



# **unfoldingWord® Translation Notes**

**Colossians**

**Version 85**

[en]

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# Table of Contents

<b>unfoldingWord® Translation Notes</b>	<b>6</b>
Colossians	6
Introduction to Colossians	7
Colossians 1	11
Colossians 2	46
Colossians 3	79
Colossians 4	114
 <b>unfoldingWord® Translation Academy</b>	 <b>139</b>
Abstract Nouns	140
Active or Passive	142
Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information	145
Biblical Imagery — Extended Metaphors	148
Blessings	151
Connect — Background Information	153
Connect — Contrary to Fact Conditions	156
Connect — Contrast Relationship	159
Connect — Factual Conditions	161
Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship	163
Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship	166
Connect — Sequential Time Relationship	168
Connect — Simultaneous Time Relationship	170
Connecting Words and Phrases	172
Direct and Indirect Quotations	176
Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding	178
Doublet	181
Ellipsis	183
Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'	186
First, Second or Third Person	188
Forms of 'You' — Singular	190
Generic Noun Phrases	192
Hendiadys	194
How to Translate Names	197
Hyperbole	201
Hypothetical Situations	205
Idiom	208
Imperatives — Other Uses	210
Information Structure	213
Kinship	215
Litotes	217
Merism	219
Metaphor	221
Metonymy	227
Nominal Adjectives	229
Personification	231
Possession	233
Predictive Past	237
Pronouns — When to Use Them	239
Rhetorical Question	241

Simile .....	245
Statements — Other Uses .....	248
Synecdoche .....	250
Textual Variants .....	252
Third-Person Imperatives .....	254
Translate Unknowns .....	257
Translating Son and Father .....	260
When Masculine Words Include Women .....	262
When to Keep Information Implicit .....	264
<b>unfoldingWord® Translation Words .....</b>	<b>266</b>
fruit, fruitful, unfruitful .....	267
<b>Contributors .....</b>	<b>268</b>
unfoldingWord® Translation Notes Contributors .....	268
unfoldingWord® Literal Text Contributors .....	274
unfoldingWord® Simplified Text Contributors .....	275
unfoldingWord® Translation Academy Contributors .....	276
unfoldingWord® Translation Words Contributors .....	276
unfoldingWord® Translation Words Links Contributors .....	277



# **unfoldingWord® Translation Notes**

## **Colossians**

## Introduction to Colossians

### Part 1: General Introduction

#### Outline of the book of Colossians

##### Letter Opening (1:1–12)

- Greeting (1:1–2)
- Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:3–8)
- Prayer of Petition (1:9–12)

##### Teaching Section (1:13–2:23)

- Christ and His Work (1:13–20)
- Christ's Work Applied to the Colossians (1:21–23)
- Paul's Ministry (1:24–2:5)
- Effects of Christ's Work (2:6–15)
- Freedom in Christ (2:16–23)

##### Exhortation Section

- Seek the Things Above (3:1–4)
- Take off Vices, Put on Virtues (3:5–17)
- Commands for the Household (3:18–4:1)
- Prayer Request and Behavior towards Outsiders (4:2–6)

##### Letter Closing (4:7–18)

- The Messengers (4:7–9)
- Greetings from Friends (4:10–14)
- Greetings and Instructions from Paul (4:15–17)
- Greeting in Paul's Own Hand (4:18)

### Who wrote the book of Colossians?

The author identifies himself as Paul the apostle. Paul was from the city of Tarsus. He had been known as Saul in his early life. Before becoming a Christian, Paul was a Pharisee, and he persecuted Christians. After he became a Christian, he traveled several times throughout the Roman Empire, telling people about Jesus. However, he had never met the Colossians in person (See: [2:1](#)).

Paul wrote this letter while in prison ([4:3](#); [4:18](#)). Paul was imprisoned many times, and he does not say where he is. Many scholars think he is in Rome.

### What is the book of Colossians about?

Paul wrote this letter to the believers in city of Colossae, which is in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). When he heard from Epaphras about the believers in Colossae, he wrote to encourage them and to warn them against false teachers. These false teachers were telling people that they had to obey certain rules and know certain things to receive new life, and they boasted about their own power and experiences. Paul attacks this false teaching by showing the Colossians that Christ's work accomplishes everything that they need and gives them new life. When they are united to Christ, they do not need anything else, including this false teaching.

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

Translators may choose to call this book by its traditional title, “Colossians.” Or they may choose a clearer title, such as “Paul’s Letter to the Church in Colossae” or “A Letter to the Christians in Colossae.” (See: **How to Translate Names** (p.197))

## Part 2: Important Religious and Cultural Concepts

### Who were the false teachers that Paul warns the Colossians against?

Most likely, these false teachers were not part of one specific group or belief system. They probably believed and practiced things from several different belief systems. Because of this, it is hard to describe exactly what they believed and taught. Based on what Paul says about them, they had certain rules about food and drink, the rituals of special days and behavior. They had what Paul calls a “philosophy,” or a system of thinking about the world that they thought was sophisticated. It seems that they based at least some of these beliefs and rules on visions and marvelous experiences that probably included what they believed were encounters with angels. Paul argues that the people who hold to these views are not remaining faithful to Christ, and he wants the Colossians to focus on the work of Christ for them, which has accomplished everything this false teaching claims to do and more.

### What does Paul mean when he uses language for “heaven”?

Paul speaks of heaven as “above,” and he further defines it as the place where Christ is seated at God’s right hand and where blessings are stored up for believers. Most likely, the spiritual powers are also in heaven. When Paul tells the Colossians to focus on what is “above” (3:1), that is not because heaven is good and earth is bad. Instead, it is because heaven is where Christ is, as he states in the same verse. The Colossians are supposed to focus on Christ and where he is.

### What are the spiritual powers that Paul speaks about?

Paul speaks of thrones, dominions, governments, and authorities in 1:16, and he uses some of these words again in 2:10; 2:15. These words refer to people or things that have power and authority, and in the letter to the Colossians they probably refer more specifically to powerful spiritual beings. The “elemental principles” in 2:8; 2:20 probably refer to the same kind of beings in a generic way. Paul never specifically says that these spiritual powers are evil, but he does say that Christ’s work frees the Colossians from them. Obeying these powers and focusing on them is thus opposed to the new life that Christ has given.

### Who are all the people that Paul mentions in the letter?

Most of the people who are mentioned at the end of the letter are either with Paul or are people that Paul knows in or near the city of Colossae. Epaphras is mentioned several times, since he is the one who first preached the good news to the Colossians and the one who told Paul about them. Tychicus and Onesimus are the ones who traveled from Paul to Colossae with the letter, and they are able to give more updates about Paul and the people with him.

### Why does Paul mention other towns in this letter?

Paul mentions Laodicea and Hierapolis because they are towns nearby in the same valley. If a person stood in Colossae, he or she could see Laodicea at the edge of the valley. Paul mentions these three towns (Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis) because they were towns where Epaphras preached the good news, and Paul had never met any Christians in these places. Perhaps it is because of these similarities and because they were so close together that Paul wanted the Colossians and the Laodiceans to share their letters.



## Part 3: Important Translation Issues

### How does Paul identify Jesus as God?

Paul calls Jesus the “image” of God and the “firstborn” of all creation (1:15). Neither of these descriptions is meant to describe Jesus as the first or best thing God created; instead, they put him outside the creation. This is clear from the next verse, which identifies him as creator (1:16). If Jesus is not created, he is God. Being “before all things” and having “all things hold together” in him are statements that make the same affirmation (1:17).

Paul twice describes Jesus as having the “fullness” of God (1:19; 2:9). This does not mean that Jesus was particularly close with God or had God living inside him. Instead, it means that Jesus is everything that God is (the “fullness” of God).

Finally, Jesus is seated at God’s right hand in heaven (3:1). This does not mean he is a powerful figure who obeys God. Instead, it means that he sits on the divine throne along with God, and he is God.

### How does Paul identify Jesus as human?

Paul says that Jesus died in “the body of his flesh” (1:22). Additionally, when he states that Jesus is the “fullness” of God, this is true of him “bodily” (2:9). When Paul says that Jesus has a “body,” this does not mean that Jesus simply used a body to look human. Instead, he means that Jesus is an embodied human like us.

### What does Paul mean when he tells the Colossians they have died and come back to life?

Multiple times throughout the letter, Paul tells the Colossians that they have died and risen with Christ. This does not mean that the Colossians have physically died and then returned from the dead. This language also is not just a figure of speech that Paul does not really mean. Rather, he means that God included believers with Christ when he died and resurrected. While the Colossians had not yet physically died and been resurrected, they could already experience death to the world and its powers, and new life with its blessings, because of their union with Christ in his death and resurrection.

### What does Paul mean when he talks about knowledge?

Paul uses knowledge language throughout his letter, including words such as “knowing,” “knowledge,” and “understanding.” Perhaps the false teachers promised “knowledge” of God and his will to those who listened to them, and Paul intended to show the Colossians that all the knowledge they needed could be found in Christ and his work. Whether this is true or not, Paul does clearly intend to tell the Colossians that growing in their knowledge of God is important and that this knowledge can be found in Christ. “Knowledge” refers to learning more about God, his will, and his work in the world, and “knowing” these things leads to new life and changed behavior.

### What are the major issues in the text of the book of Colossians?

For the following verses, there are differences between some of the ancient manuscripts. The ULT text follows the reading that most scholars consider to be original and puts the other reading in a footnote. If a translation of the Bible exists in the language of wider communication in the region, translators may want to consider using the reading found in that version. If not, translators are advised to follow the reading in the ULT.

- “Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:2). Some ancient manuscripts have this: “Grace to you, and peace from God our Father.”

- “Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf” (1:7). Some ancient manuscripts have this: “Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on your behalf.”
- “the Father, who has made you able to share the inheritance of the saints in the light” (1:12). Some ancient manuscripts have this: “the Father, who has made us able to share the inheritance of the saints in the light.”
- “in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (1:14). Some ancient manuscripts have this: “in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.”
- “having forgiven us all of our trespasses” (2:13). Some ancient manuscripts have this: “having forgiven you all of your trespasses.”
- “When Christ, your life, is revealed” (3:4). Some ancient manuscripts have this: “When Christ, our life, is revealed.”
- “the wrath of God is coming” (3:6). Some ancient manuscripts have this: “the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience.”
- “so that you might know the things concerning us” (4:8). Some ancient manuscripts have this: “so that he might know the things concerning you.”

(See: **Textual Variants (p.252)**)

# Colossians 1

## Colossians 1 General Notes

### Structure and Formatting

#### Letter Opening (1:1–12)

- Greeting (1:1–2)
- Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:3–8)
- Prayer of Petition (1:9–12)

#### Teaching Section (1:13–2:23)

- Christ and His Work (1:13–20)
- Christ's Work Applied to the Colossians (1:21–23)
- Paul's Ministry (1:24–2:5)

Paul begins this letter in [1:1–2](#) by giving his and Timothy's names, identifying the people to whom he is writing, and offering a greeting. This is the way people typically began letters at this time.

## Religious and Cultural Concepts in This Chapter

### Mystery

Paul refers to a “mystery” for the first time in this chapter ([1:26–27](#)). This does not refer to some secret truth that is hard to understand and that only a few privileged individuals can learn about. Instead, it refers to God's plans that once were unknown but are now known to all his people. What is the content of this mystery? It is Christ himself, his work, and his union with believers. (See: [\[\[rc://\\*/tw/dict/bible/kt/reveal\]\]](#))

### Fullness

Paul refers to “filling” or “fullness” four times in this chapter. First, Paul prays that the Colossians are “filled” with the knowledge of God's will ([1:9](#)). Second, Jesus has all the “fullness” of God ([1:19](#)). Third, Paul “fills up” in his flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ ([1:24](#)). Fourth, Paul makes the word of God “fully” known ([1:25](#)). It is possible that Paul uses “filling” and “fullness” so often because it was something that the false teachers promised. Paul wishes to show instead how “fullness” comes through the work of Christ and through his own work on their behalf. Christ has God's fullness, and Paul works for Christ by “filling” the Colossians, who then are “filled” with the knowledge of God's will.

## Translation Issues in This Chapter

### Images for Christian living

Paul uses many different images to describe Christian living. In this chapter, he uses the images of “walking” and “bearing fruit” ([1:10](#)). These images show that Paul wants the Colossians to think about the Christian life as a life that is directed towards a goal (either a destination, if one is walking, or fruit, if one is growing). (See: **fruit**, **fruitful**, **unfruitful** (p.267))

## Light versus dark

Paul contrasts the “inheritance of the saints in the light” (1:12) with the “authority of the darkness” (1:12). The “light” describes what is good, desirable, and related to God’s favor. The “darkness” describes what is distant from God, opposed to him, and evil.

## Head and body

In this chapter, Paul introduces an image that he will develop more fully in chapter 2: that of Christ as the head of the body, which is his church. This image identifies Christ as the source of life and direction for his church, just like the head is the source of life and direction for the body.

## Translation Issues in This Chapter

### The lack of the afflictions of Christ

In 1:24, Paul speaks of “the lack of the afflictions of Christ,” a lack that he fills up by his sufferings. This does not mean that Christ somehow failed in his mission and work, and Paul has to fill in the missing pieces. Instead, “lack” refers to something that Christ intentionally left for this followers to complete. He has called them to suffer, just as he himself did, to continue the mission of the church.

### The “Christ-Hymn”

Many scholars think that 1:15–20 is an early Christian hymn that Paul has quoted to remind the Colossians of what they believe in common with other Christians. If this is true, it does not mean that this section says something different than what Paul thinks. Instead, Paul chose to quote it because he fully affirmed it. If it would be helpful for your readers, you could format these verses in a way that shows that they are from a hymn or poem.

## Colossians 1:1

### General Information:

Throughout this letter the words “we,” “us,” “our,” and “ours” include the Colossian believers unless noted otherwise. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**)

### General Information:

The words “you,” “your,” and “yours” refer to the Colossian believers, and so they are plural unless noted otherwise. (See: **Forms of ‘You’ — Singular (p.190)**)

### Paul

In this culture, letter writers would give their own names first, referring to themselves in the third person. If that is confusing in your language, you could use the first person here. If your language has a particular way of introducing the author of a letter, and if it would be helpful to your readers, you could use it here. Alternate translation: “From Paul” (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.188)**)

### and Timothy our brother

This phrase does not mean that **Timothy** helped Paul write this letter. Paul was the author of this letter, as he shows by using the first person singular throughout the letter. What this does mean is that Timothy is with Paul and that Timothy is in agreement with what Paul writes. If it sounds in your language like Timothy is writing the letter with Paul, you could make Timothy’s supporting role more clear. Alternate translation: “with the support of Timothy, our fellow believer” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

## Colossians 1:2

### to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ in Colossae

In this culture, after giving their own names, letter writers would name those to whom they sent the letter, referring to them in the third person. If that is confusing in your language, you could use the second person here. Or if your language has a particular way of introducing the recipient of a letter, and if it would be helpful to your readers, you could use it here. Alternate translation: “to you who live in the city of Colossae and who are God’s people and faithful fellow believers who are united to the Messiah” (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.188)**)

### to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ

The words **saints**, **faithful brothers**, and **in Christ** all describe people who are followers of Jesus. Paul is using all of these to describe one group of people. For example, he is not implying that **saints** and **faithful brothers in Christ** are two different groups. If it would be helpful in your language, you could join these words together in a different way. Alternate translation: “to God’s faithful people, joined together as a family in Christ” (See: **Doublet (p. 181)**)

### Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

After stating his name and the name of the person to whom he is writing, Paul adds a blessing for the Colossians. Use a form that people would recognize as a blessing in your language. Alternate translation: “May you experience kindness and peace within you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah” or “I pray that grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus the Messiah will always be with you” (See: **Blessings (p.151)**)

### Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

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 our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ will treat you kindly and give you peaceful relationships” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### God our Father

Here and throughout the chapter, **Father** is an important title for God. Alternate translation: “God, who is our Father,” (See: **Translating Son and Father (p.260)**)

## Colossians 1:3

### We give thanks & our

The word **We** here does not include the Colossians, but the word **our** here does include the Colossians (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'** (p.186))

### always

Here, **always** is an exaggeration that the Colossians understood to mean that Paul and Timothy prayed for them often. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a word that indicates frequency. Alternate translation: "consistently" or "frequently" (See: **Hyperbole** (p.201))

## Colossians 1:4

### having heard of your faith

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **faith**, you could express the idea behind this abstract noun in another way. Alternate translation: "having heard that you are trusting" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### the love that you have for all the saints

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **love**, you could express the same idea with a verbal form. Alternate translation: "how much you love all the saints" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)



## Colossians 1:5

### the hope

Here, **hope** refers not only to the attitude of hopefulness but also to what the believer hopes for, that is, what God has promised to give to all believers. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea by using a relative clause. Alternate translation: “what you hope for” (See: **Metonymy (p.227)**)

### that is being reserved for

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this with an active form, and you could state who did the action. Alternate translation: “that God is reserving for” or “that God has prepared for” or “that God has ready for” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### the word of truth

Paul uses the possessive form to describe a **word** that is characterized by **truth**. This could refer to: (1) a message that is truth. Alternate translation: “the message that is true” (2) a message concerning the truth. Alternate translation: “the message about the truth” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### the word

Here, **word** represents a message that is made up of words. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: “the announcement” (See: **Metonymy (p.227)**)

## Colossians 1:6

### which being present among you

Here, the good news is spoken of as though it were a person who could be **present** with the Colossians. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “which was told to you in Colossae” (See: **Personification (p.231)**)

### in all the world

Here, **in all the world** is a generalization referring to the part of the **world** that Paul and the Colossians knew about. If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify that **world** refers to the known world at that time. Alternate translation: “in every place that we know about” (See: **Hyperbole (p.201)**)

### is bearing fruit and growing

Here, Paul speaks of the gospel as if it were a plant that could grow and produce fruit. He means that the gospel reaches more people and that it changes how people think and behave. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express Paul's meaning plainly. Alternate translation: “is reaching more people so that they do what is pleasing to God” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### just as also in you

Paul leaves out some of the words that a clause would need in many languages to be complete. If your language needs these words, you could supply them from the context. Alternate translation: “just as this good news has reached you so that you do what is pleasing to God” or “just as it has done among you” (See: **Ellipsis (p.183)**)

### learned about the grace of God in truth

Here, **in truth** could describe: (1) the way in which the Colossians learned about the grace of God. Alternate translation: “accurately grasped how God acts kindly” (2) the way God is gracious to the Colossians. Alternate translation: “learned about the true grace of God” or “understood how God truly acts kindly” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## Colossians 1:7

### Epaphras

**Epaphras** is the name of a man. He is the one who preached the good news to the people in Colossae. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.197)**)

### our & our

Here, **our** does not include the Colossians. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive 'We' (p.186)**)

## Colossians 1:8

### to us

The word **us** here does not include the Colossians. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'** (p.186))

### your love

Here Paul is primarily talking about the **love** that the Colossians are showing to other believers. Of course they also love God. If you must specify the object of their love, and people might think that the Colossians do not love God if he is not mentioned, then you could include both. Alternate translation: "that you love God and all his people" (See: **Abstract Nouns** (p.140))

### in the Spirit

Alternate translation: "which is by the power of the Holy Spirit" or "which you do through the power of the Holy Spirit"

## Colossians 1:9

### we heard this, we & have not stopped

The word **we** here does not include the Colossians. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'** (p.186))

### from the day we heard this

Alternate translation: "from the day Epaphras told us these things"

### have not stopped

Here, **have not stopped** is an exaggeration that the Colossians would have understood to mean that Paul and Timothy pray often for the Colossians. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a word or phrase that indicates frequency. Alternate translation: "have been frequently" or "have made a habit of" (See: **Hyperbole** (p. 201))

### have not stopped

Here 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 could express the meaning positively. Alternate translation: "have kept" or "are continually" (See: **Litotes** (p.217))

### that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will

Here Paul speaks of the Colossian believers as though they were containers that could **be filled** up. By speaking this way, he emphasizes that the Colossians should know God's **will** in every area of their lives. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this plainly. Alternate translation: "that God would enable you to understand fully what he wants you to do" (See: **Metaphor** (p.221))

### you might be filled with

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in an active form, with God as the subject. Alternate translation: "God would fill you with" (See: **Active or Passive** (p.142))

### you might be filled with the knowledge of his will

If your language does not use abstract nouns for the ideas behind the words **knowledge** and **will**, you could express those ideas in another way, such as with verbs. Alternate translation: "you might fully know what he has planned for you" (See: **Abstract Nouns** (p.140))

### you might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding

Here, **in all wisdom and spiritual understanding** identifies how the Colossians are **filled**. The phrase does not describe God's **will**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could move the phrase so that it appears immediately after **filled**. Alternate translation: "you might be filled in all wisdom and spiritual understanding with the knowledge of his will" (See: **Information Structure** (p.213))

## in all wisdom and spiritual understanding

If your language does not use abstract nouns to express the ideas behind **wisdom** and **understanding**, you could express the ideas with adjectives or verbs. If you use the following alternate translation, you may need to add a comma before it. Alternate translation: “which includes being spiritually very wise and intelligent” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## wisdom and spiritual understanding

Here, **wisdom and spiritual understanding** could refer to: (1) wisdom and understanding that comes from the Holy Spirit. Alternate translation: “wisdom and understanding given by the Holy Spirit” (2) wisdom and understanding in spiritual matters. Alternate translation: “wisdom and understanding about spiritual things”

## wisdom and spiritual understanding

The words **wisdom** and **understanding** mean very similar things. The repetition is used to emphasize the breadth of spiritual wisdom. If your language does not use repetition in this way or has only one word for this concept, you could use just one word. Alternate translation: “spiritual comprehension” or “spiritual insight” (See: **Doublet (p. 181)**)

## Colossians 1:10

### to walk worthily of the Lord

Here, the word **walk** is a figurative way to refer to behavior in life. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable metaphor or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “to behave in the way that the Lord expects you to behave” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### in every pleasing {way}

If your language does not use abstract nouns, you could express the idea behind the phrase **pleasing {way}** with a verb. If you use the following alternate translation, you may need to add a comma before it. Alternate translation: “doing everything that pleases him” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### bearing fruit in every good deed

Paul is speaking of the Colossian believers as if they were trees or plants and of the things that they do as if it were their **fruit**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea with a different figure or plainly. Alternate translation: “performing many good deeds” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### growing in the knowledge of God

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **knowledge**, you could express the idea with a verb. Alternate translation: “knowing God better and better” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## Colossians 1:11

### being strengthened

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea with an active form, with God as the subject. Alternate translation: “God strengthening you” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### the power of his glory

Paul uses the possessive form to describe **power** that is characterized by God’s **glory**. If your language does not use this form to express that idea, you could use an adjective such as “glorious” or “great” instead of the noun **glory**. Alternate translation: “his glorious power” or “his great power” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### to all endurance and patience with joy

This is a purpose phrase. Paul is stating the purpose for which the Colossians have been **strengthened with all power**. In your translation, follow the conventions of your language for purpose phrases. Alternate translation: “so that you have all endurance and patience with joy” (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.163)**)

### endurance and patience

This phrase expresses a single idea by using two words connected with **and**. The word **patience** tells what kind of **endurance** the Colossians can have. If your language does not use this form, you could express the meaning differently. Alternate translation: “patient endurance.” (See: **Hendiadys (p.194)**)

### all endurance and patience

If your language does not use abstract nouns for the ideas behind **endurance** and **patience**, you could express the ideas with verbal phrases. Alternate translation: “endure always and wait patiently” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### all endurance and patience with joy

Here, **with joy** could describe: (1) the way that the Colossians are to have endurance and patience (2) the way that the Colossians are to give thanks in verse 12. Alternate translation: “all endurance and patience”



## Colossians 1:12

### giving thanks

Some Bible versions connect the phrase “with joy” at the end of verse 11 to the phrase at the beginning of verse 12, instead of connecting it to verse 11. Alternate translation: “with joy giving thanks”

### to the Father

**Father** is an important title that describes the relationship between God and Jesus, and it also describes the relationship between God and believers, who are adopted children. Alternate translation: “God the Father” (See: **Translating Son and Father (p.260)**)

### having made you able

Alternate translation: “who has qualified you”

### to share the inheritance of the saints

This is a purpose clause. Paul is stating the purpose for which God made the Colossians **able**. In your translation, follow the conventions of your language for purpose clauses. Alternate translation (without a comma preceding): “so that you could share the inheritance of the saints” (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.163)**)

### to share the inheritance

Paul is using the possessive form to describe a **share** that is characterized by **inheritance**. If your language does not use this form to express that meaning, you could use a verbal phrase like “receive your portion of” or “take part in.” Alternate translation: “to take part in the inheritance” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### the inheritance of the saints

Here, Paul uses the possessive form to indicate that the **inheritance** is for the **saints**. If your language does not use this form to express that meaning, you could use a descriptive phrase such as “that God is keeping for” or “that belongs to” instead. Alternate translation: “the inheritance that belongs to the saints” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### in the light

Here, **in the light** is the opposite of the “authority of the darkness” in the next verse (1:13) and refers to belonging to God and being part of his kingdom. The metaphor of light representing God, goodness, and heaven is very common in the Bible, and it would be useful to retain it if it communicates well. However, you could express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “in the spiritual kingdom of God” or “in God’s glorious presence” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

## Colossians 1:13

### the authority of the darkness

Here, **darkness** is a metaphor for evil. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “the authority of evil powers” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### the authority of the darkness

Here Paul uses the possessive form to describe an **authority** that is characterized by **darkness** (a metaphor for evil). If your language does not use this form to express that idea, you could use a verb such as “rule” or “control” for the noun **authority**. Alternate translation: “the evil that ruled us” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### the authority of the darkness

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **authority**, you could express that idea in another way, such as with a verb. Alternate translation: “the dark things that controlled us” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### transferred {us

Here Paul speaks about a change in who rules over believers as if they were moving from one location to another. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea plainly. Alternate translation: “made us subject instead” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### to the kingdom of his beloved Son

Paul speaks of the people who belong to God’s Son as if they were citizens of a **kingdom**. He means that they are members of a community that obeys God’s Son Jesus and belongs to him. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul’s meaning plainly. Alternative translation, “so that his beloved Son reigns over us” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### of his beloved Son

Paul uses the possessive form to characterize the **Son** as **his beloved**. If your language does not use this form to express that idea, you could express the idea behind **his beloved** with a relative clause. Alternate translation: “of the Son he loves” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### of his beloved Son

**Son** is an important title that describes the relationship between God the Father (who is mentioned in the previous verse (1:12)) and Jesus. Alternate translation: “of Jesus, God the Father’s beloved Son” (See: **Translating Son and Father (p.260)**)

## Colossians 1:14

### redemption

Some later manuscripts add “through his blood” after **redemption**. Most likely, “through his blood” was accidentally added because of how similar this verse is to [Ephesians 1:7](#), which does include “through his blood.” Most likely, you should not include “through his blood” in your translation. (See: **Textual Variants (p.252)**)

### we have redemption

Here, the word **redemption** does not refer to a payment or to the act of redeeming. Instead, it refers to the result of the act of redeeming. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a word such as “freedom” to express this idea. Alternate translation: “we have freedom” (See: **Metonymy (p.227)**)

### we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins

If your language does not use abstract nouns for the ideas behind **redemption** and **forgiveness**, you could express the idea by using verbs. Alternate translation: “God has redeemed us; that is, he has forgiven our sins” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### the forgiveness of sins

Here, Paul uses the possessive form to indicate that the **forgiveness** concerns **sins**. If your language does not use this form to express that idea, you could use a verb for **forgiveness** and make **sins** its object or complement. If you use the following alternate translation, you may need to replace the comma before it with a semicolon. Alternate translation: “that is, God has forgiven us for our sins” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

## Colossians 1:15

### He is the image of the invisible God

Here, **image** does not mean a representation of something that is visible, like a photo or a reflection. Instead, **image** refers to how the Son perfectly reveals the Father. If it would be helpful in your language, you could replace **image** with an expression that emphasizes how the Son reveals the Father. Alternate translation: "What the invisible God is like can be seen in his Son" (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### of the invisible God

The word **invisible** does not mean that God the Father could be seen by people but hides himself. Instead, it means that human sight is unable to perceive God the Father, since he is not part of the created world. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a phrase to clarify the idea. Alternate translation: "of God, whom humans are unable to see" (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### the firstborn of all creation

The word **firstborn** does not refer to when Jesus was born. Instead, it refers to his position as the eternal Son of God the Father. In this sense, **firstborn** is a metaphor that means that he existed as God before God created anything and that he is most important. You could emphasize either or both of these ideas in your translation. Alternate translation: "God's Son, the most important one over all creation" or "God's Son, who existed as God before all creation" (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### of all creation

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **creation**, you could express the idea by using a verb such as "create." Alternate translation: "of all that God created" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## Colossians 1:16

### For in him all things were created

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form, with God as the subject. Alternate translation: “For in him God created all things” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### in him all things were created

Paul here seems to speak as if God created everything inside the Son. This is a metaphor that describes the involvement of the Son when God created all things, which you could clarify by making both the Son and the Father the subjects of **created**. If your language can clearly indicate different types of agency, you could identify God the Father as the primary agent and God the Son as the secondary agent. Alternate translation: “God the Father created all things through the work of God the Son” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### in the heavens and on the earth

Paul refers to two opposite things, the **heavens** and the **earth**, as a way to include not only them but also everything else in what God and his Son created. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: “in every part of the universe” (See: **Merism (p.219)**)

### the visible and the invisible

Paul refers to two opposite things, **the visible** and **the invisible**, as another way to refer to everything that God and his Son created. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: “whether people can see them or not” (See: **Merism (p.219)**)

### Whether thrones or dominions or governments or authorities

The words **thrones**, **dominions**, **governments**, and **authorities** here refer to different kinds of angels or other spiritual beings that are not specified as being good or evil. They are examples of what is **invisible**. It may be that the false teachers were teaching that these beings should be worshiped. But Paul is emphasizing here that God the Father created all of these spiritual beings through his Son, and so the Son is much greater than these. If it would be helpful in your language, you could: (1) identify that these are spiritual beings and translate as many of these names as you have different words for. Alternate translation: “Including all spiritual beings, which can be called thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities” (2) use names from your culture that identify different classes of angels or spiritual beings. Alternate translation: “Whether angels or archangels or spirit rulers” (3) summarize without using specific names. Alternate translation: “Including all types of powerful spiritual beings” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### all things have been created though him and for him

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form, with God as the subject. Alternate translation: “through him and for him God created all things” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### have been created though him

The phrase **through him** shows God the Son’s involvement in creating the world with the Father. Alternate translation: “God the Father created by working through the Son”

## and for him

Here, **for him** refers to the Son as the purpose or goal of all creation. If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify that creation's purpose is to honor and glorify the Son. Alternate translation: "and everything exists to glorify him" (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.163)**)

## Colossians 1:17

### he is before all things

The word **before** refers to time, not location. It means that the Son did not come into being when God created everything, but rather he existed as God before anything was created. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a word or phrase that refers to prior time. Alternate translation: “before God created anything, the Son existed as God” (See: **Connect — Sequential Time Relationship (p.168)**)

### in him all things hold together

Paul is speaking here as if all created things **hold together** because they are inside the Son. By speaking in this way, Paul means that everything that God created continues to exist because the Son actively works to preserve everything. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “he controls everything so that it works the way it should” or “he is the one who makes sure everything has its proper place” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

## Colossians 1:18

### he is the head of the body, the church

Paul speaks of Jesus' position over the **church** as if he were the **head** on the human **body**. As the head rules and directs the body, so Jesus rules and directs the church. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable expression or express the idea with a simile or in plain language. Alternate translation: "he rules and directs the church" (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### the beginning

The word **beginning** could refer to: (1) the origin of something; here, the origin of the church. Alternate translation: "the origin of the church" or "the one who started the church" (2) a position of power or authority. Alternate translation: "the ruler" or "the one with authority"

### the firstborn from among the dead

Paul describes Jesus' resurrection **from among the dead** as if someone gave birth to him as her first child. This figure helps us to see that this new life was not like his old life, because he can never die again. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: "the first one to come back to new life" or "the first person to permanently rise from the dead" (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### the dead

Paul is using the adjective **dead** 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: "the dead people" (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.229)**)

### so that he himself might become first among all things

This clause could identify: (1) the result of Jesus starting the church and coming back from the dead. Alternate translation: "with the result that he is first among all things" (2) the purpose of Jesus starting the church and coming back from the dead. Alternate translation: "in order that he might be first among all things" (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.166)**)

### he himself might become first among all things

Paul here describes Jesus as if he were **first** to do or be something. This does not refer to time or sequence, but rather it refers to importance. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea with a comparable expression or plainly. Alternate translation: "he himself might become the most important person in all creation" or "he himself might be greater than everything and anybody else" (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)



## Colossians 1:19

### For

The word **For** provides a reason for previous statements. If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify for which statements this verse gives a reason. These statements could be: (1) everything in the previous verse, including the Son's headship over the church, his founding of the church, his resurrection, and his status as most important. Alternate translation: "He is all these things because" (2) why the Son is first among all things. Alternate translation: "He is first among all things because" (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.166)**)

### in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell

The verb **was pleased** implies a personal subject, which must be God the Father. By using the phrase **all the fullness**, Paul is speaking of everything that God the Father is, either by ellipsis or metonymy. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this explicit. Alternate translation: "God the Father was pleased to make all of his fullness dwell in the Son" or "all the fullness of God the Father was pleased to dwell in the Son" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell

Here, Paul speaks of the Son as though he were a house in which God's **fullness** could **dwell**. This does not mean that God lives inside of the Son or that the Son is part of God. This means that the Son has all the divinity of God. It means that the Son is fully God just as the Father is fully God. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state it more plainly. Alternate translation: "the Son is fully God in every way" (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### all the fullness

In the context, **fullness** stands for the **fullness** of divinity, or everything that characterizes God. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make it clear that **fullness** refers to the **fullness** of God. Alternate translation: "the full divinity of God" (See: **Metonymy (p.227)**)

## Colossians 1:20

### to reconcile

This verse continues the sentence from the previous verse, so **to reconcile** continues the same verb from there, “was pleased,” along with its implied subject, God the Father. If it would be helpful in your language, you could repeat that subject and verb here. Alternate translation: “God the Father was pleased to reconcile”

### all things

Here, **all things** includes everything that God created, including people. If it would be helpful in your language, you could be more specific. Alternate translation: “all things and all people”

### having made peace

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **peace**, you could express this idea in another way. Alternate translation: “having made things right” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### the blood of his cross

Paul uses the possessive form to describe **blood** characterized by **his cross**, which is the location where the blood was shed. If your language does not use this form to express that idea, you could make the relationship between the two words clearer with a short phrase such as “shed on.” Alternate translation: “the blood shed on his cross.” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### the blood of his cross

Here, **blood** stands for the death of Christ on the cross. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable word that stands for death or express the idea in plain language. Alternate translation: “his death on the cross” (See: **Metonymy (p.227)**)

### all things to himself, & whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens

The last part of this verse (**whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens**) describes **all things**, found near the beginning of the verse. If your language does not separate a description from the thing it describes, you could move the description next to **all things**. Alternate translation: “all things, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens, to himself” (See: **Information Structure (p.213)**)

### whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens

Paul refers to the **things on the earth** and the **things in the heavens** to include them and everything in between, that is, everything in all of creation. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “everything in the whole creation” (See: **Merism (p.219)**)

## Colossians 1:21

### At one time

## Connecting Statement:

The phrase **At one time** does not refer to one specific instance in time when the Colossians were alienated from God. Instead, it refers to all the time before they believed in Jesus. If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify what **time** Paul is referring to. Alternate translation: “During the time before you believed” (See: **Connect — Sequential Time Relationship (p.168)**)

### were alienated

If your language does not use this passive form, you could describe the Colossians’ state with an active form. Alternate translation: “did not want a relationship with God” or “were people who did not want to be near God” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### alienated and enemies

Paul assumes that the Colossians will know from whom they were **alienated** and with whom they were **enemies**: God. If your language would include this implied information, you could include a reference to “God” in this sentence. Alternate translation: “alienated from God and were his enemies” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### in thought, in evil deeds

If your language does not use abstract nouns to express the ideas behind **thought** and **deeds**, you could express the ideas with relative clauses. Alternate translation: “in what you thought, in what you did that was evil” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## Colossians 1:22

### But

The word **But** here introduces a strong contrast from the previous sentence. Use a natural way in your language for introducing a strong contrast from what was just said. Alternate translation: "Instead of that," (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.159)**)

### now

The word **now** does not refer to the moment at which Paul writes this letter or the moment at which it is read to the Colossians. Instead, it refers to the time since they believed, including the present moment. This follows as a sequence to the previous verse, which referred to the time when they had not yet believed. If the meaning of **now** would be misunderstood your language, you could add a phrase such as "that you have believed." Alternate translation: "now that you have faith in Jesus," (See: **Connect — Sequential Time Relationship (p.168)**)

### by the body of his flesh

Here Paul uses the phrase **the body of his flesh** to refer to Jesus and everything that he did while in a human body. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: "by Jesus in his physical body" (See: **Metonymy (p.227)**)

### the body of his flesh

Here Paul describes Jesus' **body** that is characterized by **flesh**. This refers to Jesus' body during his earthly life, not his glorified body after the resurrection. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an expression that makes this idea clear. Alternate translation: "his physical body" or "his body before the resurrection" (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### through death

Here, Paul has not stated whose **death** this is. This **death** is not that of the Colossians but that of Jesus on the cross. If your language would state who died, you could add a possessive word to clarify. Alternate translation: "through his death" or "through Jesus' death" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### to present you

Here, **to present you** gives the purpose for which God reconciled the Colossians by the death of his Son. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a purpose phrase such as "so that" or "in order to." Alternate translation: "so that he might present you" (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.166)**)

### to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him

Here Paul is describing the Colossians as though Jesus had brought them to stand before God the Father, by which he means that Jesus has made them acceptable to God. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea in plain language. Alternate translation: "to make you acceptable before him, holy and blameless and above reproach" (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

## holy and blameless and above reproach

The words **blameless** and **above reproach** are adjectives that describe a person or thing that is free from blemishes and that cannot be blamed for doing anything wrong. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use relative clauses instead. Alternate translation: “as people who are holy and who have no faults and who cannot be blamed for doing anything wrong” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## holy and blameless and above reproach

These words, **holy**, **blameless**, and **above reproach**, mean basically the same thing here. The repetition is used to emphasize the completeness of what the Son did to take away the Colossians’ sin. After trusting in Jesus, they are now completely morally pure. If your language does not use repetition in this way or you do not have three words that mean this, you could use fewer words and express the emphasis in another way. Alternate translation: “completely pure” or “without any sin at all” (See: **Doublet (p.181)**)

## Colossians 1:23

### if indeed you continue

Here Paul explains that the Colossians need to continue in their faith for what he said in the previous verse to be true about them. In other words, in order for them to be reconciled to God, blameless and without reproach, they need to continue in the faith. However, he does not think that this is a hypothetical situation or something that is likely not true. Instead, Paul thinks that they are continuing in their faith, and he uses this statement with **if** to encourage them to keep doing so. If your language does not use **if** in this context, you could rephrase the condition into a circumstance or an assumption. Alternate translation: “provided that you continue” or “presuming that you continue” (See: **Connect — Factual Conditions (p.161)**)

### in the faith

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **faith**, you could express the idea behind this abstract noun in another way. Alternate translation: “to trust God” or “to believe God’s message” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### founded and firm

The words **founded** and **firm** mean basically the same thing. The words **not being moved** repeat the idea again in a negative way. The repetition is used to emphasize that it is important for the Colossians to continue strong in their faith. If your language does not use repetition in this way, you could use one word for this idea and provide emphasis in another way. Alternate translation: “very firm” or “like a rock” (See: **Doublet (p.181)**)

### founded and firm and not being moved from

Here Paul speaks of the Colossians as if they were a building that was **founded** and sits on a **firm** foundation so that it cannot be **moved** from its place, which means that they have good basis for their faith and will keep believing in all situations. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea with an equivalent metaphor in your culture or express it plainly. Alternate translation: “holding onto it and grasping it tightly and not letting go of” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### the hope of the gospel

Here Paul uses the possessive to explain that **hope** comes from the **gospel**. If your language does not use this form to express that idea, you could express the idea by using a phrase such as “that comes from” or “gained from.” Alternate translation: “the hope that comes from the gospel” or “how you hope, which you gained from the gospel” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### the hope of the gospel

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **hope**, you could express the idea in another way. Alternate translation: “expecting God to fulfill the gospel” or “waiting for God to complete the good news” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### the one having been proclaimed to every creature {that is} under heaven

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form. You could: (1) change **proclaimed** to “heard” and make **every creature** the subject. Alternate translation: “which every creature that is

under heaven has heard" (2) specify that "fellow believers" is the subject of **proclaimed**. Alternate translation: "which fellow believers have proclaimed to every creature that is under heaven" (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

## to every creature {that is} under heaven

Here Paul uses an exaggeration that the Colossians would have understood to emphasize how far the good news has spread. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or qualify the claim. Alternate translation: "to people in many different places" or "to people in every place we know about" (See: **Hyperbole (p.201)**)

## that is} under heaven

In Paul's culture, **under heaven** refers to the visible part of creation that humans regularly interact with. It excludes spiritual beings, the stars, and anything else in **heaven**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could translate **under heaven** with a comparable expression. Alternate translation: "that is on the earth" (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## of which I, Paul, became a servant

Here **Paul** speaks as if the good news were a person of whom he could become **a servant**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could explain that Paul is **a servant** of God, but his task from God is to proclaim the good news. Alternate translation: "which I, Paul, proclaim as God has commanded me, his servant, to do" (See: **Personification (p.231)**)

## Colossians 1:24

### Now

The word **Now** indicates that Paul wishes to tell the Colossians how he is currently serving the gospel. It does not indicate a change of topic, as it sometimes does in English. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a longer phrase to express this idea. Alternate translation: “While I write this letter,” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases** (p.172))

### in my sufferings for you

Alternate translation: “while I suffer for your sake”

### I fill up in my flesh the lack of the afflictions of Christ

Paul speaks of his **flesh** as if it were a container that could **fill up** with **afflictions**. By this, he means that his bodily sufferings function to satisfy a specific purpose, which here is to finish what **Christ** started with his **afflictions**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “with my bodily suffering, I finish what the Messiah started when he suffered. I do this” (See: **Metaphor** (p.221))

### the lack of the afflictions of Christ

Here Paul is not saying that there is a **lack** in Christ’s **afflictions** because those **afflictions** did not succeed in doing what they were supposed to do. Instead, the **lack** refers to what Christ wished for his disciples to do as his servants. The **lack**, then, is something that Christ intentionally did not accomplish, because he wanted Paul to do it. If it would be helpful in your language, you could rephrase **lack** so that it is clearer that Christ intentionally left something for Paul to do. Alternate translation: “the afflictions that Christ has called me to suffer to complete his work” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information** (p.145))

### the lack of the afflictions of Christ

Paul uses two possessive forms to speak about the **lack** that characterizes the **afflictions** that **Christ** suffered. If your language would not use possessive forms to express that idea, you could express the idea with a relative clause or two clauses. Alternate translation: “what Christ, when he suffered, left for me to suffer” (See: **Possession** (p.233))

### his body, which is the church

Here Paul speaks of the **church** as if it were Christ’s **body**, and he provides the explanation of what **body** means. If it would be helpful in your language, you could refer to the **church** first and then identify it as his **body**. Alternate translation: “the church, which is his body” (See: **Metaphor** (p.221))



## Colossians 1:25

### of which I became a servant

If your language would specify who called Paul to be **a servant** of the church, you could rephrase this clause so that God is the subject and Paul is the object. Alternate translation: “God appointed me to be a servant of the church” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### the stewardship

The word **stewardship** refers to managing a household or, more generally, to directing any group or process. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **stewardship**, you could replace the word with a descriptive phrase. Alternate translation: “authoritative oversight” or “superintending authority” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### the stewardship of God

Paul uses the possessive form to describe a **stewardship** that could: (1) come from God. Alternate translation: “the stewardship from God” (2) belong to God and be **given** to Paul. Alternate translation: “God’s own stewardship” or “God’s own oversight” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### the one having been given to me

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form, with God as the subject. Alternate translation: “that God gave to me” or “that he gave me” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### the word of God

Paul uses the possessive form to describe **the word** that is: (1) from God. Alternate translation: “the word that came from God” (2) about God. Alternate translation: “the word about God” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### the word of God

Here, **word** represents a message that is made up of words. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: “the message from God” or “God’s message” (See: **Metonymy (p.227)**)

## Colossians 1:26

### the mystery that had been hidden

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form, with God as the subject. Alternate translation: “the mystery that God had hidden” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### the mystery

Here Paul calls “the word of God,” from 1:25, **the mystery**. This does not mean that it is hard to understand, but rather, it had not yet been revealed. Now, however, Paul says that it “has been revealed.” If your language would not use **mystery** to refer to something that has been revealed, you could replace **mystery** with a short descriptive phrase. Alternate translation: “the concealed message” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### that had been hidden from the ages and from the generations

This clause does not mean that the **ages** and the **generations** were unable to understand the “mystery.” Instead, **from the ages** and **from the generations** refer to the time during which the mystery was hidden. Those from whom the mystery was hidden are not expressed explicitly, but it is clear that they are those who were alive during those times. If your language would express explicitly those from whom the mystery was hidden, you could insert it into the sentence. Alternate translation: “that has been hidden from the people who lived during the ages and in the generations” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### from the ages and from the generations

These phrases speak about the passage of time. The word **ages** refers to periods of time that are marked off by specific boundaries (often major events), while the word **generations** refers to time periods marked off by human birth and death. The **mystery** has been **hidden** during all these time periods up until the present time. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use equivalent expressions or short phrases. Alternate translation: “during all time periods, while people were born and died” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### now

The word **now** does not refer to the time during which Paul wrote this letter. Instead, it contrasts with the **ages** and **generations** and refers to the time or “age” after the work of Jesus. If it would be helpful in your language, you could further identify what time **now** refers to. Alternate translation: “now that Jesus has come, it” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### having been revealed

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form, with God as the subject. Alternate translation: “God has revealed it” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

## Colossians 1:27

### the riches of the glory of this mystery

Paul emphasizes the scope of **the glory** by speaking as if it had wealth or **riches**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable statement or express the idea with an adverb such as “very” or an adjective such as “abundant.” Alternate translation: “the abundant glory of this mystery” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### the riches of the glory of this mystery

Here Paul uses the possessive form to connect **riches** to **glory**, which then characterizes the **mystery**. If your language would not use the possessive form to express that idea, you could translate both **riches** and **glory** as adjectives or adverbs describing the **mystery**. Alternate translation: “this richly glorious mystery” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### the riches of the glory of this mystery

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind the word **glory**, you could express that idea in another way, such as with a description word. Alternate translation: “this richly glorious mystery” or “this abundantly wonderful mystery” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### among the Gentiles

This phrase could refer to: (1) how the mystery applies to all people, including **Gentiles**. Alternate translation: “that applies to every person, including the Gentiles” (2) where God makes the mystery known. Alternate translation: “to the Gentiles”

### Christ in you

Paul speaks of the believers as if they were containers in which **Christ** is present. The expression means basically the same thing as “you in Christ.” If it would be helpful in your language, you could use the same translation you have used for being “in Christ.” Alternate translation: “your union with Christ” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### the hope of glory

Here Paul speaks of a **hope** that relates to **glory**. This could refer to: (1) hoping for, or expecting, glory. Alternate translation: “the expectation of becoming glorious” (2) a hope that is glorious. Alternate translation: “the glorious hope” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### the hope of glory

If your language does not use abstract nouns for the ideas behind the words **hope** and **glory**, you could express those ideas in another way. Alternate translation: “with whom we can expect to share his glorious life” or “who makes us confidently hope for living with him in heaven” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## Colossians 1:28

### We proclaim & we may present

The pronoun **We** in this verse does not include the Colossians. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'** (p.186))

### every man & every man & every man

Here, **every man** refers to every person whom Paul has told about Jesus. If it would be helpful in your language, you could include this information. Alternate translation: "every man whom we talk to ... each of them ... each of them" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information** (p.145))

### man & man & man

Here, the word **man** does not refer to only male people but to any human being. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a term that refers to humans in general. Alternate translation: "human" (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women** (p.262))

### all wisdom

Here Paul speaks when he says that he uses **all wisdom**, by which he means that he uses all of the wisdom that he possesses. He does not mean that he possesses all the wisdom that exists. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state this more plainly. Alternate translation: "all of the wisdom that we have" or "all of the wisdom that God has given us" (See: **Hyperbole** (p.201))

### so that we may present

Paul here explains the goal or purpose for which he and those with him "admonish" and "teach" people. In your translation, use a phrase that designates goal or purpose. Alternate translation: "in order that we may present" (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship** (p.163))

### we may present every man complete in Christ

In this context, when Paul says that he intends to **present** people, he does not say to whom or where he will **present** them. If your language would include this information, you could explain what the situation is. Paul could be referring to: (1) when people appear before God on the judgment day. Alternate translation: "we may present every man complete in Christ to God the Father on the judgment day" (2) when people worship God. Alternate translation: "we may present every man complete in Christ when they come before God in worship" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information** (p.145))

### complete

The word **complete** in this context means that a person is what he or she is supposed to be and is able to do what he or she is called to do. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a word that has this meaning, such as "perfect" or "excellent," or you could translate **complete** with a short phrase. Alternate translation: "fit for what God has called him to be" (See: **Translate Unknowns** (p.257))

## Colossians 1:29

### I labor, striving

The words **labor** and **striving** mean very similar things. The repetition emphasizes how hard Paul works. If your language does not use repetition in this way or has only one word for this concept, you could use just one word and provide emphasis in another way. Alternate translation: “work hard” or “labor greatly” (See: **Doublet (p.181)**)

### his working, the one working in me

The word **working** is repeated here to emphasize God’s activity in Paul that enables him to do what he does. If your language does not use repetition in this way, you could just use the word once and provide emphasis in another way. Alternate translation: “his constant working in me” or “how he greatly enables me” (See: **Doublet (p.181)**)

### according to his working, the one working

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **working**, you could express the idea with a verb. Alternate translation: “according to how God works, who works” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### in power

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **power**, you could express the idea with an adjective or adverb. Alternate translation: “in powerful ways” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## Colossians 2

### Colossians 2 General Notes

### Structure and Formatting

Teaching Section (1:13–2:23)

- Paul's Ministry (1:24–2:5)
- Effects of Christ's Work (2:6–15)
- Freedom in Christ (2:16–23)

### Religious and Cultural Concepts in This Chapter

#### Philosophy

Paul speaks of “philosophy” in [2:8](#). He is not referring to all attempts by humans to understand the world around them. Instead, he makes it clear that he is referring to thinking that is “empty” and full of “deceit,” that comes from traditions of humans and the “elemental principles.” All this “philosophy” is bad because it is not “according to Christ.” The “philosophy” that Paul attacks, then, is any attempt to make sense of the world that does not do so in line with Christ and his work.

#### Fullness

Just as in the last chapter, “fullness” is an important idea that Paul refers to in [2:9–10](#). Again, Christ has the divine “fullness,” and he “fills” the Colossians. No other source of “fullness” is needed.

### Translation Issues in This Chapter

#### Head and body

As in the last chapter, Christ is called the “head,” both of powerful rulers ([2:10](#)) and of his church [2:19](#). Paul uses this language to identify Christ as: (1) the supreme ruler, just as the head rules over the body, and (2) the source of life for the church, just as a body is dead without its head. Paul also identifies the church as the body of Christ in [2:19](#). Here, his point is that the church cannot survive and grow without being connected to Christ, just as a body does not live or grow without a head. Finally, Paul refers to a “body” in [2:17](#), but here the metaphor is different. The word “body” refers to any object that can cast a shadow (not primarily to an organic, human body) and here the “body” (the object) is Christ, who casts a shadow, which is identified as old covenant regulations.

#### Circumcision and baptism

In [2:11–13](#), Paul uses the old covenant sign of circumcision to refer to removing the “the body of flesh,” and he uses the new covenant sign of baptism to refer to “being buried” with Christ. He uses these two signs to show how Christians are united with Christ, freed from sin, and given new life.

## Translation Issues in This Chapter

### Flesh

In Colossians, Paul uses “flesh” to refer to human, embodied existence in the world before the resurrection and before God creates the new heavens and earth. He uses “flesh” neutrally to refer to physical presence in [2:1](#); [2:5](#). In many other places, however, he uses “flesh” to refer to the weakness and sinfulness of humans as they live in ways that fit with this broken world ([2:11](#), [13](#), [18](#), [23](#)). Often, “flesh” in these situations is translated with something like “sinful nature.” However, it is perhaps better to emphasize both weakness and sinfulness, and the term “nature” can be confusing. For examples of some ways to translate “flesh,” see the UST and notes in this chapter.

### The false teaching

In this chapter, Paul gives some information about what the false teachers are saying and doing. However, it is not enough to give us a full picture of who they were and what they taught. What is clear is that they spoke about extraordinary experiences, were interested in spiritual beings, and gave commands about behavior that at least sometimes were related to Old Testament law. If possible, keep your translation as vague as Paul’s own description of the false teachers.

## Colossians 2:1

### For

The word **For** introduces the reason why Paul told them in 1:29 about how hard he works. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make the transition more explicit. Alternate translation: "I tell you about my hard work because" (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.166)**)

### how great a struggle I have for you

Here, the word **struggle** is directly related to the word "striving" in 1:29. Just as in that verse, it is usually used for striving to win a contest, whether athletic, legal, or military. Paul uses the word here to indicate how much he cares for the Colossians and how hard he works for their benefit. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: "how much care I have in your behalf" (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### how great a struggle I have

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **struggle**, you could express the idea behind this abstract noun by combining it with the verb **have** and using a verb such as "struggle." Alternate translation: "how much I struggle" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### for you and the ones at Laodicea and as many as have not seen my face in the flesh

This list includes the Colossians and the Laodiceans among those who have not seen Paul's **face in the flesh**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could reverse the order of the list and include **you** and **the ones at Laodicea** among those who **have not seen** Paul's face. Alternate translation: "for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, including you and those at Laodicea" (See: **Information Structure (p.213)**)

### for you

Here Paul implies that he has a great **struggle** in order to help **you** and the believers in other places. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this idea more explicit. Alternate translation: "in order to help you" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### the ones

Here Paul implies that these are believers, not just anyone who lives in **Laodicea**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this idea more explicit. Alternate translation: "the believers" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### have not seen my face in the flesh

In Paul's culture, seeing a **face in the flesh** refers to meeting someone in person. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable idiom or express the idea in plain language. Alternate translation: "I have not visited" or "have not seen me" (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)



## Colossians 2:2

### so that

Here, **so that** marks the encouragement of the believers as the goal or purpose of Paul's struggle. Use a connector in your language that makes it clear that this is the purpose. If it would be helpful, you could start a new sentence here and repeat some of the previous verse. Alternate translation: "The reason that I struggle so much is so that" or "I do this in order that" (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.163)**)

### their

Paul here switches from the second person to the third person because he wishes to include everyone he has not met in person, including the Colossians. If it would be helpful in your language, you could: (1) use the second person from the previous verse but make it clear that this includes everyone Paul has not met in person. Alternate translation "your hearts and their" (2) retain the third person here and reverse the list in the previous verse as suggested by the note there (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.188)**)

### their hearts might be encouraged, having been brought together

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express these verbs in their active forms, with Paul as the subject of the "encouraging" and God as the subject of the "bringing together." Alternate translation: "I might encourage their hearts, with God bringing them together" (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### their hearts

Here when Paul refers to **their hearts**, the Colossians would have understood him to mean the entire person. Paul uses **hearts** because his culture identified **hearts** as the body part where people experienced encouragement. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a word or phrase that identifies the location where people experience encouragement in your culture, or you could express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: "they" (See: **Synecdoche (p.250)**)

### all the riches of the full assurance

Paul here speaks as if **full assurance** could be characterized as having **all the riches**. He uses this metaphor to describe **the full assurance** as complete and valuable. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: "all the benefits of having complete assurance" or "all the blessings of the full assurance" (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### of the full assurance of understanding

Here Paul uses the possessive form to speak of **understanding** that is the source of **full assurance**. If your language would not use the possessive form for this, you could use a relative clause to translate **of understanding**. (From the rest of the verse, it is clear that what is understood is **the mystery of God**.) Alternate translation: "of the full assurance that comes from understanding" or "of understanding the truth that brings full assurance" (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

## into all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, into knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ

If your language does not use abstract nouns for the ideas behind **full assurance**, **understanding**, and **knowledge**, you could express the ideas with verbs. Alternate translation: “into all the riches that come from being confident that they understand God’s mysterious plan, which is Christ” or “having all the riches that come when they completely trust God because they understand, that is, they know the mystery of God, Christ” (See: **Abstract Nouns** (p.140))

## of understanding, into knowledge

Here, the words **understanding** and **knowledge** mean basically the same thing. Paul uses both words to emphasize the breadth of spiritual knowledge he speaks about. If your language does not use repetition in this way or has only one word for this concept, you could use just one word or translate **understanding** with an adjective such as “full” or “true.” Alternate translation: “of true knowledge” or “of full knowledge” (See: **Doublet** (p.181))

## knowledge of the mystery

Here, Paul uses the possessive form to speak of **knowledge** about the **mystery**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could translate **knowledge** with a verb such as “knowing” or use different prepositions, such as “about.” Alternate translation: “knowing about the mystery” (See: **Possession** (p.233))

## of the mystery of God

Paul here uses the possessive form to speak about **the mystery** that comes from **God**. Only **God** can reveal the content of this **mystery**. If your language does not use this form to express that idea, you could express the idea by using a relative clause. Alternate translation: “of the mystery that God reveals” or “of the mystery known by God” (See: **Possession** (p.233))

## Colossians 2:3

### all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden

If your language does not use this form, you could express the idea in active form, with God as the subject.  
Alternate translation: "God has hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### in whom all the treasures & are hidden

Paul here speaks of the Messiah as if he were a container that could "hide" **treasures**. He speaks this way to emphasize the value of what Christians receive from God when they are united to the Messiah. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: "from whom all the blessings ... can be received" (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden

Paul here uses the possessive form to explain what the **treasures** are: **wisdom** and **knowledge**. If your language does not use this form to express that idea, you could clarify that **wisdom** and **knowledge** are the **treasures**.  
Alternate translation: "are hidden all the treasures, which are wisdom and knowledge," or "are all God's wisdom and knowledge, which are like a treasure that has been hidden" (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### of wisdom and knowledge

If your language does not use abstract nouns for the ideas behind **wisdom** and **knowledge**, you could express the ideas behind these abstract nouns with adjectives such as "wise" and "knowledgeable." Alternate translation: "of wise and knowledgeable thinking" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### of wisdom and knowledge

The words **wisdom** and **knowledge** mean very similar things. The repetition is used to emphasize the breadth of spiritual wisdom. If your language does not use repetition in this way or has only one word for this concept, you could use just one word or translate **wisdom** as an adjective such as "wise." Alternate translation: "of wisdom" or "of knowledge" or "of wise knowledge" (See: **Doublet (p.181)**)

## Colossians 2:4

### this

The word **this** refers to what Paul has said in [2:2-3](#) about the Messiah. If it would be helpful in your language, you could summarize what Paul has said instead of using **this**. Alternate translation: “these things about the Messiah” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### no one might deceive you

Alternate translation: “people cannot deceive you” or “no one will mislead you”

### persuasive speech

The phrase **persuasive speech** refers to arguments that appear plausible. The phrase itself does not suggest that the arguments are true or false, but the context here suggests that the arguments are false even though they sound believable. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable expression or a short phrase that expresses this idea. Alternate translation: “plausible arguments” or “fine-sounding arguments” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## Colossians 2:5

### For

The word **For** introduces further support for why the Colossians should not be “deceived” (2:4). Even if Paul is physically absent, he is thinking about them and caring for them. If it would be helpful in your language, you could specify what the word **For** is supporting. Alternate translation: “Do not let yourselves be deceived, because” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.172)**)

### even if

Paul speaks as if being **absent** were a hypothetical possibility, but he means that it is actually true. If your language would not use a conditional statement for something that is a current fact, you could translate these words as an affirmation. Alternate translation: “while” or “although” (See: **Connect — Factual Conditions (p.161)**)

### I am absent in the flesh

In Paul’s culture, being **absent in the flesh** is a figurative way to speak about not being present in person. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable expression or translate the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “I am not there with you” or “I am not present with you” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### yet

The word **yet** introduces a contrast with **absent in the flesh**. While the Colossians might expect that, since Paul is **absent in the flesh**, he is also absent “in the spirit,” Paul says the opposite: he is with them **in the spirit**. Use a word that indicates contrast or contraexpectation in your language. Alternate translation: “despite this” or “you may be sure” (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.159)**)

### I am with you in the spirit

In Paul’s culture, being with someone **in the spirit** is a figurative way to speak of thinking about and caring about that person. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea with a comparable metaphor or plainly. Alternate translation: “I am still connected to you” or “it is as though I were present” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### in the spirit

Here, **the spirit** could refer to: (1) Paul’s spirit, which would be the part of him that rejoices over the Colossians from a distance. Alternate translation: “in my spirit” (2) the Holy Spirit, which connects Paul with the Colossians, even though they are not physically together. Alternate translation: “in God’s Spirit” or “by the power of God’s Spirit”

### rejoicing and seeing

Here, **rejoicing and seeing** are what Paul does while he is with them **in the spirit**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make the relationship between the ideas more explicit. Alternate translation: (adding a period after “spirit”) “When I think about you, I rejoice and see” (See: **Connect — Simultaneous Time Relationship (p.170)**)

## rejoicing and seeing

Paul here expresses a single idea with the two words **rejoicing** and **seeing**. He means that he “rejoices” when he “sees.” If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea by translating **rejoicing** as an adverb or prepositional phrase. Alternate translation: “joyfully seeing” or “delighting to witness” (See: **Hendiadys (p.194)**)

## your good order

The phrase **good order** refers to behavior that properly fits into a larger pattern or arrangement. In the context, that larger pattern is what God expects of his people. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable term or translate the idea with a short phrase. Alternate translation: “the fact that you behave according to God’s standards” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## the strength of your faith

Paul uses the possessive form to describe the Colossians’ **faith** as something that has **strength**. If your language does not use the possessive form to express this idea, you could express the idea by translating **strength** with an adjective such as “strong.” Alternate translation: “your strong faith” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

## the strength of your faith

If your language does not use abstract nouns for the ideas behind the words **strength** and **faith**, you could express the ideas behind these abstract nouns in another way. Alternate translation: “how strongly you believe” or “the fact that you firmly believe” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## Colossians 2:6

### Therefore

The word **Therefore** draws an inference or conclusion from what Paul has said in [2:1-5](#), particularly what he has said about Jesus. If it would be helpful in your language, you could specify more explicitly what Paul is basing his inference on. Alternate translation: “Since these things about the Messiah are true” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.172)**)

### as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in him

Paul here draws a comparison between the way in which the Colossians **received** the Messiah and the way in which he wishes them to behave now. If your language would put the comparison second, you could reverse the two clauses. Alternate translation: “walk in Christ Jesus the Lord just as you received him” (See: **Information Structure (p.213)**)

### you received Christ

Paul says that the Colossians **received Christ** as if they had welcomed him into their homes or received him as a gift. What this means is that they believed in Jesus and the teachings about him. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a phrase that refers to coming to believe in Jesus, or you could express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “you first believed in Christ” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### walk in him

In Paul’s culture, to **walk** is a common metaphor for how people live their lives, and the words **in him** refer to being united to Christ. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a different verb that refers to behavior in life and connect it with how you have translated “in Christ” elsewhere. Alternate translation: “act as those who are united to the Messiah” or “conduct yourselves as those who are in union with him” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

## Colossians 2:7

### being rooted & built up & confirmed & abounding

Paul uses these four verbs to give examples of how the Colossians should “walk in” the Messiah (2:6). If it would be helpful in your language, you could add a phrase that makes this relationship clear. Alternate translation: (starting a new sentence) “Walking in him entails being rooted ... built up ... confirmed ... abounding” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### being rooted & built up & confirmed

If your language does not use these passive forms, you could translate all three of these words in their active forms with the Colossians as the subject. Alternate translation: “rooting yourselves ... building yourselves up ... having confidence” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### being rooted & in him

Paul wants the Colossians to be united so closely to Christ that he speaks of this union as if the Colossians were a plant with roots growing into Christ. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea with a comparable metaphor, or express it plainly. Alternate translation: “being closely connected with ... in him” or “being more dependent on ... in him” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### and built up in him

Paul wants the Colossians to base everything they think and do on Christ as if they were a house built on Christ, who is the foundation. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea with a comparable metaphor, or express it plainly. Alternate translation: “in him, and basing everything you think and do on him,” or “in Christ, and believing more and more firmly in him,” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### confirmed in the faith

The word **confirmed** refers to something being sure or valid. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable expression or a short phrase. Alternate translation: “sure about the faith” or “strong in your faith” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### in the faith

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **faith**, you could express the idea in a different way, such as with a relative clause. Alternate translation: “in what you believe” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### you were taught

If your language does not use this passive form, you could translate this verb: (1) in its active form with Epaphras as the subject (we know he was their teacher from 1:7). See the UST. (2) with a verb such as “learned.” Alternate translation: “you learned” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### abounding in thanksgiving

If your language does not use an abstract for the idea behind **thanksgiving**, you could express the idea in another way. Alternate translation: “being very thankful” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)



## Colossians 2:8

### Beware lest someone will be the one taking you captive

## Connecting Statement:

Paul uses this clause to warn the Colossians against any person who wishes to take them captive. If your language does not use this form, you could simplify or restructure the clause so that it does not include both **someone** and **the one**. Alternate translation: "Beware lest anyone take you captive" or "Make sure that no one takes you captive" (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### the one taking you captive

Paul speaks of those who are trying to deceive the Colossians as if they were capturing the Colossians as prisoners. He uses this language to portray the false teachers as enemies who do not care about the Colossians but only want to use them for their own benefit. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable metaphor or express the idea in plain language. Alternate translation: "the one who convinces you to believe a lie" (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### philosophy and empty deceit

The words **philosophy** and **empty deceit** work together to express one idea: human **philosophy** that is **empty** of useful content and deceitful. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea in one phrase. Alternate translation: "empty, deceitful philosophy" (See: **Hendiadys (p.194)**)

### philosophy and empty deceit

If your language does not use abstract nouns to express the ideas behind **philosophy** and **deceit**, you could express these ideas in another way. Alternate translation: "the empty and false way that godless people understand the world" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### empty deceit

Paul speaks of deceitful **philosophy** as if it were a container that had nothing in it. He means that the deceitful **philosophy** has nothing important or meaningful to contribute. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable metaphor or express the idea in plain language. Alternate translation: "valueless deceit" or "deceit with no content" (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### the tradition of men

The **tradition of men** refers to the ways in which humans behave that they learned from their families and pass on to their children. If your language does not use an abstract noun to express the idea of **tradition**, you could use a phrase that refers to traditions that are passed on from parents to children. Alternate translation: "customary human thinking and behavior" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## of men

Although the word **men** is masculine, Paul is using it to refer to anyone, whether man or woman. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a non-gendered word or refer to both genders. Alternate translation: “of people” or “of humans” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.262)**)

## the elemental teaching of the world

The phrase **elemental teaching** could refer to: (1) basic human opinions about how the world works. Alternate translation: “human worldviews” (2) the spiritual powers of this world. Alternate translation: “spiritual beings that rule the world” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## Colossians 2:9

### For

Here, the word **For** introduces the reason why the Colossians need to watch out for any teaching that is “not according to Christ” (2:8): Christ is God and only he provides access to God. Use a connector that makes this clear in your language. Alternate translation: “You must beware of any teaching that ignores Christ, because” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.166)**)

### in him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form

Paul speaks as if Jesus were a place in which complete divinity (**fullness of deity**) lives (**dwells**). This metaphor indicates that Jesus, who is human (**in bodily form**), is truly and fully God. If this metaphor does not indicate Jesus’ full divinity and full humanity in your language, you could express this idea with a metaphor that does indicate this or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “he is both fully God and fully man” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### all the fullness of deity

If your language does not use abstract nouns to express the ideas behind **fullness** and **deity**, you could express the idea in another way. Alternate translation: “everything that it means to be God” or “everything that belongs fully to God” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## Colossians 2:10

### and

The word **and** introduces another reason why the Colossians need to watch out for anyone who provides teaching that is “not according to Christ” (2:8): not only is Christ fully God (2:9), but he provides the way in which the Colossians are filled with everything they need. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this link more explicit. Alternate translation: “and furthermore,” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.172)**)

### you are filled in him

Here Paul speaks as if people were containers that are filled when they are united to Christ, which means that people receive everything they need, including salvation, in their union with Christ. The word **filled** is very similar to the word Paul used in 2:9 for “fullness.” If your language uses similar words in these two sentences, you could use a word like the one you used in 2:9. If not, you could express this idea in another way, use a comparable metaphor, or express it plainly. Alternate translation: “you lack nothing because of your union with the Messiah” or “there is nothing lacking in the way in which God has caused you to live by being joined closely to him” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### you are filled

If in your language does not use this passive form, you could translate this verb in the active form, with God as the subject. Alternate translation: “God has filled you” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### the head of all rule and authority

The expression **head of** here refers to supremacy and authority over something or somebody. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable metaphor or express the idea plainly with another noun, such as “sovereign” or “ruler,” or a verb, such as “rule.” Alternate translation: “the sovereign over all rule and authority” or “the one who rules over all rule and authority” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### of all rule and authority

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the abstract nouns **rule** and **authority** in other ways. These words could refer to: (1) powerful spiritual beings, as in 1:16. Alternate translation: “of all spirit beings who govern and rule” (2) anyone or anything with power and authority. Alternate translation: “over anyone who rules and commands others” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### of all rule and authority

The terms **rule** and **authority** mean similar things. Paul is using the two terms together for emphasis. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the emphasis with a single phrase. Alternate translation: “over anyone who governs others” (See: **Doublet (p.181)**)

## Colossians 2:11

### you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands in the removal of the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ

Here Paul uses **circumcision** as an image to describe what happens to believers when they are united to the Messiah. In the metaphor, the **circumcision** is completed **without hands**, which means that God accomplishes it. What is “removed” or cut off is the **body of flesh**, which refers to the broken and sinful parts of the person. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea with the language of analogy or express it plainly. Alternate translation: “you were also marked off by God as his own when he took away your body of flesh by the work of the Messiah” (See: **Biblical Imagery — Extended Metaphors (p.148)**)

### in whom you were also circumcised

If your language does not use this passive form, you could translate this verb in active form, with God as the subject. Alternate translation: “in whom God also circumcised you” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### in the removal of the body of flesh

If your language does not use an abstract noun to express the idea behind **removal**, you could express the idea with a verb such as “remove.” Alternate translation: “when he removed the body of flesh” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### in the circumcision of Christ

Here, Paul uses the possessive form to connect **circumcision** with **Christ**. This does not refer to when Christ himself was circumcised or how he himself circumcises believers. Instead, the possessive form connects the extended metaphor of circumcision with Christ’s work: the circumcision that Paul speaks about is accomplished in what Christ has done. If your language does not use this form to express that idea, you could make the relationship between **circumcision** and **Christ** more explicit. Alternate translation: “in the circumcision accomplished by Christ” or “in the circumcision caused by Christ” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### of Christ

Here Paul uses the word **Christ** to refer primarily to what **Christ** has accomplished. If your language does not use a person’s name to identify something that they have done, you could clarify that Paul is speaking of the “work” **of Christ**. Alternate translation: “that comes from what Christ did” or “that Christ’s work accomplished” (See: **Metonymy (p.227)**)

## Colossians 2:12

### having been buried with him in baptism

Paul here uses a metaphor that connects **baptism** to “burial” to further explain what happens to believers when they are united to Christ. This metaphor expresses how, when they are baptized, believers are united to Christ in his (death and) burial and are no longer who they once were. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea with the language of analogy, or express it plainly. Alternate translation: “having been united with the Messiah in his burial when you were baptized” or “having been baptized in him, as if you were buried with him,” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### having been buried with

Here Paul refers only to being **buried**, but he also implies “dying.” If **buried** would not include the idea of “dying” in your language, you could include “dying” in your translation. Alternate translation: “having died and been buried with” (See: **Synecdoche (p.250)**)

### having been buried with him

If your language does not use this passive form, you could translate this phrase in active form, with God as the subject. Alternate translation: “God burying you with him” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### in whom you were raised up

Paul here explains that believers are not only united to Christ in his burial but also in his resurrection. It is by being united to him in his resurrection that believers receive new life. If it would be helpful in your language, you could translate this idea plainly. Alternate translation: “in union with the Messiah in his resurrection you received new life” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### you were raised up

If your language does not use this passive form, you could translate the idea in its active form, with God as the subject. Alternate translation: “God raised you up” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### you were raised up & the one having raised him from the dead

Paul uses the words **raised up** and **raised him from the dead** to refer to someone who had died and then came back to life. If your language does not use these words to describe coming back to life, use a comparable idiom or a short phrase. Alternate translation: “you were restored to life ... who restored him to life” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### through faith in the power of God

If your language does not use abstract nouns to express the ideas behind **faith** and **power**, you could express the ideas in another way. Alternate translation: “because you trusted in the powerful God” or “because you believe in the powerful working of God” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## the dead

Paul is using the adjective **dead** 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: “among the dead people” or “the dead ones” (See: **Nominal Adjectives (p.229)**)

## Colossians 2:13

### you, being dead in the trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive together

Here Paul begins the sentence with **you**, and then he restates **you** when he identifies what God has done for **you**. If your language would not restate **you** or use this structure, you could separate the two uses of **you** into separate sentences. Alternate translation: “you were dead in the trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh. Then, he made you alive together” (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.239)**)

### being dead in the trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh

This clause does not refer to the current situation of the Colossians, but rather it describes their situation before God acted to make them alive, as expressed in the rest of the verse. If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify that this clause describes a time before **he made you alive**. Alternate translation: “who used to be dead in the trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh” (See: **Connect — Background Information (p.153)**)

### you, being dead

Paul speaks of people who are without Christ as if they were dead. By this he means that those who lack any relationship with God and are not united to Christ are spiritually dead. If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify that Paul speaks of spiritual death or express the idea with a simile, or express it plainly. Alternate translation: “you, being like dead people” or “you, being totally separated from God” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### being dead in the trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh

When Paul speaks of someone **being dead in** something, this identifies both why and in what state the person is dead. In other words, the Colossians were **dead** because of their **trespasses** and because of their **uncircumcision**, and these things also characterized them while they were dead. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea with a phrase like “because of,” or you could translate **trespasses** and **uncircumcision** as descriptors of **dead**. Alternate translation: “being dead because of your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh” or “being dead, that is, trespassing God’s commands and being uncircumcised in your flesh” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### in the trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh

If your language does not use abstract nouns for the ideas of **trespasses** and **uncircumcision**, you could express the same ideas in another way. Alternate translation: “because you transgressed God’s commands and were uncircumcised in your flesh” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### the uncircumcision of your flesh

Here, **the uncircumcision** could refer: (1) to how the Colossians were not circumcised Jews and thus not part of God’s people. Alternate translation: “among the non-Jews without God’s promises” or “without circumcision, since you are Gentiles” (2) to the metaphor about circumcision in [2:11](#). Alternate translation: “apart from God’s saving work” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)



## the uncircumcision of your flesh

Here Paul uses the possessive form to describe **flesh** that has not been “circumcised.” If your language does not express this idea with the possessive form, you could translate **uncircumcision** as an adjective. Alternate translation: “your uncircumcised flesh” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

## he made you alive together with him

Here Paul speaks of God’s work in restoring people to himself as if he brought these people back to life physically. If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify that Paul speaks of spiritual life or express the idea with a simile or plainly. Alternate translation: “he did something like making you alive together with him” or “he restored you to proper relationship with him” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

## he made you alive together with him

The word **he** refers to God the Father, while the word translated **him** refers to God the Son. If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify the antecedent of one or both of these pronouns. Alternate translation: “God made you alive together with the Messiah” (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.239)**)

## Colossians 2:14

**having canceled the written record of the decrees against us, which were opposed to us, and he has taken {it} out from our midst, having nailed it to the cross**

Paul speaks of the way God forgives our sins as if God **canceled** debts that we owed him. In the metaphor, God has crossed out or erased the **written record** of those debts and thus removed any impact these debts have on our relationship to him. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable metaphor or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “having taken away the guilt from our sins, he has kept those sins from impacting our relationship with him, having nailed them to the cross” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

**against us, which were opposed to us**

The phrases **against us** and **opposed to us** might be considered redundant in your language. If this is the case, you could combine the two phrases into one. Alternate translation: “which were opposed to us” (See: **Doublet (p.181)**)

**he has taken {it} out from our midst**

Paul speaks as if the **written record** was within the community of believers, and God takes it away. What he means by this is that the **written record** of our sins no longer affects our relationship with God and each other. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “he has kept it from affecting our relationship with him and others” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

**having nailed it to the cross**

Here Paul speaks as if God had nailed the “written record” to the cross. He means that Christ’s death on the cross “canceled” the “written record” as surely as if it had been nailed to the cross and died with Christ. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea using a simile, or express it plainly. Alternate translation: “destroying it through the Messiah’s death on the cross” or “having taken it out of the way through Christ’s death” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

## Colossians 2:15

### having stripped & he made a public spectacle of {them}, having triumphed over

Here Paul speaks of God's victory over powerful spiritual beings in terms that fit with what a conqueror often did to his prisoners in Paul's culture. He would make a **public spectacle** or example of them, "stripping" them of their clothes and forcing them to parade behind him in his "triumph." If it would be helpful in your language, you could express these ideas with a comparable metaphor, or express it plainly. Alternate translation: "having defeated ... he showed everyone that he had conquered" (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### the rulers and the authorities

Just as in [1:16](#) and [2:10](#), the **rulers** and **authorities** could refer to: (1) powerful spiritual beings that rule this world. Alternate translation: "the spiritual powers, including those known as rulers and authorities" (2) anybody or anything that rules and has authority. Alternate translation: "those who rule with authority" (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### in it

Alternate translation: "by the cross" or "through the cross"

## Colossians 2:16

### Therefore

The word **Therefore** draws an inference or conclusion from what Paul has already said, which can be found in 2:9–15: in the work of Christ, the Colossians have received new life and the powers that rule this world have been defeated. Because of these things that have happened, the Colossians should not allow others to judge them in how they behave. Paul is continuing the warning against false teachers that he started in 2:8. If it would be helpful in your language, you could refer to these ideas more explicitly or use a comparable transition word or phrase. Alternate translation: “In light of all these things” or “Given the Messiah’s sufficient work on your behalf” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.172)**)

### do not let anyone judge you

This phrase translates a third-person imperative. If your language has third-person imperatives, you could use one here. If your language does not have third-person imperatives, you could use a comparable phrase or express the idea with a second-person imperative. Alternate translation: “you should not allow anyone to judge you” or “do not permit anyone to judge you” (See: **Third-Person Imperatives (p.254)**)

### in food or in drink or in regard to a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths

This list of areas in which someone might judge the Colossians refers to parts of the law of Moses. Some of these areas were also important for other religions in Paul’s culture. If Paul’s list of things that someone could **judge** the Colossians in would be misunderstood in your translation, you could clarify that these areas are covered by the law of Moses and sometimes by the traditions of other religions as well. Alternate translation: “for how you behave in relationship to the law of Moses and other religious traditions, including in the areas of food and drink and festivals and new moons and Sabbaths” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### a new moon

The word **new moon** refers to a festival or celebration that would take place when it was the time of the new moon. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable expression or translate the idea with a longer phrase. Alternate translation: “a new moon celebration” (See: **Metonymy (p.227)**)

## Colossians 2:17

### which are a shadow of the things coming, but the body {is} of Christ

A **shadow** shows the shape and outline of a **body**, but it is not the **body** itself. In a similar way, the things listed in the previous verse show the shape and outline of the **things coming**, but the **body** that casts this **shadow** is **Christ**. He is the substance of the **things coming**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable metaphor or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “which are a foretaste of the things coming, but the full experience is of Christ” or “which hint at the things that were to come, but Christ is the one who came” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### a shadow of the things coming

Paul here uses the possession form to show that the **shadow** is cast by the **things coming**. If your language would not use the possessive form to express this idea, you could express the idea in another way. Alternate translation: “a shadow cast by the things coming” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### of the things coming

The **things coming** primarily refers to things that will happen or be experienced in the future. They can be connected with both the first and the second coming of Christ, which is why the **body** is of Christ in this verse. If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify that **coming** refers to what Christ has blessed believers with at his first coming and what he will bless them with at his second coming. Alternate translation: “blessings that Christ brings” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### the body {is} of Christ

Here Paul uses the possessive form to identify **Christ** as the **body** that casts the “shadow.” If your language would not use the possessive form to express this idea, you could express the idea with a simple “being” verb. Alternate translation: “the body is Christ” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

## Colossians 2:18

### no one & he has seen, & his

The words **no one**, **he**, and **his** do not refer to one male person. Instead, they refer in a generic way to anyone who acts in these ways. If it would be helpful in your language, you could translate these words with a comparable generic phrase in your language or make them plural. Alternate translation: “no one ... they have seen ... their” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.262)**)

### Let no one & deprive you of your prize

This phrase translates a third-person imperative. If your language has third-person imperatives, you could use one here. If your language does not, you could use a comparable phrase or express the idea with a second-person imperative. Alternate translation: “Do not allow anyone ... deprive you of your prize” or “Be on your guard against anyone ... so that he does not deprive you of your prize” (See: **Third-Person Imperatives (p.254)**)

### Let no one & deprive you of your prize

Here Paul refers to the false teachers as if they were judges or umpires at a contest who could decide against the Colossians, thus keeping them from receiving the prize for winning the contest. This metaphor fits with the “judging” language in 2:16. These two verses together suggest that the Colossians are tempted to choose the false teachers as their judges instead of Christ. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable metaphor or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “Let no one ... act instead of Christ as your judge” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### false humility

If your language does not use an abstract noun to express the idea behind **humility**, you could express the idea in another way, such as with a verb. Alternate translation: “humbling themselves falsely” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### worship of the angels

Paul uses the possessive form to describe the act of worshiping angels, not the worship that angels present to God. If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify with a phrase such as “presented to.” Alternate translation: “worship presented to the angels” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### standing on

Here Paul speaks as if the false teachers were **standing on things** they have seen. This metaphor means that they talk about what they have seen and base teachings on it. If it would be helpful in your language, you could translate **standing** with a verb that expresses this idea plainly. Alternate translation: “constantly talking about” or “basing his teaching on” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### things he has seen

In the context of angel worship, **things he has seen** refers to visions and dreams that reveal powerful beings, heaven, the future, or other secrets. If these implications would not be understood in your language, you could use a word or phrase that refers to these kinds of visions or dreams or use a phrase to express the idea. Alternate

translation: “things he has seen in visions” or “secrets revealed to him in visions” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

## becoming puffed up without cause by the mind of his flesh

If your language does not use this passive form, you could translate the phrase in its active form. Alternate translation: “the mind of his flesh puffing him up without cause” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

## becoming puffed up

Here Paul describes people who boast as if they had made themselves larger by filling themselves with air. He means that they think of themselves as more important than they really are. If **becoming puffed up** would not mean “becoming prideful” in your language, you could use a comparable metaphor or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “becoming self-important” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

## by the mind of his flesh

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **mind**, you could express this idea by using a verb such as “think.” Alternate translation: “by how he thinks in fleshly ways” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## the mind of his flesh

Here Paul uses the possessive form to speak of a **mind** that belongs to the **flesh**. This phrase refers to thinking that is characterized by the flesh in its weakness and sinfulness. If your language does not use the possessive form to express that idea, you could express the idea by translating **flesh** as an adjective. Alternate translation: “his fleshly mind” or “his unspiritual mind” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

## Colossians 2:19

### not holding fast to the head

Paul describes the false teachers as if they had let go of the **head**, which is Christ. This means that they have stopped treating Christ as the source and authority behind their teaching. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable expression or translate the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “not staying connected to the head” or “ceasing to depend on Christ, who is the head” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### to the head, from which the whole body, being supplied and held together through the joints and ligaments, grows with the growth from God

In this verse Paul uses an extended metaphor in which Christ is the **head** of the **body**, which is his church, which has **joints** and **ligaments**, and which **grows**. Paul uses this metaphor to describe how Christ leads, directs, nourishes, and unifies his church to help it become what he wants it to be. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea using the language of analogy, or express it plainly. Alternate translation: “to the Messiah, from whom the whole church receives nourishment and leadership and in whom the church is united as it grows with the growth from God” (See: **Biblical Imagery — Extended Metaphors (p.148)**)

### from which the whole body, being supplied and held together through the joints and ligaments

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the sentence in active form. Alternate translation: “which supplies and holds the whole body together throughout the joints and ligaments” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### and & the joints & ligaments

The word **joints** refers to where parts of the body are connected together, while the word translated **ligaments** refers to what holds these parts together. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use technical terms that correspond to **joints** and **ligaments**, or you could use more general language for what holds the body together. Alternate translation: “what holds it together” or “all its parts” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### grows with the growth

The words **grows** and **growth** are directly related and may be redundant in your language. If your language does not use repetition in this way, you could use just one form of “grow.” Alternate translation: “experiences the growth” (See: **Doublet (p.181)**)

### with the growth from God

Paul here speaks of **growth** that is **from God** to show that the church’s **growth** is given by **God** and fits with what **God** desires. If your language would not use this form to express that idea, you could express the idea with a relative clause. Alternate translation: “with the growth that God gives” or “with the growth that God enables” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)



## Colossians 2:20

### If you died with Christ

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, then you could translate the clause as an affirmative statement. Alternate translation: “Since you died with Christ” (See: **Connect — Factual Conditions (p.161)**)

### you died with Christ

Paul now returns to a metaphor he has used earlier: believers have died and “been buried with” Christ (2:12). This means that, in their union with Christ, believers share in his death so that they too have died. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use the language of analogy, or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “you participated in the Messiah’s death” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### you died with Christ from

To “die from” something does not identify what caused the death, but rather it indicates what the death separated the person from. Here, then, the Colossians were separated from the **elemental principles** by participating in Christ’s death. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable idiom or express the idea with a short phrase. Alternate translation: “you died with Christ, which separated you from” or “you died with Christ, which rescued you from” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### the elemental principles of the world

As in 2:8, the word **elemental principles** could refer to: (1) the spiritual powers of this world. Alternate translation: “the powerful spiritual beings that rule this world” (2) basic human opinions about how the world works. Alternate translation: “the basic things that humans teach about the world” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### why, as living in the world, are you being subjected to its decrees

If this structure would be difficult to understand in your language, you could move the phrase **as living in the world** to the end of the sentence. Alternate translation: “why are you being subjected to the world’s decrees as living in the world” (See: **Information Structure (p.213)**)

### living in the world

Paul uses the verb **living** to describe the Colossian’s way of life. They are indeed physically alive and in the world, but he wants them to behave in ways that do not match what people **in the world** normally do. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea with a verbal phrase such as “belonging to” or “conforming to.” Alternate translation: “belonging to the world” or “conforming to the world” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### as living in the world

In this context, the word **as** introduces something that is not true: the Colossians do not actually live **in the world**. If **as** would be misunderstood your language, you could clarify that **living in the world** is not true of the Colossians, using a phrase such as “as if.” Alternate translation: “as if living in the world” (See: **Connect — Contrary to Fact Conditions (p.156)**)

## why, as living in the world, are you being subjected to its decrees

Paul does not ask this question because he is looking for information. Rather, he asks it to involve the Corinthians in what he is arguing. Here, there is no answer to the question, since that is exactly Paul's point. There is no reason for them to be **subjected to its decrees**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea as an imperative or a "should" statement. Alternate translation: "do not, as living in the world, be subjected to its decrees" or "you should not, as living in the world, be subjected to its decrees" (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.241)**)

## are you being subjected to its decrees

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in its active form, perhaps by using a similar verb. Alternate translation: "do you submit to its decrees" or "do you subject yourselves to its decrees" (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

## are you being subjected to its decrees

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **decrees**, you could express the idea with a relative clause. Alternate translation: "are you being subjected to what people require" or "are you being subjected to what it commands" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## Colossians 2:21

### You may not handle, nor taste, nor touch

This verse gives three commands that are not from Paul, but rather they are examples of the “decrees” from [2:20](#). If it would be helpful in your language, you could introduce these commands with a phrase, such as “for example,” that shows that they connect to the “decrees” in the previous verse. Alternate translation: “for example, ‘You may not handle, nor taste, nor touch!’”

### You may not handle, nor taste, nor touch

Paul does not express what these commands say not to **handle**, **taste**, or **touch**, but it is clear that only certain things would be included, not all things. If your language would make this information explicit, you could add a generic phrase such as “certain things” or use words that match each command. Alternate translation: “You may not handle certain objects, nor taste certain foods and drinks, nor touch certain people” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### You may & handle, & taste, & touch

These commands are addressed to **You** in the singular. Most likely, Paul refers to specific commands given to one person in a specific situation. However, he does intend these to be taken as examples of commands that might be given to any person among the Colossians. If your language can use a command in the singular as a generic example, you could do so here. If this does not make sense in your language, you could use plural commands here. Alternate translation: “You all may ... handle ... taste ... touch” (See: **Forms of ‘You’ — Singular (p.190)**)

## Colossians 2:22

### which

This pronoun refers to the commands in the previous verse, especially focusing on the implied objects of the rules. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea with a noun or a short phrase. Alternate translation: “The things that these commands regulate” (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.239)**)

### are all for destruction with the use

This phrase means that all the objects that the commands in the previous verse are about end up being destroyed when they are used. In other words, food and drink are destroyed when they are eaten, and tools eventually break when they are used. By describing the objects in this way, Paul shows that the rules about these objects are not very important. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea behind this phrase differently, such as with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: “all end up in destruction because of their use” (See: **Idiom (p. 208)**)

### for destruction with the use

If your language does not use abstract nouns to express the ideas behind **destruction** and **use**, you could express the idea by using verbs. Alternate translation: “destroyed when they are used” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### the commands and teachings of men

Paul here uses the possessive form to describe **commands and teachings** that come from **men**. If your language does not use the possessive form to express that idea, you could clarify that these teachings “come from” **men**. Alternate translation: “the commands and teachings that come from men” or “the commands and teachings that men make” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### the commands and teachings of men

If your language does not use abstract nouns to express the ideas behind **commands** and **teachings**, you could express the idea by using verbs. Alternate translation: “what men command and teach” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p. 140)**)

### of men

Although the word **men** is masculine, Paul is using it to refer to anyone, whether men or women. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a non-gendered word or refer to both genders. Alternate translation: “of men and women” or “of humans” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.262)**)

## Colossians 2:23

### having indeed a word of wisdom

Commands that have a **word of wisdom** are commands that come from wise thinking or require wise behavior. If it would be helpful in your language, you could translate this idiom with a comparable expression, or express it plainly. Alternate translation: “being indeed characterized by wisdom” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### a word

Here, **a word** represents a message that is made up of words. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: “a message” or “a lesson” (See: **Metonymy (p.227)**)

### which, having indeed a word of wisdom in self-made religion and false humility {and} severity of the body

While there is no grammatical marker for a condition here, the word **in** functionally introduces a condition: these commands have a **word of wisdom** “if” one values **self-made religion and false humility and severity of the body**. It is only if one values these things that the commands have wisdom. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea by using a conditional expression, or use the word “seem.” Alternate translation: “which, having indeed a word of wisdom if one values self-made religion and false humility and severity of the body” or “which, seeming to have a word or wisdom for those who practice self-made religion and false humility and severity of the body” (See: **Hypothetical Situations (p.205)**)

### having indeed a word of wisdom in self-made religion and false humility {and} severity of the body

If your language does not use abstract nouns to express the ideas behind **wisdom**, **religion**, **humility**, and **severity**, you could rephrase this part of the verse so that you could express these ideas with verbal phrases. Alternate translation: “having indeed a word that seems wise according to people who serve God in their own way, who humble themselves for gain, and who act severely to their bodies” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### self-made religion

The phrase **self-made religion** could describe: (1) people who worship God however they want to. Alternate translation: “invented religion” (2) people who pretend to worship God but do not. Alternate translation: “mock worship” or “false worship” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### and} severity of the body

The phrase **severity of the body** refers to treating one's body harshly as part of one's religious practice. This could include beating oneself, not eating enough, or other ascetic practices. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an expression that refers to religious practice or translate the idea with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: “and wounding one's body” or “and torturing one's body” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## are not of any value

If your language does not use an abstract noun to express the idea behind **value**, you could combine it with the verbal phrase **are not** to create a new phrase. Alternate translation: “do nothing” or “are ineffective” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## indulgence of the flesh

Paul uses the possessive form to speak of **indulgence** one gives to the **flesh**. If your language would not use the possessive form to express this idea, you could translate **indulgence** with a verb such as “indulging.” Alternate translation: “indulging the flesh.” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

## indulgence of the flesh

If one “indulges” **the flesh**, this means that one has behaved in ways that match what one’s weak and sinful parts wish. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea by using a word for “sin.” Alternate translation: “sin” or “giving in to sin” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## indulgence of the flesh

If your language does not use an abstract noun to express the idea behind **indulgence**, you could use a verb, such as “indulge.” Alternate translation: “indulging the flesh” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## Colossians 3

### Colossians 3 General Notes

### Structure and Formatting

[4:1](#) belongs to the section that begins in [3:18](#), even though it is in the next chapter.

Exhortation Section

- Seek the Things Above (3:1–4)
- Take off Vices, Put on Virtues (3:5–17)
- Commands for the Household (3:18–4:1)

### Religious and Cultural Concepts in This Chapter

#### Old and new “man”

Paul refers to the old and new “man” in [3:9–10](#). These terms refer to the person before (“old”) and after (“new”) dying and rising with Christ. With these key words, Paul makes a similar claim to what he argued in [2:11–13](#): believers are not who they used to be; rather, they have received new life in Christ and are new people. Your translation should reflect the idea that Paul tells the Colossians that they are new people in their union with Christ.

#### The wrath of God

In [3:6](#), Paul speaks of the “wrath of God,” which is “coming.” God’s “wrath” is not primarily an emotion, but rather, it is his act of judgment on those who do not believe and who disobey. It is “coming” because God will act in judgment soon. In your translation, emphasize God’s act over his emotion.

#### No Greek and Jew ...

In [3:11](#), Paul refers to multiple different ways to categorize people in his world. See the notes on that verse for details. Paul says that none of these categories exist in the “new man.” By this, he means that these categories are not relevant for those who have died and risen with Christ. It is one’s status as a “new” person that is relevant and important.

### Translation Issues in This Chapter

#### Christ, your life

In [3:4](#), Paul identifies Christ as the Colossians’ “life.” This metaphor comes from the previous verse, where Paul says that the Colossians’ life is “hidden with Christ.” Since their life is in Christ, Christ can be called their life. To say this a different way, the Colossians only have life in Christ, so their life and Christ’s life are bound together.

#### Avoiding vices, pursuing virtues

In his exhortation to the Colossians to avoid vices and pursue virtues, Paul uses a number of metaphors. For avoiding vices, he uses the language of “putting to death” ([3:5](#)), “laying aside” ([3:8](#)), and “taking off” ([3:9](#)). All these metaphors require separation from vices, whether that is pictured as putting to death parts of the body that

pursue vices or as taking off evil desires as if they were clothing. For pursuing virtues, he opposes “taking off” with “putting on” (3:10; 3:12). Just as the Colossians should “take off” the desire to pursue vices, they should “put on” the desire to pursue virtues. These metaphors are all intended to help the Colossians pursue virtue instead of vice.

## Translation Issues in This Chapter

### Vice and virtue lists

In 3:5 and 3:8, Paul gives lists of vices. These lists are not meant to provide a complete catalog of immoral and evil behaviors. Instead, they provide some examples that are meant to show the Colossians the kinds of behaviors that Paul has in mind. In 3:12, he provides a corresponding list of virtues. The same thinking applies here: this is not a complete catalog of correct or good behavior but instead gives examples of the kinds of things that Paul wants the Colossians to do. You could introduce these lists as examples if it would help your readers understand.

### The “household code”

In 3:18–4:1, Paul uses a form that was well-known in his culture. It is often called a “household code,” and it consists of a list of instructions to different members of the household, including parents, children, slaves, and others. Paul uses this form and gives his own specific instructions to members of the household. Of course, he is not addressing a household but a church. He gives his instructions to whomever in the audience was a parent or a child or a slave.



## Colossians 3:1

### therefore

The word **therefore** introduces an exhortation based on what Paul has already said about being “raised with Christ” in 2:12. Use a word or phrase that introduces an inference or concluding command based on what has already been said. Alternate translation: “then” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.172)**)

### If, & you were raised with Christ

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, then you could translate his words as an affirmative statement. Alternate translation: “Since ... you were raised with Christ” (See: **Connect — Factual Conditions (p.161)**)

### you were raised with Christ

Paul again states that believers have been raised from the dead with Christ. By this, he means that believers are united to Christ in his resurrection and thus receive new life. If it would be helpful in your language, you could translate this idea plainly. Alternate translation: “in union with the Messiah in his resurrection you received new life” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### you were raised with

Paul uses the word **raised** to refer to someone who had died coming back to life. If this word does not refer to coming back to life in your language, you could use a comparable idiom or a short phrase. Alternate translation: “you were restored to life with” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### you were raised with

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form, with God as the subject. Alternate translation: “God the Father raised you with” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### seek the things above

Here Paul speaks as if he wants the Colossians to look for or try to find **things above**. By using the word **seek**, Paul wants to tell the Colossians to focus on **the things above** as if they were something valuable that the Colossians had lost and needed to find. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea with a comparable metaphor, or express it plainly. Alternate translation: “direct your attention to the things above” or “focus on the things above” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### the things above

The **things above** is another term for heavenly things, which Paul makes clear in the next phrase. If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify that the phrase refers specifically to things in heaven. Alternate translation: “the heavenly things” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

## sitting at the right hand of God

This phrase implies two things. First, what Christ sits on is the divine throne in heaven. Second, **sitting** on this throne means that Christ has assumed a position of authority over the universe with God the Father. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make either or both of these points explicit. Alternate translation: “sitting on the throne at the right hand of God” or “ruling at the right hand of God” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

## Colossians 3:2

### Think about

The phrase **Think about** refers not just to reasoning but also to focus and desire. Alternate translation: “Focus on”

### the things above

Just as in [3:1](#), the **things above** is another term for heavenly things. If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify that the phrase refers specifically to things in heaven. Alternate translation: “the heavenly things” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### the things on the earth

The **things on the earth** describes those things in this world that are not connected to Christ, which are not **the things above**. Not thinking about **the things on the earth** does not mean that the Colossians are supposed to abandon all care for earthly things. Instead, Paul is urging them to focus on Christ and what he has promised for them, not on whatever they could gain on earth. If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify this contrast by further describing **the things on the earth**. Alternate translation: “the things that matter in this world” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

## Colossians 3:3

### For

The word **For** introduces the reason why the Colossians should think about the things above (3:1–2): it is because they **died**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the transition more explicitly. Alternate translation: “You should think about the things above because” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.166)**)

### you died

Here Paul expresses in slightly different form the idea he already stated in 2:20: the Colossians have been united to Christ in his death. As Christ actually died, so God counts the Colossian believers as having **died** with Christ. If it would be helpful in your language, you could translate this idea as you did in 2:20, or express it plainly. Alternate translation: “you died in union with the Messiah” or “you participated in the Messiah’s death” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### your life has been hidden with Christ in God

Here Paul speaks as if the Colossians’ lives were objects that could be **hidden** where Christ is, and as if the place they were hidden was God. By using this metaphor, Paul wants the Colossians to know that they are safe (**with Christ in God**) but also that their new life is not yet fully revealed (**hidden**). If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “God is protecting your new life with Christ and will reveal it when the time comes” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### your life has been hidden with Christ in God

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form. Alternate translation: “God has hidden your life with Christ in himself” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### your life has been hidden

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **life**, you could rephrase the sentence so that you could use a verb for “living.” Alternate translation: “you live in a hidden way” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## Colossians 3:4

### Christ, your life, is revealed

If your language does not use this passive form, you could translate the idea in active form with: (1) Christ as the subject. Alternate translation: “Christ, your life, reveals himself” or “Christ, your life, appears” (2) God the Father as the subject. Alternate translation: “God the Father reveals Christ, your life,” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### your life

Continuing the theme of the Colossians’ life being hidden with Christ, Paul now identifies Christ as the Colossians’ **life**. In other words, if the Colossians’ life is hidden with Christ, then Christ can be called their **life**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea with a comparable metaphor, or express it plainly. Alternate translation: “who holds your life” or “with whom you have life” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### your life

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **life**, you could express the idea with a verb for “living.” Alternate translation: “in whom you live” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### is revealed, & will be revealed with him

Paul uses the word **is revealed** to refer to Christ’s second coming, when he is **revealed** to everyone as who he truly is. Paul uses the phrase **will be revealed with him** to refer to how the Colossians will participate with Christ in that second coming and also be **revealed** as who they truly are. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use words such as “coming” or “returning” instead of “revealing.” Alternate translation: “comes again ... will come with him” or “returns ... will return with him” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### When & then

The word **When** indicates a moment in time, and the word translated **then** refers back to that same time. Therefore, the events described in two parts of this sentence occur at the same time. Use a construction that indicates simultaneous time in your language. Alternate translation: “When ... at the same time” (See: **Connect — Simultaneous Time Relationship (p.170)**)

### in glory

As a previous note pointed out, the “revealing” language suggests that something will be revealed about Christ and the Colossians. Here, Paul describes it as **glory**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify that this is one thing that **is revealed** about Christ and the Colossians: they are glorious. Alternate translation: “as glorious” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### in glory

If your language does not use an abstract noun to express the idea behind **glory**, you could express the idea in another way. Alternate translation: “as very great” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## Colossians 3:5

### therefore

Here, the word **therefore** introduces an exhortation based on previous statements. In this case, Paul bases his exhortation on what he has said about the Colossians' union with Christ and its end goal: being revealed with him in glory. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable connecting word or express the idea with a phrase that refers back to what Paul has already said. Alternate translation: "because of your union with Christ" (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.172)**)

### Put to death, therefore

If your language would normally put a transition word like **therefore** at the beginning of the sentence, you could move it there in your translation. Alternate translation: "Therefore, put to death" (See: **Information Structure (p. 213)**)

### Put to death, & the members {that are} on the earth

Here Paul speaks of the **members** as if they were people that one could kill or **Put to death**. By using this metaphor, he wants to show the Colossians that the evil desires he lists should be treated as enemies and dealt with as harshly as possible. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable metaphor or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: "Eliminate ... the members that are on the earth" (See: **Metaphor (p. 221)**)

### the members {that are} on the earth

Paul here speaks of sins as if they were **members** or limbs of the body that are part of the person **on the earth**. What this metaphor means is that these sins can be so much a part of a person while they are living on earth that getting rid of them is like cutting off an arm or leg. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable metaphor or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: "the sins that have become part of you while you live on earth" (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### sexual immorality, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and envy, which is idolatry

If your language would not use abstract nouns to express the ideas behind **immorality, uncleanness, passion, desire, envy, and idolatry**, you could rephrase this sentence and use adjectives or verbs to express the idea. Alternate translation: "behaving in ways that are sexually immoral, unclean, wrongly emotional, lustful, and envious, which is idolatrous" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### uncleanness

The word **uncleanness** describes morally dirty or impure behavior. This is a general term that covers many sins that would make one unclean, that is, that would make other people avoid one. If you have a comparable expression in your language, you could use it here, or you could express the idea with a short phrase. Alternate translation: "unclean behavior" or "disgusting acts" (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## passion

The word **passion** refers to negative emotions that are triggered by outside events. Examples would include forms of anger and jealousy. If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify that these are improper emotions, since Paul is not saying that all emotions are wrong. Alternate translation: “improper emotions” or “evil passions” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## evil desire

The word **desire** refers to longing after something, often in a sexual context. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable word or express the idea with a short phrase. Alternate translation: “evil lust” or “evil longing” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## envy

Here Paul uses the word **envy** to refer to wanting more than one needs, especially wanting more than what others have. If you have a comparable term, you could use it here, or you could express the idea with a short phrase. Alternate translation: “desiring to have more than what others have” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## which

Here, **which** refers back to **envy** only, not to other items in the list. If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify that **which** refers to **envy**. Alternate translation: “and envy” (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p. 239)**)

## Colossians 3:6

### is coming

Many ancient manuscripts include “on the sons of disobedience” after **is coming**. Several early and reliable manuscripts do not include it, however. If a translation of the Bible exists in your region, you may wish to include these words if that translation includes them. If a translation of the Bible does not exist in your region, you may wish to follow the example of the ULT and not include these words. The phrase “sons of disobedience” is an idiom that refers to people who disobey. Alternate translation: “is coming against people who disobey” (See: **Textual Variants (p.252)**)

### because of which

With this phrase, Paul identifies the sins listed in the previous verse as the reason why God’s “wrath” is coming. If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify this idea by including a word such as “sins” in the phrase. Alternate translation: “because of which sins” (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.239)**)

### the wrath of God is coming

Here Paul speaks of **the wrath of God** as if it were a person or package that can arrive somewhere. By this, he means that God has not yet acted upon his **wrath** but that he will act soon. The Colossians can expect **the wrath** to come soon, just like a package that is arriving soon. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable metaphor or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “God will act upon his wrath soon” or “the wrath of God will be enacted soon” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### the wrath of God is coming

When the **wrath of God** “is coming,” it must arrive somewhere and be against certain people. If you would explicitly state these things in your language, you could clarify that the **wrath** of God comes on earth and against those who do the sins listed in the previous verse. Alternate translation: “the wrath of God is coming on earth against those who do these things” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### the wrath of God

The **wrath of God** does not refer simply to an emotion. Rather, this phrase primarily refers to God acting against the sin he hates (examples of which appear in the previous verse). If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a word or phrase that indicates action and not just emotion. Alternate translation: “punishment from God” (See: **Metonymy (p.227)**)



## Colossians 3:7

### in which

The word **which** refers again back to the list of sins in 3:5. If it would be helpful in your language, you could include the word “sins” to clarify this reference. Alternate translation: “in which sins” (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.239)**)

### in which you also formerly walked

Paul speaks of behavior that is characteristic of one’s life as if it were something that one could “walk in.” By this, he means that the sinful behaviors were things that they normally did. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea with a comparable metaphor or express it plainly. Alternate translation: “which formerly characterized your lives too” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### formerly walked

The word **formerly** is used to refer to some indefinite time in the past. Here Paul uses it to refer to the time before the Colossians believed in Jesus. If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify the specific time reference. Alternate translation: “walked before you believed” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### when

The word **when** introduces a clause that occurs simultaneously with the main clause. Here, the Colossians “lived” **in them** at the same time as they were “walking” in them. Use an expression that indicates simultaneous time in your language. Alternate translation: “at the time when” (See: **Connect — Simultaneous Time Relationship (p.170)**)

### you were living in them

The phrase **living in** something could mean: (1) that the Colossians practiced these sins in addition to having lives characterized by them (“walking in them”). Alternate translation: “you were doing these things” (2) that the Colossians were living among people who did these things. Alternate translation: “you were living among people who did these things” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### in which you also formerly walked when you were living in them

If **which** and **them** both refer to the sins mentioned in 3:5, then “walking” and **living** in them mean very similar things. Paul uses the repetition to emphasize how thoroughly the Colossians’ lives were characterized by sins. If your language does not use repetition in this way or has only one phrase for this concept, you could use just one of these phrases. Alternate translation: “in which you also formerly walked” or “in which you used to live” (See: **Doublet (p.181)**)

## Colossians 3:8

### But now

The phrase **But now** introduces a contrast with the previous verse, a contrast that focuses on time. The word translated **now** refers to the time after the Colossians believed. It introduces how they should behave **now** in contrast to how they behaved “formerly” (3:7). If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify what **now** refers to. Alternate translation: “But now that you believe in Jesus,” (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.159)**)

### must & lay aside

Here Paul exhorts the Colossians to **lay aside** sins as if the sins were garments that they could take off or objects they could set down and stop using. By talking this way, Paul encourages the Colossians to no longer use or be associated with sins that are not part of who they are in their union with Christ, just as clothes and objects are not part of the person but can be removed. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea with a comparable metaphor or plainly. Alternate translation: “must ... separate yourselves from” or “must ... no longer do” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### wrath, anger, evil desire, slander, {and} obscene speech from your mouth

If your language does not use abstract nouns for the ideas behind these words, you could express the ideas by using verbs or adjectives. Alternate translation: “wrathful, angry, and lustful behavior, and slanderous and obscene words” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### wrath, anger

The words **wrath** and **anger** are almost synonymous, with **wrath** emphasizing angry actions and **anger** emphasizing angry emotions. If your language does not have two words for “anger” that work here, you could express the idea with one word. Alternate translation: “anger” (See: **Doublet (p.181)**)

### evil desire

The phrase **evil desire** is a broad term that means “vice,” the opposite of “virtue.” If your language has a general term for “vice,” you could use it here. Alternate translation: “vice” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### and} obscene speech

The phrase **obscene speech** refers to “shameful words,” words that are not spoken in polite company. If your language has a word or phrase for these kinds of words, you could use it here. Alternate translation: “and obscenities” or “and cursing” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### from your mouth

Here, **from your mouth** is an idiom that refers to speaking, since speech comes out of the **mouth**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable idiom or express the idea with a word such as “talk.” Alternate translation: “in your talk” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

## Colossians 3:9

### having taken off

The clause that begins with **having taken off** could: (1) give the reason why the Colossians should not lie to each other (and should put off the sins listed in the previous verse). Alternate translation: “because you have taken off” (2) give another command. Alternate translation: “and take off” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.166)**)

### having taken off the old man

Here Paul uses a metaphor that is similar to one he used in [2:11](#), where he speaks of the “circumcision of Christ” that “puts off” the body of flesh. Here, he speaks of the **old man** as if it were a piece of clothing that the Colossians could “take off.” This does not mean that their true selves are found underneath the **old man**, since the next verse has them putting on the **new man**. Instead, Paul uses the metaphor to illustrate how they have changed identity from **old** to “new.” If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea with a comparable metaphor or express it plainly. Alternate translation: “having forsaken your old identity” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### the old man

Paul uses the phrase **the old man** as part of his language about dying and rising with Christ. The **old man** is thus the person who died with Christ. It does not refer to a part of the person, but rather, it refers to what the whole person used to be before dying with Christ. This is why the ULT uses the neuter pronoun **its** to refer to **old man** later in the verse. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a term that refers to the whole person and who he or she used to be. Alternate translation: “the old ‘you’” or “your old identity” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### man

While the word **man** is grammatically masculine, it does not refer primarily to male people but to humans in general. If you have a general word for humans in your language, you could use it here. Alternate translation: “human” or “human being” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.262)**)

### with its practices

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **practices**, you could express the idea by using a relative clause that refers to what the **old man** “normally does.” Alternate translation: “along with what it does” or “with how it acts” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## Colossians 3:10

### having put on

The clause that begins with **having put on** is parallel to the clause beginning with “having taken off” in the previous verse (3:9). Translate this clause with the same structure you used in the previous verse. This clause could: (1) give the reason why the Colossians should not lie to each other (and should put off the sins listed in the 3:8). Alternate translation: “because you have put on” (2) give another command. Alternate translation: “put on” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.166)**)

### having put on the new man

Here, Paul continues the metaphor of changing clothing, which he began in 3:9. Once the Colossians have “taken off” the “old man,” they **put on** the **new man**. Translate this expression as an appropriate opposite to your translation of “take off” in the previous verse. Alternate translation: “having stepped into your new identity” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### the new man

As in the previous verse (3:9), the phrase **new man** does not refer to a male person but to what one has become when one is raised with Christ. It does not refer to a part of the person but rather to what the whole person has become after being raised with Christ. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a term that refers to the whole person and who they are. Alternate translation: “the new ‘you’” or “your new identity” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### being renewed

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form, with God as the subject. Alternate translation: “whom God is renewing” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### in knowledge

The first thing Paul says about the “renewing” is its purpose, which is **knowledge**. If **in knowledge** would not be understood as a purpose statement in your language, you could use an expression that indicates that gaining **knowledge** is one purpose of **being renewed**. Alternate translation: “to gain knowledge” or “so as to know more” (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.163)**)

### knowledge

While Paul does not say here what this **knowledge** concerns, it probably refers to knowing both God (as in 1:10) and God’s will (as in 1:9). If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify what this knowledge concerns. Alternate translation: “the knowledge of God and his will” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### knowledge

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **knowledge**, you could express the idea in a different way, such as with a relative clause. Alternate translation: “what you know” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## according to the image of the one having created it

The second thing Paul says about the “renewing” is the standard or pattern by which God renews his people: the **image of the one who created it**. Use a word or phrase in your language that indicates the standard or pattern according to which something is accomplished. Alternate translation: “so that it matches the image of the one who created it” (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.163)**)

## the image

The word **image** could refer to: (1) the way humans show or reflect God’s glory, just like he created them to do. Alternate translation: “the reflection of the glory” (2) Christ, who is the image of God, the way humans can see the invisible God. Alternate translation: “Christ, the image” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## according to the image of the one

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **image**, you could express the idea in a different way, such as with a relative clause. Make sure your translation fits with what **image** refers to, as discussed in the previous note. Alternate translation: “according to how you reflect the one” or “according to Christ, who reflects the one” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## of the one having created

The **one having created it** refers to God. If **the one having created it** would be misunderstood, you could clarify that God is **the one**. Alternate translation: “of God, who created” (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.239)**)

## it

The pronoun **it** refers to “the new man.” If it would be helpful in your language, you could refer back to “the new man” more directly. Alternate translation: “this new man” (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.239)**)

## Colossians 3:11

### where

Here Paul refers to the “new man” from the previous verse as if it were a place one could be in. This means that the word **where** refers to the new situation of those who have put on this “new man.” If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea by identifying those who have put on the “new man” as the ones addressed by this verse. Alternate translation: (start a new sentence) “For those who have put on the new man,” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### there is no

Here, Paul speaks as if none of the kinds of people he mentions exist in this new situation. The Colossians would have understood this as a way to emphasize how little the differences between all these kinds of people matter once they have died and risen with Christ. They all fit into the category of the “new man” now. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea without the hyperbole by emphasizing the new unity of people from all these categories. Alternate translation: “all people are the same,” (See: **Hyperbole (p.201)**)

### there is no Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, freeman

All these terms are nouns that refer to groups of people that are characterized by the trait that the noun names. These words do not refer to just one person. If your language has a way to categorize people by characteristics, you could use that form here. Alternate translation: “there are no Greek and Jewish people, circumcised and uncircumcised people, barbaric people, Scythian people, enslaved people, free people” (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.192)**)

### barbarian

The word **barbarian** was used by people who spoke Greek to describe anyone who did not speak Greek. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea with a word such as “foreign.” Alternate translation: “alien” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### Scythian

The word **Scythian** was used to describe a nomadic group of people who were fierce warriors. It was also used to describe those who behaved in similar ways, who were often considered rough or rude. If it would be helpful in your language, you could add an adjective before **Scythian** to clarify its connotation, or you could use a comparable label. Alternate translation: “uncivilized Scythian” or “rough Scythian” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### Christ {is} all, and

Here Paul speaks of **Christ** as being **all** things. By this, he means that none of the categories he just listed matter because Christ is the only person who matters. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea with a verb such as “matters” or a noun such as “importance.” Alternate translation: “Christ is all that matters, and he is” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

**in all**

Again, Paul speaks of those who have died and risen with Christ. Here, instead of speaking of the Colossians being “in Christ,” he reverses the form, just as he did in [1:27](#): Christ is **in all** of those who believe in him. If possible, translate this expression the same way you translated “Christ in you” in [1:27](#). Alternate translation: “is united to all of you” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

## Colossians 3:12

### Therefore

Here the word **Therefore** introduces an exhortation based on what Paul has already told the Colossians in 3:9–11 about putting off the old man, putting on the new man, and the effects of this. Use a word or phrase in your language that introduces an exhortation based on what has already been said, and you could refer back to what Paul has already said. Alternate translation: “Because you have put off the old man and put on the new man” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.172)**)

### put on

The phrase **put on** uses the same words Paul used in 3:10 for “having put on” the new man. Here, he uses the same clothing metaphor to show the Colossians that “putting on” the new man means that they also must **put on** the character traits he lists here. This means that they must consistently behave in ways that show **mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, {and} patience**. If possible, translate **put on** as you did in 3:10. Alternate translation: “step into new virtues, including” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### as

Paul uses the word **as** to introduce his description of who the Colossians are. He describes them in ways that will give them a reason to “put on” the virtues he lists. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea by using a word or phrase that gives a reason or basis for a command. Alternate translation: “because you are” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.166)**)

### chosen ones of God

Paul here uses the possessive form to indicate that the Colossians are **chosen ones** because **God** chose them. If your language would not use the possessive form to express that idea, you could express the idea by translating **chosen** with a verb such as “chose,” with God as the subject. Alternate translation: “ones whom God has chosen” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### inner parts of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, {and} patience

If your language would not use abstract nouns to express these ideas, you could: (1) translate the abstract nouns as verbs. Alternate translation: “the character traits of showing care to others, treating them nicely, not thinking highly of yourselves, considering others more important than yourselves, and not being easily annoyed” (2) translate the abstract nouns as adjectives. Alternate translation: “the merciful, kind, humble, gentle, and patient new man” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### inner parts of mercy

Greek speakers could refer to the **inner parts** as the location of emotions, especially emotions related to love or empathy for another person. The **inner parts of mercy**, then, refers to having **mercy** where one experiences emotions. In this sentence, **inner parts** is connected with an **of** only to **mercy**, not to any of the other character traits. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an alternate metaphor or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “a heart of mercy” or “a merciful heart” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)



## kindness

The word **kindness** refers to the character trait of being good, kind, or helpful to others. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable word or express the idea with a short phrase. Alternate translation: “a generous attitude toward others” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## gentleness

The word **gentleness** describes the character trait of being considerate of and gentle with others. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable word or express the idea with a short phrase. Alternate translation: “a considerate attitude” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## and} patience

In this context, the word **patience** refers to the ability to remain calm and even-tempered even when others do things that provoke one to anger. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable word or express the idea with a short phrase. Alternate translation: “and forbearance” or “and the ability to remain calm” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## Colossians 3:13

### bearing with one another and being gracious to each other if someone may have a complaint against someone else

If your language would put the conditional statement first, you could move the **if** clause to the beginning, starting a new sentence. Alternate translation: "If someone may have a complaint against someone else, bear with one another and be gracious to each other" (See: **Information Structure (p.213)**)

### bearing with one another

In Paul's culture, the phrase **bearing with one another** refers to being patient with others, even when they do things that are annoying or strange. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable idiom or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: "putting up with one another" or "being patient with one another" (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### if

Paul uses **if** to introduce a hypothetical situation that he thinks will happen among the Colossians at times. It is in this kind of situation that he wants them to "bear with one another and be gracious to each other." If your language would not use **if** to express that idea, you could express the idea by using a word or phrase that refers to any time something happens. Alternate translation: "whenever" (See: **Hypothetical Situations (p.205)**)

### someone may have a complaint against someone else

This phrase indicates a situation in which one person feels offended or hurt by another person. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable idiom or an expression that indicates that one party has been offended or hurt by another. Alternate translation: "a person has been offended by another person" (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### may have a complaint against

If your language does not use an abstract noun to express the idea behind **complaint**, you could express the idea by translating the abstract noun as a verb. Alternate translation: "may complain against" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### just as also the Lord forgave you, so also should you

If your language would put the comparison after the command, you could switch them in your translation, including "forgive" in the new first clause. Alternate translation: "you should forgive others, just as the Lord forgave you" (See: **Information Structure (p.213)**)

### just as also the Lord forgave you

Here Paul draws a comparison between how he wants the Colossians to forgive and how Jesus has forgiven them. Use a word or phrase that would normally be used for comparing things that are similar. Alternate translation: "in the same way that the Lord forgave you" (See: **Simile (p.245)**)

## **so also should you**

Paul leaves out words that could be needed in some languages to make a complete statement. If your language needs these words, you could supply words such as “forgive one another.” Alternate translation: “so also you should forgive each other” (See: **Ellipsis (p.183)**)

## Colossians 3:14

### But above all these things, love

Here Paul speaks as if **love** is higher than, or **above**, all the things he has said. By this, he means that **love** is more important than **all these things**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable metaphor or express the idea plainly with a word such as “important” or “essential.” Alternate translation: “But what is most essential is love” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### love

Here Paul omits some words that may be required in your language to make a complete thought. If your language would include more words, you could insert the words that Paul implies, which can be found in [3:12](#): “put on.” Alternate translation: “put on love” (See: **Ellipsis (p.183)**)

### love

If your language does not use an abstract noun to express the idea behind **love**, you could express the idea by using a verb. If your language requires you to specify who the Colossians are supposed to “love,” you could clarify that Paul has other believers in mind first, but he is also thinking of God. Alternate translation: “love one another” or “love each other and God” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### which is the bond of perfection

Here, **the bond of perfection** is a metaphor for something that brings people together in perfect unity. This could refer to: (1) the perfect unity in community that Paul wishes for believers. Alternate translation: “which brings you together in perfect unity” (2) the perfect unity that love brings to all Christian virtues. Alternate translation: “which brings all these virtues together to perfection” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### the bond of perfection

Here Paul uses the possessive form to describe: (1) **the bond** that leads to **perfection**. Alternate translation: “the bond that brings perfection” (2) **the bond** that has **perfection**. Alternate translation: “the perfect bond” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### the bond of perfection

If your language does not use an abstract noun to express the idea behind **perfection**, you could express the idea by an adjective such as “perfect” or a verb such as “complete.” Alternate translation: “the perfect bond” or “the bond that completes” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## Colossians 3:15

### let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts

Here Paul uses a third person imperative. If you have third person imperatives in your language, you could use one here. If you do not have third person imperatives, you could translate this imperative in the second person, with the Colossians as the subject of a verb such as “obey” and the **peace of Christ** as the object. Alternate translation: “in your hearts obey the peace of Christ” (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses (p.210)**)

### let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts

Paul speaks of the **peace of Christ** as if it should be the “ruler” in the Colossians’ hearts. The word **rule** is closely related to the word translated “deprive of your prize” that Paul uses in 2:18: both are used of a judge or an umpire making a decision, although in 2:18, the judge or umpire decides against the Colossians. Here, the idea is that the **peace of Christ** acts as the judge or umpire in the **hearts** of the Colossians, which means that this **peace** helps them decide what to feel and do. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable metaphor or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “let the peace of Christ make your decisions in your hearts” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### in your hearts

In Paul’s culture, **hearts** are the places where humans think and plan. If it would be helpful in your language, you could refer to the place where humans think in your culture or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “in your minds” or “your thinking” (See: **Metonymy (p.227)**)

### which

The pronoun **which** refers to “the peace of Christ.” If it would be helpful in your language, you could state this explicitly. Alternate translation: “which peace” (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.239)**)

### also you were called

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form, with God as the subject. Alternate translation: “God called you also” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### in one body

Paul speaks of the Colossians as if they were **in**, or part of, **one body**. With this metaphor, he clarifies the situation in which they have been called to peace: in the **one body**, which is the church. Just as the parts of a body are at “peace” with each other (when the body is working properly), so also the Colossians are to be at peace with each other in the church. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable metaphor or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “as you together make up the church” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### become thankful

Alternate translation: “become thankful people” or “be thankful”

## Colossians 3:16

### Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly

Here Paul uses a third person imperative. If you have third person imperatives in your language, you could use one here. If you do not have third person imperatives, you could express Paul's command in the second person with the Colossians as the subject of a verb such as "welcome." Alternate translation: "Welcome the word of Christ richly into your lives" (See: **Imperatives — Other Uses (p.210)**)

### Let the word of Christ dwell in you

Here Paul speaks as if the **word of Christ** were a person who could **dwell** or live in a location, which is the group of believers in Colossae. This metaphor emphasizes how the **word of Christ** should be a consistent and constant part of the Colossians' lives as surely as if it were somebody permanently living with them. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea with a comparable metaphor or plainly. Alternate translation: "Let the word of Christ be a part of your lives consistently and" (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### the word of Christ

Here Paul uses the possessive form to relate **the word** to **Christ**. This could mean: (1) that **the word** is about **Christ**. Alternate translation: "the word concerning the Messiah" (2) that **the word** is spoken by **Christ**. Alternate translation: "the word from Christ" (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### the word

Here, **word** represents a message that is made up of words. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: "the message" (See: **Metonymy (p.227)**)

### richly

Here Paul speaks as if the "word" were wealthy and could do something **richly**. He uses this metaphor to command that the word should dwell in the Colossians completely and with all the blessings that come from it. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea with a comparable metaphor or express it plainly. Alternate translation: "in every way and with every blessing" or "fully" (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### in all wisdom

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **wisdom**, you could express the idea another way. Alternate translation: "in all wise ways" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another & singing

Paul uses the words **teaching**, **admonishing**, and **singing** to show the Colossians some ways in which they can "let the word of Christ dwell" in them. Therefore, **teaching**, **admonishing**, and **singing** happen at the same time as **the word of Christ** dwelling in them. If it would be helpful in your language, you could directly state it. Alternate translation: (start a new sentence) "you could do this by teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom ... and by singing" (See: **Connect — Simultaneous Time Relationship (p.170)**)

## teaching and admonishing

These two verbs have only slightly different meanings. The word **teaching** refers positively to giving someone information, skills, or concepts. The word **admonishing** refers negatively to warning someone against something. If you have words that fit these two ideas, you could use them here. If you do not have words that make these distinctions, you could translate both of them with a single verb such as “instruct.” Alternate translation: “instructing” (See: **Doublet (p.181)**)

## with psalms, hymns, {and} spiritual songs

These three terms name different kinds of songs. The word **psalms** refers to songs from the book of Psalms in the Bible. The word **hymns** refers to songs sung in praise, usually to a deity. Finally, the word **songs** refers to vocal music that celebrates someone or something, usually in poem form. If you have words that roughly match these categories in your language, you could use them here. If you do not have words that match these categories, you could express the idea with only one or two words or use adjectives to describe the different types of songs. Alternate translation: “psalms and spiritual songs” or “biblical songs, praise songs, and celebratory spiritual songs” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## and} spiritual songs

The word **spiritual** could refer to: (1) the Holy Spirit as the origin or inspiration of the **songs**. Alternate translation: “and songs from the Spirit” (2) **songs** that are sung by or in the power of the Holy Spirit. Alternate translation: “and songs empowered by the Spirit” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## with thankfulness

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **thankfulness**, you could express the idea by using an adverb such as “thankfully” or an adjective such as “thankful.” Alternate translation: “in thankful ways” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## in your hearts

Here the Colossians would have understood the phrase **in your hearts** to describe something that people do that they fully believe in. It means that the **singing** should be done with sincerity and the full approval of one's own mind. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea with a comparable idiom or plainly. Alternate translation: “wholeheartedly” or “with genuineness” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

## in your hearts

In Paul's culture, **hearts** are the places where humans think and desire. If it would be helpful in your language, you could refer to the place where humans think in your culture or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “in your minds” (See: **Metonymy (p.227)**)

## Colossians 3:17

### everything, whatever you might do in word or in deed, do all in

The word **all** refers back to **everything, whatever you might do in word or in deed**. If your language would not write the object (**everything, whatever you might do in word or in deed**) first, you could put it where **all** is, after the verb. Or, you could change the object into a relative clause. Alternate translation: “do everything, whatever you might do in word or in deed, in” (See: **Information Structure (p.213)**)

### everything, whatever you might do

In Paul’s culture, this is a natural way to refer to anything someone might do, including all possibilities. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a customary way to refer to all possible actions. Alternate translation: “anything you do” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### in word or in deed

If your language does not use abstract nouns to express the ideas behind **word** and **deed**, you could express the idea with verbs such as “speak” and “act.” Alternate translation: “in speaking or in acting” or “when you speak or act” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### in the name of the Lord Jesus

Acting **in the name of** a person means representing that person. Representatives, those who do anything **in the name of** someone else, should act so as to help others think well of and honor the people they represent. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable idiom for representing someone or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “as representatives of the Lord Jesus” or “in a way that leads to honor for the Lord Jesus” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### through him

The phrase **through him** does not mean that the prayers of thanks are mediated to God the Father by God the Son. Rather, it is **through** the Son that the Colossians are able to give thanks. This means that they can give thanks because of what the Son has done for them. If that meaning of **through him** would not be understood in your language, you could express the idea with a preposition such as “because” or clarify that it is **through** the “work” of the Son. Alternate translation: “because of what he has done” or “through his work” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)



## Colossians 3:18

### Wives

Here Paul directly addresses the **Wives** in the audience. Use a form in your language that indicates that the speaker is singling out a specific group of people as the intended audience of the following words. Alternate translation: "You wives"

### be subjected to your husbands

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form with a verb such as "obey" or "submit." Alternate translation: "obey your husbands" or "submit to your husbands" (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### to your husbands

Here Paul does not explicitly state that wives must **be subjected** to "their own" husbands. However, Paul writes this sentence in such a way that the Colossians would have understood him to mean this. The ULT includes **your** because this is an essential part of what Paul is saying. Use a form in your language that specifies that Paul has each wife's husband in mind. Alternate translation: "to your own husbands" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### as

Here, the word **as** functions to introduce the reason why "wives" should "be subjected to" their **husbands**. If **as** does not indicate a reason in your language, you could express this idea using a causal word such as "since" or "because." Alternate translation: "because this" (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.166)**)

### is fitting

The phrase **is fitting** refers to what or to whom something properly belongs. If **is fitting** would be misunderstood your language, you could express the idea by using a word or phrase that identifies proper behavior in specific circumstances. Alternate translation: "is suitable" or "suits your position" (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### in the Lord

Paul uses the spatial metaphor **in the Lord** to describe the union of believers with Christ. In this case, being **in the Lord** or united to the Lord is the standard for how to behave. Alternate translation: "in your union with the Lord" (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

## Colossians 3:19

### Husbands

Here Paul directly addresses the **Husbands** in the audience. Use a form in your language that indicates that the speaker is singling out a specific group of people as the intended audience of the following words. Alternate translation: "You husbands"

### your wives

Here Paul does not explicitly state that husbands must **love** "their own" wives. However, Paul writes this sentence in such a way that the Colossians would have understood him to mean this. The ULT includes **your** because this is an essential part of what Paul is saying. Use a form in your language that specifies that Paul has each husband's wife in mind. Alternate translation: "your own wives" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### do not be embittered against

The phrase **be embittered** could refer to: (1) the husband doing or saying things that cause his wife to be bitter or upset with him. Alternate translation: "do not do what makes them bitter against you" (2) the husband becoming bitter or upside with his wife for doing or saying certain things. Alternate translation: "do not become bitter against them" (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## Colossians 3:20

### Children

Here Paul directly addresses the **Children** in the audience. Use a form in your language that indicates that the speaker is singling out a specific group of people as the intended audience of the following words. Alternate translation: “You children”

### your parents

Here Paul does not explicitly state that children must **obey** “their own” parents. However, Paul writes this sentence in such a way that the Colossians would have understood him to mean this. The ULT includes **your** because this is an essential part of what Paul is saying. Use a form in your language that specifies that Paul has each child’s parents in mind. Alternate translation: “your own parents” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### in all things

The phrase **in all things** is an idiom that indicates that children should obey “everything their parents command” or “in every situation.” If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable idiom or indicate what the **things** are. Alternate translation: “in everything they tell you to do” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### for

The word **for** introduces the basis or reason for something; here it is Paul’s command to children. Use a word that indicates the reason for a command in your language. Alternate translation: “since” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.166)**)

### is pleasing

If something **is pleasing**, that means that the person it “pleases” finds that thing acceptable, agreeable, or pleasant. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a word that emphasizes that obedience to parents is something that is acceptable to God. Alternate translation: “is acceptable” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### pleasing

Paul does not state to whom obedience to parents is **pleasing**, but it is clear that it pleases God. If your language would state who is pleased, you could expressly state that it is God. Alternate translation: “pleasing to God” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### in the Lord

Just as in [3:18](#), Paul uses the spatial metaphor **in the Lord** to describe the union of believers with Christ. In this case, being **in the Lord**, or united to **the Lord**, identifies specifically that those who are united to **the Lord** are to behave in this way. Alternate translation: “in your union with the Lord” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

## Colossians 3:21

### Fathers

Here Paul directly addresses the **Fathers** in the audience. Use a form in your language that indicates that the speaker is singling out a specific group of people as the intended audience of the following words. Alternate translation: "You fathers"

### do not provoke your children

The word **provoke** in this context refers to irritating someone or making them angry. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable expression or a short phrase. Alternate translation: "do not irritate your children" or "do not provoke your children to anger" (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### so that they may not be discouraged

This clause indicates the goal or purpose of the previous command, but this purpose is in the negative. If your language has a customary way to indicate a negative purpose, you could use it here. Alternate translation: "lest they be discouraged" (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.163)**)

### they may not be discouraged

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form with the **Fathers** as the subject. Alternate translation: "you may not discourage them" (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### they may & be discouraged

The phrase **they may ... be discouraged** describes the feeling of despair or hopelessness. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a word or phrase that expresses this idea. Alternate translation: "they may ... despair" or "they may ... lose heart" (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## Colossians 3:22

### Slaves

Here Paul directly addresses the **Slaves** in the audience. Use a form in your language that indicates that the speaker is singling out a specific group of people as the intended audience of the following words. Alternate translation: “You slaves”

### your masters according to the flesh

The phrase **according to the flesh** describes the **masters** as humans on this earth. Paul uses this phrase to describe these **masters** because he is already setting up a contrast with the “Master” over these masters: Jesus (See: 4:1). If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable idiom or express the idea with an adjective such as “human” or “earthly.” Alternate translation: “your earthly masters” or “your human masters” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### your masters

Here Paul does not explicitly state that slaves must **obey** “their own” masters. However, Paul writes this sentence in such a way that the Colossians would have understood him to mean this. The ULT includes **your** because this is an essential part of what Paul is saying. Use a form in your language that specifies that Paul has each slave’s master in mind. Alternate translation: “your own masters” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### in all things

Just as in 3:20, the phrase **in all things** is an idiom that indicates that slaves should obey “everything their masters command” or “in every situation.” If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable idiom or indicate what the **things** are. Alternate translation: “in everything they tell you to do” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### not with eyeservice

The word **eyeservice** describes how people sometimes behave to look good more than to do the right thing. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable expression or a short phrase such as “wanting to look impressive.” Alternate translation: “not focusing on how you appear to others” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### as people pleasers

The phrase **people pleasers** describes the kind of people who care about “eyeservice.” Here, **people pleasers** are those who focus on impressing humans rather than doing what God desires. If it would be helpful in your language, you could emphasize that **people pleasers** want to please humans only, not God. Alternate translation: “as people who want to please humans rather than God” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

### with sincerity of heart

Paul here uses the possessive form to describe a **heart** that is characterized by its **sincerity**. If your language would not use the possessive form to express that idea, you could express the idea by translating **sincerity** with an adjective such as “sincere.” Alternate translation: “with a sincere heart” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

## with sincerity of heart

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **sincerity**, you could express the idea by using an adjective such as “sincere” or an adverb such as “sincerely.” Alternate translation: “sincerely in your heart” or “with a sincere heart” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## of heart

In Paul’s culture, the **heart** is the place where a person thinks and desires. If it would be helpful in your language, you could refer to the place where humans think in your culture or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “of mind” or “of desire” (See: **Metonymy (p.227)**)

## fearing the Lord

The phrase **fearing the Lord** could describe: (1) the reason why the slaves should obey their masters. Alternate translation: “because you fear the Lord” (2) the way or manner in which the slaves should obey their masters. Alternate translation: “showing fear for the Lord” or “in a way that shows that you fear the Lord” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.166)**)

## Colossians 3:23

### Whatever you might do

In Paul's culture, this is a natural way to refer to anything someone might do, including all possibilities. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a customary way of referring to all possible actions. Alternate translation: "In anything you do" (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### from the soul

Working **from the soul** is comparable to the English idiom working "with all one's heart," which refers to doing something with diligence, without holding anything back. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea with a comparable idiom or express it plainly. Alternate translation: "with all your heart" or "with all your strength" (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### as to the Lord and not to men

This contrast indicates that, even though they serve **men**, they should consider their work to be directed to or in service of **the Lord**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea with a contrast phrase such as "even as." Alternate translation: "to serve the Lord, even as you are serving men" (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### to men

The word **men** does not refer to only male people but to humans in general. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a word that refers to people or humans in general. Alternate translation: "to humans" or "to people" (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.262)**)

## Colossians 3:24

### knowing

The word **knowing** introduces a reason why the slaves should obey as Paul commands them to in [3:22-23](#). If **knowing** would not introduce a reason in your language, you could clarify this by using a word such as “because.” Alternate translation: “since you know” or “for you know” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p. 166)**)

### the reward of the inheritance

Here Paul uses the possessive form to identify the **reward** as **the inheritance**. If your language does not use the possessive form in this way, you could clarify that these two words name the same thing by using a phrase such as “that is.” Alternate translation: “the reward, that is, the inheritance” or “the reward, which is your inheritance” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

### the reward of the inheritance

If your language does not use abstract nouns for the ideas behind **reward** and **inheritance**, you could express those ideas in another way. Alternate translation: “what he has promised to hand down to you” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### You are serving the Lord Christ

Here Paul uses a simple statement as: (1) a reminder that states for whom they actually work. Alternate translation: “Keep in mind that you are serving the Lord Christ” (2) a command about whom they should serve. Alternate translation: “Serve the Lord Christ” or “You should serve the Lord Christ” (See: **Statements — Other Uses (p.248)**)



## Colossians 3:25

### For

The word **For** introduces support for what has already been said. Here Paul uses it to introduce a negative reason for obedience (he already gave a positive reason in 3:24). If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify that the word introduces another reason for obedience. Alternate translation: “Do these things because” (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.172)**)

### the one doing unrighteousness & he did unrighteously

Here Paul speaks in general of anyone who does **unrighteousness**. However, he directs this general statement to the slaves he has been addressing (not the masters, since he does not address them until 4:1). If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a customary form for generic statements or include the slaves as the ones being addressed. Alternate translation: “any of you who do unrighteousness ... you did unrighteously” (See: **Generic Noun Phrases (p.192)**)

### doing unrighteousness

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **unrighteousness**, you could express the idea differently, such as with an adverb. Alternate translation: “acting unrighteously” or “doing unrighteous things” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### will receive what he did unrighteously

In this context, the phrase **will receive** refers to getting something in payment or in return for something else. Paul, then, speaks as if **the one doing unrighteousness** will **receive** as payment or recompense exactly **what he did unrighteously**. By this, Paul means that God will punish those who do **unrighteousness** in a way that fits with what they did. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable metaphor or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “will receive a punishment that fits the crime” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### there is no favoritism

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **favoritism**, you could express the idea with a verb such as “favor” or with a short phrase. Alternate translation: “God does not favor anyone” or “God judges everyone by the same standard” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## Colossians 4

### Colossians 4 General Notes

### Structure and Formatting

[4:1](#) belongs to the section that begins in [3:18](#), even though it is in this chapter.

Exhortation Section

Prayer Request and Behavior towards Outsiders (4:2–6)

Letter Closing (4:7–18)

The Messengers (4:7–9)

Greetings from Friends (4:10–14)

Greetings and Instructions from Paul (4:15–17)

Greeting in Paul's Own Hand (4:18)

### Religious and Cultural Concepts in This Chapter

#### Letter writing and sending

In this culture, someone who wanted to send a letter often spoke what they wanted to say, and a scribe would write it down for them. Then, they would send the letter with a messenger, who would read the letter to the person or people to whom it was addressed. In this chapter, Paul mentions the messengers with whom he is sending his letter: Tychicus and Onesimus ([4:7–9](#)). They also are able to communicate more about Paul's situation than he says in the letter. Additionally, Paul mentions that he writes the final greeting “by my own hand” ([4:18](#)). This is because the rest of the letter was written by a scribe, who wrote down what Paul dictated. Paul writes the last greeting as a personal touch and to prove that he was indeed the author.

#### Greetings

In this culture, it was common for those who sent letters to include greetings to and from others in their letter. In this way, many people could greet each other but only send one letter. In [4:10–15](#) Paul includes greetings to and from many people whom he and the Colossians know.

### Translation Issues in This Chapter

#### Paul's chains

Paul refers to his imprisonment in this chapter by using the language of “chains” and “binding.” He says that he has “been bound” in [4:3](#), and he mentions his “chains” in [4:18](#). The language of binding and chains emphasizes how Paul is restricted in his movements and activities by being imprisoned.

## Translation Issues in This Chapter

### A “master in heaven”

In [4:1](#), Paul refers to a “master in heaven.” The word translated “master” and “masters” in this verse is the same word that is translated as “Lord” throughout Colossians. It is translated “master” in this verse to illustrate Paul’s point: those who are “masters” on earth also have a “master,” their Lord in heaven. If possible, make this wordplay clear in your translation.

## Colossians 4:1

### Masters

Here Paul directly addresses the **Masters** in the audience. Use a form in your language that indicates that the speaker is singling out a specific group of people as the intended audience of the following words. Alternate translation: "You masters"

### give to your slaves {what is} right and fair

Here Paul speaks of how masters treat their slaves as if the master were "giving" the treatment of their slaves. By this, he means that the thing given (**{what is} right and fair**) is what characterizes the master's dealing with the slave. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea by using adverbs such as "rightly" and "fairly" with a verb such as "treat." Alternate translation: "act rightly and fairly towards your slaves" (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### what is} right and fair

The word **right** describes someone or something that properly follows laws, principles, and expectations. The word translated **fair** describes someone or something that is impartial and does not pick sides. If you have words in your language that roughly represent these ideas, you could them here. If you do not have words that make these distinctions, you could express the idea with one word that indicates that something is fair, legal, and proper. Alternate translation: "what is just and impartial" or "what is right" (See: **Doublet (p.181)**)

### knowing

Paul uses the word **knowing** to introduce a reason why the masters should treat their slaves as he commands them to. If **knowing** would not introduce a reason in your language, you could make this explicit with a word such as "because" or "since." Alternate translation: "since you know" (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.166)**)

### a master in heaven

The words **Masters** and **master** are usually translated "lords" and "Lord" elsewhere. However, here they are translated **Masters** and **master** because the relationship between slaves and their masters, or "lords," is in view. Paul wishes the **Masters** to treat their slaves justly because they also serve a "Master," the Lord Jesus. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea by identifying that the **master** is the Lord Jesus. Alternate translation: "a master in heaven, the Lord Jesus" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

## Colossians 4:2

### Continue steadfastly in prayer

Alternate translation: “Keep praying faithfully” or “Pray consistently”

### staying alert

The word **staying alert** expresses what Paul wants the Colossians to do as they pray. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a customary expression that indicates that **staying alert** happens at the same time as they “continue steadfastly in prayer.” Alternate translation: “and stay alert” (See: **Connect — Simultaneous Time Relationship (p.170)**)

### in it

Alternate translation: “during your time of prayer”

### in thanksgiving

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **thanksgiving**, you could express the idea by using a verbal phrase such as “and giving thanks” or an adverb such as “thankfully.” Alternate translation: “thankfully” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## Colossians 4:3

### together

In this context, the word **together** does not refer to people being together but rather, it refers to actions happening **together** or at the same time. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a word or phrase that indicates that the Colossians should pray for Paul at the same time they pray about other things (the things mentioned in 4:2). Alternate translation: “at the same time” (See: **Connect — Simultaneous Time Relationship (p.170)**)

### us & to us

In this verse, the word **us** refers to Paul and Timothy but not to the Colossians. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**)

### so that

The phrase **so that** could introduce: (1) the content of what they should pray. Alternate translation: “that” or “asking that” (2) the purpose for which the Colossians should pray for Paul. Alternate translation: “in order that” (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.163)**)

### God may open a door to us for the word

Here Paul speaks of God providing opportunities for Paul and Timothy to preach the gospel as if God were “opening” a **door** to them **for the word**. The image is of God opening a door so that Paul and Timothy can go in and preach the message about Christ. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable metaphor or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “God may give us opportunities to preach the word” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### for the word to speak

Here, **for the word** and **to speak** mean almost the same thing. If your language would not use both of phrases here, you could combine them into one. Alternate translation: “to speak” (See: **Doublet (p.181)**)

### for the word

Here, **word** represents a message that is made up of words. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: “for the message” or “for what we say” (See: **Metonymy (p.227)**)

### to speak

The phrase **to speak** indicates the purpose for which the “door” is opened. If **to speak** would not indicate purpose in your language, you could use a word or phrase that does indicate purpose. Alternate translation: “in order that we might speak” or “so that we can speak” (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.163)**)

### the mystery

Paul speaks of his message as **the mystery** of Christ. This does not mean that the message is hard to understand, but rather that it had not previously been revealed. Now, however, Paul does “make it clear” (as 4:4 says). If it would

be helpful in your language, you could replace **mystery** with a short descriptive phrase. Alternate translation: “the concealed message” or “the previously hidden message” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## the mystery of Christ

Here Paul uses the possessive form to speak of a **mystery** whose content is a message about **Christ**. If your language does not use the possessive form to express that idea, you could express the idea with a preposition such as “about” or a relative clause such as “that concerns.” Alternate translation: “the mystery that concerns Christ” (See: **Possession (p.233)**)

## on account of which

The pronoun **which** refers back to the “mystery of Christ.” If it would be helpful in your language, you could state explicitly what **which** refers to by adding a word such as “mystery.” Alternate translation: “on account of which mystery” (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.239)**)

## I have been bound

Here Paul uses the phrase **I have been bound** to refer to how he is in prison. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable word or phrase that stands for being in prison or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “I am imprisoned” or “I am incarcerated” (See: **Metonymy (p.227)**)

## I have been bound

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form with a vague or indefinite subject. Alternate translation: “they have bound me” or “the authorities have bound me” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

## Colossians 4:4

### in order that

The phrase **in order that** could introduce: (1) another thing for which the Colossians should pray (in addition to what is said in 4:3). Alternate translation: “and that” or “and asking that” (2) another purpose for which the Colossians should pray for Paul (in addition to what is said in 4:3). Alternate translation: “and so that” (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.163)**)

### I may make it clear

Alternate translation: “I may reveal it” or “I may express it clearly”

### as

Here, the word **as** functions to introduce a reason why Paul must preach his message clearly. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the meaning of **as** with a word or phrase that introduces a reason for an action. Alternate translation: “because this is how” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.166)**)

### I ought to speak

If your language would state who requires Paul **to speak** in these ways, you could include “God” as the one that role. Alternate translation: “God has commanded me to speak” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)



## Colossians 4:5

### Walk & toward

Here Paul uses the word **Walk** to refer to consistent, habitual behavior (like putting one foot in front of the other). In this image, walking **toward** someone refers to consistent behavior in relationship with that person. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea with a comparable metaphor or plainly. Alternate translation: “Act ... with” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### in wisdom

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **wisdom**, you could express the idea with an adverb such as “wisely” or an adjective such as “wise.” Alternate translation: “in wise ways” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### the ones outside

The phrase **the ones outside** is a way to identify people who do not belong to one’s group. Here, **those outside** would be anyone who does not believe in Jesus. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable word or phrase for people who are not in one’s group. Alternate translation: “outsiders” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### redeeming

The word **redeeming** introduces an example of how to “walk in wisdom toward those outside.” If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a customary way to indicate that the **redeeming** happens at the same time as “walking in wisdom” and gives an example of how it might look. Alternate translation: “which includes redeeming” (See: **Connect — Simultaneous Time Relationship (p.170)**)

### redeeming the time

Here Paul speaks of **time** as something that one could be **redeeming**. The picture is of a person buying **time** from someone. Paul uses this picture to refer to making the most of (**redeeming**) one’s opportunities (**the time**). If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea with a comparable metaphor or express it plainly. Alternate translation: “making the most of every chance you have” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

## Colossians 4:6

This verse provides one way in which Paul wants the Colossians to “walk in wisdom toward those outside” (4:5). They are to speak with words that are compelling and carefully chosen to fit the situation.

### your words always with grace

Paul has not included a verb for “speaking” in this phrase, because it was not necessary in his language. If your language would require a verb of speaking here, you could include it. Alternate translation: “speaking your words always with grace” or “your words always spoken with grace” (See: **Ellipsis (p.183)**)

### with grace

If your language does not use an abstract noun to express the idea behind **grace**, you could express the idea in another way. Alternate translation: “gracious” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### seasoned with salt

In Paul’s culture, when food was **seasoned with salt**, it would taste good and be nourishing. Paul thus speaks of seasoning one’s “words” **with salt** to say that the words should be interesting (like food that tastes good) and helpful (like food that is nourishing). If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea with a comparable idiom or plainly. Alternate translation: “both compelling and helpful” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### to know

Here Paul uses the phrase **to know** to introduce the result of speaking words **with grace** and **seasoned with salt**. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a different word or phrase that introduces a result. Alternate translation: “with the result that you will know” or “so that you might know” (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.166)**)

### how it is necessary for you to answer

Alternate translation: “how to best answer” or “the right answer to give to”

### each one

The phrase **each one** refers to individuals who would be considered part of “those outside” (4:5). If it would be helpful in your language, you could explicitly refer back to how you translated “those outside.” Alternate translation: “each outsider” or “each one who does not believe in the Messiah” (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.239)**)

## Colossians 4:7

**All the things concerning me, Tychicus will make known to you, the beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow slave in the Lord**

### Connecting Statement:

If it would be helpful in your language, you could rearrange this sentence so that: (1) what **Tychicus will make known** to them comes after **to you**, and (2) the words that describe **Tychicus** come after his name. You may need to make one or both of these changes to make the verse clear in your language. Alternate translation: “Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow slave in the Lord, will make known to you all the things concerning me” (See: **Information Structure (p.213)**)

### All the things concerning me

When Paul speaks of **All the things concerning me**, he refers to details about his life such as where he is living, his health, how his work is progressing, and other similar details. If your language has a customary way to refer to this kind of information, you could use it here, or you could express the idea with a descriptive phrase. Alternate translation: “All the news about me” or “All the details about how I am doing” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### Tychicus

**Tychicus** is the name of a man. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.197)**)

### faithful servant

If your language would state whom Tychicus serves, you could make this explicit. He could be a **servant** to: (1) Paul. Alternate translation: “my faithful servant” (2) the Lord, and thus the Lord’s church as well. Alternate translation: “faithful servant of the Lord and his church” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### fellow slave

If it would be helpful in your language, you could make it explicit that Tychicus is a **slave** of Christ, along with Paul. Alternate translation: “fellow slave of Christ” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### in the Lord

Paul uses the spatial metaphor **in the Lord** to describe the union of believers with Christ. In this case, being **in the Lord**, or united to the Lord, identifies Paul and Tychicus as “slaves” of the Lord because of their union with him. Alternate translation: “in union with the Lord” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

## Colossians 4:8

### I sent

Here Paul uses the past tense form **sent** to describe something he has not yet done when he is dictating this letter. He uses the past tense because, when the letter is read to the Colossians, his sending of Tychicus will be in the past. If your language would not use the past tense here, you could use whatever tense would customarily be used in this situation in your language. Alternate translation: “whom I send” or “whom I have sent” (See: **Predictive Past (p.237)**)

### you for this very {reason}, so that

It may seem that the phrase **for this very {reason}** contains redundant information in your language, since Paul also includes **so that**. If both of these phrases would be redundant in your language, you could use a single purpose phrase, such as **so that**. Alternate translation: “you so that” or “you in order that” (See: **Doublet (p.181)**)

### so that you might know the things concerning us

While many manuscripts have **so that you might know the things concerning us**, some say “so that he might know the things concerning you.” If a translation of the Bible exists in your region, you may wish to use the phrase it uses. If a translation of the Bible does not exist in your region, you may wish to follow the example of the ULT. (See: **Textual Variants (p.252)**)

### so that & and that

The words **so that** and **and that** introduce two of Paul's purposes in sending Tychicus to the Colossians. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a customary way to introduce a goal or purpose. Alternate translation: “in order that ... and in order that” (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.163)**)

### the things concerning us

Just like the phrase “all the things concerning me” in 4:7, the phrase **the things concerning us** refers to details about life such as where people are living, their health, how their work is progressing, and other similar details. If your language has a customary way to refer to this kind of information, you could use it here, or you could express the idea with a descriptive phrase. Alternate translation: “the news about us” or “the details about how we are doing” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### us

The word **us** does not include the Colossians. Instead, Paul is referring to himself and those who are with him, including Timothy. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.186)**)

### your hearts

Here when Paul refers to **your hearts**, the Colossians would have understood him to mean the entire person. Paul uses **hearts** because his culture identified **hearts** as the body part where people experienced encouragement. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a word or phrase that identifies the location where people experience encouragement in your culture, or you could express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “your souls” (See: **Synecdoche (p.250)**)

## Colossians 4:9

### Together with Onesimus

Paul uses this phrase to tell the Colossians that he is sending **Onesimus** along with Tychicus to the city of Colossae. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this explicit by adding a verb such as “sending.” Alternate translation: “With him I send Onesimus” (start a new sentence with “they will make”) (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### Onesimus

**Onesimus** is the name of a man. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.197)**)

### is from among you

The phrase **from among you** means that Onesimus used to live with the Colossians and was part of the group to whom Paul is writing the letter. To express this idea, you could use a word or phrase that indicates that a person belongs to a specific group of people. Alternate translation: “is from your town” or “used to live with you” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

### they will make known

The pronoun **they** refers back to Onesimus and Tychicus. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make this explicit by using their names or referring to “two” of them. Alternate translation: “the two of them will make known” (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.239)**)

### all the things here

Just like the phrases “all the things concerning me” in 4:7 and “the things concerning us” in 4:8, the phrase **all the things here** refers to details about life such as where people are living, their health, how their work is progressing, and other similar details. If your language has a customary way to refer to this kind of information, you could use it here, or you could express the idea with a descriptive phrase. Alternate translation: “all the news about us” or “all the details about what is happening here” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

## Colossians 4:10

### Aristarchus, & Mark, & of Barnabas

**Aristarchus**, **Mark**, and **Barnabas** are all names of men. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.197)**)

#### greet

As was customary in this culture, Paul concludes the letter by extending greetings from people who are with him and who know the people to whom he is writing. Your language may have a particular way of sharing greetings in a letter. If so, you could use that form here. Alternate translation: “asks to be remembered to” or “says hello to”

#### my fellow prisoner

The phrase **my fellow prisoner** identifies Aristarchus as someone who is in prison along with Paul. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea with a short phrase instead. Alternate translation: “who has been imprisoned with me” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

#### and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas

Paul has not included the verb “greet” in this clause because it was unnecessary in his language. If it is necessary in your language, you could include it here. Alternate translation: “and Mark, the cousin of Barnabas, also greets you” (See: **Ellipsis (p.183)**)

#### the cousin of Barnabas

The word **cousin** refers to the son of the brother or sister of one’s mother or father. If possible, use a word in your language that makes this relationship clear, or you could describe the relationship. Alternate translation: “the son of Barnabas’ aunt or uncle” (See: **Kinship (p.215)**)

#### whom & he may come & him

The words **whom**, **he**, and **him** refer back to Mark, not Barnabas. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make it explicit. Alternate translation: “Mark ... he may come ... him” (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.239)**)

#### about whom you received orders

Paul does not clarify who sent these **orders** to the Colossians, and it was probably not him. If it is possible in your language, leave the person who sent these **orders** unexpressed. If you must clarify who sent the **orders**, you could use an indefinite expression. Alternate translation: “about whom someone sent you orders” (See: **When to Keep Information Implicit (p.264)**)

#### if he may come to you

Here Paul indicates a hypothetical situation. It may be that Mark does visit the Colossians, but Paul is not sure if he will or not. Use a form that indicates a true possibility in your language. Alternate translation: “he may or may not come to you, but if he does,” (See: **Hypothetical Situations (p.205)**)

## receive him

To **receive** someone means welcoming that person into one's group and extending hospitality to him or her. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable expression that indicates this kind of hospitality or express the idea with a descriptive phrase. Alternate translation: "show him hospitality and accept him into your group" (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

## Colossians 4:11

### Jesus, & Justus

**Jesus** and **Justus** are two names for the same man. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.197)**)

### the one called Justus

Here Paul gives further information about “Jesus.” This information identifies which “Jesus” this is (the one also known as **Justus**), distinguishing him from other men who might be named “Jesus.” If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a form in your language that expresses this idea. Alternate translation: “, the one called Justus” (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.178)**)

### the one called

If your language does not use this passive form, you could express the idea in active form, with an indefinite or vague subject. Alternate translation: “whom some people call” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### and Jesus, the one called Justus

Paul has not included the verb “greet” in this clause because it was unnecessary in his language. If it is necessary in your language, you could include it here. Alternate translation: “and Jesus who is called Justus also greets you” (See: **Ellipsis (p.183)**)

### These {are

The word **These** refers back to the three men mentioned in this verse and the previous verse: Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus. If it would be helpful in your language, you could restate their names or indicate the reference in another way. Alternate translation: “These three are” (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.239)**)

### These {are} the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God being from the circumcision, who were a comfort to me

Paul here describes the three men in two ways. First, he identifies them as the **only** ones among his **fellow workers** who are Jewish (**from the circumcision**). In other words, Paul distinguishes them from all the other people who work with him, because these three men are the only ones who are circumcised Jews. Second, he describes them as ones **who have been a comfort** to him. Here, he is not distinguishing them from other fellow workers; instead, he just wishes to say that they have **been a comfort** to him. If it would be helpful in your language, you could translate the two descriptions differently so that it is clear that the first distinguishes the three men while the second describes the three men. Alternate translation: “Out of all my fellow workers for the kingdom of God, these are the only ones being from the circumcision, and they have been a comfort to me” (See: **Distinguishing Versus Informing or Reminding (p.178)**)

### being from the circumcision

Paul uses the label **from the circumcision** to identify the men as Jews who had received circumcision. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea plainly by using a term such as “Jewish.” Alternate translation: “who are Jewish” (See: **Metonymy (p.227)**)



## who were a comfort to me

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **comfort**, you could express the idea with a verb such as “comfort.” Alternate translation: “who have comforted me” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## Colossians 4:12

### Epaphras

**Epaphras** is the name of a man. He was the one who first preached the good news to the people in Colossae (See: [Colossians 1:7](#)). (See: [How to Translate Names \(p.197\)](#))

### greet

As was customary in this culture, Paul concludes the letter by extending greetings from people who are with him and who know the people to whom he is writing. Your language may have a particular way of sharing greetings in a letter. If so, you could use that form here. Alternate translation: “asks to be remembered to” or “says hello to”

### He {is} from among you

The phrase **from among you** means that Epaphras used to live with the Colossians and was part of the group to whom Paul is writing the letter. To express this idea, you could use a word or phrase that indicates in your language that a person belongs to a specific group of people. Alternate translation: “He is from your town” or “He used to live with you” (See: [Idiom \(p.208\)](#))

### always

Here, **always** is an exaggeration that the Colossians would have understood to mean that Epaphras prays for them very often. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a word that indicates frequency. Alternate translation: “consistently” or “frequently” (See: [Hyperbole \(p.201\)](#))

### striving on behalf of you in prayers

The word **striving** is usually used for attempting to win a contest, whether that is athletic, military, or legal. While Epaphras is not actually participating in an athletic or military contest, Paul uses the metaphor to explain how earnestly Epaphras prays for the Colossians. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable metaphor or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “praying zealously for you” or “spending much effort on his prayers for you” (See: [Metaphor \(p.221\)](#))

### so that

The phrase **so that** could introduce: (1) the content of Epaphras' prayers. Alternate translation: “asking that” (2) the purpose or goal of Epaphras' prayers. Alternate translation: “in order that” (See: [Connect — Goal \(Purpose\) Relationship \(p.163\)](#))

### you may stand complete and fully assured in all the will of God

Here Paul speaks as if the Colossians can **stand complete and fully assured in all the will of God**. By this, he means that they should consistently do God's will, just as if God's will served as a foundation underneath them. The words **complete and fully assured** explain the way in which they are supposed to **stand** or continue to obey. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable metaphor or express the idea plainly. Alternate translation: “you may be complete and fully assured as you consistently do all the will of God” (See: [Metaphor \(p.221\)](#))

## complete

The word **complete** in this context means that a person is what he or she is supposed to be and is able to do what he or she is called to do. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a word that has this meaning, such as “perfect” or “excellent,” or translate **complete** with a short phrase. Alternate translation: “fit for what God has called you to be” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## fully assured

The phrase **fully assured** describes people who are confident or sure of what they believe and do. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea with a short phrase. Alternate translation: “convinced about what you know” or “without doubts” (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.257)**)

## in all the will of God

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **will**, you could express the idea by using a verb such as “wants” or “desires.” Alternate translation: “in whatever God desires” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

## Colossians 4:13

### For

The word **For** introduces further support for Paul's statements about Epaphras in the previous verse. In 4:12, Paul says that Epaphras is "always striving" for them, and he supports that claim here by giving his own testimony about how hard Epaphras has worked for the Colossians and for other believers who live near them. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a word or phrase that introduces support for a previous statement, or you could refer back to what Paul is supporting. Alternate translation: "you could be sure that he does this, because" (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.172)**)

### he has much hard labor

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **labor**, you could express the idea by using a verb such as "labor." Alternate translation: "he labors diligently" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)

### of the ones in Laodicea and of the ones in Hierapolis

Here Paul leaves out to whom the pronoun **the ones** refers, since in his language it was clear that **the ones** refers to people who live in the cities he mentions. If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify that **the ones** refers to believers who live in these two towns. Alternate translation: "of believers who live in Laodicea, and of believers who live in Hierapolis" or "of believers who live in Laodicea and Hierapolis" (See: **Ellipsis (p.183)**)

### Laodicea & Hierapolis

**Laodicea** and **Hierapolis** were towns near Colossae. In fact, they were all in the same valley. If it would be helpful to your readers to clarify that these are nearby towns, you could include this information. Alternate translation: "nearby Laodicea ... nearby Hierapolis" or "Laodicea ... Hierapolis, churches near you" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

## Colossians 4:14

### greet

As was customary in this culture, Paul concludes the letter by extending greetings from people who are with him and who know the people to whom he is writing. Your language may have a particular way of sharing greetings in a letter. If so, you could use that form here. Alternate translation: “asks to be remembered to” or “says hello to”

### Luke, & Demas

**Demas** is the name of a man. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.197)**)

### Luke, the beloved physician, greet you, and also Demas

Paul has not included the verb “greet” with **and also Demas**, because it was unnecessary in his language. If including “greet” is necessary in your language, you could: (1) move **and also Demas** before **greet you**. Alternate translation: “Luke the beloved physician and also Demas greet you” (2) include it with the phrase **and also Demas**. Alternate translation: “Luke the beloved physician greet you, and also Demas greet you” (See: **Ellipsis (p.183)**)

## Colossians 4:15

### Greet

As was customary in this culture, Paul not only extends greetings from people who are with him and who know the people to whom he is writing (as he has done in [4:10–14](#)). He also asks the Colossians to extend greetings for him to other people that both he and the Colossians know. Your language may have a particular way of sharing greetings in a letter. If so, you could use that form here. Alternate translation: “Remember me to” or “Say hello for me to”

### the brothers

The word **brothers** does not refer to only male people. Instead, it refers to both men and women who are part of the group of believers. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea with a word that does not refer to natural gender or you could use both male and female genders. Alternate translation: “the brothers and sisters” (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.262)**)

### Nympha

**Nympha** is the name of a woman. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.197)**)

### in her house

The phrase **in her house** is a way to indicate that the church used Nympha’s house as their meeting place. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable expression or state this explicitly. Alternate translation: “that gathers in her house” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

## Colossians 4:16

### has been read & it would be read & would read

In this culture, letters sent to a group were normally read out loud by one person to everyone else in the group. The words that are translated by **read** in this verse refer to this practice. If you have a way to refer to this practice, you could use it here. Alternate translation: “has been heard ... it is heard ... hear” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### this letter has been read among you, & it would be read

If your language does not use these passive forms, you could express the ideas in active forms by supplying an indefinite subject such as “person” or by expressing the idea with a different verb such as “hear.” Alternate translation: “you have heard this letter ... they hear it” (See: **Active or Passive (p.142)**)

### make sure that it would be read also in the church of Laodicea and that you also would read the one from Laodicea

With these commands, Paul is asking the churches to exchange letters. He wants the Colossians to hear the letter he sent to Laodicea, and he wants the Laodiceans to hear the letter he sent to the Colossians. If you have a specific form to refer to sending and receiving letters, you could use it here. Alternate translation: “send it off to Laodicea to be read in the church there, and request the letter I sent to them so that you could read it too” (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.145)**)

### the one from Laodicea

The phrase **the one from Laodicea** refers to a letter that Paul has already sent or is about to send to the church in Laodicea. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an expression that clarifies that this is a letter from Paul, not one written to Paul. Alternate translation: “the letter I addressed to Laodicea” (See: **Idiom (p.208)**)

## Colossians 4:17

### And say

In addition to asking the Colossians to greet others for him (4:15), Paul also asks them to **say** something to Archippus. If you have a specific form in your language for instructions on relaying a message, you could use it here. Alternate translation: “And relay this message”

### to Archippus

**Archippus** is the name of a man. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.197)**)

### Look to the ministry that you have received in the Lord so that you may fulfill it

The instruction from Paul to Archippus is written as a direct quote. If your language does not use this form, you could write it as an indirect quote. Alternate translation: “that he must look to the ministry that he has received in the Lord, so that he may fulfill it” (See: **Direct and Indirect Quotations (p.176)**)

### say to Archippus, “Look to the ministry that you have received in the Lord so that you may fulfill it

The words **Look**, **you have received**, and **you may fulfill** all refer to Archippus alone and are singular. However, the word **say** refers to the Colossians and is plural. (See: **Forms of ‘You’ — Singular (p.190)**)

### Look to the ministry

Here Paul speaks as if Archippus’ **ministry** were something he can **look to**. By this, he means that he wants Archippus to focus on carrying out his ministry just as if it were something he could stare at. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this idea with a comparable metaphor or plainly. Alternate translation: “Focus on the ministry” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)

### the ministry & you have received

Paul does not clarify or even hint at what **the ministry** is or from whom Archippus **received** it. If it is possible, leave this information unclear in your translation. If you must include some extra information, you could clarify that “God” gave him the **ministry** of serving the church. Alternate translation: “the task of serving the church ... God gave you” (See: **When to Keep Information Implicit (p.264)**)

### in the Lord

Paul uses the spatial metaphor **in the Lord** to describe the union of Archippus with Christ. In this case, being **in the Lord** or united to the Lord identifies the situation in which he **received** his **ministry**. He received this **ministry** when he was united to **the Lord**. Alternate translation: “in union with the Lord” (See: **Metaphor (p.221)**)



## **so that**

The phrase **so that** introduces a goal or purpose. Here, it is the purpose for which Archippus should **look to** or stay focused on his ministry. Use a word or phrase that introduces the goal or purpose of a previous statement.

Alternate translation: "in order that" (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.163)**)

## Colossians 4:18

### This greeting {is} by my {own} hand

Paul concludes his letter by writing a final greeting to the Colossians. Your language may have a particular way of sharing greetings in a letter. If so, you could use that form here. Alternate translation: "I ask to be remembered by my own hand" or "I say hello by my own hand"

### is} by my {own} hand

In this culture, it was normal for a scribe to write down what the author of the letter was saying. Paul here indicates that he himself is writing these last words. The phrase **by my {own} hand** means that it was his own hand that took up the pen and wrote. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea behind **by my {own} hand** by using a comparable expression or include any extra information needed to make it clear. Alternate translation: "is in my handwriting" or "I write myself" (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p. 145)**)

### Paul

Here Paul speaks of himself in the third person. He does this to sign his name to the letter, which shows that the letter is from Paul himself and carries his authority. If your language has a specific form for signing letters or documents, you could use it here. Alternate translation: "I am Paul" (See: **First, Second or Third Person (p.188)**)

### my chains

Paul speaks of his **chains**, by which he means his imprisonment. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a comparable expression or state the idea plainly. Alternate translation: "that I am in jail" or "remember my imprisonment" (See: **Metonymy (p.227)**)

### Grace {be} with you

As was customary in his culture, Paul closes his letter with a blessing for the Colossians. Use a form that people would recognize as a blessing in your language. Alternate translation: "May you experience kindness within you" or "I pray that you will have grace" (See: **Blessings (p.151)**)

### Grace {be} with

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea behind **Grace**, you could express the idea in another way. Alternate translation: "May God be gracious to" (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.140)**)



# **unfoldingWord® Translation Academy**

**Version 85**

# 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:** [Colossians 1:2](#); [Colossians 1:4](#); [Colossians 1:6](#); [Colossians 1:8](#); [Colossians 1:9](#); [Colossians 1:10](#); [Colossians 1:11](#); [Colossians 1:13](#); [Colossians 1:14](#); [Colossians 1:15](#); [Colossians 1:20](#); [Colossians 1:21](#); [Colossians 1:23](#); [Colossians 1:25](#); [Colossians 1:27](#); [Colossians 1:29](#); [Colossians 2:1](#); [Colossians 2:2](#); [Colossians 2:3](#); [Colossians 2:5](#); [Colossians 2:7](#); [Colossians 2:8](#); [Colossians 2:9](#); [Colossians 2:10](#); [Colossians 2:11](#); [Colossians 2:12](#); [Colossians 2:13](#); [Colossians 2:18](#); [Colossians 2:20](#); [Colossians 2:22](#); [Colossians 2:23](#); [Colossians 3:3](#); [Colossians 3:4](#); [Colossians 3:5](#); [Colossians 3:8](#); [Colossians 3:9](#); [Colossians 3:10](#); [Colossians 3:12](#); [Colossians 3:13](#); [Colossians 3:14](#); [Colossians 3:16](#); [Colossians 3:17](#); [Colossians 3:22](#); [Colossians 3:24](#); [Colossians 3:25](#); [Colossians 4:2](#); [Colossians 4:5](#); [Colossians 4:6](#); [Colossians 4:11](#); [Colossians 4:12](#); [Colossians 4:13](#); [Colossians 4:18](#)

## 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:** Colossians 1:5; Colossians 1:9; Colossians 1:11; Colossians 1:16; Colossians 1:21; Colossians 1:23; Colossians 1:25; Colossians 1:26; Colossians 2:2; Colossians 2:3; Colossians 2:7; Colossians 2:10; Colossians 2:11; Colossians 2:12; Colossians 2:18; Colossians 2:19; Colossians 2:20; Colossians 3:1; Colossians 3:3; Colossians 3:4; Colossians 3:10; Colossians 3:15; Colossians 3:18; Colossians 3:21; Colossians 4:3; Colossians 4:11; Colossians 4:16



## 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:** [Colossians 1:1](#); [Colossians 1:19](#); [Colossians 1:21](#); [Colossians 1:22](#); [Colossians 1:24](#); [Colossians 1:25](#); [Colossians 1:26](#); [Colossians 1:28](#); [Colossians 2:1](#); [Colossians 2:4](#); [Colossians 2:7](#); [Colossians 2:16](#); [Colossians 2:18](#); [Colossians 2:21](#); [Colossians 3:1](#); [Colossians 3:2](#); [Colossians 3:6](#); [Colossians 3:7](#); [Colossians 3:10](#); [Colossians 3:17](#); [Colossians 3:18](#); [Colossians 3:19](#); [Colossians 3:20](#); [Colossians 3:22](#); [Colossians 4:1](#); [Colossians 4:4](#); [Colossians 4:7](#); [Colossians 4:9](#); [Colossians 4:13](#); [Colossians 4:16](#); [Colossians 4:18](#)

# Biblical Imagery — Extended Metaphors

An **extended metaphor** is an explicit metaphor that uses multiple images and multiple ideas at the same time. This is in contrast to a **simple metaphor**, which uses only a single Image and a single Idea. The difference between an extended metaphor and a **complex metaphor** is that an extended metaphor is explicitly stated by a writer/speaker, but a complex metaphor is not.

This page answers the question: *What is an extended metaphor?*

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

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

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

## Explanation of an Extended Metaphor

When using a metaphor, a writer/speaker uses a physical Image in order to express an abstract Idea about some immediate Topic, with at least one point of comparison between the Topic and the Image. In an extended metaphor, the writer/speaker explicitly states the Topic, and then describes multiple images and communicates multiple ideas.

In Isaiah 5:1b-7, the prophet Isaiah uses a vineyard (the **Image**) to express God's disappointment (the **Idea**) with the nation of Israel (the **Topic**) for their unfaithfulness to God and his covenant with them as his people. Farmers care for their gardens, and a farmer would feel disappointed if his vineyard produced bad fruit. If a vineyard produced only bad fruit for a long enough time, the farmer would eventually stop caring for it. We call this an extended metaphor because the prophet describes in detail multiple images relating to a vineyard as well as multiple aspects of God's disappointment.

1b My well beloved had a **vineyard** on a very fertile hill. 2 He **spaded it, removed the stones, and planted it** with an excellent kind of vine. He **built a tower** in the middle of it, and also **built a winepress**. He **waited for it to produce grapes, but it produced wild grapes**. 3 So now, inhabitant of Jerusalem and man of Judah; judge between me and my vineyard. 4 What more could have been done for my vineyard, that I have not done for it? **When I looked for it to produce grapes, why did it produce wild grapes?** 5 Now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard; I will remove the hedge; I will turn it into a pasture; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled down. 6 I will lay it waste, and it will not be pruned nor hoed. Instead, briars and thorns will spring up. I will also command the clouds not to rain on it. 7 For **the vineyard of Yahweh of hosts is the house of Israel**, and the man of Judah his pleasant planting; **he waited for justice, but instead, there was killing; for righteousness, but, instead, a shout for help**. (Isa 5:1b-7 ULT)

## Other Examples From the Bible

In Psalm 23, the psalmist uses the physical **Image** of a shepherd to describe the way that God (the **Topic**) shows great concern and care (the **Idea**) for his people. The psalmist describes multiple aspects of what shepherds do for sheep (leads them to pasture and to water, protects them, etc.). The psalmist also describes multiple aspects of how God takes care of him (gives him life, righteousness, comfort, etc.). Shepherds give sheep what they need, take them to safe places, rescue them, guide them, and protect them. What God does for his people is like these actions.

1 Yahweh is my shepherd; I will lack nothing. 2 He **makes me** to lie down in green pastures; he **leads me** beside tranquil water. 3 He **brings back** my life; he **guides me** along right paths for his name's sake. 4 Even though I walk through a valley of darkest shadow, I will not fear harm since you are with me; your rod and your staff comfort me. (Psalm 23:1-4 ULT)

## Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- People may not realize that the images represent other things.
- People may not be familiar with the things that are used as images.
- Extended metaphors are often so profound that it would be impossible for a translator to show all of the meaning generated by the metaphor.

## Translation Principles

- Make the meaning of the extended metaphor as clear to the target audience as it was to the original audience.
- Do not make the meaning more clear to the target audience than it was to the original audience.
- When someone uses an extended metaphor, the images are an important part of what he is trying to say.
- If the target audience is not familiar with some of the images, you will need to find some way of helping them understand the images so that they can understand the whole extended metaphor.

## Translation Strategies

Consider using the same extended metaphor if your readers will understand it in the same way the original readers would have understood it. If not, here are some other strategies:

- (1) If the target audience would think that the images should be understood literally, translate the metaphor as a simile by using words such as “like” or “as.” It may be enough to do this in just the first sentence or two.
- (2) If the target audience would not know the image, find a way of translating it so they can understand what the image is.
- (3) If the target audience still would not understand, then state it clearly.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If the target audience would think that the images should be understood literally, translate the metaphor as a simile by using words such as “like” or “as.” It may be enough to do this in just the first sentence or two. See Psalm 23:1-2 as an example:

Yahweh is **my shepherd**; I will lack nothing. He makes **me** to lie down in green pastures; **he leads me** beside tranquil water. (ULT)

Can be translated as:

“Yahweh is **like** a shepherd to me, so I will lack nothing. **Like** a shepherd who makes his sheep lie down in green pastures and leads them by peaceful waters, Yahweh helps me to rest peacefully.”

- (2) If the target audience would not know the image, find a way of translating it so they can understand what the image is.

My well beloved had a **vineyard** on a very fertile hill. He **spaded** it, removed the stones, and planted it with **an excellent kind of vine**. He built a **tower** in the middle of it, and also built a **winepress**. He waited for it to produce grapes, but it only produced **wild grapes**. (Isaiah 5:1b-2 ULT)

May be translated as:

My well beloved had a **grapevine garden** on a very fertile hill. He **dug up the ground** and removed the stones, and planted it with **the best grapevines**. He built a **watchtower** in the middle of it, and also built a **tank where he could crush the juice out of the grapes**. He

waited for it to produce grapes, but it produced **wild grapes that were not good for making wine**.

(3) If the target audience still would not understand, then state it clearly.

Yahweh is **my shepherd**; I will lack nothing. (Psalm 23:1 ULT)

“Yahweh **cares for me** like a shepherd that cares for his sheep, so I will lack nothing.”

For the vineyard of Yahweh of hosts **is** the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant planting; he waited for justice, but instead, there was killing; for righteousness, but, instead, a shout for help. (Isaiah 5:7 ULT)

Can be translated as:

For the vineyard of Yahweh of hosts **represents** the house of Israel, and the men of Judah **are like** his pleasant planting; he waited for justice, but instead, there was killing; for righteousness, but, instead, a cry for help.

or as:

**So as a farmer stops caring for a grapevine garden that produces bad fruit, Yahweh will stop protecting** Israel and Judah, **because they do not do what is right**. He waited for justice, but instead, there was killing; for righteousness, but, instead, a cry for help.

Next we recommend you learn about:

*Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns* ([UTA PDF](#))

**Referenced in:** [Colossians 2:11](#); [Colossians 2:19](#)

# 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:** [Colossians 1:2](#); [Colossians 4:18](#)



## 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 <b>in those days</b> ;
Background repeated	there was no frequent prophetic vision.
Introduction of main event	<b>At that time, when</b> Eli
Background	<b>whose</b> 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 <b>had not yet</b> gone out,
Simultaneous background	<b>and</b> Samuel was lying down to sleep in the temple of Yahweh,
Simultaneous background	where the ark of God was.
Main event	<b>Yahweh called to Samuel,</b>
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:** [Colossians 2:13](#)

## Connect — Contrary to Fact Conditions

### Conditional Relationships

This page answers the question: *How can I translate contrary-to-fact conditions?*

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

### Contrary-to-Fact Conditions

#### Description

A Contrary-to-Fact Condition is a condition that sounds hypothetical, but the speaker is already certain that it is NOT true.

#### Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Usually there are no special words that indicate a Contrary-to-Fact Condition. The writer assumes that the reader knows that it is NOT a true condition. For this reason it often requires knowledge of implied information to know that it is not true. If this kind of condition is difficult for translators to communicate, they may want to consider using the same strategies that they used for [Rhetorical Questions](#) or [Implied Information](#).

#### Examples From OBS and the Bible

But **if Baal is God**, worship him! (Story 19 Frame 6 OBS)

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

Baal is not God. Elijah is not suggesting that Baal might be God, and he does not want the people to follow Baal. But Elijah used a conditional statement to show them that what they were doing was wrong. In the example above, we see two conditions that have the same construction. The first one, “If Yahweh is God,” is a Factual Condition because Elijah is certain that it is true. The second one, “if Baal is God,” is a Contrary-to-Fact Condition because Elijah is certain that it is not true. You will need to consider if people would say both of these in the same way in your language or if they would say them in different ways.

But his wife replied to him, “**If Yahweh had desired to kill us**, he would not have taken from our hand the whole burnt offering and the offering. He would not have shown us all these things, and at this time would he have not allowed us to hear about this.” (Judges 13:23 ULT)

Manoah’s wife thinks that the second part of her conditional statement is not true, therefore the first part is also not true. God received their burnt offering; therefore, He does not want to kill them.

“**If only we had died** by Yahweh’s hand in the land of Egypt, sitting by a pot of meat and eating bread to the full.” (Exodus 16b:3 ULT)

Of course the people speaking here did not die in Egypt, and so this is a Contrary-to-Fact condition that is used to express a wish.

“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! **If the mighty deeds had been done** in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, **they would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes.” (Matthew 11:21 ULT)

The English reader knows that these last two examples are Contrary-to-Fact conditions because of the past-tense verbs used in the first part (they are not things that might happen). The last example also has a second part that uses “would have.” These words also signal something that did not happen.

## Translation Strategies

If Contrary-to-Fact conditions are clear in your language, then use them as they are.

- (1) If the condition leads the reader to think that the speaker believes something that is false, then restate the condition as something that others believe.
- (2) If the condition leads the reader to think that the speaker is suggesting that the first part is true, then restate it as a statement that it is not true.
- (3) If the condition is expressing something that did not happen but the speaker wanted it to happen, restate it as a wish.
- (4) If the condition is expressing something that did not happen, restate it as a negative statement.
- (5) Often Factual and Contrary-to-Fact conditions are used to make reasoned arguments for a change in behavior. If translators are struggling to know the best way to translate them, it could be helpful to discuss how this is done in their language community. If someone is trying to convince people to change their behavior, how do they do that? It may be possible to adapt similar strategies when translating these conditions.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If the condition leads the reader to think that the speaker believes something that is false, then restate the condition as something that others believe.

But **if Baal is God**, worship him! (Story 19 Frame 6 OBS)

If you believe that Baal is God, then worship him!

- (2) If the condition leads the reader to think that the speaker is suggesting that the first part is true, then restate it as a statement that it is not true.

If Baal is not God, then you should not worship him!

But his wife replied to him, “**If Yahweh had desired to kill us**, he would not have taken from our hand the whole burnt offering and the offering. He would not have shown us all these things, and at this time would he have not allowed us to hear about this.” (Judges 13:23 ULT)

“**Yahweh does not want to kill us**, or he would not have received the burnt offering and the offering we gave him.”

- (3) If the condition is expressing something that did not happen but the speaker wanted it to happen, restate it as a wish.

“**If only we had died** by Yahweh’s hand in the land of Egypt, sitting by a pot of meat and eating bread to the full.” (Exodus 16b:3 ULT)

“**I wish we had died** by Yahweh’s hand in the land of Egypt...”

- (4) If the condition is expressing something that did not happen, restate it as a negative statement.

“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! **If the mighty deeds had been done** in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, **they would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes.” (Matthew 11:21 ULT)

“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! The mighty deeds which were done in you **were not done** in Tyre and Sidon. But **if they had been**

**done there, those people would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes.”

(5) Often Factual and Contrary-to-Fact Conditions are used to make reasoned arguments for a change in behavior. If translators are struggling to know the best way to translate them, it could be helpful to discuss how this is done in their language community. If someone is trying to convince people to change their behavior, how do they do that? It may be possible to adapt similar strategies when translating these conditions.

But **if Baal is God**, worship him! (Story 19 Frame 6 OBS)

Is Baal the one who is truly God? Should you worship him?

“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! **If the mighty deeds had been done** in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, **they would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes.” (Matthew 11:21 ULT)

“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! You think that you are better than Tyre and Sidon, but you are not! **They would have repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes at seeing the mighty deeds that you have seen! **You should be like them!**”

”

**Referenced in:** [Colossians 2:20](#)

## Connect — Contrast Relationship

### Logical Relationships

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

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

### Contrast Relationship

#### Description

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

#### Reason This Is a Translation Issue

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

#### Examples From OBS and the Bible

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Translation Strategies

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

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

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"

**Referenced in:** [Colossians 1:22](#); [Colossians 2:5](#); [Colossians 3:8](#)



## 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:** [Colossians 1:23](#); [Colossians 2:5](#); [Colossians 2:20](#); [Colossians 3:1](#)

## 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.**

"

**Referenced in:** [Colossians 1:11](#); [Colossians 1:12](#); [Colossians 1:16](#); [Colossians 1:28](#); [Colossians 2:2](#); [Colossians 3:10](#); [Colossians 3:21](#); [Colossians 4:3](#); [Colossians 4:4](#); [Colossians 4:8](#); [Colossians 4:12](#); [Colossians 4:17](#)

## 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.

"

**Referenced in:** [Colossians 1:18](#); [Colossians 1:19](#); [Colossians 1:22](#); [Colossians 2:1](#); [Colossians 2:9](#); [Colossians 3:3](#); [Colossians 3:9](#); [Colossians 3:10](#); [Colossians 3:12](#); [Colossians 3:18](#); [Colossians 3:20](#); [Colossians 3:22](#); [Colossians 3:24](#); [Colossians 4:1](#); [Colossians 4:4](#); [Colossians 4:6](#)

## 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:** [Colossians 1:17](#); [Colossians 1:21](#); [Colossians 1:22](#)

## 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:** [Colossians 2:5](#); [Colossians 3:4](#); [Colossians 3:7](#); [Colossians 3:16](#); [Colossians 4:2](#); [Colossians 4:3](#); [Colossians 4:5](#)

## 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:** [Colossians 1:24](#); [Colossians 2:5](#); [Colossians 2:6](#); [Colossians 2:10](#); [Colossians 2:16](#); [Colossians 3:1](#); [Colossians 3:5](#); [Colossians 3:12](#); [Colossians 3:25](#); [Colossians 4:13](#)

## 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](https://ufw.io/figs_quotations).

Next we recommend you learn about:

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

**Referenced in:** [Colossians 4:17](#)

# 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:** [Colossians 4:11](#)

# 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:** [Colossians 1:2](#); [Colossians 1:9](#); [Colossians 1:22](#); [Colossians 1:23](#); [Colossians 1:29](#); [Colossians 2:2](#); [Colossians 2:3](#); [Colossians 2:10](#); [Colossians 2:14](#); [Colossians 2:19](#); [Colossians 3:7](#); [Colossians 3:8](#); [Colossians 3:16](#); [Colossians 4:1](#); [Colossians 4:3](#); [Colossians 4:8](#)

# Ellipsis

## Description

An ellipsis<sup>[^1]</sup> occurs when a speaker or writer leaves out one or more words that normally should be in the sentence. The speaker or writer does this because he knows that the hearer or reader will understand the meaning of the sentence and supply the words in his mind when he hears or reads the words that are there. For example:

So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, **nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.**  
(Psalm 1:5 ULT)

There is ellipsis in the second part because “nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous” is not a complete sentence. The speaker assumes that the hearer will understand what it is that sinners will not do in the assembly of the righteous by filling in the action from the previous clause. With the action filled in, the complete sentence would read:

So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor **will** sinners **stand** in the assembly of the righteous.

[^1]: English has a punctuation symbol which is also called an ellipsis. It is a series of three dots (...) used to indicate an intentional omission of a word, phrase, sentence or more from text without altering its original meaning. This translationAcademy article is not about the punctuation mark, but about the concept of omission of words that normally should be in the sentence.

## Two Types of Ellipsis

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

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

## Reason This Is a Translation Issue

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

## Examples From the Bible

### Relative Ellipsis

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Watch carefully, therefore, how you walk—**walk** not as unwise but **walk** as wise,

## Absolute Ellipsis

Then when he had come near, he asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And so he said, “Lord, **that I might recover my sight**.” (Luke 18:40b-41 ULT)

It seems that the man answered in an incomplete sentence because he wanted to be polite and not directly ask Jesus for healing. He knew that Jesus would understand that the only way he could receive his sight would be for Jesus to heal him. The complete sentence would be:

“Lord, **I want you to heal me so** that I might receive my sight.”

To Titus, a true son in our common faith. Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. (Titus 1:4 ULT)

The writer assumes that the reader will recognize this common form of a blessing or wish, so he does not need to include the full sentence, which would be:

To Titus, a true son in our common faith. **May you receive** grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

## Translation Strategies

If ellipsis would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here is another option:

(1) Add the missing words to the incomplete phrase or sentence.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Add the missing words to the incomplete phrase or sentence.

So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor **sinner in the assembly** of the righteous. (Psalm 1:5 ULT)

So the wicked will not stand in the judgment, and **sinner will not stand in the assembly** of the righteous.

Then when he had come near, he asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And so he said, “Lord, **that I might recover my sight**.” (Luke 18:40b-41 ULT)

Then when the man was near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, **I want you to heal me** that I might receive my sight.”

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



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

**Referenced in:** [Colossians 1:6](#); [Colossians 3:13](#); [Colossians 3:14](#); [Colossians 4:6](#); [Colossians 4:10](#); [Colossians 4:11](#); [Colossians 4:13](#); [Colossians 4:14](#)

# 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:** [Colossians 1:1](#); [Colossians 1:3](#); [Colossians 1:7](#); [Colossians 1:8](#); [Colossians 1:9](#); [Colossians 1:28](#); [Colossians 4:3](#); [Colossians 4:8](#)

## First, Second or Third Person

Normally a speaker refers to himself as “I” and the person he is speaking to as “you.” Sometimes in the Bible a speaker refers to himself or to the person he is speaking to with terms other than “I” or “you.”

### Description

- First person — This is how a speaker normally refers to himself. English uses the pronouns “I” and “we.” (Also: me, my, mine; us, our, ours)
- Second person — This is how a speaker normally refers to the person or people he is speaking to. English uses the pronoun “you.” (Also: your, yours)
- Third person — This is how a speaker refers to someone else. English uses the pronouns “he,” “she,” “it,” and “they.” (Also: him, his, her, hers, its; them, their, theirs) Noun phrases like “the man” or “the woman” are also third person.

This page answers the question: *What are first, second, and third person, and how do I translate when a third person form does not refer to the third person?*

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

*Making Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information*

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

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

### Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Sometimes in the Bible a speaker uses the third person to refer to himself or to the people he is speaking to. Readers might think that the speaker was referring to someone else. They might not understand that he meant “I” or “you.”

### Examples From the Bible

Sometimes people used the third person instead of “I” or “me” to refer to themselves.

But David said to Saul, “**Your servant** used to keep **his** father’s sheep.” (1 Samuel 17:34 ULT)

David referred to himself in the third person as “your servant” and used “his.” He was calling himself Saul’s servant in order to show his humility before Saul.

Then Yahweh answered Job out of a fierce storm and said,  
“... Do you have an arm like **God’s**? Can you thunder with a voice like **his**?” (Job 40:6, 9 ULT)

God referred to himself in the third person with the words “God’s” and “his.” He did this to emphasize that he is God, and he is powerful.

Sometimes people use the third person instead of “you” or “your” to refer to the person or people they are speaking to.

Abraham answered and said, “Look, I have undertaken to speak to my Lord, even though I am only dust and ashes!” (Genesis 18:27 ULT)

Abraham was speaking to the Lord, and referred to the Lord as “My Lord” rather than as “you.” He did this to show his humility before God.

So also my heavenly Father will do to you, if **each of you** does not forgive **his** brother from your heart. (Matthew 18:35 ULT)

After saying “each of you,” Jesus used the third person “his” instead of “your.”

## Translation Strategies

If using the third person to mean “I” or “you” would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other options.

- (1) Use the third person phrase along with the pronoun “I” or “you.”
- (2) Simply use the first person (“I”) or second person (“you”) instead of the third person.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use the third person phrase along with the pronoun “I” or “you.”

But David said to Saul, “**Your servant** used to keep **his** father’s sheep.” (1 Samuel 17:34)

But David said to Saul, “**I, your servant**, used to keep **my** father’s sheep.”

- (2) Simply use the first person (“I”) or second person (“you”) instead of the third person.

Then Yahweh answered Job out of a fierce storm and said, “... Do you have an arm like **God’s**? Can you thunder with a voice like **his**?” (Job 40:6, 9 ULT)

Then Yahweh answered Job out of a fierce storm and said, “... Do you have an arm like **mine**? Can you thunder with a voice like **mine**?”

So also my heavenly Father will do to you if **each of you** does not forgive **his** brother from your heart. (Matthew 18:35 ULT)

So also my heavenly Father will do to you if **each of you** does not forgive **your** brother from your heart.

Next we recommend you learn about:

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

**Referenced in:** [Colossians 1:1](#); [Colossians 1:2](#); [Colossians 2:2](#); [Colossians 4:18](#)

## 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](https://ufw.io/figs_younum).

Next we recommend you learn about:

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

**Referenced in:** [Colossians 1:1](#); [Colossians 2:21](#); [Colossians 4:17](#)

## 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:** [Colossians 3:11](#); [Colossians 3:25](#)

# 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:** [Colossians 1:11](#); [Colossians 2:5](#); [Colossians 2:8](#)

## How to Translate Names

### Description

The Bible contains the names of many people, groups of people, and places. Some of these names may sound strange and be hard to say. Sometimes readers may not know what a name refers to, and sometimes they may need to understand what a name means. This page will help you see how you can translate these names and how you can help people understand what they need to know about them.

This page answers the question: *How can I translate names that are new to my culture?*

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

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

### Meaning of names

Most names in the Bible have meaning. Most of the time, names in the Bible are used simply to identify the people and places they refer to, but sometimes the meaning of a name is especially important.

For this **Melchizedek**, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, was the one who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him. (Hebrews 7:1 ULT)

Here the writer uses the name “Melchizedek” primarily to refer to a man who had that name, and the title “king of Salem” tells us that he ruled over a certain city.

His name first indeed means “king of righteousness,” and then also “king of Salem,” that is, “king of peace.” (Hebrews 7:2b ULT)

Here the writer explains the meanings of Melchizedek’s name and title because those things tell us more about the person. Other times, the writer does not explain the meaning of a name because he expects the reader to already know the meaning. If the meaning of the name is important to understand the passage, you can include the meaning in the text or in a footnote.

### Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Readers may not know some of the names in the Bible. They may not know whether a name refers to a person or place or something else.
- Readers may need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand the passage.
- Some names may have different sounds or combinations of sounds that are not used in your language or are unpleasant to say in your language. For strategies to address this problem, see [Borrow Words](#).
- Some people and places in the Bible have two names. Readers may not realize that two names refer to the same person or place.

### Examples From the Bible

Then you crossed over the **Jordan** and came to **Jericho**, and the men of Jericho, and the **Amorites** ... fought against you, but I gave them into your hand. (Joshua 24:11 ULT)

Readers might not know that “Jordan” is the name of a river, “Jericho” is the name of a city, and “Amorites” is the name of a group of people.

She said, “Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?” Therefore, the well was called **Beer Lahai Roi**. (Genesis 16:13b-14a ULT)

Readers may not understand the second sentence if they do not know that “Beer Lahai Roi” means “Well of the Living One who sees me.”

And she called his name **Moses** and she said, "For out of the water I drew him." (Exodus 2:10b ULT)

Readers may not understand why she said this if they do not know that the name Moses sounds like the Hebrew words "pull out."

**Saul** was in agreement with his execution. (Acts 8:1a ULT)

But when the apostles, Barnabas and **Paul**, heard of it, they tore their clothing. (Acts 14:14a ULT)

Readers may not know that the names Saul and Paul refer to the same person.

## Translation Strategies

- (1) If readers cannot easily understand from the context what kind of a thing a name refers to, you can add a word to clarify it.
- (2) If readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, copy the name and tell about its meaning either in the text or in a footnote.
- (3) Or if readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, and that name is used only once, translate the meaning of the name instead of copying the name.
- (4) If a person or place has two different names, use one name most of the time and the other name only when the text tells about the person or place having more than one name or when it says something about why the person or place was given that name. Write a footnote when the source text uses the name that is used less frequently.
- (5) Or if a person or place has two different names, then use whatever name is given in the source text, and add a footnote that gives the other name.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If readers cannot easily understand from the context what kind of a thing a name refers to, you can add a word to clarify it.

Then you crossed over the **Jordan** and came to **Jericho**, and the men of Jericho, and the **Amorites** ... fought against you, but I gave them into your hand. (Joshua 24:11 ULT)

You went over the **Jordan River** and came to the **city of Jericho**. The men of Jericho fought against you, along with **the tribe of the Amorites**.

At that hour, certain Pharisees approached, saying to him, "Leave and go away from here, because **Herod** wants to kill you." (Luke 13:31 ULT)

At that hour, certain Pharisees approached, saying to him, "Go and leave here, because **King Herod** wants to kill you."

- (2) If readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, copy the name and tell about its meaning either in the text or in a footnote.

And she called his name **Moses** and she said, "For out of the water I drew him." (Exodus 2:10b ULT)

She called his name **Moses (which sounds like 'drawn out')**, and she said, "For out of the water I drew him."

- (3) Or if readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, and that name is used only once, translate the meaning of the name instead of copying the name.

She said, “Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?” Therefore, the well was called **Beer Lahai Roi**. (Genesis 16:13b-14a ULT)

She said, “Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?”  
Therefore, the well was called **Well of the Living One who sees me**.

(4) If a person or place has two different names, use one name most of the time and the other name only when the text tells about the person or place having more than one name or when it says something about why the person or place was given that name. Write a footnote when the source text uses the name that is used less frequently. For example, Paul is called “Saul” before Acts 13 and “Paul” after Acts 13. You could translate his name as “Paul” all of the time, except in Acts 13:9 where it talks about him having both names.

... a young man named **Saul**. (Acts 7:58b ULT)

... a young man named **Paul** <sup>1</sup>

The footnote would look like:

<sup>[1]</sup> Most versions say “Saul” here, but most of the time in the Bible he is called “Paul.”

Then later in the story, you could translate this way:

But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit; (Acts 13:9)

But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit;

(5) Or if a person or place has two names, use whatever name is given in the source text, and add a footnote that gives the other name. For example, you could write “Saul” where the source text has “Saul” and “Paul” where the source text has “Paul.”

a young man named **Saul** (Acts 7:58 ULT)

a young man named **Saul**

The footnote would look like:

<sup>[1]</sup> This is the same man who is called Paul beginning in Acts 13.

Then later in the story, you could translate this way:

But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit; (Acts 13:9)

But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit;

Then after the story has explained the name change, you could translate this way.

It came about in Iconium that **Paul** and Barnabas entered together into the synagogue (Acts 14:1 ULT)

It came about in Iconium that **Paul**<sup>1</sup> and Barnabas entered together into the synagogue

The footnote would look like:

<sup>[1]</sup> 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 Colossians](#); [Colossians 1:7](#); [Colossians 4:7](#); [Colossians 4:9](#); [Colossians 4:10](#); [Colossians 4:11](#); [Colossians 4:12](#); [Colossians 4:14](#); [Colossians 4:15](#); [Colossians 4:17](#)



# 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.

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**Referenced in:** [Colossians 1:3](#); [Colossians 1:6](#); [Colossians 1:9](#); [Colossians 1:23](#); [Colossians 1:28](#); [Colossians 3:11](#); [Colossians 4:12](#)

## 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](https://ufw.io/figs_hypo).

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**Referenced in:** [Colossians 2:23](#); [Colossians 3:13](#); [Colossians 4:10](#)

## Idiom

An idiom is a figure of speech made up of a group of words that, as a whole, has a meaning that is different from what one would understand from the meanings of the individual words. Someone from outside of the culture usually cannot understand an idiom without someone inside the culture explaining its true meaning. Every language uses idioms. Some English examples are:

- You are pulling my leg. (This means, “You are teasing me by telling me something that is not true.”)
- Do not push the envelope. (This means, “Do not take a matter to its extreme.”)
- This house is under water. (This means, “The debt owed for this house is greater than its actual value.”)
- We are painting the town red. (This means, “We are going around town tonight celebrating very intensely.”)

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

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

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

## Description

An idiom is a phrase that has a special meaning to the people of the language or culture who use it. Its meaning is different than what a person would understand from the meanings of the individual words that form the phrase.

He **set his face** to go to Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51b ULT)

The words “set his face” is an idiom that means “decided.”

Sometimes people may be able to understand an idiom from another culture, but it might sound like a strange way to express the meaning.

I am not worthy that you would **come under my roof**. (Luke 7:6b ULT)

The phrase “come under my roof” is an idiom that means “enter my house.”

Put these words **into your ears**. (Luke 9:44a ULT)

This idiom means “Listen carefully and remember what I say.”

**Purpose:** An idiom is probably created in a culture somewhat by accident when someone describes something in an unusual way. But, when that unusual way communicates the message powerfully and people understand it clearly, other people start to use it. After a while, it becomes a normal way of talking in that language.

## Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- People can easily misunderstand idioms in the original languages of the Bible if they do not know the cultures that produced the Bible.
- People can easily misunderstand idioms that are in the source language Bibles if they do not know the cultures that made those translations.
- It is useless to translate idioms literally (according to the meaning of each word) when the target language audience will not understand what they mean.

## Examples From the Bible

Then all Israel came to David at Hebron and said, “Look, we are your **flesh and bone**.” (1 Chronicles 11:1 ULT)

This means, “We and you belong to the same race, the same family.”



■ The children of Israel went out **with a high hand**. (Exodus 14:8b ASV)

This means, "The Israelites went out defiantly."

■ the one who **lifts up my head** (Psalm 3:3b ULT)

This means, "the one who helps me."

## Translation Strategies

If the idiom would be clearly understood in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other options.

- (1) Translate the meaning plainly without using an idiom.
- (2) Use a different idiom that people use in your own language that has the same meaning.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Translate the meaning plainly without using an idiom.

Then all Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Look, we are your **flesh and bone**." (1 Chronicles 11:1 ULT)

■ Look, we all **belong to the same nation**.

Then he **set his face** to go to Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51b ULT)

■ He started to travel to Jerusalem, **determined to reach it**.

I am not worthy that you would come **under my roof**. (Luke 7:6b ULT)

■ I am not worthy that you should enter **my house**.

- (2) Use an idiom that people use in your own language that has the same meaning.

Put these words **into your ears**. (Luke 9:44a ULT)

■ **Be all ears** when I say these words to you.

My **eyes grow dim** from grief. (Psalm 6:7a ULT)

■ I am crying my **eyes out**

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**Referenced in:** [Colossians 2:1](#); [Colossians 2:5](#); [Colossians 2:8](#); [Colossians 2:12](#); [Colossians 2:20](#); [Colossians 2:22](#); [Colossians 2:23](#); [Colossians 3:1](#); [Colossians 3:2](#); [Colossians 3:8](#); [Colossians 3:9](#); [Colossians 3:10](#); [Colossians 3:12](#); [Colossians 3:13](#); [Colossians 3:16](#); [Colossians 3:17](#); [Colossians 3:20](#); [Colossians 3:22](#); [Colossians 3:23](#); [Colossians 4:5](#); [Colossians 4:7](#); [Colossians 4:8](#); [Colossians 4:9](#); [Colossians 4:10](#); [Colossians 4:12](#); [Colossians 4:15](#); [Colossians 4:16](#)

## 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)

## Imperatives that function as good results

An imperative sentence can also describe a desirable result. In Proverbs 3:3-4, several imperatives give instructions, then the final imperative describes the good outcome of following those instructions.

Do not let covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness leave you; tie them on your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, and **find favor** and good insight in the eyes of God and man!  
(Proverbs 3:3-4 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.”

Do not let covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness leave you; tie them on your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, **and find favor** and good insight in the eyes of God and man! (Proverbs 3:3-4 ULT)

Do not let covenant faithfulness and trustworthiness leave you; tie them on your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, **then you will find favor** and good insight in the eyes of God and man!

(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:** [Colossians 3:15](#); [Colossians 3:16](#)

## 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:** [Colossians 1:9](#); [Colossians 1:20](#); [Colossians 2:1](#); [Colossians 2:6](#); [Colossians 2:20](#); [Colossians 3:5](#); [Colossians 3:13](#); [Colossians 3:17](#); [Colossians 4:7](#)

# Kinship

## Description

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

Kinship terms refer to those words used to describe people related to one another in familial relationships. These terms vary widely in their specificity from language to language. They range from the (Western) nuclear or immediate family (father-son, husband-wife) out to broad clan relationships in other cultures.

## Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Depending on the language translators may need to use specific terms to designate the accurate kinship relationship. In some languages a different term may be used based on siblings' birth order. In others, the side of the family (father's or mother's), age, marital status, etc. may determine the term used. Different terms may be used based on the gender of the speaker and/or addressee. Translators may need to make sure they know the exact relationship between two related people in the Bible to find the correct term. Sometimes these terms are difficult even for native speakers to remember and translators may need to seek community help in finding the correct term. Another complicating issue is that the Bible may not give enough information about the relationship for translators to determine the correct term in the language being translated into. In this case, translators will have to use a more general term or simply pick a satisfactory term based on the limited information available.

Sometimes terms that seem like kinship terms are used for people who are not necessarily related. For instance, an older person may refer to a younger man or woman as "my son" or "my daughter."

## Examples from the Bible

Then Yahweh said to Cain, "Where is Abel **your brother**?" He said, "I do not know. Am I **my brother's** keeper?" (Genesis 4:9 ULT)

Abel was Cain's younger brother.

Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field to his flock and said to them, "I see **your father's** attitude toward me has changed, but the God of my father has been with me." (Genesis 31:4-5 ULT)

Jacob is referring here to his father-in-law. In some languages there may be a specific term for a man's father-in-law, however, in this case it is better to retain the form **your father** as Jacob may be using it to distance himself from Laban.

And Moses was shepherding the flock of Jethro **his father-in-law**, the priest of Midian. (Exodus 3:1a ULT)

Unlike the previous instance, if your language has a term for a man's father-in-law this is a good place to use it.

And **his sister** stationed herself at a distance to know what would be done to him. (Exodus 2:4 ULT)

From context we know that this was Miriam, Moses's older sister. In some languages this may require a specific term. In others, the term for older sister may be only used when the younger sibling is addressing and/or referring to his or her sister.

Then she and **her daughters-in-law** arose to return from the fields of Moab (Ruth 1:6a ULT)

Ruth & Orpah are Naomi's daughters-in-law.

Then she said, “Look, your sister-in-law has turned back to her people and to her gods.” (Ruth 1:15 ULT)

Orpah had been the wife of Ruth’s husband’s brother. This may be a different term in your language than if she had been Ruth’s husband’s sister.

Then Boaz said to Ruth, “Will you not listen to me, **my daughter**?” (Ruth 2:8a ULT)

Boaz is not Ruth’s father; he is simply using the term to address a younger woman.

And behold, **your relative** Elizabeth—she also has conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren. (Luke 1:36 ULT)

While the KJV translated this as **cousin**, the term simply means a related woman.

## Translation Strategies

- (1) Find out the exact relationship specified and translate using the term your language uses.
- (2) If the text does not specify the relationship as clearly as your language would, either:
  - (a) settle on a more general term.
  - (b) use a specific term if required by your language, choosing the one that is most likely to be correct.

## Translation Strategies Applied

This is not an issue in English, so the following illustrations draw on other languages.

In Korean, there are several terms for brother and sister; the use of them depends on the speaker’s (or referent’s) sex and birth order. Examples are from the Korean Living Bible, found on [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com)

Genesis 30:1 Rachel is jealous of her “eonni,” which is the term a woman uses for her older sister.

Genesis 34:31 Simeon and Levi refer to Dinah as “nui,” a general term for sister.

Genesis 37:16 Joseph refers to his brothers as “hyeong,” which is the term a man uses for his older brother(s).

Genesis 45:12 Joseph refers to Benjamin as “dongsaeng,” which roughly means sibling, usually younger.

In Russian, in-law terms are complex. For instance, “nevěstka” is the term for a brother’s (or brother-in-law’s) wife; a woman uses the same term for her daughter-in-law but her husband would call the same daughter-in-law “snoxá.” Examples from the Russian Synodal Version.

Genesis 38:25 Tamar sends a message to her father-in-law, Judah. The term used is “svekor.” This is used for a woman’s husband’s father.

Exodus 3:1 Moses is watching his father-in-law’s herd. The term used is “test’.” This is used for a man’s wife’s father.

”

Referenced in: [Colossians 4:10](#)



# 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:** [Colossians 1:9](#)

# 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:** [Colossians 1:16](#); [Colossians 1:20](#)

# 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:** [Colossians 1:6](#); [Colossians 1:9](#); [Colossians 1:10](#); [Colossians 1:12](#); [Colossians 1:13](#); [Colossians 1:15](#); [Colossians 1:16](#); [Colossians 1:17](#); [Colossians 1:18](#); [Colossians 1:19](#); [Colossians 1:22](#); [Colossians 1:23](#); [Colossians 1:24](#); [Colossians 1:27](#); [Colossians 2:1](#); [Colossians 2:2](#); [Colossians 2:3](#); [Colossians 2:6](#); [Colossians 2:7](#); [Colossians 2:8](#); [Colossians 2:9](#); [Colossians 2:10](#); [Colossians 2:12](#); [Colossians 2:13](#); [Colossians 2:14](#); [Colossians 2:15](#); [Colossians 2:17](#); [Colossians 2:18](#); [Colossians 2:19](#); [Colossians 2:20](#); [Colossians 3:1](#); [Colossians 3:3](#); [Colossians 3:4](#); [Colossians 3:5](#); [Colossians 3:6](#); [Colossians 3:7](#); [Colossians 3:8](#); [Colossians 3:9](#); [Colossians 3:10](#); [Colossians 3:11](#); [Colossians 3:12](#); [Colossians 3:14](#); [Colossians 3:15](#); [Colossians 3:16](#); [Colossians 3:18](#); [Colossians 3:20](#); [Colossians 3:25](#); [Colossians 4:1](#); [Colossians 4:3](#); [Colossians 4:5](#); [Colossians 4:6](#); [Colossians 4:7](#); [Colossians 4:12](#); [Colossians 4:17](#)

# 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:** [Colossians 1:5](#); [Colossians 1:14](#); [Colossians 1:19](#); [Colossians 1:20](#); [Colossians 1:22](#); [Colossians 1:25](#); [Colossians 2:11](#); [Colossians 2:16](#); [Colossians 2:23](#); [Colossians 3:6](#); [Colossians 3:15](#); [Colossians 3:16](#); [Colossians 3:22](#); [Colossians 4:3](#); [Colossians 4:11](#); [Colossians 4:18](#)

## 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:** [Colossians 1:18](#); [Colossians 2:12](#)

# 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:** [Colossians 1:6](#); [Colossians 1:23](#)



# 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**.

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**Referenced in:** Colossians 1:5; Colossians 1:11; Colossians 1:12; Colossians 1:13; Colossians 1:14; Colossians 1:20; Colossians 1:22; Colossians 1:23; Colossians 1:24; Colossians 1:25; Colossians 1:27; Colossians 2:2; Colossians 2:3; Colossians 2:5; Colossians 2:11; Colossians 2:13; Colossians 2:17; Colossians 2:18; Colossians 2:19; Colossians 2:22; Colossians 2:23; Colossians 3:12; Colossians 3:14; Colossians 3:16; Colossians 3:22; Colossians 3:24; Colossians 4:3

## 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."

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**Referenced in:** [Colossians 4:8](#)

# 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:** [Colossians 2:13](#); [Colossians 2:22](#); [Colossians 3:5](#); [Colossians 3:6](#); [Colossians 3:7](#); [Colossians 3:10](#); [Colossians 3:15](#); [Colossians 4:3](#); [Colossians 4:6](#); [Colossians 4:9](#); [Colossians 4:10](#); [Colossians 4:11](#)



## 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.

But you, why do you judge your brother? And you also, why do you despise your brother? (Romans 14:10 ULT)

Paul used these rhetorical questions **to rebuke** the Romans for doing what they should not do.

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 express surprise or other emotion? 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!

But you, **why do you judge your brother?** And you also, **why do you despise your brother?** (Romans 14:10 ULT)

Do you think it is good to judge your brother? Do you think it is good to despise your brother?

"

**Referenced in:** [Colossians 2:20](#)

# 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 lightning flashes suddenly and everyone can see it, the Son of Man will come suddenly and everyone will be able to see him. No one will have to be told about it.

## Translation Strategies

If people would understand the correct meaning of a simile, consider using it. If they would not, here are some strategies you can use:

(1) If people do not know how the two items are alike, tell how they are alike. However, do not do this if the meaning was not clear to the original audience. (2) If people are not familiar with the item that something is compared to, use an item from your own culture. Be sure that it is one that could have been used in the cultures of the Bible. If you use this strategy, you may want to put the original item in a footnote. (3) Simply describe the item without comparing it to another.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If people do not know how the two items are alike, tell how they are alike. However, do not do this if the meaning was not clear to the original audience.

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**. (Matthew 10:16a ULT) — This compares the danger that Jesus' disciples would be in with the danger that sheep are in when they are surrounded by wolves.

See, I send **you out among wicked people** and you will be in danger from them **as sheep are in danger when they are among wolves**.

For the word of God is living and active and sharper **than any two-edged sword**. (Hebrews 4:12a ULT)

For the word of God is living and active and **more powerful than a very sharp two-edged sword**.

(2) If people are not familiar with the item that something is compared to, use an item from your own culture. Be sure that it is one that could have been used in the cultures of the Bible. If you use this strategy, you may want to put the original item in a footnote.

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**, (Matthew 10:16a ULT) — If people do not know what sheep and wolves are, or that wolves kill and eat sheep, you could use some other animal that kills another.

See, I send you out **as chickens in the midst of wild dogs**.

How often did I long to gather your children together, just **as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings**, but you were not willing! (Matthew 23:37b ULT)

How often I wanted to gather your children together, **as a mother closely watches over her infants**, but you refused!

If you have faith **as a grain of mustard** ... (Matthew 17:20)

If you have faith even as small **as a tiny seed**,

(3) Simply describe the item without comparing it to another.

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**. (Matthew 10:16a ULT)

See, I send you out among **people who will want to harm you**.

How often did I long to gather your children together, just **as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings**, but you were not willing! (Matthew 23:37b ULT)

How often I wanted to **protect you**, but you refused!

Next we recommend you learn about:

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

*Biblical Imagery — Common Patterns* ([UTA PDF](#))

**Referenced in:** [Colossians 3:13](#)

## Statements — Other Uses

### Description

Normally statements are used to give information. Sometimes they are used in the Bible for other functions.

This page answers the question: *What other uses are there for statements?*

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

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

### Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages would not use a statement for some of the functions that statements are used for in the Bible.

### Examples From the Bible

Statements are normally used to give **information**. All of the sentences in John 1:6-8 below are statements, and their function is to give information.

There was a man who was sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness in order to testify about the light, that all might believe through him. John was not the light, but came that he might testify about the light. (John 1:6-8 ULT)

A statement can also be used as a **command** to tell someone what to do. In the examples below, the high priest used statements with the verb “will” to tell people what to do.

He commanded them, saying, “This is what you **must** do. A third of you who come on the Sabbath **will** keep watch over the king’s house, and a third **will** be at the Sur Gate, and a third at the gate behind the guardhouse.” (2 Kings 11:5 ULT)

A statement can also be used to give **instructions**. The speaker below was not just telling Joseph about something Joseph would do in the future; he was telling Joseph what he needed to do.

She will give birth to a son, and **you will call his name Jesus**, for he will save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21 ULT)

A statement can also be used to make a **request**. The man with leprosy was not just saying what Jesus was able to do. He was also asking Jesus to heal him.

Behold, a leper came to him and bowed before him, saying, “Lord, if you are willing, **you are able to make me clean**.” (Matthew 8:2 ULT)

A statement can also be used to **perform** something. By telling Adam that the ground was cursed because of him, God actually cursed it.

... **cursed is the ground** because of you; (Genesis 3:17b ULT)

By telling a man that his sins were forgiven, **Jesus forgave** the man’s sins.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “**Son, your sins are forgiven**.” (Mark 2:5 ULT)

### Translation Strategies

- (1) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, **use a sentence type** that would express that function.
- (2) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, **add a sentence type** that would express that function.



(3) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, **use a verb form** that would express that function.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, use a sentence type that would express that function.

She will give birth to a son, and **you will call his name Jesus**, for he will save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21 ULT)

The phrase “you will call his name Jesus” is an instruction. It can be translated using the sentence type of a normal instruction.

She will give birth to a son. **Name him Jesus**, because he will save his people from their sins.

(2) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, add a sentence type that would express that function.

Lord, if you are willing, **you are able to make me clean**. (Matthew 8:2 ULT)

The function of “you are able” is to make a request. In addition to the statement, a request can be added.

Lord, you are able to make me clean. If you are willing, **please do so**.  
OR:  
Lord, if you are willing, **please heal me**. I know that you are able to do so.

(3) If the function of a statement would not be understood correctly in your language, use a verb form that would express that function.

She will give birth to a son, and **you will call his name Jesus**, for he will save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21 ULT)

She will give birth to a son, and **you must call his name Jesus**, for he will save his people from their sins.

Son, your sins are forgiven. (Mark 2:5 ULT)

Son, I forgive your sins.  
OR:  
Son, God hereby forgives your sins.

”

**Referenced in:** [Colossians 3:24](#)

# 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:** [Colossians 2:2](#); [Colossians 2:12](#); [Colossians 4:8](#)

## Textual Variants

### Description

Thousands of years ago, people wrote the books of the Bible. Other people then copied them by hand and translated them. They did this work very carefully, and over the years many people made thousands of copies. However, people who looked at them later saw that there were small differences between them. Some copiers accidentally left out some words, or some mistook one word for another that looked like it. Occasionally, they added words or even whole sentences, either by accident or because they wanted to explain something. Modern Bibles are translations of the old copies. Some modern Bibles include some of these sentences that were added. In the ULT, these added sentences are usually written in footnotes.

This page answers the question: *Why does the ULT have missing or added verses, and should I translate them?*

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

*Choosing a Source Text* ([UTA PDF](#))

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

Bible scholars have read many old copies and compared them with each other. For each place in the Bible where there was a difference, they have figured out which wordings are most likely correct. The translators of the ULT based the ULT on wordings that scholars say are most likely correct. Because people who use the ULT may have access to Bibles that are based on other copies, the ULT translators have sometimes included information about some of the differences between them, either in the ULT footnotes or in the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes.

Translators are encouraged to translate the text in the ULT and to write about added sentences in footnotes, as is done in the ULT. However, if the local church really wants those sentences to be included in the main text, translators may put them in the text and include a footnote about them.

### Examples From the Bible

Matthew 18:10-11 ULT has a footnote about verse 11.

<sup>10</sup> See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I say to you that in heaven their angels always look on the face of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>11</sup> <sup>[1]</sup>

<sup>[1]</sup> Many authorities, some ancient, insert v. 11: **For the Son of Man came to save that which was lost.**

John 7:53-8:11 is not in the best earliest manuscripts. It has been included in the ULT, but it is marked off with square brackets ([ ]) at the beginning and end, and there is a footnote after verse 11.

53 [Then everyone went to his own house ... 11 She said, "No one, Lord." Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."] <sup>[2]</sup>

<sup>[2]</sup> Some ancient manuscripts include John 7:53-8:11

### Translation Strategies

When there is a textual variant, you may choose to follow the ULT or another version that you have access to.

- (1) Translate the verses as they are in the ULT and include the footnote that the ULT provides.
- (2) Translate the verses as another version has them, and change the footnote so that it fits this situation.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

The translation strategies are applied to Mark 7:14-16 ULT, which has a footnote about verse 16.

<sup>14</sup> He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. <sup>15</sup> There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man." <sup>16</sup> [1]

[1] Some ancient manuscripts include verse 16: **If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.**

(1) Translate the verses as they are in the ULT and include the footnote that the ULT provides.

<sup>14</sup> He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. <sup>15</sup> There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man." <sup>16</sup> [1]

[1] Some ancient manuscripts include verse 16: **If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.**

(2) Translate the verses as another version has them, and change the footnote so that it fits this situation.

<sup>14</sup> He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. <sup>15</sup> There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man. <sup>16</sup> If any man has ears to hear, let him hear." [1]

[1] Some ancient manuscripts do not include verse 16.

Next we recommend you learn about:

*Chapter and Verse Numbers* ([UTA PDF](#))

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

*Terms to Know* ([UTA PDF](#))

*The Original and Source Languages* ([UTA PDF](#))

**Referenced in:** [Introduction to Colossians](#); [Colossians 1:14](#); [Colossians 3:6](#); [Colossians 4:8](#)

## Third-Person Imperatives

### Description

This page answers the question: *How do I translate third-person imperatives into my language?*

The languages of the Bible have verb forms that can give commands, instructions or other directive speech in the third person. In other words, these directives address “he,” “she,” “it,” or “they” rather than “you.”

### Reasons This Is a Translation Issue:

Many languages, including English, do not have these verb forms and so they must communicate this kind of directive speech in other ways. In English, we normally represent these third-person imperatives by putting “let” before the subject or verb. This is actually one of the translation strategies, since English does not have third-person imperatives.

### Examples From the Bible

■ **Let your kingdom come, let your will be done** as in heaven also on earth. (Matthew 6:9 ULT)

In this prayer, Jesus uses two third-person imperatives. The first one tells God’s kingdom to come, and the second one tells God’s will to be done. Of course, a kingdom and a will cannot hear Jesus, so Jesus is using these verb forms to communicate to God that Jesus desires that these things happen.

■ **Let no one deceive himself.** If anyone among you thinks he is wise in this age, **let him become a “fool,”** that he may become wise. (1 Corinthians 3:18 ULT)

In this verse, Paul uses third-person imperatives to give a warning and an instruction. It may be that using this third-person form was more polite than if he had used second-person imperatives.

■ But because of immorality, **let each man have** his own wife, and **let each woman have** her own husband. (1 Corinthians 7:2 ULT)

Here again Paul uses two third-person imperatives to instruct the Corinthian church. Since he had just recommended a celibate life in the previous verse, these imperatives have the sense of giving advice rather than command.

■ Then God said, “**Let there be light.**” And there was light. (Genesis 1:3 ULT)

The Biblical Hebrew verb form used here is equivalent to the third-person imperative in Greek. Here, God commands in the third person that light come into existence, so it does.

■ **...let him do to me** just as {is} good in his eyes. (2 Samuel 15:26 ULT)

David uses the third-person form to express his willingness for God to do to him whatever God wants to do.

### Translation Strategies

If your language has third-person imperative forms and would use them in the way that the biblical languages do, then please use them. If not, then consider these strategies.

- (1) Use a form that your language has that indicates that this is the will or wish of the speaker.
- (2) If appropriate, use a second-person imperative.
- (3) Use an explicit reference to the function of the imperative.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use a form that your language has that indicates that this is the will or wish of the speaker.

Let your kingdom come, let your will be done as in heaven also on earth. (Matthew 6:9 ULT)

(Since English does not have third-person imperatives, it follows this strategy and uses “let” to indicate that this is the will or wish of the speaker.)

May your kingdom come, may your will be done as in heaven also on earth.

Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks he is wise in this age, let him become a “fool,” that he may become wise. (1 Corinthians 3:18 ULT)

(Since English does not have third-person imperatives, it follows this strategy and uses “let” to indicate that this is the will or wish of the speaker.)

No one should deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks he is wise in this age, he should become a “fool,” that he may become wise.

...let him do to me just as {is} good in his eyes. (2 Samuel 15:26 ULT)

(Since English does not have third-person imperatives, it follows this strategy and uses “let” to indicate that this is the will or wish of the speaker.)

...he may do to me just as {is} good in his eyes. (2 Samuel 15:26 ULT)

(2) If appropriate, use a second-person imperative.

Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks he is wise in this age, let him become a “fool,” that he may become wise. (1 Corinthians 3:18 ULT)

Do not deceive yourselves. If you think you are wise in this age, then become a “fool,” that you may become wise.

Then God said, “Let there be light.” And there was light. (Genesis 1:3 ULT)

Then God said, “Light, come into being.” And there was light.

...let him do to me just as {is} good in his eyes. (2 Samuel 15:26 ULT)

...Yahweh, do to me just as {is} good in your eyes.

(3) Use an explicit reference to the function of the imperative.

Let your kingdom come, let your will be done as in heaven also on earth. (Matthew 6:9 ULT)

We pray that your kingdom come, we pray that your will be done as in heaven also on earth.

Then God said, “Let there be light.” And there was light. (Genesis 1:3 ULT)

Then God said, “I command light to be.” And there was light.

But because of immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. (1 Corinthians 7:2 ULT)

But because of immorality, I advise each man to have his own wife, and I advise each woman to have her own husband.

...let him do to me just as {is} good in his eyes. (2 Samuel 15:26 ULT)

...he has my permission to do to me just as {is} good in his eyes.

See also [Imperatives – Other Uses](#)

"

**Referenced in:** [Colossians 2:16](#); [Colossians 2:18](#)



## Translate Unknowns

While working to translate the Bible, you (the translator) might find yourself asking: “How do I translate words like lion, fig tree, mountain, priest, or temple when people in my culture have never seen these things and we do not have a word for them?”

This page answers the question: *How can I translate ideas that my readers are not familiar with?*

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

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

## Description

Unknowns are things that occur in the source text that are not known to the people of your culture. The unfoldingWord® Translation Words pages and the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes will help you understand what they are. After you understand them, you will need to find ways to refer to those things so that people who read your translation will understand what they are.

They said to him, “We have nothing here except five loaves of **bread** and two fish.” (Matthew 14:17 ULT)

Bread is a particular food made by mixing finely crushed grains with oil, and then cooking the mixture so that it is dry. (Grains are the seeds of a kind of grass.) In some cultures people do not have bread and do not know what it is.

## Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Readers may not know some of the things that are in the Bible because those things are not part of their own culture.
- Readers may have difficulty understanding a text if they do not know some of the things that are mentioned in it.

## Translation Principles

- Use words that are already part of your language if possible.
- Keep expressions short if possible.
- Represent God’s commands and historical facts accurately.

## Examples From the Bible

So I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **jackals**. (Jeremiah 9:11a ULT)

Jackals are wild animals like dogs that live in only a few parts of the world. So they are not known in many places.

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous **wolves**. (Matthew 7:15 ULT)

If wolves do not live where the translation will be read, the readers may not understand that they are fierce, wild animals like dogs that attack and eat sheep.

They offered him wine mixed with **myrrh**, but he did not drink it. (Mark 15:23 ULT)

People may not know what myrrh is and that it was used as a medicine.

... to him who made **great lights** ... (Psalm 136:7a ULT)

Some languages have terms for things that give light, like the sun and fire, but they have no general term for lights.

Your sins ... will be white like **snow**. (Isaiah 1:18b ULT)

People in many parts of the world have not seen snow, but they may have seen it in pictures.

## Translation Strategies

Here are ways you might translate a term that is not known in your language:

- (1) Use a phrase that describes what the unknown item is, or what is important about the unknown item for the verse being translated.
- (2) Substitute something similar from your language if doing so does not falsely represent a historical fact.
- (3) Copy the word from another language, and add a general word or descriptive phrase to help people understand it.
- (4) Use a word that is more general in meaning.
- (5) Use a word or phrase that is more specific in meaning.

## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use a phrase that describes what the unknown item is, or what is important about the unknown item for the verse being translated.

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but are inwardly they are **ravenous wolves**. (Matthew 7:15 ULT)

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but **inwardly they are very hungry and dangerous animals**.

"Ravenous wolves" is part of a metaphor here, so the reader needs to know that they are very dangerous to sheep in order to understand this metaphor. (If sheep are also unknown, then you will need to also use one of the translation strategies to translate sheep, or change the metaphor to something else, using a translation strategy for metaphors. See [Translating Metaphors](#).)

"We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish." (Matthew 14:17 ULT)

We have nothing here except five **loaves of baked grain seeds** and two fish.

- (2) Substitute something similar from your language if doing so does not falsely represent a historical fact.

Your sins ... will be white like **snow**. (Isaiah 1:18b ULT) This verse is not about snow. It uses snow in a figure of speech to help people understand how white something will be.

Your sins ... will be white like **milk**.

Your sins ... will be white like **the moon**.

- (3) Copy the word from another language, and add a general word or descriptive phrase to help people understand it.

Then they tried to give Jesus wine that was mixed with **myrrh**. But he refused to drink it. (Mark 15:23 ULT) — People may understand better what myrrh is if it is used with the general word "medicine."

Then they tried to give Jesus wine that was mixed with **a medicine called myrrh**. But he refused to drink it.

"We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish." (Matthew 14:17 ULT) —  
People may understand better what bread is if it is used with a phrase that tells what it is made  
of (seeds) and how it is prepared (crushed and baked).

We have nothing here except five loaves of **baked crushed seed bread**  
and two fish.

(4) Use a word that is more general in meaning.

I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **jackals** (Jeremiah 9:11a ULT)

I will turn Jerusalem into piles of ruins, a hideout for **wild dogs**

"We have nothing here except five **loaves of bread** and two fish." (Matthew 14:17 ULT)

We have nothing here except five **loaves of baked food** and two fish.

(5) Use a word or phrase that is more specific in meaning.

... to him who made **great lights** ... (Psalm 136:7a ULT)

to him who made **the sun and the moon**

Next we recommend you learn about:

*Copy or Borrow Words* ([UTA PDF](#))

*How to Translate Names* ([UTA PDF](#))

**Referenced in:** [Colossians 1:15](#); [Colossians 1:16](#); [Colossians 1:22](#); [Colossians 1:23](#); [Colossians 1:26](#); [Colossians 1:28](#);  
[Colossians 2:4](#); [Colossians 2:5](#); [Colossians 2:7](#); [Colossians 2:8](#); [Colossians 2:13](#); [Colossians 2:15](#); [Colossians 2:17](#);  
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[Colossians 3:11](#); [Colossians 3:12](#); [Colossians 3:16](#); [Colossians 3:18](#); [Colossians 3:19](#); [Colossians 3:20](#); [Colossians 3:21](#);  
[Colossians 3:22](#); [Colossians 4:3](#); [Colossians 4:10](#); [Colossians 4:12](#)

# Translating Son and Father

Door43 supports Bible translations that represent these concepts when they refer to God.

## Biblical Witness

**“Father” and “Son” are names that God calls himself in the Bible.**

The Bible shows that God called Jesus his Son:

After he was baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water, and ... a voice came out of the heavens saying, **“This is my beloved Son.** I am very pleased with him.” (Matthew 3:16-17 ULT)

The Bible shows that Jesus called God his Father:

Jesus ... said, “I praise you **Father**, Lord of heaven and earth ... no one knows the **Son** except the **Father**, and no one knows the **Father** except the **Son.**” (Matthew 11:25a, 27b ULT) (See also: John 6:26-57)

Christians have found that “Father” and “Son” are the ideas that most essentially describe the eternal relationship of the First and Second Persons of the Trinity to each other. The Bible indeed refers to them in various ways, but no other terms reflect the eternal love and intimacy between these Persons, nor the interdependent eternal relationship between them.

Jesus referred to God in the following terms:

Baptize them into **the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.** (Matthew 28:19b ULT)

The intimate, loving relationship between the Father and the Son is eternal, just as they are eternal. The Father **loves** the Son. (See John 3:35-36; 5:19-20 ULT)

**I love** the Father, and just as the Father commanded me, thus I do. (John 14:31 ULT)

**No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son.** (Luke 10:22b ULT)

The terms “Father” and “Son” also communicate that the Father and the Son are of the same essence; they are both eternal God.

Jesus said, “Father, ... glorify your Son so that the Son will glorify you ... I glorified you on the earth ... Now Father, glorify me ... with the glory that **I had with you before the world was made.**” (John 17:1, 4a, 5 ULT)

But in these last days, {God the Father} has spoken to us through a Son, whom he appointed to be the heir of all things. Through him, he also made the universe. He is the brightness of God’s glory and **the very exact representation of his being.** He holds everything together by the word of his power. (Hebrews 1:2-3a ULT)

Jesus said to him, “I have been with you for so long and you still do not know me, Philip? **Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.** How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’” (John 14:9 ULT)

This page answers the question: *Why are these concepts important in referring to God?*

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

Create Faithful Translations [\(UTA PDF\)](#)

Son of God and God the Father [\(UTA PDF\)](#)

## Human Relationships

**Human fathers and sons are not perfect, but the Bible still uses those terms for the Father and Son, who are perfect.**

Just as today, human father-son relationships during Bible times were never as loving or perfect as the relationship between Jesus and his Father. But this does not mean that the translator should avoid the concepts of father and son. The Scriptures use these terms to refer to God, the perfect Father and Son, as well as to sinful human fathers and sons. In referring to God as Father and Son, choose words in your language that are widely used to refer to a human “father” and “son.” In this way you will communicate that God the Father and God the Son are of the same divine essence (they are both God), just as a human father and son are of the same human essence (they are both human and share the same human characteristics).

## Translation Strategies

- (1) Think through all the possibilities within your language to translate the words “son” and “father.” Determine which words in your language best represent the divine “Son” and “Father.”
- (2) If your language has more than one word for “son,” use the word that has the closest meaning to “only son” (or “first son” if necessary).
- (3) If your language has more than one word for “father,” use the word that has the closest meaning to “birth father,” rather than “adoptive father.”

(See *God the Father and Son of God* pages in [unfoldingWord® Translation Words](#) for help translating “Father” and “Son.”)

”

**Referenced in:** [Colossians 1:2](#); [Colossians 1:12](#); [Colossians 1:13](#)

# 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:** [Colossians 1:28](#); [Colossians 2:8](#); [Colossians 2:18](#); [Colossians 2:22](#); [Colossians 3:9](#); [Colossians 3:23](#); [Colossians 4:15](#)

## When to Keep Information Implicit

### Description

Sometimes it is better not to state assumed knowledge or implicit information explicitly. This page gives some direction about when not to do this.

This page answers the question: *When should I not make implicit information explicit?*

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

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

### Translation Principles

- If a speaker or author intentionally left something unclear, do not try to make it more clear.
- If the original audience did not understand what the speaker meant, do not make it so clear that your readers would find it strange that the original audience did not understand.
- If you need to explicitly state some assumed knowledge or implicit information, try to do it in a way that does not make your readers think that the original audience needed to be told those things.
- Do not make implicit information explicit if it confuses the message or leads the reader to forget what the main point is.
- Do not make assumed knowledge or implicit information explicit if your readers already understand it.

### Examples From the Bible

From the eater came forth food; and from the strong one came forth sweetness. (Judges 14:14 ULT)

This was a riddle. Samson purposely said this in a way that it would be hard for his enemies to know what it meant. Do not make it clear that the eater and the strong thing was a lion and that the sweet thing to eat was honey.

Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." They reasoned among themselves saying, "It is because we did not take bread." (Matthew 16:6-7 ULT)

Some possible implicit information here is that the disciples should beware of the false teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. But Jesus' disciples did not understand this. They thought that Jesus was talking about real yeast and bread. So it would not be appropriate to state explicitly that the word "yeast" here refers to false teaching. The disciples did not understand what Jesus meant until they heard what Jesus said in Matthew 16:11.

"How is it that you do not understand that I was not speaking to you about bread? Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then they understood that he was not telling them to beware of yeast in bread, but to beware of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Matthew 16:11-12 ULT)

Only after Jesus explained that he was not talking about bread did they realize that he was talking about the false teaching of the Pharisees. Therefore, it would be wrong to explicitly state the implicit information in Matthew 16:6.

### Translation Strategies

Because we recommend that translators not change this kind of passage to make it more clear, this page does not have any translation strategies.



## Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

Because we recommend that translators not change this kind of passage to make it more clear, this page does not have any translation strategies applied.

"

**Referenced in:** [Colossians 4:10](#); [Colossians 4:17](#)



# **unfoldingWord® Translation Words**

**Version 85**

## fruit, fruitful, unfruitful

### Definition:

The term “fruit” refers to the part of a plant that can be eaten. Something that is “fruitful” produces a lot of fruit. Something that is “unfruitful” does not produce fruit.

- In general, the expression “fruit of” refers to anything that comes from or that is produced by something else. For example, the phrase “the fruit of every tree” refers to the fruit that comes from these trees.
- The expression “fruit of the land” refers generally to everything that the land produces for people to eat. This includes not only fruits such as grapes or dates, but also vegetables, nuts, and grains.

### Translation Suggestions:

- It is best to translate the term “fruit” using the general word for “fruit” that is commonly used in the project language to refer to the edible fruit of a fruit tree. In many languages it may be more natural to use the plural “fruits” whenever it refers to more than one fruit.
- When used literally, the term “fruitful” could be translated as “producing much fruit.”
- The expression “fruit of the land” could also be translated as “food that the land produces” or “food crops that are growing in that region.”
- When used literally, the expression “will be more fruitful” could also be translated as “will produce more fruit.”

(See also: [descendant](#), [grain](#), [grape](#), [Holy Spirit](#), [vine](#), [womb](#))

### Bible References:

- Genesis 1:11
- Matthew 7:17

### Word Data:

- Strong's: H0004, H1061, H1063, H1069, H2233, H2981, H3581, H3759, H3899, H3978, H4022, H5108, H6509, H6529, H7019, H8393, H8570, G10810, G25900, G25920, G25930, G37030, G50520, G53520

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Referenced in: [Colossians 1 General Notes](#)

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