



unfoldingWord® Translation Notes

1 Thessalonians

Version 76

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unfoldingWord® Translation Notes

1 Thessalonians

Introduction to 1 Thessalonians

Part 1: General Introduction

Outline of the book of 1 Thessalonians

In this letter, the apostle Paul, along with Silvanus and Timothy, encourages and makes appeals to the Thessalonian church (See: [rc://*/tw/bible/names/thessalonica.md](#)). Paul is the spokesman for all of them, using “we” to refer to the group, but in certain places Paul speaks for himself using “I” (See [2:18](#); [3:5](#); [5:27](#)). The background story for the apostles’ activity in Thessalonica can be found in Acts 17:1-10.

Apostolic memories of the Thessalonian church (1:1-10)

- Greeting (1:1)
- Thanksgiving for the Thessalonian Christians (1:2-4)
- Examples of Thessalonian suffering (1:6-10)

Apostolic authority (2:1-16)

- Persecution of the church (2:1-13)
- Opposition to the church (2:14-16)

Timothy’s visit to Thessalonica (3:1-13)

- Reason for the visit (3:1-5)
- Report about the visit (3:6-13)

Apostolic teachings (4:1-18)

- Holiness (4:1-8)
- Christian love (4:9-12)
- Manner of the Second Coming of Christ (4:13-18)

Final teachings (5:1-28)

- Timing of the Second Coming of Christ (5:1-10)
- Final appeals and teachings (5:11-28)

Who wrote 1 Thessalonians?

Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians, writing with the agreement of Silvanus and Timothy. Paul was from the city of Tarsus. He had been known as Saul in his early life. Before becoming a Christian, Saul was a Pharisee. He persecuted Christians. After he became a Christian, Paul traveled several times throughout the Roman Empire, telling people about Jesus. Paul wrote this letter while staying in the city of Corinth. Many scholars think 1 Thessalonians was the first letter Paul wrote of all Paul’s letters that are in the Bible.

Silvanus is also mentioned in 2 Corinthians 1:19; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Peter 5:12. “Silas,” the name used in the book of Acts, is a contracted form of Silvanus; Silas and Silvanus are considered to be the same person. Timothy was leader of the church at Ephesus (See 1 Timothy 1:1-4). Paul wrote this letter while staying in the city of Corinth with these two men. The mention of all three men in 1:1 indicates they were in Thessalonica together at some point.

What is the book of 1 Thessalonians about?

Paul wrote this letter to the church in the city of Thessalonica, after the Jews in the city forced him to leave. Ancient Thessalonica was located on the southeast coast of ancient Macedonia, and is now called Thessaloniki, located in northeast Greece. (See: **Background Information (p.140)**). In this letter Paul said he considered his visit to them a success, even though he was forced to leave (See Acts 17:1-10).

Paul responded to the news from Timothy about the Thessalonian believers. The believers there were being persecuted. He encouraged them to continue living in a way that pleased God. He also comforted them by explaining what happens to those who die before Christ returns.

How should the title of this book be translated?

Translators may choose to call this book by its traditional title, “1 Thessalonians” or “First Thessalonians.” They may instead prefer to choose a clearer title, such as “Paul’s First Letter to the Church in Thessalonica,” or “The First Letter to the Church in Thessalonica.” (See: **How to Translate Names (p.198)**)

Part 2: Important Religious and Cultural Concepts

Trinity

In this letter, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity finds solid support. The terms: God, Father, Son, Lord, Jesus, and Holy Spirit appear numerous times. (See: [\[\[rc://*/tw/bible/kt/god\]\]](#))

The gospel

In this letter, Paul frequently refers to the apostles’ ministry of the gospel and uses different phrases to communicate the concept of God’s good news about Jesus Christ. (See: [\[\[rc://*/tw/bible/kt/goodnews\]\]](#))

Prayer

Paul reassures the Thessalonians that his group of apostles frequently prays for them (See [1:2](#)). He also gives instructions about prayer (See [5:2](#)), and asks the Thessalonians to pray for them (See [5:25](#)). (See: [\[\[rc://*/tw/bible/kt/pray\]\]](#))

Faith and Faithfulness

Through the letter the Thessalonians are commended for their faithfulness to God. They are reminded to trust God and remain faithful to gospel living. (See: [\[\[rc://tw/bible/kt/faithful\]\]](#), [\[\[rc://tw/bible/kt/faith\]\]](#))

Apostolic authority

Much of this letter is a defense of the apostles’ authority, based on their teaching and living. The term “apostles” is used in [2:6](#) to reinforce that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy are sent by God. (See: [\[\[rc://*/tw/bible/kt/apostle\]\]](#))

Second Coming of Christ

Paul wrote much in this letter about Jesus’ eventual return to Earth. When Jesus returns, he will judge all mankind. He will also rule over creation, and there will be peace everywhere.

The fate of reposed Christians

Paul made clear that those who die before Christ's return will come back to life and be with Jesus. They will not remain dead forever. Paul wrote this to encourage the Thessalonians, for some of them worried that those Christians who died would miss the great "day of the Lord" when Jesus returns.

Idolatry

The Greek and Roman cultural background in Thessalonica meant that many members of the church were former pagans who practiced some sort of idolatry (See [1:9](#)(See: [\[\[rc://*/tw/bible/other/image\]\]](#))).

Suffering

Much of this letter addresses both the sufferings of the apostles and the Thessalonian church for faithfulness to the gospel. (See: [\[\[rc:///tw/bible/other/afflict\]\]](#), [\[\[rc:///tw/bible/other/persecute\]\]](#), [\[\[rc://*/tw/bible/other/suffer\]\]](#))

Sanctification

The concept of holiness is prevalent in this letter. Chapter four discusses how a Christian should practice a holy life. (See: [\[\[rc://*/tw/bible/kt/sanctify\]\]](#))

Part 3: Important Translation Issues

What did Paul mean by expressions like "in Christ" and "in Christ Jesus" and "in the Lord Jesus Christ" and "in God the Father" and "in the Holy Spirit"?

Paul meant to express the idea of a union between God and Christians that includes all three persons of the Trinity. Please see the introduction to the book of Romans for more details about these kinds of expressions.

What did Paul mean by expressions like "his coming" and "the coming of the Lord Jesus" and "the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ"?

Paul used "coming" in a specific way in relation to Jesus Christ to refer to the time when he will come again to earth, this time displaying his glory and power and gathering his people to himself. Depending on the nuances of your language, you may need to translate this with a special concept or word.

What did Paul mean by expressions like "the word of God" or "the word of the Lord"?

Throughout this letter, Paul uses these well-known phrases or abbreviations to refer to the gospel message.

What did Paul mean by expressions like "brothers"?

Throughout this letter, "brothers" is a metaphor that refers to all believers, including females. (See [1:4](#); 2:1, 9, 14, 17; 3:7; 4:1, 6, 10, 13; 5:1, 4, 12, 14, 26, 27)

“We” and “you”

In this letter, the words “we”, “us,” and “our” refer to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, unless otherwise noted. In addition, “we”, “us,” and “our” are used to convey that all three apostles are in agreement with the letter.

Major textual issues in the text of the book of First Thessalonians

When ancient manuscripts of the Bible differ, ULT puts in its text the reading that scholars consider to be the most accurate, but it puts other possibly accurate readings in footnotes. The introductions to each chapter will discuss places where the ancient manuscripts differ in significant ways, and notes will address those places again where they occur in the book. If a translation of the Bible already exists in your region, consider using the readings found in that version. If not, we recommend that you follow the readings in the ULT text. (See: **Textual Variants (p.267)**) * “Grace and peace to you” (See [1:1](#)). Some other manuscripts read: “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” * “but we became little children in the midst of you, as if a mother might comfort her own children” (See [2:7](#)). Some other manuscripts read, “Instead, we were as gentle among you as a mother comforting her own children.” * “Timothy, our brother and a servant of God” (See [3:2](#)). Some other manuscripts read: “Timothy, our brother and fellow worker for God.”

(See: **Textual Variants (p.267)**)

1 Thessalonians 1

1 Thessalonians 1 General Notes

Outline of 1 Thessalonians 1

Greeting (1:1)

Prayer of thanksgiving for the Thessalonian church (1:2-10)

Memory of the Thessalonians (1:2-5)

- apostolic prayers (1:2)
- work of the Thessalonians (1:2-3)
- God's election of the Thessalonians (1:4-5)

Thessalonians' example (1:6-10)

- reception of the apostles' teaching (1:6)
- examples to Macedonia and Achaia (1:7-10)
- example of suffering (1:7)
- preaching of the gospel (1:8)
- turned away from idolatry to God (1:9)
- waiting for the Second Coming of Christ (1:10)

Structure and Formatting

Verse 1 formally introduces this letter. Letters in the ancient Near East commonly had introductions of this type. Verses 2-4 give a general thanksgiving and encouragement to the Thessalonian church.

Special Concepts in this Chapter

Trinity

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are mentioned numerous times in this chapter. They are described in their identity, activity, and the union that the Christian has in them.

Hardship

Like the apostles before them, the Thessalonian church endured persecution for the sake of the gospel. The way that they responded with faith to the gospel message even in affliction and then preached that gospel to others made them examples to the churches throughout the regions of Macedonia and Achaia.

Faithfulness

Paul mentions the faithfulness of the Thessalonian church throughout this chapter. See, for example, "work of faith" in 1:3, "example to all those who believe" in 1:7, and "faith toward God" in 1:8.

1 Thessalonians 1:1

Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church

Here some words are omitted that a sentence would need in order to be complete in many languages. Alternate translation: “We are Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, writing to the church” (See **Ellipsis (p.179)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**)

Paul and Silvanus and Timothy

Paul is understood to be the author of this letter. Silvanus and Timothy are with him as he writes and are in agreement with what he writes. If that might not be understood in your language, you could include this information in your translation. Alternate translation: “I, Paul, together with Silvanus and Timothy, write” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

Silvanus

The name **Silvanus** is a longer form of the name **Silas**, the form of the name used for this same man in the book of Acts. You could choose to use the shorter form here as well, or you could choose to use the longer form here and include a footnote explaining that they are forms of the same name. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.198)**) (See: **How to Translate Names (p.198)**)

in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Here Paul speaks figuratively of the believers as though they were occupying space inside of God and Jesus. This metaphor expresses the idea that believers are spiritually united to God and Jesus. If this might be misunderstood in your language, you could express the meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternative translation: “united to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” or “sharing life with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

When **God** is called **Father** (See **1:3**), it is meant to highlight his relationship to **Jesus** as “Son” (See **1:10**). Here, the Old Testament title for **God**, **Lord**, is applied to **Jesus**, equating him with **God**. Be sure to accurately translate these titles in your translation. (See: **Translating Son and Father (p.269)**) (See: **Translating Son and Father (p.269)**)

Grace to you and peace

This phrase is a common biblical blessing formula and greeting (See Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2; 2 Th. 1:2; Philem. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Pet. 1:2; Rev. 1:4). Use a form that people would recognize as a blessing that could be used as a greeting in your language. Alternate translation: “May God give you his grace and peace” or “I pray that God shows you favor and keeps you safe” (See: **Blessings (p.143)**) (See: **Blessings (p.143)**)

Grace to you and peace

The words **grace** and **peace** are abstract nouns. Your language may have a particular way of expressing these concepts, such as with verbs or description words. If so, you could use them in your translation. Alternate translation: “We pray that God will treat you kindly and give you peaceful relationships.” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

to you

Throughout this letter the word **you** is plural and refers to the church of Thessalonica, unless otherwise noted.
(See: **Forms of You (p.188)**) (See: **Forms of You (p.188)**)

1 Thessalonians 1:2

We give thanks & making

In this verse Paul describes the apostles' prayers for the Thessalonians in two clauses. The first clause is specific, that they **give thanks to God**, and the second is general, that they are **making mention** of them. If it would be clearer in your language, you could reverse the order of the clauses, as done in the UST. (See: **Information Structure (p.214)**) (See: **Information Structure (p.214)**)

always & making mention {of you} in our prayers continually

Here the words **always** and **continually** are exaggerations that figuratively express the intensity and frequency of the prayers offered up to God by Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy for the Thessalonians. If your language would not use exaggeration in this way, use plain language and express the emphasis in another way. Alternate translation: "We regularly give thanks to God for all of you, very often making mention of you in our prayers" (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**) (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**)

1 Thessalonians 1:3

remembering your work of faith and labor of love and endurance of hope of our Lord Jesus Christ before our God and Father

The main verb of this sentence is “we give thanks” (See 1:2). The phrase **remembering ... before our God and Father** is an idiom that also means to thank God in prayer. The apostles are **remembering** these things about the Thessalonians and thanking God for them. If it would be helpful for your readers, you could move the phrase **before our God and Father** to follow **remembering**. Alternate translation: “offering thanks for ... to our God and Father” or “gratefully mentioning to our God and Father ... Christ” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

work of faith and labor of love and endurance of hope

Paul uses three pairs of words in a possessive relationship here. The most likely meaning of this possessive relationship is that the second word of each pair is the motivation for the first word of the pair. Alternate translation: “work motivated by faith and labor because of love and endurance based on future promises” (See: **Possession (p.244)**) (See: **Possession (p.244)**)

of our Lord Jesus Christ

The words **in our Lord Jesus Christ** is a possessive form. The relationship between **our Lord Jesus Christ** and **hope** could refer to: (1) Jesus as the object of hope. Alternate translation: “that our Lord Jesus Christ will do what he has promised” (2) Jesus as the source of hope. Alternate translation: “that comes from our Lord Jesus Christ” (See: **Possession (p.244)**) (See: **Possession (p.244)**)

our God and Father

Here, **our God and Father** refers to the one divine person who is both God and Father. This phrase is a hendiadys, since Father further describes God. Alternate translation: “God our Father” or “our Father God” (See: **Hendiadys (p.195)**) (See: **Hendiadys (p.195)**)

our

Here, **our** refers to Paul, Silvanus, Timothy, and the Thessalonian church. All believers are the spiritual children of God the Father through Jesus. Your language may require you to mark these forms. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**) (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**)

1 Thessalonians 1:4

knowing

Here, **knowing** continues the simultaneous description of how the writers of this letter “give thanks” (See UST). (See: **Connect — Simultaneous Time Relationship (p.163)**) (See: **Connect — Simultaneous Time Relationship (p.163)**)

brothers loved by God

This phrase acts as nominal adjective that describes the Thessalonian church in relational terms. They are spiritual siblings in their relationship with the writers of the letter and beloved children in their relationship with **God** the Father (See 1:3). (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**) (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**)

brothers

Throughout this letter, **brothers** is a metaphor meaning “fellow Christians” or “fellow believers in Christ.” If your readers would not understand what **brothers** means in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

brothers

Although the term **brothers** is masculine, Paul is using the word here in a generic sense that includes both males and females. Alternate translation: “brothers and sisters” or “spiritual brothers and sisters” or “fellow believers in Christ” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.271)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.271)**)

loved by God

If it is clearer in your language, this passive form **loved** could be changed to an active form. Alternate translation: “whom God has always loved” (See: **Active or Passive (p.134)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.134)**)

your election

This phrase **your election** is the direct objective of **knowing**, and it is the beginning of a result clause. The reason why the writers of this letter know that the Thessalonians have been chosen as God’s people is found in the following verse. (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

your election

Here, **election** is an abstract noun phrase. If this is unclear in your language, you could change this abstract noun to a verb form. Alternate translation: “that he chose you to belong to him,” or “that he ordained you to be his children,” or starting a new sentence, “God selected you to be his people.” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

1 Thessalonians 1:5

because

Here, **because** is the marker of a result clause. The writers of this letter are certain of the “election” and identity of the Thessalonian church as God’s people [1:4](#), **because** they received the gospel message in all the ways described in verse 5. (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance

The writers of this letter use a contrasting clause to emphasize the multi-faceted effect of the gospel. Alternate translation: “our gospel preaching did not come to you as only a simple message, but even accompanied with power and the Holy Spirit and full assurance” (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**)

our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance

If it is clearer in your language, you could change this extended phrase to a simultaneous clause, framed in a positive way. Alternate translation: “our gospel message was completely validated: by our words, by a display of power, by the Holy Spirit, by your own full assurance” (See: **Connect — Simultaneous Time Relationship (p.163)**) (See: **Connect — Simultaneous Time Relationship (p.163)**)

but also in power and in the Holy Spirit

This phrase could refer to: (1) the **Holy Spirit** who gave the apostles the ability to preach the **gospel** powerfully. (2) the **Holy Spirit** who caused the preaching of the **gospel** to have a powerful effect in the Thessalonian church. Alternate translation: “but also empowered by the Holy Spirit” (3) the **Holy Spirit** demonstrated the truth of the **gospel** preaching through displays of **power**. Alternate translation: “but also with powerful signs from the Holy Spirit”

in much assurance

Here, **assurance** is an abstract noun. If your language does not use the abstract noun **assurance**, you can express the idea behind it in another way. Alternate translation: “the Holy Spirit gave you full confidence” or “the Holy Spirit fully convinced you” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

just as you know what kind {of men

The phrase **just as you know what kind of men** is used by writers of this letter to validate the gospel message, by the example of their own conduct amongst the Thessalonian Church. Alternate translation: “you even experienced for yourself what type of men” or “you are well aware how we behaved while”

1 Thessalonians 1:6

And you yourselves became imitators of us and of the Lord

If your language would not use a noun for the idea behind **imitators**, you could translate this with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: “And all of you mimicked us and the Lord” or “And all of you copied us and the Lord” or “And all of you behaved like us and the Lord” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

yourselves

The word translated **you** is in a position that gives it special emphasis as a new topic. Use a natural way in your language to show that Paul is now going to talk about the Thessalonians. Alternate translation: “on your part, you” or “you yourselves”

of the Lord

Lord here refers to Jesus, as in 1:3. Throughout this letter, whenever Paul uses the title **Lord**, it refers to Jesus. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could include the name here. See the UST. (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

with joy of the Holy Spirit

If it is natural in your language, you may want to indicate a contrast between this phrase and the one before it. Alternate translation: “yet in spite of that, you had joy from the Holy Spirit” or “and even so, the Holy Spirit caused you to be joyful” (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**)

the word

Here, **the word** figuratively represents a message that is made up of words. It refers to the same message called “our gospel” in 1:5. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression. Alternate translation: “the gospel message” or “God’s message” (See: **Metonymy (p.231)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.231)**)

in much affliction

If your language would not use the abstract noun **hardship**, you could express the idea behind it with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: “while you were deeply distressed” or “as people made you suffer” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

with joy of the Holy Spirit

If your language would not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **joy**, you could translate this with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: “you rejoiced because of the Holy Spirit” or “but remaining joyful because of the Holy Spirit” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

with joy of the Holy Spirit

Paul is using the possessive form to describe a relationship between **the Holy Spirit** and **joy**. This relationship could be: (1) the Holy Spirit is the source of joy. Alternate translation: “with joy from the Holy Spirit” or “as the Holy Spirit caused you to rejoice” (2) joy is the response to having the Holy Spirit. Alternate translation: “with the joy of

those who belong to the Holy Spirit” or “with joy because you belong to the Holy Spirit” (See: **Possession (p.244)**)
(See: **Possession (p.244)**)

1 Thessalonians 1:7

so that

As a result indicates that what was spoken about in verse 6 caused what follows in verse 7. Use a natural way in your language to introduce verse 7 as the outcome of verse 6. Alternate translation: “Therefore” or “Because of that” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

you became examples to all the ones believing in Macedonia and in Achaia

If your language would not use the abstract noun **example**, you could express the idea behind it with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: “all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia wanted to imitate you” or “all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia started to copy how you live” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

to & the ones believing

Here and throughout the letter, the phrase **those who believe** refers to people who believe or trust in Jesus. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could include that information here. Alternate translation: “to ... those who trust in Jesus” or “to ... those who remain faithful to Jesus” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

in Macedonia and in Achaia

The phrases **in Macedonia** and **in Achaia** mean that **those who believe** lived in any part of those provinces. Alternate translation: “throughout Macedonia and Achaia” or “throughout the regions of Macedonia and Achaia” or “across all of Macedonia and Achaia”

1 Thessalonians 1:8

For from you the word of the Lord has been sounded out

By putting **For from you** at the beginning of the sentence, Paul is emphasizing that it was the Thessalonians who have spread the word of God throughout the area. Use a natural way in your language to emphasize this. Alternate translation: “Indeed, it was from you that people heard the word of the Lord” or “Yes, you were the ones who proclaimed the word of the Lord” (See: **Information Structure (p.214)**) (See: **Information Structure (p.214)**)

For from you

This verse connects to verse 7 as an explanation of how the Thessalonian church became an example of faithfulness to God throughout Macedonia and Achaia and beyond. Use a word or phrase that introduces an explanation in your language. Alternate translation: “Certainly, from you” or “Indeed, from all of you” or “Because from you” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

the word of the Lord

The phrase **the word of the Lord** figuratively refers to “the whole message of the Lord’s gospel.” Alternate translation: “the gospel message about the Lord Jesus Christ” or “the Lord’s gospel message” (See: **Metonymy (p.231)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.231)**)

has been sounded out

Here, **has been sounded out** uses a metaphor of a ringing bell or resounding instrument that can be heard from far away to describe how clearly and far the news of the Thessalonians’ faithfulness to God has spread throughout the world. If this might be misunderstood in your language, use an equivalent metaphor, or use plain language. Alternate translation: “has shone forth” or “has spread far and wide” or “has been heard” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

your faith toward God

Here, **faith** stands for the way that the Thessalonian church lived in faithful obedience to God. If this might be misunderstood in your language, use an expanded phrase. Alternate translation: “news of the way that you trust in God” or “the report about your faithfulness toward God” or “your faithful example before God” (See **Synecdoche (p.265)**) (See: **Synecdoche (p.265)**)

your faith toward God has gone out into every place

Here, **your faith toward God has gone out** is a metaphor that pictures **faith** as something that can travel. This metaphor has the same meaning as the previous one about the sound of a bell going out. It means that the news of the Thessalonians’ faithfulness to God has spread very far. If this might be misunderstood in your language, use an equivalent metaphor, or use plain language. Alternate translation: “people have heard about your faith toward God in every place” or “news of your trust in God has been heard in every place” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

into every place

The phrase **into every place** is a hyperbole. If this might be misunderstood in your language, use plain language. Alternate translation: “all over the inhabited world” (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**) (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**)

so that we do not have need to say anything

Therefore marks what follows as the result of what came before. Because the gospel message and the faithful model of the Thessalonian church were so effective, the writers of this letter have no need to add anything to it. Use a natural way in your language to show this result relationship. Alternate translation: “This is why we have no reason to say anything more” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

1 Thessalonians 1:9

For

Here, **For** is used to emphasize and explain why the writers of this letter do not need to **say anything** 1:8. Alternate translation: “Because” or “Indeed,” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

For they themselves report concerning us

The writers of the letter use the pronoun **themselves** to emphasize at least two things: (1) These are the same people who heard about the Thessalonians’ gospel message and way of life. (2) The way the writers of this letter know that the Thessalonians’ gospel message and way of life has spread “into every place” is from the **report**. Alternate translation: “Those people who heard about the Thessalonian church tell” or “These same people proclaim” (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**) (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**)

they & report

Alternate translation: “these same people are sending out the message” or “they themselves are proclaiming”

what kind of entrance we had to you

If your language does not use the abstract noun **reception**, you can express that idea behind it in another way. Alternate translation: “how readily you received us” or “how enthusiastically you welcomed us” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

what kind of entrance we had to you

Paul implies that the **kind of reception** they had from the Thessalonians was a good one. If that would not be understood by your readers, you could indicate it explicitly. Alternate translation: “what a good reception we had from you” or “how gladly you welcomed us” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

how you turned to God

Here, the phrase **how you turned** is an idiom that simply refers to the fact that they turned, not to the manner of how they turned. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use plain language. Alternate translation: “that you turned” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

you turned to God from the idols to serve the living and true God

If it would be more natural in your language, you could combine the two phrases **to God** and **to serve the living and true God** into one phrase. Alternate translation: “you turned from serving the idols to serve the living and true God” (See: **Doublet (p.177)**) (See: **Doublet (p.177)**)

you turned to God from the idols

Paul speaks figuratively of the Thessalonian believers as if they had been facing toward their idols and then turned around to face toward God. He means that they no longer worship idols, but now they worship God. If this metaphor might be misunderstood in your language, use an equivalent metaphor from your culture or express

this meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “you started worshiping God and left the idols behind” or “you abandoned the idols so that you could worship God” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

to serve

Here, **to serve** introduces a purpose clause. The reason why these people stopped worshiping idols was in order to serve God. Use a natural method of introducing a purpose clause in your language. Alternate translation: “in order to begin serving” or “for the purpose of serving” or “so that you could serve” (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**) (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**)

from the idols to serve the living and true God

This phrase expresses parallelism, by contrasting the deadness and falseness of idols with the living and real God. (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**)

from the idols to serve the living and true God

By using the terms **living and true** to describe God, Paul is implying that these terms do not apply to the idols or to the gods that those idols represent. The idols themselves are made of materials that are not alive. The gods that they represent are living beings, but they are not **true** gods, because people do not owe them obedience or worship as they do to the God who created them. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could include this information in the text or a footnote. Alternate translation: “from worshiping the non-living statues of false gods in order to serve the real God who is alive” or “from the dead idols in order to serve the God who lives and deserves our worship” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

1 Thessalonians 1:10

and to wait for his Son from the heavens

The phrase **and to wait** adds a second purpose for which the Thessalonian believers stopped worshiping idols. Use a natural method for connecting this as another purpose clause in your language. Alternate translation: “and also to wait expectantly for the second coming of his Son from heaven” (See the Introduction to 1 Thessalonians, Part 2, for a discussion of the Second Coming of Christ.) (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**) (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**)

his Son

Son is an important title for Jesus that describes his relationship to God the Father. Alternate translation: “God’s only Son” (See: **Translating Son and Father (p.269)**) (See: **Translating Son and Father (p.269)**)

from the heavens

Here, the phrase **from the heavens** expresses the spiritual place where God is and where Jesus is currently located. It is the place from where he will return to the physical location of Earth. Make sure that your translation means this and not merely “the sky.” Alternate translation: “from the place where God is” or “from God’s realm”

whom he raised from the dead—Jesus

Here, **whom** is a reference to **Son**, who is the same person as Jesus. Also, **he** and **his** refer back to God in 1:9. So, it is God who raised Jesus from the dead. You can make the subject, God, explicit in your translation if the use of the pronoun is unclear in your language. Alternate translation: “Jesus, whom God raised from the dead” or “whom God resurrected from the dead. This is Jesus” (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.250)**) (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.250)**)

from the dead

Here, the phrase **the dead** is plural and a common biblical concept that refers to “dead people.” It means that Jesus physically died and was buried. If your language has a word or phrase for the place that dead people go, you could use it here. Alternate translation: “from the place where dead people are” or “from death” or “from the place where corpses are” or “from the grave” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

Jesus, the one rescuing us

The clause **the one rescuing us** is functioning as an adjective that describes Jesus in his role as rescuer. It makes this action of rescuing to be a characteristic of Jesus or even a title: “the rescuer.” Translate this in a way that makes this a description of Jesus. Alternate translation: “Jesus, our rescuer” or “Jesus, who rescues us” or “Jesus, the one who is going to rescue us” (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**) (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**)

the one rescuing

Here, **rescuing** does not mean being taken away from God’s wrath after experiencing it. Instead, it means being taken away from any danger of experiencing God’s wrath. Alternate translation: “the one saving us” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

us

This is an inclusive use of **us**, including Paul, Silvanus, Timothy, and the Thessalonians—and by extension—all Christians. Your language may require you to mark these forms. Alternate translation: “all of us Christians” or “we who trust in Christ” or “all of us believers in Christ” (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**) (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**)

from the coming wrath

Here, **wrath** is an abstract noun referring to the destined **coming** of God’s future and final Judgment. If it is clearer in your language, you could translate this as a verb form. Alternate translation: “from the future time when God punishes those who do not trust in him” or “when God will certainly punish those who worship idols” or “from God’s impending judgment” (See: [What is the “second coming” of Jesus?](#)) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

the coming wrath

Paul speaks figuratively of **wrath** as though it were something that could travel and is **coming** to where people are. He means by this that in the future an event will happen when God will act wrathfully against people who have sinned and who have not trusted in Jesus to forgive their sins. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this plainly. Alternate translation: “God’s judgment that will happen” or “when God will punish people for sin” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

1 Thessalonians 2

1 Thessalonians 2 General Notes

Outline of 1 Thessalonians 2

Apostolic Suffering (2:1-13)
Apostolic preaching (2:1-6)
Apostolic conduct (2:7-9)
Apostolic witness (2:10-3)
Persecution of the Church (2:14-16)
Thessalonian persecution (2:14a)
Jewish persecution (2:14b-16)
Paul's Desire to Visit (2:17-20)

Structure and Formatting

The first part of this chapter is a defense of their apostleship and sufferings. The second part is a recounting of the Thessalonian church's sufferings. Lastly, the apostle Paul makes known his deep desire to visit the Thessalonian church.

"We" and "You"

In this letter, the words **we** and **our** refer to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, unless otherwise noted. Throughout the letter, **we** and **our** is used to convey that all three apostles are in agreement with the letter.

Special Concepts in this Chapter

Apostolic witness

Here, Paul defends how he, Silvanus, and Timothy are God's apostles. By their preaching, conduct, and witness, they prove to be authorized messengers of Christ. (See: [\[\[rc://tw/bible/kt/apostle\]\]](#) and [\[\[rc://tw/dict/bible/kt/testimony\]\]](#))

The gospel of God

The foundation of the apostolic witness is that they were "entrusted with the gospel" (See [2:4](#)). The apostles' authority makes them: "bold to speak" (See [2:2](#)), "impart" (See [2:8](#)), "preach" (See [2:9](#)), and thank God that the Thessalonian church "received the word of God" (See [2:13](#)).

The Second Coming of Christ

In this chapter is the first mention of the Second Coming of Christ in its two facets. First, Paul mentions that the persecutors of Christ's Church will be judged by using the phrase "wrath has come upon them" in [2:16](#). Next, Paul speaks of the "hope" and "joy" and "glory" for those who will "be saved" (See [2:16](#)) "in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming" (See [2:19-20](#)).

1 Thessalonians 2:1

For you yourselves know, brothers

Here, **For you yourselves know, brothers** functions as a chapter transition into the next topic, the apostles' suffering. You could emphasize this if it would be clearer in your language. Alternate translation: "Certainly, you are fully aware" (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

you yourselves know

The words **you** and **yourselves** refer to the Thessalonian church. Paul uses this emphasis to express how well the Thessalonians understand the benefit of the apostles' previous visit. Use a way that is natural in your language to indicate this emphasis. Alternate translation: "you fully realize" or "you personally understand" (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**) (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**)

brothers

Throughout this letter, **brothers** is a metaphor meaning "fellow Christians" or "fellow believers in Christ" (See 1:4). If your readers would not understand what **brothers** means in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

brothers

Although the term **brothers** is masculine, Paul is using the word here in a generic sense that includes both males and females. Alternate translation: "brothers and sisters" or "spiritual brothers and sisters" or "fellow believers in Christ" (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.271)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.271)**)

our entrance to you

This is an abstract noun phrase that refers to the apostles' previous visit (See "reception" in 1:9). If your language does not use abstract noun phrases for this idea, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun phrase with a verb form. Alternate translation: "when we visited you" or "when you received us" or "when you welcomed us" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

that our entrance to

Here, **our** is exclusive, referring to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy—but not to the Thessalonian church (See 1:9). Your language may require you to mark this form. Alternate translation: "when we apostles came" (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive 'We' (p.186)**) (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive 'We' (p.186)**)

has not been in vain

Here, **has not been in vain** is a figure of speech that expresses a strong positive meaning by using a negative word together with a word that has the opposite of the intended meaning. If this is confusing in your language, you can express the meaning positively. Alternate translation: "has proved quite beneficial" or "has definitely been worthwhile" or "has been very useful" (See: **Litotes (p.221)**) (See: **Litotes (p.221)**)

1 Thessalonians 2:2

This verse provides background information about what happened when Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy were in the city of Philippi (See Acts 16-17:1-10; 1:6). Use the natural form in your language for expressing background information. (See: **Background Information (p.140)**) (See: **Background Information (p.140)**)

But having previously suffered and having been mistreated at Philippi, just as you know, we were bold in our God

But begins a contrasting clause emphasizing that the coming of Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy was **not in vain** 2:1. The phrase **we were bold** is an emphatic contrast to the normal response one would expect from suffering. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy are able to respond this way because their boldness comes from God. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a contrast. Alternate translation: "However ... God made us confident in how powerful he is" or "Instead ... God encouraged us" (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**)

But having previously suffered and having been mistreated at Philippi, just as you know

Here, **just as you know** is meant to emphasize how well the Thessalonian church understands the apostles' suffering. If it would be more natural in your language, you could reverse the order of these phrases. Alternate translation: "But, as you are well aware that we already suffered and were badly insulted at Philippi" (See: **Information Structure (p.214)**) (See: **Information Structure (p.214)**)

having previously suffered and having been mistreated

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. The repetition is used to emphasize how badly the apostles suffered. If your language does not use repetition in this way, you can combine these phrases. Alternate translation: "despite the fact that we had earlier suffered violently" or "since we already suffered being shamefully abused" (See: **Doublet (p.177)**) (See: **Doublet (p.177)**)

the gospel of God

This possessive phrase, **the gospel of God**, expresses how **gospel** relates to **God**. It can refer to three main ideas: (1) possession. Alternate translation: "God's gospel" (2) source. Alternate translation: "the gospel from God" (3) association. "the gospel about God" (See: **Possession (p.244)**) (See: **Possession (p.244)**)

in much struggle

Here, **in much struggle** can also refer to a spiritual contest or game. If your language does not use the abstract noun **struggle**, for this idea, you can express the idea behind it in another way. Alternate translation: "although we struggled hard" or "despite how much we agonized" or "during the time we contested" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

1 Thessalonians 2:3

For our exhortation {was} neither from error, nor from impurity, nor in deceit

Paul uses a repetitive series of phrases to describe why Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy had boldness to speak. This repetitive style of speaking or writing is called a “litany.” This list of phrases also defends how their message was “the gospel of God” (See [2:2](#)). Use a form in your language that someone would use to list things that someone has done right. (See: [Litany \(p.219\)](#)) (See: [Litany \(p.219\)](#))

For our exhortation {was} neither from error, nor from impurity, nor in deceit

If your language does not use an abstract nouns **exhortation**, **error**, **impurity**, and **deceit**, you can express the idea behind them in another way. Alternate translation: “Certainly, when we appealed to you: we did not try to lead you astray, we did not speak impurely, we did not try to deceive you” (See: [Abstract Nouns \(p.132\)](#)) (See: [Abstract Nouns \(p.132\)](#))

was} neither from error, nor from impurity, nor in deceit

Paul uses this list of figures of speech that express a strong positive meaning by using a negative words together with words that are the opposite of the intended meaning. Here this list highlights the sincere motive and true content of the **exhortation** Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy shared with the Thessalonian church. If this is confusing in your language, you can express the meaning positively. Alternate translation: “was from honest, pure, sincere motives” or “was made properly, purely, and sincerely” (See: [Litotes \(p.221\)](#)) (See: [Litotes \(p.221\)](#))

1 Thessalonians 2:4

but just as

Here, **but just as** is meant to contrast the negative items in 2:3, and reinforce that Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy are authorized to preach the gospel. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a contrast. Alternate translation: “it is actually true that” (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**)

but just as we have been examined by God to be entrusted with the gospel

Here, **to be entrusted** expresses the result of **been examined**. If it would be more natural in your language, you could reverse the order of these phrases. Alternate translation: “certainly, God trusts us to proclaim the gospel because he tested and approved us” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

we have been examined by God to be entrusted with the gospel

The combination of these two verbs, **examined** and **entrusted**, are meant to emphasize how the apostles are authorized to preach the gospel. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly. Alternate translation: “God has verified that we can be trusted to proclaim his good news” or “we have passed God’s test as faithful preachers of the gospel” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

so we speak

Here, **so we speak** expresses the result of having **been examined**. The reason why the apostles have confidence and authority to **speak** the gospel is because God tested and approved them. This could refer to: (1) reason for speaking. Alternate translation: “this is why we keep talking about it” (2) manner of speaking. Alternate translation: “so this is how we speak” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

we speak

Paul is leaving out some of the words that a sentence would need in many languages to be complete. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could supply these words from the context. Alternate translation: “we apostles keep speaking the gospel” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

not as pleasing to men, but to God

Here, the word **but** contrasts **men** and **God**. Paul is indicating that **God** and **men** are different beings. Paul is also expressing the idea that the apostles’ motive for speaking the **gospel** is to please **God**, and not to be **pleasing to men**. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a contrast. Alternate translation: “not to flatter people, but to please God” (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**)

our hearts

The phrase **our hearts** is a metonym for the apostles' motives, affections, or deepest thoughts. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or use plain language. Alternate translation: "what we love" or "what we ponder" (See: **Metonymy (p.231)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.231)**)

1 Thessalonians 2:5

For we were not at that time in a word of flattery

Here, the phrase **For we did not come at that time** marks a transition where the apostles defend their motives by describing their previous godly conduct. Alternate translation: “Because previously when we came, it was not to flatter you” or “Certainly we never came in order to flatter you” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

not & in a word of flattery, & nor in a pretext of greed

Here, Paul uses a series of negative examples in [2:5-6](#) to describe behavior that is not fitting for Christ’s apostles. This repetitive style of speaking or writing is called a “litany.” You can use a form in your language to list things that someone should not do. (See: **Litany (p.219)**) (See: **Litany (p.219)**)

For we were not at that time in a word of flattery

Paul places **just as you know** in a position that gives it special emphasis (See also [2:2](#)). If it would be more natural in your language, you could reverse the order of these phrases. Alternate translation: “As you are well aware, we did not previously come to flatter” (See: **Information Structure (p.214)**) (See: **Information Structure (p.214)**)

in a pretext of greed

Here, **pretext** figuratively expresses the idea of people with greedy motives by comparing them to people wearing a mask or a disguise to cover up their evil intent. If the concept of a masking or disguising would not communicate a covering of true motives, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternate translation: “disguising greedy intent” or “trying to hide greed” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

God {is} witness

In the phrase **God {is} witness**, Paul is leaving out some of the words that a sentence would need in many languages to be complete. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could supply these words from the context. Alternate translation: “God is our witness!” (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**)

God {is} witness

The apostles are appealing to God to validate their gospel message and personal motives. They figuratively speak as if they are summoning God as a witness to testify on their behalf before a judge. If your readers would not understand what **God {is} witness** means in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternate translation: “We swear to/by God!” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

1 Thessalonians 2:6

nor seeking glory from men, neither from you nor from others

Here Paul refers figuratively to **men** to speak of any individual person. He also refers to **from you or from others** as another way of saying “all people.” If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your culture or use plain language. Alternate translation: “We were not looking for praise from any human being—not you or anyone else—” or “We were not hoping for any human honors from anyone” (See: **Synecdoche (p.265)**) (See: **Synecdoche (p.265)**)

glory from men

If your language does not use the abstract noun **glory**, you can express the idea behind it in another way. Alternate translation: “for people to praise us” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

1 Thessalonians 2:7

being able to be a burden as apostles of Christ

With the phrase **being able to be a burden**, Paul uses a hypothetical condition to draw attention to the divine authority of the **apostles of Christ**. Use the natural form in your language for expressing a hypothetical situation. This phrase could refer to: (1) authority of the apostles. “as Christ’s apostles we have authority to force obedience” (2) rights of the apostles. Alternate translation: “as Christ’s apostles, we could have burdened you by demanding financial support” (3) authority and rights of the apostles. Alternate translation: “as Christ’s apostles, we have the power to demand support and submission” (See: **Hypothetical Situations (p.206)**) (See: **Hypothetical Situations (p.206)**)

being able to be a burden

Paul speaks figuratively of the apostles as if they were a heavy weight or pack. He means that if they wanted to, they could impose their apostolic authority in a way that could seem oppressive to the Thessalonian church. If your readers would not understand what **burden** means in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul’s meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternative translation, “although we could impose our authority” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

but

Here, **but** signals that the rest of the verse will contrast the idea of **burden**. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a contrast. Alternate translation: “however” (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**)

we became little children in the midst of you

Here, **became little children in the midst of you** is a metaphor indicating how gently the apostles treated the Thessalonian church. You could translate this with an active form, using a simile. Alternate translation: “we acted as mild as infants when we visited you” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

in the midst of you

Paul uses the idiom **in the midst of you** that means “spending time” or “visiting”. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent idiom or use plain language. Alternate translation: “while visiting you” or “while spending time with you” or “when we were with you” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

as if a mother might comfort her own children

The point of this comparison is that in the same way a **mother** would gently **comfort** her **children**, so the apostles gently and affectionately nurtured the Thessalonian church (See 2:8). If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent comparison or express this meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “as we affectionately cared for you” (See: **Simile (p.258)**) (See: **Simile (p.258)**)

1 Thessalonians 2:8

Longing for you in this manner

If your language does not use the abstract noun **affection**, you can express the idea behind it in another way. Alternate translation: “Because we desire you so much” or “Since we yearn for you like this” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

our own souls

Paul uses **our own souls** to speak figuratively of the apostles’ bodies or their life. Alternatively, you could express Paul’s meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “our own selves” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

1 Thessalonians 2:9

For

Here the connecting word **For** emphasizes that what follows is something else important that the Thessalonian church should pay attention to. Alternate translation: “Certainly,” or “Indeed,” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

brothers

Although the term **brothers** is masculine, Paul is using the word here in a generic sense that includes both males and females. Alternate translation: “brothers and sisters” or “spiritual brothers and sisters” or “fellow believers in Christ” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.271)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.271)**)

our labor and toil

Here, **labor** and **toil** mean basically the same thing. The repetition emphasizes how hard the apostles worked. If your language does not use repetition in this way, you can combine these phrases or make them active. Alternate translation: “our toilsome labor” or “how hard we worked” (See: **Doublet (p.177)**) (See: **Doublet (p.177)**)

night and day working

This phrase further explains **our labor and toil**. If this is not understood in your language, you could make the relationship between these phrases more clear. Alternate translation: “although working night and day” or “despite the fact that we kept working night and day” (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**) (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**)

night and day working

Here, **night and day working** is an idiom for excessive labor. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent idiom or use plain language. Alternate translation: “we stayed busy working” or “we never stopped laboring” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

in order not to burden any of you

Paul speaks figuratively of the apostles as if they were a heavy weight or pack (See note at [2:7](#)). Alternative translation, “so that none of you would have to financially support us” or “so that we would not impose on anyone” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

in order not

This phrase introduces a purpose clause. Paul is stating the purpose for why the apostles worked so much. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a purpose clause. (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**) (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**)

the gospel of God

Again, the phrase **the gospel of God** is used to indicate that the apostles’ message is of divine origin (See your translation at [2:2](#)). (See: **Possession (p.244)**) (See: **Possession (p.244)**)

1 Thessalonians 2:10

You and God {are} witnesses

The apostles are appealing to the Thessalonian church and God to validate their gospel message and personal motives (See also [2:5](#)). They figuratively speak as if they are summoning both the church and God as a witness to testify on their behalf before a judge. If your readers would not understand what this phrase means in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternate translation: “You are our witnesses, as well as God himself” or “As well as God, you could personally testify” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

You and God {are} witnesses

In this phrase, Paul is leaving out some of the words that a sentence would need in many languages to be complete. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could supply these words from the context. Alternate translation: “As well as God, you could personally testify” (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**)

how piously and righteously and blamelessly we were to you, the ones believing

Paul uses a repetitive series of proofs of the apostles’ godly behavior in [2:10-12](#). This repetitive style of speaking or writing is called a “litany.” This is a list of the evidence for which the Thessalonian church and God are evoked as witnesses. Use a form in your language that someone would use to list things that someone has done right. Alternate translation: “just how faithfully and justly and innocently we conducted ourselves toward you believers in God” or “how we acted reverently, and fairly, and blamelessly while visiting the faithful” (See: **Litany (p.219)**) (See: **Litany (p.219)**)

You & to you

The pronouns **You** and **you** are plural and refer to all the believers in God at Thessalonica. Your language may require you to mark this form. Alternate translation: “You all ... among all of you” (See: **Forms of ‘You’ — Singular (p.189)**) (See: **Forms of ‘You’ — Singular (p.189)**)

1 Thessalonians 2:11

just as you know how, {with} each one of you

Again, Paul places **just as you know** in a position that gives it special emphasis (See also [2:2,5](#)). It is another way of saying “you {are} witnesses” (See [2:10](#)). Paul is appealing to the Thessalonian church’s own experience of the apostles’ godly behavior to prove their gospel message comes from God (See [2:9](#)). Use a natural way in your language to express this emphasis. Alternate translation: “just as you each and every one of you are well aware” or “just as each one of you experienced for yourself”

as a father his own children

The point of Paul’s comparison is that the apostles are like fathers who model and instruct in proper behavior for their children. They see themselves as spiritual fathers to the Thessalonian church, so they nurture them in the Christian faith like a father would care for the overall well-being of his own children. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent comparison or express this meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “like a father nurtures his own children” or “just as a father cares for his own children” or “like a father trains his own children” (See: **Simile (p.258)**) (See: **Simile (p.258)**)

1 Thessalonians 2:12

exhorting you and encouraging and testifying & you

Paul uses a repetitive series of verb forms to show how the apostles have instructed the Thessalonian church like caring fathers would teach their children. These words are meant to instill a sense of urgency. Alternate translation: “encouraging and building you up and acting as your witness” or “instructing you through appeals, encouragement, and our own personal example”

exhorting & testifying

These verbal forms also describe the apostles’ fatherly behavior toward the Thessalonian church. These forms can be expressed in a number of ways: (1) result. Alternate translation: “with the result that we kept exhorting ... testifying” (2) means. Alternate translation: “by exhorting ... testifying” (3) manner. Alternate translation: “how we kept exhorting ... testifying”

in order that you might walk worthily of God

This phrase is a purpose clause. Paul is stating the purpose for the apostles’ appeals. He wants the Thessalonian church to live **worthy of God**. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a purpose clause. Alternate translation: “that you must honor God by how you live” or “so that you would live how God desires” (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**) (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**)

in order that you might walk worthily of God

Paul is using the possessive form **of God** to describe how God’s people should live. Use a natural way in your language to make this explicit. Alternate translation: “to live in a way that honors God” or “to live in a way that God honors” (See: **Possession (p.244)**) (See: **Possession (p.244)**)

in order that & might walk

Here, **to walk** is a metaphor that means “to live.” If your readers would not understand what it means **to walk** in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul’s meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “to habitually live” or “for you to continue to live” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

the one calling you

This phrase gives us further information about God and describes what he is doing through the apostles’ teachings. If this is not understood in your language, you could make the relationship between these phrases clearer. Alternate translation: “he is the one who continues to summon you” (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**) (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**)

the one calling you

Here, **who is calling you** is a parallelism that equates the apostles’ **exhorting**, **encouraging**, and **testifying** with God’s **calling**. See also 2:13. (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**)

into his own kingdom and glory

This phrase, **into his own kingdom and glory**, expresses a single idea by using two words connected with **and**. The word **glory** describes what the **kingdom** is like. If it would be more natural in your language, you could express this meaning with an equivalent phrase that does not use **and**. Alternate translation: “into his own glorious kingdom” (See: **Hendiadys (p.195)**) (See: **Hendiadys (p.195)**)

1 Thessalonians 2:13

And because of this, we also thank God continually

General Information:

The phrase **And because of this** indicates that what follows are the reasons why the apostles are thankful for the Thessalonian church. If it would be more natural in your language, you could reverse the order of these phrases, as in the UST, to make this explicit. (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

we also thank God continually

This phrase uses exaggeration to emphasize the apostles' gratitude (See also 1:2). Here, **constantly** does not mean "every moment." If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language that shows intense gratitude. Alternate translation: "We ourselves habitually thank" (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**) (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**)

we

Here Paul uses the word **we** to emphasize how thankful the apostles are. Use a way that is natural in your language to indicate this emphasis. Alternate translation: "we personally" or "we ourselves"

that having received the word of hearing of God from us, you received it

General Information:

This clause explains why the apostles are thankful. If this is not understood in your language, you could make the relationship between these phrases more clear. See UST (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**) (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**)

that having received the word of hearing of God from us, you received it

General Information:

Paul is stressing that it is **the word of God** that the apostles reported. This is why he first mentions that the Thessalonians **received the word of God** before mentioning that they **heard** it. If this is confusing in your language, you can make the order of events clear. Alternate translation: "that when we told you God's message, you heard it, and then you accepted it" (See: **Order of Events (p.237)**) (See: **Order of Events (p.237)**)

that

Here, **that** marks the reasons in 2:13-14 for why the apostles are thankful for the Thessalonian church. Use a natural way in your language to express the reason why people should do things. (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

but just as it truly is

Paul uses this contrasting clause to strongly negate the idea that the apostles' message is of human origin. Use a natural way in your language for introducing an emphatic contrast. Alternate translation: "but in fact what it really is" (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**)

as} the word of men, & the word of God

Paul uses the phrase **the word** figuratively to represent a message that is made up of words. Here, **the word of man** refers to a message of human origin. In contrast, **the word of God** refers to the same message, called "the gospel of God" in 2:8-9. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression. Alternate translation: "a human message ... God's message" (See: **Metonymy (p.231)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.231)**)

which is also working in you, the ones believing

The apostles refer to God's gospel message figuratively as if it were a person or tool doing work. If this might be confusing for your readers, you could express this meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: "and God is energizing you faithful ones with this message" or "and God is activating this message among you who trust in him" (See: **Personification (p.242)**) (See: **Personification (p.242)**)

which

Here, the word translated **which** could refer to **God** or **the word**. Alternate translation: "and God" or "and God's word" (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.250)**) (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.250)**)

in you

Here, the pronoun **you** is plural and refers to all the believers in God at Thessalonica (See 2:10). Your language may require you to mark this form. Alternate translation: "among all of you" (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.189)**) (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.189)**)

1 Thessalonians 2:14

became imitators of the churches

Verses 14-16 provide background information about how the Thessalonian church suffered persecutions similar to the Judean church. (See: **Background Information (p.140)**) (See: **Background Information (p.140)**)

For

For indicates that what follows is the proof of how God's message is working among the Thessalonian church.

Alternate translation: "Because" or "In fact" (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

brothers

Although the term **brothers** is masculine, Paul is using the word here in a generic sense that includes both males and females. Alternate translation: "brothers and sisters" or "spiritual brothers and sisters" or "fellow believers in Christ" (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.271)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.271)**)

became imitators of the churches

Here, **imitators** is a noun that can be translated with a verb (See [1:6](#)). Use a natural way in your language to express this idea. Alternate translation: "mimicked the churches" or "imitated the churches" or "copied the behavior of the churches"

in Christ Jesus

Here, Paul speaks figuratively of the churches of God **in Christ Jesus** as though they were occupying space inside Jesus. This metaphor expresses the idea that believers are spiritually united to God and Jesus (See also [1:1](#)). Here, it also highlights the communion that Thessalonian believers **in Christ Jesus** have with Judean believers **in Christ Jesus** through the Holy Trinity. If this might be misunderstood in your language, you could express the meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternative translation, "who are united to Jesus Christ" or "who share life with Jesus Christ" (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

1 Thessalonians 2:15

the ones having killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets and having persecuted us

This is the specific content of the background information about the Jewish persecution of Christians. (See: **Background Information (p.140)**) (See: **Background Information (p.140)**)

the ones having killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets and having persecuted us

The whole history of the persecution of God's people is summarized in three parts: the killing of Old Testament prophets, the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, and persecution of the apostles. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your culture or use plain language. (See: **Merism (p.223)**) (See: **Merism (p.223)**)

the ones having killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets and having persecuted us

This list of those persecuted by the Jews is not chronological, but emphasizes the order of importance and intensity of persecution. If this is confusing in your language, you can make the order of events clear. Alternate translation: "who have killed the prophets, then the Lord Jesus, and finally persecuted us" (See: **Order of Events (p.237)**) (See: **Order of Events (p.237)**)

having persecuted us and not being pleasing to God and {being} hostile to all men

Here, **and** indicates that the following phrase is the result of Jews' persecution. If it would be more natural in your language, you could reverse the order of these phrases since the second phrase gives the reason for the result that the first phrase describes. To emphasize God's response toward the Jews' persecution, you could begin a new sentence with God as the subject. Alternate translation: "have persecuted us and are enemies of all people. This is why God is continually displeased" (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

and not being pleasing to God and {being} hostile to all men

These two phrases mean similar things. These phrases are meant to express how the Jewish persecution of Christians is the same thing as opposing God himself. If it would be clearer in your language, you could combine the phrases into one clarifying idea. Alternate translation: "and they make themselves enemies of God by how hostile they are against the Jewish and Gentile churches" (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**)

being} hostile to all men

Paul is using the possessive form of **hostile** to describe how the persecutors of the Christian Church are characterized by a hostile attitude. Alternate translation: "characterized by being opposed to all people types" (See: **Possession (p.244)**) (See: **Possession (p.244)**)

being} hostile

A word is left out here in the original that a sentence would need in many languages to be complete. Since English needs it, the word **are** is added in brackets. Do what is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “are opposed” (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**)

to all men

Paul speaks figuratively about **all men** to refer to “all people types” or “the whole human race.” Here, **all men** refers to two parts of humanity represented by Jews (See [2:14](#)) and Gentiles (See [2:16](#)). If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your culture or use plain language. Alternate translation: “to all people types” or “to all the nations” (See: **Synecdoche (p.265)**) (See: **Synecdoche (p.265)**)

to all men

Here, **to all men** is an exaggeration that Paul uses to express his emotions about the hostile Jews. Paul does not mean that the Jews are hostile to every individual human being. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language that shows this emphasis. Alternate translation: “toward all of humanity” (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**) (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**)

to all men

Although the term **men** is masculine, Paul is using the word here in a generic sense that includes both **men** and women. Alternate translation: “to all humans” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.271)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.271)**)

1 Thessalonians 2:16

forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles so that they might be saved

This clause gives further information for why the Gentiles are “not pleasing to God and {are} hostile to all men” (See [2:15](#)). If this is not understood in your language, you could make the relationship between these phrases more clear. (See: [Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding \(p.171\)](#)) (See: [Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding \(p.171\)](#))

to the Gentiles

Here, **Gentiles** refers to all the non-Christian nations in general, not one group of people. If this would be misunderstood in your language, use a more natural phrase. Alternate translation: “among the non-Jews” or “to all the nations” (See: [Generic Noun Phrases \(p.191\)](#)) (See: [Generic Noun Phrases \(p.191\)](#))

so that they might be saved

This purpose clause gives the reason why the Jews are trying to prevent the apostles from preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. Here, **to speak** expresses the way the Gentiles **might be saved**. This clause could refer to: (1) the Jews purposely trying to keep the Gentiles from salvation. Alternate translation: “to hinder the Gentiles from being saved” (2) how the speaking is for the purpose of saving the Gentiles. Alternate translation: “in order that the Gentiles can be saved” or “for the purpose of saving the nations” The clause could also refer to both ideas. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a purpose clause. (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship \(p.155\)](#)) (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship \(p.155\)](#))

so that {they} always fill up their sins

Paul speaks figuratively of the Jews’ sins as if they fill a container. He means that these Jews sin so much and so extremely that they can never escape God’s **wrath**. If your readers would not understand what it means to **to always fill up** in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternate translation: “causing them to always reach the limit of their sinfulness” (See: [Metaphor \(p.225\)](#)) (See: [Metaphor \(p.225\)](#))

so that {they} always fill up their sins

This result clause explains what will happen to the Jews for **forbidding** the apostles **to speak to the Gentiles**. Use a natural way in your language to indicate result. Alternate translation: “as a result, God will no longer forgive their many sins” (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship \(p.158\)](#)) (See: [Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship \(p.158\)](#))

But the wrath has come upon them to the end

Paul is figuratively using the past tense in order to refer to something that will happen in the future. Paul is doing this to show that the event will certainly happen. If the use of the past tense here is confusing in your language, you could use the future tense. This phrase could refer to: (1) final judgment. Alternate translation: “In fact, final wrath will overtake them” (See also [5:9](#)) (2) certain judgment. Alternate translation: “Certainly, their punishment has finally arrived” (See: [Predictive Past \(p.248\)](#)) (See: [Predictive Past \(p.248\)](#))

But

Paul uses **But** to indicate that what follows is important. Here, **But** could refer to: (1) certainty. Alternate translation: “Certainly” or “In fact” (2) contrast. Alternate translation: “However” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

But the wrath has come upon them

If your language does not use the abstract noun **the wrath**, you can express the idea behind it in another way. (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

1 Thessalonians 2:17

But we, brothers

The phrase **But we, brothers** expresses that this is a contrasting phrase that switches the attention back to the apostles' relationship with the Thessalonian church. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a contrast. (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**)

brothers

Although the term **brothers** is masculine, Paul is using the word here in a generic sense that includes both males and females. Alternate translation: "brothers and sisters" or "spiritual brothers and sisters" or "fellow believers in Christ" (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.271)**) (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.271)**)

having been separated from you

Since the Greek word that ULT translates as **having been separated from you** can also mean "having been orphaned from you," Paul may be revisiting the idea where the apostles affectionately compare themselves to "little children" in 2:7. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say this explicitly. Alternate translation: "since we have been apart from you, we feel like orphans" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

for the time of an hour

Here, **for the time of an hour** is an idiom that indicates a short time span. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent idiom or use plain language. Alternate translation: "for short time" or "for a little while" (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

by face, not by heart

Here, **face** represents the person or physical presence, and **heart** represents the apostles' concerns, feelings, and affections. Though the apostles were not physically present in Thessalonica, they continued to care about and show concern for their relationship with the church there. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or use plain language. Alternate translation: "by distance, not in feeling" or "in person, not in affection" or "in presence, not in concern" (See: **Metonymy (p.231)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.231)**)

to see your face, in much desire

Here, **to see your faces, in much desire** means the same thing as **by face, not in heart**. Paul says the same thing twice in slightly different ways to show how much the apostles desire to visit the Thessalonian church. Use a natural way in your language to express this idea. (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**)

in much desire

If your language does not use the abstract noun **desire**, you can express the idea behind it in another way. It can also be translated as an active phrase. Alternate translation: "for which we long passionately" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

to see your face

The phrase **to see your faces** is an idiom meaning **to visit**. Here, it expresses the apostles' strong desire to personally visit and share spiritual intimacy with the Thessalonian church. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent idiom or use plain language. Alternate translation: "to visit you" or "to spend quality time with you" (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

1 Thessalonians 2:18

For

Here, **For** indicates that what follows is background information for why Paul had not yet visited. Alternate translation: “Indeed,” or “Certainly,” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

to come

Your language may say “go” rather than **come** in contexts such as this. Use whichever is more natural. Alternate translation: “to go” or “to travel” (See: **Go and Come (p.193)**) (See: **Go and Come (p.193)**)

indeed I, Paul, both once and twice

In this phrase, Paul is leaving out some of the words that a sentence would need in many languages to be complete. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could supply these words from the context. Alternate translation: “I Paul personally tried to come twice” or “Indeed, I, Paul tried to go two times” (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**)

indeed I, Paul

Here Paul uses the pronoun **I**, and he uses **indeed** to emphasize that he personally tried to visit the Thessalonian church. Use a way that is natural in your language to indicate this emphasis. (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**) (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**)

both once and twice

Here, the phrase **both once and twice** means repeatedly. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent idiom or use plain language. Alternate translation: “twice” or “many times” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

but

What follows the word **but** here is in contrast to what was expected, that Paul would visit the Thessalonian church. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a contrast. Alternate translation: “however” (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**)

but & hindered

Since the Greek word that ULT translates as **hindered** often means “cut off” or “beat in,” Paul may be stressing the violent nature of Satan’s obstruction. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say this explicitly. Alternate translation: “powerfully prevented us” or “violently obstructed us” or “cut off our route” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

1 Thessalonians 2:19

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of boasting? Is it not even you before our Lord Jesus at his coming?

Paul uses these rhetorical questions here to emphasize why the apostles want to visit the Thessalonian church. If you would not use rhetorical questions for this purpose in your language, you could translate his words as a statement or an exclamation and communicate the emphasis in another way. (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.255)**) (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.255)**)

hope or joy or crown of boasting

Here, **hope**, **joy** and **crown** are spoken of figuratively as if they were the people in the Thessalonian church. If this might be confusing for your readers, you could express this meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: "Because who makes us hopeful? Who causes us to rejoice? Who gives us reason to boast victoriously?" (See: **Personification (p.242)**) (See: **Personification (p.242)**)

For what {is} our hope or joy or crown of boasting? Or {is it} not also you

Some words are left out here in the original that a sentence would need in many languages to be complete. Since English needs it, **is it** is added in brackets. Do what is natural in your language. (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**)

hope or joy or crown of boasting

Here, **hope**, **joy**, and **crown of boasting** are spoken of figuratively as if these concepts were the Thessalonian church. If this might be confusing for your readers, you could express this meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: "Because who makes us hopeful? Who causes us to rejoice? Who gives us reason to boast victoriously?" (See: **Personification (p.242)**) (See: **Personification (p.242)**)

crown of boasting

Here, **crown** refers figuratively to a laurel wreath awarded to victorious athletes. The expression **crown of boasting** means a reward for victory or for having competed well. The proof of the apostles' success will ultimately be displayed at the Second Coming of Christ if the Thessalonian church remains faithful to God (See 4:13-5:11). If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or use plain language. Alternate translation: "reward for victory" (See: **Metonymy (p.231)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.231)**)

crown of boasting

Paul is using this possessive form to describe either: (1) the product of boasting. Alternate translation: "crown that produces boasting" (2) the means of boasting. Alternate translation: "crown through which we boast" (See: **Possession (p.244)**) (See: **Possession (p.244)**)

before our Lord Jesus

Here, **before** refers to location or sphere, used as a substitute for "in front of" or "in the presence of." If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or use plain language. Alternate translation: "in the presence of our Lord Jesus" or "in front of our Lord Jesus" or "in the sight of our Lord Jesus" (See: **Metonymy (p.231)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.231)**)

at his coming

Here, **his coming** is a well-known idiom in 1-2 Thessalonians for the Second Coming of Christ (See [3:13](#)) or the “Day of the Lord” (See [5:2](#)). Use a natural way in your language to emphasize this idea. Alternate translation: “at his Second Coming” or “when he arrives again” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

1 Thessalonians 2:20

For you are our glory and joy

This verse means the same thing as “our hope or joy or crown of boasting” in 2:19. Paul says the same thing twice in slightly different ways to emphasize that he is genuinely pleased with the Thessalonian church. Use a natural way in your language to express this emphasis. (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**)

you

Paul uses the word **you** to emphasize how the Thessalonian church’s faithfulness to God brings honor and joy to the apostles. Use a way that is natural in your language to indicate this emphasis. (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**) (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**)

For you are our glory and joy

Here, the Thessalonian church is figuratively compared to the abstract concepts of **glory and joy**. If this might be confusing for your readers, you could express this meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “Because of you, God will honor us and make us rejoice” or “Certainly, we will become glorified and rejoice because of you!” (See: **Personification (p.242)**) (See: **Personification (p.242)**)

1 Thessalonians 3

1 Thessalonians 3 General Notes

Outline of 1 Thessalonians 3

Timothy's Visit (3:1-5)

Apostolic concern (3:1-2)

Apostolic encouragement (3:3-5)

Timothy's Report (3:6-13)

Good news (3:6-10)

Apostolic prayer (3:11-13)

Structure and Formatting

The first part of this chapter recounts Timothy's visit to Thessalonica. The second part tells about his report to Paul and Silvanus at Athens. Lastly, the apostles offer a prayer on behalf of the Thessalonian church.

"We" and "You"

In this letter, the words **we** and **our** refer to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, unless otherwise noted. Throughout the letter, **we** and **our** is used to convey that all three apostles are in agreement with the letter.

Special Concepts in this Chapter

Metaphor

In this chapter, the Apostle Paul uses the phrase "stand firm" in 3:8 as a metaphor of faithfulness to the Gospel, and "be shaken" in 3:3 as the opposite of being faithful. (See: **faithful, faithfulness, trustworthy (p.276)**)

Use a building metaphor, the apostles pray that God will "strengthen the "hearts" of the Thessalonian church "blameless" (See 3:13).

The enemy of God's people, "Satan" (See 2:18) is here called "the tempter" (See 3:5).

Hyperbole

Paul uses emotional and extreme language when speaking of his memory of the Thessalonian church. "Enduring it no longer," the apostles and especially Paul (See 3:1,5) feel compelled to find out about the spiritual condition of the church. The intensity and duration of the apostles' prayers is described as "night and day pleading earnestly" (See 3:10).

The Second Coming of Christ

Here the apostles pray that the Thessalonian church will be preserved holy when Christ comes again with all his holy ones or "saints" (See 3:13).

1 Thessalonians 3:1

Therefore, enduring {it} no longer, we thought it good to be left behind in Athens alone

This is a result clause. Paul is explaining why he sent Timothy to Thessalonica in [3:2](#). Alternate translation: “Because we could not restrain ourselves any longer, we thought it proper to stay behind in Athens alone” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

Therefore

Here, **Therefore** indicates a return to the topic of a visit from the apostles (See [2:17-18](#)). (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

Therefore, enduring {it} no longer

This phrase uses extreme exaggeration to express the apostles’ deep desire to visit the Thessalonian church (See [2:17](#)). The word translated **enduring** is related to the idea of keeping water out of a ship or trying to contain or holding something back. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language that communicates anxious longing. Alternate translation: “Thus, since we could not bear to wait any longer” or “Therefore, because we could not ignore these emotions” (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**) (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**)

we thought it good to be left behind in Athens alone

Here, **we** and **alone** refer to Paul and Silvanus (and perhaps Timothy), since in [3:2](#) it says, “we sent Timothy.” If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly. Alternate translation: “Silas and I thought it was good idea to remain alone in Athens” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

1 Thessalonians 3:2

and

What follows the word **and** here is in contrast to Paul and Silvanus staying behind at Athens. Instead, they sent Timothy. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a contrast. Alternate translation: “even though this was true,” or “yet” (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**)

we sent & our

When Paul says **we** and **our**, he is exclusively speaking of himself and Silvanus. Your language may require you to mark these forms. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**) (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**)

our brother and a servant of God

This phrase gives us further information about Timothy. It is meant to clarify that he is authorized by the apostles and God himself. If this is not understood in your language, you could make the relationship between these phrases more clear. Alternate translation: “and we sent Timothy, who is our fellow worker and an authorized servant of God” or “and we sent Timothy. He is our assistant and God’s authorized servant” (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**) (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**)

our brother and a servant of God

Here, the metaphors **our brother** and **servant** refer to **Timothy** as a fellow apostle (See [2:6](#)). If your readers would not understand what **brother** or **servant** mean in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul’s meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “he assists us and ministers for God in the preaching of the gospel about Christ” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

and a servant of God

Here, **servant of God** could refer to: (1) a servant in general. Alternate translation: “and a minister of God” or “and assistant to God” (2) office of deacon. Alternate translation: “and a deacon of God” or “who also serves God as a deacon” (See: **Possession (p.244)**) (See: **Possession (p.244)**)

in

The preposition **in** could refer to: (1) Timothy’s association with the gospel. Alternate translation: “associated with” or “partnering in” (2) the cause of the gospel. Alternate translation: “for the cause of” or “for the sake of” (3) the means of the gospel. Alternate translation: “through” or “by means of”

of Christ

Paul is most likely using the possessive form to refer to **the gospel** that is “about” **Christ**. If this is not clear in your language, you could replace **of** with “about.” Alternate translation: “about Christ” or “concerning Christ” (See: **Possession (p.244)**) (See: **Possession (p.244)**)

to strengthen and encourage you

This is a purpose clause. Paul is stating the purpose for why he and Silvanus sent Timothy. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a purpose clause. Alternate translation: “so that you would be confirmed and consoled” (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**) (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**)

1 Thessalonians 3:3

that no one be disturbed by these afflictions

If your language does not use the abstract noun **afflictions**, you can express the idea behind it in another way. Alternate translation: “so that when you are distressed, it would not make anyone waver” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

that no one be disturbed

This is a purpose clause. Paul is stating the purpose for sending Timothy. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a purpose clause. Alternate translation: “in order that no one would waver” or “for the purpose of keeping anyone from being deceived” (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**) (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**)

that no one be disturbed

Paul is using the adjective **no one** as a noun in order to describe the Thessalonian church. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you could translate this with a noun phrase. Alternate translation: “so that no person wavers” or “in order that none of you are deceived” (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**) (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**)

For you yourselves know

Paul uses the word **yourselves** to emphasize what the apostles had previously told them about **afflictions**. Use a way that is natural in your language to indicate this emphasis. Alternate translation: “In fact, you know for yourselves” or “Certainly, you are well aware of the fact” (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**) (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**)

for this

Here, **this** refers to **afflictions**. However, in this sentence the meaning is more like a condition or state of “being afflicted” regularly or continually. The pronoun is changed to be singular to agree with this unstated idea. If you readers would not understand this shift, you could change **this** to a plural pronoun or make this unstated idea explicit. Alternate translation: “for these afflictions” or “for this affliction” “for a life characterized by afflictions” (See: **Collective Nouns (p.145)**) (See: **Collective Nouns (p.145)**)

we are appointed

Paul assumes that the Thessalonian church knows that it is God who **appointed** the apostles for **afflictions**. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly. Alternate translation: “God appointed us” or “God destined us” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

we are appointed

Here, **we** refers exclusively to the apostles. Your language may require you to mark these forms. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**) (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**)

1 Thessalonians 3:4

For also when we were with you, we were telling you in advance that we are about to be afflicted, just as also it happened and you know

Paul is giving background information about his previous visit. Paul reminds the Thessalonian church that what he predicted about the apostles' sufferings has come true, so they should not be tempted to doubt the apostles' authority or teaching (See 3:5,7). Use the natural form in your language for expressing background information. Alternate translation: "Indeed, the last time we visited you, we kept telling you before it happened, 'We are destined to be afflicted.' You are well aware that it happened exactly as we told you" (See: **Background Information (p.140)**) (See: **Background Information (p.140)**)

we were

Here, **we** is exclusive of the apostles. Your language may require you to mark these forms. Alternate translation: "we apostles were" (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive 'We' (p.186)**) (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive 'We' (p.186)**)

For

Here, **For** indicates that what follows explains and emphasizes what the Thessalonian already know about the apostles' afflictions. Alternate translation: "Certainly," (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

we were telling you in advance that we are about to be afflicted

Here, **that** could either express emphasis or be a quotation marker of what the apostles said. If it would be more natural in your language, you could express this as a direct quotation. Alternate translation: "we kept telling you ahead of time, 'We are destined to endure distress.'" (See: **Direct and Indirect Quotations (p.169)**) (See: **Direct and Indirect Quotations (p.169)**)

also it happened

Here, **and it happened** is meant to emphasize Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy's apostolic credentials by verifying that their prophetic words came true. Use a natural way in your language to express this emphasis. Alternate translation: "and this is precisely what happened"

1 Thessalonians 3:5

Because of this, I also, no longer enduring {it}, sent to know about your faith

Here Paul summarizes the story of Timothy's visit but leaves out mention of Timothy as redundant information. If it is clearer in your language, you could include mention of Timothy. Alternate translation: "Again, since I could not wait anymore, I sent Timothy to learn if you still trust in God" (See: **Introduction of New and Old Participants (p. 216)**) (See: **Introduction of New and Old Participants (p.216)**)

I also, no longer enduring {it}, sent

Paul repeats the same phrase **no longer enduring it** found in 3:1. Here, "I sent" parallels "we sent" in 3:1-2. This expresses that Paul represents the apostles who sent Timothy to Thessalonica. Use a natural way in your language to indicate this parallelism. (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**)

I also, no longer enduring {it}

This phrase is an exaggeration that Paul uses to express deep concern. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language that shows deep concern. See your translation at 3:1. (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**) (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**)

sent

Here it is implied that Paul **sent** Timothy. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly. Alternate translation: "I, Paul, sent Timothy" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

to know about your faith

This is a purpose clause. Paul is stating the purpose for why he **sent** Timothy. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a purpose clause. Alternate translation: "so that I could learn if you remained faithful" or "in order to discern whether you still trust God" (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**) (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**)

the tempter

Here Paul uses the phrase **the tempter** as a title to identify Satan (See Matthew 4:3). The phrase means "one who tempts." If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use a phrase. Alternate translation: "Satan, the one who tempts" (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

lest somehow the tempter had tempted you, and

Paul is using a hypothetical situation to help his readers recognize how powerful satanic temptation can be. Use the natural form in your language for expressing a hypothetical situation. Alternate translation: "because if Satan tempted you, I wanted to find out, and then" (See: **Hypothetical Situations (p.206)**) (See: **Hypothetical Situations (p.206)**)

and our labor might have been in vain

This phrase could be a result clause. Paul is stating what would be the result if the Thessalonian church let Satan tempt them to stop trusting God. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a result clause. Alternate translation: “then how hard we worked would have been worthless” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

in vain

Here, **in vain** is an exaggeration that Paul uses to express how sad the apostles would have been if the Thessalonian church had not remained faithful to God. Paul does not really think the apostles' **labor** is worthless. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language that shows deep disappointment. Alternate translation: “worthless” or “purposeless” or “profitless” (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**) (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**)

1 Thessalonians 3:6

Connecting Statement:

Connecting Statement:

In 3:6 Paul describes Timothy's current report about the Thessalonian church. Paul provides this background information to help his readers understand how comforted he is (See 3:7). Use the natural form in your language for expressing background information. (See: **Connect — Background Information (p.148)**) (See: **Connect — Background Information (p.148)**)

But just now Timothy has come to us from you

Connecting Statement:

The phrase **But just now** brings Paul's narrative into the present time. Use a natural way in your language to express this emphasis. Alternate translation: "But Timothy recently returned to us from visiting you" or "But now, Timothy is back to us from his visit with you" (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

to us

This is an exclusive use of **us**, referring to Paul and Silvanus. Your language may require you to mark these forms. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive 'We' (p.186)**) (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive 'We' (p.186)**)

your faith and love

If your language does not use the abstract nouns **faith** and **love**, you can express the idea behind them in another way. Alternate translation: "that you remain faithful to God and love him" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

your faith and love

This phrase could express a single idea by using two words connected with **and**. The word **faith** could describe **love**. If it would be more natural in your language, you could express this meaning with an equivalent phrase that does not use **and**. Alternate translation: "your faithful love" or "your faithful love toward God" (See: **Hendiadys (p.195)**) (See: **Hendiadys (p.195)**)

and that you always have good memory of us, longing to see us

This phrase could indicate a result clause. If it would be clearer in your language, you could reverse the order of these phrases, since the second phrase gives the reason for the result that the first phrase describes. Alternate translation: "and you constantly desire to visit with us, because you always remember us fondly" (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

and that you always have good memory of us

If your language does not use the abstract noun **memories**, you can express the idea behind it in another way.
Alternate translation: “and how you always remember us fondly” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

1 Thessalonians 3:7

Because of this, brothers, we were encouraged about you

This phrase is a result clause. Paul is stating the result of the Timothy's good news in 3:6. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a result clause. Alternate translation: "Fellow believers in Christ, as a result of Timothy's good news about you, God consoled us" (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

in all our distress and affliction

This phrase expresses a single idea by using two words connected with **and**. The word **distress** describes the **affliction**. If it would be more natural in your language, you could express this meaning with an equivalent phrase that does not use **and**. Here this phrase emphasizes how much and how intensely the apostles were persecuted. Alternate translation: "in all our abusive affliction" or "in all our violent suffering" (See: **Hendiadys (p.195)**) (See: **Hendiadys (p.195)**)

in all our distress and affliction

If your language does not use the abstract nouns **distress** and **affliction**, you can express them in another way. Here, it could refer to: (1) the time of distress and affliction. Alternate translation: "during all our abuse and affliction" or "each time we violently suffered" (2) the place or way of distress and affliction. Alternate translation: "in every place the tempter violently afflicted us" or "in every way we suffered abuse" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

1 Thessalonians 3:8

For now we live, if you yourselves stand firm in the Lord

If it would be more natural in your language, you could reverse the order of these phrases, since the second phrase gives the reason for the result that the first phrase describes. Alternate translation: “Since you are remaining faithful to the Lord Jesus, we are now refreshed!” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

For now we live

Here, **For now we live** is an exaggeration that Paul uses to show how thankful he is that the Thessalonians **stand firm** in the Christian faith (See 3:7). Paul is not trying to say that he was dead. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language that shows thankfulness. Alternate translation (replace the comma): “O how we are now refreshed!” or “O how we now feel alive!” or “Certainly now we thrive!” (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**) (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**)

if you yourselves stand firm in the Lord

Here, the term **stand firm** is an idiom meaning “remain faithful.” If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent idiom or use plain language. Alternate translation: “when you remain faithful to the Lord” or “if you continue unwavering in your relationship with the Lord” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

if you yourselves stand firm in the Lord

Paul is speaking as if this were a hypothetical possibility, but he means that it is actually true. If your language does not state something as a condition if it is certain or true, and if your readers might misunderstand and think that what Paul is saying is not certain, then you can translate his words as an affirmative statement. Alternate translation: “since you are remaining faithful to the Lord Jesus” (See: **Connect — Factual Conditions (p.153)**) (See: **Connect — Factual Conditions (p.153)**)

you yourselves stand firm in the Lord

Paul speaks figuratively of the Thessalonian church as though they were occupying space inside the Lord Jesus. Here, this metaphor, **in the Lord**, could express these ideas: (1) devotion to Jesus. Alternate translation: “you are really devoted to the Lord Jesus” (2) relationship with Jesus. Alternate translation: “you are truly standing firm in your relationship with the Lord Jesus” (3) union with Jesus. Alternate translation: “all of you are firmly united to the Lord Jesus” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

yourselves

Paul uses the word **yourselves** to emphasize his joy for the Thessalonian church’s faithfulness. Use a way that is natural in your language to indicate this emphasis. Alternative translation: “indeed” (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**) (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**)

1 Thessalonians 3:9

For what thanks are we able to give back to God concerning you for all the joy with which we rejoice because of you before our God

Paul is using a rhetorical question that continues to the end of 3:10 in order to emphasize the apostles' thankful joy for the Thessalonian church's faithfulness to God. If you would not use a rhetorical question for this purpose in your language, you could translate his words as a statement or an exclamation and communicate the emphasis in another way. Alternate translation: "We could not possibly thank God enough for what he has done for you! When we pray to our God, we greatly rejoice because of you!" (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.255)**) (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.255)**)

For what thanks are we able to give back to God concerning you

With the phrase **give back**, Paul speaks figuratively of the apostles as if they owe God a debt for the sake of the Thessalonian church's faithfulness. Paul means that the apostles cannot adequately express how thankful they are. If your readers would not understand what it means to **give back** in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul's meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: "Because, how could we possibly show how grateful we are to God for you" or "Indeed, what kind of thanksgiving for you could we give to God" (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

for all the joy with which we rejoice because of you before our God

If it would be more natural in your language, you could reverse the order of these phrases, since the second phrase gives the reason for the result that the first phrase describes. Since this is a rhetorical question, you could change it to a statement, and begin a new sentence here. Alternate translation: "Because of you, we greatly rejoice when we pray to God," (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

for all the joy with which we rejoice

Here, **joy** and **rejoice** mean basically the same thing. The repetition is used to emphasize how much joy the apostles have because of how faithful the Thessalonian church has been towards God. Alternate translation: "for how much we greatly rejoice" (See: **Doublet (p.177)**) (See: **Doublet (p.177)**)

we rejoice & before our God

Here, **before our God** is an idiom for being in the personal presence of God. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent idiom or use plain language. Alternate translation: "we rejoice in the presence of our God" (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

1 Thessalonians 3:10

night and day pleading earnestly

This emphatic phrase is an exaggeration that Paul uses to show how much and often the apostles pray for the Thessalonian church. Paul does not mean to say he never does anything else except pray. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language that expresses this emphasis. Alternate translation: “we never stop intensely pleading” or “we continually and fervently pray” (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**) (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**)

to see your face

Here, the phrase **to see your face** is an idiom meaning “visit.” If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent idiom or use plain language. Alternate translation: “to visit you” or “to spend time with you” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

your face

Paul refers figuratively to **your face** to mean the whole Thessalonian church. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your culture or use plain language. Alternate translation: “all of you” (See: **Synecdoche (p.265)**) (See: **Synecdoche (p.265)**)

and to provide what {is} lacking in your faith

If your language does not use the abstract noun **faith**, you can express the idea behind it in another way (See also [2:17](#)). Alternate translation: “and to provide support so that you remain faithful” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

1 Thessalonians 3:11

But may & direct

General Information:

Here the verb forms indicate that this is a blessing or prayer that continues through 3:13. Use a form that people would recognize as a blessing or prayer in your language. Alternate translation: “Now we pray that ... would guide” (See: **Blessings (p.143)**) (See: **Blessings (p.143)**)

our God and Father

Here, **our God and Father** refers to the one divine person who is both God and Father. This phrase is a hendiadys, since Father further describes God (See also 1:3). Alternate translation: “God our Father” or “our Father God” (See: **Hendiadys (p.195)**) (See: **Hendiadys (p.195)**)

himself

Paul uses the word **himself** to distinguish **our God and Father** from **our Lord Jesus**. Use a way that is natural in your language to indicate this distinction. (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**) (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**)

our & our & our

It is possible that these first two uses of **our** are inclusive of the whole Christian Church. Yet, the third use of **our** exclusively refers to the apostles. So, it is most likely that **our** refers exclusively to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy in this whole verse (see also 1:9, 2:1, 3:9). Your language may require you to mark these forms. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**) (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**)

may & direct our way to you

Paul speaks figuratively about God as if he were a pilot or captain of a ship. Paul means that he wants God to allow the apostles to visit the Thessalonian church again. If your readers would not understand what **direct our way to you** means in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul’s meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “quickly bring us to you” or “direct our voyage so that we can visit you” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

1 Thessalonians 3:12

Now may the Lord make you increase and abound

Here, **increase** and **abound** mean basically the same thing. The repetition is used to emphasize how much the apostles want the Thessalonian church to keep increasing in their love for all people. If your language does not use repetition in this way, you can combine these phrases. Alternate translation: "May the Lord Jesus make you completely excel" or "O that the Lord Jesus would cause you to fully thrive" (See: **Doublet (p.177)**) (See: **Doublet (p.177)**)

in love

Paul speaks figuratively of **love** as something that can be quantified or measured. He means that he hopes the Thessalonian church will keep loving people well. If your readers would not understand what **in love** means in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternate translation: "in the way you love" (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

for one another and for all

Paul could be speaking figuratively, using these phrases in order to include the whole human race. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or use plain language. Alternate translation: "toward each and every person" or "toward the whole human race" or "toward Christians and non-Christians" (See: **Merism (p.223)**) (See: **Merism (p.223)**)

for all

Paul could be using the adjective **all** as a noun in order to describe a group of people. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you could translate this with a noun phrase. It could refer to: (1) the whole human race. Alternate translation: "toward all humanity" (2) all Christians. Alternate translation: "for all your fellow believers in Christ" (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**) (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**)

just as we also toward you

Here, **just as we also toward you** is an emphatic phrase meant to reinforce the deep love the apostles have for the Thessalonian church (also in [3:6](#)). Use a natural way in your language to express this emphasis. Alternate translation: "in the same way that we love you"

1 Thessalonians 3:13

to strengthen your hearts, blameless in holiness

If your language does not use the abstract nouns **hearts** and **holiness**, you can express the ideas behind them in another way. Alternate translation: “so that how you love one another strengthens you to become resolved to live blamelessly, as is appropriate for those who belong to the Lord Jesus” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

to strengthen your hearts

Paul speaks figuratively of the people of the Thessalonian church as if they have one heart that is like a building that can be established or supported. He means that he wants God to increase their willpower or affections so that they would remain faithful to God. If your readers would not understand what this phrase means in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul's meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “to establish your affections” or “to strengthen your will” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

to strengthen your hearts

This phrase is a purpose clause. Paul is stating the purpose for why he prays that God will increase the Thessalonian church's love for all people. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a purpose clause. Alternate translation: “so that the Lord will establish your affections for him” or “in order that the Lord will strengthen your willpower” (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**) (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**)

blameless in holiness

Here, **blameless** and **holiness** mean basically the same thing. The repetition is used to emphasize total sanctification. If your language does not use repetition in this way, you can combine these phrases. This phrase could refer to: (1) a condition of holiness. Alternate translation: “blameless in a condition of holiness” (2) how to become holy. Alternate translation: “blameless through holiness” (See: **Doublet (p.177)**) (See: **Doublet (p.177)**)

before our God and Father

This phrase is an idiom for being in the personal presence of God (See 3:9). If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent idiom or use plain language. Alternate translation: “in the presence of our Father God” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints

This is a reference to Zechariah 14:5 (See also 2 Thessalonians 1:7,10; Jude 14). Here it is implied that these **saints** are all those who are **blameless in holiness** and who have already died (See 4:14). If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly. Alternate translation: “at the time the Lord Jesus arrives along with all his holy people who have already died” or “when the Lord Jesus returns a second time with all those reposed people who belong to him” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

at the coming of our Lord Jesus

Here, **at the coming of the Lord Jesus** is a well-known idiom in 1-2 Thessalonians for the Second Coming of Christ (See [2:19](#); [4:15](#)) or the “Day of the **Lord**” [5:2](#)). Use a natural way in your language to emphasize this idea. Alternate translation: “in the presence of our Lord Jesus at his Second Coming” or “in the sight of our Lord Jesus when he arrives again” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

1 Thessalonians 4

1 Thessalonians 4 General Notes

Outline of 1 Thessalonians 4

Apostolic Teachings on Holiness (4:1-8)

Apostolic Teachings on Christian Love (4:9-12)

Reminder (4:9-10)

Keep Busy (4:11-12)

Apostolic Teachings on the Manner of the Second Coming of Christ (4:13-18)

“We” and “You”

In this letter, the words **we** and **our** refer to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, unless otherwise noted. Throughout the letter, **we** and **our** are used to convey that all three apostles are in agreement with the letter.

Special Concepts in this Chapter

Christian love

The apostles address the topic of Christian love that the Thessalonian church had previously asked about. The apostles encouraged the church that they were already loving well, and they should continue to grow in this practice. The apostles also link “brotherly love” to living in harmony with each other and minding their own business, so that they would be a good example to non-Christians (See [4:11-12](#)).

Dying before the Second Coming of Christ

The Thessalonian church was concerned about what would happen if a believer died before Christ returned. They were anxious to know whether or not those who died before Christ returned would be part of the Kingdom of God. Paul addresses that concern in [4:13-5:11](#).

The manner of the Second Coming of Christ

In [4:13-18](#), the apostles teach about the events related to the Second Coming of Christ (called “the day of the Lord” in [5:2](#)). This is so that the Thessalonians can “comfort one another with these words” (See [4:18](#)).

Important Translation Issues in this Chapter

Sexual immorality

Different cultures have different standards of sexual morality. These different cultural standards may make translating this passage difficult. Translators will have to consider the most appropriate way to communicate these sensitive issues.

The Second Coming of Christ and the Day of the Lord

All Christians believe that Jesus will return to earth to judge all people and to rule forever. As the Nicene Creed (381 A.D.) states: "I await the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come." Christ came once as Incarnate God and will return once as Resurrected Judge. However, there are various ways that Christians understand the "coming of the Lord" as explained in [4:13-5:11](#), and the "day of the Lord" in [5:2](#). Some believe they are one and the same event, but others believe them to be two separate events. Your translation should state clearly only what is clear in these verses without promoting any particular interpretation.

1 Thessalonians 4:1

Therefore, finally

Here, **So finally** could refer to: (1) a summary of the apostles' teachings. Alternate translation: "So, in summary," (2) the remaining things to address. "So then, here is what remains for us to talk about" (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

we ask and encourage you

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. The repetition is used to emphasize how seriously the apostles want the Thessalonian church to follow their teachings. If your language does not use repetition in this way, you can combine these phrases. Alternate translation: "we are urging and appealing to you" or "we strongly urge you" (See: **Doublet (p.177)**) (See: **Doublet (p.177)**)

in the Lord Jesus

Paul speaks figuratively as if the apostles are occupying space inside of **the Lord Jesus**. Here, the metaphor expresses the idea that the apostles represent Jesus himself like ambassadors who possess a king's authority. If your readers would not understand what **in the Lord** means in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul's meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: "with our authority from the Lord Jesus" (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

how it is necessary for you to walk

Here, **to walk** is a metaphor that means "to live" or "to obey" (See [2:12](#)). If your readers would not understand what it means **to walk** in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul's meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: "about how you must live" or "about how you are obligated to obey" (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

how it is necessary for you to walk and to please God (just as also you are walking)

Here, **to walk and to please** expresses a single idea by using two words connected with **and**. The word **please** describes how the Thessalonian church should **walk**. If it would be more natural in your language, you could express this meaning with an equivalent phrase that does not use **and**. Alternate translation: "about how you must live to please God (exactly as you live now)" (See: **Hendiadys (p.195)**) (See: **Hendiadys (p.195)**)

that you might abound even more

This phrase is a purpose clause. Paul is stating the purpose for which apostles are begging and exhorting the Thessalonian church. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a purpose clause. Alternate translation: "so that you can excel more and more" or "in order that you thrive even more" (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**) (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**)

1 Thessalonians 4:2

through the Lord Jesus

Paul is providing this background information about the apostles' teachings during their previous visit to help readers understand what happens next. Use a natural way in your language for introducing background information. (See: **Connect — Background Information (p.148)**) (See: **Connect — Background Information (p.148)**)

For you know what commands we gave you through the Lord Jesus

This verse expresses that the Thessalonian church should do what the apostles previously taught them (See 4:1), because these teachings are actually commands from **the Lord Jesus** himself. Use a natural way in your language to express a result clause. Alternate translation: "The reason we beg and exhort you is because you realize that when we gave commands, it was actually the Lord Jesus who taught you" (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

For

Here, **For** indicates that what follows is something else important that the Thessalonian church should pay attention to. Use a natural way in your language to express this emphasis. Alternate translation: "In fact" or "Certainly" (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

through the Lord Jesus

Paul speaks figuratively of the **commands** that the apostles gave to the Thessalonian church as though **Jesus** personally told them to the apostles. Paul means that **Jesus** made the apostles his messengers, not that **Jesus** is a messenger of the apostles. If your readers would not understand what **through the Lord Jesus** means in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul's meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: "through a message from the Lord Jesus" or "by order of the Lord Jesus himself" (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

1 Thessalonians 4:3

For this is the will of God, your sanctification

If your language does not use the abstract nouns **will** and **sanctification**, you can express the ideas behind them in another way. Alternate translation: “Indeed, God desires that you live like those who belong to him” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

For this is

Here, **For this is** indicates that this is the beginning of a section about the content of the commands from the Lord Jesus in 4:2. Use a natural way in your language to indicate the beginning of new topic. Alternate translation: “Now, this is” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

For this is the will of God

Here, **this** is a singular pronoun that emphasizes what **is the will of God**. Use a natural way in your language to express this emphasis. Alternate translation: “Certainly, this very thing is God’s will” (See: **Collective Nouns (p.145)**) (See: **Collective Nouns (p.145)**)

For this is the will of God, your sanctification

Here begins a list spanning through 4:3-8 that explains what **sanctification** means in this context. Use a natural way in your language to indicate the beginning of a topic.

that you keep yourselves from sexual immorality

This phrase gives us further information about what is meant by **sanctification**. Paul is defining the **sanctification** God wants for his people by forbidding **sexually immorality**. If this is not understood in your language, you could make the relationship between these phrases clearer. (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**) (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**)

that you keep yourselves

The following list of verb forms in 4:3-6 could be translated as commands (See 4:2). Here, the verb forms are likely meant to express a strong suggestion or appeal. Use a form in your language that would be used in this type of situation. Alternate translation: “you yourselves must refrain” or “you should withhold yourselves” (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses (p.211)**) (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses (p.211)**)

1 Thessalonians 4:4

that each of you knows to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor

Here Paul gives more instructions about the **sanctification** God wants for his people, by telling the Thessalonian church that every husband needs to treat his wife's body and his own body **in sanctification and honor**. If this is not understood in your language, you could make the relationship between these verses clearer. (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**) (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**)

that each of you knows to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor

Here, **to know to possess** refers to sexual intimacy. This is a polite way of referring to something private. If this would be misunderstood in your language, use a different polite way of referring to this or you could state this plainly. Alternate translation: "God desires that you treat your wives' bodies like they belong to God and to honor them" or "each of you men must use your own body for God's holy and honorable purposes" (See: **Euphemism (p.184)**) (See: **Euphemism (p.184)**)

each

Paul is using the adjective **each** as a noun in order to describe a group of men. Here it specifically is used to emphasize that every husband or man must obey this teaching. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you could translate this with a noun phrase. Alternate translation: "each and every man" (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**) (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**)

to possess his own vessel

Here Paul speaks figuratively of a person's body as if it were a container. Here, **to possess his own vessel** is a metaphor that compares sexual self-control to a proper use of a container. If your readers would not understand what this phrase means in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. It could refer to: (1) a wife's body. Alternate translation: "to use his wife's body" or "to properly care for his own wife" (2) a husband's own body. Alternate translation: "to control his own body" (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

his own vessel

Paul is using the possessive form **his own** to express ownership. Use a natural way in your language to express ownership. Alternate translation: "the wife that belongs to you" or "your very own wife" or "the body that belongs to you" (See: **Possession (p.244)**) (See: **Possession (p.244)**)

in sanctification and honor

This phrase could express a single idea by using two words connected with **and**. The word **honor** tells how a husband or man must live in **sanctification**. If it would be more natural in your language, you could express this meaning with an equivalent phrase that does not use **and**. Alternate translation: "by honorably setting it apart for God's purposes" (See: **Hendiadys (p.195)**) (See: **Hendiadys (p.195)**)

1 Thessalonians 4:5

not in the passion of lust

If your language does not use the abstract noun phrase **in the passion of lust**, you can express the idea behind it in another way. Alternate translation: “not passionately lusting” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

not in the passion of lust

Here, **not in the passion of lust** contrasts with the previous phrase “in holiness and honor” (See: **4:4**). Use a natural way in your language for introducing a contrast. Alternate translation: “not passionately lusting” (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**)

the passion of lust

Paul is using the possessive phrase **of lust** to describe **passion**. This genitive phrase could refer to: 1) passion characterized by lust. Alternate translation: “lustful passion” 2) the source of the passion. Alternate translation: “passion that comes from lust” (See: **Possession (p.244)**) (See: **Possession (p.244)**)

just as also the Gentiles, the ones not knowing God

This phrase gives us further information about the those who live **in the passion of lust**. If this is not understood in your language, you could make the relationship between these phrases clearer. Alternate translation: “like the nations who remain ignorant of God act” or “exactly like all the people who have no relationship with God” (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**) (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**)

the Gentiles

Here, **the Gentiles** refers to all the non-Christian nations in general, not one group of people. If this would be misunderstood in your language, use a more natural phrase (See your translation at **2:16**). (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.191)**) (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.191)**)

the ones not knowing God

Here, **who do not know God** is meant to give further information about the **Gentiles**. If this is not understood in your language, you could make the relationship between these phrases clearer. Alternate translation: “who have no relationship with God” or “who remain ignorant of God” (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**) (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**)

1 Thessalonians 4:6

transgress and take advantage of

This phrase expresses a single idea by using two words connected with **and**. The word **exploit** describes **transgress**. If it would be more natural in your language, you could express this meaning with an equivalent phrase that does not use **and**. Alternate translation: “exploits by transgressing” (See: **Hendiadys (p.195)**) (See: **Hendiadys (p.195)**)

transgress and take advantage of

Here, **transgress and exploit** speaks figuratively about adultery, by comparing it to a person who unlawfully enters someone's property and claims it for their own. If your readers would not understand what it means to **transgress and exploit** in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul's meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternative translation, “must trespass and defraud” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

his brother in this matter

Here, **in this matter** could be speaking figuratively of adultery as if someone is intruding in another person's business matters. If your readers would not understand what **in this matter** means in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul's meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “the marital matters of his fellow believer in Christ” or “the marriage relationship of another believer in Christ” or (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

for the Lord {is} an avenger concerning all these things

This clause gives the final result for those who live “in the passion of lust” (See 4:5). Use a natural way in your language to express result. This could refer to: 1) all the matters spoken of in 4:3-6. Alternate translation: “Certainly, the Lord Jesus will avenge all these things” 2) the sexually immoral people. Alternate translation: “This is because the Lord Jesus will punish all those people” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

just as we also said before to you and testified

Paul provides this background information about what the apostles said in an earlier visit (See in 2:10-12). Use the natural form in your language for expressing background information. Alternate translation: “This will happen just as we already told you and solemnly testified to you” (See: **Background Information (p.140)**) (See: **Background Information (p.140)**)

just as we also said before to you and testified

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. The repetition is used to emphasize what the apostles had already told the Thessalonian church during a previous visit. If your language does not use repetition in this way, you can combine these phrases. Alternate translation: “exactly as we also solemnly forewarned you” (See: **Doublet (p.177)**) (See: **Doublet (p.177)**)

1 Thessalonians 4:7

For God did not call us for uncleanness, but in sanctification

If your language does not use the abstract nouns **uncleanness** and **sanctification**, you can express the ideas behind them in other ways. Alternate translation: “We must not live impurely or act unholy, because God did not call us as his people for this purpose” or “God called us, so we must purify and set ourselves apart like those who belong to God” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

For God did not call us for uncleanness, but in sanctification

Paul uses a figure of speech that expresses a strong positive meaning by using a negative word together with a word that is the opposite of the intended meaning. If this is confusing in your language, you can express the meaning positively. Alternate translation: “Certainly God summons us to live purely and act holy” or “Indeed, God calls us to be pure and holy” (See: **Litotes (p.221)**) (See: **Litotes (p.221)**)

us

Here, **us** is inclusive, referring to the apostles, the Thessalonian church, and by extension, to all Christians. Your language may require you to mark these forms. Alternate translation: “us believers in Christ” (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**) (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**)

but in sanctification

What follows the word **but** is in contrast to **uncleanness**. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a contrast. (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**)

1 Thessalonians 4:8

Therefore

This emphatic connecting word is meant to mark the end of this section prohibiting sexual immorality. Use a natural way in your language to indicate this emphasis. Alternate translation: “So then” or “As you can be absolutely certain” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

the one rejecting this & but God, the one giving

Here God’s constant giving of the **Holy Spirit** is contrasted with the person who constantly **rejects** the apostolic teaching. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a contrast. Alternate translation: “he who continues to reject ... but actually God himself, who continues to give” (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**)

1 Thessalonians 4:9

But concerning brotherly love

This phrase implies that the apostles are answering a specific question previously asked by the Thessalonian church. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly. Alternate translation: “Now, related to your question about how to love fellow believers in Christ” or “Now, about your question referring to Christian relationships” or “Now, about your question related to Christian friendships” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

brotherly love

If your language does not use the abstract noun phrase **brotherly love**, you can express the idea behind it in another way. Alternate translation: “how to affectionately care for fellow believers in Christ” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

you have no need {for us} to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another

If it would be more natural in your language, you could reverse the order of these phrases since the second phrase gives the reason for the result that the first phrase describes. Alternate translation: “because God himself teaches you that you should love each other, you do not need us to write to you” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

you have no need {for us} to write to you

Here, **no need** is an exaggeration that Paul uses to show how successfully the Thessalonian church is practicing Christian love. Paul knows that they still have things to learn about loving fellow believers in Christ. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language. Alternate translation: “we feel no need to write to you” (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**) (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**)

no need {for us}

A word is left out here in the original that a sentence would need in many languages to be complete. Since English needs it, **for us** is added in brackets. Do what is natural in your language. (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**)

for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another

This clause could refer to: (1) the content of God’s teaching. Alternate translation: “because it is God himself who teaches you: love each other” (2) the manner of God’s teaching. Alternate translation: “indeed, it is God who teaches you how to love each other” (3) the purpose of God’s teaching. Alternate translation: “the reason why God teaches you is so that you would love each other” Use a natural way in your language for expressing this idea.

for you yourselves are taught by God

Paul speaks figuratively of the Thessalonian church as though God himself were physically present as their teacher. Paul means that the Thessalonian church already has been taught **to love one another** through the words of Jesus (See John 13:34; 15:12, 17) by the apostles. If your readers would not understand what it means to be **taught by God** in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express

Paul's meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: "because you have learned well what God teaches," or "since this is what God teaches you to do," (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

yourselves

Paul uses the word **yourselves** to emphasize that the Thessalonian church is doing what God teaches. Use a way that is natural in your language to indicate this emphasis. Alternate translation: "personally" (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**) (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**)

1 Thessalonians 4:10

For also you do it to all the brothers who {are} in all Macedonia

Paul provides this background information to show another aspect of how the Thessalonian church “became an example” to the churches in Macedonia and Achaia (See [1:7-8](#)). Use the natural form in your language for expressing background information. Alternate translation: “Certainly, you habitually show love to all your fellow believers in Christ throughout the region of Macedonia” or “In fact, you are doing just that to all the fellow Christians throughout the province of Macedonia” (See: **Background Information (p.140)**) (See: **Background Information (p.140)**)

For also

Here, **For indeed** indicates that what follows is an example of how the Thessalonian church shows Christian love. Use a natural way in your language to indicate this emphasis. (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

you do it

What is implied here is that **this** refers back to the phrase “to love” in [4:9](#). If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly. (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

But we encourage you, brothers

Speaking of what the apostles **exhort** the Thessalonian church to do, Paul uses a repetitive series of five verb forms that continues into [4:11](#). This repetitive style of speaking or writing is called a “litany.” Use a form in your language that someone would use to list things that someone is urged to do. Alternate translation: “Now, fellow believers in Christ, we are urging you” or “But, fellow Christians, we strongly encourage you” (See: **Litany (p.219)**) (See: **Litany (p.219)**)

But

Here, **But** indicates that what follows are numerous exhortations. Use a natural way in your language to express this emphasis. Alternate translation: “However” or “Certainly” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

1 Thessalonians 4:11

and to strive to be quiet and to perform your own things and to work with your own hands

Paul is figuratively describing peaceful communal living by using this combination of ideas. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or use plain language. Alternate translation: “and seek to lovingly honor others: by living quietly and tending to your own business and focusing on doing your own work” (See: **Metonymy (p.231)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.231)**)

and to strive to be quiet

These phrases continue the apostles’ exhortations. Here, the phrases translated **and to strive to live quietly** could refer to: (1) phrases that complement each other. Alternate translation: “and to aspire to live quietly” (2) phrases that express separate ideas. Alternate translation: “and seek to lovingly honor others, to live quietly,” Use a natural way in your language to emphasize this.

to perform your own things

Here, **to perform your own things** implies that the Thessalonian church should tend to their own concerns. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly. Alternate translation: “to tend to your own business” or “to focus on your own tasks” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

to work with your own hands

Here, **to work with your own hands** is an idiom meaning “earn what you need to live.” If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent idiom or use plain language. Alternate translation: “to work hard to earn what you need” or “to labor to pay for your expenses” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

just as we commanded you

This phrase and the following verse signal the end of this larger section of teaching about how to live in Christian community (See 4:1,2 for the same wording). Here, **just as we commanded** also expresses that what the apostles teach is the same as being “taught by God” (See 4:9). If this would not be understood in your language, you could make the relationship between these phrases clearer. Alternate translation as a new sentence: “This is what we already commanded you to do” (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**) (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**)

1 Thessalonians 4:12

so that

Here, **so that** could introduce a purpose clause. Paul could be stating the purpose for the apostles' exhortation in [4:10](#). Use a natural way in your language for introducing a purpose clause. Alternate translation: "in order that" (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**) (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**)

so that you may walk

Here, **so that you may walk** could be a result clause. It is possible that this phrase refers to both purpose and result. If there is a way to indicate this in your language, you could express this dual meaning. Alternate translation: "as a result you now live" or "then you will live" (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

you may walk properly

Here, **to walk** is a metaphor that means "to live" or "behave." If your readers would not understand what it means **to walk** in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul's meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: "you would live appropriately" or "you would live nobly" or "you would behave modestly" (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

before the ones outside

Paul speaks figuratively of these people as if they were physically located outside of an area. He means that they are not part of the Christian community. If your readers would not understand what "before those outside" means in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul's meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: "in the presence of non-Christians" or "in front of those who do not trust in Christ" (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

and have need of nothing

This is a purpose clause. Paul is stating the purpose for the apostles' exhortation in [4:10](#). Use a natural way in your language for introducing a purpose clause. Alternate translation: "and so that you would not need anything" or "and then you could be self-sufficient" (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

1 Thessalonians 4:13

Now

General Information:

Here, **Now** is a connecting word that signals the beginning of an extended section in 4:13-5:11 about the Second Coming of Christ (See chapter and book introduction)(See also 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2:3-12). If our language has a special section marker, you could use it here. (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

Now we do not want you to be ignorant

General Information:

Paul uses a figure of speech that expresses a strong positive meaning by using a negative word together with a word that is the opposite of the intended meaning. If this is confusing in your language, you can express the meaning positively. Alternate translation: “We want you to know for certain” or “Now we desire to clarify” (See: **Litotes (p.221)**) (See: **Litotes (p.221)**)

concerning

Here, **concerning** implies that the apostles are answering another specific question previously asked by the Thessalonian church (See 4:9). If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly. Alternate translation: “as it relates to your question about” or “concerning your question about” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

the ones sleeping

General Information:

Here, **those who are asleep** is a euphemism for death that continues through 5:10. In this specific context, it refers to those human souls who are awaiting the reunion of their bodies at the Second Coming of Christ (See 4:16–17). You could either use a similar euphemism for death in your language or say this in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “those who are already dead” or “those who have died” (See: **Euphemism (p.184)**) (See: **Euphemism (p.184)**)

so that you may not grieve

Here, **so that you may not grieve** is a purpose clause. Paul is stating the purpose for why he does not want the Thessalonian church to remain ignorant about the destiny of their loved ones **who are asleep**. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a purpose clause. Alternate translation: “so that you would not sorrow” (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**) (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**)

just as also the rest

Paul is using the adjective phrase **the rest** as a noun in order to describe a group of people. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you could translate this with a noun phrase. Alternate translation: “like the rest of people” or “in the same way as the rest of humanity” (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**) (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**)

the ones not having hope

Here Paul assumes that his readers will know that **hope** refers to salvation at the final resurrection (See [1:3](#); [2:19](#); [4:16](#); [5:8](#)). Previously **hope** was associated with the Second Coming of Christ in [2:19](#). If it would be helpful to your readers, you could indicate that explicitly. Alternate translation: “who possess no confidence of life after death” or “who possess no assurance of life after death” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

the ones not having hope

If your language does not use the abstract noun **hope**, you can express the idea behind it in another way. Alternate translation: “who are not confident of life after death” “who are not sure about life after death” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

1 Thessalonians 4:14

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose

Paul is speaking as if this were a hypothetical possibility, but he actually means that it is true. If your language does not state something as a condition if it is certain or true, and if your readers might misunderstand and think what the apostles are saying is not certain, then you can translate their words as an affirmative statement. Alternate translation: “As we certainly believe that Jesus died and resurrected” (See: **Connect — Factual Conditions (p.153)**) (See: **Connect — Factual Conditions (p.153)**)

we believe that Jesus died and rose

Here it is assumed that the Thessalonian church knows the apostolic teaching that **Jesus died and rose again**. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could indicate that explicitly. Alternate translation: “we apostles trust—as you already know—that Jesus died and rose again” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

we believe

Although **we believe** could be inclusive of the Thessalonian church (and by extension all Christians), it is most likely exclusive, referring to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. The previous use in 4:11 and subsequent uses (See “we say” in 4:15) are clearly referring to the apostles. Here, it mostly likely is a reference to their authoritative teaching. Your language may require you to mark these forms. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**) (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**)

thus & God

This phrase could refer to: (1) result. Alternate translation: “then God” (2) manner. Alternate translation: “this is the way God” or “this is how God” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

God will bring the ones having slept through Jesus with him

Paul is using the possessive form. Here, **through Jesus** could refer to: (1) being united to Jesus’ resurrection power **through** death. Alternate translation: “God will bring back with Jesus those who are united to him in death” (2) those who God will also bring back again **through** Jesus. Alternate translation: “it is through Jesus that God will bring back the dead people who are with him” (See: **Possession (p.244)**) (See: **Possession (p.244)**)

him

Here Paul implies that **him** refers to **Jesus**. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly. (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

1 Thessalonians 4:15

For this we say to you in a word of the Lord

This clause indicates that what follows is something else important that the Thessalonian church should pay attention to (See also 1:8 for **the word of the Lord**). Alternate translation: “Certainly, what we now say to you is the Lord Jesus’ message” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

in a word of the Lord

The phrase **the word of the Lord** figuratively refers to “the whole message of the Lord’s gospel.” If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or use plain language. Here, **word** could refer to: (1) the authority of the message. Alternate translation: “because the Lord Jesus authorized our message” (2) the means of the message. Alternate translation: “with a message from the Lord Jesus” (See: **Metonymy (p.231)**) (See: **Metonymy (p.231)**)

of the Lord, that we

Here, **that** indicates that the rest of the verse is the content of **the word of the Lord**. You could indicate this by changing the punctuation or some other natural way in your language. Alternate translation: “of the Lord: we” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

we say & we, the ones living

When Paul says **we say**, he is speaking of himself, Silvanus, and Timothy, so **we** would be exclusive. However, when Paul says **we who are alive**, since he seems to be referring to all Christians, **we who are alive** would be inclusive. Your language may require you to mark these forms. Alternate translation: “we apostles say ... all of us believers in Christ who are still alive” (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**) (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**)

the ones surviving

This phrase gives us further information about **we who are alive**. It is not making a distinction between **who are left behind** and **we who are alive**. If this is not understood in your language, you could make the relationship between these phrases clearer. Alternate translation: “and survive” or “and remain here” (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**) (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**)

to the coming of the Lord

Here, **coming of the Lord** is a well-known idiom in 1-2 Thessalonians for the Second Coming of Christ 3:13 or the “Day of the **Lord**” 5:2. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent idiom or use plain language. Alternate translation: “until the Lord Jesus returns” or “for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

will certainly not go before the ones having slept

Here, the phrase translated **certainly not** is a strong prohibition meaning “never.” If this double negative would be misunderstood in your language, you could translate it as a positive statement as in the UST. Alternate translation: “will never precede those who are dead” or “are not permitted to come before those who have already died” (See: **Double Negatives (p.174)**) (See: **Double Negatives (p.174)**)

1 Thessalonians 4:16

For

Here, **For** indicates that following events are related to the Second Coming. Use a natural way in your language to indicate this. Alternate translation: “Certainly,” or “Indeed,” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

For the Lord himself, with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with a trumpet of God, will come down from heaven

In this verse, Paul is describing events that happen at the same time **the Lord will descend from heaven**. He emphasizes the order of events by listing them prior to the main verb. If it is clearer in your language, you could place the main verb before the accompanying actions. You can also make this clear in your translation with an appropriate connecting word or phrase. Alternate translation: “Certainly, the Lord Jesus himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, and with the archangel’s voice, and with God’s trumpet” (See: **Connect — Simultaneous Time Relationship (p.163)**) (See: **Connect — Simultaneous Time Relationship (p.163)**)

the Lord himself

Paul uses the word **himself** to emphasize that the Lord Jesus will come back in person. Use a way that is natural in your language to indicate this emphasis. Alternate translation: “the Lord Jesus will come back personally” or “the very person, the Lord Jesus” (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**) (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**)

of an archangel

See Jude 9 for the only other use of this word in the Bible.

a trumpet of God

Paul is using the possessive form to describe **a trumpet** that is related to God. Here, **trumpet of God** could refer to: (1) a trumpet that God commands to be blown. Alternate translation: “a trumpet that God orders to be blown” (2) a trumpet that belongs to God. Alternate translation: “God’s trumpet” (See: **Possession (p.244)**) (See: **Possession (p.244)**)

will come down from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first

The first main verb **descend** is listed after the events that describe it. This is to show contrast with the second verb **rise**. After the **Lord** Jesus comes down from **heaven**, the **dead** Christians will resurrect from the earth. Paul makes two opposite statements, in similar ways, to emphasize the dramatic nature of the Lord’s Second Coming. Use a natural way in your language to indicate this emphasis. Alternate translation: “will come down from heaven, but the first to resurrect from the earth will be the dead people who are united to Christ” (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**)

and

The word **and** indicates that the event the story will now relate came after the event it has just described. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could show this relationship by using a fuller phrase. Alternate translation: “and then after that,” or “and afterward,” (See: **Connect — Sequential Time Relationship (p.161)**) (See: **Connect — Sequential Time Relationship (p.161)**)

the dead

Paul assumes that the Thessalonian church knows that **the dead** are the same as “those who are asleep” in [4:13–15](#). If it would be helpful to your readers, you could indicate that explicitly. See how you translated “fallen asleep” in [4:13–15](#) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

in Christ

Here Paul speaks figuratively about **the dead** as though they were occupying space inside **Christ**. This metaphor expresses the idea that believers are spiritually united to **Christ** (See also [2:14](#)). Here, it also highlights the communion that living Thessalonian believers **in Christ** have with the believers **in Christ** who have died. If this might be misunderstood in your language, you could express the meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternative translation: “who are united to Jesus Christ” or “who share life with Jesus Christ” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

1 Thessalonians 4:17

Then

Here, **Then** indicates that the events the story will now relate came after the event it has just described. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could show this relationship by using a fuller phrase. Alternate translation: “After that,” or “Afterward,” (See: **Connect — Sequential Time Relationship (p.161)**) (See: **Connect — Sequential Time Relationship (p.161)**)

we, the ones living

Though **we who are alive** could be exclusive of the apostles (See note for the same phrase at 4:15), the universal content of this section implies that all Christians are in view, so **we** would be inclusive. Your language may require you to mark these forms. Alternate translation: “all of us believers in Christ who remain alive” (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**) (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**)

together with them

Here, Paul refers to “the dead in Christ” (See 4:16) as **them**. If this is confusing in your language, you can make the reference explicit. Alternate translation: “together with the dead in Christ (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.250)**) (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.250)**)

together with them

Here, **together with them** could refer to: (1) a simultaneous event. You can make this clear in your translation with an appropriate connecting word or phrase. Alternate translation: “with them at the same time” (2) association with the “dead in Christ.” Alternate translation: “along with the dead in Christ” (3) both event and association. Alternate translation: “at the same time together with the dead in Christ” (See: **Connect — Simultaneous Time Relationship (p.163)**) (See: **Connect — Simultaneous Time Relationship (p.163)**)

will be caught up & in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air

Here it is assumed that Paul is referring to the words of the angels at Jesus’ Ascension in [Acts 1:9-11] (acts/01/09.md), as a fulfillment of the prophecy in [Daniel 7:13-14](#). If it would be helpful to your readers, you could provide a footnote or reference. (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

to meet

Here, **to meet** is a purpose clause. Paul is stating the purpose for why living believers **will be caught up together** with “the dead in Christ.” Use a natural way in your language for introducing a purpose clause. Alternate translation: “in order to encounter” (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**) (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**)

in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air

Here, **clouds** and **air** could be considered symbolic language representing God’s presence and the spiritual realm (See Exodus 19; Daniel 7:13-14; Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 17; 21; Ephesians 2:2). If it would be helpful to your readers, you could indicate that explicitly. Alternate translation: “to spiritually encounter the Lord Jesus” (See: **Symbolic Language (p.263)**) (See: **Symbolic Language (p.263)**)

and in this way

This clause is meant to signal the end of the events related to the Second Coming. You can use the natural form in your language for expressing the conclusion of a story. (See: **End of Story (p.182)**) (See: **End of Story (p.182)**)

and in this way

This clause also indicates the result of the meeting with **the Lord**. Use a natural way in your language to indicate result. Alternate translation: “and then” or “as a result” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

with the Lord

Here, **with the Lord** parallels **together with them** to express union with Christ as communion with his people. Use a natural way in your language to indicate this emphasis. (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**)

1 Thessalonians 4:18

Therefore, encourage

This is a result clause. Use a natural way in your language to indicate result. Alternate translation: “So then, keep encouraging” or “Because of this, you must comfort” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

encourage

This is an imperative, but it communicates an appeal rather than a command. Use a form in your language that communicates an appeal. Alternate translation: “you should encourage” or “please continue to comfort” (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses (p.211)**) (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses (p.211)**)

one another

The pronoun **one another** refers to the Thessalonian church. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make it explicit. Alternate translation: “each fellow member of your church” or “your fellow Thessalonian believers in Christ” (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.250)**) (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.250)**)

with these words

Here, **with these words** could refer to “we will always be with the Lord” in 4:17 or figuratively to all that has been said in 4:13-17. Alternate translation: “by reminding each other of our message” or “with these promises” (See: **Synecdoche (p.265)**) (See: **Synecdoche (p.265)**)

1 Thessalonians 5

1 Thessalonians 5 General Notes

Outline of 1 Thessalonians 5

Apostolic Teachings on the Second Coming of Christ (5:1-10)

Timing (5:1-3)

Preparation (5:4-8)

God's plan (5:9-10)

Final Instructions (5:11-28)

Final Commands (5:11-22)

Final Prayer (5:23-24)

Final Appeals (5:25-27)

Final blessing (5:25-27)

Structure and Formatting

Paul concludes his letter in a way that was typical of letters in the ancient Near East.

“We” and “You”

In this letter, the words **we** and **our** refer to Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, unless otherwise noted. Throughout the letter, **we** and **our** are used to convey that all three apostles are in agreement with the letter.

Special Concepts in this Chapter

Idiom

Day of the Lord

The “day of the Lord” is an idiom for the time of final salvation for God’s people and final judgment for God’s enemies. “Day” is metaphorical for a time period. Thus, the exact time of the coming “day of the Lord” will be a surprise to the world. The simile “like a thief in the night” refers to this surprise timing. Because of this, Christians must prepare for the coming of the Lord by living with faith, hope and love [5:8](#) toward God and others. (See: **day of the Lord**, **day of Yahweh** (p.275))

Simile

Like a thief

The simile “like a thief in the night” refers to this surprise timing. Because of this, Christians must prepare for the coming of the Lord by living with faith, hope, and love [5:8](#) toward God and others. (See: **Simile** (p.258))

Metaphor

Day and night, light and darkness

The apostles use many metaphors throughout [5:1-11](#). “Night,” “darkness,” “drunk,” “sleep” are all metaphors about spiritual ignorance or lack of readiness. “Day,” “light,” “sober,” “watch” are all metaphors about spiritual awareness and readiness.

Armor

Here, the apostles use a military metaphor to urge the Thessalonian church to be ready for Christ’s Second Coming at “the day of the Lord.” Just as soldiers must always be armed and ready to fight, so the Christian must live prepared for Christ’s return. Faithfulness and love are compared to a breastplate, and the hope of salvation is likened to a helmet [5:8](#).

Prophecy

Those who “despise prophecies” in [5:20](#) are said to “quench the Spirit.” This is a metaphor for trying to hinder the Holy Spirit’s guidance in the Church. All prophecies are to be examined and tested to determine if they adhere to apostolic teaching [5:21](#). All prophecies that are proven to agree with apostolic teaching, are to be retained as good [5:21-22](#).

Submission to Christian leadership

The apostles link the well-being and spiritual safety of the Thessalonian church to obedience to their leaders. Christian leaders are to be given recognition and loving respect by the church [5:12-13](#).

Holy Kiss

This refers to the ancient practice of exchanging a kiss of peace on the cheek during the liturgy. Different cultures have different standards of appropriate physical contact. These different cultural standards may make translating this passage difficult. Translators will have to consider the most appropriate way to communicate this sensitive issue [5:26](#).

1 Thessalonians 5:1

Now concerning the times and the seasons

General Information:

Here, **Now concerning** signals a change in subject (See also [4:9](#)). This phrase implies that the apostles are answering a specific question previously asked by the Thessalonian church about the timing of “the coming of the Lord” and how the church should prepare for it. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly. Alternate translation: “Now, about your question related to the exact timing of the Lord’s return” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

the times and the seasons

General Information:

Here, **the times and the seasons** is an idiom referring to a specific point in time or a time period. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent idiom or use plain language. This phrase could refer to: (1) a specific point in time. Alternate translation: “the appointed time when Jesus returns” or “the fixed time when Jesus returns” (See [Acts 1:7](#) for this exact phrase referring to the same thing)). (2) a specific amount of time. Alternate translation: “how long it will take for the Lord Jesus to return” or “when the Lord Jesus will return” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

you have no need {for anything} to be written to you

General Information:

Here words are left out in the original that a sentence would need in many languages to be complete. Since English needs it, **for us** is added in brackets. Do what is natural in your language. (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:2

perfectly well

This verse begins an extended list of contrasting similes that continues through 5:8. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use equivalent comparisons or express these meanings in a non-figurative way. (See: **Simile (p.258)**) (See: **Simile (p.258)**)

For you yourselves know perfectly well

The words **For**, **yourselves**, and **perfectly** emphasize how clearly the Thessalonian church should understand when and how the Lord's Second Coming will happen. Use a natural way in your language to indicate this emphasis. Alternate translation: "In fact, it is certain that you recognize accurately" or "You are certainly well aware of this fact" or "Indeed, you know precisely" (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**) (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**)

For

Here, **For** begins a reason clause that explains why the Thessalonian church has "no need that anything be written" to them about the timing and manner of the Lord's Second Coming (See 5:1). Alternate translation: "In fact," or "Certainly," (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

the day of the Lord

Here, **the day of the Lord** is an idiom that refers to the Old Testament concept of the time of God's final judgment. The context of this passage makes it clear that **the day of the Lord** is synonymous with "the coming of the Lord" Jesus in 4:15. (See also Acts 2:20; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Peter 3:10). Use a natural way in your language to emphasize this idea. Alternate translation; "the time when the Lord Jesus returns again to earth" or "the time when the Lord Jesus will finally judge" (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

comes in this manner—as a thief in the night

The point of this comparison is that, just like a thief at night comes unexpectedly, the way Jesus will return is unexpected and the timing of his return is unknown. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent comparison or express this meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: "is going to come as unexpectedly as a robber at night" or "is going to come so surprisingly-like when a thief breaks in at night" or "is going to happen like this—all of a sudden" (See: **Simile (p.258)**) (See: **Simile (p.258)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:3

Whenever they say, “Peace and safety

Paul is using a hypothetical situation to express the suddenness of the “the day of the Lord.” Use the natural form in your language for expressing a hypothetical situation. Alternate translation: “Whenever they might say, ‘Everything is safe and sound,’” or “At a time when people are saying, ‘All is well,’” (See: **Hypothetical Situations (p.206)**) (See: **Hypothetical Situations (p.206)**)

then

Here what follows the word **then** is in contrast to the **Peace and safety** these people expected to last. Instead, **sudden destruction comes** on them. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a contrast. (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**)

then sudden destruction comes on them

Here, **sudden destruction** parallels the idea of terror that accompanies a sudden attack by “a thief in the night” (See 5:2). If it would be clearer in your language, you could make this idea explicit. Alternate translation: “then sudden calamity strikes” or “then immediate destruction looms over them” (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**)

sudden destruction comes on them, just as the birth pain to the one having in the womb, and they will certainly not escape

Here, **sudden** describes the unexpected timing of **birth pains**, and **certainly not escape** describes the nature of **destruction**. Paul says similar things with these phrases to show that God’s final judgment will be a total surprise and complete ruin for unbelievers. Use a natural way in your language to emphasize these ideas. (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**)

just as the birth pain to the one having in the womb, and they will certainly not escape

The point of this comparison is that, just like a pregnant woman suddenly experiences labor pains, God’s final judgment will come suddenly and be inescapable. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent comparison or express this meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “just as suddenly as labor pains seize a pregnant woman—these people can never escape God’s destruction” (See: **Simile (p.258)**) (See: **Simile (p.258)**)

to the one having in the womb

Here, **having in the womb** is an idiom meaning “pregnant.” If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent idiom or use plain language. Alternate translation: “do for a woman in late pregnancy” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

they will certainly not escape

Here, **certainly not** is a strong prohibition meaning “never” (See 4:15). If this double negative would be misunderstood in your language, you could translate it as a positive statement. Alternate translation: “they will

never escape” or “there is no way to possibly escape” (See: **Double Negatives (p.174)**) (See: **Double Negatives (p.174)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:4

But you

Here what follows the words **But you** is in contrast to the “sudden destruction” of the people in 5:3. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a contrast. Alternate translation: “Certainly you” (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**)

are not in darkness

Paul speaks figuratively of these people as if they actually live in place without light. He means that they are unaware or unprepared for the Lord's return because they are living sinfully. If your readers would not understand what it means to be **in darkness** in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternate translation: “are not unprepared” or “are not living sinfully” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

so that the day might overtake you as a thief

This is a result clause. Use a natural way in your language to indicate result. Alternate translation: “causing you to be like people such as those surprised by a robber. You are ready for the time when the Lord Jesus will return” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

the day

Here, Paul speaks figuratively about the idiom “the **day** of the Lord” in 5:2, by contrasting **the day** with **darkness**. He means that because the Thessalonian church is not unaware of “the **day** of the Lord,” they will not be unprepared, like people who live **in darkness**. If your readers would not understand what **the day** means in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul's meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternative translation, “the day of the Lord” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

so that the day might overtake you as a thief

Paul speaks figuratively of “the **day** of the Lord” as if it were a thief who surprises a person. He means that “the **day** of the Lord” will come suddenly for those who are unprepared (See “sudden destruction” in 5:3). If your readers would not understand what this phrase means in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul's meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternative translation: “making you unprepared, like when a robber breaks in at night” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:5

πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς υἱοὶ φωτός ἐστε, καὶ υἱοὶ ἡμέρας. οὐκ ἐσμὲν νυκτὸς οὐδὲ σκότους

Here, **sons of the light** means basically the same thing as **sons of the day**. Also, **of the night** means basically the same thing as **of the darkness**. The repetition is used to emphasize how **light** characterizes **day** and how **darkness** characterizes **night**. If your language does not use repetition in this way, you can combine these phrases. Alternate translation: “Certainly, all of you are ready for Christ’s Second Coming. None of us are unprepared” (See: **Doublet (p.177)**) (See: **Doublet (p.177)**)

For you are all sons of light and sons of day

Paul speaks figuratively of the Thessalonian church as if the **light** and **day** were their physical parents. He means that the Thessalonian church members are God’s spiritual children who are characterized by spiritual readiness. If your readers would not understand what it means to be **sons of the light** and **sons of the day** in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul’s meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “This is because all of you who belong to God are ready for Christ’s coming” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

For

Here, **For** begins a reason clause that explains why the Thessalonian church will escape God’s judgment on “the **day** of the Lord” (See **5:2**). Alternate translation: “Because in fact” or “Certainly” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

you are all

Paul is using the adjective **all** as a noun in order to describe the whole Thessalonian church. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you could translate this with a noun phrase. Alternate translation: “you Thessalonians are all” (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**) (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**)

We are not of night, nor of darkness

Again, Paul speaks figuratively of these people as if they actually live in a place without light. He means that they are unaware or unprepared for the Lord’s return because they are living sinfully (See **5:4**). If your readers would not understand what it means to be **of the night** or **of the darkness** in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternate translation: “We are not unprepared like those at night or those who live in the darkness,” or “We are not characterized by being spiritually ignorant” or “We do not live like those who are characterized by sinful activities” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

We are

In **5:5-10**, **We** is inclusive of all Christians. Your language may require you to mark these forms. Alternate translation: “We believers in Christ are” (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**) (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**)

of night, nor of darkness

Paul is using the possessive form to describe people who are characterized by spiritual ignorance or who live sinfully. This means that they will not be prepared at “**the day** of the Lord.” If this is not clear in your language, you could make this explicit. Alternate translation: “characterized by being spiritually unprepared and living sinfully” (See: **Possession (p.244)**) (See: **Possession (p.244)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:6

So then

Here, **so then** emphatically introduces a result clause. Use a natural way in your language to introduce a result clause. Alternate translation: “therefore” or “as a result” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

let us not sleep as the rest

Here Paul speaks figuratively about the people “of the night” and “of the darkness” are if they are sleeping. He means that they are unaware or unprepared for the Lord’s return because they are living sinfully (See notes for “darkness” at 5:4-5). If your readers would not understand what it means to **sleep** in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternate translation: “we must not be unprepared like non-Christians” or “let us not be like the rest of humanity, who are not aware that Jesus is coming back” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

let us not sleep & let us keep watch and be sober

Here, the verb forms **sleep**, **keep watch**, and **be sober** could also refer to: (1) commands. Alternate translation: “we must not sleep ... we must keep watch and be sober” (2) appeals. Alternate translation: “let us not sleep ... let us keep watch and let us be sober” (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses (p.211)**) (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses (p.211)**)

the rest

Paul is using the adjective **the rest** as a noun in order to describe those who are unprepared for Christ’s return. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you could translate this with a noun phrase. Alternate translation: “like others who are not ready for the Lord Jesus to return” or “like the rest of humanity” (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**) (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**)

but

Here, what follows the word **but** is in contrast to **the rest** who **sleep**. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a contrast. Alternate translation (starting a new sentence): “On the contrary,” or “Instead,” or “Rather,” (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**)

let us keep watch and be sober

Here, Paul speaks figuratively of Christians as if they are watch guards. He means that they should be aware and be prepared for the Lord’s return by living as God’s people should live. If your readers would not understand what it means to **keep watch** or **be sober** in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternate translation: “instead, we must stay spiritually alert and prepared” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

let us keep watch and be sober

These verbs express a similar idea by using two words connected with **and**. The verb **be sober** tells how Christians should **keep watch**. If it would be more natural in your language, you could express this meaning with an

equivalent phrase that does not use **and**. Alternate translation: “we should remain calmly alert” or “let us remain soberly awake” (See: **Hendiadys (p.195)**) (See: **Hendiadys (p.195)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:7

For the ones sleeping sleep at night, and the ones getting drunk get drunk at night

These two phrases convey similar ideas by repeating the same verb forms twice. Paul says the same thing twice, in different ways, to show that **sleeping** and **getting drunk** are states of being that make people unaware or unprepared. If saying the same thing twice might be confusing for your readers, you could condense each phrase. Alternate translation: “Certainly, people sleep at night, and people get drunk at night” (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**)

For

Here, **For** begins a reason clause that explains why the Thessalonian church should “not sleep” or be unprepared for the Lord’s return (See 5:6). Alternate translation: “Because in fact,” or “Certainly,” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

For the ones sleeping sleep at night

Here again, like in 5:6, Paul speaks figuratively as if these people are actually sleeping, or it is night time. He means that these people are spiritually unprepared or unaware or even sinful (See also notes at 5:2,4). If your readers would not understand what **sleep** and **night** mean in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul’s meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “Those who are sleeping are unaware” or “Certainly those who are asleep are unprepared” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

the ones getting drunk get drunk at night

Paul speaks figuratively as if these people are actually drunk, or it is night time. He means that these people are spiritually unprepared or unaware or sinful. If your readers would not understand what **getting drunk** or **night** mean in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul’s meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “those who are drunk are unprepared” or “those who are drunk are unaware” or “those who drink too much alcohol tend to drink at night” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:8

But

What follows the word **But** here is in contrast to “getting drunk” at “night” in 5:7. Instead, Christians are characterized by the activities of **the day** and staying **sober** (See 5:5–6). Use a natural way in your language for introducing a contrast. Alternate translation: “However” or “Instead” (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship** (p.151)) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship** (p.151))

let us, & be sober

Here, **should stay sober** could refer to: (1) a command. Alternate translation: “we ... must stay sober” (2) an appeal. Alternate translation: “let us ... stay sober” (See your translation at 5:6). (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses** (p.211)) (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses** (p.211))

But & us, being of day

Paul speaks figuratively of Christians as if they are actually a part of the day time. He means that they are characterized by spiritual readiness for the Lord’s return. If your readers would not understand what it means to be **of the day** in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul’s meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “Now, because we are ready for Christ’s coming, we” or “Since we are characterized by being ready, we” (See: **Metaphor** (p.225)) (See: **Metaphor** (p.225))

having put on the breastplate of faith and of love, and a helmet—the hope of salvation

Paul speaks figuratively of Christians as if they are soldiers. He means that just as a soldier must equip himself with armor in order to be ready to fight, so Christians must prepare themselves for the Second Coming of Christ with the spiritual protection of **faith**, **love**, and **hope** (See also [Ephesians 6:10-18,23](#)). If your readers would not understand what these phrases mean in this context, you could use equivalent metaphors from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul’s meaning in a non-figurative way. (See: **Metaphor** (p.225)) (See: **Metaphor** (p.225))

of faith and of love, & of salvation

Paul uses the possessive form to describe things that are characterized by **faith** and **hope** and **love**. You could turn these phrases into similes if it would be clearer in your language. (See: **Possession** (p.244)) (See: **Possession** (p.244))

1 Thessalonians 5:9

For God did not appoint us for wrath

Here, **wrath** refers to God's future and final Judgment (See your translation of **wrath** at 1:10, 2:16). (See also [What is the "second coming" of Jesus?](#)). If your language does not use the abstract noun **wrath**, you can express the idea behind it in another way. "Certainly, God did not destine that he would punish us" or "Indeed, God did not determine that he would judge us" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

For

Here, **For** begins a reason clause that explains why the Thessalonian church should have "the hope of salvation" (See 5:8). Use a natural way in your language to express this emphasis. Alternate translation: "Certainly" (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

for & for

Here, **to ... to** introduces two purpose clauses. Paul is stating the purpose or goal for which God **appointed** the two types of people described in 5:3-8). Use a natural way in your language for introducing purpose clauses. Alternate translation: "for the purpose of ... in order to" (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**) (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**)

but

What follows the word **but** here is in contrast to **wrath**. Here Paul emphasizes that God's true people will not experience his final punishment. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a contrast. Alternate translation: "but actually" or "but instead" (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**)

for the obtaining of salvation

Here, the phrase translated **to obtain salvation** is a possessive form that Paul uses to indicate that **salvation** is something that belongs to God's people. If this is not clear in your language, you could make this explicit. Alternate translation: "for the possessing of salvation" or "for the acquiring of salvation" (See: **Possession (p.244)**) (See: **Possession (p.244)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:10

the one having died for us

Here, **the one who died for us** gives us further information about what “salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” is (See 5:9). Paul means that God gives the guarantee that Christians will “obtain salvation,” because Jesus **died for us**. If this is not understood in your language, you could make the relationship between these phrases clearer. Alternate translation: “who died on our behalf” or “who died for our sake” (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**) (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**)

so that, & we will live together with him

This is a purpose clause. Paul is stating why Jesus **died for us**. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a purpose clause. Alternate translation: “in order that ... we could live together with him” (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**) (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.155)**)

whether we keep watch or sleep

Paul speaks figuratively of these people as if they were physically **awake or asleep**. He means that they are “alive or dead” (See 4:14–17). If your readers would not understand what it means to be **awake or asleep** in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul's meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “whether we are living or even if we are dead” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore

Here, **Therefore** indicates the conclusion of this section about timing of “the day of the Lord,” and connects to the manner of Christ’s return in 4:14–18 by again using the same phrase, **comfort one another**. (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

Therefore, encourage

Therefore begins a result clause. Paul explains how the Thessalonian church should respond to the fact that Jesus died so that Christians can “obtain salvation” (See 5:9). Alternate translation: “This is why you should encourage” or “As a result, you must comfort” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

Therefore, encourage one another and build up one the one

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. The repetition is used to emphasize how much Paul wants the Thessalonian church to encourage and support each other. If your language does not use repetition in this way, you can combine these phrases. Alternate translation: “As a result, continue to be supportive of what each person needs” or “This is why you must supportively console each other with this message” (See: **Doublet (p.177)**) (See: **Doublet (p.177)**)

encourage & build up

These verbs are imperatives but could communicate an appeal rather than a command. You could use a form in your language that communicates an urgent request or appeal. Alternate translation: “we apostles urge you to comfort ... build up” (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses (p.211)**) (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses (p.211)**)

build up

Paul speaks figuratively of the Thessalonian church as if they were a building that can be constructed. He means that they should mutually support one another in the Christian life. If your readers would not understand what it means to **build up** in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul’s meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “keep supporting” or “continue to confirm” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

one the one

Here, the term **one the one** is an idiom meaning “each and every one” or “each one.” If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent idiom or use plain language. Alternate translation: “each one” or “one another” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

just as also you are doing

Here Paul uses the emphatic phrase **just as also you are doing** to encourage the Thessalonian church to continue their practice of mutually supporting each other. Use a natural way in your language to indicate this emphasis. Alternate translation: “exactly as you have been doing”

1 Thessalonians 5:12

Now

General Information:

Here, **Now** indicates that what follows is the final section of instructions from the apostles. Alternate translation: “Lastly” or “Indeed” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**) (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

the ones laboring among you and leading you in the Lord and admonishing you

This clause expresses different functions for the same group of leaders. It is not making a distinction between **those who are laboring among you** and **leading you** and **admonishing you**. If this is not understood in your language, you could make the relationship between these phrases more clear. Alternate translation: “your leaders who are working among you and guiding you in the Lord and training you” (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**) (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.171)**)

in the Lord

Paul speaks figuratively as if the leaders of the church at Thessalonica were occupying space inside of **the Lord**. Here, the metaphor expresses the idea that these men represent Jesus himself in their leadership role in the Thessalonian church (See also [4:1](#)). If your readers would not understand what **in the Lord** means in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul's meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “with authority from the Lord Jesus” or “as spokespersons for the Lord Jesus” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:13

and to regard them highly in love because of their work

If it would be more natural in your language, you could reverse the order of these phrases, since the second phrase gives the reason for the result that the first phrase describes. Alternate translation: “and because of their work on your behalf, we also ask you to lovingly show them the utmost consideration” or “and since they work so hard for you, we also urge you to show them the highest honor out of love” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

in love

Paul speaks figuratively as if the Thessalonian church is occupying space inside of **love**. He is describing how they should show honor to their leaders. If your readers would not understand what **in love** means in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul's meaning in a non-figurative way. Here, **in love** could refer to: (1) the means of love. Alternate translation: “by loving them” (2) the basis for love. Alternate translation: “on the basis of your love for them” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

Be at peace among yourselves

Here is the first of 17 final appeals in 5:13-26 that the apostles give the Thessalonian church. **Be at peace** is an imperative, but here it could be an urgent request rather than a command. Use a natural way in your language to communicate an appeal or urgent request. Alternate translation: “We urge you to continue to live peacefully with your leaders” (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses (p.211)**) (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses (p.211)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:14

to regard them highly in love because of their work

Paul uses a repetitive series of imperative sentences in [5:14–22](#) to urge the Thessalonian church to show practical love to one another. This repetitive style of speaking or writing is called a “litany.” Use a form in your language that someone would use to list things that someone should do. (See: **Litany (p.219)**) (See: **Litany (p.219)**)

Now we encourage you, brothers

This phrase signals the apostles’ final appeals to the Thessalonian church. Since there are 14 commands in this section [5:14–22](#), you could use a marker from your language to indicate this final section. Alternate translation: “Finally, we urge you, fellow believers in Christ” See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)** (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.165)**)

brothers

Here the idiom **brothers** could refer to: (1) the whole Thessalonian church including the leaders. Alternate translation: “our fellow believers in Christ” (2) the leaders of the Thessalonian church. Alternate translation: “fellow leaders of Christ’s church” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

toward all

Paul is using the adjective **all** as a noun in order to describe the Thessalonian church. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you could translate this with a noun phrase. Alternate translation: “toward all your fellow believers in Christ” or “with the whole Thessalonian church” (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**) (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:15

See that

Here, **See that** is an idiom used to command attention. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent idiom or use plain language. Alternate translation: “Be certain that” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

repays evil for evil to anyone

Paul speaks figuratively of **evil** as if it were goods or money that could be exchanged. He means that if a someone treats you badly, you should not respond in the same way. If your readers would not understand what it means to **pay back evil for evil** in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul's meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “treats anyone wrongly because they treated you wrongly” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

but

Here what follows the word **but** is in contrast to repaying **evil for evil**. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a contrast. Alternate translation: “and instead,” (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**) (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.151)**)

always

Here, **always** could be using exaggeration to express emphasis. Paul means that the Thessalonian church should make it a habit to **pursue what is good**. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language that expresses this emphasis. Alternate translation: “make every effort to” or “constantly” or “habitually” (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**) (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**)

both for one another and for all

Here, **both for one another and for all** is used to emphasize groups of people. In this context, the phrase could refer to: (1) the Thessalonian church and all believers in Christ. Alternate translation (remove preceding comma): “for your church at Thessalonica and for all believers in Christ” (2) the Thessalonian church and the whole human race (See how you translated this phrase in 3:12). Alternate translation (remove preceding comma): “for everyone” or “for each and every person” (See: **Merism (p.223)**) (See: **Merism (p.223)**)

all

Paul could be using the adjective **all** as a noun in order to describe a group of people. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you could translate this with a noun phrase. Here it could refer to: (1) all Christians. Alternate translation: “all your fellow believers in Christ” (2) the whole human race. Alternate translation: “all humanity” (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**) (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:16

always

Here, **always** could be using exaggeration to express emphasis. Paul could mean that the Thessalonian church should make it a habit to **rejoice**. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language that expresses this emphasis. Alternate translation: “constantly” or “habitually” (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**) (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray continually

Here, **without ceasing** could be using exaggeration to express emphasis. Paul could mean that the Thessalonian church should make it a habit to **pray**. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your language that expresses this emphasis. Alternate translation: “Continue to pray” or “Keep praying regularly” or “Retain a prayerful state of mind” (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**) (See: **Hyperbole (p.202)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:18

In everything

Paul is using the adjective **everything** as a noun in order to describe a situation or time. Your language may use adjectives in the same way. If not, you could translate this with a noun phrase. Here, **In everything** could refer to: (1) a situation or circumstance. Alternate translation: “In every circumstance” or “No matter what happens” (2) time. Alternate translation: “At every time” or “At every moment” (3) both a situation and time. Alternate translation: “In every circumstance and moment” (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**) (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**)

In everything give thanks

If it would be more natural in your language, you could reverse the order of these phrases. Alternate translation: “Continue to give thanks in everything” or “Keep giving thanks all the time” (See: **Information Structure (p.214)**) (See: **Information Structure (p.214)**)

In everything give thanks, for this {is} the will of God in Christ Jesus for you

Here, **for** begins a reason clause. Paul is telling the Thessalonian church the reason why they should “rejoice,” “pray,” and **give thanks** in [5:16–18](#). If it would be more natural in your language, you could reverse the order of these phrases, since the second phrase gives the reason for the result that the first phrase describes. Alternate translation: “Give thanks in everything, because all these things are what God desires for those who are united to Christ Jesus” or “Because this is God’s will for you who are united to Christ Jesus, you must give thanks in everything” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

for this {is} the will of God

Here, **this** is a singular pronoun that could refer to: (1) all the commands in [5:14–18](#) Alternate translation: “because all these things are what God desires” (2) **give thanks**. Alternate translation: “for in fact, this is God’s will” or “for certainly, this thing is God’s will” (See: **Collective Nouns (p.145)**) (See: **Collective Nouns (p.145)**)

this {is}

A word is left out here in the original that a sentence would need in many languages to be complete. Since English needs it, **is** is added in brackets. Do what is natural in your language. Alternate translation: “this is” (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**)

the will of God in Christ Jesus for you

If your language does not use the abstract noun phrase **the will of God in Christ Jesus for you**, you can express the idea in another way. Alternate translation: “how God desires people to live who are united to Christ Jesus” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

in Christ Jesus for you

Here, Paul speaks figuratively of **the will of God** as though it were occupying space inside **Christ Jesus**. This metaphor means that the way God desires his people to live is inseparable from being united to **Christ Jesus** (See also [2:14](#)). If this might be misunderstood in your language, you could express the meaning in a non-figurative

way. Alternative translation, “for those of you who are united to Jesus Christ” or “for all of you who share life with Jesus Christ” (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:19

Do not quench the Spirit

Paul speaks figuratively of **the** Holy **Spirit** as if he is fire that can be extinguished. Paul means that the Thessalonian church must not hinder the work of the Holy **Spirit**, especially by despising prophecies (See [5:20](#)). If your readers would not understand what it means to **quench** in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul's meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: "Do not extinguish the Spirit" or "Do not reject the Spirit" (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

Do not quench

Paul uses a figure of speech that expresses a strong positive meaning by using a negative word together with a word that is the opposite of the intended meaning. If this is confusing in your language, you can express the meaning positively. Alternate translation: "Continue to kindle" or "Be fervent in" or "Keep working along with" (See: **Litotes (p.221)**) (See: **Litotes (p.221)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:20

Do not despise

Paul uses a figure of speech that expresses a strong positive meaning by using a negative word together with a word that is the opposite of the intended meaning. If this is confusing in your language, you can express the meaning positively. Alternate translation: “Readily accept” or “Cherish” (See: **Litotes (p.221)**) (See: **Litotes (p.221)**)

Do not despise prophecies

The two phrases in [5:19-20](#) could refer to the same thing. Paul could be saying the same thing twice, in slightly different ways, to correct how the Thessalonian church viewed prophecy. He means that the Holy Spirit is the source of true prophecy (See [2 Peter 1:21](#)), so they should not “quench the Spirit” by rejecting all prophecies. You could use a natural way in your language to emphasize this. Alternate translation: “Do not continue to despise prophetic messages from the Holy Spirit” (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:21

Test all things. Hold fast to what {is} good

This could mean: (1) Paul is beginning a general list of things that the Thessalonians should **Test** and **Hold fast** if they are **good**. (2) Paul is continuing to refer to the prophecies in the previous verse, and he wants the Thessalonians to **Test** those and **Hold fast** to the prophecies that are truly from God. (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

Test all things

Paul speaks figuratively as if the Thessalonians could make **all things** pass a test. This could mean: (1) they should examine everything they hear and do to make sure it conforms to what honors God. Alternate translation: "Carefully examine everything you hear and do" (2) they should examine and approve prophecies to determine whether or not they are genuinely from the Holy Spirit (See [2:4](#) for a similar context)). Alternate translation: "examine and approve all prophecies" (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

all things

Here, **all things** is an adjectival phrase. Depending on whether you decided this is a new list or a continuation of verse 20, this could mean: (1) Alternate translation: "everything you hear and do" (2) Alternate translation: "all prophecies" (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**) (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.233)**)

Hold fast to what {is} good

Paul speaks figuratively of **good** things as if they were objects that someone could hold tightly in his hands. He means that the Thessalonian church should only believe and practice things that prove to be from the Holy Spirit. If your readers would not understand what it means to **hold fast to what {is} good** in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul's meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: "Keep only the valid things" or "Retain what is from the Spirit" (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**) (See: **Metaphor (p.225)**)

what {is} good

A word is left out here in the original that a sentence would need in many languages to be complete. Since English needs it, **is** is added in brackets. Do what is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "what is good" (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:22

every form of evil

Here, **evil** is spoken of figuratively as though it were a person who could be seen. If this might be confusing for your readers, you could express this meaning in a non-figurative way. Alternate translation: “anything clearly wicked” or “all that is obviously evil” (See: **Personification (p.242)**) (See: **Personification (p.242)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:23

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify

Here, the verb forms indicate that this is a blessing or prayer (See also [3:11-13](#)). Use a form that people would recognize as a blessing or prayer in your language. Alternate translation: “Now we pray that God himself, who gives peace, would sanctify” (See: **Blessings (p.143)**) (See: **Blessings (p.143)**)

may & sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, and soul, and body be kept blamelessly

These two clauses mean the same thing. Paul says the same thing twice, in slightly different ways, to show how much he wants God to preserve the Thessalonian church as his people. If saying the same thing twice might be confusing for your readers, you could combine the phrases into one. Alternate translation: “may ... fully preserve you as his people to the end, and may every part of you be protected” or “may ... completely preserve each and every one of you” (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**) (See: **Parallelism (p.239)**)

the God of peace

Here Paul uses the possessive form **the God of peace**, which is a title for God found in the New Testament (See Romans 15:33; 16:20; Philippians 4:9; Hebrews 13:20). If this is not clear in your language, you could make it explicit. In this context, **the God of peace** could refer to: (1) who God is. Alternate translation: “the God who is characterized by peace” (2) what God does. Alternate translation: “the God who gives peace” (3) Both. (See: **Possession (p.244)**) (See: **Possession (p.244)**)

himself

Paul uses the word **himself** to emphasize the urgency of the apostles’ prayer or blessing by drawing attention to **God**, who is the only one who can sanctify and keep the Christian person blameless. Use a way that is natural in your language to indicate this emphasis. (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**) (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.252)**)

may your whole spirit, and soul, and body be kept blamelessly

If it would be more natural in your language, you could say **be kept** with an active form, and you could emphasize who did the action. Alternate translation: “may God keep you completely blameless” or “may God make your whole life sinless” (See: **Active or Passive (p.134)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.134)**)

your whole spirit, and soul, and body

Paul speaks figuratively, using these three aspects of the human person in order to represent the whole human being. If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or use plain language. Alternate translation: “your whole being” or “your whole life” (See: **Merism (p.223)**) (See: **Merism (p.223)**)

at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ

Here, **coming of the Lord** is a well-known idiom in 1-2 Thessalonians for the Second Coming of Christ (See [4:15](#)) or the “Day of the **Lord**” in [5:2](#). If this would be misunderstood in your language, you could use an equivalent idiom or use plain language. Alternate translation: “when our Lord Jesus Christ comes back to earth again” or “at the arrival of our Lord Jesus Christ” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:24

Faithful {is} the one calling you, who also will do {it}

Here, **who will also do it** expresses the result of God's faithfulness. If it would be misunderstood in your language, you could make this explicit. Alternate translation: "Because God is faithful, he will also preserve you sanctified" or "Since God is trustworthy, he will also completely sanctify you" (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**) (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.158)**)

Faithful {is} the one calling you

Here it is implied that **he** refers to "the God of peace" in 5:23. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly. Alternate translation: "Faithful is God who calls you" or "The God who continues to summon you is faithful" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

Faithful {is} the one

A word is left out here in the original that a sentence would need in many languages to be complete. Since English needs it, **is** is added in brackets. Do what is natural in your language. (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**)

is} the one calling you, who also will do {it

The pronouns **he** and **who** refer to "the God of peace" in 5:23. Use a natural way in your language to make this explicit. Alternate translation: "is God who calls you, so he will also do it" (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.250)**) (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.250)**)

Faithful {is} the one

A word is left out here in the original that a sentence would need in many languages to be complete. Since English needs it, **is** is added in brackets. Do what is natural in your language. (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**) (See: **Ellipsis (p.179)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:25

pray also for us

Here, **pray** is an imperative, but it communicates a polite request or appeal rather than a command. Use a form in your language that communicates a polite request or appeal. It may be helpful to add an expression such as “please” to make this clearer. Alternate translation: “we ask you to pray” or “please pray for us” (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses (p.211)**) (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses (p.211)**)

us

Here, **us** refers exclusively to the apostles. Your language may require you to mark these forms. Alternate translation: “us apostles” (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**) (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:26

Greet

Here, **Greet** is an imperative, but it communicates a polite request rather than a command. Use a form in your language that communicates a polite request. Alternate translation: “Make it your habit to greet” or “Make it your practice to greet” (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses (p.211)**) (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses (p.211)**)

all the brothers

Here, **all the brothers** is an idiom that refers to the whole Thessalonian church—and by extension—all Christians. Alternate translation: “all believers in Christ” or “all Christians” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

with a holy kiss

This action was an expression of Christian affection in this culture. It showed the unity of those who belong to Christ. If there is a gesture with similar meaning in your culture, you could consider using it here in your translation. (See: **Symbolic Action (p.261)**) (See: **Symbolic Action (p.261)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:27

I solemnly charge you {by} the Lord to have this letter read

The phrase **I solemnly charge you by the Lord** is an oath formula. Use a natural way in your language to express an oath. Alternate translation: “You must make a vow to the Lord that you will read this letter” or “I put you under oath to the Lord that this letter must be read” (See: **Oath Formulas (p.235)**) (See: **Oath Formulas (p.235)**)

to have this letter read

It is assumed that this letter would be read out loud by someone in the local church. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could say that explicitly. Alternate translation: “to have this letter read aloud” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.137)**)

to have this letter read

If it would be more natural in your language, you could say this with an active form. Alternate translation: “to make sure you read this letter out loud” (See: **Active or Passive (p.134)**) (See: **Active or Passive (p.134)**)

to all the brothers

Here, **all the brothers** is an idiom that refers to the whole Thessalonian church—and by extension—all Christians (See [5:26](#). Alternate translation: “to the whole church at Thessalonica” (See: **Idiom (p.209)**) (See: **Idiom (p.209)**)

1 Thessalonians 5:28

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ {be} with you

This is a blessing and greeting formula. Use a form that people would recognize as a blessing that could be used as a greeting in your language. Alternate translation: “May our Lord Jesus Christ show you how kind he is” or “May the favor of the Lord Jesus Christ be among you all” or “I pray that the Lord Jesus Christ will favor all of you” (See: **Blessings (p.143)**) (See: **Blessings (p.143)**)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ {be} with you

If your language does not use the abstract noun **grace**, you can express the idea behind it in another way. Alternate translation: “May our Lord Jesus Christ always show you how kind he is” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**) (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.132)**)

be} with you

Many ancient manuscripts add “Amen” (See: **Textual Variants (p.267)**) (See: **Textual Variants (p.267)**)



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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 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 Thessalonians 2:6; 1 Thessalonians 2:8; 1 Thessalonians 2:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:17; 1 Thessalonians 3:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:6; 1 Thessalonians 3:7; 1 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:7; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:28

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.

Next we recommend you learn about:

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

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

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 1:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:23](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:27](#)

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 Thessalonians 1:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:7](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:10](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:17](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:18](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:3](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:13](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:10](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:11](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:13](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:14](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:16](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:24](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:27](#)

Background Information

Description

When people tell a story, they normally tell the events in the order that they happened. This sequence of events makes up the storyline. The storyline is full of action verbs that move the story along in time. But sometimes a writer may take a break from the storyline and give some information to help his listeners understand the story better. This type of information is called background information. The background information might be about things that happened before the events he has already told about, or it might explain something in the story, or it might be about something that would happen much later in the story.

This page answers the question: *What is background information, and how can I show that some information is background information?*

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

Order of Events ([UTA PDF](#))

Writing Styles ([UTA PDF](#))

Example — The bolded phrases in the story below are all background information.

Peter and John went on a hunting trip because **their village was going to have a feast the next day. Peter was the best hunter in the village. He once killed three wild pigs in one day!** They walked for hours through low bushes until they heard a wild pig. The pig ran, but they managed to shoot the pig and kill it. Then they tied up its legs with some rope **they had brought with them** and carried it home on a pole. When they brought it to the village, Peter's cousin saw the pig and realized that it was his own pig. Peter had mistakenly killed his cousin's pig.

Background information often tells about something that had happened earlier or something that would happen much later. Examples of these are: "their village was going to have a feast the next day," "He once killed three wild pigs in one day," and "that they had brought with them."

Often background information uses "be" verbs like "was" and "were," rather than action verbs. Examples of these are "their village was going to have a feast the next day," and "Peter **was** the best hunter in the village."

Background information can also be marked with words that tell the reader that this information is not part of the event line of the story. In this story, some of these words are "because," "once," and "had."

A writer may use background information:

- to help their listeners be interested in the story
- to help their listeners understand something in the story
- to help the listeners understand why something is important in the story
- to tell the setting of a story

- Setting includes:
 - where the story takes place
 - when the story takes place
 - who is present when the story begins
 - what is happening when the story begins

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Languages have different ways of marking background information and storyline information.
- You (the translator) need to know the order of the events in the Bible, which information is background information, and which is storyline information.
- You will need to translate the story in a way that marks the background information in a way that your own readers will understand the order of events, which information is background information, and which is storyline information.

Examples From the Bible

Hagar gave birth to Abram's son, and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram **was 86 years old** when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram. (Genesis 16:15-16 ULT)

The first sentence tells about two events. Hagar gave birth and Abraham named his son. The second sentence is background information about how old Abram was when those things happened.

And Jesus himself **was beginning about 30 years old**. He **was the son** (as it was assumed) of Joseph, of Heli, (Luke 3:23 ULT)

The verses before this tell about when Jesus was baptized. This sentence introduces background information about Jesus' age and ancestors. The story resumes in chapter 4 where it tells about Jesus going to the wilderness.

Then **it happened on a Sabbath** that he **was going through the grain fields**, and his disciples **were picking and eating the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands**. But some of the Pharisees said ... (Luke 6:1-2a ULT)

These verses give the setting of the story. The events took place in a grain field on the Sabbath day. Jesus, his disciples, and some Pharisees were there, and Jesus' disciples were picking heads of grain and eating them. The main action in the story starts with the phrase, "But some of the Pharisees said"

Translation Strategies

To keep translations clear and natural you will need to study how people tell stories in your language. Observe how your language marks background information. You may need to write down some stories in order to study this. Observe what kinds of verbs your language uses for background information and what kinds of words or other markers signal that something is background information. Do these same things when you translate, so that your translation is clear and natural and people can understand it easily.

- (1) Use your language's way of showing that certain information is background information.
- (2) Reorder the information so that earlier events are mentioned first. (This is not always possible when the background information is very long.)

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use your language's way of showing that certain information is background information. The examples below explain how this was done in the ULT English translations.

And Jesus himself **was** beginning about 30 years old. He **was** the son (as it was assumed) of Joseph, of Heli. (Luke 3:23 ULT)

As here, English sometimes uses the word "and" to show that there is some kind of change in the story. The verb "was" shows that it is background information.

Therefore, also exhorting many other things, he preached the good news to the people. But Herod the tetrarch, having been rebuked by him concerning Herodias, the wife of his brother, and **concerning all the evil things that Herod had done**, added even this to them all: He locked John up in prison. (Luke 3:18-20 ULT)

The bolded phrase happened before John rebuked Herod. In English, the helping verb "had" in "had done" shows that Herod did those things before John rebuked him.

- (2) Reorder the information so that earlier events are mentioned first.

Hagar gave birth to Abram's son, and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.
Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram. (Genesis 16:16 ULT)

"**When Abram was 86 years old**, Hagar gave birth to his son, and Abram named his son Ishmael."

Therefore, also exhorting many other things, he preached the good news to the people. But Herod the tetrarch, having been rebuked by him concerning Herodias, the wife of his brother, and **concerning all the evil things that Herod had done**, added even this to them all: He locked John up in prison. (Luke 3:18-20 ULT)

The translation below reorders John's rebuke and Herod's actions.

"Now Herod the tetrarch married his brother's wife, Herodias, and **he did many other evil things**, so John rebuked him. But then Herod did another very evil thing. He had John locked up in prison."

Next we recommend you learn about:

Connecting Words and Phrases ([UTA PDF](#))

Introduction of a New Event ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Introduction to 1 Thessalonians](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:2](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:14](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:15](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:10](#)

Blessings

Description

Blessings are short sayings that people use to ask God to do something good for another person. In the Bible, the person saying the blessing speaks or writes directly to the person who will receive the blessing. The person who says the blessing does not directly speak to God, but it is understood that God is the one who will do the good thing mentioned. It is also understood that God hears the blessing, whether he is mentioned by name or not.

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

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

Writing Styles ([UTA PDF](#))

Poetry ([UTA PDF](#))

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Each language has its own ways of saying blessings. There are many blessings in the Bible. They need to be translated in the way that people say blessings in your language, so that people recognize them as blessings and understand what one person wants God to do for another.

Examples From the Bible

In the Bible, people often said a blessing when they met someone or when they were leaving someone or sending someone off.

In the book of Ruth, when Boaz meets his workers in the fields, he greets them with a blessing:

Then behold, Boaz coming from Bethlehem! And he said to the reapers, "Yahweh be with you." And they said to him, "May Yahweh bless you." (Ruth 2:4 ULT)

Similarly, when Rebekah leaves her family, they say farewell with a blessing:

They blessed Rebekah, and said to her, "Our sister, may you be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them." (Genesis 24:60 ULT)

In a similar way, the writers of letters in the New Testament often wrote a blessing at the beginning of their letters as well as at the end. Here are examples from the beginning and end of Paul's second letter to Timothy:

Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. (2 Tim 1:2 ULT) The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you. (2 Tim 4:22 ULT)

Translation Strategies

Find out how people say blessings in your language. Collect a list of common blessings, noting the form of the verb, the use of certain words, and the words that are not used in a blessing but would normally be in a sentence. Also find out what differences there might be between blessings that people use when they are speaking to each other and when they are writing to each other.

If translating a blessing literally would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider doing that. If not, here are some options:

Add a verb if that is natural in your language.

Mention God as the subject of a blessing if that is natural in your language.

Translate the blessing in a form that is natural and clear in your language.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Add a verb if that is natural in your language.

■ The Lord with your spirit. The grace with you. (2 Tim 4:22, literal from the Greek)

In the Greek of this verse, there is no verb 'be.' However, in blessings in English, it is natural to use a verb. The idea that the 'grace' from God will be or remain with the person is implied in Greek.

The Lord **be** with your spirit. Grace **be** with you. (2 Tim 4:22 ULT)

(2) Mention God as the subject of a blessing if that is natural in your language.

If people expect a blessing to refer to God in your language, you might have to provide 'God' as the subject or as the source of the blessing. In Greek and Hebrew, usually God is not explicitly mentioned in the blessing, but it is implied that God is the one acting to show his kindness to the person being addressed.

■ The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you. (2 Tim 4:22 ULT)

The Lord be with your spirit. **May God give** grace to you.

■ They blessed Rebekah, and said to her, "Our sister, may you be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them." (Genesis 24:60 ULT)

They blessed Rebekah, and said to her, "Our sister, may **God grant that** you be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and may **God empower** your descendants **to** possess the gate of those who hate them."

(3) Translate the blessing in a form that is natural and clear in your language.

Here are some ideas for ways that people might say a blessing in their language.

■ The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you. (2 Tim 4:22 ULT)

May the Lord be with your spirit. May God cause his grace to be with you.

May you have God's presence with you. May you experience grace from God.

■ "Our sister, may you be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them." (Genesis 24:60 ULT)

"Our sister, we pray to God that you may be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and appeal to him that your descendants may possess the gate of those who hate them."

"Our sister, by God's power you will be the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and your descendants will possess the gate of those who hate them."

"

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 1:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:11](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:23](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:28](#)

Collective Nouns

Description

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

A collective noun is a singular noun that refers to a group of something. Examples: a **family**, **clan**, or **tribe** is a group of people who are related to each other; a **flock** is a group of birds or sheep; a **fleet** is a group of ships; and an **army** is a group of soldiers.

Many collective nouns are used exclusively as a singular replacement for a group as in the examples above. Frequently in the Bible the name of an ancestor is used, through a process of metonymy, as a collective noun referencing the group of his descendants. In the Bible, sometimes the singular noun will take a singular verb form, other times it will take a plural verb form. This may depend on how the author is thinking about the group, or whether the action is being done as a group or as individuals.

Reason This is a Translation Issue

There are several issues that require care when translating collective nouns. Further care is needed because the language you are translating into may not use collective nouns in the same way as the language you are translating from. Issues include:

The source language may have a collective noun for a group that the target language does not and vice-versa. You may have to translate a collective noun with a plural noun in your language, or you may need to translate a plural noun with a collective noun in your language.

Subject-verb agreement. Different languages or dialects may have different rules about using singular or plural verbs with collective nouns. Examples (from Wikipedia):

a singular noun with a singular verb: The team *is* in the dressing room.

a singular noun with a plural verb which is correct in British, but not American, English: The team *are* fighting among themselves. The team *have* finished the project.

Pronoun agreement. Similar to the previous, care needs to be taken to use the correct pronoun plurality and possibly gender or noun class to agree with the number/gender/class of the noun used. See the biblical examples below.

Clarity of referent. Especially if there is a mismatch in your translation between the verb and noun or pronoun concerning any of the factors above, readers may be confused about who or what is being referenced.

Examples from the Bible

And Joab and all the **army** which was with him arrived (2 Samuel 3:23a ULT)

The word in bold is written in singular form in both Hebrew and English, but it refers to a group of warriors that fight together.

and though the **flock** is cut off from the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls. (Habakkuk 3:17b ULT)

The word in bold is singular and refers to a group of sheep.

And he went out again beside the sea, and all the **crowd** was coming to him, and he was teaching **them**. (Mark 2:13 ULT)

Note in this example that the noun is singular but the pronoun is plural. This may or may not be allowed or natural in your language.

Do not let **your heart** be troubled. **You** believe in God; believe also in me. (John 14:1 ULT)

In this verse, the words translated “your” and “you” are plural, referring to many people. The word “heart” is singular in form, but it refers to all of their hearts as a group.

And he shall take the **hair** of the head of his separation. And he shall put **it** on the fire that is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings. (Num 6:18b ULT)

The word **hair** is singular, but it refers to many hairs, not just one.

And Pharaoh said, “Who is Yahweh that I should listen to his voice to let **Israel** go? I do not know Yahweh; and moreover, I will not let **Israel** go.” (Exodus 5:2 ULT)

Here, “Israel” is singular, but means “the Israelites” by metonymy.

Translation Strategies

If your language has a collective (singular) noun that refers to the same group as referenced by the collective noun in the source text, then translate the word using that term. If not, here are some strategies to consider:

- (1) Translate the collective noun with a plural noun.
- (2) Add a plural word to the collective noun so that you can use a plural verb and pronouns.
- (3) Use a phrase to describe the group that the collective noun references. A useful strategy here can be to use a general collective noun that refers to a group of people or things.
- (4) If your language uses a collective noun for something that is a plural noun in the source language, you can translate the plural noun as a collective noun and, if necessary, change the form of the verb and any pronouns so that they agree with the singular noun.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Translate the collective noun with a plural noun.

And Pharaoh said, “Who is Yahweh that I should listen to his voice to let **Israel** go? I do not know Yahweh; and moreover, I will not let **Israel** go.” (Exodus 5:2 ULT)

And Pharaoh said, “Who is Yahweh that I should listen to his voice to let **the Israelites** go? I do not know Yahweh; and moreover, I will not let **the Israelites** go.”

And he shall take the **hair** of the head of his separation. And he shall put **it** on the fire that is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings. (Num 6:18b ULT)

And he shall take the **hairs** of the head of his separation. And he shall put **them** on the fire that is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings.

- (2) Add a plural word to the collective noun so that you can use a plural verb and pronouns.

And Joab and all the **army** which was with him arrived (2 Samuel 3:23a ULT)

And Joab and all the **army men who were** with him arrived

And he went out again beside the sea, and all the **crowd** was coming to him, and he was teaching **them**. (Mark 2:13 ULT)

And he went out again beside the sea, and all the **people of the crowd were** coming to him, and he was teaching **them**.

- (3) Use a phrase to describe the group that the collective noun references. A useful strategy here can be to use a general collective noun that refers to a group of people or things.

and though the **flock** is cut off from the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls. (Habakkuk 3:17b ULT)

and though the **group of sheep** is cut off from the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls.

And Pharaoh said, "Who is Yahweh that I should listen to his voice to let **Israel** go? I do not know Yahweh; and moreover, I will not let **Israel** go." (Exodus 5:2 ULT)

And Pharaoh said, "Who is Yahweh that I should listen to his voice to let **the people of Israel** go? I do not know Yahweh; and moreover, I will not let **the people of Israel** go."

(4) If your language uses a collective noun for something that is a plural noun in the source language, you can translate the plural noun as a collective noun and, if necessary, change the form of the verb and any pronouns so that they agree with the singular noun.

Now this John had his clothing from the **hairs** of a camel and a leather belt around his waist (Matthew 3:4a ULT)

Now this John had his clothing from the **hair** of a camel and a leather belt around his waist

You shall not make for yourself a carved figure nor any likeness that {is} in **the heavens** above, or that {is} in the earth beneath, or that {is} in **the waters** under the earth. (Deuteronomy 5:8 ULT)

You shall not make for yourself a carved figure nor any likeness that is in **heaven** above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in **the water** under the earth.

"

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 3:3](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:3](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:18](#)

Connect — Background Information

Time Relationship

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

This page answers the question: *How can I translate clauses that give background information?*

Background Clause

Description

A background clause is one that describes something that is ongoing. Then, in the same sentence, another clause indicates an event that begins to happen during that time. These events are also simultaneous events, but they have the further relationship of background event and main event because the event that is already happening serves as the background for the other event, the one that is in focus. The background event simply provides the time frame or other context for the main event or events.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Languages indicate a shift in time in different ways. You (the translator) need to understand how these shifts in time are indicated in the original languages in order to communicate them clearly in your own language. Background clauses often indicate a time that began long before the event that is in focus. Translators need to understand how both the source language and the target language communicate background events. Some English words that indicate background events are “now,” “when,” “while,” and “during.” Those words can also indicate simultaneous events. To tell the difference, ask yourself if all of the events seem to be equal in importance and started at about the same time. If so, they are probably simultaneous events. But if an event(s) is ongoing and another event(s) just started, then the ongoing event(s) is probably background to the other event(s). Some common phrases that indicate background events are “in those days” and “at that time.”

Examples From OBS and the Bible

When Solomon was old, he also worshiped their gods. (OBS Story 18 Frame 3)

Solomon began to worship foreign gods at a time when he was old. Being old is the background event. Worshiping other gods is the main event.

And his parents went **every year** to Jerusalem to the Feast of the Passover. And when he was 12 years old, they went up according to the custom of the feast. (Luke 2:41-42 ULT)

The first event—going to Jerusalem—is ongoing and started long ago. We know this because of the words “every year.” Going to Jerusalem is the background event. Then an event begins that started during the time “when he was twelve years old.” So the main event is the specific time Jesus and his family traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover festival **when he was twelve years old**.

And it came about that, **while** they were there, the days were fulfilled for her to give birth. (Luke 2:6 ULT)

Being in Bethlehem is the background event. The birth of the baby is the main event.

And in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—**while** Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, **during** the high priesthood of

Annas and Caiaphas—the word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah, in the wilderness.
(Luke 3:1-2 ULT)

This example begins with five background clauses (marked by commas), signalled as background by the words “while” and “during.” Then the main event happens: “the word of God came to John.”

Translation Strategies

If the way that the Background Clauses are marked is also clear in your language, then translate the Background Clauses as they are.

- (1) If the connecting word does not make it clear that what follows is a Background Clause, use a connecting word that communicates this more clearly.
- (2) If your language marks Background Clauses in a different way than using connecting words (such as by using different verb forms), then use that way.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

And in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—**while** Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, **during** the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas—the word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah, in the wilderness.
(Luke 3:1-2 ULT)

- (1) If the connecting word does not make it clear that what follows is a background clause, use a connecting word that communicates this more clearly.

It happened during the time that Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, **and during the time that** Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, **and during the time that** his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, **and during the time that** Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, **and also during the time that** Annas and Caiaphas were high priests—**that** the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

- (2) If your language marks background clauses in a different way than using connecting words, such as with different verb forms, then use that way.

Pontius Pilate **was governing** Judea, and Herod **was ruling over** Galilee, and his brother Philip **was ruling over** the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias **was ruling over** Abilene, and Annas and Caiaphas **were being** high priests—the word of God **came** to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

Example of Differences in Time Relationship Connecting Words:

Category	Example
Background setting	Yahweh's word was rare in those days ;
Background repeated	there was no frequent prophetic vision.
Introduction of main event	At that time, when Eli
Background	whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see well,
Simultaneous background	was lying down in his own bed.
Simultaneous background	The lamp of God had not yet gone out,
Simultaneous background	and Samuel was lying down to sleep in the temple of Yahweh,
Simultaneous background	where the ark of God was.
Main event	Yahweh called to Samuel,
Sequential event	who said, "Here I am." (1 Sam 3:1-4 ULT)

In the above example, the first two lines talk about a condition that was going on for a long time. This is the general, long-term background. We know this from the phrase "in those days." After the introduction of the main event ("At that time,"), there are several lines of simultaneous background. The first one is introduced by "when," and then three more follow, with the last connected by "and." The background clause introduced by "where" explains a little more about the background clause before it. Then the main event happens, followed by more events. Translators will need to think about the best way to show these relationships in their language.

"

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 3:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:2](#)

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 Thessalonians 1:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:2](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:7](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:13](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:17](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:18](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:2](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:7](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:8](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:3](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:8](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:15](#)

Connect — Factual Conditions

Conditional Relationships

This page answers the question: *How can I translate factual conditions?*

Conditional connectors connect two clauses to indicate that one of them will happen when the other one happens. In English, the most common way to connect conditional clauses is with the words, “if ... then.” Often, however, the word “then” is not stated.

Factual Conditions

Description

A Factual Condition is a condition that sounds hypothetical but is already certain or true in the speaker’s mind. In English, a sentence containing a Factual Condition can use the words “even though,” “since,” or “this being the case” to indicate that it is a factual condition and not a hypothetical condition.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages do not state something as a condition if it is certain or true. Translators from these languages may misunderstand the original languages and think that the condition is uncertain. This would lead to mistakes in their translations. Even if the translators understand that the condition is certain or true, the readers may misunderstand it. In this case, it would be best to translate it as a statement of fact rather than as a conditional statement.

Examples From OBS and the Bible

“**If** Yahweh is God, worship him!” (Story 19 Frame 6 OBS)

Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long will you keep changing your mind? **If Yahweh is God**, follow him. But if Baal is God, then follow him.” Yet the people did not answer him a word. (1 Kings 18:21 ULT)

This sentence has the same construction as a hypothetical condition. The condition is “if Yahweh is God.” If that is true, then the Israelites should worship Yahweh. But the prophet Elijah does not question whether or not Yahweh is God. In fact, he is so certain that Yahweh is God that later in the passage he pours water all over his sacrifice. He is confident that God is real and that he will burn even an offering that is completely wet. Over and over again, the prophets taught that Yahweh is God, so the people should worship him. The people did not worship Yahweh, however, even though He is God. By putting the statement or instruction into the form of a Factual Condition, Elijah is trying to get the Israelites to understand more clearly what they should do.

“A son honors his father, and a servant honors his master. **If I**, then, am a father, where is my honor? **If I** am a master, where is the reverence for me?” says Yahweh of hosts to you priests, who despise my name. (Malachi 1:6 ULT)

Yahweh has said that he is a father and a master to Israel, so even though this sounds like a hypothetical condition because it begins with “if,” it is not hypothetical. This verse begins with the proverb that a son honors his father. Everyone knows that is right. But the Israelites are not honoring Yahweh. The other proverb in the verse says that a servant honors his master. Everyone knows that is right. But the Israelites are not honoring Yahweh, so it seems that he is not their master. But Yahweh is the master. Yahweh uses the form of a hypothetical condition to demonstrate that the Israelites are wrong. The second part of the condition that should occur naturally is not happening, even though the conditional statement is true.

Translation Strategies

If using the form of a hypothetical condition is confusing or would make the reader think that the speaker doubts what he is saying in the first part of the sentence, then use a statement instead. Words such as “since” or “you know that ...” or “it is true that ...” can be helpful to make the meaning clear.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

“**If** Yahweh is God, worship him!” (Story 19 Frame 6 OBS)

“**It is true that** Yahweh is God, so worship him!”

“A son honors his father, and a servant honors his master. **If** I, then, am a father, where is my honor? **If** I am a master, where is the reverence for me?” says Yahweh of hosts to you priests, who despise my name. (Malachi 1:6 ULT)

“A son honors his father, and a servant honors his master. **Since** I, then, am a father, where is my honor? **Since** I am a master, where is the reverence for me?”

”

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 3:8](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:14](#)

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 Thessalonians 1:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:10](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:16](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:2](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:3](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:13](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:13](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:10](#)

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 Thessalonians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:7; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 2:4; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:15; 1 Thessalonians 2:16; 1 Thessalonians 3:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 3:6; 1 Thessalonians 3:7; 1 Thessalonians 3:8; 1 Thessalonians 3:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:14; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; 1 Thessalonians 4:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:6; 1

[Thessalonians 5:7](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:11](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:13](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:18](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:24](#)

Connect — Sequential Time Relationship

Time Relationships

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

This page answers the question: *How do I translate clauses with a sequential time relationship?*

Sequential Clause

Description

A sequential clause is a time relation that connects two events in which one happens and then the other happens.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Languages indicate sequences of events in different ways; some use ordering, some use connecting words, some even use relative tense (Relative tense is a tense that refers to a time in relation to a reference point in the context.) Connecting words that may indicate sequence are words such as “then,” “later,” “after,” “afterward,” “before,” “first,” and “when.” Translators need to be certain that they communicate the order of the events in a way that is natural in their language. This may require ordering clauses differently than in the original languages.

Examples From OBS and the Bible

When Joseph came to his brothers, they kidnapped him and sold him to some slave traders.
(OBS Story 8 Frame 2)

First Joseph came to his brothers, and then they kidnapped and sold him. We know this because of the connecting word “**when**.” The translator needs to decide the best way to communicate this sequence clearly and correctly.

It was as sweet as honey in my mouth, but **after** I ate it, my stomach became bitter. (Revelation 10:10b ULT)

The event of the first clause occurs first, and the event of the last clause occurs later. We know this because of the connecting word “**after**.” The translator needs to decide the best way to communicate this sequence clearly and correctly.

For **before** the child knows to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be desolate (Isaiah 7:16 ULT)

The event of the first clause occurs after the event of the second clause. First the land they dread will be desolate, and then the child will know to refuse evil and choose good. We know this because of the connecting word “**before**.” However, stating the clauses in this order may communicate the wrong order of events in your language. The translator may have to change the order so that the clauses come in the order that they happen. Or it may be possible to keep the order of the original language text and mark the ordering of sequence so that it is clear to the readers. You (the translator) need to decide the best way to communicate this sequence clearly and correctly.

Then Mary arose in those days **and** quickly went into the hill country, to a city of Judah, **and** she entered into the house of Zechariah **and** greeted Elizabeth. (Luke 1:39-40 ULT)

Here the general connector “**and**” connects four events. These are sequential events—each happens after the one before it. We know this because that is the only way that these events would happen. So in English, the general connector “and” is enough to make the sequence clear for events such as these. You will need to decide if this also communicates this sequence clearly and correctly in your language.

Translation Strategies

If the sequence of events is clear in your language, then translate the sequence as it is.

- (1) If the connecting word is not clear, use a connecting word that communicates the sequence more clearly.
- (2) If the clauses are in an order that makes the sequence unclear, put the clauses in an order that is more clear.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If the connecting word is not clear, use a connecting word that communicates the sequence more clearly.

Then Mary arose in those days **and** quickly went into the hill country, to a city of Judah, **and** she entered into the house of Zechariah **and** greeted Elizabeth. (Luke 1:39-40 ULT)

Then Mary arose in those days. **Then** she quickly went into the hill country, to a city of Judah. **Then** she entered into the house of Zechariah, **and then** she greeted Elizabeth.

For **before** the child knows to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be desolate (Isaiah 7:16 ULT)

For the time will come when the child knows to refuse the evil and choose the good, **but even before that time**, the land whose two kings you dread will be desolate.

- (2) If the clauses are in an order that makes the sequence unclear, put the clauses in an order that is more clear.

For the land whose two kings you dread will be desolate **before** the child knows to refuse the evil and choose the good.

For more about sequences of events, see [Sequence of Events](#).

"

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 4:16](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#)

Connect — Simultaneous Time Relationship

Time Relationships

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

This page answers the question: *How can I translate clauses with a simultaneous time relationship?*

Simultaneous Clause

Description

A simultaneous clause is a time relationship that connects two or more events that occur at the same time.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Languages indicate in many different ways that events occur simultaneously. These ways may vary based on whether or not something is causing the events to occur simultaneously. Connecting words that may indicate simultaneous events are words such as “while,” “as,” and “during.” Often the Bible does not state a relationship between the events but simply says they occurred at the same time. It is important that you (the translator) know when a time relationship is implied and when it is not implied so that you can communicate it clearly. A simultaneous clause communicates that events happened at the same time but it does not indicate that one event caused the other. That would be a reason-and-result relationship.

Examples From OBS and the Bible

Joseph served his master well, **and** God blessed Joseph. (OBS Story 8 Frame 4)

Two events happened while Joseph was a slave to a wealthy government official: Joseph served well, and God blessed Joseph. There is no indication of a reason-and-result (cause and effect) relationship between the two, or that the first event happened, and then the second event happened.

But in truth I say to you that there were many widows in Israel **during** the days of Elijah. (Luke 4:25b ULT)

The connecting word “**during**” tells us clearly that two things happened at the same time, but one event did not cause the other.

And the people were waiting for Zechariah, **and** they were wondering at his delaying in the temple. (Luke 1:21 ULT)

The people were both waiting and wondering at the same time. The general connector “**and**” indicates this.

While they were looking intensely into heaven **as** he was going up, suddenly, two men stood by them in white clothing. (Acts 1:10 ULT)

Three events happened at the same time — the disciples looking, Jesus going up, and two men standing. The connector words “**while**” and “**as**” tell us this.

Translation Strategies

If the way that the simultaneous clauses are marked also is clear in your language, then translate the simultaneous clauses as they are.

- (1) If the connecting word does not make it clear that the simultaneous clauses are happening at the same time, use a connecting word that communicates this more clearly.
- (2) If it is not clear which clause the simultaneous clause is connected to, and that they are happening at the same time, mark all of the clauses with a connecting word.
- (3) If your language marks events as simultaneous in a different way than using connecting words, then use that way.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

Below, each Bible verse will be restated in three different ways, according to the translation strategies in the list above. Each restatement will have the same number as the translation strategy that it is using.

And the people were waiting for Zechariah, **and** they were wondering at his delaying in the temple. (Luke 1:21 ULT)

- (1) Now **while** the people were waiting for Zechariah, they were wondering at his delaying in the temple.
- (2) Now **while** the people were waiting for Zechariah, they were **also** wondering at his delaying in the temple.
- (3) Now the people were waiting for Zechariah, wondering at his delaying in the temple.

While they were looking intently into heaven **as** he was going up, suddenly, two men stood by them in white clothing. (Acts 1:10 ULT)

- (1) And **during the time** they were looking intently into heaven **while** he was going up, suddenly, two men stood by them in white clothing.
- (2) And **while** they were looking intently into heaven **as** he was going up, suddenly, **at that same time** two men stood by them in white clothing.
- (3) They were looking intently into heaven; he was going up **when** they saw two men standing by them in white clothing.

"

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 1:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:16](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#)

Connecting Words and Phrases

Description

This page answers the question: *How do connecting words work to join parts of the text in different ways?*

As humans, we write our thoughts in phrases and sentences. We usually want to communicate a series of thoughts that are connected to each other in different ways. **Connecting words and phrases** show how these thoughts are related to each other. For example, we can show how the following thoughts are related by using the Connecting Words in bold type:

- It was raining, **so** I opened my umbrella.
- It was raining, **but** I did not have an umbrella. **So** I got very wet.

Connecting words or phrases can connect phrases or clauses within a sentence. They can connect sentences to each other. They can also connect entire chunks to one another in order to show how the chunk before relates to the chunk after the connecting word. Very often, the connecting words that connect entire chunks to one another are either conjunctions or adverbs.

It was raining, but I did not have an umbrella, so I got very wet.

Now I must change my clothes. Then I will drink a cup of hot tea and warm myself by the fire.

In the above example, the word **now** connects the two short chunks of text, showing the relationship between them. The speaker must change his clothes, drink hot tea, and warm himself because of something that happened earlier (that is, he got wet in the rain).

Sometimes people might not use a connecting word because they expect the context to help the readers understand the relationship between the thoughts. Some languages do not use connecting words as much as other languages do. They might say:

- It was raining. I did not have an umbrella. I got very wet.

You (the translator) will need to use the method that is most natural and clear in the target language. But in general, using connecting words whenever possible helps the reader to understand the ideas in the Bible most clearly.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- You need to understand the relationship between paragraphs, between sentences, and between parts of sentences in the Bible, and how connecting words and phrases can help you to understand the relationship between the thoughts that they are connecting.
- Each language has its own ways of showing how thoughts are related.
- You need to know how to help readers understand the relationship between the thoughts in a way that is natural in your language.

Translation Principles

- You need to translate in a way that readers can understand the same relationship between thoughts that the original readers would have understood.
- Whether or not a connecting word is used is not as important as readers being able to understand the relationship between the ideas.

The Different Types of Connections

Listed below are different types of connections between ideas or events. These different types of connections can be indicated by using different connecting words. When we write or translate something, it is important to use the right connecting word so that these connections are clear for the reader. If you would like additional information, simply click the colored, hyperlinked word to be directed to a page containing definitions and examples for each type of connection.

- [Sequential Clause](#) — a time relationship between two events in which one happens and then the other happens.
- [Simultaneous Clause](#) — a time relationship between two or more events that occur at the same time.
- [Background Clause](#) — a time relationship in which the first clause describes a long event that is happening at the time when the beginning of the second event happens, which is described in the second clause.
- [Exceptional Relationship](#) — one clause describes a group of people or items, and the other clause excludes one or more items or people from the group.
- [Hypothetical Condition](#) — the second event will only take place if the first one takes place. Sometimes what takes place is dependent on the actions of other people.
- [Factual Condition](#) — a connection that sounds hypothetical but is already certain or true, so that the condition is guaranteed to happen.
- [Contrary-to-Fact Condition](#) — a connection that sounds hypothetical but is already certain that it is not true. See also: [Hypothetical Statements](#).
- [Goal Relationship](#) — a logical relationship in which the second event is the purpose or goal of the first.
- [Reason and Result Relationship](#) — a logical relationship in which one event is the reason for the other event, the result.
- [Contrast Relationship](#) — one item is being described as different or in opposition to another.

Examples from the Bible

I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood. I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me. **Instead**, I went to Arabia and then returned to Damascus. **Then** after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and I stayed with him 15 days. (Galatians 1:16b-18 ULT)

The word “instead” introduces something that contrasts with what was said before. The contrast here is between what Paul did not do and what he did do. The word “then” introduces a sequence of events. It introduces something that Paul did after he returned to Damascus.

Therefore, whoever breaks the least one of these commandments **and** teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. **But** whoever keeps them and teaches them, that one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19 ULT)

The word “therefore” links this section with the section before it, signaling that the section that came before gave the reason for this section. “Therefore” usually links sections larger than one sentence. The word “and” links only two actions within the same sentence, that of breaking commandments and teaching others. In this verse the word “but” contrasts what one group of people will be called in God’s kingdom with what another group of people will be called.

We place nothing as a stumbling block in front of anyone, **so that** our ministry might not be discredited. **Instead**, we commend ourselves in everything as God’s servants. (2 Corinthians 6:3-4 ULT)

Here the words “so that” connect what follows as the reason for what came before; the reason that Paul does not place stumbling blocks is that he does not want his ministry brought into disrepute. “Instead” contrasts what Paul does (prove by his actions that he is God’s servant) with what he said he does not do (place stumbling blocks).

General Translation Strategies

See each type of Connecting Word above for specific strategies

If the way the relationship between thoughts is shown in the ULT would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, then consider using it. If not, here are some other options.

- (1) Use a connecting word (even if the ULT does not use one).
- (2) Do not use a connecting word if it would be strange to use one and people would understand the right relationship between the thoughts without it.
- (3) Use a different connecting word.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use a connecting word (even if the ULT does not use one).

Jesus said to them, "Come follow me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." Then immediately they left the nets and followed him. (Mark 1:17-18 ULT)

They followed Jesus because he told them to. Some translators may want to mark this clause with the connecting word "so."

Jesus said to them, "Come follow me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." **So**, immediately they left the nets and followed him.

- (2) Do not use a connecting word if it would be odd to use one, and if people would understand the right relationship between the thoughts without it.

Therefore, whoever breaks the least one of these commandments **and** teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. **But** whoever keeps them and teaches them, that one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19 ULT)

Some languages would prefer not to use connecting words here because the meaning is clear without them and using them would be unnatural. They might translate like this:

Therefore, whoever breaks the least one of these commandments, teaching others to do so as well, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever keeps them and teaches them, that one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood. I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me. **Instead**, I went to Arabia and then returned to Damascus. **Then** after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and I stayed with him 15 days. (Galatians 1:16b-18 ULT) (Galatians 1:16-18 ULT)

Some languages might not need the words "instead" or "then" here. They might translate like this:

I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who had become apostles before me. I went to Arabia and then returned to Damascus. After three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and I stayed with him 15 days.

- (3) Use a different connecting word.

Therefore, whoever breaks the least one of these commandments **and** teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. **But** whoever keeps them and teaches them, that one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19 ULT)

Instead of a word like “therefore,” a language might need a phrase to indicate that there was a section before it that gave the reason for the section that follows. Also, the word “but” is used here because of the contrast between the two groups of people. But in some languages, the word “but” would show that what comes after it is surprising because of what came before it. So “and” might be clearer for those languages. They might translate like this:

Because of that, whoever breaks the least one of these commandments and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.
And whoever keeps them and teaches them, that one will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

”

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 1:8](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:14](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:16](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:18](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:2](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:3](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:8](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:10](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:13](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:15](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:16](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:11](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:14](#)

Direct and Indirect Quotations

Description

There are two kinds of quotations: direct quotations and indirect quotations.

A direct quotation occurs when someone reports what another person said from the viewpoint of that original speaker. People usually expect that this kind of quotation will represent the original speaker's exact words. In the example below, John would have said "I" when referring to himself, so the narrator, who is reporting John's words, uses the word "I" in the quotation to refer to John. To show that these are John's exact words, many languages put the words between quotation marks: "".

- John said, "I do not know at what time I will arrive."

An indirect quotation occurs when a speaker reports what someone else said, but in this case, the speaker is reporting it from his own point of view instead and not from the original person's point of view. This kind of quotation usually contains changes in pronouns, and it often includes changes in time, in word choices, and in length. In the example below, the narrator refers to John as "he" in the quotation and uses the word "would" to replace the future tense, indicated by "will."

- John said that he did not know at what time he would arrive.

This page answers the question: *What are direct and indirect quotations?*

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

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

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

[Quotations and Quote Margins \(UTA PDF\)](#)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

In some languages, reported speech can be expressed by either direct or indirect quotations. In other languages, it is more natural to use one than the other. There may be a certain meaning implied by using one rather than the other. So for each quotation, translators need to decide whether it is best to translate it as a direct quotation or as an indirect quotation.

Examples From the Bible

The verses in the examples below contain both direct and indirect quotations. In the explanation below the verse, we have marked in bold the words that are quoted.

And he commanded him to tell no one, but, "Go, show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing, according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them."
(Luke 5:14 ULT)

- Indirect quote: He commanded him **to tell no one**,
- Direct quote: but told him, "**Go, show yourself to the priest ...**"

And being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them and said, "The kingdom of God is not coming with careful observation. Neither will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is among you." (Luke 17:20-21 ULT)

- Indirect quote: Being asked by the Pharisees **when the kingdom of God was coming**,
- Direct quote: he answered them and said, "**The kingdom of God is not coming with careful observation. Neither will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is among you.**"
- Direct quotes: Neither will they say, '**Look, here it is!**' or, '**There it is!**'

Translation Strategies

If the kind of quote used in the source text would work well in your language, consider using it. If the kind of quote used in that context is not natural for your language, follow these strategies.

- (1) If a direct quote would not work well in your language, change it to an indirect quote.
- (2) If an indirect quote would not work well in your language, change it to a direct quote.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If a direct quote would not work well in your language, change it to an indirect quote.

And he commanded him to tell no one, but, **“Go, show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing, according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.”** (Luke 5:14 ULT)

He commanded him to tell no one, but **to go and show himself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for his cleansing according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.**

- (2) If an indirect quote would not work well in your language, change it to a direct quote.

And he commanded him **to tell no one**, but, “Go, show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing, according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.” (Luke 5:14 ULT)

He commanded him, **“Tell no one.** But go and show yourself to the priest and offer a sacrifice for your cleansing according to what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.”

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_quotations.

Next we recommend you learn about:

Quotes within Quotes ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 3:4](#)

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](#))

When the phrase that modifies a noun is a relative clause (a phrase that starts with a word such as “who” or “which”), 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 the added phrase 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 phrase 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.

You must surely open your hand to your brother, **to your needy and to your poor** in your land. (Deuteronomy 15:11 ULT)

The phrases “to your needy and to your poor” give further information about “your brother.” They do not refer to a separate group of people.

How 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. He was not distinguishing one woman named Sarah from another woman named Sarah who was a different age.

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.

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.

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)

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)

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

You must surely open your hand to your brother, **to your needy and to your poor** in your land. (Deuteronomy 15:11 ULT)

You must surely open your hand to any of **your needy and poor brothers** in your land.

(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.

You must surely open your hand to your brother, **to your needy and to your poor** in your land. (Deuteronomy 15:11 ULT)

You must surely open your hand to your brother **who is needy and poor** in your land.

Next we recommend you learn about:

Double Negatives ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 1:10](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:13](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:16](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:2](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:3](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:11](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:15](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:10](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:12](#)

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 **unpunished**. (Proverbs 11:21a ULT)

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Double negatives mean very different things in different languages.

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

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

Examples From the Bible

The Greek of John 15:5 says:

χωρὶς ἐμοῦ οὐ δύνασθε ποιεῖν οὐδέν
Without me **not** you can do **nothing**

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

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

or:

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

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

This means "in order to be fruitful."

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

This means "a prophet is honored."

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

This means "I want you to be knowledgeable."

Translation Strategies

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

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

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

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

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

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

χωρὶς ἐμοῦ οὐ δύνασθε ποιεῖν οὐδέν
Without me **not** you can do **nothing** (John 15:5)

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

or:

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

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

...ἰῶτα ἐν ἡ 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 Thessalonians 4:15](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:3](#)

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 Thessalonians 1:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:2](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:13](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:11](#)

Ellipsis

Description

An ellipsis¹ occurs when a speaker or writer leaves out one or more words that normally should be in the sentence. The speaker or writer does this because he knows that the hearer or reader will understand the meaning of the sentence and supply the words in his mind when he hears or reads the words that are there. For example:

So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, **nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.**
(Psalm 1:5 ULT)

There is ellipsis in the second part because “nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous” is not a complete sentence. The speaker assumes that the hearer will understand what it is that sinners will not do in the assembly of the righteous by filling in the action from the previous clause. With the action filled in, the complete sentence would read:

So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor **will** sinners **stand** in the assembly of the righteous.

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)

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](#))

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

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

Absolute Ellipsis

Then when he had come near, he asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And so he said, “Lord, **that I might recover my sight.**” (Luke 18:40b-41 ULT)

It seems that the man answered in an incomplete sentence because he wanted to be polite and not directly ask Jesus for healing. He knew that Jesus would understand that the only way he could receive his sight would be for Jesus to heal him. The complete sentence would be:

“Lord, **I want you to heal me so** that I might receive my sight.”

To Titus, a true son in our common faith. Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. (Titus 1:4 ULT)

The writer assumes that the reader will recognize this common form of a blessing or wish, so he does not need to include the full sentence, which would be:

To Titus, a true son in our common faith. **May you receive** grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

Translation Strategies

If ellipsis would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here is another option:

(1) Add the missing words to the incomplete phrase or sentence.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Add the missing words to the incomplete phrase or sentence.

So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor **sinner in the assembly** of the righteous. (Psalm 1:5 ULT)

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

Then when he had come near, he asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And so he said, “Lord, **that I might recover my sight.**” (Luke 18:40b-41 ULT)

Then when the man was near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, **I want you to heal me** that I might receive my sight.”

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

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

English has a punctuation symbol which is also called an ellipsis. It is a series of three dots (...) used to indicate an intentional omission of a word, phrase, sentence or more from text without altering its original meaning. This translationAcademy article is not about the punctuation mark, but about the concept of omission of words that normally should be in the sentence.

"

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 1:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:10](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:15](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:18](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:19](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:18](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:21](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:24](#)

End of Story

Description

There are different types of information that may be given at the end of a story. Often this is background information. This background information is different from the actions that make up the main part of the story. A book of the Bible is often made up of many smaller stories that are part of the larger story of the book itself. For example, the story of Jesus' birth is a smaller story in the larger story of the book of Luke. Each of these stories, whether large or small, can have background information at the end of it.

This page answers the question: *What kinds of information are given at the end of a story?*

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

Writing Styles ([UTA PDF](#))

Background Information ([UTA PDF](#))

The following are purposes for end of story information:

- to summarize the story
- to give a comment about what happened in the story
- to connect a smaller story to the larger story it is a part of
- to tell the reader what happens to a specific character after the main part of the story ends
- to tell on-going action that continues after the main part of the story ends
- to tell what happens after the story as a result of the events that happened in the story itself

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages have different ways of presenting these kinds of information. If you (the translator) do not use your language's ways of doing this, readers may not know:

- that this information is ending the story
- what the purpose of the information is
- how the information is related to the story

Translation Strategies

- Translate the particular kind of information at the end of a story the way your language expresses that kind of information.
- Translate it so that people will understand how it relates to the story it is part of.
- If possible, translate the end of the story in a way that people will know where that story ends and the next begins.

Examples From the Bible

- To summarize the story

Then the rest of the men should follow, some on planks, and some on other things from the ship. **In this way it happened that all of us were brought safely to the land.** (Acts 27:44 ULT)

- To give a comment about what happened in the story

Many of those who practiced magical arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of everyone. Then they counted the value of them, and found it was 50,000 pieces of silver. **So the word of the Lord was spreading and prevailing with power.** (Acts 19:19-20 ULT)

- To tell the reader what happens to a specific character after the main part of the story ends

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoiced in God my savior." **And Mary stayed with her about three months and then returned to her house.** (Luke 1:46-47, 56 ULT)

- To tell on-going action that continues after the main part of the story ends

All who those who heard it were amazed concerning the things that were spoken to them by the shepherds. **But Mary kept all the things, pondering them in her heart.** (Luke 2:18-19 ULT)

- To tell what happens after the story as a result of the events that happened in the story itself

"Woe to you, experts in the Jewish law, because you have taken away the key of knowledge; you do not enter in yourselves, and you hinder those who are entering." **After he went from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to fiercely oppose him and argued against him about many things, lying in wait to trap him in something from his mouth.** (Luke 11:52-54 ULT)

"

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#)

Euphemism

Description

A euphemism is a mild or polite way of referring to something that is unpleasant, embarrassing, or socially unacceptable, such as death or activities usually done in private.

This page answers the question: *What is a euphemism?*

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

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

... they found Saul and his sons **fallen** on Mount Gilboa.
(1 Chronicles 10:8b ULT)

This means that Saul and his sons “were dead.” It is a euphemism because the important thing was not that Saul and his sons had fallen but that they were dead. Sometimes people do not like to speak directly about death because it is unpleasant.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages use different euphemisms. If the target language does not use the same euphemism as in the source language, readers may not understand what it means and they may think that the writer means only what the words literally say.

Examples From the Bible

... where there was a cave. Saul went inside to **cover his feet**. (1 Samuel 24:3b ULT)

The original hearers would have understood that Saul went into the cave to use it as a toilet, but the writer wanted to avoid offending or distracting them, so **he did not say specifically** what Saul did or what he left in the cave.

But Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I have not **known a man?**” (Luke 1:34 ULT)

In order **to be polite**, Mary uses a euphemism to say that she has never had sexual intercourse with a man.

Translation Strategies

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

- (1) Use a euphemism from your own culture.
- (2) State the information plainly without a euphemism if it would not be offensive.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use a euphemism from your own culture.

... where there was a cave. Saul went inside to **cover his feet**. (1 Samuel 24:3b ULT) — Some languages might use euphemisms like these:

“... where there was a cave. Saul went into the cave to **dig a hole**”

“... where there was a cave. Saul went into the cave to **have some time alone**”

But Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I have not **known a man?**” (Luke 1:34 ULT)

But Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I have not **slept with a man?**"

(2) State the information plainly without a euphemism if it would not be offensive.

They found Saul and his sons **fallen** on Mount Gilboa. (1 Chronicles 10:8b ULT)

"They found Saul and his sons **dead** on Mount Gilboa."

"

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 4:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:13](#)

Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'

Description

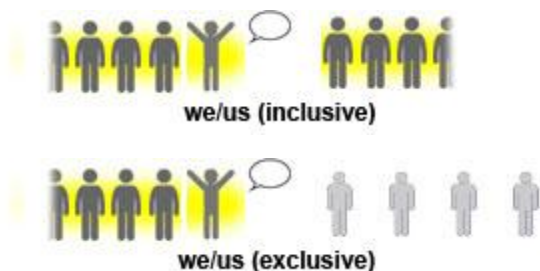
Some languages have more than one form of "we": an inclusive form that means "I and you" and an exclusive form that means "I and someone else but not you." The exclusive form excludes the person being spoken to. The inclusive form includes the person being spoken to and possibly others. This is also 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 Thessalonians 1:3](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:10](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:2](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:3](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:11](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:7](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:14](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:15](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:25](#)

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.

Sometimes in the Bible a speaker uses a singular form of “you” even though he is speaking to a crowd. For help with translating these, we suggest you read:

- [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 or she is talking to. People use the **formal** form of “you” when speaking to someone who is older, or has higher authority, or is someone they do not know very well. People use the **informal** form when speaking to someone who is not older, or does not have higher authority, or is a family member or close friend.

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_youform.

For help with translating these, we suggest you read:

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

Masculine and Feminine

Some languages have a **masculine** form and a **feminine** form of the word for “you.” People use the **masculine** form when speaking to a man or boy and the **feminine** form when speaking to a woman or girl.

English does not make any of the above distinctions, so they are absent in the ULT. Please be aware of this and use the appropriate forms of “you” if your language does make any of these distinctions.

”

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 1:1](#)

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 and he used the singular form. So languages that have singular and plural forms of “you” need the singular form here, as well as for the verbs “sell,” “distribute,” “come,” and “follow.”

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 angel used singular forms here and the context makes it clear that he 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,” “put on,” and “follow” need the form that indicates a singular subject.

All the ones {who are} with me greet **you**. **Greet** the ones loving us in faith. Grace {be} with all of **you**. (Titus 3:15 ULT)

Paul wrote this letter to one person, Titus, so most of the time the word “you” in this letter is singular and refers only to Titus. In this verse, the first “you” is singular, so the greeting is for Titus, as well as the instruction to greet the others there. The second “you,” however, is plural, so the blessing is for Titus and for all of the believers there in Crete.

“Having gone, **search** carefully for the young child, and after **you** have found him, **report** to me so that I also, having come, might worship him.” (Matthew 2:8 ULT)

Since Herod is speaking to all of the learned men, the word “you” and the commands “search” and “report” are plural.

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.

Next we recommend you learn about:

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

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 2:10](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:13](#)

Generic Noun Phrases

Description

Generic noun phrases refer to people or things in general rather than to specific individuals or things. This happens frequently in proverbs, because proverbs tell about things that are true about people in general.

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

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

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

Can **a man** walk on hot coals without scorching his feet? So is **the man who goes in to his neighbor's wife; the one who touches her** will not go unpunished. (Proverbs 6:28-29 ULT)

The phrases in bold above do not refer to a specific man. They refer to any man who does these things.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages have different ways of showing that noun phrases refer to something in general. You (the translator) should refer to these general ideas in ways that are natural in your language.

Examples From the Bible

The **righteous person** is kept away from trouble and it comes upon **the wicked** instead. (Proverbs 11:8 ULT)

The bold phrases above do not refer to a specific person but to anyone who does what is right or anyone who is wicked.

People curse **the man who refuses to sell grain**. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)

This does not refer to a particular man, but to any person who refuses to sell grain.

Yahweh gives favor to **a good man**, but he condemns **a man who makes evil plans**. (Proverbs 12:2 ULT)

The phrase "a good man" does not refer to a particular man, but to any person who is good. The phrase "a man who makes evil plans" does not refer to a particular man, but to any person who makes evil plans.

Translation Strategies

If your language can use the same wording as in the ULT to refer to people or things in general rather than to specific individuals or things, consider using the same wording. If not, here are some strategies you might use.

- (1) Use the word "the" in the noun phrase.
- (2) Use the word "a" in the noun phrase.
- (3) Use the word "any," as in "any person" or "anyone."
- (4) Use the plural form, as in "people."
- (5) Use any other way that is natural in your language.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use the word "the" in the noun phrase.

Yahweh gives favor to **a good man**, but he condemns **a man who makes evil plans**. (Proverbs 12:2 ULT)

"Yahweh gives favor to **the good man**, but he condemns **the man who makes evil plans**." (Proverbs 12:2)

(2) Use the word "a" in the noun phrase.

People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)

"People curse **a man** who refuses to sell grain."

(3) Use the word "any," as in "any person" or "anyone."

People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)

"People curse **any man** who refuses to sell grain."

(4) Use the plural form, as in "people" (or in this sentence, "men").

People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)

"People curse **men** who refuse to sell grain"

(5) Use any other way that is natural in your language.

People curse **the man** who refuses to sell grain. (Proverbs 11:26 ULT)

"People curse **whoever** refuses to sell grain."

Next we recommend you learn about:

When Masculine Words Include Women ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 2:16](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:5](#)

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 Thessalonians 2:18](#)

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.

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](#))

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

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

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

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

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

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

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

Examples From the Bible

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

- (1) Substitute the describing noun with an adjective that means the same thing.
- (2) Substitute the describing noun with a phrase that means the same thing.
- (3) Substitute the describing adjective with an adverb that means the same thing.
- (4) Substitute other parts of speech that mean the same thing and show that one word or phrase describes the

other.

(5) If it is unclear that only one thing is meant, change the phrase so that this is clear.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Substitute the describing noun with an adjective that means the same thing.

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

For I will give you **wise words** ...

Walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you into **his own kingdom and glory**. (1 Thessalonians 2:12b ULT)

You should walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you to **his own glorious kingdom**.

(2) Substitute the describing noun with a phrase that means the same thing.

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

for I will give you **words of wisdom**.

You should walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you into **his own kingdom and glory**. (1 Thessalonians 2:12b ULT)

You should walk in a manner that is worthy of God, who calls you to **his own kingdom of glory**.

(3) Substitute the describing adjective with an adverb that means the same thing.

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

If you are **willingly obedient** ...

(4) Substitute other parts of speech that mean the same thing and show that one word or phrase describes the other.

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

The adjective "obedient" can be substituted with the verb "obey."

if you **obey willingly** ...

(4) and (5) If it is unclear that only one thing is meant, change the phrase so that this is clear.

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

The noun "glory" can be changed to the adjective "glorious" to make it clear that Jesus' appearing is what we hope for. Also, "Jesus Christ" can be moved to the front of the phrase and "great God and Savior" put into a relative clause that describes the one person, Jesus Christ.

We look forward to receiving **what we are longing for, the blessed and glorious appearing of Jesus Christ, who is our great God and Savior**.

Next we recommend you learn about:

Doublet ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 1:3](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:7](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:11](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:6](#)

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** ¹

The footnote would look like:

^[1] Most versions say “Saul” here, but most of the time in the Bible he is called “Paul.”

Then later in the story, you could translate this way:

But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit; (Acts 13:9)

But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit;

(5) Or if a person or place has two names, use whatever name is given in the source text, and add a footnote that gives the other name. For example, you could write “Saul” where the source text has “Saul” and “Paul” where the source text has “Paul.”

a young man named **Saul** (Acts 7:58 ULT)

a young man named **Saul**

The footnote would look like:

^[1] This is the same man who is called Paul beginning in Acts 13.

Then later in the story, you could translate this way:

But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit; (Acts 13:9)

But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit;

Then after the story has explained the name change, you could translate this way.

It came about in Iconium that **Paul** and Barnabas entered together into the synagogue (Acts 14:1 ULT)

It came about in Iconium that **Paul**¹ and Barnabas entered together into the synagogue

The footnote would look like:

^[1] This is the same man who was called Saul before Acts 13.

Next we recommend you learn about:

Copy or Borrow Words ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Introduction to 1 Thessalonians](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:1](#)

Hyperbole

Description

A speaker or writer can use exactly the same words to say something that he means as completely true, or as generally true, or as a hyperbole. This is why it can be hard to decide how to understand a statement. For example, the sentence below could mean three different things.

It rains here every night.

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

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

The speaker means this as a **hyperbole** if he wants to say that it rains more than it actually does, usually in order to express a strong attitude toward the amount or frequency of rain, such as being annoyed or being happy about it.

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

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

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 Thessalonians 1:2](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:8](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:13](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:15](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:8](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:10](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:15](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:16](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:17](#)

Hypothetical Situations

Consider these phrases: “If the sun stopped shining ...” “What if the sun stopped shining ...” “Suppose the sun stopped shining ...” and “If only the sun had not stopped shining.” We use such expressions to set up hypothetical situations, imagining what might have happened or what could happen in the future but probably will not. We also use them to express regret or wishes. Hypothetical expressions occur often in the Bible. You (the translator) need to translate them in a way that people will know that the event did not actually happen and so that they will understand why the event was imagined.

This page answers the question: *What is a hypothetical situation?*

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

Writing Styles ([UTA PDF](#))

Description

Hypothetical situations are situations that are not real. They can be in the past, present, or future. Hypothetical situations in the past and present have not happened, are not happening now, and ones in the future are not expected to happen.

People sometimes tell about conditions and what would happen if those conditions were met, but they know that these things have not happened or probably will not happen. (The conditions comprise a phrase that starts with “if.”)

- If he had lived to be 100 years old, he would have seen his grandson’s grandson. (But he did not.)
- If he lived to be 100 years old, he would still be alive today. (But he is not.)
- If he lives to be 100 years old, he will see his grandson’s grandson. (But he probably will not.)

People sometimes express wishes about things that have not happened or that are not expected to happen.

- I wish he had come.
- I wish he were here.
- I wish he would come.

People sometimes express regrets about things that have not happened or that are not expected to happen.

- If only he had come.
- If only he were here.
- If only he would come.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Translators need to recognize the different kinds of hypothetical situations in the Bible and understand that they are unreal.
- Translators need to know their own language’s ways of talking about different kinds of hypothetical situations.

Examples From the Bible

Hypothetical Situations in the Past

“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! **If the mighty deeds had been done** in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, **they would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes.” (Matthew 11:21 ULT)

Here in Matthew 11:21, Jesus said that **if** the people living in the ancient cities of Tyre and Sidon had been able to see the miracles that he performed, they would have repented long ago. The people of Tyre and Sidon did not actually see his miracles, and they did not repent. He said this to rebuke the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida who had seen his miracles and yet did not repent.

Martha then said to Jesus, “Lord, **if you had been here, my brother would not have died.**” (John 11:21 ULT)

Martha said this to express her wish that Jesus would have come sooner so that her brother would not have died. But Jesus did not come sooner and her brother did die.

Hypothetical Situations in the Present

And no man puts new wine into old wineskins. **But if he did do that, the new wine would burst the wineskins, and it would be spilled out, and the wineskins would be destroyed.** (Luke 5:37 ULT)

Jesus told about what would happen if a person were to put new wine into old wineskins. But no one would do that. He used this imaginary situation as an example to show that there are times when it is unwise to mix new things with old things. He did this so that people could understand why his disciples were not fasting as people traditionally did.

Jesus said to them, “What man would there be among you, who, **if he had just one sheep, and if this sheep fell into a deep hole on the Sabbath, would not grasp hold of it and lift it out?**” (Matthew 12:11 ULT)

Jesus asked the religious leaders what they would do on the Sabbath if one of their sheep fell into a hole. He was not saying that their sheep would fall into a hole. He used this imaginary situation to show them that they were wrong to judge him for healing people on the Sabbath.

Hypothetical Situation in the Future

Unless those days are shortened, no flesh would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened. (Matthew 24:22 ULT)

Jesus was talking about a future time when very bad things would happen. He told what would happen if those days of trouble were to last a long time. He did this to show how bad those days will be—so bad that if they lasted a long time, no one would be saved. But then he clarified that God will shorten those days of trouble so that the elect (those he has chosen) will be saved.

Expressing Emotion About a Hypothetical Situation

People sometimes talk about hypothetical situations in order to express regrets and wishes. Regrets are about the past and wishes are about the present and future.

The Israelites said to them, “**If only we had died by Yahweh’s hand in the land of Egypt when we were sitting by the pots of meat and were eating bread to the full.** For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill our whole community with hunger.” (Exodus 16:3 ULT)

Here the Israelites were afraid that they would have to suffer and die of hunger in the wilderness, and so they wished that they had stayed in Egypt and died there with full stomachs. They were complaining, expressing regret that this had not happened.

I know what you have done, and that you are neither cold nor hot. **I wish that you were either cold or hot!** (Revelation 3:15 ULT)

Jesus wished that the people were either hot or cold, but they are neither. He was rebuking them, expressing anger at this.

Translation Strategies

Find out how people speaking your language show:

- that something could have happened, but did not.
- that something could be true now, but is not.
- that something could happen in the future, but will not unless something changes.
- that they wish for something, but it does not happen.
- that they regret that something did not happen.

Use your language's ways of showing these kinds of things.

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_hypo.

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Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 2:7](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:3](#)

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 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 2:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:18; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 3:8; 1 Thessalonians 3:9; 1 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Thessalonians 5:27

Imperatives — Other Uses

Description

Imperative sentences are mainly used to express a desire or requirement that someone do something. In the Bible, sometimes imperative sentences have other uses.

This page answers the question: *What other uses are there for imperative sentences in the Bible?*

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 an imperative sentence for some of the functions that they are used for in the Bible.

Examples From the Bible

Speakers often use imperative sentences to tell or ask their listeners to do something. In Genesis 26, God spoke to Isaac and told him not to go to Egypt but to live where God would tell him to live.

Now Yahweh appeared to him and said, “**Do not go down** to Egypt; **live** in the land that I tell you to live in.” (Genesis 26:2 ULT)

Sometimes imperative sentences in the Bible have other uses.

Imperatives that make things happen

God can make things happen by commanding that they happen. Jesus healed a man by commanding that the man be healed. The man could not do anything to obey the command, but Jesus caused him to be healed by commanding it. (In this context, the command “Be clean” means to “be healed” so that others around would know that it was safe to touch the man again.)

“I am willing. **Be clean.**” Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. (Matthew 8:3b ULT)

In Genesis 1, God commanded that there should be light, and by commanding it, he caused it to exist. Some languages, such as the Hebrew of the Bible, have commands that are in the third person. English does not do that, and so it must turn the third-person command into a general, second-person command, as in the ULT:

God said, “**Let there be** light,” and there was light. (Genesis 1:3 ULT)

Languages that have third-person commands can follow the original Hebrew, which translates into English as something like “light must be.”

Imperatives that function as blessings

In the Bible, God blesses people by using imperatives. This indicates what his will is for them.

God blessed them and said to them, “**Be fruitful**, and **multiply**. **Fill** the earth, and **subdue** it. **Have dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” (Genesis 1:28 ULT)

Imperatives that function as conditions

An imperative sentence can also be used to tell the **condition** under which something will happen. The proverbs mainly tell about life and things that often happen. The purpose of Proverbs 4:6 below is not primarily to give a command, but to teach what people can expect to happen **if** they love wisdom.

Do not abandon wisdom and she will watch over you; **love** her and she will keep you safe.
(Proverbs 4:6 ULT)

The purpose of Proverbs 22:6, below, is to teach what people can expect to happen if they teach their children the way they should go.

Teach a child the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn away from that instruction. (Proverbs 22:6 ULT)

Translation Strategies

- (1) If people would not use an imperative sentence for one of the functions in the Bible, try using a statement instead.
- (2) If people would not understand that a sentence is used to cause something to happen, add a connecting word like “so” to show that what happened was a result of what was said.
- (3) If people would not use a command as a condition, translate it as a statement with the words “if” and “then.”

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If people would not use an imperative sentence for one of the functions in the Bible, try using a statement instead.

Be clean. (Matthew 8:3b ULT)

“You are now clean.” “I now cleanse you.”

God said, “**Let there be light**,” and there was light. (Genesis 1:3 ULT)

God said, “**There is now light**” and there was light.

God blessed them and said to them, “**Be fruitful**, and **multiply**. **Fill** the earth, and **subdue** it. **Have dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” (Genesis 1:28 ULT)

God blessed them and said to them, “**My will for you is that you be fruitful**, and **multiply**. **Fill** the earth, and **subdue** it. **I want you to have dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

- (2) If people would not understand that a sentence is used to cause something to happen, add a connecting word like “so” to show that what happened was a result of what was said.

God said, “**Let there be light**,” and there was light. (Genesis 1:3 ULT)

God said, ‘Let there be light,’ **so** there was light. God said, “Light must be;” **as a result**, there was light.

- (3) If people would not use a command as a condition, translate it as a statement with the words “if” and “then.”

Teach a child the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn away from that instruction. (Proverbs 22:6 ULT)

Translated as:

“**If** you teach a child the way he should go, **then** when he is old he will not turn away from that instruction.”

”

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 4:3](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:18](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:8](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:11](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:13](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:25](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:26](#)

Information Structure

Description

Different languages arrange the parts of the sentence in different ways. In English, a sentence normally has the subject first, then the verb, then the object, then other modifiers, like this: Peter painted his house yesterday.

Many other languages normally put these things in a different order such as: Painted yesterday Peter his house.

Although all languages have a normal order for parts of a sentence, this order can change depending on what information the speaker or writer considers to be the most important.

Suppose that someone is answering the question, "What did Peter paint yesterday?" The person asking the question already knows all of the information in our sentence above except for the object, "his house." Therefore, that becomes the most important part of the information, and a person answering in English might say "His house is what Peter painted (yesterday)."

This puts the most important information first, which is normal for English. Many Other Languages would normally put the most important information last. In the flow of a text, the most important information is usually what the writer considers to be new information for the reader. In some languages the new information comes first, and in others it comes last.

This page answers the question: *How do languages arrange the parts of a sentence?*

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

Sentence Structure ([UTA PDF](#))

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Different languages arrange the parts of a sentence in different ways. If you (the translator) copy the order of the parts of a sentence from the source, it may not make sense in your language.
- Different languages put important or new information in different places in the sentence. If you keep the important or new information in the same place that it had in the source language, it may be confusing or give the wrong message in your language.

Examples From the Bible

They all ate until they were satisfied. (Mark 6:42 ULT)

The parts of this sentence were in a different order in the original Greek source language. They were like this: And they ate all and they were satisfied.

In English, this means that the people ate everything. But the next verse says that they took up twelve baskets full of leftover pieces of food. In order for this to not be so confusing, the translators of the ULT put the parts of the sentence in the right order for English.

And the day began to end, and the twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so that, going into the surrounding villages and countryside, they may find lodging and food, because we are here in an desolate place." (Luke 9:12 ULT)

In this verse, what the disciples say to Jesus puts the important information first, that he should send the crowd away. In languages that put the important information last, people would understand that the reason that they gave, being in an isolated place, is the most important part of their message to Jesus. They might then think that the disciples are afraid of the spirits in that place, and that sending the people to buy food is a way to protect them from the spirits. That is the wrong message.

Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers treated the false prophets in the same way. (Luke 6:26 ULT)

In this verse, the most important part of the information is first, that “woe” is coming on the people for what they are doing. The reason that supports that warning comes last. This could be confusing for people who expect the important information to come last.

Translation Strategies

- (1) Study how your language arranges the parts of a sentence, and use that order in your translation.
- (2) Study where your language puts the new or important information, and rearrange the order of information so that it follows the way it is done in your language.

Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Study how your language arranges the parts of a sentence, and use that order in your translation.

This is the verse in the original Greek order:

And he went out from there and came to the hometown his, and they followed him the disciples his. (Mark 6:1)

The ULT has put this into the normal order for English:

Now Jesus went out from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. (Mark 6:1 ULT)

- (2) Study where your language puts the new or important information and rearrange the order of information so that it follows the way it is done in your language.

And the day began to end, and the twelve came and said to him, “Send the crowd away so that, going into the surrounding villages and countryside, they may find lodging and food, because we are here in a desolate place.” (Luke 9:12 ULT)

If your language puts the important information last, you can change the order of the verse.

Now the day was about to come to an end, and the twelve came to him and said, “Because we are here in an desolate place, send the crowd away that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and food.”

Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets. (Luke 6:26 ULT)

If your language puts the important information last, you can change the order of the verse.

When all men speak well of you, which is just as people’s ancestors treated the false prophets, then woe to you!

Next we recommend you learn about:

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

[Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding \(UTA PDF\)](#)

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 1:2](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:8](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:2](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:18](#)

Introduction of New and Old Participants

Description

The first time that people or things are mentioned in a story, they are **new participants**. After that, whenever they are mentioned, they are **old participants**.

Now **there was a man from the Pharisees whose name was Nicodemus** ... **This man** came to Jesus at night ... Jesus replied and said to **him** ... (John 3:1, 2a, 3a)

This page answers the question: *Why cannot the readers of my translation understand who the author was writing about?*

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

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

Writing Styles ([UTA PDF](#))

The first bolded phrase introduces Nicodemus as a new participant. After being introduced, he is then referred to as “This man” and “him” when he has become an old participant.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

In order to make your translation clear and natural, it is necessary to refer to the participants in such a way that people will know if they are new participants or participants that they have already read about. Different languages have different ways of doing this. You must follow the way that your language does this, not the way that the source language does this.

Examples From the Bible

New Participants

Often the most important new participant is introduced with a phrase that says that he existed, such as “There was a man,” as in the example below. The phrase “There was” tells us that this man existed. The word “a” in “a man” tells us that the author is speaking about him for the first time. The rest of the sentence tells where this man was from, who his family was, and what his name was.

Now there was a man from Zorah, of the families of the Danites, and his name was Manoah. (Judges 13:2a ULT)

A new participant who is not the most important participant is often introduced in relation to the more important person who was already introduced. In the example below, Manoah’s wife is simply referred to as “his wife.” This phrase shows her relationship to him.

Now there was one man from Zorah, of the families of the Danites, and his name was Manoah. **His wife** was barren and she had never given birth. (Judges 13:2 ULT)

Sometimes a new participant is introduced simply by name because the author assumes that the readers know who the person is. In the first verse of 1 Kings, the author assumes that his readers know who King David is, so there is no need to explain who he is.

Now King David was old, he had advanced in the days, and they covered him with the garments, but it was not warm enough for him. (1 Kings 1:1 ULT)

Old Participants

A person who has already been brought into the story can be referred to with a pronoun after that. In the example below, Manoah is referred to with the pronoun “his,” and his wife is referred to with the pronoun “she.”

His **wife** was barren and **she** had never given birth. (Judges 13:2 ULT)

Old participants can also be referred to in other ways, depending on what is happening in the story. In the example below, the story is about bearing a son, and Manoah's wife is referred to by the noun phrase "the wife."

The angel of Yahweh appeared to **the wife** and he said to her ... (Judges 13:3a ULT)

If the old participant has not been mentioned for a while, or if there could be confusion between participants, the author may use the participant's name again. In the example below, Manoah is referred to by his name, which the author has not used since verse 2.

Then **Manoah** prayed to Yahweh. (Judges 13:8a ULT)

Some languages place an affix on the verb that tells something about the subject. In some of those languages, people do not always use noun phrases or pronouns for old participants when they are the subject of the sentence. The marker on the verb gives enough information for the listener to understand who the subject is. (See [Verbs](#).)

Translation Strategies

- (1) If the participant is new, use one of your language's ways of introducing new participants.
- (2) If it is not clear to whom a pronoun refers, use a noun phrase or name.
- (3) If an old participant is referred to by name or a noun phrase, and people wonder if this is another new participant, try using a pronoun instead. If a pronoun is not needed because people would understand it clearly from the context, then leave out the pronoun.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If the participant is new, use one of your language's ways of introducing new participants.

Then Joseph, who was called Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated as Son of Encouragement), a Levite from Cyprus by birth ... (Acts 4:36-37 ULT) — Starting the sentence with Joseph's name when he has not been introduced yet might be confusing in some languages.

There was a man from Cyprus who was a Levite. His name was Joseph, and he was given the name Barnabas by the apostles (that is, being interpreted, Son of Encouragement). There was a Levite from Cyprus whose name was Joseph. The apostles gave him the name Barnabas, which means Son of encouragement.

- (2) If it is not clear who a pronoun refers to, use a noun phrase or name.

And it happened that when he was praying in a certain place, when he stopped, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples." (Luke 11:1 ULT) — Since this is the first verse in a chapter, readers might wonder who "he" refers to.

It happened when **Jesus** finished praying in a certain place, that one of his disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples."

- (3) If an old participant is referred to by name or a noun phrase, and people wonder if this is another new participant, try using a pronoun instead. If a pronoun is not needed because people would understand it clearly from the context, then leave out the pronoun.

Joseph's master took Joseph and put him in prison, in the place where all the king's prisoners were put, and Joseph stayed there. (Genesis 39:20) — Since Joseph is the main person in the story, some languages might prefer the pronoun.

Joseph's master took **him** and put **him** in prison, in the place where all the king's prisoners were put, and **he** stayed there in the prison.

Next we recommend you learn about:

Pronouns — When to Use Them ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 3:5](#)

Litany

Description

A litany is a figure of speech in which the various components of a thing are listed in a series of very similar statements. The speaker does this to indicate that what he is saying should be understood as comprehensive and without exceptions.

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

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Many languages do not use litanies, and readers could be confused by them. They may wonder why the speaker seems to be saying the same thing over and over again.

Examples From the Bible

Though they dig into Sheol, there my hand will take them. Though they climb up to heaven, there I will bring them down. Though they hide on the top of Carmel, there I will search and take them. Though they are hidden from my sight in the bottom of the sea, there will I give orders to the serpent, and it will bite them. Though they go into captivity, driven by their enemies before them, there will I give orders to the sword, and it will kill them. (Amos 9:2-4 ULT)

In this passage Yahweh is telling the people of Israel that when he punishes them, none of them will escape.

But you should not have looked on the day of your brother, on the day of his misfortune. And you should not have rejoiced over the sons of Judah in the day of their perishing. And you should not have made your mouth great in a day of distress. You should not have entered the gate of my people in the day of their calamity. Yes, you! You should not have looked on his evil in the day of his calamity. And you women should not have looted his wealth in the day of his calamity. And you should not have stood at the crossroads to cut down his fugitives. And you should not have delivered up his survivors in a day of distress. (Obadiah 1:12-14)

In this passage Yahweh is telling the people of Edom that they should have helped the people of Judah when they were conquered by the Babylonians.

Translation Strategies

If the litany is understood as it is in the ULT, then translate the litany as it is. If it is not understood, then try one or more of the following strategies.

- (1) Often in the Bible there will be a general statement at the beginning or end of a litany that sums up its overall meaning. You can format that statement in a way that will show that it is a summary statement that gives the meaning of the litany.
- (2) You can put each sentence of the litany on a separate line. Also, if each sentence in the litany has two parts, you can format the litany so that the equivalent parts of each sentence line up. Use this or any other type of formatting that will show that each sentence is reinforcing the same meaning.
- (3) You can eliminate words like "and," "but," and "or" at the beginning of sentences so that it will be clearer that the component parts of the litany are all being listed in a row.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) combined with (3):

Often in the Bible there will be a general statement at the beginning or end of a litany that sums up its overall meaning. You can format that statement in a way that will show that it is a summary statement that gives the meaning of the litany;

You can eliminate words like “and,” “but,” and “or” at the beginning of sentences so that it will be clearer that the component parts of the litany are all being listed in a row.

You did nothing to help the Israelites when strangers carried away their wealth. They conquered all the cities of Judah, and they even plundered Jerusalem. And you were just as bad as those foreigners, because you did nothing to help:

You should not have looked on the day of your brother, on the day of his misfortune. You should not have rejoiced over the sons of Judah in the day of their perishing. You should not have made your mouth great in a day of distress. You should not have entered the gate of my people in the day of their calamity. Yes, you! You should not have looked on his evil in the day of his calamity. You women should not have looted his wealth in the day of his calamity. You should not have stood at the crossroads to cut down his fugitives. You should not have delivered up his survivors in a day of distress. (Obadiah 1:11-14)

In the above example, verse 11 provides the summary and meaning for the litany that follows in verses 12-14.

(1) combined with (2):

Often in the Bible there will be a general statement at the beginning or end of a litany that sums up its overall meaning. You can format that statement in a way that will show that it is a summary statement that gives the meaning of the litany;

You can put each sentence of the litany on a separate line. Also, if each sentence in the litany has two parts, you can format the litany so that the equivalent parts of each sentence line up. Use this or any other type of formatting that will show that each sentence is reinforcing the same meaning.

Not one of them will get away, not one of them will escape:

Though they dig into Sheol,	there my hand will take them.
Though they climb up to heaven,	there I will bring them down.
Though they hide on the top of Carmel,	there I will search and take them.
Though they are hidden from my sight in the bottom of the sea,	there will I give orders to the serpent, and it will bite them.
Though they go into captivity, driven by their enemies before them,	there will I give orders to the sword, and it will kill them.

(Amos 9:1b-4 ULT)

In the above example, the sentence before the litany explains its overall meaning. That sentence can be placed as an introduction. The second half of each sentence can be formatted in a descending staircase pattern as above, or lined up evenly like the first half of each sentence, or in another way. Use whatever format best shows that these sentences are all communicating the same truth, that it is not possible to escape from God.

”

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 2:3](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:10](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:10](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:14](#)

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 Thessalonians 2:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:3](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:7](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:13](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:19](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:20](#)

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 Thessalonians 2:15](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:15](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:23](#)

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 Thessalonians 1:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:8](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:10](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:7](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:8](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:10](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:14](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:16](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:2](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:8](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:11](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:13](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:2](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:16](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:7](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:8](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:10](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:11](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:13](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:15](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:18](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:19](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:21](#)

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 Thessalonians 1:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:8](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:13](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:17](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:19](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:11](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:15](#)

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 Thessalonians 1:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:3](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:13](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:14](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:15](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:18](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:21](#)

Oath Formulas

An oath is a solemn promise that someone makes to another person to do something or to solemnly testify that something is true that includes a punishment if the person does not do it.

This page answers the question: *How do I translate oath formulas into my language?*

Description

As a guarantee that the person taking the oath will do what he promises, the person calls on God to punish him severely if he does not do the thing promised, or if what he testifies to is not true. Sometimes the person will name a deity different than God as punisher or will name something that the person holds sacred. In the case of a sacred object, the idea is that the person is willing to let that object be desecrated if he does not fulfill his oath. So an oath has four parts, some of which are often left implied: 1. Calling on God to witness the oath and judge the person making it 2. Making the promise (may be implied as the opposite of the violation) 3. Telling what would be a violation of the oath (may be implied as the opposite of the promise) 4. Saying what punishment God would do if the person violates the oath

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue:

People in some cultures may not be familiar with the practice of taking oaths, and so they may not understand what the people in the Bible are doing. In many languages, people would not take an oath the way that people did in the Bible, and so they might not recognize that the person is taking an oath. In the Old Testament, people often did not speak one or more parts of the oath, leaving those parts implied. The part that was most often left unspoken was the part that would tell what they are asking God to do if they break the oath. People believed that spoken words have power, and that speaking the part about punishment might cause the punishment to happen, so they often left that part to be understood silently. Because of these things, people might think that the person in the Bible is not making a real oath or they may not understand what the verse is talking about at all.

Examples From the Bible

"I raise my hand to Yahweh, God Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth, if from a thread even to the strap of a sandal, or if I take from anything that {belongs} to you, so that you will not say, 'I made Abram rich.' (Genesis 14:22-23 ULT)

In the verse above, Abram describes a symbolic action (raising his hand to Yahweh) to signal that he is taking an oath and calling on Yahweh as witness and judge. He says what would violate his oath (thus promising to do the opposite). Then he leaves out the part that would describe how Yahweh would punish him if he fails to do what he is promising.

May Yahweh do thus to me, and thus may he add, if death separates between me and between you. (Ruth 1:17 ULT)

Ruth calls on Yahweh and includes the part about Yahweh punishing her, says what the violation would be (thus promising to do the opposite), but does not say what the punishment would be.

And Saul said, "Thus may God do and thus may he add, for dying you will die, Jonathan." (1 Samuel 14:44 ULT)

Saul takes an oath that Jonathan will die, but does not specifically say whom God would punish, what the punishment would be, or what the person would do that would violate the oath and bring about God's punishment.

Translation Strategies

If people who speak your language would recognize the oath as it is in the ULT, consider translating it in its current form. If not, consider using the following strategies.

- (1) Add in the missing parts so that people recognize it as an oath.
- (2) If oaths are unfamiliar, add a short explanation of what an oath is.
- (3) Put the oath into a form that would be natural in your language.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Add in the missing parts so that people recognize it as an oath.

"I raise my hand to Yahweh, God Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth, if from a thread even to the strap of a sandal, or if I take from anything that {belongs} to you, so that you will not say, 'I made Abram rich.' (Genesis 14:22-23 ULT)

"I raise my hand to Yahweh, God Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth, **and ask him to punish me severely** if from a thread even to the strap of a sandal, or if I take from anything that {belongs} to you, so that you will not say, 'I made Abram rich.'

And Saul said, "Thus may God do and thus may he add, for dying you will die, Jonathan." (1 Samuel 14:44 ULT)

And Saul said, "May God **punish me severely** and may he add **even more punishment if I do not kill you**, for dying you will die, Jonathan."

- (2) If oaths are unfamiliar, add a short explanation of what an oath is.

May Yahweh do thus to me, and thus may he add, if death separates between me and between you. (Ruth 1:17 ULT)

Then Ruth called on Yahweh to enforce her promise: "May Yahweh do thus to me, and thus may he add, if death separates between me and between you."

- (3) Put the oath into a form that would be natural in your language.

"I raise my hand to Yahweh, God Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth, if from a thread even to the strap of a sandal, or if I take from anything that {belongs} to you, so that you will not say, 'I made Abram rich.' (Genesis 14:22-23 ULT)

"I solemnly swear before Yahweh, God Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth, **that I will not take** from a thread even to the strap of a sandal, or from anything that {belongs} to you, **so help me God**, so that you will not say, 'I made Abram rich.'

May Yahweh do thus to me, and thus may he add, if death separates between me and between you. (Ruth 1:17 ULT)

May Yahweh **strike me dead right where I stand** if death separates between me and between you.

"

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 5:27](#)

Order of Events

Description

In the Bible, events are not always told in the order in which they occurred. Sometimes the author wanted to discuss something that happened at an earlier time than the event that he just talked about. This can be confusing to the reader.

This page answers the question: *Why are some events not listed in the order they happened, and how do I translate them?*

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

Writing Styles ([UTA PDF](#))

Verbs ([UTA PDF](#))

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Readers might think that the events happened in the order that they are told. It is important to help them understand the correct order of events.

Examples From the Bible

He even added this to them all: he locked John up in prison. Now it came about, when all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized. (Luke 3:20-21 ULT)

This could sound like John baptized Jesus after John was locked up in prison, but John baptized Jesus before John was locked up in prison.

Just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carrying seven trumpets of rams' horns before Yahweh went forward and blew the trumpets, and the ark of the covenant of Yahweh followed after them. But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout nor let your voice be heard, nor let any word leave your mouth until the day I tell you to shout. Then you must shout." (Joshua 6:8,10 ULT)

This could sound like Joshua gave the order not to shout after the army had already started their march, but he had given that order before they started marching.

Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? (Revelation 5:2b ULT)

This sounds like a person must first open the scroll and then break its seals, but the seals that lock the scroll must be broken before the scroll can be unrolled.

Translation Strategies

- (1) If your language uses phrases or time words to show that an event happened before one that was already mentioned, consider using one of them.
- (2) If your language uses verb tense or aspect to show that an event happened before one that was already mentioned, consider using that. (See the section on "Aspect" of [Verbs](#).)
- (3) If your language prefers to tell events in the order that they occurred, consider reordering the events so they are in that order. This may require putting two or more verses together (like 5-6). (See [Verse Bridges](#).)

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If your language uses phrases, time words or tenses to show that an event happened before the one just mentioned, consider using one of them.

20 he even added this to them all: he locked John up in prison. Now it came about, when all the people were baptized, Jesus also was baptized. (Luke 3:20-21 ULT)

20 But then Herod ... had John locked up in prison. 21 **Before John was put in prison**, while all the people were being baptized by John, Jesus also was baptized.

Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? (Revelation 5:2b ULT)

Who is worthy to open the scroll **after** breaking its seals?

(2) If your language uses verb tense or aspect to show that an event happened before one that was already mentioned, consider using that.

Just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carrying seven trumpets of rams' horns before Yahweh went forward and blew the trumpets, But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout nor let your voice be heard, nor let any word leave your mouth until the day I tell you to shout. Then you must shout." (Joshua 6:8,10 ULT)

8 Just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carried the seven trumpets of rams' horns before Yahweh, as they advanced, they gave a blast on the trumpets 10 But Joshua **had commanded** the people, saying, "Do not shout. No sound must leave your mouths until the day I tell you to shout. Only then must you shout."

(3) If your language prefers to tell events in the order that they occur, consider reordering the events. This may require putting two or more verses together (like 5-6).

8 Just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carrying seven trumpets of rams' horns before Yahweh went forward and blew the trumpets, But Joshua commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout nor let your voice be heard, nor let any word leave your mouth until the day I tell you to shout. Then you must shout." (Joshua 6:8,10 ULT)

8,10 Joshua commanded the people, saying, "Do not shout. No sound must leave your mouths until the day I tell you to shout. Only then must you shout." Then just as Joshua had said to the people, the seven priests carried the seven trumpets of rams horns before Yahweh, as they advanced, they gave a blast on the trumpets...

Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? (Revelation 5:2b ULT)

Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_events.

Next we recommend you learn about:

Background Information ([UTA PDF](#))

Connecting Words and Phrases ([UTA PDF](#))

Introduction of a New Event ([UTA PDF](#))

Verse Bridges ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 2:13](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:15](#)

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 Thessalonians 1:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:15](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:17](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:20](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:16](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:3](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:7](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:20](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:23](#)

Personification

Description

Personification is a figure of speech in which someone speaks of something as if it could do things that animals or people can do. People often do this because it makes it easier to talk about things that we cannot see:

Such as wisdom:

Does not Wisdom call out? (Proverbs 8:1a ULT)

Or sin:

Sin crouches at the door. (Genesis 4:7b ULT)

People also use personification because it is sometimes easier to talk about people's relationships with non-human things such as wealth as if they were relationships between people.

You cannot serve God and wealth. (Matthew 6:24b ULT)

In each case, the purpose of the personification is to highlight a certain characteristic of the non-human thing. As in metaphor, the reader needs to think of the way that the thing is like a certain kind of person.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Some languages do not use personification.
- Some languages use personification only in certain situations.

Examples From the Bible

You cannot **serve** God and wealth. (Matthew 6:24b ULT)

Jesus speaks of wealth as if it were a master whom people might serve. Loving money and basing one's decisions on it is like serving it as a slave would serve his master.

Does not Wisdom **call** out? Does not Understanding **raise her voice**? (Proverbs 8:1 ULT)

The author speaks of wisdom and understanding as if they were woman who calls out to teach people. This means that they are not something hidden, but something obvious that people should pay attention to.

Translation Strategies

If the personification would be understood clearly, consider using it. If it would not be understood, here are some other ways for translating it.

- (1) Add words or phrases to make the human (or animal) characteristic clear.
- (2) In addition to Strategy (1), use words such as "like" or "as" to show that the sentence is not to be understood literally.
- (3) Find a way to translate it without the personification.

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

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

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 Thessalonians 2:13](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:19](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:20](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:22](#)

Possession

Description

In English, the grammatical form that commonly indicates possession is also used to indicate a variety of relationships between people and objects or people and other people. In English, that grammatical relationship is shown by using the word “**of**,” by using **an apostrophe and the letter “s”**, or by using a **possessive pronoun**. The following examples are different ways to indicate that my grandfather owns a house.

- the house **of** my grandfather
- my grandfather **'s** house
- **his** house

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

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

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

Sentence Structure ([UTA PDF](#))

Possession is used in Hebrew, Greek, and English for a variety of situations. Here are a few common situations that it is used for.

- Ownership — Someone owns something.
 - The clothes of me - my clothes — The clothes that I own
- Social Relationship — Someone has some kind of social relationship with another.
 - The mother of John — John's mother - the woman who gave birth to John, or the woman who cared for John
 - A teacher of Israel - Israel's teacher — a person who teaches Israel
- Association — A particular thing is associated with a particular person, place, or thing.
 - The sickness of David - David's sickness — the sickness that David is experiencing
 - the fear of the Lord — the fear that is appropriate for a human being to have when relating to the Lord
- Contents — Something has something in it.
 - a bag of clothes — a bag that has clothes in it, or a bag that is full of clothes
- Part and whole: One thing is part of another.
 - my head — the head that is part of my body
 - the roof of a house — the roof that is part of a house

In some languages there is a special form of possession, termed **inalienable possession**. This form of possession is used for things that cannot be removed from you, as opposed to things you could lose. In the examples above, *my head* and *my mother* are examples of inalienable possession (at least in some languages), while *my clothes* or *my teacher* would be alienably possessed. What may be considered alienable vs. inalienable may differ by language. In languages that mark the difference, the expression of inalienable possession and alienable possession will be different.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- You (the translator) need to understand the relationship between two ideas represented by the two nouns when one is in the grammatical relationship of possessing the other.
- Some languages do not use grammatical possession for all of the situations that your source text Bible might use it for.

Examples From the Bible

Ownership — In the example below, the son owned the money.

The younger son ... wasted his wealth by living recklessly. (Luke 15:13b)

Social Relationship — In the example below, the disciples were people who learned from John.

Then **the disciples of John** came to him. (Matthew 9:14a ULT)

Association — In the example below, the gospel is the message associated with Paul because he preaches it.

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, from the seed of David, according to **my gospel**,
(2 Timothy 2:8 ULT)

Material — In the example below, the material used for making the crowns was gold.

On their heads were something like **crowns of gold**. (Revelation 9:7b)

Contents — In the example below, the cup has water in it.

For whoever gives you **a cup of water** to drink ... will not lose his reward. (Mark 9:41 ULT)

Part of a whole — In the example below, the door was a part of the palace.

But Uriah slept at **the door of the king's palace**. (2 Samuel 11:9a ULT)

Part of a group — In the example below, “us” refers to the whole group and “each one” refers to the individual members.

Now to **each one of us** grace has been given according to the measure of the gift of Christ.
(Ephesians 4:7 ULT)

Events and Possession

Sometimes one or both of the nouns is an abstract noun that refers to an event or action. In the examples below, the abstract nouns are in **bold** print. These are just some of the relationships that are possible between two nouns when one of them refers to an event.

Subject — Sometimes the word after “of” tells who would do the action named by the first noun. In the example below, **John baptized people**.

The **baptism of John**, was it from heaven or from men? Answer me. (Mark 11:30)

In the example below, **Christ loves us**.

Who will separate us from the **love of Christ**? (Romans 8:35)

Object — Sometimes the word after “of” tells who or what something would happen to. In the example below, **people love money**.

For the **love of money** is a root of all kinds of evil. (1 Timothy 6:10a ULT)

Instrument — Sometimes the word after “of” tells how something would happen. In the example below, God would **punish people by sending enemies to attack them with swords**.

Then be afraid of the sword, because wrath brings **the punishment of the sword**. (Job 19:29a ULT)

Representation — In the example below, John was baptizing people who were repenting of their sins. They were being baptized to show that they were repenting. Their **baptism represented their repentance**.

John came, baptizing in the wilderness and preaching **a baptism of repentance** for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 1:4 ULT)

Strategies for learning what the relationship is between the two nouns

- (1) Read the surrounding verses to see if they help you to understand the relationship between the two nouns.
- (2) Read the verse in the UST. Sometimes it shows the relationship clearly.
- (3) See what the notes say about it.

Translation Strategies

If possession would be a natural way to show a particular relationship between two nouns, consider using it. If it would be strange or hard to understand, consider these.

- (1) Use an adjective to show that one noun describes the other.
- (2) Use a verb to show how the two are related.
- (3) If one of the nouns refers to an event, translate it as a verb.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use an adjective to show that one noun describes the other.

On their heads were something like **crowns of gold**. (Revelation 9:7b)

"On their heads were **gold crowns**"

- (2) Use a verb to show how the two are related.

Whoever gives you **a cup of water** to drink ... will not lose his reward. (Mark 9:41 ULT)

Whoever gives you a **cup that has water in it** to drink ... will not lose his reward.

Wealth is worthless on **the day of wrath**. (Proverbs 11:4a ULT)

Wealth is worthless on **the day when God shows his wrath**. or: Wealth is worthless on the **day when God punishes people because of his wrath**.

- (3) If one of the nouns refers to an event, translate it as a verb. (In the example below, there are two possession relationships, "punishment of Yahweh" and "your God.")

Notice that I am not speaking to your children, who have not known or seen **the punishment of Yahweh your God**. (Deuteronomy 11:2a ULT)

Notice that I am not speaking to your children who have not known or seen **how Yahweh, the God whom you worship, punished the people of Egypt**.

You will only observe and see the **punishment of the wicked**. (Psalms 91:8 ULT)

You will only observe and see **how Yahweh punishes the wicked**.

You will receive **the gift of the Holy Spirit**. (Acts 2:38b ULT)

You will receive the **Holy Spirit, whom God will give to you**.

"

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 1:3](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:2](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:15](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:19](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:2](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:5](#); [1](#)

[Thessalonians 4:14](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:16](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:5](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:8](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:23](#)

Predictive Past

Description

The predictive past is a figure of speech that uses the past tense to refer to things that will happen in the future. This is sometimes done in prophecy to show that the event will certainly happen. It is also called the prophetic perfect.

Therefore my people have gone into captivity for lack of understanding; their honored leaders go hungry, and their common people have nothing to drink. (Isaiah 5:13 ULT)

In the example above, the people of Israel had not yet gone into captivity, but God spoke of their going into captivity as if it had already happened because he had decided that they certainly would go into captivity.

This page answers the question: *What is the predictive past?*

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

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

Verbs ([UTA PDF](#))

Reason This Is a Translation Issue:

Readers who are not aware of the past tense being used in prophecy to refer to future events may find it confusing.

Examples From the Bible

Now Jericho was tightly closed because of the sons of Israel. No one went out and no one came in. Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho, and its king, and its powerful soldiers into your hand." (Joshua 6:1-2 ULT)

For to us a child has been born, to us a son has been given; and the rule will be on his shoulder. (Isaiah 9:6a ULT)

In the examples above, God spoke of things that would happen in the future as if they had already happened.

But even Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about them, saying, "Look! The Lord came with thousands and thousands of his holy ones." (Jude 1:14 ULT)

Enoch was speaking of something that would happen in the future, but he used the past tense when he said "the Lord came."

Translation Strategies

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

- (1) Use the future tense to refer to future events.
- (2) If it refers to something in the immediate future, use a form that would show that.
- (3) Some languages may use the present tense to show that something will happen very soon.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use the future tense to refer to future events.

For to us a child **has been born**, to us a son **has been given**. (Isaiah 9:6a ULT)

For to us a child **will be born**, to us a son **will be given**.

(2) If it refers to something that would happen very soon, use a form that shows that.

Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho, and its king, and its powerful soldiers into your hand." (Joshua 6:2 ULT)

Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, I **am about to deliver** over to you Jericho, its king, and its powerful soldiers."

(3) Some languages may use the present tense to show that something will happen very soon.

Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho, and its king, and its powerful soldiers into your hand." (Joshua 6:2 ULT)

Yahweh said to Joshua, "See, I **am delivering** over to you Jericho, its king, and its powerful soldiers."

"

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 2:16](#)

Pronouns — When to Use Them

Description

When we talk or write, we use pronouns to refer to people or things without always having to repeat the noun or name. Usually, the first time we refer to someone in a story, we use a descriptive phrase or a name. The next time we might refer to that person with a simple noun or by name. After that we might refer to him simply with a pronoun as long as we think that our listeners will be able to understand easily to whom the pronoun refers.

This page answers the question: *How do I decide whether or not to use a pronoun?*

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

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

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

Now there was **a man from the Pharisees whose name was Nicodemus, a Jewish leader**. **This man** came to Jesus at night. Jesus replied and said to **him** ... (John 3:1, 2a, 3a ULT)

In John 3, Nicodemus is first referred to with noun phrases and his name. Then he is referred to with the noun phrase “this man.” Then he is referred to with the pronoun “him.”

Each language has its rules and exceptions to this usual way of referring to people and things.

- In some languages, the first time something is referred to in a paragraph or chapter, it is referred to with a noun rather than a pronoun.
- The main character is the person whom a story is about. In some languages, after a main character is introduced in a story, he is usually referred to with a pronoun. Some languages have special pronouns that refer only to the main character.
- In some languages, marking on the verb helps people know who the subject is. (See [Verbs](#).) In some of these languages, listeners rely on this marking to help them understand who the subject is. Speakers will use a pronoun, noun phrase, or proper name only when they want either to emphasize or to clarify who the subject is.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- If translators use a pronoun at the wrong time for their language, readers might not know about whom the writer is talking.
- If translators too frequently refer to a main character by name, listeners of some languages might not realize that the person is a main character, or they might think that there is a new character with the same name.
- If translators use pronouns, nouns, or names at the wrong time, people might think that there is some special emphasis on the person or thing to which it refers.

Examples From the Bible

The example below occurs at the beginning of a chapter. In some languages it might not be clear to whom the pronouns refer.

Then Jesus entered into the synagogue again, and there was a man who had a withered hand. Some people watched **him** closely to see if **he** would heal **him** on the Sabbath so that they might accuse **him**. (Mark 3:1-2 ULT)

In the example below, two men are named in the first sentence. It might not be clear whom “he” in the second sentence refers to.

Now after some days had passed, **King Agrippa** and Bernice came down to Caesarea to pay their respects to **Festus**. After **he** had been there for many days, Festus presented to the king the things concerning Paul. (Acts 25:13-14)

Jesus is the main character of the book of Matthew, but in the verses below he is referred to four times by name. This may lead speakers of some languages to think that Jesus is not the main character. Or it might lead them to think that there is more than one person named Jesus in this story. Or it might lead them to think that there is some kind of emphasis on him, even though there is no emphasis.

At that time **Jesus** went on the Sabbath day through the grainfields. **His** disciples were hungry and began to pluck heads of grain and eat them. But when the Pharisees saw that, they said to **Jesus**, "See, your disciples do what is unlawful to do on the Sabbath." But **Jesus** said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was hungry, and the men who were with him?" Then **Jesus** left from there and went into their synagogue. (Matthew 12:1-3,9 ULT)

Translation Strategies

- (1) If it would not be clear to your readers to whom or to what a pronoun refers, use a name or a noun.
- (2) If repeating a noun or name would lead people to think that a main character is not a main character, or that the writer is talking about more than one person with that name, or that there is some kind of emphasis on someone when there is no emphasis, use a pronoun instead.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If it would not be clear to your readers to whom or to what a pronoun refers, use a name or a noun.

Again **he** walked into the synagogue, and a man with a withered hand was there. Some Pharisees watched **him** to see if **he** would heal the man on the Sabbath. (Mark 3:1-2)

Again **Jesus** walked into the synagogue, and a man with a withered hand was there. Some Pharisees watched **Jesus** to see if **he** would heal the man on the Sabbath.

- (2) If repeating a noun or name would lead people to think that a main character is not a main character, or that the writer is talking about more than one person with that name, or that there is some kind of emphasis on someone when there is no emphasis, use a pronoun instead.

At that time **Jesus** went on the Sabbath day through the grainfields. **His** disciples were hungry and began to pluck heads of grain and eat them. But when the Pharisees saw that, they said to **Jesus**, "See, your disciples do what is unlawful to do on the Sabbath." But **Jesus** said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was hungry, and the men who were with him?" Then **Jesus** left from there and went into their synagogue. (Matthew 12:1-3,9 ULT)

This may be translated as:

At that time **Jesus** went on the Sabbath day through the grainfields. **His** disciples were hungry and began to pluck heads of grain and eat them. But when the Pharisees saw that, they said to **him**, "See, your disciples do what is unlawful to do on the Sabbath." But **he** said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was hungry, and the men who were with him?" Then **he** left from there and went into their synagogue.

"

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 1:10](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:13](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:18](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:24](#)

Reflexive Pronouns

Description

All languages have ways of showing that the same person fills two different roles in a sentence. English does this by using reflexive pronouns. These are pronouns that refer to someone or something that has already been mentioned in a sentence. In English the reflexive pronouns are: “myself,” “yourself,” “himself,” “herself,” “itself,” “ourselves,” “yourselves,” and “themselves.” Other languages may have other ways to show this.

This page answers the question: *What are reflexive pronouns?*

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

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Languages have different ways of showing that the same person fills two different roles in a sentence. For those languages, translators will need to know how to translate the English reflexive pronouns.
- The reflexive pronouns in English also have other functions.

Uses of Reflexive Pronouns

- To show that the same person or things fills two different roles in a sentence
- To emphasize a person or thing in the sentence
- To show that someone did something alone
- To show that someone or something was alone

Examples From the Bible

Reflexive pronouns are used to show the same person or thing fills two different roles in a sentence.

If **I** should testify about **myself**, my testimony would not be true. (John 5:31 ULT)

Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and **many** went up to Jerusalem from the country before the Passover in order to purify **themselves**. (John 11:55 ULT)

Reflexive pronouns are used to emphasize a person or thing in the sentence.

Jesus himself was not baptizing, but his disciples were. (John 4:2 ULT)

So they left the crowd, taking Jesus with them, just as he was, in the boat. There also were other boats with him. Then a violent windstorm arose and the waves were breaking into the boat so that the boat was already full of water. But **Jesus himself** was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. (Mark 4:36-38a ULT)

Reflexive pronouns are used to show that someone did something alone.

When Jesus realized that they were about to come and seize him by force to make him king, he withdrew again up the mountain **by himself**. (John 6:15 ULT)

Reflexive pronouns are used to show that someone or something was alone.

He saw the linen cloths lying there and the cloth that had been on his head. **It** was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a place **by itself**. (John 20:6b-7 ULT)

Translation Strategies

If a reflexive pronoun would have the same function in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other strategies.

(1) In some languages people put something on the verb to show that the object of the verb is the same as the subject. (2) In some languages people emphasize a certain person or thing by referring to it in a special place in the sentence. (3) In some languages people emphasize a certain person or thing by adding something to that word or putting another word with it. (4) In some languages people show that someone did something alone by using a word like “alone.” (5) In some languages people show that something was alone by using a phrase that tells about where it was.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) In some languages people modify the verb to show that the object of the verb is the same as the subject.

If I should testify about **myself** alone, my testimony would not be true. (John 5:31)

“If I should **self-testify** alone, my testimony would not be true.”

Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem from the country before the Passover in order to **purify themselves**. (John 11:55)

“Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out from country before the Passover in order to **self-purify**.”

(2) In some languages people emphasize a certain person or thing by referring to it in a special place in the sentence.

He himself took our sickness and bore our diseases. (Matthew 8:17 ULT)

“**It was he who** took our sickness and bore our diseases.”

Jesus himself was not baptizing, but his disciples were. (John 4:2)

“**It was not Jesus who** was baptizing, but his disciples were.”

(3) In some languages people emphasize a certain person or thing by adding something to that word or putting another word with it. English adds the reflexive pronoun.

But Jesus said this to test Philip, for he **himself** knew what he was going to do. (John 6:6)

(4) In some languages people show that someone did something alone by using a word like “alone.”

When Jesus realized that they were about to come and seize him by force to make him king, he withdrew again up the mountain **by himself**. (John 6:15)

“When Jesus realized that they were about to come and seize him by force to make him king, he withdrew again **alone** up the mountain.”

(5) In some languages people show that something was alone by using a phrase that tells about where it was.

He saw the linen cloths lying there and the cloth that had been on his head. It was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a place **by itself**. (John 20:6b-7 ULT)

“He saw the linen cloths lying there and the cloth that had been on his head. It was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up and lying **in its own place**.”

"

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 1:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:18](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:20](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:3](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:8](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:11](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:16](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:2](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:23](#)

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 Thessalonians 2:19](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:9](#)

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 Thessalonians 2:7](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:11](#); [1 Thessalonians 5 General Notes](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:2](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:3](#)

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 Thessalonians 5:26](#)

Symbolic Language

Description

Symbolic language in speech and writing is the use of symbols to represent other things, other events, etc. In the Bible it occurs most in prophecy and poetry, especially in visions and dreams about things that will happen in the future. Though people may not immediately know the meaning of a symbol, it is important to keep the symbol in the translation.

This page answers the question: *What is symbolic language and how do I translate it?*

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

Writing Styles ([UTA PDF](#))

■ Eat this scroll; then go speak to the house of Israel. (Ezekiel 3:1 ULT)

This was in a dream. Eating the scroll is a symbol of Ezekiel reading and understanding well what was written on the scroll, and accepting these words from God into himself.

Purposes of Symbolism

- One purpose of symbolism is to help people understand the importance or severity of an event by putting it in other, very dramatic terms.
- Another purpose of symbolism is to tell some people about something while hiding the true meaning from others who do not understand the symbolism.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

People who read the Bible today may find it hard to recognize that the language is symbolic, and they may not know what the symbol stands for.

Translation Principles

- When symbolic language is used, it is important to keep the symbol in the translation.
- It is also important not to explain the symbol more than the original speaker or writer did, since he may not have wanted everyone living then to be able to understand it easily.

Examples From the Bible

■ After this I saw in my visions of the night **a fourth animal**, terrifying, frightening, and very strong. It had **large iron teeth**; it devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled underfoot what was left. It was different from the other animals, and it had **ten horns**. (Daniel 7:7 ULT)

The meaning of the bolded symbols is explained in Daniel 7:23-24 as shown below. The animals represent kingdoms, iron teeth represent a powerful army, and the horns represent powerful leaders.

■ This is what that person said, 'As for the fourth animal, it will be **a fourth kingdom** on earth that will be different from all the other kingdoms. It will devour the whole earth, and it will trample it down and break it into pieces. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom **ten kings** will arise, and another will arise after them. He will be different from the previous ones, and he will conquer the three kings.' (Daniel 7:23-24 ULT)

■ I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me, and as I turned I saw **seven golden lampstands**. In the middle of the lampstands there was one like a son of man ... He had **seven stars** in his right hand and **a sword with two sharp edges** was coming out of his mouth. As for the hidden meaning about the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven

golden lampstands: **The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches**, and **the seven lampstands are the seven churches**. (Revelation 1:12-13a, 16a, 20 ULT)

This passage explains the meaning of the seven lampstands and the seven stars. The two-edged sword represents God's word and judgment.

Translation Strategies

- (1) Translate the text with the symbols. Often the speaker or author explains the meaning later in the passage.
- (2) Translate the text with the symbols. Then explain the symbols in footnotes.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Translate the text with the symbols. Often the speaker or author explains the meaning later in the passage.

This is what that person said, 'As for the fourth animal, it will be **a fourth kingdom** on earth that will be different from all the other kingdoms. It will devour the whole earth, and it will trample it down and break it into pieces. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom **ten kings** will arise, and another will arise after them. He will be different from the previous ones, and he will conquer the three kings.' (Daniel 7:23-24 ULT)

- (2) Translate the text with the symbols. Then explain the symbols in footnotes.

After this I saw in my visions of the night **a fourth animal**, terrifying, frightening, and very strong. It had **large iron teeth**; it devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled underfoot what was left. It was different from the other animals, and it had **ten horns**. (Daniel 7:7 ULT)

After this I saw in my dream at night a fourth animal, ¹ terrifying, frightening, and very strong. It had large iron teeth; ² it devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled underfoot what was left. It was different from the other animals, and it had ten horns. ³

The footnotes would look like:

[¹] The animal is a symbol for a kingdom. [²] The iron teeth is a symbol for the kingdom's powerful army. [³] The horns are a symbol of powerful kings.

"

Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 4:17](#)

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 Thessalonians 1:8](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:6](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:15](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:10](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:18](#)

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.

¹⁰ See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I say to you that in heaven their angels always look on the face of my Father who is in heaven. ¹¹ ^[1]

^[1] Many authorities, some ancient, insert v. 11: **For the Son of Man came to save that which was lost.**

John 7:53-8:11 is not in the best earliest manuscripts. It has been included in the ULT, but it is marked off with square brackets ([]) at the beginning and end, and there is a footnote after verse 11.

53 [Then everyone went to his own house ... 11 She said, "No one, Lord." Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."] ^[2]

^[2] Some ancient manuscripts include John 7:53-8:11

Translation Strategies

When there is a textual variant, you may choose to follow the ULT or another version that you have access to.

- (1) Translate the verses as they are in the ULT and include the footnote that the ULT provides.
- (2) Translate the verses as another version has them, and change the footnote so that it fits this situation.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

The translation strategies are applied to Mark 7:14-16 ULT, which has a footnote about verse 16.

¹⁴ He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man." ¹⁶ [1]

[1] Some ancient manuscripts include verse 16: **If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.**

(1) Translate the verses as they are in the ULT and include the footnote that the ULT provides.

¹⁴ He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man." ¹⁶ [1]

[1] Some ancient manuscripts include verse 16: **If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.**

(2) Translate the verses as another version has them, and change the footnote so that it fits this situation.

¹⁴ He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man. ¹⁶ If any man has ears to hear, let him hear." [1]

[1] Some ancient manuscripts do not include verse 16.

Next we recommend you learn about:

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 Thessalonians](#); [1 Thessalonians 5:28](#)

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.”)

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Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 1:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 1:10](#)

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 Thessalonians 1:4](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:1](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:9](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:14](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:15](#); [1 Thessalonians 2:17](#)



unfoldingWord® Translation Words

Version 76

apostle, apostleship

Definition:

The “apostles” were men sent by Jesus to preach about God and his kingdom. The term “apostleship” refers to the position and authority of those who were chosen as apostles.

- The word “apostle” means “someone who is sent out for a special purpose.” The apostle has the same authority as the one who sent him.
- Jesus’ twelve closest disciples became the first apostles. Other men, such as Paul and James, also became apostles.
- By God’s power, the apostles were able to boldly preach the gospel and heal people, and were able to force demons to come out of people.

Translation Suggestions:

- The word “apostle” can also be translated with a word or phrase that means “someone who is sent out” or “sent-out one” or “person who is called to go out and preach God’s message to people.”
- It is important to translate the terms “apostle” and “disciple” in different ways.
- Also consider how this term was translated in a Bible translation in a local or national language. (See [How to Translate Unknowns](#))

(See also: [authority](#), [disciple](#), [James \(son of Zebedee\)](#), [Paul](#), [the twelve](#))

Bible References:

- Jude 1:17-19
- Luke 9:12-14

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **26:10** Then Jesus chose twelve men who were called his **apostles**. The **apostles** traveled with Jesus and learned from him.
- **30:1** Jesus sent his **apostles** to preach and to teach people in many different villages.
- **38:2** Judas was one of Jesus’ **apostles**. He was in charge of the **apostles’** money bag, but he loved money and often stole from the bag.
- **43:13** The disciples devoted themselves to the **apostles’** teaching, fellowship, eating together, and prayer.
- **46:8** Then a believer named Barnabas took Saul to the **apostles** and told them how Saul had preached boldly in Damascus.

Word Data:

- Strong’s: G06510, G06520, G24910, G53760, G55700

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Referenced in: [Introduction to 1 Thessalonians](#)

day of the Lord, day of Yahweh

Description:

The Old Testament term “day of Yahweh” is used to refer to a future time when God will punish people for their sin.

- The Old Testament term “day of Yahweh” is an expression that many of the prophets use.
- The New Testament term “day of the Lord” usually refers to the day or time when the Lord Jesus will come back to judge people at the end of time.
- This final, future time of judgment and resurrection is also sometimes referred to as the “last day.” This time will begin when the Lord Jesus comes back to judge sinners and will permanently establish his rule.
- The word “day” in these phrases may sometimes refer to a literal day or it may refer to a “time” or “occasion” that is longer than a day.
- Sometimes the punishment is referred to as a “pouring out of God’s wrath” upon those who do not believe.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, other ways to translate “day of Yahweh” could include “time of Yahweh” or “time when Yahweh will punish his enemies” or “time of Yahweh’s wrath.”
- Other ways to translate “day of the Lord” could include “time of the Lord’s judgment” or “time when the Lord Jesus will return to judge people.”

(See also: [day](#), [judgment day](#), [Lord](#), [resurrection](#), [Yahweh](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Corinthians 5:5
- 1 Thessalonians 5:2
- 2 Peter 3:10
- 2 Thessalonians 2:2
- Acts 2:20-21
- Philippians 1:9-11

Word Data:

- Strong’s: H3068, H3117, G22500, G29620

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Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 5 General Notes](#)

faithful, faithfulness, trustworthy

Definition:

To be “faithful” to God means to consistently live according to God’s teachings. It means to be loyal to him by obeying him. The state or condition of being faithful is “faithfulness.”

- A person who is faithful can be trusted to always keep his promises and to always fulfill his responsibilities to other people.
- A faithful person perseveres in doing a task, even when it is long and difficult.
- Faithfulness to God is the consistent practice of doing what God wants us to do.

Translation Suggestions:

- In many contexts, “faithful” can be translated as “loyal” or “dedicated” or “dependable.”
- In other contexts, “faithful” can be translated by a word or phrase that means “continuing to believe” or “persevering in believing and obeying God.”
- Ways that “faithfulness” could be translated could include “persevering in believing” or “loyalty” or “trustworthiness” or “believing and obeying God.”

(See also: [believe](#), [faith](#), [believe](#))

Bible References:

- Genesis 24:49
- Leviticus 26:40
- Numbers 12:7
- Joshua 2:14
- Judges 2:16-17
- 1 Samuel 2:9
- Psalm 12:1
- Proverbs 11:12-13
- Isaiah 1:26
- Jeremiah 9:7-9
- Hosea 5:7
- Luke 12:46
- Luke 16:10
- Colossians 1:7
- 1 Thessalonians 5:24
- 3 John 1:5

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **8:5** Even in prison, Joseph remained **faithful** to God, and God blessed him.
- **14:12** Even so, God was still **faithful** to His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- **15:13** The people promised to remain **faithful** to God and follow his laws.
- **17:9** David ruled with justice and **faithfulness** for many years, and God blessed him. However, toward the end of his life he sinned terribly against God.
- **35:12** “The older son said to his father, ‘All these years I have worked **faithfully** for you!’”
- **49:17** But God is **faithful** and says that if you confess your sins, he will forgive you.
- **50:4** “If you remain **faithful** to me to the end, then God will save you.”

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0529, H0530, H0539, H0540, H0571, H0898, H2181, H4603, H4604, H4820, G05690, G05710, G41030

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Referenced in: [1 Thessalonians 3 General Notes](#)

God

Definition:

In the Bible, the term “God” refers to the eternal being who created the universe out of nothing. God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God’s personal name is “Yahweh.”

- God has always existed; he existed before anything else existed, and he will continue to exist forever.
- He is the only true God and has authority over everything in the universe.
- God is perfectly righteous, infinitely wise, holy, sinless, just, merciful, and loving.
- He is a covenant-keeping God, who always fulfills his promises.
- People were created to worship God and he is the only one they should worship.
- God revealed his name as “Yahweh,” which means “he is” or “I am” or “the One who (always) exists.”
- The Bible also teaches about false “gods,” which are nonliving idols that people wrongly worship.

Translation Suggestions:

- Ways to translate “God” could include “Deity” or “Creator” or “Supreme Being” or “Supreme Creator” or “Infinite Sovereign Lord” or “Eternal Supreme Being.”
- Consider how God is referred to in a local or national language. There may also already be a word for “God” in the language being translated. If so, it is important to make sure that this word fits the characteristics of the one true God as described above.
- Many languages capitalize the first letter of the word for the one true God, to distinguish it from the word for a false god. Another way to make this distinction would be to use different terms for “God” and “god.”
NOTE: In the biblical text, when a person who does not worship Yahweh speaks about Yahweh and uses the word “god,” it is acceptable to render the term without a capital letter in reference to Yahweh (see Jonah 1:6, 3:9).
- The phrase “I will be their God and they will be my people” could also be translated as “I, God, will rule over these people and they will worship me.”

(Translation suggestions: [How to Translate Names](#))

(See also: [create](#), [false god](#), [God the Father](#), [Holy Spirit](#), [false god](#), [Son of God](#), [Yahweh](#))

Bible References:

- 1 John 1:7
- 1 Samuel 10:7-8
- 1 Timothy 4:10
- Colossians 1:16
- Deuteronomy 29:14-16
- Ezra 3:1-2
- Genesis 1:2
- Hosea 4:11-12
- Isaiah 36:6-7
- James 2:20
- Jeremiah 5:5
- John 1:3
- Joshua 3:9-11
- Lamentations 3:43
- Micah 4:5
- Philippians 2:6
- Proverbs 24:12

- Psalms 47:9

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **1:1 God** created the universe and everything in it in six days.
- **1:15 God** made man and woman in his own image.
- **5:3** "I am **God** Almighty. I will make a covenant with you."
- **9:14 God** said, "I AM WHO I AM. Tell them, 'I AM has sent me to you.' Also tell them, 'I am Yahweh, the **God** of your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is my name forever.'"
- **10:2** Through these plagues, **God** showed Pharaoh that he is more powerful than Pharaoh and all of Egypt's gods.
- **16:1** The Israelites began to worship the Canaanite gods instead of Yahweh, the true **God**.
- **22:7** "You, my son, will be called the prophet of the **Most High God** who will prepare the people to receive the Messiah!"
- **24:9** There is only one **God**. But John heard **God** the Father speak, and saw Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit when he baptized Jesus.
- **25:7** "Worship only the Lord your **God** and only serve him."
- **28:1** "There is only one who is good, and that is **God**."
- **49:9** But **God** loved everyone in the world so much that he gave his only Son so that whoever believes in Jesus will not be punished for his sins, but will live with **God** forever.
- **50:16** But some day **God** will create a new heaven and a new earth that will be perfect.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0136, H0305, H0410, H0426, H0430, H0433, H2486, H2623, H3068, H3069, H3863, H4136, H6697, G01120, G05160, G09320, G09350, G10960, G11400, G20980, G21240, G21280, G21500, G21520, G21530, G22990, G23040, G23050, G23120, G23130, G23140, G23150, G23160, G23170, G23180, G23190, G23200, G33610, G37850, G41510, G52070, G53770, G54630, G55370, G55380

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Referenced in: [Introduction to 1 Thessalonians](#)

good news, gospel

Definition:

The term “gospel” literally means “good news” and refers to a message or announcement that tells people something that benefits them and makes them glad.

- In the Bible, this term usually refers to the message about God’s salvation for people through Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross.
- In most English Bibles, “good news” is usually translated as “gospel” and is also used in phrases such as, the “gospel of Jesus Christ,” the “gospel of God” and the “gospel of the kingdom.”

Translation Suggestions:

- Different ways to translate this term could include, “good message” or “good announcement” or “God’s message of salvation” or “the good things God teaches about Jesus.”
- Depending on the context, ways to translate the phrase, “good news of” could include, “good news/message about” or “good message from” or “the good things God tells us about” or “what God says about how he saves people.”

(See also: [kingdom](#), [sacrifice](#), [save](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Thessalonians 1:5
- Acts 8:25
- Colossians 1:23
- Galatians 1:6
- Luke 8:1-3
- Mark 1:14
- Philippians 2:22
- Romans 1:3

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **23:6** The angel said, “Do not be afraid, because I have some **good news** for you. The Messiah, the Master, has been born in Bethlehem!”
- **26:3** Jesus read, “God has given me his Spirit so that I can proclaim **good news** to the poor, freedom to captives, recovery of sight for the blind, and release to the oppressed. This is the year of the Lord’s favor.”
- **45:10** Philip also used other Scriptures to tell him the **good news of Jesus**.
- **46:10** Then they sent them off to preach the **good news about Jesus** in many other places.
- **47:1** One day, Paul and his friend Silas went to the town of Philippi to proclaim the **good news about Jesus**.
- **47:13** The **good news about Jesus** kept spreading, and the Church kept growing.
- **50:1** For almost 2,000 years, more and more people around the world have been hearing the **good news about Jesus** the Messiah.
- **50:2** When Jesus was living on earth he said, “My disciples will preach the **good news** about the kingdom of God to people everywhere in the world, and then the end will come.”
- **50:3** Before he returned to heaven, Jesus told Christians to proclaim the **good news** to people who have never heard it.

Word Data:

- Strong's: G20970, G20980, G42830

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Referenced in: [Introduction to 1 Thessalonians](#)

image, carved image, cast metal images, figure, carved figure, statue

Definition:

These terms are all used to refer to idols that have been made for worshiping a false god. In the context of worshiping idols, the term “image” is a shortened form of “carved image.”

- A “carved image” or “carved figure” is a wooden object that has been made to look like an animal, person, or thing.
- A “cast metal figure” is an object or statue created by melting metal and pouring it into a mold that is in the shape of an object, animal, or person.
- These wooden and metal objects were used in the worship of false gods.
- The term “image” when referring to an idol could either refer to a wooden or metal idol.

Translation Suggestions:

- When referring to an idol, the term “image” could also be translated as “statue” or “engraved idol” or “carved religious object.”
- It may be more clear in some languages to always use a descriptive word with this term, such as “carved image” or “cast metal figure,” even in places where only the term “image” or “figure” is in the original text.
- Make sure it is clear that this term is different than the term used to refer to being in the image of God.

(See also: [false god](#), [God](#), [false god](#), [image of God](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Kings 14:9-10
- Acts 7:43
- Isaiah 21:8-9
- Matthew 22:21
- Romans 1:23

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0457, H1544, H2553, H4541, H4676, H4853, H4906, H5257, H5262, H5566, H6091, H6456, H6459, H6754, H6755, H6816, H8403, H8544, H8655, G15040, G51790

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Referenced in: [Introduction to 1 Thessalonians](#)

pray, prayer

Definition:

The terms “pray” and “prayer” refer to talking with God. These terms are also used to refer to people trying to talk to a false god.

- People can pray silently, talking to God with their thoughts, or they can pray aloud, speaking to God with their voice. Sometimes prayers are written down, such as when David wrote his prayers in the Book of Psalms.
- Prayer can include asking God for mercy, for help with a problem, and for wisdom in making decisions.
- Often people ask God to heal people who are sick or who need his help in other ways.
- People also thank and praise God when they are praying to him.
- Praying includes confessing our sins to God and asking him to forgive us.
- Talking to God is sometimes called “communing” with him as our spirit communicates with his spirit, sharing our emotions and enjoying his presence.
- This term could be translated as “talking to God” or “communicating with God.” The translation of this term should be able to include praying that is silent.

(See also: [false god](#), [forgive](#), [praise](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Thessalonians 3:9
- Acts 8:24
- Acts 14:26
- Colossians 4:4
- John 17:9
- Luke 11:1
- Matthew 5:43-45
- Matthew 14:22-24

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **6:5** Isaac **prayed** for Rebekah, and God allowed her to get pregnant with twins.
- **13:12** But Moses **prayed** for them, and God listened to his **prayer** and did not destroy them.
- **19:8** Then the prophets of Baal **prayed** to Baal, “Hear us, O Baal!”
- **21:7** Priests also **prayed** to God for the people.
- **38:11** Jesus told his disciples to **pray** that they would not enter into temptation.
- **43:13** The disciples continually listened to the teaching of the apostles, spent time together, ate together, and **prayed** with each other.
- **49:18** God tells you to **pray**, to study his word, to worship him with other Christians, and to tell others what he has done for you.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0559, H0577, H1156, H2470, H3863, H3908, H4994, H6279, H6293, H6419, H6739, H7592, H7878, H7879, H7881, H8034, H8605, G01540, G11620, G11890, G17830, G20650, G21710, G21720, G38700, G43350, G43360

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Referenced in: [Introduction to 1 Thessalonians](#)

sanctify, sanctification

Definition:

To sanctify is to set apart or to make holy. Sanctification is the process of being made holy.

- In the Old Testament, certain people and things were sanctified, or set apart, for service to God.
- The New Testament teaches that God sanctifies people who believe in Jesus. That is, he makes them holy and sets them apart to serve him.
- Believers in Jesus are also commanded to sanctify themselves to God, to be holy in everything they do.

Translation Suggestions:

- Depending on the context, the term "sanctify" can be translated as "set apart" or "make holy" or "purify."
- When people sanctify themselves, they purify themselves and dedicate themselves to God's service. Often the word "consecrate" is used in the Bible with this meaning.
- When its meaning is "consecrate," this term could be translated as "dedicate someone (or something) to God's service."
- Depending on the context, the phrase "your sanctification" could be translated as "making you holy" or "setting you apart (for God)" or "what makes you holy."

(See also: [consecrate](#), [holy](#), set apart)

Bible References:

- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6
- 2 Thessalonians 2:13
- Genesis 2:1-3
- Luke 11:2
- Matthew 6:8-10

Word Data:

- Strong's: H6942, G00370, G00380

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Referenced in: [Introduction to 1 Thessalonians](#)

suffer, suffering

Definition:

The terms “suffer” and “suffering” refer to experiencing something very unpleasant, such as illness, pain, or other hardships.

- When people are persecuted or when they are sick, they suffer.
- Sometimes people suffer because of wrong things they have done; other times they suffer because of sin and disease in the world.
- Suffering can be physical, such as feeling pain or sickness. It can also be emotional, such as feeling fear, sadness, or loneliness.
- The phrase “suffer me” means “bear with me” or “hear me out” or “listen patiently.”

Translation Suggestions:

- The term “suffer” can be translated as “feel pain” or “endure difficulty” or “experience hardships” or “go through difficult and painful experiences.”
- Depending on the context, “suffering” could be translated as “extremely difficult circumstances” or “severe hardships” or “experiencing hardship” or “time of painful experiences.”
- The phrase “suffer thirst” could be translated as “experience thirst” or “suffer with thirst.”
- To “suffer violence” could also be translated as “undergo violence” or “be harmed by violent acts.”

Bible References:

- 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16
- 2 Thessalonians 1:3-5
- 2 Timothy 1:8
- Acts 7:11-13
- Isaiah 53:11
- Jeremiah 6:6-8
- Matthew 16:21
- Psalms 22:24
- Revelation 1:9
- Romans 5:3-5

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **9:13** God said, “I have seen the **suffering** of my people.”
- **38:12** Jesus prayed three times, “My Father, if it is possible, please let me not have to drink this cup of **suffering**.”
- **42:3** He (Jesus) reminded them that the prophets said the Messiah would **suffer** and be killed, but would rise again on the third day.
- **42:7** He (Jesus) said, “It was written long ago that the Messiah would **suffer**, die, and rise from the dead on the third day.”
- **44:5** “Although you did not understand what you were doing, God used your actions to fulfill the prophecies that the Messiah would **suffer** and die.”
- **46:4** God said, “I have chosen him (Saul) to declare my name to the unsaved. I will show him how much he must **suffer** for my sake.”
- **50:17** He (Jesus) will wipe away every tear and there will be no more **suffering**, sadness, crying, evil, pain, or death.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0943, H1741, H1934, H4531, H5142, H5375, H5999, H6031, H6040, H6041, H6064, H6090, H6770, H6869, H6887, H7661, G00910, G09410, G09710, G22100, G23460, G23470, G25520, G25530, G25610, G38040, G39580, G43100, G47780, G47770, G48410, G50040

"

Referenced in: [Introduction to 1 Thessalonians](#)

Thessalonica, Thessalonian

Facts:

In New Testament times, Thessalonica was the capital city of Macedonia in the ancient Roman empire. The people living in that city were called the “Thessalonians.”

- The city of Thessalonica was an important seaport and was also located along a major road that connected Rome to the eastern part of the Roman empire.
- Paul, along with Silas and Timothy, visited Thessalonica on his second missionary journey and as a result, a church was established there. Later, Paul also visited this city on his third missionary journey.
- Paul wrote two letters to the Christians in Thessalonica. These letters (1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians) are included in the New Testament.

(Translation suggestions: [How to Translate Names](#))

(See also: [Macedonia](#), [Paul](#), [Rome](#))

Bible References:

- 1 Thessalonians 1:1
- 2 Thessalonians 1:1
- 2 Timothy 4:9-10
- Acts 17:1
- Philippians 4:14-17

Word Data:

- Strong's: G23310, G23320

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Referenced in: [Introduction to 1 Thessalonians](#)

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