyles that attract attention” (See: **Synecdoche (p.216)**) (See: **Synecdoche (p.216)**)

### pearls

These **pearls** are beautiful and valuable mineral balls that people use as jewelry. They are formed inside the shell of a small animal that lives in the ocean. If your readers would not be familiar with pearls, you could express this idea in a more general way. Alternate translation: “decorations made from valuable materials” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.220)**) (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.220)**)



## **1 Timothy 2:10**

### **professing godliness, through good works**

Alternate translation: "who want to honor God by the good things that they do"

## 1 Timothy 2:11

### in quietness

Paul may be saying that he wants the women to listen rather than to speak. Alternate translation: “by listening”  
(See: **Idiom (p.179)**) (See: **Idiom (p.179)**)

### in all submission

Alternate translation: “and submit to the authority of the teacher”

## 1 Timothy 2:12

### to be in quietness

As in [2:11](#), Paul may be saying that he wants the women to listen rather than to speak. Alternate translation: “she should listen quietly”

## 1 Timothy 2:13

### Adam was formed first

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who did the action. Alternate translation: “God created Adam first” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### then Eve

Here Paul leaves out some of the words that a sentence would ordinarily need in order to be complete. Alternate translation: “and then God created Eve” (See: **Ellipsis (p.159)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.159)**)

## 1 Timothy 2:14

### Adam was not deceived

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who did the action. Alternate translation: “Adam was not the one whom the serpent deceived” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### but the woman, having been deceived, came into transgression

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who did the action. Alternate translation: “but it was the woman who disobeyed God when the serpent deceived her” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### came into transgression

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the abstract noun **transgression** by stating the ideas behind it with a verbal phrase. Alternate translations: “began to sin” or “began to disobey God” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

## 1 Timothy 2:15

### But

Use a natural way in your language to indicate that this sentence provides a contrast to the previous sentence. (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.142)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.142)**)

### she will be saved

Here, **she** likely refers to Eve, mentioned in the preceding verse, and whom Paul describes as “the woman.” Later in the sentence, **they** refers to women in general. To show how Paul shifts the topic from Eve, a representative woman, to all women, the word **she** could be translated here as “women.”

### she will be saved through childbearing

This could mean: (1) people thought that women would be condemned because of Eve’s sin and punished even more than with the pain of childbearing (see Genesis 3:16), or they may have thought that a woman who believed in Jesus was no longer under the punishment that God gave in Genesis 3:16. Since the Greek word translated **through** can also mean “with” or “while,” Paul may be saying here that women continue to have the punishment of pain in childbirth but will be saved from additional punishment as long as they have faith in Jesus. Alternate translation: “God will save women, although they do have to endure childbirth” (2) the women of the church in Ephesus were being led away from faith in Jesus by the false teachers (see 2 Timothy 3:6), so Paul is recommending that they focus on raising their families rather than listening to (or participating in) the “foolish talk” (1:6). Alternate translation: “God will save women as they attend to their families” (3) a reference to the birth of Jesus as a human child to be the Savior. Alternate translation: “God will save women through Jesus, who was born as a child”

### through childbearing

If option number 2 from the previous note is correct, then Paul is figuratively referring to all of the aspects of motherhood by mentioning the beginning part of it: childbearing. Alternate translation: “as they attend to their families” (See: **Synecdoche (p.216)**) (See: **Synecdoche (p.216)**)

### she will be saved

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who did the action. Alternate translation: “God will save women” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### if they remain

Here, **they** refers to women. Paul switches from the singular to the plural as he switches from talking about Eve as the representative of women to women in general. Alternate translation: “if women continue living”

### in faith and love and holiness

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the abstract nouns **faith**, **love**, and **holiness** by stating the ideas behind them with verbs. Alternate translation: “trusting Jesus, loving others, and living in a holy way” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

## with self-control

Here, **with self-control** could mean: (1) with good judgment. (2) with modesty. (3) with clear thinking. (See: **Idiom (p.179)**) (See: **Idiom (p.179)**)

# 1 Timothy 3

## 1 Timothy 3 General Notes

### Structure and formatting

[3:16](#) was probably a song, poem, or creed the early church used to express what it understood to be the meaning of who Jesus was and what he did.

### Overseers and deacons

The church has used different titles for church leaders. Some titles include elder, pastor, and bishop. The word “overseer” reflects the Greek term in verses 1-2, which means literally an “over-seer.” The word “bishop” is derived directly from the letters of this Greek term. Paul writes about another kind of church leader, a “deacon,” in verses 8 and 12.

### Character qualities

This chapter lists several qualities that an overseer or deacon in the church must have. (See: **Abstract Nouns (p. 134)**)



## 1 Timothy 3:1

### This} word {is} trustworthy

As in 1:15, in this context the term **word** has a meaning more like “statement” or “message.” Alternate translation: “this statement is dependable”

### This} word {is} trustworthy

Paul uses this phrase to introduce a direct quotation. It may be helpful to your readers if you indicate this by setting off the words that follow in the rest of the verse with quotation marks or with whatever other punctuation or convention your language may use to indicate a quotation. (See: **Quote Markings (p.203)**) (See: **Quote Markings (p.203)**)

### an overseer

The term **overseer** describes a leader of the early Christian church whose work was to take care of the spiritual needs of believers and make sure that they received accurate biblical teaching. Alternate translation: “spiritual leader” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.220)**) (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.220)**)

### a noble work

Alternate translations: “an honorable task” or “an honorable role”

## 1 Timothy 3:2

### **a husband of one wife**

Here, **if one wife** means that he has only one wife, that is, he does not have any other wives or concubines. This also means that he does not commit adultery and may also mean that he has not divorced a previous wife.

Alternate translations: "a man who has only one woman" or "a man who is faithful to his wife"

### **must be & sober, self-controlled, orderly, hospitable**

Alternate translation: "He must ... not do anything to excess, he must be reasonable and behave well, and he must be welcoming to strangers"

## 1 Timothy 3:3

### **not a drunkard, not a brawler, but gentle, peaceful**

Alternate translation: "he must not drink alcohol to excess, and he must not fight and argue, but instead, he must be gentle and peaceful"

### **not money-loving**

If the expression **loving** money would not convey the idea of something inappropriate in your language, it might be helpful to use a term that expresses the idea of "greed." Alternate translation: "not greedy for money" (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

## 1 Timothy 3:4

### managing

Alternate translations: "he should lead" or "he should take care of"

### in obedience with all honor

This could mean: (1) the overseer's children should obey their father and show respect to him. Alternate translation: "who obey him completely respectfully" (2) the overseer's children should show respect to everyone. Alternate translation: "who obey him and show respect to everyone" or (3) the overseer should show respect to those in his household as he leads them. Alternate translation: "who obey him as he treats them with respect"

## 1 Timothy 3:5

**for if someone does not know {how} to manage {his} own household, how will he take care of {the} church of God**

Paul is making a statement, not actually asking a question. He does not expect Timothy to explain how a man who could not manage his own household could take care of God's church. Instead, Paul is using the question form to emphasize how important it is for an overseer to demonstrate faithfulness in his personal life before assuming a leadership role in the church. If it would be helpful in your language, you could translate these words as a statement. Alternate translation: "I say this because a man who is not able to manage his own household will certainly not be able to take care of the church of God" (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.206)**) (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.206)**)

**the} church of God**

Here the term **church** refers to a local group of God's people, not to a building. Alternate translations: "a group of God's people" or "a local gathering of believers" (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**)

# 1 Timothy 3:6

## not a new convert

Alternate translations: “he should not be still just learning the faith” or “he must be mature from a long, steady growth in the faith”

## being puffed up

Paul is warning that a new convert might become excessively proud if he were given an important leadership position right away. Alternate translation: “becoming proud of himself” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

## being puffed up

Paul describes being proud figuratively as if it made a person swell in size. Alternate translation: “thinking that he is better than others” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

## so that he may not fall, & into {the} judgment of the devil

Paul describes the experience of being condemned for having done wrong as like falling into a hole. Alternate translation: “and have God condemn him ... as he condemned the devil” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

## 1 Timothy 3:7

### the ones outside

Paul speaks of the church figuratively as though it were a place and unbelievers were physically outside of it. Alternate translation: “those who are not believers” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### he may not fall into disgrace

Paul speaks of disgrace figuratively as if it were a hole that a person could fall into. Alternate translation: “so that he does not do anything that would make him ashamed” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### a trap of the devil

Paul speaks of the devil tempting someone to sin as if it were a trap that could catch a person. Alternate translation: “so that the devil is not able to tempt him to sin” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

## 1 Timothy 3:8

### Likewise deacons

Alternate translation: “deacons, just like overseers”

### not double-talkers

Paul speaks figuratively about some people as if they could say two things at once. Alternate translation: “they should not say one thing but mean something else” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### not double-talkers

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea behind **not double-talkers** positively. Alternate translation: “be honest in what they say” (See: **Double Negatives (p.154)**) (See: **Double Negatives (p.154)**)



## 1 Timothy 3:9

### holding

Paul speaks of true teaching about God as if it were an object that a person could hold. Alternate translation: “they must continue to believe” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### the mystery

Paul uses the abstract noun **mystery** to refer to a truth that had existed for some time but that God was revealing at that moment. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea behind this term with a verb such as “reveal.” Alternate translation: “what God has now revealed” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

### the mystery of the faith

Here, **faith** refers to the content of the **mystery**, that is, the specific things that God has revealed and that followers of Jesus must believe. Alternate translation: “the teachings that God has revealed to us” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

### with a clean conscience

Paul speaks figuratively of a person’s sense of right and wrong being **clean**, which means that it assures that person that he has done nothing wrong. Alternate translation: “knowing that they are not doing anything wrong” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

## 1 Timothy 3:10

### let them also be tested first

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who would the action. Alternate translations: “the leaders should observe and approve of them first” or “they should first prove themselves” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

## 1 Timothy 3:11

### women

This could mean: (1) deacons' wives. (2) female deacons.

### must be} dignified

Alternate translations: "people who act properly" or "people who are worthy of respect"

### not slanderers

Alternate translation: "they must not say malicious things about other people"

### sober

See how you translated **sober** in [3:2](#). Alternate translation: "not doing anything to excess."

## 1 Timothy 3:12

### husbands of one wife

See how you translated this phrase in [3:2](#). Review the note there if that would be helpful. Alternate translations: “not married to more than one woman” or “faithful to their wives”

### managing {their} own children and households well

Alternate translation: “taking proper care of their children and their personal affairs”

## 1 Timothy 3:13

### For

Paul here uses the word **For** to introduce what the results will be if people with the qualifications he has just described are chosen as church leaders. Alternate translation: "After all" (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.149)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.149)**)

### the ones having served well

This phrase could refer either to deacons, whom Paul has just discussed, or to overseers as well, as a conclusion to Paul's entire discussion of church leaders. Alternate translations: "deacons who serve well" or "church leaders who serve well"

### a good standing

This could mean: (1) an honorable position. (2) a good reputation.

### and much confidence in {the} faith that {is} in Christ Jesus

This could mean: (1) they will speak more confidently to other people about believing in Jesus. (2) they will trust in Jesus with even more confidence.

## 1 Timothy 3:14

### in quickness

The expression **in quickness** describes Paul's haste and urgency. Alternate translation: "as soon as I can" (See: **Idiom (p.179)**) (See: **Idiom (p.179)**)

### to come

In some languages it is more natural to say "go" here, rather than **come**. Alternate translation: "to go" (See: **Go and Come (p.166)**) (See: **Go and Come (p.166)**)

## 1 Timothy 3:15

### but if I delay

This phrase does not imply that Paul might choose to take his time rather than hurrying. Alternate translations: “but in case I cannot get there soon” or “but if something prevents me from getting there soon”

### so that you may know how one ought to behave in {the} household of God

Paul speaks of the group of believers as a family because God adopts each believer as a son or daughter through Christ. This could refer to: (1) the believers in general. Alternate translation: “so that you all may know how to conduct yourselves as members of God’s family” (2) Timothy’s behavior in the church. Alternate translation: “so that you may know how to conduct yourself as a member of God’s family”

### the} household of God, which is {the} church of {the} living God

This phrase gives us further information about **the household of God**. It is not making a distinction between a household of God that is the church and one that is not the church. Alternate translation: “household of God, by which I mean the community of people who believe in the living God” (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.151)**) (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.151)**)

### a pillar and support of the truth

Paul speaks of the truth as if it were a building and of the community of believers as if they were helping to hold up that building. Alternate translation: “which helps to proclaim God’s truth” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### a pillar and support

The terms **pillar** and **support** mean basically the same thing. They are architectural features that hold up parts of buildings. Paul uses the terms together for emphasis. If it would be helpful in your language, you could combine them into an equivalent phrase. Alternate translation: “which helps promote” (See: **Doublet (p.157)**) (See: **Doublet (p.157)**)

### of {the} living God

Alternate translations: “the God who is genuinely alive” or “the true God” (See: **Idiom (p.179)**) (See: **Idiom (p.179)**)

## 1 Timothy 3:16

### great is the mystery of godliness

While in most of this letter Paul uses the term **godliness** to describe godly living, in this instance the term instead seems to describe the reverence for God that would lead a person to live a right life. Alternate translation: “the truth that God has revealed, that leads us to worship him, is great”

### great is the mystery of godliness

Since Paul follows this statement by quoting a hymn or poem about the life of Jesus, the implication is that he sees Jesus as having made it possible for people to worship God in the most genuine way. Alternate translation: “the truth that God has revealed about why we worship Jesus is great” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### Who was revealed in flesh, was justified in {the} Spirit, was seen by angels, was proclaimed among {the} nations, was believed in {the} world, was taken up in glory

This is most likely a song or poem that Paul is quoting. If your language has a way of indicating that this is poetry, such as through line-by-line formatting, you could use that here. (See: **Poetry (p.200)**) (See: **Poetry (p.200)**)

### Who was revealed in flesh

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form. (Be sure not to suggest in your translation that Jesus only seemed or appeared to be human.) Alternate translations: “he revealed himself as a human being” or “he came to earth as a human being” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### in flesh

Paul uses the term **flesh** figuratively here to mean “in a human body.” He is describing the human body by reference to something associated with it, the flesh that envelops it. Alternate translation: “as a true human being” (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**)

### was justified in {the} Spirit

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form. Alternate translation: “the Holy Spirit confirmed that he was who he said he was” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### was seen by angels

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form. Alternate translation: “the angels saw him” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)



## was proclaimed among {the} nations

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who did the action. Alternate translation: “people in many nations told others about him” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

## was believed in {the} world

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who did the action. Alternate translation: “people throughout the world believed in him” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

## was taken up in glory

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who did the action. Alternate translation: “God the Father took him up to heaven in glory” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

## was taken up in glory

The abstract noun **glory** refers to the way Jesus received power from God the Father and is worthy of honor. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea behind this term with an adjective such as “powerful” and a verb such as “admire.” Alternate translation: “God the Father took him up to heaven, making him powerful and making everyone admire him” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

# 1 Timothy 4

## 1 Timothy 4 General Notes

### Special concepts in this chapter

Paul speaks in 4:14 of prophecy. A “prophecy” is a message that God communicates to people through someone to whom He has given a special gift of hearing and conveying these messages. The specific prophecy that Paul describes revealed how Timothy would become a gifted leader of the church. (See: **prophet, prophecy, prophesy, seer, prophetess (p.230)**)

### Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

#### Cultural practices

In verse 14 Paul speaks of church leaders placing their hands on Timothy. That was one way of indicating publicly that a person was being placed in a leadership position in the church.

#### Variation in names

In this chapter Paul speaks of church leaders called “elders.” They seem to be the same kind of leaders that he calls “overseers” in chapter 3.

## 1 Timothy 4:1

### Now

Paul here uses the word **Now** to introduce background information that will help Timothy and the believers in Ephesus understand the next part of his letter. The false teachings that Timothy must oppose are something that the Spirit has already predicted. You can translate the term with the word or phrase in your language that is most similar in meaning and significance.

### in later times

This expression refers to the time period when God's purposes in history are approaching their culmination and so the evil opposition to them increases. Paul is probably referring to the time period between Jesus' resurrection and his second coming. Alternate translation: "in these days as God's purposes advance" (See: **Idiom (p.179)**) (See: **Idiom (p.179)**)

### some will leave the faith

Paul speaks of people ceasing to trust in Christ as if they were physically leaving a place. Alternate translation: "some people will stop trusting in Jesus" (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### some will leave the faith

Here, **faith** could refer to: (1) the teachings about Jesus. Alternate translation: "some people will stop believing the teachings about Jesus" (2) trust in Jesus. Alternate translation: "some people will stop trusting in Jesus" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

### attending

Alternate translations: "and turn their attention to" or "because they are paying attention to"

### to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons

These two phrases mean similar things. Paul may be using them together for emphasis. If you think having both phrases in your translation might be confusing for your readers, you could combine them into a single expression. Alternate translation: "the things that evil spirits say to trick people" (See: **Doublet (p.157)**) (See: **Doublet (p.157)**)

## 1 Timothy 4:2

### through {the} hypocrisy of liars

If it would be helpful in your language, you could start a separate sentence here. Alternate translation: "The people who teach these things are hypocrites, and they tell lies"

### their} own consciences having been seared

Paul is speaking figuratively of these people as if their sense of right and wrong had been ruined like skin that someone had burned with a hot iron. Alternate translation: "they will not have any sense of right and wrong any more" (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### their} own consciences having been seared

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form. Alternate translation: "they will be people who have destroyed their sense of right and wrong" (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

## 1 Timothy 4:3

### forbidding to marry

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could begin a new sentence here. Alternate translation: “these people teach that it is wrong to marry”

### forbidding to marry

The implication of this phrase is that these false teachers will forbid believers to **marry**. Alternate translation: “these people will forbid believers to marry” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### to abstain from foods

Here Paul leaves out some of the words that a sentence would ordinarily need in order to be complete. He does not mean that these false teachers will forbid believers to abstain from certain foods, but that the false teachers will require them to abstain from certain foods. In other words, the meaning of **forbidding** does not carry forward from the previous clause; rather, the meaning of “requiring” should be supplied. Alternate translation: “they will require believers to abstain from certain foods” (See: **Ellipsis (p.159)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.159)**)

### to abstain from foods

The implication of this phrase is that these false teachers will forbid only certain **foods** and that they will impose this restriction on believers. Alternate translation: “they will forbid believers to eat certain foods” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### by the faithful and {the ones} knowing the truth

These two expressions mean the same thing. Paul uses them together for emphasis. If it would be helpful in your language, you could combine these terms. Alternate translation: “by the genuine believers” (See: **Doublet (p.157)**) (See: **Doublet (p.157)**)

### by the faithful

Paul is using the adjective **faithful** as a noun to refer to a class of people that it describes. If it would be helpful in your language, you could translate it with a noun phrase. Alternate translation: “by people who believe in Jesus” (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.193)**) (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.193)**)

## 1 Timothy 4:4

### For

The word **For** communicates that what follows is the reason for what Paul just said. Use a natural way in your language to give a reason. Alternate translation: “that is true because” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.149)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.149)**)

### every creation of God {is} good

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea behind the phrase **every creation** behind the expression **creation of God** with a relative clause. Alternate translation: “everything that God created is good” (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.151)**) (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.151)**)

### nothing being received with thanksgiving {is} vile

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who would do the action. Alternate translation: “we are free to eat anything that we can thank God for” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

## 1 Timothy 4:5

### for

The word **for** communicates that what follows is the reason for the last part of what Paul has just said. In other words, it is the reason why “nothing being received with thanksgiving is vile.” Use a natural way in your language to give a reason. Alternate translation: “because” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.149)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.149)**)

### it is sanctified

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form. Alternate translations: “it becomes holy” or “it is suitable to eat” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### by {the} word of God

In this context, the term **word** has a specific meaning. It refers to the pronouncement that God made in his word that everything that he created was good. Alternate translation: “because of what God said about it” (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**)

### and prayer

In context, the implication is that this refers to prayers of thanksgiving to God for food. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could state that explicitly. Alternate translation: “and because of the thanks that people offer to God for it in prayer” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

## 1 Timothy 4:6

### Placing these {things} before the brothers

Paul speaks of his instructions as if they were objects that could be physically placed in front of the other believers. Alternate translation: “if you help the believers remember these things” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### these {things}

This refers to the teaching that began in [3:16](#).

### the brothers

Paul is using the term **brothers** in a generic sense that includes men and women. Alternate translation: “the brothers and sisters” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

### the brothers

The term **the brothers** figuratively means fellow believers in Jesus. Alternative translation: “your fellow believers” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### being nourished by the words of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state what is doing the action. Alternate translation: “the statements of what we believe, expressed in proper teaching, are causing you to trust more strongly in Christ” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### being nourished by the words of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed

Paul speaks of these statements and teachings as if they could physically feed Timothy and make him strong. Alternate translation: “the statements of what we believe, expressed in proper teaching, are causing you to trust more strongly in Christ” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### by the words of the faith and of the good teaching

Paul uses the term **words** figuratively to describe the statements of belief and the teachings that explain them, both expressed in words. Alternate translation: “the statements of what we believe, expressed in proper teaching” (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**)



## 1 Timothy 4:7

### the profane and old-womanish myths

See how you translated **myths** in 1:4 and **profane** in 1:9. Alternate translation: “foolish, made-up stories in which nothing is sacred”

### old-womanish myths

The term **old-womanish** is an idiom that means “silly” or “foolish.” Paul tells Timothy in 5:2 that he should respect older women as mothers, so Paul’s expression here should be recognized as idiomatic rather than disrespectful. Your language may have a similar expression. Alternate translation: “old wives’ tales” (See: **Idiom (p.179)**) (See: **Idiom (p.179)**)

### train yourself for godliness

Paul tells Timothy figuratively to work to develop godly character as if he were an athlete improving his physical conditioning. Alternate translation: “diligently practice acting in ways that please God” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

## 1 Timothy 4:8

### **for**

What follows after the word **for** is a direct quotation of a saying that Paul uses for teaching. It may be helpful to your readers if you indicate this by setting off the words that follow in the rest of the verse with quotation marks or with whatever other punctuation or convention your language may use to indicate a quotation. (See: **Quote Markings (p.203)**) (See: **Quote Markings (p.203)**)

### **bodily training**

Alternate translation: "physical exercise"

### **is valuable for a little**

This could mean: (1) it has some small value. (2) it has value for a little while. (3) it does not have very much value.

### **having promise**

Alternate translation: "will bring benefits"

## 1 Timothy 4:9

### **That} word {is} trustworthy**

As in [1:15](#) and [3:1](#), in this context, the term **word** means “statement” or “saying.” (Paul is referring to the entire saying that he quoted in the previous verse.) Alternate translation: “this statement is dependable”

### **and worthy of all acceptance**

See how you translated this phrase in [1:15](#). Alternate translations: “and we should believe it without any doubt” or “and we should have full confidence in it”

## 1 Timothy 4:10

### for unto this

The term **this** refers to “godliness,” which Paul mentions in the previous two verses. Paul is giving a reason why Timothy should believe the saying about the value of godliness. He and his other fellow workers are striving very hard to become godly, so it must be valuable. Alternate translation: “after all, it is for godliness that” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.149)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.149)**)

### we toil and struggle

The terms **toil** and **struggle** mean basically the same thing. Paul uses them together to emphasize the intensity with which he and his fellow workers are serving God. If it would be helpful in your language, you could combine these terms. Alternate translation: “we work so hard” (See: **Doublet (p.157)**) (See: **Doublet (p.157)**)

### we toil and struggle

This could be the one place where **we** does not include the addressee. Paul has just told Timothy to make godliness his priority rather than physical exercise, and he may be offering himself and his other fellow workers as an example of that for Timothy to follow. So if your language makes that distinction, you may wish to use the exclusive form in this phrase. However, **we** in the next phrase would include Timothy, since Paul is encouraging Timothy to join him and his fellow workers in making godliness his priority as someone who, like them, has hoped in the living God. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.161)**) (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.161)**)

### the} living God

See how you translated this phrase in 3:15. Alternate translations: “the God who is genuinely alive” or “the true God” (See: **Idiom (p.179)**) (See: **Idiom (p.179)**)

### of all men

Paul uses the term **men** here in a generic sense that includes both men and women. Alternate translation: “of all people” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

## **1 Timothy 4:11**

(There are no notes for this verse.)

## 1 Timothy 4:12

### Let no one despise your youth

The term **despise** here does not mean “hate,” but “think little of” or “scorn.” Alternate translation: “Do not let anyone disrespect you just because you are young”

### in word

In this context, the term **word** means “what you say.” Alternate translation: “in your speech”

## 1 Timothy 4:13

### attend to the reading, to the exhortation, to the teaching

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could state explicitly what Timothy is to read and to whom, and whom he is to exhort and teach. Alternate translation: “continue reading the Scriptures to the people in the church there, exhorting them, and teaching them” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### attend to the reading, to the exhortation, to the teaching

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the abstract nouns **reading**, **exhortation**, and **teaching** by translating them with verbal phrases. Alternate translation: “continue reading the Scriptures to the people in your meeting there, exhorting them, and teaching them” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

## 1 Timothy 4:14

### Do not neglect

You can translate this phrase in a positive way if that is more natural for your language. Alternate translations: “continue to use” or “make sure you develop” (See: **Double Negatives (p.154)**) (See: **Double Negatives (p.154)**)

### Do not neglect the gift in you

Paul speaks of Timothy as if he were a container that could hold God’s **gift**. Alternate translation: “do not neglect the ability that God has given you” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### Do not neglect the gift in you

The implication is that this **gift** is the ability that God has given Timothy for ministry. Alternate translation: “do not neglect the ability that God has given you” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### which was given to you through prophecy

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who did the action. Alternate translation: “which you received when leaders of the church prophesied about you” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### the} imposition of the hands of the

Paul is speaking of a ceremony during which the church leaders put their **hands** on Timothy and prayed that God would enable him to do the work he had commanded him to do. Alternate translation: “when the elders all laid their hands on you” (See: **Symbolic Action (p.214)**) (See: **Symbolic Action (p.214)**)



## 1 Timothy 4:15

### these {things

If it is helpful in your language, you may want to make explicit what **these things** are. Alternate translation: “these things that I am telling you” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### be in them

Paul is speaking figuratively as if Timothy could physically be inside the instructions he has just given him. Alternate translation: “and follow them consistently” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### your progress

If it is helpful in your language, you may want to make explicit in what way Timothy is to make **progress**. Alternate translation: “your increasing ability to live the way that Jesus wants you to live” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

## **1 Timothy 4:16**

### **Pay attention to yourself and to the teaching**

Alternate translation: "Pay attention to how you live and to what you teach"

### **Continue in these {things**

Alternate translation: "continue to do these things"

### **you will save both yourself and your listeners**

This could mean: (1) Timothy will save himself and those who hear him from God's judgment (2) Timothy will protect himself and those who hear him from the influence of false teachers. Perhaps Paul means both things since, if Timothy can persuade the people of the church in Ephesus not to listen to the false teachers, then he will also spare them from God's judgment for the wrong things they would have done if they had listened to those teachers. Alternate translation: "you will keep both yourself and your listeners from believing and doing the wrong things"

# 1 Timothy 5

## 1 Timothy 5 General Notes

### Special concepts in this chapter

#### Honor and respect

Paul encourages younger Christians to honor and respect older Christians. Cultures honor and respect older people in different ways.

#### Widows

In the ancient Near East, it was important to care for widows because they could not provide for themselves.

#### Variation in names

In this chapter, as in chapter 4, Paul speaks of church leaders called “elders.” Here, as well, they seem to be the same kind of leaders that he calls “overseers” in chapter 3.

## 1 Timothy 5:1

### General Information:

### General Information:

Paul was giving these commands to one person, Timothy. Languages that have different forms of “you” or different forms for commands would use the singular form here. (See: **Forms of You (p.163)**) (See: **Forms of You (p.163)**)

### Do not rebuke an older man

Alternate translation: “do not reprimand an older man”

### but exhort {him

Alternate translation: “instead, encourage him”

### as a father, younger men as brothers

Paul uses these two similes to tell Timothy that he should treat fellow believers with the same sincere love and respect that he would show to family members. Alternate translation: “as if he were your own father, and encourage younger men as if they were your own brothers” (See: **Simile (p.209)**) (See: **Simile (p.209)**)

## 1 Timothy 5:2

### as mothers, younger women as sisters

Paul uses these two similes to tell Timothy that he should treat fellow believers with sincere love and respect, just as he would treat family members. Alternate translation: “encourage each of them as if they were your own mother, and encourage younger women as if they were your own sisters” (See: **Simile (p.209)**) (See: **Simile (p.209)**)

### in all purity

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract noun **purity** by translating it with an adjective such as “pure.” Alternate translation: “making sure that your thoughts and actions are pure” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

## 1 Timothy 5:3

### Honor widows

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “provide for widows” (See: **Idiom (p.179)**) (See: **Idiom (p.179)**)

### real widows

Alternate translation: “widows who have no one else to provide for them”

## 1 Timothy 5:4

### children or grandchildren

Here these **children** and **grandchildren** are adults who are able to care for others, not young children.

### first

This could mean one of two things, or possibly both: (1) of all of their religious duties, taking care of their family is the most important one and the one that they should learn to do before anything else. Alternate translation: “as the most basic part of belonging to God’s people” (2) these children and grandchildren should be the first ones to take care of their family members, before the rest of the congregation. Alternate translation: “before the church offers any support”

### let them learn to honor

Here, **learn** means to practice, that is, to learn by doing. Alternate translation: “let them become proficient in honoring”

### let them learn to honor {their} own household and to make repayment to {their} forebears

These two phrases may: (1) mean similar things and you could combine them if that would be helpful to your readers. If **honor** is an idiom for “provide” here, as in the previous verse, then Paul may be using repetition for emphasis. Alternate translation: “let them provide the support that their widowed mother or grandmother needs and deserves” (2) have a slight difference in meaning, and you could also choose to bring that out in your translation. Paul may actually be giving two reasons why people should support their widowed mothers or grandmothers. Alternate translation: “this is a respectful thing to do for widowed family members, and it will repay them for supporting their children and grandchildren as they were growing up” (See: **Parallelism (p.195)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.195)**)

### {their} own household

Paul uses this phrase figuratively to refer to family members, by association to the way they live in the same house. Alternate translations: “their own family members” or “those living in their homes” (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**)

### to make repayment to {their} forebears

Alternate translation: “let them do good to their mother or grandmother in return for the good things their parents and grandparents gave them”

### for

Paul uses the term **for** to introduce an additional reason why family members should support their widowed mothers or grandmothers. Alternate translation: “also” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.149)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.149)**)

## this is pleasing before God

Paul uses the expression **before God**, which means "in front of God," to mean "where God can see." Alternate translations: "this is pleasing in God's view" or "this pleases God" (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)



## 1 Timothy 5:5

### the genuine and left-alone widow

The two words **genuine** and **left-alone** work together to describe one condition, and they may be combined if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: “a widow who is genuinely alone” Or it may be that **left-alone** further defines **genuine**. Alternate translation: “a real widow, that is, one who has no family” (See: **Hendiadys (p.168)**) (See: **Hendiadys (p.168)**)

### the & widow

Here, **the ... widow** does not refer to any specific widow, but to all widows who meet this description. Alternate translations: “any ... widow” or “all ... widows”

### continues in requests and prayers

Paul leaves a verb unexpressed here that your language might need to express. Alternate translations: “continues in making requests and prayers” or “continues to make requests and to offer prayers” (See: **Ellipsis (p.159)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.159)**)

### in requests and prayers

The phrase **requests and prayers** expresses a single idea by using two words connected with **and**. The word **requests** tells what kind of **prayers** Paul is talking about here. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this phrase by stating the meaning with an equivalent phrase. Alternate translations: “making requests to God in prayer” or “praying to God for what she needs” (See: **Hendiadys (p.168)**). (See: **Hendiadys (p.168)**)

### night and day

The words **night** and **day** are used together to mean that she prays to God often, no matter what time it is. It does not mean that she prays all night and all day without ever stopping. Alternate translation: “at all times” (See: **Merism (p.183)**) (See: **Merism (p.183)**)

## 1 Timothy 5:6

### living, has died

Paul speaks figuratively about people who do not seek to please God as if they were dead. Alternate translation: “has died in her spirit, even though she is still alive physically” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

## 1 Timothy 5:7

### Also command these {things}, so that they may be irreproachable

This statement seems to refer back to [4:11](#), “Command and teach these things,” which Paul tells Timothy after telling him in [4:6](#) to “place these things before the brothers.” So **they** seems to refer to all the believers in this situation, including the widows, their families, and the local church that is supposed to organize the list of widows and make sure that the widows are cared for well. Alternate translation: “also give these instructions to the believers, so that no one will be able to accuse them of doing anything wrong”

## 1 Timothy 5:8

### someone does not provide for his own, and especially for household members

Here, **his own** is an idiom that means “his own relatives.” Alternate translation: “a person does not help with his relatives’ needs, and especially those of the family members living in his home” (See: **Idiom (p.179)**) (See: **Idiom (p.179)**)

### he has denied the faith

Here, **the faith** refers to believing in Jesus and obeying him. Paul explains that this action would be equivalent to denying all of this. Alternate translations: “by doing that, he denies that he belongs to Jesus” or “he has shown that he does not follow the Messiah” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

### is worse than an unbeliever

The implication is that this person is **worse than an unbeliever** because even unbelievers take care of their own relatives. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could state that explicitly. Alternate translation: “is worse than those who do not believe in Jesus, because they do take care of their relatives” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

## 1 Timothy 5:9

### Let a widow be enrolled

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who would do the action. Alternate translation: “have the church put a widow on the register” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### Let a widow be enrolled

There seems to have been a list of widows who had no family to help them. The church members met these women's needs for food, clothing, and shelter, and these women then devoted their lives to serving the Christian community. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state this phrase explicitly. Alternate translation: “have the church put a woman on the list of widows who truly need help” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### being not less than 60 years old

Paul is using the figure of speech **not less than** here that expresses a positive meaning by using a negative word together with a word that is the opposite of the intended meaning. Alternate translation: “if she is at least sixty years old” (See: **Litotes (p.181)**) (See: **Litotes (p.181)**)

### a wife of one husband

Like the similar expression in [3:2](#), this could mean: (1) she has only one husband. Alternate translation: “she was always faithful to her husband” (2) she was only married once. If it means this second possibility, it is not clear whether Paul means to exclude women who were married more than once and widowed each time, or more specifically women who divorced their husbands and married other men. Alternate translation: “she had one husband” (See: **Idiom (p.179)**) (See: **Idiom (p.179)**)

## 1 Timothy 5:10

### attested in good works

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who did the action. Alternate translation: “people must be able to attest to her good deeds” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### she has received strangers

Alternate translations: “has welcomed strangers into her home” or “practiced hospitality”

### she has washed {the} feet of {the} saints

In this culture, people walked barefoot or in sandals on roads that were dusty or muddy, so washing their feet once they entered a home was a way of helping them be comfortable and clean. If the people of your culture would not be familiar with this practice, you could use a general expression instead. Alternate translation: “has cared for believers who visited her” (See: **Symbolic Action (p.214)**) (See: **Symbolic Action (p.214)**)

### she has washed {the} feet of {the} saints

Paul may be using one type of humble service figuratively to represent humble service in general. Alternate translation: “has done humble things to help other believers” (See: **Synecdoche (p.216)**) (See: **Synecdoche (p.216)**)

### of {the} saints

The term **saints** refers to believers in Jesus as people who are “holy” or “set apart” for God. Alternate translations: “the believers” or “God’s holy people” (See: **Idiom (p.179)**) (See: **Idiom (p.179)**)

### she has relieved {the} afflicted

Paul is using the adjective **afflicted** as a noun to refer to a class of people that it describes. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this term by translating it with a noun phrase. Alternate translation: “has helped people who were suffering” (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.193)**) (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.193)**)

### she has pursued every good work

Paul uses the word **every** here as a generalization for emphasis. Alternate translation: “she has done many good deeds” (See: **Hyperbole (p.175)**) (See: **Hyperbole (p.175)**)

## 1 Timothy 5:11

### But refuse younger widows

Alternate translation: "But do not add the names of widows who are younger than 60 years old to the list of widows"

### when they become wanton against Christ

The implication of this phrase is that when a widow accepted a place on the register, she promised to remain unmarried and devote herself to serving other believers. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could indicate this explicitly. Alternate translation: "when they feel bodily desires that are contrary to their pledge of chastity" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

## 1 Timothy 5:12

### having judgment

Alternate translation: "and so they incur God's judgment"

### they have broken {their} first pledge

The term **pledge** here refers to a commitment that the widows made, as the last note to [5:11](#) explains, that they would serve the Christian community for the rest of their lives and not remarry if the community would supply their needs. Alternate translations: "they have not kept their prior commitment" or "they have not done what they had previously promised to do"



## 1 Timothy 5:13

### they also learn to be lazy

Alternate translation: “they also get into the habit of doing nothing”

### lazy

Paul is using the adjective **lazy** as a noun to refer to a class of people that it describes. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this term by translating it with a noun phrase. Alternate translation: “people who are lazy” (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.193)**) (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.193)**)

### wandering about the houses

Alternate translation: “going from house to house”

### babblers and busybodies, saying what they should not

These three phrases may be ways of speaking about the same activity. Paul may be using repetition to emphasize that these women should not be looking into the private lives of people and telling about them to others who would be no better off after hearing this gossip. If you think it would be helpful to your readers, you could combine these phrases into a single one. Alternate translation: “people who interfere openly in other people’s business” (See: **Doublet (p.157)**) (A doublet can consist of more than two terms.) (See: **Doublet (p.157)**)

### babblers

Alternate translation: “people who talk nonsense”

## 1 Timothy 5:14

### to the one opposing

This expression could refer by implication to: (1) This could refer to: (1) Satan. This is the reading of UST. Alternate translation: "the devil" (2) unbelievers who are opposing the followers of Jesus. Alternate translation: "unbelievers who are opposing you"

## 1 Timothy 5:15

### have turned aside after Satan

Paul speaks of living in faithfulness to Christ as if it were a path that one can either follow or turn aside from. He means that some younger widows have stopped obeying Jesus and have started to do what Satan would want them to do instead. Alternate translation: “have stopped living in obedience to Jesus and have decided to obey Satan” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

## 1 Timothy 5:16

### has widows

The implication is that she **has widows** within her extended family. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could state that explicitly. Alternate translation: “has relatives who are widows” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### and let the church not be weighed down

Paul speaks figuratively of the community having to help more people than it is able to help as if it were carrying too much weight on its back. Alternate translations: “so that the church will not have more work than it can do” or “so that the Christian community will not have to support widows whose families could provide for them” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### and let the church not be weighed down

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form. Alternate translations: “so that the church will not have more work than it can do” or “so that the Christian community will not have to support widows whose families could provide for them” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### genuine widows

Alternate translation: “widows who have no one else to provide for them”

## 1 Timothy 5:17

### The elders having ruled well, let {them} be considered worthy

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who would do the action. Alternate translation: "All believers should consider elders who are good leaders to be deserving" (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### of double honor

Here, **double honor** could mean: (1) the congregation should honor the elders in two ways. Alternate translation: "of both respect and payment for their work" (2) they should honor them twice as much as others. Since Paul quotes two Scriptures in the next verse that support the idea of church leaders being paid for their work, the first possibility is more likely. Alternate translation: "of more respect than others receive" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

### in {the} word and teaching

This phrase may be expressing a single idea by using two phrases (which are actually just two words in Greek) connected with **and**. The phrase **in the word** would be identifying the content of the **teaching**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this connection by stating the meaning with an equivalent phrase. Alternate translation: "at teaching from the Scriptures" (See: **Hendiadys (p.168)**) (See: **Hendiadys (p.168)**)

### the} word

Paul may be using the term **word** here figuratively to describe the Scriptures, which God inspired people to put into words. Alternate translation: "the Scriptures" (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**)

## 1 Timothy 5:18

### For the Scripture says

Paul figuratively describes Scripture as if it could speak for itself. Alternate translations: “for it is written in the Scriptures” or “for we read in the Scriptures that” (See: **Personification (p.198)**) (See: **Personification (p.198)**)

### You will not muzzle a threshing ox

Here the Scriptures use a statement in order to give a command. Alternate translation: “you must not muzzle an ox while it is treading on grain” (See: **Statements — Other Uses (p.212)**) (See: **Statements — Other Uses (p.212)**)

### You will not muzzle a threshing ox

Paul is quoting this passage figuratively. He is using it to indicate that, just as God wanted oxen to be able to eat some of the grain that they were working to separate from its husks, so church leaders deserve to receive payment from the Christian community that they are serving. (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### You will not muzzle

A **muzzle** is a sleeve that goes over an animal's snout to prevent it from opening its jaws and eating while it is doing work. If your readers would not be familiar with this object, you could use a more general expression instead. Alternate translations: “Do not keep an ox's mouth shut” or “You must not prevent an ox from eating” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.220)**) (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.220)**)

### a threshing ox

An **ox** in this culture would “thresh” grain by walking on it or pulling a heavy object over it to separate the grain from the husks. Alternate translation: “an ox that is separating grain from husks” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.220)**) (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.220)**)

### The worker {is} worthy of his wages

Alternate translations: “a worker has a right to be paid” or “a worker should receive his wages”

## 1 Timothy 5:19

### do not receive an accusation, except if

If, in your language, it would appear that Paul was making a statement and then contradicting it, you could reword this statement to avoid using an exception clause. Alternate translation: “only believe that an accusation is true if” (See: **Connect — Exception Clauses (p.144)**) (See: **Connect — Exception Clauses (p.144)**)

### on two or three witnesses

Here, **on** stands for the concept of “relying on.” You may need to use a more complete phrase in your language. Alternate translations: “you are relying on the testimony of two or three people” or “at least two people give evidence for it” (See: **Ellipsis (p.159)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.159)**)

### two or three

Alternate translations: “at least two” or “two or more”

## 1 Timothy 5:20

### before all

Paul uses the expression **before** to mean “in front of.” Alternate translations: “where everyone can see” or “in public” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### so that the rest also may have fear

If it would be helpful to your readers, you could state what, by implication, people will be afraid of doing. Alternate translation: “so that other people will be afraid to sin themselves” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### may have fear

This is an idiom. Alternate translation: “will be afraid” (See: **Idiom (p.179)**) (See: **Idiom (p.179)**)



## 1 Timothy 5:21

### I adjure you, before God and Christ Jesus and the chosen angels

By calling on **God and Christ Jesus and the chosen angels** as witnesses to what Paul is saying, Paul is making Timothy responsible to God to do what he says. If this is not clear, then put this into the form that your language uses for an oath. Alternate translation: “as God and Christ Jesus and the chosen angels are my witnesses, I put you under oath”

### before God and Christ Jesus

Paul uses the expression **before**, meaning “in front of,” to indicate “where they can see.” Seeing, in turn, figuratively means attention and judgment. Alternate translation: “as God and Christ Jesus and the chosen angels are watching” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### the chosen angels

This phrase refers to the **angels** whom God has **chosen** to serve him in a special way. Alternate translation: “the angels who are God’s special servants” (See: **Idiom (p.179)**) (See: **Idiom (p.179)**)

### you keep these {things}

Alternate translation: “you follow these instructions”

### these {things}

Grammatically, this could refer either to the instructions Paul has just given Timothy about elders or to the instructions he is about to give Timothy regarding his own personal conduct. But since Paul tells Timothy to follow these instructions without favoring one person over another, it is most likely that this refers to the instructions about elders. Alternate translation: “these things that I have just told you”

### without partiality, doing nothing according to favoritism

The terms **partiality** and **favoritism** mean similar things. Paul may be using repetition to emphasize that Timothy must judge honestly and be fair to everyone. If it would be helpful in your language, you could combine these terms. Alternate translation: “being completely fair to everyone” (See: **Doublet (p.157)**) (See: **Doublet (p.157)**)

## 1 Timothy 5:22

### Place hands hastily on no one

The **placing of hands** was a ceremony in which one or more church leaders would put their hands on people and pray that God would enable them to serve the church in a way that would please God. Timothy was to wait until a person had shown good character for a long time before officially and publicly setting that person apart in this way to serve the Christian community. Alternate translation: “wait until a person has consistently demonstrated good character before appointing that person to church leadership” (See: **Symbolic Action (p.214)**) (See: **Symbolic Action (p.214)**)

### Place hands hastily on no one

Paul is using a figure of speech here that expresses a positive meaning by using a negative word together with a word that is the opposite of the intended meaning. Alternate translation: “wait until a person has consistently demonstrated good character before appointing that person to church leadership” (See: **Litotes (p.181)**) (See: **Litotes (p.181)**)

### nor share in {the} sins of others

The implication in context may be that if Timothy appoints a person to leadership before they are ready or without ensuring that their character is exemplary, then Timothy will bear some responsibility for that person’s ultimate failure as a leader, or he will appear to have approved of the person’s sins, once they are uncovered. Alternate translation: “so that you do not become responsible for the moral and leadership failures of others” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

## 1 Timothy 5:23

### use a little wine

Paul is telling Timothy to use wine specifically as medicine. The water in that area was impure and often caused sickness. Alternate translation: “in addition, you should drink some wine from time to time as medicine” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

## 1 Timothy 5:24

### of some men

Paul uses the term **men** here in a generic sense that includes both men and women. Alternate translation: “of some people” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

### are evident, going ahead into judgment

Paul speaks of sins as if they could move on their own ahead of a person to the place where that person will be judged for committing them. Here, **judgment** could refer to: (1) the judgment when the sinner stands before God on the last day. Alternate translation: “are so obvious that everyone knows they are guilty long before God declares them guilty” (2) judgment before the church. Alternate translation: “are clear to everyone, even before the church leaders confront them” (See: **Personification (p.198)**) (See: **Personification (p.198)**)

### but also they follow after some

Paul speaks once again of sins as if they could move on their own. As in the previous clause, this could refer to: (1) judgment by God. Alternate translation: “but the sins of other people do not become evident until God judges them” (2) judgment by the church. Alternate translation: “but the sins of some people remain hidden for a long time” This latter alternative also allows the possibility that Paul is referring to judgment by God. (See: **Personification (p.198)**) (See: **Personification (p.198)**)

## 1 Timothy 5:25

### the good works {are} also evident

Implicitly, here Paul does not mean all good works, since in the rest of the sentence he speaks of some good works that are not evident. Alternate translation: “most good works are also obvious” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### the good works

The implication of **good works** is that these works are considered **good** because they are consistent with God’s character, purposes, and will. Alternate translation: “actions that God approves” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### and the ones having otherwise are not able to be hidden

Paul speaks of good works as if they were objects that someone could hide. Alternate translation: “and people will find out later about even those good deeds that are not obvious” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### and the ones having otherwise are not able to be hidden

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who will do the action. Alternate translation: “and people who secretly do good works will not be able to hide them forever” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### are not able to be hidden

If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the double-negative **not ... hidden** in a positive way. Alternate translation: “people will learn about later” (See: **Double Negatives (p.154)**) (See: **Double Negatives (p.154)**)

## **1 Timothy 6**

### **1 Timothy 6 General Notes**

### **Special concepts in this chapter**

#### **Slavery**

In this chapter Paul teaches slaves about honoring, respecting, and diligently serving their masters. This does not mean that he is endorsing slavery as a good thing or as something that God approves of. Instead, Paul is encouraging believers to be godly and content in every situation that they are in. This does not mean that they cannot also work to change those situations.

## 1 Timothy 6:1

### As many slaves as are under a yoke

Paul speaks of people who work as **slaves** as though they were oxen plowing or pulling with a **yoke** around their necks. Alternate translation: “concerning people who are working as slaves” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### As many slaves as are

The implication in context is that Paul is speaking about believers who are slaves. Alternate translation: “All the believers who are working as slaves” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### so that the name of God and the teaching may not be blasphemed

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who would do the action. Alternate translation: “so that unbelievers will not insult God’s character or what we believe and teach” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### so that the name of God and the teaching may not be blasphemed

If it would be helpful in your language, you could state this negative phrase in a positive way. Alternate translation: “so that unbelievers will always speak respectfully about God’s character and about the things that we teach”

### the name of God

Here, **name** is a figurative way of referring to the fame or reputation of a person. Alternate translations: “God’s character” or “God’s reputation” (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**)

### the teaching

Implicitly Paul means **the teaching** about Jesus and about how his followers should live. Alternate translation: “our teaching about how believers should live” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

## 1 Timothy 6:2

### they are brothers

Here, **brothers** figuratively means fellow believers in Jesus, whether male or female. Alternate translation: “they are fellow believers” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

### and beloved

This could have either, or both, meanings: (1) God loves these people. Alternate translation: “whom God loves” (2) other believers love these people. Alternate translation: “and so their believing slaves should love them”



## 1 Timothy 6:3

### to {the} healthy words

See how you translated the term **healthy** in [1:10](#). Here, as well, it is a figurative way to say that the teaching is good and reliable in every way and has no defect or corruption. A person with a healthy mind would recognize this teaching as correct. Alternate translations: “to the correct words” or “to the true expression of our faith” (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**)

### to {the} healthy words

Paul uses the term **words** figuratively to describe the verbal expression of what followers of Jesus genuinely believe. Alternate translation: “the true expression of our faith” (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**)

### the ones of our Lord Jesus Christ

This could refer to: (1) the message about the Lord Jesus. (2) words spoken by the Lord Jesus.

## 1 Timothy 6:4

### he is puffed up

Paul speaks figuratively of a person who is excessively proud as if they were inflated with air. See how you translated this phrase in 3:6. Alternate translation: “that person is excessively proud” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### he is puffed up

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the phrase **puffed up** with an active form. Alternate translation: “that person is excessively proud” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### he is puffed up

Here, **he** refers to anyone in general who teaches what is not correct. Alternate translation: “that person is excessively proud” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

### understanding nothing

Paul uses the term **nothing** here as a generalization for emphasis. It is specifically God’s true message that the person does not understand. Alternate translation: “he understands nothing about God’s truth” (See: **Hyperbole (p.175)**) (See: **Hyperbole (p.175)**)

### being sick about controversies

Paul speaks of people who feel compelled to engage in useless arguments as if they were ill. Such people greatly desire to argue, and they do not really want to find a way to agree. Alternate translation: “morbidly craves arguments” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### controversies and word-battles

These two terms mean basically the same thing, although the second term refers more specifically to arguments about the meaning of words. Paul uses these terms together for emphasis. If these are not separate ideas in your language, you could combine them. Alternate translation: “arguments” (See: **Doublet (p.157)**) (See: **Doublet (p.157)**)

### word-battles

Alternate translation: “fights about the meaning of words”

### blasphemies

While the term **blasphemies** often refers to untrue or disrespectful things that people say about God, in this context it refers to people falsely saying bad things about each other. Alternate translation: “insults”

## **evil suspicions**

Alternate translation: “people thinking incorrectly that others want to harm them”

## 1 Timothy 6:5

### friction

Here, **friction** is the last item in the list that began in the previous verse, a litany of bad things that result from “controversies and word-battles.” This is a metaphor. It compares two results: the heat and damage which occur when two objects rub together and the irritation and anger that can occur when people interact badly. Alternate translation: “and constant conflict” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### between men having been corrupted {as to} the mind and having been deprived of the truth

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form. Alternate translation: “between people whose minds are corrupt and who no longer believe the truth” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### between men having been corrupted {as to} the mind and having been deprived of the truth

These two phrases mean basically the same thing; Paul uses the repetition for emphasis. If it would be helpful in your language, you could combine these phrases. Alternate translation: “people who are no longer able to recognize the truth” (See: **Parallelism (p.195)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.195)**)

### between men

Paul uses the term **men** here in a generic sense that includes both men and women. Alternate translation: “between people” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

## 1 Timothy 6:6

### But

Paul uses the word **But** to introduce a contrast between what the false teachers believe about godliness and what is really true about godliness. Alternate translation: “instead” (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.142)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.142)**)

### godliness with contentment

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the abstract nouns **godliness** and **contentment** by stating the ideas behind them with verbal phrases. Alternate translation: “doing what is godly along with being content with what a person has” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

### is great gain

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract noun **gain** behind it with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: “makes a person very well off” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

## 1 Timothy 6:7

### For

Paul uses the word **For** to introduce the reason for what he said in the previous sentence. Alternate translation: “after all” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.149)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.149)**)

### we brought nothing into the world

The implication of this phrase is that Paul is speaking about when a person is born. Alternate translation: “brought nothing into the world when we were born” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### so that

Here Paul leaves out some of the words that a sentence would ordinarily need in order to be complete. Alternate translation: “and so it is also clear that” (See: **Ellipsis (p.159)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.159)**)

### neither are we able to take anything out

The implication of this phrase is that Paul is speaking about when a person dies. Alternate translation: “we can take nothing out of the world when we die” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

## 1 Timothy 6:8

### we will be satisfied

Here Paul uses a statement in order to express a moral imperative. Alternate translation: “that should be enough for us” (See: **Statements — Other Uses (p.212)**) (See: **Statements — Other Uses (p.212)**)

### we will be satisfied

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form. Alternate translation: “that should be enough for us” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

## 1 Timothy 6:9

### Now

Paul uses the word **Now** to indicate that he is returning to the topic of those who think being godly will make them wealthy. You can translate the term with the word or phrase in your language that is most similar in meaning and significance. (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.142)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.142)**)

### fall into temptation and a trap

Paul speaks figuratively about those who let the **temptation** of money cause them to sin as if they were animals that **fall into** a hole that a hunter is using as **a trap**. Alternate translation: “will encounter more temptation than they can resist” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### and many foolish and harmful desires

This phrase continues the figure of speech from the previous phrase. Paul speaks about these desires as if they were a hole that a hunter was using as a trap. Alternate translation: “and will experience destructive impulses than they cannot overcome” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### foolish and harmful desires

Here Paul expresses a single idea by using two words connected with **and**. The word **foolish** tells why these desires are **harmful**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this connection by stating the meaning with an equivalent phrase. Alternate translation: “destructive impulses” (See: **Hendiadys (p.168)**) (See: **Hendiadys (p.168)**)

### whatever plunges men into ruin and destruction

This phrase summarizes the character of the temptations and impulses that Paul has just described. He speaks of them figuratively as if they could make people drown in deep water. Alternate translation: “people cannot escape from such things and they destroy them” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### men

Paul uses the term **men** here in a generic sense that includes both men and women. Alternate translation: “people” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

### ruin and destruction

These two words **ruin** and **destruction** mean very similar things. Paul uses them both to emphasize that this is very bad. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use one term with a word that adds emphasis. Alternate translations: “complete destruction” or “total ruin” (See: **Doublet (p.157)**) (See: **Doublet (p.157)**)



## 1 Timothy 6:10

### For

Paul uses the word **For** to introduce the reasons for what the previous sentence stated. Alternate translation: “this is because” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.149)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.149)**)

### a root of all the evils is the love of money

Paul speaks figuratively of evil as if it were a plant, and of **the love of money** as if it were the **root** from which that plant grew. Alternate translation: “loving money leads a person to do all kinds of wrong things” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### of all the evils

Paul uses the term **all** here as a generalization for emphasis. Alternate translation: “of many kinds of wrong things” (See: **Hyperbole (p.175)**) (See: **Hyperbole (p.175)**)

### which, some desiring

The reference here is to people **desiring** money, not evil. You could start a new sentence here if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: “people who want to become rich”

### have been led away from the faith

Paul speaks figuratively of the desire for money as if it were an evil guide that intentionally leads people down the wrong path. Alternate translation: “have stopped believing in Jesus because of their desire for money” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### which, some desiring, have been led away from the faith

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form. Alternate translations: “which has led some people away from believing in Jesus” or “this love for money has led some people to stop following Jesus” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### have pierced themselves with many sorrows

Paul speaks about grief as if it were a sword that people use to stab themselves. Alternate translation: “have experienced great sorrows in their lives” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

## 1 Timothy 6:11

### O man of God

Alternate translations: “you servant of God” or “you person who belongs to God”

### flee these {things}

Paul speaks of these temptations and sins as if they were things a person could physically run away from. Alternate translation: “make sure that you do not do these things” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### these {things}

This phrase could refer to: (1) everything Paul has been talking about in this section of the letter (false teachings, pride, arguments, and the love of money). (2) what Paul has been talking about most recently (the love of money). If possible, it is best to leave it as a general reference.

### pursue

Paul speaks of righteousness and other good qualities as if they were things that a person could run after and catch. This metaphor is the opposite of “flee from.” It means to try your best to obtain something. Alternate translation: “seek to acquire” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

## 1 Timothy 6:12

### Fight the good fight of the faith

Here, Paul speaks figuratively about a person persevering in following Jesus as if he were a warrior fighting at his best, or an athlete doing his best to win an event. Alternate translation: “do your best to obey Jesus” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### grasp eternal life

Paul speaks figuratively about people wanting **eternal life** so much that they hold onto it firmly in their hands. He may be continuing the metaphor of an athlete who worked hard to win an event and now holds the trophy in his hands. Alternate translations: “eagerly desire to live with God forever” or “do whatever is necessary to pursue life with God forever” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### to which you were called

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who did the action. Alternate translation: “to which God called you” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

### confessed the good confession

Alternate translation: “you publicly stated your faith in Jesus”

### before many witnesses

The implication is that Timothy’s statement of his faith was binding because these **witnesses** were present and could testify that he had made it. In your translation, you could use the expression used in your culture for a public, legal commitment. Alternate translation: “while many people were watching” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

## 1 Timothy 6:13

### before God

The implication is that Paul is asking **God** to be his witness that he has given Timothy this command. Alternate translation: “with God as my witness” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### the one enlivening all

Alternate translation: “who causes all things to live”

### and Christ Jesus

The implication is that Paul is also asking **Jesus** to be his witness. Alternate translation: “and with Christ Jesus ... as my witness as well” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### the one having testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate

Paul is offering Jesus to Timothy as an example of someone who publicly affirmed his obedience to God even when others were hostile and threatening. Alternate translation: “who acknowledged God himself when Pontius Pilate put him on trial” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

## 1 Timothy 6:14

### spotless, irreproachable

The terms **spotless** and **irreproachable** mean similar things. Paul may be using them together for emphasis. If it would be helpful in your language, you could combine these terms and express the emphasis in another way.

Alternate translation: "completely blameless" (See: **Doublet (p.157)**) (See: **Doublet (p.157)**)

### spotless

A spot figuratively means a moral fault. This could mean: (1) Timothy should live in such a way that Jesus will not find fault with him or blame him for doing wrong. (2) Timothy should live in such a way that other people will not find fault with him or blame him for doing wrong. Alternate translation: "blameless" (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ

Alternate translation: "until our Lord Jesus Christ returns"

## 1 Timothy 6:15

### in its own times

See how you translated this expression in [2:6](#). Alternate translation: “at the time that God will choose” (See: **Idiom (p.179)**) (See: **Idiom (p.179)**)

### the blessed and only Sovereign

This expression refers implicitly to God. Alternate translation: “God, the One we praise, who alone rules over the world” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

## 1 Timothy 6:16

### the One having immortality alone

Alternate translation: “the only one who has always existed”

### occupying unapproachable light

Alternate translation: “who lives in light so bright that no one can come near it”

### none of men

Paul uses the term **men** here in a generic sense that includes both men and women. Alternate translation: “no human being” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

## 1 Timothy 6:17

### the rich

Paul is using the adjective **rich** as a noun to refer to a class of people that it describes. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this term by translating it with a noun phrase. Alternate translation: “people who are rich” (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.193)**) (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.193)**)

### in the present age

The **present age** is the time period in which we are living, before Jesus returns and establishes God’s rule over all people. Alternate translation: “at this time”

### in {the} uncertainty of riches

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract noun **uncertainty** behind this with a verbal phrase. Alternate translations: “in riches, which are so uncertain” or “in wealth, which a person can lose so easily” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.134)**)

### all {things} richly unto enjoyment

By **all**, Paul is referring to all of the things that anyone actually has, not to everything that it might be possible to have. If it would be helpful in your language, you may want to include words to make that clear. Alternate translation: “all of the things that we have so that we can enjoy them” (See: **Ellipsis (p.159)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.159)**)



## 1 Timothy 6:18

### to be rich in good works

Paul speaks figuratively of doing things to help others as a way of becoming wealthy, but it is measured in something other than money. Alternate translation: “to serve and help others in many ways” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

## 1 Timothy 6:19

### storing up for themselves a good foundation for what is coming

Paul speaks figuratively about the blessings that God will give to those who have served him faithfully as if they were riches that a person was **storing** in a safe place. Alternate translation: “securing a good start now on their future life in God’s presence” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### storing up for themselves a good foundation for what is coming

Paul also speaks figuratively about the blessings that God will give as if they were the **foundation** of a building. He means that they will give a person a good start on their new life in the presence of God forever. Alternate translation: “securing a good start now on their future life in God’s presence” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### for what is coming

In the New Testament, this expression can refer to different things, but in this case it seems to refer to the new life that believers will have in God’s presence after death and the end of history. It is equivalent to the expression “the coming life” in 4:8. Alternate translation: “their future life in God’s presence” (See: **Idiom (p.179)**) (See: **Idiom (p.179)**)

### so that they may grasp genuine life

Paul is using the same image as in the phrase **grasp eternal life** in 6:12. He is speaking figuratively about people wanting eternal life so much that they hold onto it firmly in their hands. Alternate translation: “so that they can indeed live with God forever” (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

## 1 Timothy 6:20

### guard the deposit

The implication is that Jesus has entrusted Timothy with the message to proclaim about him. Alternate translation: “protect the message about Jesus that he has put in your care” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.139)**)

### avoiding the profane chatter

In order to avoid **profane chatter**, Timothy must avoid the people who do the chattering. Alternate translation: “do not pay attention to the talk of people for whom nothing is sacred” (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.191)**)

### and contradictions

This could mean: (1) the false teachers are saying things that are contrary to true Christian belief. Alternate translations: “and teachings that contradict us” or “and the opposing statements” (2) the false teachers are saying things that cannot all be true at the same time.

### of miscalled knowledge

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this passive phrase with an active form, and you could state who is doing the action. Alternate translation: “of what some people falsely call knowledge” (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.136)**)

## 1 Timothy 6:21

### have missed the mark regarding the faith

See how you translated this expression in [1:6](#). Paul speaks of faith in Christ as if it were a target that people should aim at. Alternate translation: "have not fulfilled the purpose of faith in Jesus" (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.185)**)

### Grace {be} with you

If it would be helpful in your language, you could state explicitly who will give this grace and who Paul is thinking will make this happen. Alternate translation: "may God give grace to all of you"

### Grace {be} with you

The word **you** is plural and refers to Timothy and all the believers at Ephesus. Alternate translation: "may God give grace to all of you" (See: **Forms of You (p.163)**) (See: **Forms of You (p.163)**)



# **unfoldingWord® Translation Academy**

**Version 36**

# 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:

*Parts of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))

*Sentence Structure* ([UTA PDF](#))

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**.

”

**Referenced in:** 1 Timothy 1:4; 1 Timothy 1:5; 1 Timothy 1:17; 1 Timothy 1:19; 1 Timothy 2:2; 1 Timothy 2:14; 1 Timothy 2:15; 1 Timothy 3 General Notes; 1 Timothy 3:9; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 Timothy 4:1; 1 Timothy 4:13; 1 Timothy 5:2; 1 Timothy 5:8; 1 Timothy 5:17; 1 Timothy 6:6; 1 Timothy 6:17

## 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:

*Sentence Structure* ([UTA PDF](#))

*Verbs* ([UTA PDF](#))

## 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.

[Abstract Nouns \(UTA PDF\)](#)

[Word Order \(UTA PDF\)](#)

**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 1:9](#); [1 Timothy 1:11](#); [1 Timothy 1:13](#); [1 Timothy 1:16](#); [1 Timothy 1:20](#); [1 Timothy 2:1](#); [1 Timothy 2:4](#); [1 Timothy 2:7](#); [1 Timothy 2:13](#); [1 Timothy 2:14](#); [1 Timothy 2:15](#); [1 Timothy 3:10](#); [1 Timothy 3:16](#); [1 Timothy 4:2](#); [1 Timothy 4:4](#); [1 Timothy 4:5](#); [1 Timothy 4:6](#); [1 Timothy 4:14](#); [1 Timothy 5:9](#); [1 Timothy 5:10](#); [1 Timothy 5:16](#); [1 Timothy 5:17](#); [1 Timothy 5:25](#); [1 Timothy 6:1](#); [1 Timothy 6:4](#); [1 Timothy 6:5](#); [1 Timothy 6:8](#); [1 Timothy 6:10](#); [1 Timothy 6:12](#); [1 Timothy 6:20](#)

## Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

Assumed knowledge is whatever a speaker assumes his audience knows before he speaks and gives them some kind of information. The speaker does not give the audience this information because he believes that they already know it.

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

When the speaker does give the audience information, he can do so in two ways. The speaker gives explicit information in what he states directly. Implicit Information is what the speaker does not state directly because he expects his audience to be able to learn it from other things he says.

### Description

When someone speaks or writes, he has something specific that he wants people to know or do or think about. He normally states this directly. This is explicit information.

The speaker assumes that his audience already knows certain things that they will need to think about in order to understand this information. Normally he does not tell people these things, because they already know them. This is called assumed knowledge.

The speaker does not always directly state everything that he expects his audience to learn from what he says. Implicit information is information that he expects people to learn from what he says even though he does not state it directly.

Often, the audience understands this implicit information by combining what they already know (assumed knowledge) with the explicit information that the speaker tells them directly.

### Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

All three kinds of information are part of the speaker's message. If one of these kinds of information is missing, then the audience will not understand the message. Because the target translation is in a language that is very different from the biblical languages and is made for an audience that lives in a very different time and place than the people in the Bible, many times the assumed knowledge or the implicit information is missing from the message. In other words, modern readers do not know everything that the original speakers and hearers in the Bible knew. When these things are important for understanding the message, it is helpful if you include this information in the text or in a footnote.

### Examples From the Bible

Then a scribe came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus said to him, "Foxes **have holes**, and the birds of the sky **have nests**, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:19-20 ULT)

Jesus did not say what foxes and birds use holes and nests for, because he assumed that the scribe would have known that foxes sleep in holes in the ground and birds sleep in their nests. This is **assumed knowledge**.

Jesus did not directly say here "I am the Son of Man" but, if the scribe did not already know it, then that fact would be **implicit information** that he could learn because Jesus referred to himself that way. Also, Jesus did not state explicitly that he travelled a lot and did not have a house that he slept in every night. That is **implicit information** that the scribe could learn when Jesus said that he had nowhere to lay his head.

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the mighty deeds had been done in **Tyre and Sidon** which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But

I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the **day of judgment** than for you.  
(Matthew 11:21-22 ULT)

Jesus assumed that the people he was speaking to knew that Tyre and Sidon were very wicked, and that the day of judgment is a time when God will judge every person. Jesus also knew that the people he was talking to believed that they were good and did not need to repent. Jesus did not need to tell them these things. This is all **assumed knowledge**.

An important piece of **implicit information** here is that the people he was speaking to would be judged more severely than the people of Tyre and Sidon would be judged **because** they did not repent.

Why do your disciples violate the traditions of the elders? For **they do not wash their hands when they eat bread**. (Matthew 15:2 ULT)

One of the traditions of the elders was a ceremony in which people would wash their hands in order to be ritually clean before eating. People thought that in order to be righteous, they had to follow all the traditions of the elders. This was **assumed knowledge** that the Pharisees who were speaking to Jesus expected him to know. By saying this, they were accusing his disciples of not following the traditions, and thus not being righteous. This is **implicit information** that they wanted him to understand from what they said.

## Translation Strategies

If readers have enough assumed knowledge to be able to understand the message, along with any important implicit information that goes with the explicit information, then it is good to leave that knowledge unstated and leave the implicit information implicit. If the readers do not understand the message because one of these is missing for them, then follow these strategies:

- (1) If readers cannot understand the message because they do not have certain assumed knowledge, then provide that knowledge as explicit information.
- (2) If readers cannot understand the message because they do not know certain implicit information, then state that information clearly, but try to do it in a way that does not imply that the information was new to the original audience.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If readers cannot understand the message because they do not have certain assumed knowledge, then provide that knowledge as explicit information.

Jesus said to him, "Foxes **have holes**, and the birds of the sky **have nests**, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:20 ULT)

The assumed knowledge was that the foxes slept in their holes and birds slept in their nests.

Jesus said to him, "Foxes **have holes to live in**, and the birds of the sky **have nests to live in**, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head and sleep."

It will be more tolerable for **Tyre and Sidon** at the day of judgment than for you (Matthew 11:22 ULT)

The assumed knowledge was that the people of Tyre and Sidon were very, very wicked. This can be stated explicitly.  
>

At the day of judgment, it will be more tolerable for **those cities of Tyre and Sidon, whose people were very wicked**, than it will be for you. or At

the day of judgment, It will be more tolerable for those **wicked cities, Tyre and Sidon**, than for you.

Why do your disciples violate the traditions of the elders? For **they do not wash their hands** when they eat bread. (Matthew 15:2 ULT)

The assumed knowledge was that one of the traditions of the elders was a ceremony in which people would wash their hands in order to be ritually clean before eating, which they must do to be righteous. It was not to remove germs from their hands to avoid sickness, as a modern reader might think.

Why do your disciples violate the traditions of the elders? For **they do not go through the ceremonial handwashing ritual of righteousness** when they eat bread.

(2) If readers cannot understand the message because they do not know certain implicit information, then state that information clearly, but try to do it in a way that does not imply that the information was new to the original audience.

Then a scribe came to him and said, "Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." (Matthew 8:19-20 ULT)

The implicit information is that Jesus himself is the Son of Man. Other implicit information is that if the scribe wanted to follow Jesus, then, like Jesus, he would have to live without a house.

Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but **I, the Son of Man**, have **no home to rest in. If you want to follow me, you will live as I live.**"

It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you (Matthew 11:22 ULT)

The implicit information is that God would not only judge the people; he would punish them. This can be made explicit.

At the day of judgment, God will **punish Tyre and Sidon**, cities whose people were very wicked, **less severely than he will punish you.**  
or:

At the day of judgment, God will **punish you more severely** than Tyre and Sidon, cities whose people were very wicked.

Modern readers may not know some of the things that the people in the Bible and the people who first read it knew. This can make it hard for them to understand what a speaker or writer says, and to learn things that the speaker left implicit. Translators may need to state some things explicitly in the translation that the original speaker or writer left unstated or implicit.

Next we recommend you learn about:

*Making Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information Explicit* ([UTA PDF](#))

**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 1:3](#); [1 Timothy 1:5](#); [1 Timothy 1:7](#); [1 Timothy 1:13](#); [1 Timothy 1:20](#); [1 Timothy 2:6](#); [1 Timothy 3:6](#); [1 Timothy 3:16](#); [1 Timothy 4:3](#); [1 Timothy 4:5](#); [1 Timothy 4:13](#); [1 Timothy 4:14](#); [1 Timothy 4:15](#); [1 Timothy 5:8](#); [1 Timothy 5:9](#); [1 Timothy 5:11](#); [1 Timothy 5:16](#); [1 Timothy 5:20](#); [1 Timothy 5:22](#); [1 Timothy 5:23](#); [1 Timothy 5:25](#); [1 Timothy 6:1](#); [1 Timothy 6:7](#); [1 Timothy 6:12](#); [1 Timothy 6:13](#); [1 Timothy 6:15](#); [1 Timothy 6:20](#)

## Connect — Contrast Relationship

### Logical Relationships

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

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

### Contrast Relationship

#### Description

A contrast relationship is a logical relationship in which one event or item is in contrast or opposition to another.

#### Reason This Is a Translation Issue

In Scripture, many events did not happen as the people involved intended or expected them to happen. Sometimes people acted in ways that were not expected, whether good or bad. Often it was God at work, changing the events. These events were often pivotal. It is important that translators understand and communicate these contrasts. In English, contrast relationships are often indicated by the words “but,” “although,” “even though,” “though,” “yet,” or “however.”

#### Examples From OBS and the Bible

You tried to do evil when you sold me as a slave, **but** God used the evil for good! (Story 8 Frame 12 OBS)

Joseph’s brothers’ evil plan to sell Joseph is contrasted with God’s good plan to save many people. The word “but” marks the contrast.

For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? **Yet** I am among you as one who serves. (Luke 22:27 ULT)

Jesus contrasts the proud way that human leaders behave with the humble way that he behaves. The contrast is marked by the word “yet.”

The hill country will also be yours. **Though** it is a forest, you will clear it and it will become yours to its farthest borders, for you will drive out the Canaanites, even **though** they have chariots of iron, and even **though** they are strong. (Joshua 17:18 ULT)

It was unexpected that the Israelites, who had been slaves in Egypt, would be able to conquer and lay claim to the promised land.

#### Translation Strategies

If your language uses contrast relationships in the same way as in the text, then use them as they are.

- (1) If the contrast relationship between the clauses is not clear, then use a connecting word or phrase that is more specific or more clear.
- (2) If it is more clear in your language to mark the other clause of the contrast relationship, then use a connecting word on the other clause.
- (3) If your language shows a contrast relationship in a different way, then use that way.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the contrast relationship between the clauses is not clear, then use a connecting word or phrase that is more specific or more clear.

For who is greater, the one who reclines at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? **Yet** I am among you as one who serves. (Luke 22:27 ULT)

For who is greater, the one who reclines at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? **Unlike that person**, I am among you as one who serves.

(2) If it is more clear in your language to mark the other clause of the contrast relationship, then use a connecting word on the other clause.

The hill country will also be yours. **Though** it is a forest, you will clear it and it will become yours to its farthest borders, for you will drive out the Canaanites, even **though** they have chariots of iron, and even **though** they are strong. (Joshua 17:18 ULT)

The hill country will also be yours. It is a forest, **but** you will clear it and it will become yours to its farthest borders. They have chariots of iron, and they are strong, **but** you will drive out the Canaanites.

(3) If your language shows a contrast relationship in a different way, then use that way.

{David} found favor in the sight of God, and he asked if he might find a dwelling place for the house of Jacob. **However**, Solomon built the house for him. **But** the Most High does not live in houses made with hands. (Acts 7:46-48a ULT)

[David] found favor in the sight of God, and he asked if he might find a dwelling place for the house of Jacob. **But** it was, Solomon, **not David**, who built the house for God. **Even though Solomon built him a house**, the Most High does not live in houses made with hands.

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**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 1:7](#); [1 Timothy 2:15](#); [1 Timothy 6:6](#); [1 Timothy 6:9](#)

## Connect — Exception Clauses

### Exceptional Relationship

This page answers the question: *How can I translate exception clauses?*

### Description

Exceptional relationship connectors exclude one or more items or people from a group.

### Reason This Is a Translation Issue

English indicates exceptional relationships by first describing a group (Part 1) and then stating what is not in that group by using words like “except,” “but not,” “other than,” “besides,” “unless,” “however ... not,” and “only” (Part 2). Some languages do not indicate in this way that one or more items or people are excluded from a group. Instead, they have other ways of doing this. In some languages this type of construction does not make sense because the exception in Part 2 seems to contradict the statement in Part 1. Translators need to understand who (or what) is in the group and who (or what) is excluded in order to be able to accurately communicate this in their language.

### Examples From OBS and the Bible

God told Adam that he could eat from **any** tree in the garden **except** from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (OBS Story 1 Frame 11)

But if you will not redeem it, then tell me so that I may know, for there is **no one** to redeem it **besides** you, and I am after you. (Ruth 4:4b ULT)

David attacked them from the twilight to the evening of the next day. **Not** a man escaped **except for** 400 young men, who rode on camels and fled. (1 Samuel 30:17 ULT)

The man said, “Let me go, for the dawn is breaking.” Jacob said, “I will **not** let you go **unless** you bless me.” (Genesis 32:26 ULT)

### Translation Strategies

If the way that Exceptional Clauses are marked in the source language is also clear in your language, then translate the Exceptional Clauses in the same way.

(1) Very often, the exception in Part 2 contradicts something that was negated in Part 1. In this case, the translator can phrase the same idea without the contradiction by deleting the negative and using a word like “**only**.”

(2) Reverse the order of the clauses so that the exception is stated first, and then the larger group is named second.

### Examples of Translation Strategy Applied

(1) Very often, the exception in Part 2 contradicts something that was negated in Part 1. In this case, the translator can phrase the same idea without the contradiction by deleting the negative and using a word like “**only**.”

David attacked them from the twilight to the evening of the next day. **Not a man escaped except for 400 young men**, who rode on camels and fled. (1 Samuel 30:17 ULT)

- Part 1: (**Not** a man escaped)
- Part 2: (**except for** 400 young men)



David attacked them from the twilight to the evening of the next day. **Only** 400 young men escaped; they rode on camels and fled.

But if you will not redeem it, then tell me so that I may know, for there is **no one** to redeem it **besides** you, and I am after you. (Ruth 4:4 ULT)

But if you will not redeem it, then tell me so that I may know, for **you are first in line to redeem it {only you can redeem it}**, and I am after you.

The man said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." Jacob said, "I will **not** let you go **unless** you bless me." (Genesis 32:26 ULT)

The man said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." Jacob said, "I will let you go **only if** you bless me."

(2) Reverse the order of the clauses, so that the exception is stated first, and then the larger group is named second.

God told Adam that he could eat from **any** tree in the garden **except** from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (OBS Story 1 Frame 11)

God told Adam that he could **not** eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but he could eat from **any other** tree in the garden.

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Referenced in: [1 Timothy 5:19](#)

## Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship

### Logical Relationships

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

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

### Goal (or Purpose) Relationship

#### Description

A Goal Relationship is a logical relationship in which the second event is the purpose or goal of the first event. In order for something to be a goal relationship, someone must do the first event with the intention that it will cause the second event.

#### Reason This Is a Translation Issue

In Scripture, the goal or purpose may be stated either first or second. But in some languages, the goal or purpose must always occur in the same position (either first or second) in order for that logical relationship to be understood. You (the translator) need to understand the relationship between the two parts and communicate those accurately in your language. This may require changing the order of the two events. It may also require specific words to indicate that one is the goal or purpose of the other. Words commonly used to indicate a goal relationship in English are “in order to,” “in order that” or “so that.” It is important that the translator recognize the words that signal a goal relationship and translate that relationship in a natural way.

#### Examples From OBS and the Bible

She became angry and falsely accused Joseph **so that he was arrested and sent to prison.**  
(Story 8 Frame 5 OBS)

The goal or purpose of the woman’s false accusation was to get Joseph arrested and sent to prison.

Meanwhile Gideon, his son, was threshing out wheat at the winepress **in order to hide from the presence of Midian.** (Judges 6:11b ULT)

Here the prepositional phrase begins with “in order to.”

Now if I have found favor in your eyes, show me your ways **so that I may know you and continue to find favor in your eyes.** Remember that this nation is your people. (Exodus 33:13 ULT)

Moses wants God to show him God’s ways for the goal or purpose of Moses knowing God and continuing to find favor with God.

Even be sure to pull some out from the bundles for her and leave it **for her to glean,** and do not rebuke her! (Ruth 2:16 ULT)

The goal or purpose of Boaz instructing the men to pull out the grain from their bundles and leave it was for Ruth to gather (glean) it.

The shepherds said to each other, “Let us indeed go over as far as Bethlehem, **and let us see this thing that has happened,** which the Lord has made known to us.” (Luke 2:15 ULT)

The purpose of going to Bethlehem was to see the thing that had happened. Here the purpose is not marked and might be misunderstood.

“... if you want **to enter into life**, keep the commandments.” (Matthew 19:17b ULT)

The goal of keeping the commandments is to enter into life.

Do not turn from it to the right or to the left **so that you may be wise** in everything in which you walk. (Joshua 1:7c ULT)

The purpose of not turning away from the instructions that Moses gave to the Israelites was so that they would be wise.

But when the vine growers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him **and take over his inheritance**.’ So they took him, threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. (Matt 21:38-39 ULT)

The purpose of the vine growers killing the heir was so they could take his inheritance. They state both events as a plan, joining them only with “and.” Then the word “so” marks the reporting of the first event, but the second event (the goal or purpose) is not stated.

## Translation Strategies

If your language uses Goal or Purpose relationships in the same way as in the text, then use them as they are.

- (1) If the construction of the Goal statement is unclear, change it to one that is more clear.
- (2) If the order of the statements makes the Goal statement unclear or confusing for the reader, then change the order.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If the construction of the goal statement is unclear, change it to one that is more clear.

“Even be sure to pull some out from the bundles for her and leave it **for her to glean**, and do not rebuke her!” (Ruth 2:16 ULT)

“Even be sure to pull some out from the bundles for her and leave it **so that she can glean it**, and do not rebuke her!”

The shepherds said to each other, “Let us indeed go over as far as Bethlehem, **and let us see this thing that has happened**, which the Lord has made known to us.” (Luke 2:15 ULT)

The shepherds said to each other, “Let us indeed go over as far as Bethlehem **so that we can see this thing that has happened**, which the Lord has made known to us.”

- (2) If the order of the statements makes the goal statement unclear or confusing for the reader, then change the order.

“... if you want **to enter into life**, keep the commandments.” (Matthew 19:17b ULT)

“... keep the commandments if you want **to enter into life**.” or: “... keep the commandments **so that you can enter into life**.”

But when the vine growers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him **and take over his inheritance**.’ So they took him, threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. (Matt 21:38-39 ULT)

(1) and (2)

But when the vine growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him **and take over his inheritance.**' So they took him, threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. (Matt 21:38-39 ULT)

But when the vine growers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him **so that we can take over his inheritance.**' So they took him, threw him out of the vineyard and killed him **so that they could take over his inheritance.**

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Referenced in: [1 Timothy 1:5](#)

## Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship

### Logical Relationships

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

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

### Reason-and-Result Relationships

#### Description

A reason-and-result relationship is a logical relationship in which one event is the **reason** or cause for another event. The second event, then, is the **result** of the first event.

#### Reason This Is a Translation Issue

A reason-and-result relationship can look forward — “I did Y because I wanted X to happen.” But usually it is looking backward — “X happened, and so I did Y.” Also, it is possible to state the reason either before or after the result. Many languages have a preferred order for the reason and the result, and it will be confusing for the reader if they are in the opposite order. Common words used to indicate a reason-and-result relationship in English are “because,” “so,” “therefore,” and “for.” Some of these words can also be used to indicate a goal relationship, so translators need to be aware of the difference between a goal relationship and a reason-and-result relationship. It is necessary for translators to understand how the two events are connected, and then communicate them clearly in their language.

If the reason and result are stated in different verses, it is still possible to put them in a different order. If you change the order of the verses, then put the verse numbers together at the beginning of the group of verses that were rearranged like this: 1-2. This is called a [Verse Bridge](#).

#### Examples From OBS and the Bible

The Jews were amazed, **because** Saul had tried to kill believers, and now he believed in Jesus!  
(Story 46 Frame 6 OBS)

The **reason** is the change in Saul — that he had tried to kill people who believed in Jesus, and now he himself believed in Jesus. The **result** is that the Jews were amazed. “Because” connects the two ideas and indicates that what follows it is a reason.

Behold, a great storm arose on the sea, **so that** the boat was covered with the waves.  
(Matthew 8:24a ULT)

The **reason** is the great storm, and the **result** is that the boat was covered with the waves. The two events are connected by “so that.” Notice that the term “so that” often indicates a goal relationship, but here the relationship is reason-and-result. This is because the sea cannot think and therefore does not have a goal.

God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, **because** in it he rested from all his work which he had done in his creation. (Genesis 2:3 ULT)

The **result** is that God blessed and sanctified the seventh day. The **reason** is because he rested on the seventh day from his work.

“Blessed are the poor, **for** yours is the kingdom of God.” (Luke 6:20b ULT)

The **result** is that the poor are blessed. The **reason** is that the kingdom of God is theirs.

But he raised up in their place their sons that Joshua circumcised, being uncircumcised, **because** they had not been circumcised on the way. (Joshua 5:7 ULT)

The **result** is that Joshua circumcised the boys and men who had been born in the wilderness. The **reason** was that they had not been circumcised while they were journeying.

## Translation Strategies

If your language uses reason-and-result relationships in the same way as in the text, then use them as they are.

- (1) If the order of the clauses is confusing for the reader, then change the order.
- (2) If the relationship between the clauses is not clear, then use a more clear connecting word.
- (3) If it is more clear to put a connecting word in the clause that does not have one, then do so.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, **because** in it he rested from all his work which he had done in his creation. (Genesis 2:3 ULT)

- (1) God rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done in his creation. **That is why** he blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.

Blessed are the poor, **for** yours is the kingdom of God. (Luke 6:20 ULT)

- (1) The kingdom of God belongs to you who are poor. **Therefore**, the poor are blessed.
- (2) Blessed are the poor, **because** yours is the kingdom of God.
- (3) **The reason that** the poor are blessed **is because** yours is the kingdom of God.

Behold, a great storm arose on the sea, **so that** the boat was covered with the waves. (Matthew 8:24a ULT)

- (1) Behold, the boat was covered with the waves **because** a great storm arose on the sea.
- (2) Behold, a great storm arose on the sea, **with the result that** the boat was covered with the waves.
- (3) Behold, **because** a great storm arose on the sea, the boat was covered with the waves.

**Since** he was not able to find out anything for certain because of the noise, he ordered that he be brought into the fortress. (Acts 21:34b ULT)

- (1) The captain ordered that Paul be brought into the fortress, **because** he could not tell anything because of all the noise.
- (2) **Because** the captain could not tell anything because of all the noise, he ordered that Paul be brought into the fortress.
- (3) The captain could not tell anything because of all the noise, **so** he ordered that Paul be brought into the fortress.

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**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 1:13](#); [1 Timothy 3:13](#); [1 Timothy 4:4](#); [1 Timothy 4:5](#); [1 Timothy 4:10](#); [1 Timothy 5:4](#); [1 Timothy 6:7](#); [1 Timothy 6:10](#)

## Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding

### Description

In some languages, phrases that modify a noun can be used with the noun for two different purposes. They can either (1) distinguish the noun from other similar items, or (2) they can give more information about the noun. That information could be new to the reader, or a reminder about something the reader might already know. Other languages use modifying phrases with a noun only for distinguishing the noun from other similar things. When people who speak these languages hear a modifying phrase along with a noun, they assume that its function is to distinguish one item from another similar item.

This page answers the question: *When a phrase is used with a noun, what is the difference between phrases that distinguish the noun from others and phrases that simply inform or remind?*

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

*Parts of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))

*Sentence Structure* ([UTA PDF](#))

Some languages use a comma to mark the difference between (1) making a distinction between similar items and (2) giving more information about an item. Without the comma, the sentence below communicates that it is making a distinction:

- Mary gave some of the food to **her sister who was very thankful**.
  - If her sister was usually thankful, the phrase “who was thankful” could distinguish this sister of Mary’s from another sister who was not usually thankful.

With the comma, the sentence is giving more information:

- Mary gave some of the food to **her sister, who was very thankful**.
  - This same phrase can be used to give us more information about Mary’s sister. It tells us about how Mary’s sister responded when Mary gave her the food. In this case it does not distinguish one sister from another sister.

### Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Many source languages of the Bible use phrases that modify a noun both for distinguishing the noun from another similar item and also for giving more information about the noun. You (the translator) must be careful to understand which meaning the author intended in each case.
- Some languages use phrases that modify a noun only for distinguishing the noun from another similar item. When translating a phrase that is used for giving more information, translators who speak these languages will need to separate the phrase from the noun. Otherwise, people who read it or hear it will think that the phrase is meant to distinguish the noun from other similar items.

### Examples From the Bible

#### Examples of words and phrases that are used to distinguish one item from other possible items:

(These usually do not cause any problem in translation.)

■ The curtain is to separate **the holy place** from **the most holy place**. (Exodus 26:33b ULT)

The words “holy” and “most holy” distinguish two different places from each other and from any other place.

■ A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to **the woman who bore him**. (Proverbs 17:25 ULT)

The phrase “who bore him” distinguishes which woman the son is bitterness to. He is not bitterness to all women, but to his mother.

## Examples of words and phrases that are used to give added information or a reminder about an item:

(These are a translation issue for languages that do not use these.)

... for **your righteous judgments** are good. (Psalm 119:39b ULT)

The word “righteous” simply reminds us that God’s judgments are righteous. It does not distinguish his righteous judgments from his unrighteous judgments, because all of his judgments are righteous.

How can Sarah, **who is 90 years old**, bear a son? (Genesis 17:17b ULT)

The phrase “who is 90 years old” is the reason that Abraham did not think that Sarah could bear a son. He was not distinguishing one woman named Sarah from another woman named Sarah who was a different age, and he was not telling anyone something new about her age. He simply did not think that a woman who was that old could bear a child.

I will wipe away mankind **whom I have created** from the surface of the earth. (Genesis 6:7 ULT)

The phrase “whom I have created” is a reminder of the relationship between God and mankind. It is the reason God had the right to wipe away mankind. There is not another mankind that God did not create.

## Translation Strategies

If readers would understand the purpose of a phrase with a noun, then consider keeping the phrase and the noun together. For languages that use words or phrases with a noun only to distinguish one item from another, here are some strategies for translating phrases that are used to inform or remind.

- (1) Put the information in another part of the sentence and add words that show its purpose.
- (2) Use one of your language’s ways for expressing that this is just added information. It may be by adding a small word, or by changing the way the voice sounds. Sometimes changes in the voice can be shown with punctuation marks, such as parentheses or commas.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Put the information in another part of the sentence and add words that show its purpose.

I hate those who serve **worthless** idols (Psalm 31:6 ULT)

By saying “worthless idols,” David was commenting about all idols and giving his reason for hating those who serve them. He was not distinguishing worthless idols from valuable idols.

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**Because idols are worthless**, I hate those who serve them.

... for your **righteous** judgments are good. (Psalm 119:39b ULT)

... for your judgments are good **because they are righteous**.

Can Sarah, **who is 90 years old**, bear a son? (Genesis 17:17b ULT)



The phrase “who is 90 years old” is a reminder of Sarah’s age. It tells why Abraham was asking the question. He did not expect that a woman who was that old could bear a child.

>

Can Sarah bear a son **even when she is 90 years old**?

I will call on Yahweh, **who is worthy to be praised**. (2 Samuel 22:4a ULT) There is only one Yahweh. The phrase “who is worthy to be praised” gives a reason for calling on Yahweh.

I will call on Yahweh, because **he is worthy to be praised**

(2) Use one of your language’s ways for expressing that this is just added information.

You are my Son, **whom I love**. I am pleased with you. (Luke 3:22 ULT)

You are my Son. **I love you** and I am pleased with you.

**Receiving my love**, you are my Son. I am pleased with you.

Next we recommend you learn about:

*Double Negatives* ([UTA PDF](#))

**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 3:15](#); [1 Timothy 4:4](#)

## 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:

*Parts of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))

*Sentence Structure* ([UTA PDF](#))

## Description

Negative words are words that have in them the meaning “not.” Examples in English are “no,” “not,” “none,” “no one,” “nothing,” “nowhere,” “never,” “nor,” “neither,” and “without.” Also, some words have prefixes or suffixes that mean “not,” such as the bolded parts of these words: “**un**happy,” “**im**possible,” and “**useless**.” Some other kinds of words also have a negative meaning, such as “lack” or “reject,” or even “fight” or “evil.”

A double negative occurs when a clause has two words that each have a negative meaning.

We did this **not** because we have **no** authority ... (2 Thessalonians 3:9a ULT)

And this was **not** done **without** an oath! (Hebrews 7:20a ULT)

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

## Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Double negatives mean very different things in different languages.

- In some languages, such as English, a second negative in a clause cancels the first one, creating a positive sentence. So, “He is not unintelligent” means “He is intelligent.”
- In some languages, such as French and Spanish, two negative words in a clause do not cancel each other to become a positive. The Spanish sentence, “No vi a nadie,” literally says “I did not see no one.” It has both the word ‘no’ next to the verb and ‘nadie,’ which means “no one.” The two negatives are seen as in agreement with each other, and the sentence means, “I did not see anyone.”
- In some languages, a double negative creates a stronger negative statement.
- In some languages, a double negative creates a positive sentence, but it is a weak statement. So, “He is not unintelligent” means, “He is somewhat intelligent.”
- In some languages, including the languages of the Bible, a double negative can produce a stronger positive meaning than a simple positive statement. So, “He is not unintelligent” can mean “He is very intelligent.” In this case, the double negative is actually the figure of speech called [litotes](#).

Biblical Greek can do all of the above. So to translate sentences with double negatives accurately and clearly in your language, you need to know what each double negative means in the Bible and how to express the same idea in your language.

## Examples From the Bible

The Greek of John 15:5 says:

χωρὶς ἐμοῦ οὐ δύνασθε ποιεῖν οὐδέν

Without me **not** you can do **nothing**

We cannot reproduce this double negative in the English ULT because in English, a second negative in a clause cancels the first one. In English, and perhaps in your language, we need to choose only one of the negatives and say either:

Without me, you can do **nothing**.

or:

Without me, you **cannot** do anything.

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

This means "in order to be fruitful."

A prophet is **not without** honor (Mark 6:4 ULT)

This means "a prophet is honored."

I do **not** want you to be **ignorant**. (1 Corinthians 12:1)

This means "I want you to be knowledgeable."

## Translation Strategies

If the way that the double negative is used in the Bible is natural and has the same meaning as in your language, consider using it in the same way. Otherwise, you could consider these strategies:

- (1) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a positive statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove the two negatives so that it is positive.
- (2) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a negative statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove one of the two negatives.
- (3) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a stronger negative statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove one of the two negatives and add a strengthening word.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a positive statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove the two negatives so that it is positive.

For we do **not** have a high priest who **cannot** feel sympathy for our weaknesses. (Hebrews 4:15a ULT)

"For we have a high priest who can feel sympathy for our weaknesses."

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

"... so that they may be fruitful."

- (2) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a negative statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove one of the two negatives.

χωρὶς ἐμοῦ οὐ δύνασθε ποιεῖν οὐδέν

Without me **not** you can do **nothing** (John 15:5)

Without me, you can do **nothing**.

or:

Without me, you **cannot** do anything.

(3) If the purpose of a double negative in the Bible is to make a stronger negative statement, and if it would not do that in your language, remove one of the two negatives and add a strengthening word.

...ἰώτα 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:

Verbs ([UTA PDF](#))

**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 1:7](#); [1 Timothy 3:8](#); [1 Timothy 4:14](#); [1 Timothy 5:25](#)

# 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:

*Figures of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))

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!"

"

**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 2:2](#); [1 Timothy 2:3](#); [1 Timothy 3:15](#); [1 Timothy 4:1](#); [1 Timothy 4:3](#); [1 Timothy 4:10](#); [1 Timothy 5:13](#); [1 Timothy 5:21](#); [1 Timothy 6:4](#); [1 Timothy 6:9](#); [1 Timothy 6:14](#)

# Ellipsis

## Description

An ellipsis<sup>[1]</sup> 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.

## Two Types of Ellipsis

A Relative Ellipsis happens when the reader has to supply the omitted word or words from the context. Usually the word is in the previous sentence, as in the example above.

An Absolute Ellipsis happens when the omitted word or words are not in the context, but the phrases are common enough in the language that the reader is expected to supply what is missing from this common usage or from the nature of the situation.

## Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Readers who see incomplete sentences or phrases may not know that there is information missing that the writer expects them to fill in. Or readers may understand that there is information missing, but they may not know what information is missing because they do not know the original biblical language, culture, or situation as the original readers did. In this case, they may fill in the wrong information. Or readers may misunderstand the ellipsis if they do not use ellipsis in the same way in their language.

## Examples From the Bible

### Relative Ellipsis

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf **and Sirion like a young ox**. (Psalm 29:6 ULT)

The writer wants his words to be few and to make good poetry. The full sentence with the information filled in would be:

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf and **he makes** Sirion **skip** like a young ox.

Watch carefully, therefore, how you walk—**not as unwise but as wise**. (Ephesians 5:15b ULT)

The information that the reader must understand in the second parts of these sentences can be filled in from the first parts:

This page answers the question: *What is ellipsis ?*

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

*Figures of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))

*Sentence Structure* ([UTA PDF](#))

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.

”

**Referenced in:** 1 Timothy 2:9; 1 Timothy 2:13; 1 Timothy 4:3; 1 Timothy 5:5; 1 Timothy 5:19; 1 Timothy 6:7; 1 Timothy 6:17



# Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'

## Description

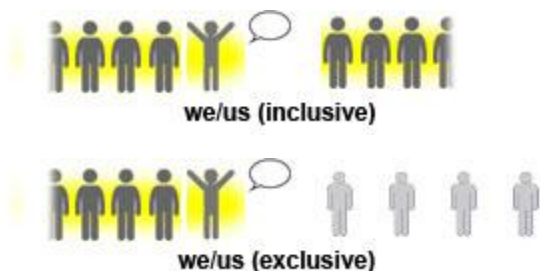
Some languages have more than one form of "we": an inclusive form that means "I and you" and an exclusive form that means "I and someone else but not you." The exclusive form excludes the person being spoken to. The inclusive form includes the person being spoken to and possibly others. This is also 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:

[Pronouns \(UTA PDF\)](#)

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* ([UTA PDF](#))

**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 1:8](#); [1 Timothy 4:10](#)

## Forms of You

### Singular, Dual, and Plural

Some languages have more than one word for “you” based on how many people the word “you” refers to. The **singular** form refers to one person, and the **plural** form refers to more than one person. Some languages also have a **dual** form which refers to two people, and some languages have other forms that refer to three or four people.

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

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

*Forms of ‘You’ — Singular* ([UTA PDF](#))

*Forms of ‘You’ — Dual/Plural* ([UTA PDF](#))

You may also want to watch the video at [https://ufw.io/figs\\_younum](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](https://ufw.io/figs_youform).

For help with translating these, we suggest you read:

- [Forms of “You” — Formal or Informal](#)

”

**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 5:1](#); [1 Timothy 6:21](#)

## Forms of 'You' — Singular

### Description

Some languages have a singular form of “you” for when the word “you” refers to just one person, and a **plural** form for when the word “you” refers to more than one person. Translators who speak one of these languages will always need to know what the speaker meant so they can choose the right word for “you” in their language. Other languages, such as English, have only one form, which people use regardless of how many people it refers to.

This page answers the question: *How do I know if the word 'you' is singular?*

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

*Parts of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))

*Forms of You* ([UTA PDF](#))

*Pronouns* ([UTA PDF](#))

The Bible was first written in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages. These languages all have both a singular form of “you” and a plural form of “you.” When we read the Bible in those languages, the pronouns and verb forms show us whether the word “you” refers to one person or more than one. When we read the Bible in a language that does not have different forms of you, we need to look at the context to see how many people the speaker was speaking to.

### Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Translators who speak a language that has distinct singular and plural forms of “you” will always need to know what the speaker meant so they can choose the right word for “you” in their language.
- Many languages also have different forms of the verb depending on whether the subject is singular or plural. So even if there is no pronoun meaning “you,” translators of these languages will need to know if the speaker was referring to one person or more than one.

Often the context will make it clear whether the word “you” refers to one person or more than one. If you look at the other pronouns in the sentence, they will help you know the number of people the speaker was speaking to. Sometimes Greek and Hebrew speakers used the singular form of “you” even though they were speaking to a group of people. (See [Forms of 'You' — Singular to a Crowd](#).)

### Examples From the Bible

But he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.” But when he heard this, Jesus said to him, “One thing is still lacking to **you**. All things, as much as **you** have, sell all and distribute to the poor, and **you** will have treasure in heaven—and come, follow me.” (Luke 18:21-22 ULT)

The ruler was speaking about just himself when he said “I.” This shows us that when Jesus said “you” he was referring only to the ruler. So languages that have singular and plural forms of “you” need the singular form here.

The angel said to him, “Dress **yourself** and put on **your** sandals.” So he did that. He said to him, “Put on **your** outer garment and follow me.” (Acts 12:8 ULT)

The context makes it clear that the angel was speaking to one person and that only one person did what the the angel commanded. So languages that have singular and plural forms of “you” would need the singular form here for “yourself” and “your.” Also, if verbs have different forms for singular and plural subjects, then the verbs “dress” and “put on” need the form that indicates a singular subject.

To Titus, a true son in our common faith. For this purpose I left **you** in Crete, that **you** might set in order things not yet complete and ordain elders in every city as I directed **you**. But **you**, say what fits with sound teaching. (Titus 1:4a, 5; 2:1 ULT)

Paul wrote this letter to one person, Titus. Most of the time the word “you” in this letter refers only to Titus.

## Strategies for finding out how many people “you” refers to

- (1) Look at the notes to see if they tell whether “you” refers to one person or more than one person.
- (2) Look at the UST to see if it says anything that would show you whether the word “you” refers to one person or more than one person.
- (3) If you have a Bible that is written in a language that distinguishes “you” singular from “you” plural, see which form of “you” that Bible has in that sentence.
- (4) Look at the context to see how many people the speaker was talking to and who responded.

You may also want to watch the video at [https://ufw.io/figs\\_younum](https://ufw.io/figs_younum).

Next we recommend you learn about:

*Forms of 'You' — Dual/Plural* ([UTA PDF](#))

**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 1:3](#)

# 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?

”

Referenced in: [1 Timothy 3:14](#)

# Hendiadys

## Description

In a hendiadys, a speaker uses two words that mean different things and that are connected with “and.” These two words work together to express a single idea. Usually one of the words is the primary idea and the other word further describes the primary one.

... his own **kingdom and glory**. (1 Thessalonians 2:12b ULT)

Though “kingdom” and “glory” are both nouns, “glory” actually tells what kind of kingdom it is: it is a **kingdom of glory** or **a glorious kingdom**.

Two phrases connected by “and” can also be a hendiadys when they refer to a single person, thing, or event.

while we look forward to receiving **the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ**. (Titus 2:13b ULT)

Titus 2:13 contains two hendiadyses. “The blessed hope” and “appearing of the glory” refer to the same thing and serve to strengthen the idea that the return of Jesus Christ is greatly anticipated and wonderful. Also, “our great God” and “Savior Jesus Christ” refer to one person, not two.

## Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Often a hendiadys contains an abstract noun. Some languages may not have a noun with the same meaning.
- Many languages do not use the hendiadys, so people may not understand that the second word is further describing the first one.
- Many languages do not use the hendiadys, so people may not understand that only one person or thing is meant, not two.

## Examples From the Bible

For I will give you **a mouth and wisdom** ... (Luke 21:15a ULT)

“A mouth” and “wisdom” are nouns, but in this figure of speech “wisdom” describes what comes from the mouth.

If you are willing and obedient ... (Isaiah 1:19a ULT)

“Willing” and “obedient” are adjectives, but “willing” describes “obedient.”

## Translation Strategies

If the hendiadys would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are other options:

- (1) Substitute the describing noun with an adjective that means the same thing.
- (2) Substitute the describing noun with a phrase that means the same thing.
- (3) Substitute the describing adjective with an adverb that means the same thing.

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:

*Figures of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))

*Parts of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))



(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**.

Doublet ([UTA PDF](#))

Next we recommend you learn about:

Doublet ([UTA PDF](#))

**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 2:7](#); [1 Timothy 2:8](#); [1 Timothy 5:5](#); [1 Timothy 5:17](#); [1 Timothy 6:9](#)

## 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* ([UTA PDF](#))

### 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** <sup>1</sup>

The footnote would look like:

<sup>[1]</sup> 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:

<sup>[1]</sup> 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**<sup>1</sup> 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:

Copy or Borrow Words ([UTA PDF](#))

**Referenced in:** [Introduction to 1 Timothy](#); [1 Timothy 1:3](#); [1 Timothy 1:20](#); [1 Timothy 2:7](#)

# 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:

*Figures of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))

## 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.

"

**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 1:4](#); [1 Timothy 5:10](#); [1 Timothy 6:4](#); [1 Timothy 6:10](#)

## 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:

*Figures of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))

## 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**

"

**Referenced in:** 1 Timothy 1:10; 1 Timothy 1:14; 1 Timothy 2:1; 1 Timothy 2:6; 1 Timothy 2:11; 1 Timothy 2:15; 1 Timothy 3:14; 1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Timothy 4:1; 1 Timothy 4:7; 1 Timothy 4:10; 1 Timothy 5:3; 1 Timothy 5:8; 1 Timothy 5:9; 1 Timothy 5:10; 1 Timothy 5:20; 1 Timothy 5:21; 1 Timothy 6:15; 1 Timothy 6:19

# 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:

*Figures of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))

## 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."

"

**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 5:9](#); [1 Timothy 5:22](#)

# 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:

*Figures of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))

**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**.

"

Referenced in: [1 Timothy 5:5](#)



# 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:

*Figures of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))

*Simile* ([UTA PDF](#))

## 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](#).

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**Referenced in:** 1 Timothy 1:2; 1 Timothy 1:5; 1 Timothy 1:6; 1 Timothy 1:12; 1 Timothy 1:14; 1 Timothy 1:18; 1 Timothy 1:19; 1 Timothy 1:20; 1 Timothy 2:4; 1 Timothy 2:7; 1 Timothy 3:3; 1 Timothy 3:6; 1 Timothy 3:7; 1 Timothy 3:8; 1 Timothy 3:9; 1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Timothy 4:1; 1 Timothy 4:2; 1 Timothy 4:6; 1 Timothy 4:7; 1 Timothy 4:14; 1 Timothy 4:15; 1 Timothy 5:4; 1 Timothy 5:6; 1 Timothy 5:15; 1 Timothy 5:16; 1 Timothy 5:18; 1 Timothy 5:20; 1 Timothy 5:21; 1 Timothy 5:25; 1 Timothy 6:1; 1 Timothy 6:4; 1 Timothy 6:5; 1 Timothy 6:9; 1 Timothy 6:10; 1 Timothy 6:11; 1 Timothy 6:12; 1 Timothy 6:14; 1 Timothy 6:18; 1 Timothy 6:19; 1 Timothy 6:21

# 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:

*Figures of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))

... 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](#).

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**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 1:1](#); [1 Timothy 1:5](#); [1 Timothy 1:10](#); [1 Timothy 3:5](#); [1 Timothy 3:16](#); [1 Timothy 4:5](#); [1 Timothy 4:6](#); [1 Timothy 5:4](#); [1 Timothy 5:17](#); [1 Timothy 6:1](#); [1 Timothy 6:3](#); [1 Timothy 6:20](#)



## 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:

*Parts of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))

### 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**.

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**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 1:9](#); [1 Timothy 1:10](#); [1 Timothy 4:3](#); [1 Timothy 5:10](#); [1 Timothy 5:13](#); [1 Timothy 6:17](#)

# Parallelism

## Description

Parallelism is a poetic device in which two phrases or clauses that are similar in structure or idea are used together. The following are some of the different kinds of parallelism.

- The second clause or phrase means the same as the first. This is called synonymous parallelism.
- The second clarifies or strengthens the meaning of the first.
- The second completes what is said in the first.
- The second says something that contrasts with the first, but adds to the same idea.

Parallelism is most commonly found in Old Testament poetry, such as in the books of Psalms and Proverbs. It also occurs in Greek in the New Testament, both in the four gospels and in the apostles' letters.

This article will only discuss synonymous parallelism, the kind in which the two parallel phrases mean the same thing, because that is the kind that presents a problem for translation. Note that we use the term "synonymous parallelism" for long phrases or clauses that have the same meaning. We use the term "doublet" for words or very short phrases that mean basically the same thing and are used together.

In the poetry of the original languages, synonymous parallelism has several effects:

- It shows that something is very important by saying it more than once and in more than one way.
- It helps the hearer to think more deeply about the idea by saying it in different ways.
- It makes the language more beautiful and raises it above the ordinary way of speaking.

## Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages would not use synonymous parallelism. They would either think it odd that someone said the same thing twice, or, since it is in the Bible, they would think that the two phrases must have some difference in meaning. For them it would be confusing, rather than beautiful. They would not understand that the repetition of the idea in different words serves to emphasize the idea.

## Examples From the Bible

Your word is a lamp to my feet  
and a light for my path. (Psalm 119:105 ULT)

Both parts of the sentence are metaphors saying that God's word teaches people how to live. That is the single idea. The words "lamp" and "light" are similar in meaning because they refer to light. The words "my feet" and "my path" are related because they refer to a person walking. Walking is a metaphor for living.

You make him to rule over the works of your hands;  
you have put all things under his feet (Psalm 8:6 ULT)

Both lines say that God made man the ruler of everything. "To rule over" is the same idea as putting things "under his feet," and "the works of your [God's] hands" is the same idea as "all things."

Yahweh sees everything a person does  
and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)

This page answers the question: *What is parallelism?*

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

*Figures of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))

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* ([UTA PDF](#))

**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 1:7](#); [1 Timothy 5:4](#); [1 Timothy 6:5](#)

# 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:

*Figures of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Add words or phrases to make the human (or animal) characteristic clear.

**Sin crouches** at the door. (Genesis 4:7b ULT) — God speaks of sin as if it were a wild animal that is waiting for the chance to attack. This shows how dangerous sin is. An additional phrase can be added to make this danger clear.

**Sin** is at your door, **waiting to attack you**.

(2) In addition to Strategy (1), use words such as “like” or “as” to show that the sentence is not to be understood literally.

Sin crouches at the door. (Genesis 4:7b ULT) — This can be translated with the word “as.”

Sin is crouching at the door, **just as a wild animal does as it waits to attack a person..**

(3) Find a way to translate it without the personification.

Even the **winds and the sea obey him**. (Matthew 8:27b ULT) — The men speak of the “wind and the sea” as if they are able to hear and obey Jesus, just as people can. This could also be translated without the idea of obedience by speaking of Jesus controlling them.

He even **controls the winds and the sea**.

**NOTE:** We have broadened our definition of “personification” to include “zoomorphism” (speaking of other things as if they had animal characteristics) and “anthropomorphism” (speaking of non-human things as if they had human characteristics) because the translation strategies for them are the same.

Next we recommend you learn about:

*Apostrophe* ([UTA PDF](#))

*Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns* ([UTA PDF](#))

**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 5:18](#); [1 Timothy 5:24](#)

# 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:

*Figures of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))

*Writing Styles* ([UTA PDF](#))

## 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:

*Symbolic Language* ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [1 Timothy 3:16](#)

## Quote Markings

### Description

Some languages use quotation marks to mark off direct quotes from the rest of the text. English uses the mark " immediately before a quote and " immediately after it.

- John said, "I do not know when I will arrive."

Quotation marks are not used with indirect quotes.

- John said that he did not know when he would arrive.

When there are several layers of quotations inside of other quotations, it might be hard for readers to understand who is saying what. Alternating two kinds of quotation marks can help careful readers to keep track of them. In English, the outermost quotation has double quote marks, and the next quotation within it has single marks. If there is a third embedded quote, that quotation again has double quotation marks.

- Mary said, "John said, 'I do not know when I will arrive.'"
- Bob said, "Mary told me, 'John said, "I do not know when I will arrive.'" "

Some languages use other kinds of quotation marks: Here are some examples: , ' ' " " < > « » 7 — .

### Examples From the Bible

The examples below show the kind of quotation markings used in the ULT.

#### A quotation with only one layer

A first layer direct quote has double quotation marks around it.

So the king replied, "That is Elijah the Tishbite." (2 Kings 1:8b ULT)

#### Quotations with two layers

A second layer direct quote has single quotation marks around it. We have printed it and the phrase in bold type for you to see them clearly.

They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, '**Pick it up and walk**'?" (John 5:12 ULT)

He sent two of the disciples, saying, "Go into the village ahead of you. As you enter, you will find a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it to me. If any one asks you, '**Why are you untying it?**'" you will say thus, '**The Lord has need of it.**'" (Luke 19:29b-31 ULT)

#### A quotation with three layers

A third layer direct quote has double quotation marks around it. We have printed it in bold type for you to see them clearly.

Abraham said, "Because I thought, 'Surely there is no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.' Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. When God caused me to leave my father's

This page answers the question: *How can quotes be marked, especially when there are quotes within quotes?*

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

*Direct and Indirect Quotations* ([UTA PDF](#))

house and travel from place to place, I said to her, 'You must show me this faithfulness as my wife: At every place where we go, say about me, "**He is my brother.**"' (Genesis 20:11-13 ULT)

## A quotation with four layers

A fourth layer direct quote has single quotation marks around it. We have printed it in bold for you to see it clearly.

They said to him, "A man came to meet us who said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, "Yahweh says this: '**Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.**'" ' " (2 Kings 1:6 ULT)

## Quote Marking Strategies

Here are some ways you may be able to help readers see where each quote starts and ends so they can more easily know who said what.

- (1) Alternate two kinds of quote marks to show layers of direct quotation. English alternates double quote marks and single quote marks.
- (2) Translate one or some of the quotes as indirect quotes in order to use fewer quote marks, since indirect quotes do not need them. (See [Direct and Indirect Quotations](#).)
- (3) If a quotation is very long and has many layers of quotation in it, indent the main overall quote, and use quote marks only for the direct quotes inside of it.

## Examples of Quote Marking Strategies Applied

- (1) Alternate two kinds of quotation marks to show layers of direct quotation as shown in the ULT text below.

They said to him, "A man came to meet us who said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, "Yahweh says this: 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.'" ' " (2 Kings 1:6 ULT)

- (2) Translate one or more of the quotes as indirect quotes in order to use fewer quotation marks, since indirect quotes do not need them. In English, the word "that" can introduce an indirect quote. In the example below, everything after the word "that" is an indirect quote of what the messengers said to the king. Within that indirect quote, there are some direct quotes marked with double and single quotation marks.

They said to him, "A man came to meet us who said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, "Yahweh says this: 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.'" ' " (2 Kings 1:6 ULT)

They told him **that** a man came to meet them who said to them, "Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, 'Yahweh says this: "Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.'" ' " (2 Kings 1:6 ULT)

- (3) If a quotation is very long and has many layers of quotation in it, indent the main overall quote, and use quote marks only for the direct quotes inside of it.

They said to him, "A man came to meet us who said to us, 'Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, "Yahweh says this: 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to

consult with Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.'"" (2 Kings 1:6 ULT)

They said to him,

A man came to meet us who said to us, "Go back to the king who sent you, and say to him, 'Yahweh says this: "Is it because there is no God in Israel that you sent men to consult with Baal Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you will not come down from the bed to which you have gone up; instead, you will certainly die.'""

Next we recommend you learn about:

*Quotes within Quotes* ([UTA PDF](#))

**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 1:15](#); [1 Timothy 3:1](#); [1 Timothy 4:8](#)

## 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:

*Figures of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))

*Sentence Types* ([UTA PDF](#))

## 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

"

Referenced in: [1 Timothy 3:5](#)



# 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:

*Figures of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))

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* ([UTA PDF](#))

*Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns* ([UTA PDF](#))

**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 5:1](#); [1 Timothy 5:2](#)

## Statements — Other Uses

### Description

Normally statements are used to give information. Sometimes they are used in the Bible for other functions.

This page answers the question: *What other uses are there for statements?*

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

*Sentence Types* ([UTA PDF](#))

### Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages would not use a statement for some of the functions that statements are used for in the Bible.

### Examples From the Bible

Statements are normally used to give **information**. All of the sentences in John 1:6-8 below are statements, and their function is to give information.

There was a man who was sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness in order to testify about the light, that all might believe through him. John was not the light, but came that he might testify about the light. (John 1:6-8 ULT)

A statement can also be used as a **command** to tell someone what to do. In the examples below, the high priest used statements with the verb “will” to tell people what to do.

He commanded them, saying, “This is what you **must** do. A third of you who come on the Sabbath **will** keep watch over the king’s house, and a third **will** be at the Sur Gate, and a third at the gate behind the guardhouse.” (2 Kings 11:5 ULT)

A statement can also be used to give **instructions**. The speaker below was not just telling Joseph about something Joseph would do in the future; he was telling Joseph what he needed to do.

She will give birth to a son, and **you will call his name Jesus**, for he will save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21 ULT)

A statement can also be used to make a **request**. The man with leprosy was not just saying what Jesus was able to do. He was also asking Jesus to heal him.

Behold, a leper came to him and bowed before him, saying, “Lord, if you are willing, **you can make me clean.**” (Matthew 8:2 ULT)

A statement can also be used to **perform** something. By telling Adam that the ground was cursed because of him, God actually cursed it.

... **cursed is the ground** because of you; (Genesis 3:17b ULT)

By telling a man that his sins were forgiven, **Jesus forgave** the man’s sins.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “**Son, your sins are forgiven.**” (Mark 2:5 ULT)

### Translation Strategies

(1) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, **use a sentence type** that would express that function.

(2) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, **add a sentence type** that

would express that function.

(3) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, **use a verb form** that would express that function.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, use a sentence type that would express that function.

She will give birth to a son, and **you will call his name Jesus**, for he will save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21 ULT)

The phrase “you will call his name Jesus” is an instruction. It can be translated using the sentence type of a normal instruction.

She will give birth to a son. **Name him Jesus**, because he will save his people from their sins.

(2) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, add a sentence type that would express that function.

Lord, **please heal me**, because I know you are able to heal me if you are willing to. (Matthew 8:2 ULT)

The function of “I know you can” is to make a request. In addition to the statement, a request can be added.

Lord, **I know you can heal me**. If you are willing, please do so.

Lord, if you are willing, please heal me. **I know you can do so**.

(3) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, use a verb form that would express that function.

She will give birth to a son, and **you will call his name Jesus**, for he will save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21 ULT)

She will give birth to a son, and **you must call his name Jesus**, for he will save his people from their sins.

Son, your sins are forgiven. (Mark 2:5 ULT)

Son, I forgive your sins.

Son, God has forgiven your sins.

”

**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 5:18](#); [1 Timothy 6:8](#)

# Symbolic Action

## Description

A symbolic action is something that someone does in order to express a certain idea. For example, in some cultures people nod their heads up and down to mean “yes” or turn their heads from side to side to mean “no.” Symbolic actions do not mean the same things in all cultures. In the Bible, sometimes people perform symbolic actions and sometimes they only refer to the symbolic action.

This page answers the question: *What is a symbolic action and how do I translate it?*

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

*Translate Unknowns* ([UTA PDF](#))

## 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.

"

**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 2:8](#); [1 Timothy 4:14](#); [1 Timothy 5:10](#); [1 Timothy 5:22](#)

# 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)

■ I looked on all the deeds that **I** had accomplished

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:

*Figures of Speech* ([UTA PDF](#))



Metonymy ([UTA PDF](#))

Biblical Imagery — Common Metonymies ([UTA PDF](#))

Next we recommend you learn about:

Metonymy ([UTA PDF](#))

Biblical Imagery — Common Metonymies ([UTA PDF](#))

**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 2:8](#); [1 Timothy 2:9](#); [1 Timothy 2:15](#); [1 Timothy 5:10](#)

## 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.

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:

*Choosing a Source Text* ([UTA PDF](#))

*Original Manuscripts* ([UTA PDF](#))

Bible scholars have read many old copies and compared them with each other. For each place in the Bible where there was a difference, they have figured out which wordings are most likely correct. The translators of the ULT based the ULT on wordings that scholars say are most likely correct. Because people who use the ULT may have access to Bibles that are based on other copies, the ULT translators have sometimes included information about some of the differences between them, either in the ULT footnotes or in the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes.

Translators are encouraged to translate the text in the ULT and to write about added sentences in footnotes, as is done in the ULT. However, if the local church really wants those sentences to be included in the main text, translators may put them in the text and include a footnote about them.

### Examples From the Bible

Matthew 18:10-11 ULT has a footnote about verse 11.

<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> <sup>[1]</sup>

<sup>[1]</sup> 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."] <sup>[2]</sup>

<sup>[2]</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. <sup>15</sup> 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." <sup>16</sup> [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.

<sup>14</sup> He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. <sup>15</sup> 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." <sup>16</sup> [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.

<sup>14</sup> He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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:

*Chapter and Verse Numbers* ([UTA PDF](#))

*Original Manuscripts* ([UTA PDF](#))

*Terms to Know* ([UTA PDF](#))

*The Original and Source Languages* ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Introduction to 1 Timothy](#)

## 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:

[Sentence Structure \(UTA PDF\)](#)

## 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:

*Copy or Borrow Words* ([UTA PDF](#))

*How to Translate Names* ([UTA PDF](#))

**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 2:5](#); [1 Timothy 2:7](#); [1 Timothy 2:9](#); [1 Timothy 3:1](#); [1 Timothy 5:18](#)

# Translating Son and Father

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

## Biblical Witness

**“Father” and “Son” are names that God calls himself in the Bible.**

The Bible shows that God called Jesus his Son:

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

The Bible shows that Jesus called God his Father:

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

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

Jesus referred to God in the following terms:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This page answers the question: *Why are these concepts important in referring to God?*

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

Create Faithful Translations [\(UTA PDF\)](#)

Son of God and God the Father [\(UTA PDF\)](#)

## Human Relationships

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

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

## Translation Strategies

(1) Think through all the possibilities within your language to translate the words “son” and “father.” Determine which words in your language best represent the divine “Son” and “Father.”

(2) If your language has more than one word for “son,” use the word that has the closest meaning to “only son” (or “first son” if necessary).

(3) If your language has more than one word for “father,” use the word that has the closest meaning to “birth father,” rather than “adoptive father.”

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

”

**Referenced in:** [1 Timothy 1:2](#)



## When Masculine Words Include Women

In the Bible, sometimes the words “men,” “brothers,” and “sons” refer only to men. At other times, those words include both men and women. In those places where the writer meant both men and women, you (the translator) need to translate it in a way that does not limit the meaning to men.

### Description

In some languages a word that normally refers to men can also be used in a more general way to refer to both men and women. For example, the Bible sometimes says “brothers” when it refers to both brothers and sisters.

Also in some languages, the masculine pronouns “he” and “him” can be used in a more general way for any person if it is not important whether the person is a man or a woman. In the example below, the pronoun is “his,” but it is not limited to males.

A wise son makes **his** father rejoice  
but a foolish son brings grief to **his** mother. (Proverbs 10:1 ULT)

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:

[Pronouns \(UTA PDF\)](#)

[Generic Noun Phrases \(UTA PDF\)](#)

### 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.”

”

**Referenced in:** 1 Timothy 1:9; 1 Timothy 1:10; 1 Timothy 2:1; 1 Timothy 2:4; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 Timothy 2:8; 1 Timothy 4:6; 1 Timothy 4:10; 1 Timothy 5:24; 1 Timothy 6:2; 1 Timothy 6:4; 1 Timothy 6:5; 1 Timothy 6:9; 1 Timothy 6:16



# **unfoldingWord® Translation Words**

**Version 40**

## disciple

### Definition:

The term “disciple” refers to a person who spends much time with a teacher, learning from that teacher’s character and teaching.

- The people who followed Jesus around, listening to his teachings and obeying them, were called his “disciples.”
- John the Baptist also had disciples.
- During Jesus’ ministry, there were many disciples who followed him and heard his teachings.
- Jesus chose twelve disciples to be his closest followers; these men became known as his “apostles.”
- Jesus’ twelve apostles continued to be known as his “disciples” or “the 12.”
- Just before Jesus went up to heaven, he commanded his disciples to teach other people about how to become Jesus’ disciples, too.
- Anyone who believes in Jesus and obeys his teachings is called a disciple of Jesus.

### Translation Suggestions:

- The term “disciple” could be translated by a word or phrase that means “follower” or “student” or “pupil” or “learner.”
- Make sure that the translation of this term does not refer only to a student who learns in a classroom.
- The translation of this term should also be different from the translation of “apostle.”

(See also: [apostle](#), [believe](#), [Jesus](#), [John \(the Baptist\)](#), [the twelve](#))

### Bible References:

- Acts 6:1
- Acts 9:26-27
- Acts 11:26
- Acts 14:22
- John 13:23
- Luke 6:40
- Matthew 11:3
- Matthew 26:33-35
- Matthew 27:64

### Examples from the Bible stories:

- **30:8** He (Jesus) gave the pieces to his **disciples** to give to the people. The **disciples** kept passing out the food, and it never ran out!
- **38:1** About three years after Jesus first began preaching and teaching publicly, Jesus told his **disciples** that he wanted to celebrate this Passover with them in Jerusalem, and that he would be killed there.
- **38:11** Then Jesus went with his **disciples** to a place called Gethsemane. Jesus told his **disciples** to pray that they would not enter into temptation.
- **42:10** Jesus said to his **disciples**, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. So go, make **disciples** of all people groups by baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and by teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

## Word Data:

- Strong's: H3928, G31000, G31010, G31020

"

**Referenced in:** [Introduction to 1 Timothy](#)

## prophet, prophecy, prophesy, seer, prophetess

### Definition:

A “prophet” is a man who speaks God’s messages to people. A woman who does this is called a “prophetess.”

- Often prophets warned people to turn away from their sins and obey God.
- A “prophecy” is the message that the prophet speaks. To “prophesy” means to speak God’s messages.
- Often the message of a prophecy was about something that would happen in the future.
- Many prophecies in the Old Testament have already been fulfilled.
- In the Bible the collection of books written by prophets are sometimes referred to as “the prophets.”
- For example the phrase, “the law and the prophets” is a way of referring to all the Hebrew scriptures, which are also known as the “Old Testament.”
- An older term for a prophet was “seer” or “someone who sees.”
- Sometimes the term “seer” refers to a false prophet or to someone who practices divination.

### Translation Suggestions:

- The term “prophet” could be translated as “God’s spokesman” or “man who speaks for God” or “man who speaks God’s messages.”
- A “seer” could be translated as “person who sees visions” or “man who sees the future from God.”
- The term “prophetess” could be translated as “spokeswoman for God” or “woman who speaks for God” or “woman who speaks God’s messages.”
- Ways to translate “prophecy” could include, “message from God” or “prophet message.”
- The term “prophesy” could be translated as “speak words from God” or “tell God’s message.”
- The figurative expression, “law and the prophets” could also be translated as “the books of the law and of the prophets” or “everything written about God and his people, including God’s laws and what his prophets preached.” (See: [synecdoche](#))
- When referring to a prophet (or seer) of a false god, it may be necessary to translate this as “false prophet (seer)” or “prophet (seer) of a false god” or “prophet of Baal,” for example.

(See also: [Baal](#), [divination](#), [false god](#), [false prophet](#), [fulfill](#), [law](#), [vision](#))

### Bible References:

- 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16
- Acts 3:25
- John 1:43-45
- Malachi 4:4-6
- Matthew 1:23
- Matthew 2:18
- Matthew 5:17
- Psalm 51:1

### Examples from the Bible stories:

- **12:12** When the Israelites saw that the Egyptians were dead, they trusted in God and believed that Moses was a **prophet** of God.
- **17:13** God was very angry about what David had done, so he sent the **prophet** Nathan to tell David how evil his sin was.
- **19:1** Throughout the history of the Israelites, God sent them **prophets**. The **prophets** heard messages from God and then told the people God’s messages.

- **19:6** All the people of the entire kingdom of Israel, including the 450 **prophets** of Baal, came to Mount Carmel.
- **19:17** Most of the time, the people did not obey God. They often mistreated the **prophets** and sometimes even killed them.
- **21:9** The **prophet** Isaiah **prophesied** that the Messiah would be born from a virgin.
- **43:5** "This fulfills the **prophecy** made by the **prophet** Joel in which God said, 'In the last days, I will pour out my Spirit.'"
- **43:7** "This fulfills the **prophecy** which says, 'You will not let your Holy One rot in the grave.'"
- **48:12** Moses was a great **prophet** who proclaimed the word of God. But Jesus is the greatest **prophet** of all. He is the Word of God.

## Word Data:

- Strong's: H2372, H2374, H4853, H5012, H5013, H5016, H5017, H5029, H5030, H5031, H5197, G24950, G43940, G43950, G43960, G43970, G43980, G55780

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Referenced in: [1 Timothy 4 General Notes](#)

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