



unfoldingWord® Translation Notes

Philippians

Version 86

[en]

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unfoldingWord® Translation Notes

Date: 2025-08-01

Version: 86

Published by: unfoldingWord

unfoldingWord® Literal Text

Date: 2025-08-01

Version: 86

Published by: unfoldingWord

unfoldingWord® Simplified Text

Date: 2025-08-01

Version: 86

Published by: unfoldingWord

unfoldingWord® Hebrew Bible

Date: 2022-10-11

Version: 2.1.30

Published by: unfoldingWord

unfoldingWord® Greek New Testament

Date: 2023-09-26

Version: 0.34

Published by: unfoldingWord

unfoldingWord® Translation Academy

Date: 2025-08-01

Version: 86

Published by: unfoldingWord®

unfoldingWord® Translation Words

Date: 2025-08-01

Version: 86

Published by: unfoldingWord

unfoldingWord® Translation Words Links

Date: 2025-08-01

Version: 86

Published by: unfoldingWord

unfoldingWord® Translation Notes

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unfoldingWord® Translation Notes

Philippians

Introduction to Philippians

Part 1: General Introduction

Outline of Philippians

Greeting, thanksgiving and prayer (1:1–11)

Paul's report on his ministry (1:12–26)

Instructions

- To be steadfast (1:27–30)
- To be united (2:1–2)
- To be humble (2:3–11)
- To work out our salvation with God working in you (2:12–13)
- To be innocent, and shining as light (2:14–18)

Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19–30)

Warning about false teachers (3:1–4:1)

Personal instruction (4:2–5)

Rejoice and do not be anxious (4:4–6)

Final remarks

- Values (4:8–9)
- Contentment (4:10–20)
- Final Greetings (4:21–23)

Who wrote the book of Philippians?

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

Paul wrote this letter while in prison in Rome.

What is the book of Philippians about?

Paul wrote this letter to the believers in Philippi, a city in Macedonia. He wrote it to thank the Philippians for the gift they had sent him. He wanted to tell them how he was doing in prison and to encourage them to rejoice, even if they were suffering. He also wrote to them about a man named Epaphroditus, the one who brought the gift to Paul. While visiting Paul, Epaphroditus became ill, so Paul decided to send him back to Philippi. Paul encouraged the believers in Philippi to welcome him and to be kind to Epaphroditus when he returned.

How should the title of this book be translated?

Translators may choose to call this book by its traditional title, "Philippians." Or they may choose a clearer title, such as "Paul's Letter to the Church in Philippi," or "A Letter to the Christians in Philippi." (See: **How to Translate Names (p.171)**)

Part 2: Important Religious and Cultural Concepts

What was the city of Philippi like?

Philip, the father of Alexander the Great, founded Philippi in the region of Macedonia. This meant that the citizens of Philippi were also considered citizens of Rome. The people of Philippi were proud of being citizens of Rome. But Paul tells the believers that it is much more important that they are citizens of heaven (3:20).

Part 3: Important Translation Issues

Singular and plural “you”

In this book, the word “I” refers to Paul. The words “you” and “your” always refer to the believers in Philippi, except for one time in 4:3. (See: **Forms of You (p.163)**)

Who were the “enemies of the cross of Christ” (3:18) in this letter?

The “enemies of the cross of Christ” were probably people who called themselves believers, but they did not obey God’s commands. They thought that freedom in Christ meant that believers could do whatever they desired, and God would not punish them (3:19).

Why were the words “joy” and “rejoice” frequently used in this letter?

Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter (1:7). Even though he suffered, Paul said many times that he was joyful because God had been kind to him through Jesus Christ. He wanted to encourage his readers to have the same trust in Jesus Christ.

What does Paul mean by the expressions “in Christ,” or “in the Lord,” etc.?

These kinds of expressions occur in 1:1, 8, 13, 14, 26, 27; 2:1, 5, 19, 24, 29; 3:1, 3, 9, 14; 4:1, 2, 4, 7, 10, 13, 19, 21. Paul meant to express the idea of a very close union with Christ and the believers. See the introduction to the book of Romans for more details about this kind of expression.

What are the major issues in the text of the book of Philippians?

Some versions have “Amen” at the end of the final verse in the letter (4:23). The ULT, UST, and some modern versions include it, but many other versions do not. (See: **Textual Variants (p.220)**)

Philippians 1

Philippians 1 Chapter Introduction

Structure and Formatting

Paul follows the normal practice of the time by beginning the letter with a statement of the names of the senders and the recipients. In that culture, the sender would then offer a good wish for the recipients. Paul does this in the form of a Christian blessing.

Religious and Cultural Concepts in This Chapter

The day of Christ

This refers to the day when Christ returns. Paul often connected the return of Christ with motivating godly living. (See: **godly, godliness, ungodly, godless, ungodliness, godlessness (p.230)**)

Translation Issues in This Chapter

Paradox

A paradox is a true statement that appears to describe something impossible. This statement in [verse 21](#) is a paradox: "to die is gain." In [verse 23](#) Paul explains why this is true. ([Philippians 1:21](#))

Philippians 1:1

in Christ Jesus

The phrase **in Christ Jesus** and similar expressions are metaphors that frequently occur in the New Testament letters. They express the strongest kind of relationship possible between Christ and those who believe in him, picturing believers as being surrounded by Christ. Alternate translation: [in close relationship to Christ Jesus] or [in union with Christ Jesus] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

Philippians 1:2

Grace to you and peace

This is a greeting and blessing that Paul often uses in the beginning of his letters. Use a form in your language that makes it clear that this is a greeting and blessing. Alternate translation: [may you experience kindness, mercy, and peace within you] or [I pray that you will have grace, mercy, and peace] (See: **Blessings (p.133)**)

to you

Here, **you** refers to the Philippian Christians and is plural in form in the original language in which Paul wrote. Throughout this letter, with one exception, the words “you” and “your” are plural and refer to the Philippian Christians. If your language uses different forms to show when “you” and “your” refer to one person and when they refer to more than one person, use the plural form that would be appropriate in your language in this occurrence and all other occurrences of “you” and “your” in this letter, except for in [4:3](#). A note will discuss the one exception in [4:3](#). (See: **Forms of ‘You’ — Singular (p.164)**)

our Father

If your language has different forms for including or excluding the hearers, use the inclusive form for **our** here and throughout the letter. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive ‘We’ (p.161)**)

Philippians 1:3

in all my remembrance of you

Here, **in all my remembrance of you** could refer to: (1) each time that Paul thought about the Philippian believers. Alternate translation: [each time that I think about you]; (2) each time that Paul prayed for the Philippian believers. Alternate translation: [every time that I pray for you] (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.143)**)

my God

Use of the words **my God** does not mean that God belongs to Paul, but that Paul belongs to God. That is, God is the one whom Paul worships exclusively. Alternate translation: [the one who is God to me] (See: **Possession (p.196)**)

of you

See how you translated the word **you** in 1:2. In this letter, every use of the words **you** and **your** is plural and refers to the Philippian believers, except for one use in 4:3, which has a note to discuss it. (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

Philippians 1:4

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Philippians 1:5

because of your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now

Here, **because** could refer to: (1) the reason that Paul gives thanks to God. Alternate translation: [I give thanks to God because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now]; (2) the reason for Paul's joy. (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.143)**)

your

The word **your** is plural and refers to the Philippian Christians. In this letter, with one exception, the words “you” and “your” are always plural and always refer to the Philippian Christians. If your language uses different forms to show when “you” and “your” refer to one person and when they refer to more than one person, use the plural form that would be appropriate in your language in this occurrence and all other occurrences of “you” and “your” in this letter, except for in 4:3. A note will discuss the one exception in 4:3. (See: **Forms of ‘You’ — Singular (p.164)**)

your fellowship in the gospel

Here, **your fellowship in the gospel** refers to the Philippians’ partnering with Paul in the various things involved in spreading the good news about Jesus. This includes gifts of money that they sent to Paul (See: 4:15–18). You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [your participation with me in advancing the gospel] or [your partnership with me in working to spread the good news about Jesus] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

from the first day

The phrase **from the first day** refers to the time at which the Philippian believers first believed the gospel that Paul preached to them. This may also have been the first day that Paul preached in Philippi. Alternate translation: [from the time you first heard and believed the gospel that I preached] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

until now

The phrase **until now** does not mean that the Philippian believers have now stopped partnering with Paul. Rather, it means that they are still partnering with Paul. Alternate translation: [that we are still sharing now] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

Philippians 1:6

having become confident about this very thing

The phrase **having been persuaded** indicates a reason that Paul thanks God. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state that explicitly. Alternate translation: [I thank God because I am confident of this very thing] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

the one having begun a good work in you will perfect {it

Here, **the one** refers to God. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state that explicitly. Alternate translation: [that God, having begun a good work in you, will perfect it] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

that the one having begun a good work in you

The phrase **a good work in you** refers to both the initial conversion of the Philippian Christians and to God's ongoing work in their lives through the Holy Spirit. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state that explicitly. Alternate translation: [that God, having begun his good work in you through your conversion and continuing it through the work of the Holy Spirit] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

you

See how you translated the word **you** in [Philippians 1:2](#). (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

will perfect {it

Here, **will perfect {it}** means that God would bring to completion the work which he began in the lives of the Philippian believers at their conversion and which he was continuing to do. If it would be clearer in your language, you could express this explicitly. (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

the day of Jesus Christ

The phrase **the day of Jesus Christ** refers to the time in the future when Jesus Christ will return to judge the world and save those who believe in him. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state that explicitly. Alternate translation: [the time when Jesus Christ returns] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

Philippians 1:7

I have you in my heart

The phrase, **I have you in my heart** is an idiom which expresses strong affection. If you have an equivalent expression which adequately communicates the meaning, you may use it here. If not, you could state this using plain language. Alternate translation: [I love you very much] (See: **Idiom (p.178)**)

being partakers with me of grace

Alternate translation: [sharing in grace with me]

of grace

Here, **grace** refers to the way that God kindly gives us good things that we do not deserve. If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract noun **grace** with a verb or adjective. In this context, Paul considers both his imprisonment and his ministry of defending and confirming the gospel to be gifts from God. Alternate translation: [of God's gracious gift] or [in experiencing how kind God is] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

my chains

Paul refers to his imprisonment in Rome by using the phrase **my chains**. Paul was chained to a guard and the Philippian Christians would have understood that Paul was referring to his imprisonment when he used the phrase **my chains** because of the close association between **chains** and being in prison. If this association is not clear in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or use plain language. Alternate translation: [my imprisonment] (See: **Metonymy (p.188)**)

and in my defense and confirmation of the gospel

The words translated **defense** and **confirmation** could be used to refer to defending and confirming in a court of law the truth of something against which a charge was made. These two words mean very similar things. The repetition is used to emphasize that this is hard work. If your language has one word for these ideas, use that here and add emphasis another way. If there is a word or phrase that could be used with this legal sense but could also be used in the context of defending the gospel, consider using it here. Alternate translation: [and as I contend for the truth of the gospel] or [and as I labor to show people that the gospel is true] (See: **Doublet (p.152)**)

Philippians 1:8

with the inner parts of Christ Jesus

The Greek word translated as **inner parts** is a term which refers to body organs, particularly to the intestines, liver, lungs, and heart. Paul is using **inner parts** to refer to love or affection. You can use the body part that represents the seat of affection in your language, or translate the plain meaning. Alternate translation: [with the heart of Christ Jesus] or [with the affection of Christ Jesus] (See: **Idiom (p.178)**)

with the inner parts of Christ Jesus

Here, **the inner parts of Christ Jesus** could mean: (1) the same kind of love as Christ Jesus gives to people. (2) love that originates with Christ Jesus. Alternate translation: [with love that comes from Christ Jesus] (See: **Idiom (p.178)**)

Philippians 1:9

that your love would abound still more and more

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract noun **love** with the verb form. Alternate translation: [that you will be able to love others more and more abundantly] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

your

See how you translated the word **your** in [Philippians 1:5](#). (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

in knowledge and all understanding

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract nouns **knowledge** and **understanding** with verb phrases. Alternate translation: [and that God will enable you to see the truth about Him and teach you to love wisely] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

Philippians 1:10

so that you may approve {what} excels

The word **{what}** here refers to that which a person does, and the word **excels** here refers to something that is best, according to God. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state these things explicitly. Alternate translation: [so that you may approve and choose to do what pleases God the most] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

so that

Here, the phrase **so that** shows that what follows this phrase is the desired result of Paul's prayer in verse nine. Consider using a connecting word or phrase that will clearly show that what follows it is the desired result of what Paul prayed in verse nine. (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.143)**)

pure and blameless

The words **pure** and **blameless** have very similar meanings. Paul uses these two words together to emphasize the idea of moral purity. If it would be clearer in your language, you could combine these two words and translate them as one idea. Alternate translation: [completely innocent] (See: **Doublet (p.152)**)

Philippians 1:11

being filled with the fruit of righteousness {that is

Here, the phrase **being filled with** is a metaphor meaning to be occupied in doing something. The phrase **the fruit of righteousness** is a metaphor which refers to what characterizes a person, namely what a person produces. This metaphor is a comparison between a good tree that produces good fruit and a person who is filled with righteousness and produces good actions as a result. So with these two metaphors, Paul is telling the Philippians to be occupied in doing righteous deeds. If this would be unclear in your language, you could state this plainly. Alternate translation: [filling your lives with the righteous deeds that are] or [habitually doing the good works that are] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

being filled with

The phrase **being filled with** is a passive form. If it would be more natural in your language, you could express this with an active form. Alternate translation: [letting God fill you with] or [continually producing] (See: **Active or Passive (p.127)**)

that is} through Jesus Christ

Here, the phrase **through Christ Jesus** is a metaphor meaning that Christ Jesus is the one who makes it possible for a person to be righteous and thus to do the things that a righteous person does. Alternate translation: [that Christ Jesus produces in you] or [that Christ Jesus enables you to produce] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

to the glory and praise of God

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract nouns **glory** and **praise** with verbs. Alternate translation: [which will cause people to glorify and praise God] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

to the glory and praise of God

The words **glory** and **praise** mean very similar things here. They are used together to emphasize how much people will praise God. If you have one word for this in your language, you could use it here and show emphasis another way. Alternate translation: [which will cause people to greatly praise God] or [which will cause people to declare how great God is] (See: **Doublet (p.152)**)

Philippians 1:12

brothers

Although the term **brothers** is masculine, Paul is using the word here in a spiritual sense to include both men and women who believe in Jesus. Alternate translation: [brothers and sisters] (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

brothers

Paul is using the term **brothers** here to refer to anyone who is a fellow believer in Jesus. If this is not clear in your language, you could express this plainly. Alternate translation: [my companions who believe in Jesus] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

the things concerning me

The phrase **the things concerning me** refers to Paul's imprisonment. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state this explicitly. Alternate translation: [the things I have suffered because I was put into prison for preaching about Jesus] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

have really happened for the advancement of the gospel

The phrase **advancement of the gospel** refers to an increasing number of people hearing and believing the gospel. Alternate translation: [have actually caused more people to hear the gospel] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

Philippians 1:13

As a result

The phrase **As a result** shows that what follows this phrase is the result of Paul's circumstances which he began discussing in [verse 12](#), namely, his imprisonment. Consider using a connecting word or phrase that will clearly show that what follows it is the result of Paul's imprisonment. (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.143)**)

my chains

Paul again refers to his imprisonment in a figurative way by using the phrase **my chains**. See how you translated this phrase in [1:7](#). (See: **Metonymy (p.188)**)

my chains in Christ

The phrase **my chains in Christ** means that Paul is imprisoned because of his work for the cause of Christ. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state that explicitly. Alternate translation: [my chains for the sake of Christ] or [my chains because I teach people about Christ] or [my chains for the cause of Christ] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

Philippians 1:14

of the brothers

See how you translated **brothers** in the previous verse 1:12. (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women** (p. 225))

of the brothers

Paul is using the term **brothers** here to refer to anyone who is a fellow believer in Jesus. If this is not clear in your language, you could express this plainly. Alternate translation: [my companions who believe in Jesus] (See: **Metaphor** (p.182))

have become confident in the Lord by my chains

The phrase **encouraged in the Lord** means that the Philippian Christians had grown in their trust of the Lord because of Paul's imprisonment. Alternate translation: [trust the Lord more because of my chains] or [have received more courage from the Lord as a result of my imprisonment] (See: **Metaphor** (p.182))

And most of the brothers have become confident in the Lord by my chains

If it would be more natural in your language, you could express this with an active form, and you could state who or what caused the action. Alternate translation: [The Lord has encouraged most of the brothers because of my chains] or [My chains have given most of the brothers more trust in the Lord] (See: **Active or Passive** (p.127))

by my chains

Paul is referring to his imprisonment by mentioning one part of it: the chains that bound his feet and hands. If this is unclear in your language, you could mention the imprisonment directly. See how you translated the phrase **my chains** in 1:7 and 1:13. Alternate translation: [because of my imprisonment] (See: **Metonymy** (p.188))

the word

Here, **the word** refers to the message from God about Jesus. If it would be clearer in your language, consider stating this explicitly. Alternate translation: [the gospel] or [the good news] or [God's message] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information** (p.130))

Philippians 1:15

Beginning in this verse, and extending to the end of 1:17, Paul uses a poetic device called chiasm that could be confusing in some languages. You may need to reorder certain things in 1:15–17 if it would be more natural in your language. See the UST. (See: **Poetry (p.193)**)

Some indeed even proclaim Christ

Alternate translation: [Some people are preaching the good news about Jesus]

because of envy and strife

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract nouns **envy** and **strife** by using them in a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: [because they are envious and seek their own evil purposes] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

goodwill

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract noun **goodwill** by using it in a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: [their desire that others would know Jesus Christ] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

Philippians 1:16

from love

The object of the word **love** is not specified. You can leave the object of **love** unspecified or, if it is needed in your language, you may specify the object of **love**. Here, the word **love** could refer to: (1) love for Paul. Alternate translation: [because of their love for me]; (2) love for Christ. Alternate translation: [The ones who proclaim the good news because they love Christ]; (3) love for multiple objects, such as Paul and Christ and those who have not yet heard or believed in the gospel. Alternate translation: [The ones who proclaim the good news because of their love for me, and Jesus, and those who do not believe] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p. 130)**)

I am appointed

You could state the phrase **I am appointed** in active form. Alternate translation: [God appointed me] (See: **Active or Passive (p.127)**)

for the defense of the gospel

Paul is speaking of the gospel as though it were a place or person that could be attacked. If this is confusing in your language, you can use plain language. See how you translated “defense and confirmation of the gospel” in [1:7](#). Alternate translation: [to prove that the message about Jesus is true] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

I am appointed for the defense of the gospel

The phrase **I am appointed** could refer to: (1) God appointing Paul’s current situation of being in prison. Alternate translation: [I am assigned to be here for the defense of the gospel]; (2) God appointing Paul to the ministry of defending the gospel. Alternate translation: [God has delegated me to the ministry of publicly defending the truth of the good news] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

the defense of the gospel

See how you translated the phrase “defense and confirmation of the gospel” in [1:7](#). (See: **Doublet (p.152)**)

Philippians 1:17

but the ones from selfish ambition proclaim Christ

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract noun **ambition** with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: [but they proclaim Christ only to make themselves seem important] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

not sincerely

Alternate translation: [with wrong motives] or [from wrong motives]

in my chains

Paul is referring to his imprisonment by mentioning one part of it: the chains that bound his feet and hands. If this is unclear in your language, you could mention the imprisonment directly. See how you translated the phrase **my chains** in [1:7](#) and [1:13](#). Alternate translation: [because of my imprisonment] (See: **Metonymy (p.188)**)

supposing to raise up trouble in my chains

If it would be clearer in your language, you could state how the selfish preachers suppose that they are causing trouble to Paul. You could also start a new sentence here. Alternate translation: [They hope to cause me trouble in my imprisonment by their preaching] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

Philippians 1:18

What then

The phrase **What then?** is a rhetorical question. If using a rhetorical question would be confusing in your language, consider expressing the meaning of this rhetorical question by changing it into a statement. Alternate translation: [But that does not matter!] (See: **Rhetorical Question (p.209)**)

What then

In the rhetorical question **What then?**, Paul leaves out some words that might be necessary in some languages. If you want to use a rhetorical question here, you may want to add the words which are implied but not stated. This could be done in two ways: (1) as a rhetorical question which expects a negative answer. Alternate translation: [What does it matter what their motives are?] or [So what difference does it make?]; (2) as a phrase that focuses on the result. Alternate translation: [What then is the result of this?] (See: **Ellipsis (p.154)**)

Christ is proclaimed

You can express the meaning of the passive form **is proclaimed** with an active form. Alternate translation: [we all proclaim Christ] (See: **Active or Passive (p.127)**)

Philippians 1:19

this

Here, the word **this** refers to Paul's current situation of being in prison and the things that accompanied it. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [my imprisonment] or [my current condition in prison] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

for I know that this will result to me in deliverance

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the meaning behind the abstract noun **deliverance** by using a verbal phrase. You could also say who does the action, if necessary. Alternate translation: [for I know that this will result in God delivering me] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the meaning behind the abstract noun **provision** by using a verbal phrase. You could also say who does the action, if necessary. Alternate translation: [by God providing to me the Spirit of Jesus Christ] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

Philippians 1:20

eager expectation and hope

Both **eager expectation** and **hope** have similar meanings and together express a single idea. Paul uses these two words together to emphasize the strength of his expectation. If you have a single word or phrase in your language which expresses the meaning of these two words, consider using that to express the strength of the hope in another way. Alternate translation: [sincere expectation] or [sure hope] (See: **Doublet (p.152)**)

according to my eager expectation and hope

Both **expectation** and **hope** are abstract nouns. If it would be clearer in your language, you could express them together in a verb phrase. Alternate translation: [because I fully believe] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

in my body

The phrase **in my body** is used here to mean the activities that Paul does with his body. Paul speaks of his **body** because it was with his earthly body that he would serve God on earth until he died, as he explains in more detail in [1:22-24](#). Alternate translation: [in everything that I do] (See: **Metonymy (p.188)**)

I will in nothing be ashamed, but

If the double-negative phrase **in nothing be ashamed** would be confusing in your language, you could translate it in a positive way. Alternate translation: [I will always do the right thing and] (See: **Double Negatives (p.149)**)

in everything have boldness

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract noun **boldness** with a similar adverb. Alternate translation: [always act boldly] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

whether through life or through death

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the ideas behind the abstract nouns **life** and **death** with their verbal forms. Alternate translation: [whether I live or I die] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

Philippians 1:21

is} gain

If the abstract noun **gain** would be unclear in your language, you may express the meaning behind this word by using a verb phrase. Alternate translation: [to die is to go to Christ] or [to die would give me more blessing] (See:

Abstract Nouns (p.125))

Philippians 1:22

in the flesh

Paul is using the word **flesh** to refer to his entire body. The phrase **in the flesh** then refers to living as physical beings. If this would be confusing in your language, consider using a different word or phrase that refers to this present physical life. Alternate translation: [on this earth] or [in this world] (See: **Synecdoche (p.218)**)

this {is} fruitful labor for me

The word **fruitful** refers to Paul's work producing good results. This is a metaphor in which Paul's anticipated productive work is compared to a plant or tree which produces good fruit. Alternate translation: [this will mean effectively serving God] or [this will mean productively working for the advancement of the gospel] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

this {is} fruitful labor for me

If the an abstract noun **labor** would be unclear in your language, you may express the meaning behind this word by using a verb phrase. Alternate translation: [I will accomplish something important] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

Philippians 1:23

But I am hard pressed between the two

The phrase **I am hard pressed between the two** is a metaphor. Paul speaks as if he were experiencing literal pressure from two opposite sides at the same time. Paul uses this figurative expression to show his difficulty in deciding which decision is best, if given the option between living or dying. If this would be confusing in your language, you could translate this phrase using a metaphor that would make sense in your language, or you could choose to use plain language to express it. Alternate translation: [both options have their advantages, so the decision is not an easy one for me] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

I am hard pressed

The phrase **I am hard pressed** is in passive form. If this would be confusing in your language, you could express the meaning behind this phrase by using a verb phrase that is in the active voice. Alternate translation: [It is not easy for me to decide] (See: **Active or Passive (p.127)**)

the two

The phrase **the two** refers to the two options regarding what decision is best. The choice of continuing to live on earth and serve Christ or its alternative, the choice of leaving earth to be with Christ. If the phrase **the two** would be confusing in your language, consider stating this explicitly. Alternate translation: [these two options] or [these two choices] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

having the desire

If the word abstract noun **desire** would be unclear in your language, you could express the meaning of this word by using the verbal form. Alternate translation: [yearning] or [preferring] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

to depart

Paul is referring to his death with the phrase **to depart**. Instead of focusing on the unpleasantness of death, Paul is using the word **depart** to focus on the positive result of his death, namely, that his physical death will result in his being with Christ. If it would be clearer in your language, you could use a different euphemism or express this plainly. Alternate translation: [to leave this life] or [to depart from this earth] or [to die] (See: **Euphemism (p.159)**)

Philippians 1:24

but to remain in the flesh

The phrase **but remain in the flesh** means to remain alive in one's body on earth. See how you translated **flesh** in [1:22](#). If this would be unclear in your language, consider stating this plainly. Alternate translation: [but to continue in the body] or [but to continue to live on this earth] (See: **Synecdoche (p.218)**)

is} more necessary

In the phrase **{is} more necessary** Paul leaves out the implied words “than departing” because he knows that his readers will understand them from the context. If this would be unclear in your language, consider supplying these omitted words in your translation. Alternate translation: [rather than departing is more necessary] (See: **Ellipsis (p. 154)**)

your

See how you translated the word **your** in [1:5](#). (See: **Forms of ‘You’ — Singular (p.164)**)

Philippians 1:25

And having become confident of this

The word **this** refers back to [1:24](#) where Paul said that he believed it was more necessary that he remain alive on earth so that he could continue helping the Philippian Christians mature in their faith. If this would be unclear in your language, consider further explaining the word **this** in your translation. Alternate translation: [And being sure that it is better for you that I remain] or [And having been convinced that I should remain here on earth] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

having become confident of this

If it would be more natural in your language, you could express this with an active form. Alternate translation: [because I am sure of this] (See: **Active or Passive (p.127)**)

I will remain

Here, the word **remain** refers to remaining alive on earth in one's body in contrast to dying and leaving the earth to be with Christ. See how you translated the word **remain** in [1:24](#) and make the meaning the same here. Alternate translation: [I will continue living on this earth] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

I will remain and will continue with

These two words mean very similar things. The first is more general and the second is more specific about remaining with someone. If your language has one word for both of these meanings, you could use that here. Alternate translation: [I will continue with] (See: **Doublet (p.152)**)

you

See how you translated the word **you** in [1:2](#). (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

for your progress and joy

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the ideas behind the abstract nouns **progress** and **joy** with verbal phrases. Alternate translation: [so that you will advance and be joyful] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

for your progress and joy

This phrase, **progress and joy**, may be expressing a single idea by using two words connected with **and**. The word **joy** tells how it feels to progress in faith. Alternate translation: [joyful progress] (See: **Hendiadys (p.168)**)

your

See how you translated the word **your** in [1:5](#).

in the faith

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract noun **faith** with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: [in trusting Jesus] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

Philippians 1:26

so that

Here, the phrase **so that** indicates that what follows is the purpose of what came before it. The purpose of Paul remaining alive, (1:25), was to increase the Philippian's boasting in Christ. In your translation, use the method your language uses to indicate purpose. (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.140)**)

boasting in

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract noun **boasting** by expressing its meaning in a verb phrase or in some other way that would be natural in your language. Alternate translation: [glorying in] or [rejoicing in] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

coming

Here the word **coming** describes Paul's travel from the perspective of the Philippians. In your language, it may be more natural to describe his travel from Paul's perspective and use a word such as "going." Here and in verse 27, use the word or phrase that is most natural in your language. (See: **Go and Come (p.166)**)

through my coming

Here the word **through** could refer to: (1) the reason the Philippians would greatly boast in Christ. Therefore, the word **through** means "because". Alternate translation: [because of my coming]; (2) the means by which the Philippians would greatly boast in Christ. Therefore, the word **through** means [by]. Alternate translation: [by my coming] (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.143)**)

Philippians 1:27

having come

Your language may have a different way of expressing the motion described by the word **come**. Here, the word **come** refers to Paul traveling to where the Philippians live and visiting them. See how you translated the form of this word in the previous verse, [1:26](#). (See: **Go and Come (p.166)**)

conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ

This is a command or instruction to all of the Philippian Christians. Use the most natural form in your language to give direction to a group of people. (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

you stand firm

The phrase **stand firm** is used to mean not changing one's beliefs but, rather, remaining steadfast in what one believes. If this would be unclear in your language, consider using an equivalent expression from your language, or use plain language. Alternate translation: [you be unmoved] or [you remain strong in your faith] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

in one spirit, with one soul

The phrases **in one spirit** and **with one soul** mean essentially the same thing and are used together to emphasize the importance of unity. If it would be clearer in your language, you could translate them together as one expression and express the emphasis in another way. Alternate translation: [unified as one spirit] or [with complete unity] (See: **Doublet (p.152)**)

in one spirit, with one soul

The phrases **in one spirit** and **with one soul** are used to mean "to have unity in one's primary purposes and beliefs." Both phrases refer to being in agreement about what matters. If these expressions would be confusing in your language, you may use plain language or use a similar expression from your language. Alternate translation: [with one mind] or [with singleness of purpose] or [in full agreement] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

striving together

Alternate translation: [cooperating together in the work]

for the faith of the gospel

The abstract noun **faith** in the phrase **the faith of the gospel** refers to what believers understand and do as a result of believing the gospel, which is God's message about Jesus. (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

Philippians 1:28

the ones opposing {you

The phrase **the ones opposing you** refers to the people who were opposing the Philippian Christians and causing them trouble. If this would be unclear in your language, consider stating this plainly. Alternate translation: [the people opposing you] or [the people opposing you because you believe in Jesus] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

This is a sign to them

The word **This** in the phrase **This is a sign to them** refers to the lack of fear because of their faith that the Philippian believers will have when they are opposed. (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.202)**)

of their destruction

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract noun **destruction** by using a verb form or by expressing it in some other way that would be clear in your language. Alternate translation: [that God will destroy them] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

but of your salvation

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract noun **salvation** by using a verb form of this word or by expressing it in some other way that would be clear in your language. Alternate translation: [while he is saving you] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

this from God

The word **this** in the phrase **this from God** could refer to: (1) what comes before it in this verse, both the courage God gives the Philippian Christians and the sign that their courage gives to those opposing them. Alternate translation: [your lack of fear and the evidence it gives is all from God]; (2) the sign given to those who oppose the Philippian Christians. Alternate translation: [this sign is from God] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.202)**)

Philippians 1:29

it has been freely given to you

You could express this with an active form, and you could state who did the action. Alternate translation: [God has graciously granted to you] (See: **Active or Passive (p.127)**)

Philippians 1:30

having the same struggle

If the abstract noun **struggle** would be confusing in your language, you could express it with a verb phrase, as the UST does, or by expressing the idea behind this word in some other way that would be clear in your language.

Alternate translation: [facing the same strife] or [enduring the same trials] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

having the same struggle which you saw in me

The word **struggle** is a figurative way of referring to the conflict that Paul and the Philippian believers had with people who opposed them because of their faith. Paul speaks of it here as if it were a military battle or an athletic competition. If this would be unclear in your language, you could state this in plain language. Alternate translation: [as you experience the same opposition from people that you saw that I experienced] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

you saw in me, and now you hear in me

The phrase **in me** occurs twice, both times referring to what Paul is experiencing. If this would be unclear in your language, you could express this in a way that is understandable in your language. Alternate translation: [you saw me experience and now hear that I am experiencing] (See: **Idiom (p.178)**)

Philippians 2

Philippians 2 Chapter Introduction

Structure and Formatting

Some translations, like the ULT, set apart the lines of [verses 6–11](#). These verses describe the example of Christ. They teach important truths about the person of Jesus.

Religious and Cultural Concepts in This Chapter

Practical instructions

In this chapter Paul gives many practical instructions to the church in Philippi.

Translation Issues in This Chapter

“If there is any”

This appears as though it is a type of hypothetical statement. However, it is not a hypothetical statement, because it expresses something that is true. The translator may also translate this phrase as “Since there is.”

Philippians 2:1

Therefore

The word **Therefore** indicates that what follows is the natural result of or conclusion to what preceded it. Use the most natural form in your language to show this relationship. (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.145)**)

if {there is} any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affections and compassions

The phrase **if {there is} any**, which occurs one time in this verse, and the phrase **if any**, which occurs three times in this verse, appear to be hypothetical statements. However, they are not hypothetical, because they each express things which are true. If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the meaning of these phrases explicitly. Alternate translation: [because of the encouragement which comes from Christ, because there is comfort from his love, because of the fellowship of the Spirit, because you have affections and compassions] or [since Christ has encouraged you, since there is comfort from his love, since there is fellowship in the Spirit, since you have affections and compassions] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affections and compassions

In the three occurrences of the phrase **if any** in this verse, the missing words, “there is,” are implied and can be supplied in your translation if omitting them would cause confusion. Alternate translation: [if there is any comfort from love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if there are any affections and compassions] (See: **Ellipsis (p.154)**)

if {there is} any encouragement in Christ

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract noun **encouragement** by using a verbal form of this word. Alternate translation: [if Christ encourages you] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

if {there is} any encouragement in Christ

The word **encouragement** could refer to: (1) “encouragement” (2) “exhortation” Alternate translation: [if there is any exhortation in Christ]; (3) both the idea of “encouragement” and “exhortation” at the same time. Alternate translation: [if there is any encouragement and exhortation in Christ]

if {there is} any encouragement in Christ

The phrase, **encouragement in Christ** probably means the encouragement that Christ gives to believers because they are in union with him. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state that explicitly. Alternate translation: [because of the encouragement which comes from Christ] or [if Christ encourages you] or [because you are encouraged by being in Christ] or [since you are encouraged because of your union with Christ] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

if any comfort of love

Here, **love** probably refers to Christ’s love for the Philippians. Alternate translation: [if his love has given you any comfort] or [if his love for you has comforted you in any way] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

if any comfort of love

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the ideas behind the abstract nouns **comfort** and **love** by using verbal forms of these words and/or using them in a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: [if Christ's way of loving you has comforted you] or [if being loved by Christ has comforted you] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

if any comfort of love

The phrase **comfort of love** refers to the comfort which the Philippian believers received from Christ's love. If it would be clearer in your language, consider stating this explicitly. Alternate translation: [if you have received any comfort from Christ's love] or [if Christ's love comforts you] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

if any fellowship of the Spirit

The phrase **fellowship of the Spirit** could refer to: (1) the Holy Spirit giving the Philippian Christians fellowship with each other. Alternate translation: [if the Spirit has produced any fellowship among you] or [if the Spirit has given you fellowship with each other]; (2) the Philippian Christians' fellowship with the Holy Spirit. Alternate translation: [if you have fellowship with the Spirit]; (3) both the Holy Spirit giving the Philippian Christians fellowship with each other and to their having fellowship with the Holy Spirit. Alternate translation: [if you have any fellowship with the Spirit and the Spirit has produced in you any fellowship with each other]

if any fellowship of the Spirit

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract noun **fellowship** by using it in a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: [if the Spirit has produced any fellowship among you] or [if the Spirit has enabled you to fellowship with each other] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

if any affections and compassions

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract nouns **affections** and **compassions** by using them in a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: [if you feel any affections and compassions for one another] or [if you have any affection and compassion for each other] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

if any affections and compassions

The phrase **if any affections and compassions** probably refers to the Philippian believers' affection and compassion toward each other. If it would be clearer in your language, consider stating this explicitly. Alternate translation: [if you have any affection and compassion toward one another] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

Philippians 2:2

fulfill my joy

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **joy**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **joy** by using an adjective or verb. Alternate translation: [make me overflow with happiness] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

you might think the same

Alternate translation: [you think together as one]

having the same love

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **love**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **love** with an adjective or verb. Alternate translation: [love each other] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

united in soul

Paul's use of the idiom **united in soul** is a figurative way of asking the Philippians to be unified and to agree about what is important. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent idiom or use plain language. Alternate translation: [be one in spirit] or [be one in heart and will] or [agree about what is important] or [be unified] (See: **Idiom (p.178)**)

thinking the one thing

Alternate translation: [being concerned about the same things]

Philippians 2:3

Do} nothing according to selfish ambition

Alternate translation: [Do not be selfishly ambitious] or [Do not do anything with an attitude of self-importance]

or according to empty conceit

Alternate translation: [or with empty pride]

or according to empty conceit

If your language does not use an abstract noun for this idea, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **conceit** by using an adjective or some other way. Alternate translation: [or with prideful motives] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

but with humility considering others better than yourselves

If your language does not use an abstract noun for this idea, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **humility** by using an adjective or some other way. Alternate translation: [but rather, act in a humble way by considering others more important than yourselves] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

Philippians 2:4

each one not considering the things of themselves, but also the things of each other

Alternate translation: [each of you caring not only about what you need, but also about what others need]

each one

The phrase **each one** here means “each person” and refers to all of the Philippian believers. If it would be clearer in your language, consider stating this explicitly. Alternate translation: [every one of you] or [each of you] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

not considering

Alternate translation: [not thinking about]

of themselves

The reflexive pronoun **themselves** is plural in form in the original language in which Paul wrote this letter. If your language has a plural form for this pronoun, consider using it here. Alternate translation: [of yourselves] (See: **Pronouns (p.200)**)

of themselves

The reflexive pronoun **themselves** refers back to **each one** at the beginning of the verse. Alternate translation: [of yourselves] (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.206)**)

Philippians 2:5

Have this attitude in you which also {was} in Christ Jesus

Alternate translation: [Have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had]

Have this attitude in you which also {was} in Christ Jesus

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **attitude**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **attitude** with a verb such as “think.” Alternate translation: [Think about one another the way Christ Jesus thought of people] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

Have this attitude

This is a command or instruction to all of the Philippian believers. Use the most natural form in your language to give direction to a group of people. Alternate translation: [Every one of you should have this attitude] (See: **Forms of ‘You’ — Singular (p.164)**)

Have this attitude in you which also {was} in Christ Jesus

The phrase **Have this attitude in you which also {was} in Christ Jesus** means that a believer is to have the same attitude and disposition which Christ Jesus had and which characterized his behavior. If it would be helpful in your language, consider stating it explicitly. Alternate translation: [Think the same way that Christ Jesus did] or [Have the same values which Christ Jesus also had] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

Philippians 2:6

existing in the form of God

The phrase **existing in the form of God** means that Jesus had the very nature of God. It does not mean that Jesus only appeared to be God, but was not God. This phrase is saying that Jesus was fully God. The rest of this verse and the next two verses explain that Jesus, while being fully God, humbled himself and acted as a servant, in obedience to God. Avoid any translation that would suggest that Jesus was not fully God. Alternate translation: [being fully God] or [though everything that is true of God is true of him] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

did not consider

Alternate translation: [did not think] or [did not regard]

something to be grasped

Alternate translation: [something to be held onto] or [something to be retained]

Philippians 2:7

Instead

The word **Instead** introduces a contrast between the preceding clause in 2:6 and what is expressed about Jesus in this verse and the next two verses. The contrast is made between Jesus' choice to retain his divine rights and privileges, or to surrender them. Choose the best form in your language to show the contrast that **Instead** expresses here. Alternate translation: [On the contrary] or [Rather] or [But instead] (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship** (p.138))

Instead, he emptied himself

The pronoun **he** refers to Jesus. If it would be helpful in your language, consider the best way to express the meaning of **he** to show that it refers to Jesus. Alternate translation: [Instead, Jesus emptied himself] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them** (p.202))

he emptied himself

The reflexive pronoun **himself** refers to Jesus and is used to emphasize the fact that Jesus freely and intentionally chose to empty himself of divine rights and privileges. Consider the best way to express the emphatic element of this pronoun in your language. Alternate translation: [he willingly set aside divine privileges] (See: **Reflexive Pronouns** (p.206))

he emptied himself

Paul statement that Christ **emptied himself** is figurative and not literal. By using the figurative phrase **he emptied himself**, Paul is vividly expressing that Christ chose to give up his divine rights and privileges when he became human. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture, or use plain language. Alternate translation: [he gave up divine rights and privileges] or [he willingly set aside divine privileges] (See: **Metaphor** (p.182))

having taken the form of a servant

The phrase, **having taken the form of a servant**, means that Jesus acted as a servant while on earth. It does not mean that Jesus simply appeared to be a servant. If it would be helpful in your language, consider using an equivalent expression from your language, or state this in plain language. Alternate translation: [and acted as a servant] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information** (p.130))

having been born in the likeness of men

The phrase **having been born in the likeness of men** means that Jesus became a human being. It does not mean that Jesus only appeared to be human. Rather, it means that Jesus, who always existed as God, chose to take on a human body and appear on earth in human form. If it would be helpful in your language, consider saying this in plain language. Alternate translation: [having become a human being] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information** (p.130))

in the likeness of men

The word **men** is emphasizing the idea of Jesus' humanity rather than his gender. The word **men** is plural in form to emphasize the idea that Jesus resembled humanity in general. Consider the best way in your language to express

this emphasis on Jesus' humanity. Alternate translation: [in the likeness of human beings] (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

and having been found in appearance as a man

The phrase **having been found in appearance as a man** does not mean that Jesus appeared to be a man but was not a man. Rather, this phrase continues the thought of the previous phrase, **having been born in the likeness of men**, and means that Jesus became a human being and therefore was fully human in appearance. The phrase, **in appearance**, points out that Jesus appeared in all ways to be fully human. It also indicates that while being fully human, Jesus was distinct from the rest of humanity: He retained his full deity while being human and, therefore, he was both human and divine at the same time. Alternate translation: [and while being found in the form of a human being] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

a man

Here the word **man** is emphasizing the idea of Jesus' humanity rather than his gender. If your language has a way of expressing this emphasis on Jesus' humanity, consider using the term that would most clearly express this. See how you translated the word **men** earlier in this verse. Alternate translation: [a human being] (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

Philippians 2:8

he humbled himself, having become obedient to the point of death

The phrase **having become** clarifies or introduces the way that Jesus **humbled himself**. Choose the most natural form in your language to express this meaning. Alternate translation: [Jesus humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of dying] or [Jesus humbled himself this way, by obeying to the point of death] or [Jesus humbled himself, specifically, by obeying God to the point of death] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

himself

The reflexive pronoun **himself**, which refers to Jesus, is used here to emphasize Jesus' action of humbling himself. Consider the best way in your language to express the emphatic element of this pronoun. (See: **Reflexive Pronouns (p.206)**)

having become obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the idea behind the two occurrences in this verse of the abstract noun **death** with a verb such as "dying". Alternate translation: [having become obedient to the point of dying, even dying on a cross] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

having become obedient to the point of death

The phrase **to the point of** is an English idiom that translates a single Greek preposition. This preposition emphasizes the intensity of Jesus' obedience to the Father by showing that **death** that follows as the extreme result of that obedience. Alternate translation: [remaining obedient even though it resulted in him dying] (See: **Idiom (p.178)**)

even death on a cross

The phrase **even death on a cross** emphasizes that dying on a cross was a very humiliating way to die. By using the word **even** and repeating the word **death**, Paul is emphasizing the great extent of Jesus' humility and obedience. Think about the best way in your language to show the emphasis provided by the phrase **even death on a cross**. Alternate translation: [even so far as dying on a cross] or [even to the extent of dying on a cross] (See: **Reduplication (p.204)**)

Philippians 2:9

Therefore

The word **Therefore** shows the reason and result relationship between what comes before this word and what follows it. Here, **Therefore** introduces the result of Jesus humbling himself, as was described in [2:6-8](#). Choose the form in your language that best expresses the reason and result relationship expressed by the word **Therefore**. Alternate translation: [Because of this] or [Because Jesus acted this way] (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.143)**)

highly exalted him

Alternate translation: [greatly honored him]

the name {that is} above every name

Here, **name** is a metonym that refers to the status or position associated with someone's name. Alternate translation: [the position that is above every other position] or [the position that is higher than any other position] or [the rank that is above every other rank] (See: **Metonymy (p.188)**)

Philippians 2:10

so that

The phrase **so that** connects this verse with the preceding verse, [2:9](#) and shows that this verse and the next verse are the result of [2:9](#). Use the most natural form in your language to show this connection. (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.143)**)

at the name of Jesus every knee would bend

Here, **every knee** bending is an idiomatic way of saying that Jesus will be worshiped and honored by all. If this would be clear in your language, consider using this expression, but If it would be helpful in your language, consider using an equivalent expression to communicate the idea of worship. (See: **Idiom (p.178)**)

at the name of Jesus every knee would bend

Here, **name** is a metonym for the person, telling who it is they will worship. Alternate translation: [before the person of Jesus] or [every person and being will worship Jesus] (See: **Metonymy (p.188)**)

in heaven and on earth and under the earth

Paul uses the phrase **in heaven and on earth and under the earth** to include to all beings, including human beings and angels. This phrase emphasizes that all beings everywhere will bow in reverence to Jesus. Consider the best way to express this in your language. Alternate translation: [every being in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth] (See: **Merism (p.180)**)

Philippians 2:11

every tongue would confess

Paul uses the word **tongue** to represent the mouth and what comes out of the mouth. Paul is describing what is said by associating it with the tongue. If this is not clear in your language, you could use an equivalent expression, or use plain language. Alternate translation: [every mouth will declare] or [every being will say] or [everyone will say] (See: **Metonymy (p.188)**)

to the glory of God the Father

The word **to** expresses result. Alternate translation: [with the result that God the Father will be honored] (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p.140)**)

to the glory of God the Father

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **glory**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **glory** by using a verbal form of this word or by some other way. Alternate translation: [and honor God the Father] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

Philippians 2:12

So then

The phrase **So then** shows that what follows it is the desired result of what preceded it in [2:5–11](#). Use the most natural form in your language to show this relationship. Alternate translation: [Therefore] (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases** (p.145))

my beloved

The word **beloved** refers to the believers in Philippi. Paul uses this word to express how much he loves them. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent phrase in your language that expresses love and affection. Alternate translation: [my dear fellow believers]

as in my presence

Alternate translation: [when I was present with you]

in my absence

Alternate translation: [when I am not there with you]

work out your own salvation with fear and trembling

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **salvation**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **salvation** by using a verbal form of this word or expressing it in some other way which describes God's saving work. Alternate translation: [with fear and trembling, continue to work hard to do that which is proper for those whom God saves] or [with awe and reverence for God, work to do good things, as those whom God has saved] (See: **Abstract Nouns** (p.125))

with fear and trembling

Paul uses the words **fear** and **trembling** together to show the attitude of reverence that people should have for God. Consider the best way to express this idea in your language. These words have very similar meanings, so you can express them as one idea or translate them as two separate expressions. Alternate translation: [with awe and reverence for God] or [with deep reverence] (See: **Doublet** (p.152))

Philippians 2:13

working

In the original language in which Paul wrote this letter, the word **working** expresses continuous action and emphasizes the ongoing nature of God's work in believers. Consider the best way to express the continuous nature of this word in your language. Alternate translation: [continually working] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

in you

The phrase **in you** could refer to: (1) God working individually within the heart of each of the Philippian believers. (2) God working among the Philippian believers as a whole. Alternate translation: [among you]; (3) both option one and two simultaneously. Alternate translation: [in and among you] If your language allows you to keep the object of God's work ambiguous, as it is in the ULT, this is the preferable option. If your language does not allow for this, choose one of the options above. (See: **When to Keep Information Implicit (p.227)**)

both to will and to work for his good pleasure

Alternate translation: [to enable you to both desire to do, and to do, the things which him happy] or [so that you will want to do what pleases him, and will be able to do what pleases him]

Philippians 2:14

Do all things without complaining or arguing

The phrase **Do all things without** is a command or instruction to all of the Philippian Christians. Use the most natural form in your language to give direction to a group of people. Alternate translation: [Every one of you, make sure that you do not complain or argue in anything you do] (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

Philippians 2:15

blameless and pure

The words **blameless** and **pure** are very similar in meaning and are used together to emphasize the idea of living a morally pure life. You may translate these words individually, as the ULT does, or combine them together into one idea and express their meaning together as a single expression. Consider what would be most natural in your language. Alternate translation: [completely innocent] (See: **Doublet (p.152)**)

children of God

The phrase **children of God** is a metaphorical way of describing people who have entered into a father-child relationship with God by putting their faith and trust in Jesus. Here, **children** does not refer to those who are young, but only to the relationship that people have at any age to their father. If you translate **children** using a literal term, choose a word that can refer to people of any age in relation to their fathers. Alternate translation: [God's spiritual offspring] or [spiritual children of God] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

without blemish

The phrase **without blemish** means being free from flaws or defects. Here the phrase **without blemish** specifically means being free from moral flaws or corruption. Consider using an equivalent phrase from your language that would be understood in this context, or use plain language. Alternate translation: [who abstain from all evil] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

among whom you shine as lights in the world

Paul is describing people by associating them with the world in which they live. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or use plain language. Alternate translation: [among whom you shine as lights before the people in the world] (See: **Metonymy (p.188)**)

you shine as lights in the world

The word **lights** represents believers who are living in a righteous way that shows other people what is true and good. "Light" is often used metaphorically in the Bible to represent truth and the righteous living that aligns with truth. In the Bible, light is often contrasted with darkness, which represents falsehood and living according to it. To **shine as lights in the world** means to live in a way that helps people see God's truth and character. You can retain this metaphor or express this using plain language. Alternate translation: [you will be examples of God's goodness and truth in the world] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation

The words **crooked** and **perverted** are used together to emphasize the idea of extreme sinfulness. These two words are very similar in meaning. You may translate these words individually, as the ULT does, or combine them together into one idea and express their meaning together as a single expression. Consider what would be most natural in your language. Alternate translation: [among people who are very sinful] (See: **Doublet (p.152)**)

Philippians 2:16

holding forth the word of life

Here, **holding forth** could mean: (1) holding out to others the word of life. Alternate translation: [holding out the word of life] or [offering the word of life]; (2) holding firmly to the word of life. Alternate translation: [holding tightly to the word of life] or [holding firmly to the word of life]

holding forth the word of life

The phrase **holding forth the word of life** continues the thought from the previous verse and shows in more detail how Christians can become “blameless and pure, children of God” who “shine as lights in the world.” Consider the best way to show this connection in your language. Alternate translation: [as you hold forth the word of life] (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.145)**)

the word of life

The phrase **word of life** refers to the good news about Jesus. If this would be unclear in your language, consider translating this phrase in plain language. Alternate translation: [the message that gives life] or [the life-giving gospel] or [the life-giving message] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

the word

Here the phrase **the word** means “the gospel.” In his writings, Paul often uses **word** to refer to the message of the gospel. In doing this, Paul is describing something Christians communicate to others by associating it with words. If this is not clear in your language, you could use an equivalent expression, or use plain language. Alternate translation: [the message] or [the gospel] or [the good news] (See: **Metonymy (p.188)**)

the word of life

The phrase **the word of life** could mean: (1) the word that gives people life. Alternate translation: [the word that gives life]; (2) the word that is about life and that gives life. Alternate translation: [the word that is about life and gives life]; (3) the word which contains life and has the ability to give people life. Alternate translation: [the word that contains and gives life] If your language allows you to keep the phrase **the word of life** ambiguous, this is the best option. If your language does not allow you to do this, you may specify clearly how the phrase **of life** is related to **the word**. (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

the word of life

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the abstract noun **life** by using it in a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: [the life-giving word] or [the word which gives life] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

for my boasting on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain nor labor in vain

With the phrase **for my boasting on the day of Christ**, Paul introduces a reason that the Philippian believers should try to live out the things he has just told them to do in 2:12 and ending with the phrase “holding forth the word of life.” Paul here gives one reason for what he has just asked them to do. He says that if they live out what he has just told them, then when Christ returns, he can be proud of the fact that he did not work in vain among them. Consider the best way in your language to show this reason-result relationship. Alternate translation: [so that I will

be able to boast on the day Christ returns that I did not run in vain or labor in vain] (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.143)**)

for my boasting

Here, **boasting** refers to Paul being rightfully proud of God's work in the lives of the Philippian believers. If it would be clearer in your language, consider stating this explicitly. Alternate translation: [so that I may be rightfully proud of God's work in you] or [so that I might glory in God's work in you] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

for my boasting

Alternate translation: [so that I may boast] or [in order that I have good reason to glory]

on the day of Christ

The phrase **the day of Christ** refers to the time in the future when Christ will return. If it would be clearer in your language, you could state that explicitly. Alternate translation: [when Christ returns] or [at the time Christ returns] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

I did not run in vain nor labor in vain

The phrases **run in vain** and **labor in vain** have very similar meanings here. Paul uses these two phrases together to emphasize how hard he has worked to help people believe in Christ and mature in their obedience and love for him. You may translate these two phrases separately, as the ULT does, or if it would be clearer in your language, you may translate them together as a single phrase. Alternate translation: [I did not work so hard for nothing] or [I did not work hard with no lasting results] (See: **Parallelism (p.190)**)

I did not run in vain

Paul uses the word **run** metaphorically to mean "work." Here Paul specifically means that he worked for the advancement of the gospel among the Philippians. Paul uses the word **run** to bring to the Philippians' minds the image of a runner who is racing toward a finish line in order to win a prize. If this image is familiar to people in your culture, consider using this metaphor. But if this image is not familiar to your readers, consider stating this idea in plain language. Alternate translation: [I did not work for the advancement of the gospel uselessly] or [I did not work for the spread of the good news for nothing] or [I did not run the race uselessly] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

in vain & in vain

Alternate translation: [for no purpose ... for no purpose] or [without positive results ... without positive results] or [for nothing ... for nothing]

nor labor in vain

Paul uses the word **labor** to refer to his spiritual work of sharing the gospel with the Philippian believers and working to help them grow in spiritual maturity. Paul assumes that his readers will know that he is referring to his spiritual work among them. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could indicate that explicitly. Alternate translation: [or work hard for nothing, trying to help you believe in Christ and obey him] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

Philippians 2:17

But even if

But even if connects the idea of running and laboring for the advance of the gospel, which Paul discussed in [2:16](#), with what he says in the rest of this verse. Consider how to translate this phrase in your language in a way that shows this connection. (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.145)**)

I am being poured out as an offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith

The phrase **I am being poured out as an offering on the sacrifice** uses imagery from the Old Testament Jewish sacrificial system. A priest would sacrifice an animal on the altar as a burnt offering to God and then pour out wine as a drink offering to God, in order to make the sacrifice complete. See Num 28:7. If there is a gesture with similar meaning in your culture, consider using it here, but if this imagery would be confusing in your culture, consider translating this imagery using plain language. Alternate translation: [I work and give my life for your sake in order to complete the sacrificial service of your faith] (See: **Symbolic Action (p.216)**)

I am being poured out as an offering

Paul uses the phrase **I am being poured out as an offering** to depict his imprisonment and suffering for the advancement of the gospel. Paul probably is also thinking of the fact that he could be killed in the future for preaching the gospel. If this metaphor would not be clear in your language, consider using plain language to express this idea. (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

I am being poured out as an offering

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the abstract noun **offering** by using a verbal form. (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

on the sacrifice and service of your faith

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express this with an active form. Alternate translation: [on your sacrifice and service which you offer because you believe] (See: **Active or Passive (p.127)**)

on the sacrifice and service of your faith

The words **sacrifice** and **service** express a single idea by using two words connected by **and**. If it would be clearer in your language, you could express this meaning as a single idea or phrase. Alternate translation: [to complete your sacrificial service which you offer because you believe the gospel] (See: **Hendiadys (p.168)**)

Philippians 2:18

in the same manner

The phrase **in the same manner** refers to the Philippian Christians rejoicing in the same manner that Paul said he would rejoice in previous verse [2:17](#). If this would be unclear in your language, consider stating this explicitly. Alternate translation: [in the same way that I rejoice] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p. 130)**)

you also rejoice and rejoice with me

The phrases **you also rejoice** and **rejoice with me** are both commands or instructions given to all of the Philippian Christians. Use the most natural form in your language to give direction to a group of people. Alternate translation: [I urge each of you to rejoice, and also to rejoice with me] (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

Philippians 2:19

Now I hope in the Lord Jesus

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **hope**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **hope** with a verb form such as “hoping.” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

Philippians 2:20

For I have no one like-minded

Alternate translation: [For I have no one else who loves you like I do]

Philippians 2:21

for they all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ

The words **they** and **their** refer to a group of people whom Paul does not think he can trust to help the believers in Philippi. If it would be helpful in your language, consider stating that explicitly. Alternate translation: [All the other people I might send to you seek what they want and do not see the things Jesus Christ wants] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

Philippians 2:22

as a child with his father, he served with me in the gospel

The point of this comparison is that children learn from their fathers and try to follow and imitate them as they work alongside them. Paul was not Timothy's biological father, but he uses this simile to illustrate how Timothy worked alongside him and learned from him as, together, they advanced the gospel. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent comparison or express this meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [he learned from me and did what I did as he served with me in the gospel] (See: **Simile (p.213)**)

But you know his proven worth

If your language does not use an abstract noun for this idea, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **worth** with an adjective such as "valuable" or in some other way. Alternate translation: [But you know how valuable Timothy is] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

in the gospel

Here, **the gospel** means the work of advancing the gospel. If it would be helpful in your language, consider stating this explicitly. Alternate translation: [in gospel work] or [in working to spread the gospel] or [in the work of telling people the good news about Jesus] (See: **Metonymy (p.188)**)

Philippians 2:23

(There are no notes for this verse.)

Philippians 2:24

I am confident in the Lord that I myself will also come soon

Alternate translation: [I am sure, if it is the Lord's will, that I will also come soon]

that I myself will also come soon

The word **also** expresses that Paul was confident that he would be able to visit the Philippian Christians too, in addition to sending Timothy to them. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers.

Alternate translation: [that I myself, in addition to Timothy, will also come soon] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

that I myself will also come soon

Your language may say "go" instead of **come** in contexts such as this. Alternate translation: [that I myself will also go soon] (See: **Go and Come (p.166)**)

Philippians 2:25

Epaphroditus

Epaphroditus is the name of a man sent by the Philippian church to minister to Paul in prison. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.171)**)

my brother

The phrase **my brother** does not mean that Epaphroditus was Paul's biological brother. Rather, Paul calls Epaphroditus his **brother** because they were both members of God's spiritual family through their faith in Jesus Christ. If this would be unclear in your language, consider stating this explicitly. Alternate translation: [my spiritual brother] or [my brother in Christ] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

fellow soldier

The phrase **fellow soldier** does not mean that Epaphroditus and Paul were actual soldiers in a military. What Paul means is that he and Epaphroditus were spiritual soldiers fighting together beside God in the spiritual battle against Satan and evil. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this explicitly or modify the phrase **fellow soldier** to further explain what Paul means, or you could express the meaning of **fellow soldier** by turning it into a simile, as the UST does. Alternate translation: [fellow believer who works and struggles along with us] or [fellow soldier of God] or [fellow warrior for God] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

your messenger and minister for my needs

Alternate translation: [who brings your messages to me and helps me in my need]

Philippians 2:26

he has been longing to be with you all, and he is distressed

Alternate translation: [he has wanted to be with you all and is deeply concerned]

**seeing that he has been longing to be with you all, and he is distressed
because you heard that he was sick**

In this verse all three uses of the pronoun **he** refer to Epaphroditus. If it would be helpful in your language, consider clarifying this in your translation in a way that would be natural. Alternate translation: [seeing that Epaphroditus has been longing to be with you all and is distressed because you heard that he was sick] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.202)**)

Philippians 2:27

For indeed he was sick nearly to death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but also on me, so that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow

The pronoun **he** refers to Epaphroditus, as do both uses of the pronoun **him**. If this would be unclear in your language, consider clarifying this in your translation. Alternate translation: [For indeed Epaphroditus was sick nearly to death. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but also on me, so that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.202)**)

he was sick nearly to death

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract noun **death** with an adjective such as “dying” or with a verbal form such as **died**, as the UST does. Alternate translation: [he was sick nearly to the point of dying] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

but God had mercy on him

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **mercy**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **mercy** with an adjective such as “merciful” or in some other way. Alternate translation: [but God was merciful to him] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

sorrow upon sorrow

The phrase **sorrow upon sorrow** is an expression that refers to great or abundant sorrow. If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, you could use a comparable expression from your language that does have that meaning or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [endless sorrow] or [great sorrow] (See: **Idiom (p.178)**)

sorrow upon sorrow

The expression **sorrow upon sorrow** could mean: (1) adding the sorrow of Epaphroditus’ death to the sorrow of Epaphroditus’ sickness. Alternate translation: [the sorrow of Epaphroditus’ death added to the sorrow of his sickness]; (2) adding the sorrow of Epaphroditus’ death to the sorrow of Paul’s imprisonment. Alternate translation: [the sorrow of Epaphroditus’ death added to the sorrow of my imprisonment] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

Philippians 2:28

Therefore, I sent him all the more eagerly, so that, having seen him again, you might rejoice, and I might be free from pain

Here, both occurrences of the pronoun **him** refer to Epaphroditus. If it would be helpful in your language, consider clarifying who **him** is referring to in a way that would be natural in your language. Alternate translation: [Therefore, I sent Epaphroditus all the more eagerly, so that, having seen him again, you might rejoice, and I might be free from pain] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.202)**)

and I might be free from pain

When Paul refers to **pain**, he is referring to emotional pain. If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **pain**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **pain** with an adjective such as “anxious” or “concerned” or in some other way. Alternate translation: [and I might be less anxious] or [and I might be less concerned about you] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

Philippians 2:29

welcome him

The word **welcome** is a command or instruction in plural form to all of the Philippian Christians. Use the most natural form in your language to give direction to a group of people. Alternate translation: [I exhort all of you to welcome him] or [all of you receive him] (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

in the Lord with all joy

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **joy**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **joy** with an adverb such as “joyfully,” as the UST does, or you can use a verbal form of this word such as “rejoicing.” Alternate translation: [in the Lord with rejoicing] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

hold in honor

The phrase **hold in honor** is a command or instruction to all of the Philippian Christians. Use the most natural form in your language to give direction to a group of people. Alternate translation: [I exhort each of you to hold in honor] or [each of you honor] or [all of you honor] (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

hold in honor

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **honor**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **honor** with a verbal form of **honor** as the UST does, or in some other way. (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

Philippians 2:30

since for the sake of the work of Christ, he came near even to death, risking his life so that he might make up your lack of service to me

The pronouns **he** and **him** refer to Epaphroditus. If it would be helpful in your language, consider clarifying this in a way that would be natural in your language. Alternate translation: [since for the sake of the work of Christ, Epaphroditus came near even to death, risking his life so that he might make up your lack of service to me] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.202)**)

for the sake of the work of Christ

In the phrase **the work of Christ**, Paul is using the possessive form to describe work that is done for Christ. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea behind this phrase in some other way. Alternate translation: [for the sake of working for Christ] or [as a result of working for Christ] (See: **Possession (p.196)**)

for the sake of the work of Christ

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **work**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **work** with a verbal form such as “working.” Alternate translation: [for the sake of working for Christ] or [as a result of working for Christ] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

he came near even to death

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **death**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **death** with an adjective such as “dying” or with a verbal form such as **died**, as the UST does. Alternate translation: [he was close to dying] or [he came close to dying] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

risking his life

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **life**, you can express the idea behind the phrase **risking his life** in some other way. Alternate translation: [running the risk of dying] or [taking the risk that he would die] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

so that he might make up your lack of service to me

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **service**, you can express the idea behind the word **service** by using a verb form such as “serve.” Alternate translation: [so that he might make up for your being unable to serve me] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

so that he might make up your lack of service to me

The **lack of service** Paul speaks of here is the inability of the Philippian believers to be present with him in prison. By sending Epaphroditus to Paul, the Philippian believers ministered to Paul's needs through Epaphroditus, and so Epaphroditus supplied what they could not. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could indicate that explicitly. Alternate translation: [so that he might supply what you could not give me] or [so that he might make up for what you could not give] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

Philippians 3

Philippians 3 Chapter Introduction

Structure and Formatting

In [verses 4–8](#), Paul lists the ways he qualifies for being considered a righteous Jew. In every way, Paul was an exemplary Jew, but he contrasts this with the greatness of knowing Jesus. (See: **righteous, righteousness, unrighteous, unrighteousness, upright, uprightness** (p.232))

Religious and Cultural Concepts in This Chapter

Dogs

The people of the ancient Near East used dogs as an image to refer to people in a negative way. Not all cultures use the term “dogs” in this way.

Resurrected bodies

We know very little about what people will be like in heaven. Paul teaches here that Christians will have some kind of glorious body and will be free from sin. (See: [\[\[rc://tw/dict/bible/kt/heaven\]\]](#) and [\[\[rc://tw/dict/bible/kt/sin\]\]](#))

Translation Issues in This Chapter

Prize

Paul uses an extended illustration to describe the Christian life. The goal of the Christian life is to grow to be like Christ while we live on earth. We can never achieve this goal perfectly, but we must strive for it.

Philippians 3:1

brothers

Paul is using the term **brothers** here to refer to anyone who is a fellow believer in Jesus. If this is not clear in your language, you could express this plainly. See how you translated this word in [Philippians 1:12](#). (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

rejoice in the Lord

The word **rejoice** is a command or instruction to all of the Philippian Christians. Use the most natural form in your language to give direction to a group of people. Alternate translation: [I exhort each of you to rejoice in the Lord] or [each of you rejoice in the Lord] or [all of you rejoice in the Lord] (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

in the Lord

Alternate translation: [in your relationship with the Lord] or [in who the Lord is and what he has done]

and {is} a safeguard for you

If it would be helpful in your language, you could state explicitly how writing these things is a **safeguard** for the Philippians. Alternate translation: [and these teachings will protect you from those who teach what is false] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

Philippians 3:2

Beware of & beware of & beware of

All three times that the phrase **Beware** occurs in this verse, it is a command or instruction given to all of the Philippian believers. Use the most natural form in your language to give direction to a group of people. Alternate translation: [I exhort each of you to beware of] or [Each of you should beware of] (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

Beware of & beware of & beware of

Alternate translation: [Watch out for] or [Look out for] or [Be on guard against]

the dogs, & the evil workers, & the mutilation

The phrases **the dogs**, **the evil workers**, and **the mutilation** are three different ways of describing the same group of Jewish teachers who were corrupting the gospel. Paul uses strong expressions to convey his feelings about these Jewish teachers.

the dogs

Paul speaks of the Jewish teachers who were corrupting the gospel as though they were **dogs** in order to show strong contempt for them. A dog is an animal that is common in many parts of the world. Dogs are despised in some cultures but not despised in other cultures, so using the term **dogs** in some cultures may not have the same derogatory or negative meaning that Paul intended. If you have a different animal in your culture that is despised or whose name is used as an insult, you could use this animal instead, if it would fit well in this context. (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.222)**)

evil workers

The phrase **evil workers** refers to Jewish teachers who were teaching things that were contrary to the gospel. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea behind this phrase using plain language. Alternate translation: [false teachers] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

the mutilation

The word **mutilation** is a sarcastic way of referring to circumcision, and the phrase **the mutilation** is a sarcastic way of referring to the people who taught that circumcision was necessary in order to be in right standing with God. By using the term **mutilation**, Paul is showing the Philippian believers that those who trust in circumcision, and not solely in Christ, mistakenly think that they can earn God's favor by cutting their bodies. Consider the term that would best communicate this idea in your language, or you could state this using plain language. Alternate translation: [those who cut themselves] (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.222)**)

the mutilation

Here, **the mutilation** refers to the Jewish teachers, all circumcised, who were corrupting the gospel by teaching that it was necessary to be circumcised. (See: **Metonymy (p.188)**)

Philippians 3:3

For we are

Paul uses **we** to refer to himself and the Philippian believers and anyone else who believes in Christ, so **we** is inclusive. Your language may require you to mark this form. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'** (p.161))

the circumcision

In contrast to its normal usage in the Bible, here Paul uses the term **the circumcision** as a metonym to refer to all true Christians. Normally, the term **the circumcision** was used to refer to Jewish males, all circumcised, but here Paul intentionally uses this term with a spiritual sense to refer to all Christians, both Jews and non-Jew. This would have been surprising to his readers. Paul's use of **the circumcision** here refers to the inward, spiritual circumcision that the Holy Spirit performs in the hearts of all true Christians. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea behind this term using plain language. (See: **Metonymy** (p.188))

the ones worshipping by the Spirit of God

Alternate translation: [the ones who are empowered by God's Spirit to worship him] or [the ones who are enabled to worship God by his Spirit] or [the ones who worship God through his Spirit]

not being confident in the flesh

You can state explicitly that Paul did not have any **confidence** in the works of **the flesh**. Alternate translation: [having no confidence in the works of the flesh] or [not trusting that physical circumcision will please God] or [not trusting that being circumcised will earn God's favor] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information** (p.130))

boasting in Christ Jesus and not being confident in the flesh

The phrase **boasting in Christ Jesus** and the phrase **and having no confidence in the flesh** are complementary ideas which express a similar truth. If people truly place their confidence in Christ as their only means of earning God's favor, they will not put their confidence in themselves or religious acts. Conversely, if people put their confidence in religious rituals and observances, they cannot place their full confidence in Christ. Consider the best way to clearly express these coordinate ideas in your language.

and not being confident in the flesh

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **confidence**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **confidence** with an adjective such as **trusting** or a verbal form such as **trust**. Alternate translation: [and we do not trust in our flesh] (See: **Abstract Nouns** (p.125))

Philippians 3:4

I myself having confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else thinks to be confident in the flesh, I even more

Using a type of hypothetical situation, Paul begins to recite his own credentials to illustrate that if observing the law could earn God's favor, then he had more reason to boast than anyone else. His purpose is to teach the Philippian believers that they should only trust in Christ and not trust in other things to earn God's favor. Paul explains in [3:7-11](#) that his hope is in Christ and not in the things he lists in the next two verses. Alternate translation: [we do not trust in those rituals to make us acceptable to God, although I could very well do that if it would be useful for me] (See: **Hypothetical Situations (p.175)**)

Philippians 3:5

circumcision on the eighth day, from the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; according to the law, a Pharisee

In this verse and the next verse, Paul lists a total of seven things in which he put his confidence before he believed in Christ. In this verse he lists five of those things and in the next verse he lists the remaining two. If the connection between this statement and the previous one and following one is not clear, you may want to use a connecting word to show how this statement relates to what came before it. Use a natural form in your language for connecting this statement to those before and after it. (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.145)**)

of the tribe of Benjamin

The phrase **of the tribe of Benjamin** means that Paul was from the Israelite tribe of Benjamin and therefore descended from Jacob's son Benjamin. Consider the best way to say this in your language. (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

a Hebrew of Hebrews

Paul assumes that his readers will understand that the meaning of his statement. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. The phrase **a Hebrew of Hebrews** could mean: (1) that Paul had retained Hebrew customs and spoke the language of the Hebrew people, which was Aramaic. (2) that Paul had no Gentile ancestors, but rather was a pure-blooded Hebrew. Alternate translation: [a Hebrew whose parents and ancestors are all full-blooded Jews]; (3) a combination of both of the above. Alternate translation: [a full-blooded Jew who has retained the Hebrew culture, customs, and language] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

according to the law, a Pharisee

The phrase **according to the law, a Pharisee** means that prior to his conversion Paul had been a Pharisee. He related to the law of Moses as a Pharisee and, therefore, strictly obeyed it as well as the many rules scribes had added to try to safeguard the law of Moses. Alternate translation: [in relation to the law of Moses, I was a Pharisee] or [in relation to how I observed the law of Moses, I was a Pharisee, and therefore, I strictly obeyed every detail of it including the teachings of the scribes] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

Philippians 3:6

according to zeal, persecuting the church; according to righteousness {that is} in the law, having become blameless

In this verse Paul finishes naming the things in which he put his confidence before he believed in Christ. (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.145)**)

according to zeal, persecuting the church

The phrase **persecuting the church** is explaining the extent of Paul's **zeal**. Before Paul believed in Jesus, he thought that by **persecuting the church**, he was serving God and ensuring that the law of Moses was honored and obeyed. If it would be helpful in your language, consider stating the meaning of the phrase **according to zeal, persecuting the church** plainly. Alternate translation: [having so much desire to serve God that I persecuted the church] or [wanting so much to honor God, I persecuted the church] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

the church

Here, **church** is a collective noun. The phrase **the church** refers to Christians as a whole and includes anyone belonging to the group of people who follow Jesus. What Paul means by saying that he had persecuted **the church** is that he formerly persecuted anyone who was a Christian. Alternate translation: [persecuting Christians] or [persecuting anyone who was a Christian] (See: **Collective Nouns (p.135)**)

according to righteousness {that is} in the law, having become blameless

The phrase **righteousness {that is} in the law** refers to obeying the righteous guidelines for living that the law of Moses required. Paul obeyed the law so carefully that he believed that no one could find any part of it that he disobeyed. If it would be helpful in your language, consider stating it plainly. Alternate translation: [As regards obeying the law of Moses, no one could say that I ever disobeyed the law] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

Philippians 3:7

Whatever things were gains for me, I consider these things loss for the sake of Christ

This entire verse is Paul's response to the seven things he listed in 3:5–6, which he once considered to be spiritually and religiously profitable to himself. In this verse Paul contrasts his former way of viewing things when he was a Pharisee with his new way of viewing things now that he believes in Christ. (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship** (p.138))

Whatever things were gains for me, I consider these things loss for the sake of Christ

In the original language in which Paul wrote this letter, the words **gains** and **loss** were common business terms used in accounting to describe things a business person determined to be either profitable or unprofitable. Paul is using these two terms metaphorically to portray the things he considers spiritually profitable and unprofitable. If your language has similar business or accounting terms that would be natural to use in this context, consider using them here. Alternate translation: [Whatever things I formerly counted as gains, these things I now count as loss for the sake of Christ] or [Whatever things I formerly accounted as gains, these things I now account as loss for the sake of Christ] (See: **Metaphor** (p.182))

Whatever things were gains for me

The phrase **Whatever things were gains for me** refers specifically to the list of seven things that Paul has just listed in 3:5–6 and to anything else in which he would have put confidence before he believed in Christ. Alternate translation: [Whatever things I formerly considered profitable] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information** (p.130))

Whatever things were gains for me

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **gains**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **gains** by using an adjective such as **profitable**, or you can express it in some other way. Alternate translation: [Whatever things were profitable for me] (See: **Abstract Nouns** (p.125))

I consider these things loss for the sake of Christ

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **loss**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **loss** by using a verbal phrase such as “worth losing”. Alternate translation: [I judge these things worth losing for the sake of Christ] (See: **Abstract Nouns** (p.125))

Philippians 3:8

But on the contrary, I consider even all things to be loss because of the surpassing value of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, because of whom I have suffered the loss of all things—and I consider {them} dung—so that I might gain Christ

In this verse Paul continues the business metaphor which he began in 3:7. (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

I consider

See how you translated the word **consider** in 3:7.

loss

See how you translated the abstract noun **loss** in 3:7. Alternate translation: [worth losing] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

I consider even all things to be loss because of the surpassing value of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **value**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **value** with an adjective such as “valuable.” Alternate translation: [I consider everything worth losing for the sake of what is most valuable, namely, knowing Christ Jesus my Lord] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

because of the surpassing value of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **knowledge**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **knowledge** with a verbal form such as “knowing.” Alternate translation: [because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

because of the surpassing value of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord

Alternate translation: [because knowing Christ Jesus my Lord is worth so much more]

of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord

The word **knowledge** does not refer to simply being mentally aware of something or someone, but rather, it refers to having a deep, intimate, personal knowledge or experience of someone or something. Here, it refers to having an intimate and personal knowledge or experience of Christ. Consider the best way to express this meaning in your language. Alternate translation: [of intimately knowing Christ Jesus my Lord] or [of deeply knowing and experiencing Christ Jesus my Lord] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

because of whom I have suffered the loss of all things

See how you translated the abstract noun **loss** earlier in this verse and in 3:7. Alternate translation: [for whom I have willingly lost all things] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

I consider {them

See how you translated the word **consider** earlier in this verse and in [3:7](#).

dung

During Paul's time, the word **dung** was used to refer to excrement and things which were considered worthless and worthy only of being thrown out. In the original language in which Paul wrote this letter, the term **dung** was a crude term that referred to things that were discarded as garbage, including excrement, and the specific meaning was determined by context. Here, this word could be referring to: (1) excrement, since in the preceding verses Paul has been discussing what comes from the flesh. Alternate translation: [excrement]; (2) garbage, since Paul is discussing what he now considers worth throwing away in order to gain and know Christ. Alternate translation: [garbage] or [refuse] (See: **Translate Unknowns (p.222)**)

I might gain

See how you translated the word **gains** in [3:7](#). (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

so that I might gain Christ

The phrase **so that** is a purpose clause. In your translation, follow the conventions of your language for purpose clauses. Alternate translation: [for the purpose of gaining Christ] (See: **Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship (p. 140)**)

Philippians 3:9

and be found in him

If it would be clearer in your language, you could translate the passive verbal phrase **be found** with an active form, and you could state who did the action. Alternate translation: [and God might find me belonging to him] (See: **Active or Passive (p.127)**)

not having my own righteousness {that is} from law

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **righteousness**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **righteousness** in some other way. Alternate translation: [not being able to please God by keeping the law] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

but {that which is} through faith in Christ

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **faith**, you can express the idea behind **faith** by using a verbal form. Alternate translation: [but that which comes by believing in Christ] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

but {that which is} through faith in Christ

The word **that** refers to “righteousness.” Paul assumes his readers will know this from the context. If this would be unclear in your language, consider stating this explicitly. Alternate translation: [but the righteousness which is through faith in Christ] or [but the righteousness which comes by faith in Christ] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

the righteousness from God by faith

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **righteousness**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **righteousness** in some other way. See how you translated **righteousness** earlier in this verse. Alternate translation: [being pleasing to God by believing in Christ] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

the righteousness from God by faith

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **faith**, you can express the idea behind **faith** by using a verbal form. See how you translated **faith** earlier in this verse. Alternate translation: [but the righteousness from God, which comes by believing in Christ] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

by faith

In the phrase **by faith**, Paul is leaving out some words that would be needed to complete the sentence in many languages. If it would be helpful in your language, you could supply these words from the context. Alternate translation: [which comes by faith] or [which is received through faith] (See: **Ellipsis (p.154)**)

Philippians 3:10

to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death

All occurrences of the pronouns **him** and **his** in this verse refer to Christ. If it would be helpful in your language, you could clarify this in a way that would be natural in your language. Alternate translation: [to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them** (p.202))

and

The first occurrence of the word **and** indicates that what follows is the Paul's explanation of how specifically he wants to know Christ. (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases** (p.145))

to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings

In the original language in which Paul wrote this letter, he closely connects the phrase **the power of his resurrection** and the phrase **the fellowship of his sufferings**. He does this because in Paul's mind these two things are inseparably linked, and a person cannot know the power of Christ's resurrection without first sharing in Christ's suffering. Consider the best way to show the close connection between these two phrases in your language. (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases** (p.145))

to know him

See how you translated the word "knowledge" in 3:8. Here, the word **know** does not refer to simply being mentally aware of something or someone, but rather, it refers to having a deep, intimate, personal knowledge or experience of something or someone. Here, it refers to having an intimate and personal knowledge or experience of Christ. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers, so consider the best way to express this meaning in your language. Alternate translation: [to intimately know Christ] or [to deeply know and experience him] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information** (p.130))

power

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **power**, you could express the idea behind **power** by using an adverb such as "powerfully," as modeled in UST. (See: **Abstract Nouns** (p.125))

and the fellowship of his sufferings

If your language does not use abstract noun for the idea of **fellowship**, you can express the idea behind this word by using a verbal form such as "participate" or "sharing." Alternate translation: [and to participate in his sufferings] or [and the sharing of his sufferings] (See: **Abstract Nouns** (p.125))

and the fellowship of his sufferings

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of suffering, you can express the idea behind the word **sufferings** by using a verbal form such as "suffer." Alternate translation: [and to suffer with him] (See: **Abstract Nouns** (p.125))

and

The word **and** indicates that what follows is the second aspect of knowing Christ, which Paul introduces in explanation of how specifically he wants to know Christ. Alternate translation: [and to know] (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.145)**)

being conformed to his death

If it would be clearer in your language, you could express the phrase **being conformed to** with an active form. Alternate translation: [taking on the likeness of his death] (See: **Active or Passive (p.127)**)

being conformed to his death

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **death**, you can express the idea behind this word by using a verbal form such as “die.” (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

Philippians 3:11

the resurrection {that is} from the dead

Alternate translation: [the resurrection from the dead]

Philippians 3:12

Not that I already received {it}

The pronoun **{it}** in the phrase **Not that I already received {it}** could be referring to: (1) spiritual perfection and completion. This phrase would then mean that Paul is saying that he is not yet spiritually perfect or complete. Alternate translation: [Not that I have already attained spiritual perfection] or [Not that I am already spiritually complete] or [Not that God's work in me is already complete] or [Not that God's work in me is already perfected]; (2) that Paul has not yet reached the goals he has for himself and so has not received his reward. Alternate translation: [Not that I have yet reached my goals and received my reward from God]; (3) Paul has not yet finished the work God gave him to do with his life, and then died and received his reward from God. Alternate translation: [Not that I have finished my work and received my reward from God] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p. 202)**)

or have already been made perfect

If it would be more natural in your language, you could express the phrase **been made perfect** with an active form. Alternate translation: [or think that God has already made me perfect] or [or think that God has already completed his work in me] (See: **Active or Passive (p.127)**)

have already been made perfect

In the original language in which Paul wrote this letter, the word **perfect** means that someone or something has reached full completion and therefore reached its intended purpose or goal. It can also refer to someone reaching full maturity and is used in the New Testament of Christians reaching completeness of Christ-like character. Alternate translation: [been brought to completion] or [have already been made complete] or [have already reached full maturity] or [have already reached full Christ-likeness] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

have already been made perfect

If it would be more natural in your language, you could translate the phrase **been made perfect** with an active form. Alternate translation: [that God has already perfected me] or [that God has already perfected his work in me] (See: **Active or Passive (p.127)**)

I might & grasp that for which I was also grasped by Christ Jesus

If it would be more natural in your language, you could translate the phrase **I was also grasped by Christ Jesus** with an active form. Alternate translation: [I might grasp the things for which Christ Jesus grasped me] (See: **Active or Passive (p.127)**)

Philippians 3:13

Brothers

See how you translated the word **Brothers** in [Philippians 1:12](#) and [3:1](#). (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

I do not consider myself to have grasped {it}

Paul does not explicitly state what **{it}** is that he has not yet **grasped**. He is probably referring to becoming perfectly like Jesus and to fully knowing Jesus. You may choose to state this in your translation, as the UST does, or you may leave it ambiguous, as the ULT does. (See: **When to Keep Information Implicit (p.227)**)

But one thing

In the phrase **But one thing**, Paul is leaving out some of the words that a sentence would need in many languages to be complete. If it would be clearer in your language, you could supply these words from the context. Alternate translation: [But take note of this one thing] (See: **Ellipsis (p.154)**)

forgetting {what is} behind and straining for {what is} ahead

In the phrase **forgetting {what is} behind and straining for {what is} ahead**, Paul is using the imagery of a person who is in a race to win a prize. Paul portrays himself as a runner in this metaphor, and he continues using this metaphor until the end of [Philippians 3:14](#). If this metaphor is unfamiliar in your culture, consider using another metaphor that would be familiar to your readers, or you may state this in plain language, as the UST does. Alternate translation: [like a runner, I forget what is behind me and put all of my effort into running toward the finish line in front of me] or [like a runner, I have one focus, and therefore I do not look backward as I run, but only look forward as I strain with all my might so that I will reach the finish line] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

Philippians 3:14

I press on toward the goal for the prize

In this verse Paul continues using the metaphor of a runner who is competing in a foot race in order to win a prize. In this verse Paul says that his **goal**, which he works hard for, is to win the **prize** which God promises to give every person who obediently follows Christ. If this metaphor would be unfamiliar in your culture, consider using another metaphor, or use plain language to translate the idea behind this metaphor. Alternate translation: [I do all I can to pursue the goal of winning the prize of God's upward call in Christ Jesus] or [I work hard so that I can reach my goal] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

the goal for the prize of the upward calling of God

The phrases **the goal** and **the prize** could be related to each other in one of two ways. They could: (1) be focusing on the same basic idea. Alternate translation: [the goal, which is to be given the prize of God's upward call] or [my goal, which is to receive the prize of God's upward call]; (2) be focusing on different things, in which case **the goal** is referring to the goal of Paul's life, while **the prize** is referring to what Paul hopes to receive once he has successfully achieved his goal. Alternate translation: [the goal and toward being given the prize of God's upward call] or [the goal and toward receiving the prize of God's upward call] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

the prize of the upward calling of God

The phrase **the prize of the upward calling of God** could mean: (1) that **the prize** is **the upward calling of God**. Alternate translation: [receive the prize of God's upward call] or [receive the prize of God's heavenward invitation]; (2) that the **upward calling of God** is a call to come and receive God's **prize**. Alternate translation: [answer God's upward call to receive his prize] or [answer God's invitation to receive his prize] (See: **When to Keep Information Implicit (p.227)**)

of the upward calling of God

The word **upward** probably refers to both the origin of God's call and to the direction of God's call. In other words, the phrase **the upward calling of God** probably refers both to the fact that the **calling** is from God and that the calling is also a heavenly calling to move towards God. Alternate translation: [God's heavenward call] (See: **When to Keep Information Implicit (p.227)**)

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus

The phrase **in Christ Jesus** could be: (1) modifying the phrase **the upward calling of God**. (2) modifying the phrase **I press on**. Alternate translation: [I press on in Christ Jesus toward the goal for the prize of the upward calling of God] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of a **goal**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **goal** in another way. Alternate translation: [I make it my main focus to win the prize of God's upward calling in Christ Jesus] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

Philippians 3:15

Therefore

The word **Therefore** indicates that Paul is transitioning from teaching the Philippians by using his personal experience ([Philippians 3:4–14](#)) to exhorting them ([Philippians 3:15–17](#)). Use the form that would best express this meaning in your language. (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.145)**)

as many as

The phrase **as many as** is missing some words that a sentence would need in many languages to be complete. If it would be helpful in your language, you could supply these words from the context. Alternate translation: [as many of you as] or [all of you who] (See: **Ellipsis (p.154)**)

as many as {are} perfect

The word **perfect** does not mean “without sin,” but rather, it means “spiritually mature.” You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [as many as are spiritually mature] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

God will also reveal that to you

Alternate translation: [God will also make it clear to you] or [God will make sure you know it]

Philippians 3:16

in what we have attained, we should live in it

When Paul says **we** in this verse, he is speaking of himself and the Philippian Christians, so **we** is inclusive here. Your language may require you to mark these two uses of **we** as inclusive forms. Alternate translation: [let us all continue obeying the same truths we have already received] (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'** (p.161))

in what we have attained, we should live in it

Alternate translation: [in the things that we have attained so far, we should live in them] or [in the things that we have believed so far, we should obey them] or [in the things that we have believed so far, we should act on them]

Philippians 3:17

Become imitators of me

Alternate translation: [Do what I do] or [Live as I live]

Become

The word **Become** is a command or instruction to all of the Philippian Christians. Use the most natural form in your language to give direction to a group of people. Alternate translation: [I exhort each of you to become] or [Each of you become] or [I command each of you to become] (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

brothers

See how you translated the word **brothers** in [Philippians 1:12](#). (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p. 225)**)

watch closely

The phrase **watch closely** is a command or instruction to all of the Philippian Christians. Use the most natural form in your language to give direction to a group of people. Alternate translation: [I exhort each of you to watch closely] or [each of you watch closely] or [I urge each of you to watch closely] (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p. 164)**)

the ones walking in this manner, just as you have us {as} an example

Alternate translation: [those people who are already living just as I live and follow our example] or [those people who are already doing what I do and imitating us]

Philippians 3:18

For many walk

The word **walk** is a Jewish figure of speech meaning to “live” or to “conduct one’s life.” In Jewish culture a person’s behavior was spoken of as if that person were walking along a path. If it would be helpful in your language, consider stating this in plain language. Alternate translation: [For many live] or [For many people conduct their lives] (See: **Metonymy (p.188)**)

For many

The phrase **For many** leaves out a word that would be needed in some languages to be completely clear. If it would be clearer in your language, you could supply the missing word from the context. Alternate translation: [For many people walk] (See: **Ellipsis (p.154)**)

but now even weeping

Alternate translation: [but now telling you with great sadness]

as} the enemies of the cross of Christ

Paul is describing the good news of Jesus’ death and resurrection and the work of sharing this good news by associating these things with **the cross of Christ**. The phrase **the cross of Christ** is synonymous with the gospel message and the work of spreading the gospel message. The phrase **enemies of the cross of Christ** refers to the people who are opposed to the message of the gospel and who oppose the people who share the gospel with others. If this is not clear in your language, you could express this with plain language. Alternate translation: [as enemies of the good news about Jesus] or [as enemies of the message about Jesus and enemies of those who proclaim it] or [as enemies of the message about Jesus and enemies of those who share it with others] (See: **Metonymy (p.188)**)

Philippians 3:19

whose end {is} destruction

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **end**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **end** in another way. Alternate translation: [whom God will destroy] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

whose end {is} destruction

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **destruction**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **destruction** by using a verb such as “destroy.” Alternate translation: [whom God will destroy] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

whose god {is their} belly

Paul uses **belly** to represent all physical desires for pleasure. By Paul calling their **belly** their **god**, he means that these people love and serve their physical desire for pleasure rather than loving and serving God. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression from your culture, or you could use plain language. Alternate translation: [who serve their desire for food and other pleasures rather than serve God] or [who obey their physical appetites instead of obeying God] or [who love pleasure more than they love God] (See: **Synecdoche (p.218)**)

whose} glory {is} in their shame

Here, **shame** stands for the actions that people should be ashamed of but are not. Alternate translation: [they are proud of the things that should cause them shame] (See: **Metonymy (p.188)**)

whose} glory {is} in their shame

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **glory**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **glory** by using an adjective such as “proud.” Alternate translation: [who take pride in what should bring them shame] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

whose} glory {is} in their shame

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **shame**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **shame** by using an adjective such as “ashamed.” Alternate translation: [who take pride in what should cause them to be ashamed] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

the ones thinking about earthly things

Here, **earthly** refers to all the things that pertain to everyday living on earth. Alternate translation: [who only think about the things here on this earth] or [who only think about the things of this life] (See: **Metonymy (p.188)**)

the ones thinking about earthly things

The implied contrast that Paul is making here is between **earthly things** and spiritual things. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: [who think about is earthly things instead of the things of God] or [who only think about earthly things instead of the things of God] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

Philippians 3:20

our & we & eagerly await

When Paul uses **our** and **we** here, he is referring to himself and the believers in Philippi, so **our** and **we** are inclusive. Your language may require you to mark these forms. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'** (p.161))

citizenship

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **citizenship**, you can express the idea behind **citizenship** with a concrete noun such as "citizen." Alternate translation: [status as citizens] (See: **Abstract Nouns** (p.125))

Philippians 3:21

to his glorious body

Here, the pronoun **his** refers to Christ. Alternate translation: [to Christ's glorious body] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them** (p.202))

of his power

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **power**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **power** in some other way. Alternate translation: [of his might and ability] (See: **Abstract Nouns** (p. 125))

Philippians 4

Philippians 4:1

Therefore

Paul uses the word **Therefore** as a transition word to introduce the exhortations to the Philippian Christians which he is about to give and which are based on the things that he has said before this verse. Consider the best word or phrase to use in your language to show this meaning. Alternate translation: [So then] (See: **Connecting Words and Phrases (p.145)**)

brothers

See how you translated the word **brothers** in [Philippians 1:12](#). (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p. 225)**)

beloved and longed for

Alternate translation: [whom I love and greatly desire to see]

my joy and crown

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **joy**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **joy** by using a verbal form such as “rejoice” or by using an adjective such as “happy.” Alternate translation: [who cause me to be very happy and are my crown] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

my joy and crown

The phrase **my joy and crown** could refer to: (1) Paul's current feelings of joy regarding the Philippian Christians and his future hope of being rewarded for his labor among them. Alternate translation: [my source of joy and my future hope of being rewarded when Christ returns]; (2) Paul's joy and reward in the future when Christ returns. Alternate translation: [my hope for joy and reward when Christ returns]; (3) Paul's present joy in the Philippian believers and his present feeling that they are his reward for his work among them. Alternate translation: [my joy and reward] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

crown

Paul speaks of the Philippian Christians as if they were his **crown**. At the time Paul wrote this letter, a **crown** was made of leaves and was worn by a person on their head as a sign of their achievement after they had won an important victory. Here, the word **crown** means that the Philippian Christians brought great honor to Paul before God and were a sign of his hard work among them. If your readers would not understand the meaning of this metaphor, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture or state the meaning in plain language. Alternate translation: [my reward] or [my honor] or [the sign of my hard work] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

in this way stand firm in the Lord, beloved

Alternate translation: [so continue living for the Lord in the way that I have taught you, dear friends]

in this way stand firm in the Lord, beloved

The phrase **in this way** could refer to: (1) what comes before it, in which case this phrase would mean, “in the way that I have just explained to you” Alternate translation: [stand firm in the Lord in the way that I have just explained to you, beloved]; (2) what Paul commands the Philippian Christians to do in [Philippians 4:2–9](#). Alternate translation: [stand firm in the Lord, beloved, in this way]

stand firm

The phrase **stand firm** is a command or instruction to all of the Philippian Christians. Use the most natural form in your language to give direction to a group of people. (See: **Forms of ‘You’ — Singular (p.164)**)

stand firm

The phrase **stand firm** is used to refer to the imagery of a soldier remaining in place, not moved by the enemy. Paul gives this metaphor a spiritual meaning to exhort the Philippian Christians to not change their minds but continue believing what they have already believed. If it would be helpful in your language, consider using another metaphor that would make sense in your culture, or use plain language. Alternate translation: [remain unmoved in your belief in Christ] or [remain firm in your faith] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

in this way stand firm in the Lord

Alternate translation: [stand firm in your union and relationship with the Lord] or [stand firm in your union and communion with the Lord]

Philippians 4:2

Euodia & Syntyche

Euodia and **Syntyche** are the names of women. (See: **How to Translate Names (p.171)**)

Philippians 4:3

you

Here, **you** refers to the **true companion** and is singular. This is the only occurrence of the word **you** in Philippians that is singular. (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

true companion

The phrase **true companion** refers to a person with whom the Philippian believers were familiar at that time but whose identity is no longer known. Alternate translation: [my faithful helper in the work of the gospel]

who labored with me in the gospel

In the phrase **the gospel**, Paul is leaving out some of the words that would be needed in many languages for the sentence to be complete. If it would be clearer in your language, you could supply these words from the context. Alternate translation: [who have labored with me in the work of spreading the gospel] or [who have labored with me in the work of telling people the gospel] or [who have labored with me in the work of sharing the gospel with people] (See: **Ellipsis (p.154)**)

the gospel

Paul is using the phrase **the gospel** to refer specifically to the work of telling other people about Jesus. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express plainly the idea behind this term. Alternate translation: [the work of spreading the gospel] or [the work of telling people the gospel] or [the work of sharing the gospel with people] (See: **Metonymy (p.188)**)

the gospel

See how you translated the phrase **the gospel** in [Philippians 1:5](#).

Clement

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

whose names {are} in the Book of Life

Alternate translation: [whose names God has written in the Book of Life]

Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord

See how you translated the phrase **Rejoice in the Lord** in [Philippians 3:1](#). (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice

Both occurrences of the word **Rejoice** are commands or instructions to all of the Philippian Christians. Use the most natural form in your language to give direction to a group of people. Alternate translation: [I urge you all to rejoice in the Lord at all times. Again I will say it, I urge each of you to rejoice] (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p. 164)**)

Philippians 4:5

Let your gentleness be known

The phrase **Let your gentleness be known** is a command or instruction to all of the Philippian Christians. Use the most natural form in your language to give direction to a group of people. (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

to all men

Although the term **men** is masculine, Paul is using the word here in a general sense to mean all people in general, including women. Alternate translation: [to all people] or [to everyone.] (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

The Lord {is} near

The phrase **The Lord {is} near** could mean: (1) that the day that Jesus will return is coming soon. Alternate translation: [The Lord will return soon] or [The second coming of the Lord is near]; (2) the Lord was close to the Philippian believers. Alternate translation: [The Lord is near to you]

Philippians 4:6

Be anxious about nothing

Be anxious about nothing is a command or instruction to all of the Philippian Christians. Use the most natural form in your language to give direction to a group of people. (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

but

The word **but** shows a contrast here between the phrase **Be anxious** and the phrase **by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God**. Consider the best way to show this contrast in your language. (See: **Connect — Contrast Relationship (p.138)**)

in everything

The phrase **in everything** could refer to: (1) all situations. Alternate translation: [in all situations] or [in all circumstances.]; (2) all times. Alternate translation: [at all times] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

by prayer and petition

The words **prayer** and **petition** mean basically the same thing. The repetition is used both for emphasis and comprehensiveness. Petition is a type of prayer in which a person asks God for things. If it would be clearer in your language, you could combine these two words. Alternate translation: [by asking in prayer] or [by prayerfully petitioning]. (See: **Doublet (p.152)**)

by prayer and petition

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **prayer**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **prayer** with a verb such as “praying” or in some other way. Alternate translation: [by praying and making a petition] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

by prayer and petition

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **petition**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **petition** by using a verbal form such as “petitioning” or in some other way. Alternate translation: [by praying and petitioning God] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

with thanksgiving

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **thanksgiving**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **thanksgiving** with a verb such as “thank” or in a verbal phrase such as “giving thanks.” Alternate translation: [and giving thanks] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

let your requests be known

The phrase **let your requests be known** is a command or instruction to all of the Philippian Christians. Use the most natural form in your language to give direction to a group of people. (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

let your requests be known to God

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **requests**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **requests** in some other way. Alternate translation: [tell God your needs] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p. 125)**)

Philippians 4:7

and

The word **and** shows that what follows is the result of practicing what comes before **and** in the previous verse. Alternate translation: [and then] (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.143)**)

the peace of God

Paul is using the possessive form to describe a **peace** that is characterized by having been given by **God**. If your language would not use the possessive form for this, you could express it another way. The phrase **the peace of God** refers to the peace which God gives. Alternate translation: [the peace that God gives] (See: **Possession (p.196)**)

of God, which surpasses all understanding

If your readers not understand the abstract noun **peace**, you could express the meaning with an adjectival phrase such as “at peace” or in some other way. Alternate translation: [then God will help you be confident in God, even if you don’t understand everything] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

which surpasses all understanding

The phrase **which surpasses all understanding** could mean: (1) that the peace God gives is so great that human minds are not able to understand it. Alternate translation: [which is greater than we can understand]; (2) that the peace that God gives is superior to anything that humans can contrive through their own efforts. Alternate translation: [which humans cannot accomplish or attain by their own efforts] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

which surpasses all understanding

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **understanding**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **understanding** by using a verbal form such as “understand.” Alternate translation: [which is greater than we can understand] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

will guard your hearts and your minds

The word **guard** is a military term which refers to a soldier guarding a city or a fortress in order to protect it from enemy attacks. Here Paul presents God’s peace as if it were a soldier who protects **hearts** and **minds** from worrying, and so this phrase literally means “will be like a soldier and guard your hearts and minds” or “will be like a soldier standing guard to protect your hearts and minds.” If your readers would not understand this metaphor in this context, you could use an equivalent metaphor from your culture. Alternatively, you could express Paul’s meaning plainly. Alternate translation: [will keep your hearts and minds safe from attacks of worry and fear] or [will keep your hearts and minds safe] or [will protect your hearts and minds] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

in Christ Jesus

See how you translated the phrase **in Christ Jesus** in [Philippians 1:1](#). (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

Philippians 4:8

As to} the rest

Here, as Paul comes near to the end of his letter, he gives some final instructions for how believers should live. Alternate translation: [Regarding what remains to be said] or [As to what remains for me to say] (See: **End of Story (p.157)**)

brothers

See how you translated the word **brothers** in [Philippians 1:12](#). (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p. 225)**)

as many as are true, as many as honorable, as many as just, as many as pure, as many as lovely, as many as reputable

Paul is leaving out some of the words that would be needed in many languages in order for these phrases to be complete. If it would be clearer in your language, you could supply these words from the context. Alternate translation: [as many things as are true, as many things as are honorable, as many things as are just, as many things as are pure, as many things as are lovely, as many things as are reputable] (See: **Ellipsis (p.154)**)

as many as lovely

Alternate translation: [whatever things are pleasing]

as many as reputable

Alternate translation: [whatever things people admire] or [whatever things people respect]

if anything {is} virtuous

Alternate translation: [if anything is morally good]

if anything {is} praiseworthy

Alternate translation: [if anything is worth praising]

think about

The phrase **think about** is a command or instruction to all of the Philippian Christians. Use the most natural form in your language to give direction to a group of people. (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

Philippians 4:9

And what you learned and received and heard and saw in me

Alternate translation: [And everything that I have taught and shown you]

And what you learned and received

The words **learned** and **received** mean basically the same thing. If it would be clearer in your language, you could combine them into one idea. Alternate translation: [And what you learned] (See: **Doublet (p.152)**)

do these things

Alternate translation: [put these things into practice]

do

The word **do** is a command or instruction to all of the Philippian Christians. Use the most natural form in your language to give direction to a group of people. (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

and

The word **and** shows that what follows it is the result of practicing what comes before it. Consider the best way to show this relationship in your language. Alternate translation: [and then] or [and the result will be that] (See: **Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship (p.143)**)

the God of peace

The phrase **the God of peace** could mean: (1) that God is the giver of peace. Alternate translation: [the God who gives peace] or [God, who gives peace,]; (2) that God is characterized by peace. Alternate translation: [the God who is characterized by peace] or [our God who is characterized by peace]; (3) God, the source of peace and the giver of peace. Alternate translation: [God, who is both the source of peace and the giver of peace,] (See: **Possession (p.196)**)

and the God of peace will be with you

If your readers would better understand it, you could express the idea behind the abstract noun **peace** with an adjective such as “peaceful” or in some other way. Alternate translation: [the God who gives us a peaceful spirit will be with you] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

Philippians 4:10

in the Lord

See how you translated the phrase **in the Lord** in [Philippians 3:12](#). (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

because now at last you renewed your concern on my behalf

Connecting Statement:

Alternate translation: [because now at last you revived your concern for me]

for which indeed you were concerned

Connecting Statement:

Alternate translation: [for whom you were certainly worried]

but were lacking opportunity

Connecting Statement:

Here Paul is leaving out some of the words that a phrase would need in many languages to be complete. If it would be clearer in your language, you could supply these words from the context. Alternate translation: [but you did not have a way to demonstrate it] or [but it was not possible for you to show it] (See: **Ellipsis (p.154)**)

Philippians 4:11

Not that I speak according to need

Alternate translation: [I do not say this because of need]

to be content

Alternate translation: [to be satisfied] or [to be happy]

in whatever I am

Here Paul is leaving out some of the words that a phrase would need in many languages to be complete. If it would be clearer in your language, you could supply these words from the context. Alternate translation: [in whatever situation I am in] or [in whatever circumstances I am in] (See: **Ellipsis (p.154)**)

Philippians 4:12

I know both {how}

Here, the phrase **I know** means “I know from experience” and refers to what Paul knew from his experience. If it would help your readers, consider clarifying this in your translation in some way. Alternate translation: [I have learned both how] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

I know both {how} to be brought low, and I know {how} to abound. & and to abound and to be in need

The sentence at the beginning of this verse, **I know both {how} to be brought low and I know {how} to abound** is very similar in meaning to the phrase **and to abounding and to being in need** at the end of this verse. You can combine the beginning sentence and the closing phrase, as modeled by the UST, if you think it will help your readers.

I know both {how} to be brought low, and I know {how} to abound

Here, the phrases **to be brought low** and **to abound** refer to two opposite extremes of living and to every living condition between them. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: [I know both how to live with very little and how to live with more than I need] or [I know how to live with very little and I know how to live with plenty] (See: **Merism (p.180)**)

to be brought low

If it would be more natural in your language, you could express the passive phrase **to be brought low** with an active form. Alternate translation: [to live with less] or [to live without things I need] (See: **Active or Passive (p.127)**)

to be brought low

Here the phrase **to be brought low** is a figurative way of saying “to live with very little.” If it would help your readers, you could use an equivalent idiom or use plain language. Alternate translation: [to live with very little] (See: **Idiom (p.178)**)

to be filled and to be hungry

Here Paul is leaving out some of the words that a phrase would need in many languages to be understandable. If it would help your readers, you could supply these words from the context. Alternate translation: [to be full of food and to be hungry] or [to be content when I have plenty of food to eat and to be content when I am hungry] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

to be filled and to be hungry

Here the phrases **to be filled** and **to be hungry** refer to two opposite extremes and to everything in between them. If it would help your readers, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: [to be hungry and to be filled and to everything in between] (See: **Merism (p.180)**)

to abound and to be in need

Here Paul is leaving out some of the words that a phrase would need in many languages to be understandable. If it would help your readers, you could supply these words from the context. Alternate translation: [to have an abundance of things I need and to live contentedly when I do not have certain things I need] (See: **Ellipsis (p.154)**)

to abound and to be in need

Here, the phrases **to abound** and **to be in need** refer to two opposite extremes and to everything in between them. If it would help your readers, you could use an equivalent expression or plain language. Alternate translation: [to abound and to be in need and to everything in between] (See: **Merism (p.180)**)

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things in the one strengthening me

Here, **the one** refers to Christ. Alternate translation: [I can do all things because Christ gives me strength] (See: **Pronouns — When to Use Them (p.202)**)

I can do all things in the one strengthening me

Here, **all things** refers to all situations. The phrase **I can do all things** means “I can handle all situations.” Alternate translation: [I can deal with anything through him who strengthens me] or [I am able to act properly in every situation because Jesus makes me strong] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

Philippians 4:14

having shared together in my affliction

The phrase **having shared together in my affliction** means that the Philippian believers helped Paul while he was experiencing difficulties by giving him money and sending Epaphroditus to him. If it would help your readers, you could state this explicitly. Alternate translation: [by helping me in my affliction through your gift of money and sending Epaphroditus to me] or [by helping me when I faced difficult circumstances by sending Epaphroditus to encourage me and bring me your gift of money] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

in my affliction

If your language does not use an abstract noun for the idea of **affliction**, you can express the idea behind the abstract noun **affliction** with an adjective such as **difficult** or in some other way. Alternate translation: [when I was suffering] or [when I was mistreated] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)

in my affliction

Alternate translation: [in my trials] or [in my troubles] or [in my difficulties]

Philippians 4:15

in the beginning of the gospel

Here, **in the beginning of the gospel** refers to when Paul first began communicating the gospel message to the Philippians. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state explicitly the idea behind this phrase. Alternate translation: [when you first heard me preach the gospel] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p. 130)**)

of the gospel

See how you translated the phrase **the gospel** in [Philippians 1:5](#) and [4:3](#).

no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone

You can state **no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you alone** in the positive. Alternate translation: [you were the only church that shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving] (See: **Double Negatives (p.149)**)

shared with me

Here, **shared with me** means the Philippians helped Paul financially and in other practical ways. Alternate translation: [were partners with] or [helped me] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

in the matter of giving and receiving

In the original language in which Paul wrote this letter, the phrase **giving and receiving** could refer either to exchanges that involved money or to exchanges that involved the giving and receiving of non-financial things that would benefit the other party. Here, the phrase **giving and receiving** may refer to both financial and non-financial gifts because the Philippians helped Paul by sending a gift of money via Epaphroditus, who also helped Paul in other ways. Alternate translation: [by sending money and help to me]

Philippians 4:16

for even in Thessalonica

Alternate translation: [for even when I was in Thessalonica]

both once and twice

The phrase **both once and twice** is an idiom meaning that something occurred more than one time. If your readers would not understand this idiom, you could use an equivalent idiom from your language, or you could state this in plain language. Alternate translation: [several times] (See: **Idiom (p.178)**)

you sent for my needs

Paul is leaving out some of the words that this phrase would need in many languages to be complete. If it would be clearer in your language, you could supply these words from the context. Alternate translation: [you sent me money to help me with my needs] (See: **Ellipsis (p.154)**)

Philippians 4:17

I seek the fruit that is increasing to your account

At the time Paul wrote this letter, the word **fruit** could be used in a business context to refer to what was gained in a financial transaction. When used in a business context, the word **fruit** meant “profit” or “gain.” Here Paul is using this business meaning to refer to God’s reward. If your language has an equivalent word that could be used in a business context, consider using it here if it would be natural in your language. Alternately, you may express this meaning using plain language, as the UST does. Alternate translation: [I seek the profit that increases to your account] or [I seek the gain that increases to your account] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

Philippians 4:18

I have all things in full

The phrase **I have all things in full** could mean: (1) that Paul has received **all things** that he needs from the Philippian believers and is therefore sufficiently supplied. Alternate translation: [I have everything I need and am content]; (2) that Paul is continuing the business metaphor from [Philippians 4:17](#) and is here offering the Philippians a figurative receipt for the gifts they gave him. Alternate translation: [I have received the gift that you sent]

I abound

The phrase **I abound** means that Paul has more than enough of the things that he needs for himself. If it would be helpful in your language, consider stating this explicitly. Alternate translation: [I have more than enough of the things I need] (See: **Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information (p.130)**)

I have been filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things from you

Connecting Statement:

If it would be more natural in your language, you could express the phrase **I have been filled** with an active form, and you could state who did the action. Alternate translation: [You have fully provided for me by giving me the things which Epaphroditus brought to me] (See: **Active or Passive (p.127)**)

Epaphroditus

Epaphroditus is the name of a man. See how you translated his name in [Philippians 2:25](#). (See: **How to Translate Names (p.171)**)

an aroma, a sweet smell, an acceptable, pleasing sacrifice to God

Here Paul speaks of the gift from the Philippian believers as if it were a **sacrifice** offered **to God** on an altar. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this phrase by stating the meaning using plain language. Alternate translation: [which are very pleasing to God] or [which make God happy] or [which I assure you are gifts very pleasing to God, like an acceptable sacrifice] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

Philippians 4:19

will fulfill all your need

The word for **will fulfill** is the same word translated as “have been fulfilled” in [verse 18](#). This phrase is an idiom meaning “will provide everything you need” (See: **Idiom (p.178)**)

according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus

Alternate translation: [from his glorious riches that he gives through Christ Jesus]

Philippians 4:20

our

When Paul says **our**, he is speaking of himself and the Philippian believers, so **our** is inclusive. Your language may require you to mark this form. (See: **Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'** (p.161))

Philippians 4:21

Greet

Greet is a command or instruction to all of the Philippian Christians. Use the most natural form in your language to give direction to a group of people. (See: **Forms of 'You' — Singular (p.164)**)

The brothers with me

See how you translated the word **brothers** in [Philippians 1:12](#). Paul is using the term **brothers** here to refer to anyone who is a fellow believer in Jesus. If this is not clear in your language, you could express this plainly. Alternate translation: [My fellow believers here] (See: **Metaphor (p.182)**)

The brothers with me

See how you translated the word **brothers** in [Philippians 1:12](#). Although the term **brothers** is masculine, Paul is using the word here in a spiritual sense to include both men and women who believe in Jesus. Alternate translation: [The brothers and sisters with me] (See: **When Masculine Words Include Women (p.225)**)

Philippians 4:22

the household of Caesar

The phrase **the household of Caesar** refers to the servants who worked in Caesar's palace. (See: **Translate Unknowns** (p.222))

Philippians 4:23

be} with your spirit

Paul describes the Philippian Christians as whole persons by reference to their **spirit**. Alternate translation: [be with you] (See: **Synecdoche (p.218)**)

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ {be} with your spirit

The word **grace** is an abstract noun that can be translated with an adverb. Alternate translation: [May the Lord Jesus Christ act graciously to you] (See: **Abstract Nouns (p.125)**)



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Abstract Nouns

Description

Abstract nouns are nouns that refer to attitudes, qualities, events, or situations. These are things that cannot be seen or touched in a physical sense, such as happiness, weight, unity, friendship, health, and reason. This is a translation issue because some languages may express a certain idea with an abstract noun, while others would need a different way to express it.

This page answers the question: *What are abstract nouns and how do I deal with them in my translation?*

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

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

Sentence Structure ([UTA PDF](#))

Remember that nouns are words that refer to a person, place, thing, or idea. Abstract nouns are the nouns that refer to ideas. These can be attitudes, qualities, events, situations, or even relationships between those ideas. These are things that cannot be seen or touched in a physical sense, such as joy, peace, creation, goodness, contentment, justice, truth, freedom, vengeance, slowness, length, weight, and many, many more.

Some languages, such as Biblical Greek and English, use abstract nouns a lot. They provide a way of giving names to actions or qualities. With names, people who speak these languages can talk about the concepts as though they were things. For example, in languages that use abstract nouns, people can say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sin." But some languages do not use abstract nouns very much. In these languages, speakers may not have the two abstract nouns "forgiveness" and "sin," but they would express the same meaning in other ways. For example, they would express, "I believe that God is willing to forgive people after they have sinned," by using verb phrases instead of nouns for those ideas.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

The Bible that you translate from may use abstract nouns to express certain ideas. Your language might not use abstract nouns for some of those ideas. Instead, it might use phrases to express those ideas. Those phrases will use other kinds of words such as adjectives, verbs, or adverbs to express the meaning of the abstract noun. For example, "What is its **weight**?" could be expressed as "How much does it **weigh**?" or "How **heavy** is it?"

Examples From the Bible

From **childhood** you have known the sacred writings ... (2 Timothy 3:15a ULT)

The abstract noun "childhood" refers to when someone was a child.

But **godliness** with **contentment** is great **gain**. (1 Timothy 6:6 ULT)

The abstract nouns "godliness" and "contentment" refer to being godly and content. The abstract noun "gain" refers to something that benefits or helps someone.

Today **salvation** has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. (Luke 19:9 ULT)

The abstract noun "salvation" here refers to being saved.

The Lord does not move slowly concerning his promises, as some consider **slowness** to be (2 Peter 3:9a ULT)

The abstract noun "slowness" refers to the lack of speed with which something is done.

He will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the **purposes** of the heart. (1 Corinthians 4:5b ULT)

The abstract noun "purposes" refers to the things that people want to do and the reasons they want to do them.

Translation Strategies

If an abstract noun would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here is another option:

(1) Reword the sentence with a phrase that expresses the meaning of the abstract noun. Instead of a noun, the new phrase will use a verb, an adverb, or an adjective to express the idea of the abstract noun.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Reword the sentence with a phrase that expresses the meaning of the abstract noun. Instead of a noun, the new phrase will use a verb, an adverb, or an adjective to express the idea of the abstract noun. Alternative translations are indented below the Scripture example.

... from **childhood** you have known the sacred writings ... (2 Timothy 3:15a ULT)

Ever since **you were a child** you have known the sacred writings.

But **godliness** with **contentment** is great **gain**. (1 Timothy 6:6 ULT)

But **being godly** and **content** is very **beneficial**. But we **benefit** greatly when we **are godly** and **content**. But we **benefit** greatly when we **honor and obey God** and when we are **happy with what we have**.

Today **salvation** has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. (Luke 19:9 ULT)

Today the people in this house **have been saved** ... Today God **has saved** the people in this house ...

The Lord does not move slowly concerning his promises, as some consider **slowness** to be. (2 Peter 3:9a ULT)

The Lord does not move slowly concerning his promises, as some consider **moving slowly** to be.

He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the **purposes** of the heart. (1 Corinthians 4:5b ULT)

He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal **the things that people want to do and the reasons that they want to do them**.

"

Referenced in: [Philippians 1:7](#); [Philippians 1:9](#); [Philippians 1:11](#); [Philippians 1:15](#); [Philippians 1:17](#); [Philippians 1:19](#); [Philippians 1:20](#); [Philippians 1:21](#); [Philippians 1:22](#); [Philippians 1:23](#); [Philippians 1:25](#); [Philippians 1:26](#); [Philippians 1:27](#); [Philippians 1:28](#); [Philippians 1:30](#); [Philippians 2:1](#); [Philippians 2:2](#); [Philippians 2:3](#); [Philippians 2:5](#); [Philippians 2:8](#); [Philippians 2:11](#); [Philippians 2:12](#); [Philippians 2:16](#); [Philippians 2:17](#); [Philippians 2:19](#); [Philippians 2:22](#); [Philippians 2:27](#); [Philippians 2:28](#); [Philippians 2:29](#); [Philippians 2:30](#); [Philippians 3:3](#); [Philippians 3:7](#); [Philippians 3:8](#); [Philippians 3:9](#); [Philippians 3:10](#); [Philippians 3:14](#); [Philippians 3:19](#); [Philippians 3:20](#); [Philippians 3:21](#); [Philippians 4:1](#); [Philippians 4:6](#); [Philippians 4:7](#); [Philippians 4:9](#); [Philippians 4:14](#); [Philippians 4:23](#)

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: [Philippians 1:11](#); [Philippians 1:14](#); [Philippians 1:16](#); [Philippians 1:18](#); [Philippians 1:23](#); [Philippians 1:25](#); [Philippians 1:29](#); [Philippians 2:17](#); [Philippians 3:9](#); [Philippians 3:10](#); [Philippians 3:12](#); [Philippians 4:12](#); [Philippians 4:18](#)

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: [Philippians 1:5](#); [Philippians 1:6](#); [Philippians 1:10](#); [Philippians 1:12](#); [Philippians 1:13](#); [Philippians 1:14](#); [Philippians 1:16](#); [Philippians 1:17](#); [Philippians 1:19](#); [Philippians 1:23](#); [Philippians 1:25](#); [Philippians 1:28](#); [Philippians 2:1](#); [Philippians 2:4](#); [Philippians 2:5](#); [Philippians 2:6](#); [Philippians 2:7](#); [Philippians 2:8](#); [Philippians 2:13](#); [Philippians 2:15](#); [Philippians 2:16](#); [Philippians 2:18](#); [Philippians 2:21](#); [Philippians 2:24](#); [Philippians 2:27](#); [Philippians 2:30](#); [Philippians 3:1](#); [Philippians 3:2](#); [Philippians 3:3](#); [Philippians 3:5](#); [Philippians 3:6](#); [Philippians 3:7](#); [Philippians 3:8](#); [Philippians 3:9](#); [Philippians 3:10](#); [Philippians 3:12](#); [Philippians 3:14](#); [Philippians 3:15](#); [Philippians 3:19](#); [Philippians 4:1](#); [Philippians 4:6](#); [Philippians 4:7](#); [Philippians 4:12](#); [Philippians 4:13](#); [Philippians 4:14](#); [Philippians 4:15](#); [Philippians 4:18](#)

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: [Philippians 1:2](#)

Collective Nouns

Description

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

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

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

Reason This is a Translation Issue

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Examples from the Bible

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"

Referenced in: [Philippians 3:6](#)

Connect — Contrast Relationship

Logical Relationships

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

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

Contrast Relationship

Description

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

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

Examples From OBS and the Bible

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

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

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Referenced in: [Philippians 2:7](#); [Philippians 3:7](#); [Philippians 4:6](#)

Connect — Goal (Purpose) Relationship

Logical Relationships

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

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

Goal (or Purpose) Relationship

Description

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

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

Examples From OBS and the Bible

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(1) and (2)

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

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

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Referenced in: [Philippians 1:26](#); [Philippians 2:11](#); [Philippians 3:8](#)

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: [Philippians 1:3](#); [Philippians 1:5](#); [Philippians 1:10](#); [Philippians 1:13](#); [Philippians 1:26](#); [Philippians 2:9](#); [Philippians 2:10](#); [Philippians 2:16](#); [Philippians 4:7](#); [Philippians 4:9](#)

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: [Philippians 2:1](#); [Philippians 2:12](#); [Philippians 2:16](#); [Philippians 2:17](#); [Philippians 3:5](#); [Philippians 3:6](#); [Philippians 3:10](#); [Philippians 3:15](#); [Philippians 4:1](#)

Double Negatives

A double negative occurs when a clause has two words that each express the meaning of “not.” Double negatives mean very different things in different languages. To translate sentences that have double negatives accurately and clearly, you need to know what a double negative means in the Bible and how to express this idea in your language.

This page answers the question: *What are double negatives?*

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

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

Sentence Structure ([UTA PDF](#))

Description

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

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

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

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Double negatives mean very different things in different languages.

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

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

Examples From the Bible

The Greek of John 15:5 says:

χωρὶς ἐμοῦ οὐ δύνασθε ποιεῖν οὐδέν
Without me **not** you can do **nothing**

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

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

or:

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

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

This means "in order to be fruitful."

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

This means "a prophet is honored."

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

This means "I want you to be knowledgeable."

Translation Strategies

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

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

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

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

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

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

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

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

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

χωρὶς ἐμοῦ οὐ δύνασθε ποιεῖν οὐδέν
Without me **not** you can do **nothing** (John 15:5)

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

or:

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

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

...ἰῶτα ἐν ἡ μία κεραία οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου (Matthew 5:18)

...iota one or one serif **not not** may pass away from the law

...**not even** one iota or one serif may pass away from the law

or:

...**certainly no** iota or serif may pass away from the law

Next we recommend you learn about:

Verbs ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Philippians 1:20](#); [Philippians 4:15](#)

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: [Philippians 1:7](#); [Philippians 1:10](#); [Philippians 1:11](#); [Philippians 1:16](#); [Philippians 1:20](#); [Philippians 1:25](#); [Philippians 1:27](#); [Philippians 2:12](#); [Philippians 2:15](#); [Philippians 4:6](#); [Philippians 4:9](#)

Ellipsis

Description

An ellipsis^[^1] 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: [Philippians 1:18](#); [Philippians 1:24](#); [Philippians 2:1](#); [Philippians 3:9](#); [Philippians 3:13](#); [Philippians 3:15](#); [Philippians 3:18](#); [Philippians 4:3](#); [Philippians 4:8](#); [Philippians 4:10](#); [Philippians 4:11](#); [Philippians 4:12](#); [Philippians 4:16](#)

End of Story

Description

There are different types of information that may be given at the end of a story. Often this is background information. This background information is different from the actions that make up the main part of the story. A book of the Bible is often made up of many smaller stories that are part of the larger story of the book itself. For example, the story of Jesus' birth is a smaller story in the larger story of the book of Luke. Each of these stories, whether large or small, can have background information at the end of it.

This page answers the question: *What kinds of information are given at the end of a story?*

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

Writing Styles ([UTA PDF](#))

Background Information ([UTA PDF](#))

The following are purposes for end of story information:

- to summarize the story
- to give a conclusion about what the story means or what is important about it
- to connect a smaller story to the larger story it is a part of
- to tell the reader what happens to a specific character after the main part of the story ends
- to tell on-going action that continues after the main part of the story ends
- to tell what happens after the story as a result of the events that happened in the story itself

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages have different ways of presenting these kinds of information. If you (the translator) do not use your language's ways of doing this, readers may not know:

- that this information is ending the story
- what the purpose of the information is
- how the information is related to the story

Translation Strategies

- Translate the particular kind of information at the end of a story the way your language expresses that kind of information.
- Translate it so that people will understand how it relates to the story it is part of.
- If possible, translate the end of the story in a way that people will know where that story ends and the next begins.

Examples From the Bible

- To summarize the story

Then the rest of the men should follow, some on planks, and some on other things from the ship. **In this way it happened that all of us were brought safely to the land.** (Acts 27:44 ULT)

- To give a conclusion about what the story means or what is important about it

Many of those who practiced magical arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of everyone. Then they counted the value of them, and found it was 50,000 pieces of silver. **So the word of the Lord was spreading and prevailing with power.** (Acts 19:19-20 ULT)

- To tell the reader what happens to a specific character after the main part of the story ends

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoiced in God my savior." **And Mary stayed with her about three months and then returned to her house.** (Luke 1:46-47, 56 ULT)

- To tell on-going action that continues after the main part of the story ends

All who those who heard it were amazed concerning the things that were spoken to them by the shepherds. **But Mary kept all the things, pondering them in her heart.** (Luke 2:18-19 ULT)

- To tell what happens after the story as a result of the events that happened in the story itself

"Woe to you, experts in the Jewish law, because you have taken away the key of knowledge; you do not enter in yourselves, and you hinder those who are entering." **After he went from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to fiercely oppose him and argued against him about many things, lying in wait to trap him in something from his mouth.** (Luke 11:52-54 ULT)

"

Referenced in: [Philippians 4:8](#)

Euphemism

Description

A euphemism is a mild or polite way of referring to something that is unpleasant, embarrassing, or socially unacceptable, such as death or activities usually done in private.

... they found Saul and his sons **fallen** on Mount Gilboa.
(1 Chronicles 10:8b ULT)

This means that Saul and his sons “were dead.” It is a euphemism because the important thing was not that Saul and his sons had fallen but that they were dead. Sometimes people do not like to speak directly about death because it is unpleasant.

This page answers the question: *What is a euphemism?*

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages use different euphemisms. If the target language does not use the same euphemism as in the source language, readers may not understand what it means and they may think that the writer means only what the words literally say.

Examples From the Bible

... where there was a cave. Saul went inside to **cover his feet**. (1 Samuel 24:3b ULT)

The original hearers would have understood that Saul went into the cave to use it as a toilet, but the writer wanted to avoid offending or distracting them, so **he did not say specifically** what Saul did or what he left in the cave.

But Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I have not **known a man**?” (Luke 1:34 ULT)

In order **to be polite**, Mary uses a euphemism to say that she has never had sexual intercourse with a man.

Translation Strategies

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

- (1) Use a euphemism from your own culture.
- (2) State the information plainly without a euphemism if it would not be offensive.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use a euphemism from your own culture.

... where there was a cave. Saul went inside to **cover his feet**. (1 Samuel 24:3b ULT) — Some languages might use euphemisms like these:

“... where there was a cave. Saul went into the cave to **dig a hole**”

“... where there was a cave. Saul went into the cave to **have some time alone**”

But Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I have not **known a man**?” (Luke 1:34 ULT)

But Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I have not **slept with a man?**"

(2) State the information plainly without a euphemism if it would not be offensive.

They found Saul and his sons **fallen** on Mount Gilboa. (1 Chronicles 10:8b ULT)

"They found Saul and his sons **dead** on Mount Gilboa."

"

Referenced in: [Philippians 1:23](#)

Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'

Description

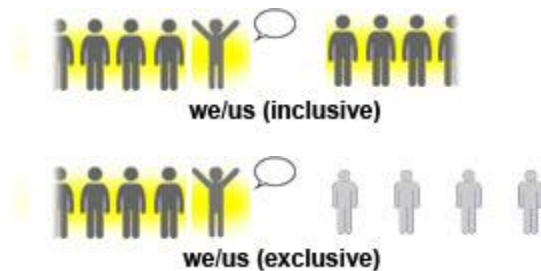
Some languages have more than one form of "we": an inclusive form that means "I and you" and an exclusive form that means "I and someone else but not you." The exclusive form excludes the person being spoken to. The inclusive form includes the person being spoken to and possibly others. This is also 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: [Philippians 1:2](#); [Philippians 3:3](#); [Philippians 3:16](#); [Philippians 3:20](#); [Philippians 4:20](#)

Forms of You

Singular, Dual, and Plural

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

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

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

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

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

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_younum.

Sometimes in the Bible a speaker uses a singular form of “you” even though he is speaking to a crowd. For help with translating these, we suggest you read:

- [Singular Pronouns that Refer to Groups](#)

Formal and Informal

Some languages have more than one form of “you” based on the relationship between the speaker and the person he or she is talking to. People use the **formal** form of “you” when speaking to someone who is older, or has higher authority, or is someone they do not know very well. People use the **informal** form when speaking to someone who is not older, or does not have higher authority, or is a family member or close friend.

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_youform.

For help with translating these, we suggest you read:

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

Masculine and Feminine

Some languages have a **masculine** form and a **feminine** form of the word for “you.” People use the **masculine** form when speaking to a man or boy and the **feminine** form when speaking to a woman or girl.

English does not make any of the above distinctions, so they are absent in the ULT. Please be aware of this and use the appropriate forms of “you” if your language does make any of these distinctions.

”

Referenced in: [Introduction to Philippians](#)

Forms of 'You' — Singular

Description

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

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

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

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

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

Pronouns ([UTA PDF](#))

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

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

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

Examples From the Bible

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

The ruler was speaking about just himself when he said “I.” This shows us that when Jesus said “you” he was referring only to the ruler and he used the singular form. So languages that have singular and plural forms of “you” need the singular form here, as well as for the verbs “sell,” “distribute,” “come,” and “follow.”

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

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

All the ones {who are} with me greet **you**. **Greet** the ones loving us in faith. Grace {be} with all of **you**. (Titus 3:15 ULT)

Paul wrote this letter to one person, Titus, so most of the time the word “you” in this letter is singular and refers only to Titus. In this verse, the first “you” is singular, so the greeting is for Titus, as well as the instruction to greet the others there. The second “you,” however, is plural, so the blessing is for Titus and for all of the believers there in Crete.

“Having gone, **search** carefully for the young child, and after **you** have found him, **report** to me so that I also, having come, might worship him.” (Matthew 2:8 ULT)

Since Herod is speaking to all of the learned men, the word “you” and the commands “search” and “report” are plural.

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

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

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_younum.

Next we recommend you learn about:

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

Referenced in: [Philippians 1:2](#); [Philippians 1:3](#); [Philippians 1:5](#); [Philippians 1:6](#); [Philippians 1:9](#); [Philippians 1:24](#); [Philippians 1:25](#); [Philippians 1:27](#); [Philippians 2:5](#); [Philippians 2:14](#); [Philippians 2:18](#); [Philippians 2:29](#); [Philippians 3:1](#); [Philippians 3:2](#); [Philippians 3:17](#); [Philippians 4:1](#); [Philippians 4:3](#); [Philippians 4:4](#); [Philippians 4:5](#); [Philippians 4:6](#); [Philippians 4:8](#); [Philippians 4:9](#); [Philippians 4:10](#); [Philippians 4:21](#)

Go and Come

Description

This page answers the question: *What do I do if the word "go" or "come" is confusing in a certain sentence?*

Different languages have different ways of determining whether to use the words "go" or "come" and whether to use the words "take" or "bring" when talking about motion. For example, when saying that they are approaching a person who has called them, English speakers say "I'm coming," while Spanish speakers say "I'm going." You will need to study the context in order to understand what is meant by the words "go" and "come" (and also "take" and "bring"), and then translate those words in a way that your readers will understand which direction people are moving in.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Different languages have different ways of talking about motion. The biblical languages or your source language may use the words "go" and "come" or "take" and "bring" differently than your language uses them. If these words are not translated in the way that is natural in your language, your readers may be confused about which direction people are moving.

Examples From the Bible

Yahweh said to Noah, "**Come**, you and all your household, into the ark." (Genesis 7:1 ULT)

In some languages, this would lead people to think that Yahweh was in the ark.

But you will be free from my oath if you **come** to my relatives and they will not give her to you. Then you will be free from my oath. (Genesis 24:41 ULT)

Abraham was speaking to his servant. Abraham's relatives lived far away from where he and his servant were standing and he wanted his servant to **go** to them, not **come** toward Abraham.

When you have **come** to the land that Yahweh your God gives you, and when you take possession of it and begin to live in it ... (Deuteronomy 17:14a ULT)

Moses is speaking to the people in the wilderness. They had not yet gone into the land that God was giving them. In some languages, it would make more sense to say, "When you have **gone** into the land ..."

They **brought** him up to the temple in Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. (Luke 2:22b ULT)

In some languages, it might make more sense to say that they **took** or **carried** Jesus to the temple.

Then see, there was a man whose name was Jairus, and he was a leader of the synagogue. And falling at the feet of Jesus, he begged him to come to his house. (Luke 8:41 ULT)

The man was not at his house when he spoke to Jesus. He wanted Jesus to **go** with him to his house.

What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? (Luke 7:24b ULT)

In some languages, it might make more sense to ask what did you come out to see.

Translation Strategies

If the word used in the ULT would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are other strategies.

- (1) Use the word “go,” “come,” “take,” or “bring” that would be natural in your language.
- (2) Use another word that expresses the right meaning.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use the word “go,” “come,” “take,” or “bring” that would be natural in your language.

But you will be free from my oath if you **come** to my relatives and they will not give her to you.
(Genesis 24:41 ULT)

But you will be free from my oath if you **go** to my relatives and they will not give her to you.

What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? (Luke 7:24b ULT)

What did you come out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

- (2) Use another word that expresses the right meaning.

When you have **come** to the land that Yahweh your God gives you, and when you take possession of it and begin to live in it ... (Deuteronomy 17:14 ULT)

“When you have **arrived** in the land that Yahweh your God gives you, and when you take possession of it and begin to live in it ...”

Yahweh said to Noah, “**Come**, you and all your household, into the ark ...” (Genesis 7:1 ULT)

Yahweh said to Noah, “**Enter**, you and all your household, into the ark ...”

What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind? (Luke 7:24b ULT)

What did you travel out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

”

Referenced in: [Philippians 1:26](#); [Philippians 1:27](#); [Philippians 2:24](#)

Hendiadys

Description

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

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

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

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

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

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

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

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

Examples From the Bible

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

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

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

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

Translation Strategies

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

- (1) Substitute the describing noun with an adjective that means the same thing.
- (2) Substitute the describing noun with a phrase that means the same thing.
- (3) Substitute the describing adjective with an adverb that means the same thing.
- (4) Substitute other parts of speech that mean the same thing and show that one word or phrase describes the

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](#))

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: [Philippians 1:25](#); [Philippians 2:17](#)

How to Translate Names

Description

The Bible contains the names of many people, groups of people, and places. Some of these names may sound strange and be hard to say. Sometimes readers may not know what a name refers to, and sometimes they may need to understand what a name means. This page will help you see how you can translate these names and how you can help people understand what they need to know about them.

This page answers the question: *How can I translate names that are new to my culture?*

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

Translate Unknowns ([UTA PDF](#))

Meaning of names

Most names in the Bible have meaning. Most of the time, names in the Bible are used simply to identify the people and places they refer to, but sometimes the meaning of a name is especially important.

For this **Melchizedek**, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, was the one who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him. (Hebrews 7:1 ULT)

Here the writer uses the name “Melchizedek” primarily to refer to a man who had that name, and the title “king of Salem” tells us that he ruled over a certain city.

His name first indeed means “king of righteousness,” and then also “king of Salem,” that is, “king of peace.” (Hebrews 7:2b ULT)

Here the writer explains the meanings of Melchizedek’s name and title because those things tell us more about the person. Other times, the writer does not explain the meaning of a name because he expects the reader to already know the meaning. If the meaning of the name is important to understand the passage, you can include the meaning in the text or in a footnote.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Readers may not know some of the names in the Bible. They may not know whether a name refers to a person or place or something else.
- Readers may need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand the passage.
- Some names may have different sounds or combinations of sounds that are not used in your language or are unpleasant to say in your language. For strategies to address this problem, see [Borrow Words](#).
- Some people and places in the Bible have two names. Readers may not realize that two names refer to the same person or place.

Examples From the Bible

Then you crossed over the **Jordan** and came to **Jericho**, and the men of Jericho, and the **Amorites** ... fought against you, but I gave them into your hand. (Joshua 24:11 ULT)

Readers might not know that “Jordan” is the name of a river, “Jericho” is the name of a city, and “Amorites” is the name of a group of people.

She said, “Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?” Therefore, the well was called **Beer Lahai Roi**. (Genesis 16:13b-14a ULT)

Readers may not understand the second sentence if they do not know that “Beer Lahai Roi” means “Well of the Living One who sees me.”

And she called his name **Moses** and she said, "For out of the water I drew him." (Exodus 2:10b ULT)

Readers may not understand why she said this if they do not know that the name Moses sounds like the Hebrew words "pull out."

Saul was in agreement with his execution. (Acts 8:1a ULT)

But when the apostles, Barnabas and **Paul**, heard of it, they tore their clothing. (Acts 14:14a ULT)

Readers may not know that the names Saul and Paul refer to the same person.

Translation Strategies

- (1) If readers cannot easily understand from the context what kind of a thing a name refers to, you can add a word to clarify it.
- (2) If readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, copy the name and tell about its meaning either in the text or in a footnote.
- (3) Or if readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, and that name is used only once, translate the meaning of the name instead of copying the name.
- (4) If a person or place has two different names, use one name most of the time and the other name only when the text tells about the person or place having more than one name or when it says something about why the person or place was given that name. Write a footnote when the source text uses the name that is used less frequently.
- (5) Or if a person or place has two different names, then use whatever name is given in the source text, and add a footnote that gives the other name.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If readers cannot easily understand from the context what kind of a thing a name refers to, you can add a word to clarify it.

Then you crossed over the **Jordan** and came to **Jericho**, and the men of Jericho, and the **Amorites** ... fought against you, but I gave them into your hand. (Joshua 24:11 ULT)

You went over the **Jordan River** and came to the **city of Jericho**. The men of Jericho fought against you, along with **the tribe of the Amorites**.

At that hour, certain Pharisees approached, saying to him, "Leave and go away from here, because **Herod** wants to kill you." (Luke 13:31 ULT)

At that hour, certain Pharisees approached, saying to him, "Go and leave here, because **King Herod** wants to kill you."

- (2) If readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, copy the name and tell about its meaning either in the text or in a footnote.

And she called his name **Moses** and she said, "For out of the water I drew him." (Exodus 2:10b ULT)

She called his name **Moses (which sounds like 'drawn out')**, and she said, "For out of the water I drew him."

- (3) Or if readers need to understand the meaning of a name in order to understand what is said about it, and that name is used only once, translate the meaning of the name instead of copying the name.

She said, “Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?” Therefore, the well was called **Beer Lahai Roi**. (Genesis 16:13b-14a ULT)

She said, “Do I really continue to see, even after he has seen me?”
Therefore, the well was called **Well of the Living One who sees me**.

(4) If a person or place has two different names, use one name most of the time and the other name only when the text tells about the person or place having more than one name or when it says something about why the person or place was given that name. Write a footnote when the source text uses the name that is used less frequently. For example, Paul is called “Saul” before Acts 13 and “Paul” after Acts 13. You could translate his name as “Paul” all of the time, except in Acts 13:9 where it talks about him having both names.

... a young man named **Saul**. (Acts 7:58b ULT)

... a young man named **Paul** ¹

The footnote would look like:

^[1] Most versions say “Saul” here, but most of the time in the Bible he is called “Paul.”

Then later in the story, you could translate this way:

But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit; (Acts 13:9)

But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit;

(5) Or if a person or place has two names, use whatever name is given in the source text, and add a footnote that gives the other name. For example, you could write “Saul” where the source text has “Saul” and “Paul” where the source text has “Paul.”

a young man named **Saul** (Acts 7:58 ULT)

a young man named **Saul**

The footnote would look like:

^[1] This is the same man who is called Paul beginning in Acts 13.

Then later in the story, you could translate this way:

But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit; (Acts 13:9)

But **Saul**, who is also called **Paul**, was filled with the Holy Spirit;

Then after the story has explained the name change, you could translate this way.

It came about in Iconium that **Paul** and Barnabas entered together into the synagogue (Acts 14:1 ULT)

It came about in Iconium that **Paul**¹ and Barnabas entered together into the synagogue

The footnote would look like:

^[1] This is the same man who was called Saul before Acts 13.

Next we recommend you learn about:

Copy or Borrow Words ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Introduction to Philippians](#); [Philippians 2:25](#); [Philippians 4:2](#); [Philippians 4:3](#); [Philippians 4:18](#)

Hypothetical Situations

Consider these phrases: “If the sun stopped shining ...” “What if the sun stopped shining ...” “Suppose the sun stopped shining ...” and “If only the sun had not stopped shining.” We use such expressions to set up hypothetical situations, imagining what might have happened or what could happen in the future but probably will not. We also use them to express regret or wishes. Hypothetical expressions occur often in the Bible. You (the translator) need to translate them in a way that people will know that the event did not actually happen and so that they will understand why the event was imagined.

This page answers the question: *What is a hypothetical situation?*

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

Writing Styles ([UTA PDF](#))

Description

Hypothetical situations are situations that are not real. They can be in the past, present, or future. Hypothetical situations in the past and present have not happened, are not happening now, and ones in the future are not expected to happen.

People sometimes tell about conditions and what would happen if those conditions were met, but they know that these things have not happened or probably will not happen. (The conditions comprise a phrase that starts with “if.”)

- If he had lived to be 100 years old, he would have seen his grandson’s grandson. (But he did not.)
- If he lived to be 100 years old, he would still be alive today. (But he is not.)
- If he lives to be 100 years old, he will see his grandson’s grandson. (But he probably will not.)

People sometimes express wishes about things that have not happened or that are not expected to happen.

- I wish he had come.
- I wish he were here.
- I wish he would come.

People sometimes express regrets about things that have not happened or that are not expected to happen.

- If only he had come.
- If only he were here.
- If only he would come.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Translators need to recognize the different kinds of hypothetical situations in the Bible and understand that they are unreal.
- Translators need to know their own language’s ways of talking about different kinds of hypothetical situations.

Examples From the Bible

Hypothetical Situations in the Past

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

Here in Matthew 11:21, Jesus said that **if** the people living in the ancient cities of Tyre and Sidon had been able to see the miracles that he performed, they would have repented long ago. The people of Tyre and Sidon did not actually see his miracles, and they did not repent. He said this to rebuke the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida who had seen his miracles and yet did not repent.

Martha then said to Jesus, “Lord, **if you had been here, my brother would not have died.**” (John 11:21 ULT)

Martha said this to express her wish that Jesus would have come sooner so that her brother would not have died. But Jesus did not come sooner and her brother did die.

Hypothetical Situations in the Present

And no man puts new wine into old wineskins. **But if he did do that, the new wine would burst the wineskins, and it would be spilled out, and the wineskins would be destroyed.** (Luke 5:37 ULT)

Jesus told about what would happen if a person were to put new wine into old wineskins. But no one would do that. He used this imaginary situation as an example to show that there are times when it is unwise to mix new things with old things. He did this so that people could understand why his disciples were not fasting as people traditionally did.

Jesus said to them, “What man would there be among you, who, **if he had just one sheep, and if this sheep fell into a deep hole on the Sabbath, would not grasp hold of it and lift it out?**” (Matthew 12:11 ULT)

Jesus asked the religious leaders what they would do on the Sabbath if one of their sheep fell into a hole. He was not saying that their sheep would fall into a hole. He used this imaginary situation to show them that they were wrong to judge him for healing people on the Sabbath.

Hypothetical Situation in the Future

Unless those days are shortened, no flesh would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days will be shortened. (Matthew 24:22 ULT)

Jesus was talking about a future time when very bad things would happen. He told what would happen if those days of trouble were to last a long time. He did this to show how bad those days will be—so bad that if they lasted a long time, no one would be saved. But then he clarified that God will shorten those days of trouble so that the elect (those he has chosen) will be saved.

Expressing Emotion About a Hypothetical Situation

People sometimes talk about hypothetical situations in order to express regrets and wishes. Regrets are about the past and wishes are about the present and future.

The Israelites said to them, “**If only we had died by Yahweh’s hand in the land of Egypt when we were sitting by the pots of meat and were eating bread to the full.** For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill our whole community with hunger.” (Exodus 16:3 ULT)

Here the Israelites were afraid that they would have to suffer and die of hunger in the wilderness, and so they wished that they had stayed in Egypt and died there with full stomachs. They were complaining, expressing regret that this had not happened.

I know what you have done, and that you are neither cold nor hot. **I wish that you were either cold or hot!** (Revelation 3:15 ULT)

Jesus wished that the people were either hot or cold, but they are neither. He was rebuking them, expressing anger at this.

Translation Strategies

Find out how people speaking your language show:

- that something could have happened, but did not.
- that something could be true now, but is not.
- that something could happen in the future, but will not unless something changes.
- that they wish for something, but it does not happen.
- that they regret that something did not happen.

Use your language's ways of showing these kinds of things.

You may also want to watch the video at https://ufw.io/figs_hypo.

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Referenced in: [Philippians 3:4](#)

Idiom

An idiom is a figure of speech made up of a group of words that, as a whole, has a meaning that is different from what one would understand from the meanings of the individual words. Someone from outside of the culture usually cannot understand an idiom without someone inside the culture explaining its true meaning. Every language uses idioms. Some English examples are:

- You are pulling my leg. (This means, “You are teasing me by telling me something that is not true.”)
- Do not push the envelope. (This means, “Do not take a matter to its extreme.”)
- This house is under water. (This means, “The debt owed for this house is greater than its actual value.”)
- We are painting the town red. (This means, “We are going around town tonight celebrating very intensely.”)

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

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

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

Description

An idiom is a phrase that has a special meaning to the people of the language or culture who use it. Its meaning is different than what a person would understand from the meanings of the individual words that form the phrase.

He **set his face** to go to Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51b ULT)

The words “set his face” is an idiom that means “decided.”

Sometimes people may be able to understand an idiom from another culture, but it might sound like a strange way to express the meaning.

I am not worthy that you would **come under my roof**. (Luke 7:6b ULT)

The phrase “come under my roof” is an idiom that means “enter my house.”

Put these words **into your ears**. (Luke 9:44a ULT)

This idiom means “Listen carefully and remember what I say.”

Purpose: An idiom is probably created in a culture somewhat by accident when someone describes something in an unusual way. But, when that unusual way communicates the message powerfully and people understand it clearly, other people start to use it. After a while, it becomes a normal way of talking in that language.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- People can easily misunderstand idioms in the original languages of the Bible if they do not know the cultures that produced the Bible.
- People can easily misunderstand idioms that are in the source language Bibles if they do not know the cultures that made those translations.
- It is useless to translate idioms literally (according to the meaning of each word) when the target language audience will not understand what they mean.

Examples From the Bible

Then all Israel came to David at Hebron and said, “Look, we are your **flesh and bone**.” (1 Chronicles 11:1 ULT)

This means, “We and you belong to the same race, the same family.”

■ The children of Israel went out **with a high hand**. (Exodus 14:8b ASV)

This means, "The Israelites went out defiantly."

■ the one who **lifts up my head** (Psalm 3:3b ULT)

This means, "the one who helps me."

Translation Strategies

If the idiom would be clearly understood in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other options.

- (1) Translate the meaning plainly without using an idiom.
- (2) Use a different idiom that people use in your own language that has the same meaning.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Translate the meaning plainly without using an idiom.

Then all Israel came to David at Hebron and said, "Look, we are your **flesh and bone**." (1 Chronicles 11:1 ULT)

■ Look, we all **belong to the same nation**.

Then he **set his face** to go to Jerusalem. (Luke 9:51b ULT)

■ He started to travel to Jerusalem, **determined to reach it**.

I am not worthy that you would come **under my roof**. (Luke 7:6b ULT)

■ I am not worthy that you should enter **my house**.

- (2) Use an idiom that people use in your own language that has the same meaning.

Put these words **into your ears**. (Luke 9:44a ULT)

■ **Be all ears** when I say these words to you.

My **eyes grow dim** from grief. (Psalm 6:7a ULT)

■ I am crying my **eyes out**

"

Referenced in: [Philippians 1:7](#); [Philippians 1:8](#); [Philippians 1:30](#); [Philippians 2:2](#); [Philippians 2:8](#); [Philippians 2:10](#); [Philippians 2:27](#); [Philippians 4:12](#); [Philippians 4:16](#); [Philippians 4:19](#)

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: [Philippians 2:10](#); [Philippians 4:12](#)

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](#).

"

Referenced in: [Philippians 1:1](#); [Philippians 1:11](#); [Philippians 1:12](#); [Philippians 1:14](#); [Philippians 1:16](#); [Philippians 1:22](#); [Philippians 1:23](#); [Philippians 1:27](#); [Philippians 1:30](#); [Philippians 2:7](#); [Philippians 2:15](#); [Philippians 2:16](#); [Philippians 2:17](#); [Philippians 2:25](#); [Philippians 3:7](#); [Philippians 3:8](#); [Philippians 3:13](#); [Philippians 3:14](#); [Philippians 4:1](#); [Philippians 4:7](#); [Philippians 4:17](#); [Philippians 4:18](#); [Philippians 4:21](#)

Metonymy

Description

Metonymy is a figure of speech in which an item (either physical or abstract) is called not by its own name, but by the name of something closely associated with it. A metonym is a word or phrase used as a substitute for something that it is associated with.

This page answers the question: *What is a metonymy?*

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

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

... and **the blood** of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin. (1 John 1:7b ULT)

The blood represents Christ's death.

And he took **the cup** in the same way after supper, saying, "**This cup** is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:20 ULT)

The cup represents the wine that is in the cup.

Metonymy can be used

- as a shorter way of referring to something
- to make an abstract idea more meaningful by referring to it with the name of a physical object associated with it

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

The Bible uses metonymy very often. Speakers of some languages are not familiar with metonymy and they may not recognize it when they read it in the Bible. If they do not recognize the metonymy, they will not understand the passage or, worse yet, they will get a wrong understanding of the passage. Whenever a metonym is used, people need to be able to understand what it represents.

Examples From the Bible

The Lord God will give to him **the throne** of his father David. (Luke 1:32b ULT)

A throne represents the authority of a king. "Throne" is a metonym for "kingly authority," "kingship," or "reign." This means that God would make him become a king who would follow King David.

Then immediately his **mouth** was opened (Luke 1:64a ULT)

The mouth here represents the power to speak. This means that he was able to talk again.

Who warned you to flee from **the wrath** that is coming? (Luke 3:7b ULT)

The word "wrath" or "anger" is a metonym for "punishment." God was extremely angry with the people and, as a result, he would punish them.

Translation Strategies

If people would easily understand the metonym, consider using it. Otherwise, here are some options.

(1) Use the metonym along with the name of the thing it represents.

(2) Use only the name of the thing the metonym represents.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Use the metonym along with the name of the thing it represents.

And he took the cup in the same way after the supper, saying, “**This cup** is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.” (Luke 22:20 ULT)

He took the cup in the same way after supper, saying, “**The wine in this cup** is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”

This verse also contains a second metonym: The cup, (representing the wine it contains) also represents the new covenant made with the blood Christ shed for us.

(2) Use the name of the thing the metonym represents.

The Lord God will give him **the throne** of his father David. (Luke 1:32b ULT)

“The Lord God will give him **the kingly authority** of his father, David.” or:
“The Lord God will **make him king** like his ancestor, King David.”

Who warned you to flee from **the wrath** that is coming? (Luke 3:7b ULT)

“Who warned you to flee from God’s coming **punishment?**”

To learn about some common metonymies, see [Biblical Imagery — Common Metonymies](#).

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Referenced in: [Philippians 1:7](#); [Philippians 1:13](#); [Philippians 1:14](#); [Philippians 1:17](#); [Philippians 1:20](#); [Philippians 2:9](#); [Philippians 2:10](#); [Philippians 2:11](#); [Philippians 2:15](#); [Philippians 2:16](#); [Philippians 2:22](#); [Philippians 3:2](#); [Philippians 3:3](#); [Philippians 3:18](#); [Philippians 3:19](#); [Philippians 4:3](#)

Parallelism

Description

Parallelism is a poetic device in which two phrases or clauses that are similar in structure or idea are used together. The following are some of the different kinds of parallelism.

- The second clause or phrase means the same as the first. This is called synonymous parallelism.
- The second clarifies or strengthens the meaning of the first.
- The second completes what is said in the first.
- The second says something that contrasts with the first, but adds to the same idea.

Parallelism is most commonly found in Old Testament poetry, such as in the books of Psalms and Proverbs. It also occurs in Greek in the New Testament, both in the four gospels and in the apostles' letters.

This article will only discuss synonymous parallelism, the kind in which the two parallel phrases mean the same thing, because that is the kind that presents a problem for translation. Note that we use the term "synonymous parallelism" for long phrases or clauses that have the same meaning. We use the term "doublet" for words or very short phrases that mean basically the same thing and are used together.

In the poetry of the original languages, synonymous parallelism has several effects:

- It shows that something is very important by saying it more than once and in more than one way.
- It helps the hearer to think more deeply about the idea by saying it in different ways.
- It makes the language more beautiful and raises it above the ordinary way of speaking.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages would not use synonymous parallelism. They would either think it odd that someone said the same thing twice, or, since it is in the Bible, they would think that the two phrases must have some difference in meaning. For them it would be confusing, rather than beautiful. They would not understand that the repetition of the idea in different words serves to emphasize the idea.

Examples From the Bible

Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light for my path. (Psalm 119:105 ULT)

Both parts of the sentence are metaphors saying that God's word teaches people how to live. That is the single idea. The words "lamp" and "light" are similar in meaning because they refer to light. The words "my feet" and "my path" are related because they refer to a person walking. Walking is a metaphor for living.

You make him to rule over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet (Psalm 8:6 ULT)

Both lines say that God made man the ruler of everything. "To rule over" is the same idea as putting things "under his feet," and "the works of your [God's] hands" is the same idea as "all things."

Yahweh sees everything a person does
and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)

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

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

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

The first phrase and the second phrase mean the same thing. There are three ideas that are the same between these two phrases. "Sees" corresponds to "watches," "everything...does" corresponds to "all the paths...takes," and "a person" corresponds to "he."

Praise Yahweh, all you nations;
exalt him, all you peoples! (Psalm 117:1 ULT)

Both parts of this verse tell people everywhere to praise Yahweh. The words 'Praise' and 'exalt' mean the same thing. The words 'Yahweh' and 'him' refer to the same person. The terms 'all you nations' and 'all you peoples' refer to the same people.

For Yahweh has a lawsuit with his people,
and he will fight in court against Israel. (Micah 6:2b ULT)

The two parts of this verse say that Yahweh has a serious disagreement with his people, Israel. These are not two different disagreements or two different groups of people.

Translation Strategies

For most kinds of parallelism, it is good to translate both of the clauses or phrases. For synonymous parallelism, it is good to translate both clauses if people in your language understand that the purpose of saying something twice is to strengthen a single idea. But if your language does not use parallelism in this way, then consider using one of the following translation strategies.

- (1) Combine the ideas of both clauses into one.
- (2) If it appears that the clauses are used together to show that what they say is really true, you could combine the ideas of both clauses into one and include words that emphasize the truth such as "truly" or "certainly."
- (3) If it appears that the clauses are used together to intensify an idea in them, you could combine the ideas of both clauses into one and use words like "very," "completely," or "all."

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Combine the ideas of both clauses into one.

Until now you have dealt deceitfully with me and you have spoken lies to me. (Judges 16:13, ULT)

Delilah expressed this idea twice to emphasize that she was very upset.

Until now you have deceived me with your lies.
Yahweh sees everything a person does and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)

The phrase "all the paths he takes" is a metaphor for "all he does."

Yahweh pays attention to everything a person does.
For Yahweh has a lawsuit with his people, and he will fight in court against Israel. (Micah 6:2 ULT)

This parallelism describes one serious disagreement that Yahweh had with one group of people. If this is unclear, the phrases can be combined:

For Yahweh has a lawsuit with his people, Israel.

(2) If it appears that the clauses are used together to show that what they say is really true, you could combine the ideas of both clauses into one and include words that emphasize the truth such as “truly” or “certainly.”

Yahweh sees everything a person does and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)

Yahweh truly sees everything a person does.

You make him to rule over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet
(Psalm 8:6 ULT)

You have certainly made him to rule over everything that you have created.

(3) If it appears that the clauses are used together to intensify an idea in them, you could combine the ideas of both clauses into one and use words like “very,” “completely” or “all.”

Until now you have dealt deceitfully with me and you have spoken lies to me. (Judges 16:13, ULT)

All you have done is lie to me.

Yahweh sees everything a person does and watches all the paths he takes. (Proverbs 5:21 ULT)

Yahweh sees absolutely everything that a person does.

Next we recommend you learn about:

Personification ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Philippians 2:16](#)

Poetry

Description

Poetry is one of the ways that people use the words and sounds of their language to make their speech and writing more beautiful and to express strong emotion. Through poetry, people can communicate deeper emotion than they can through simple non-poetic forms. Poetry gives more weight and elegance to statements of truth, such as proverbs, and is also easier to remember than ordinary speech.

This page answers the question: *What is poetry and how do I translate it into my language?*

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

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

Writing Styles ([UTA PDF](#))

In poetry we commonly find:

- many figures of speech such as [Apostrophe](#)
- arrangements of clauses into particular patterns such as:
 - parallel lines (See [Parallelism](#))
 - acrostics (beginning lines with successive letters of the alphabet)
 - chiasms (in which the first line relates to the last line, the second to the next-to-last line, etc.):

You should not give what is holy to the dogs,
and should not throw your pearls in front of the pigs.
Otherwise they will trample them under their feet,
and having turned, they might tear you to pieces. (Matt 7:6 ULT)

- repetition of some or all of a line:

Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts. Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars. (Psalm 148:2-3 ULT)

- lines of similar length:

Listen to my call to you,
Yahweh; think about my groanings.
Listen to the sound of my call, my King and my God,
for it is to you that I pray. (Psalm 5:1-2 ULT)

- the same sound used at the end or at the beginning of two or more lines:

"Twinkle, twinkle little **star**. How I wonder what you **are**." (from an English rhyme)

- the same sound repeated many times:

"Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater" (from an English rhyme)

- The same root word used as both a verb and as a noun:

Your old men will **dream dreams** (Joel 2:28 ULT)

Yahweh,...**light lightning** and scatter them (Psalm 144:5-6 ULT)

We also find:

- old words and expressions
- dramatic imagery
- different use of grammar — including:
 - incomplete sentences
 - lack of connective words

Some places to look for poetry in your language

Songs, particularly old songs or songs used in children's games

Religious ceremony or chants of priests or witch doctors

Prayers, blessings, and curses

Old legends

Elegant or fancy speech

Elegant or fancy speech is similar to poetry in that it uses beautiful language, but it does not use all of the language's features of poetry, and it does not use them as much as poetry does. Popular speakers in the language often use elegant speech, and this is probably the easiest source of text to study to find out what makes speech elegant in your language.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue:

- Different languages use poetry for different things. If a poetic form would not communicate the same meaning in your language, you may need to write it without the poetry.
- Different languages use different poetic devices. A poetic device that conveys elegance or emotion in a biblical language may be confusing or misunderstood in another language.
- In some languages, using poetry for a particular part of the Bible would make it much more powerful.

Examples From the Bible

The Bible uses poetry for songs, teaching, and prophecy. Almost all of the books of the Old Testament have poetry in them and many of the books are completely made up of poetry.

... for you saw my affliction; you knew the distress of my soul. (Psalm 31:7b ULT)

This example of [Parallelism](#) has two lines that mean the same thing.

Yahweh, judge the nations; vindicate me, Yahweh, because I am righteous and innocent, Most High. (Psalm 7:8 ULT)

This example of parallelism shows the contrast between what David wants God to do to him and what he wants God to do to the unrighteous nations. (See [Parallelism](#).)

Keep your servant also from arrogant sins; let them not rule over me. (Psalm 19:13a ULT)

This example of personification speaks of sins as if they could rule over a person. (See [Personification](#).)

Oh, give thanks to Yahweh; for he is good,
for his covenant faithfulness endures forever.

Oh, give thanks to the God of gods,

for his covenant faithfulness endures forever.

Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords,

for his covenant faithfulness endures forever.

(Psalm 136:1-3 ULT)

This example repeats the phrases “give thanks” and “his covenant faithfulness endures forever.”

Translation Strategies

If the style of poetry that is used in the source text would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other ways of translating it.

- (1) Translate the poetry using one of your styles of poetry.
- (2) Translate the poetry using your style of elegant speech.
- (3) Translate the poetry using your style of ordinary speech.

If you use poetry it may be more beautiful.

If you use ordinary speech it may be more clear.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the advice of the wicked, or stand in the pathway with sinners, or sit in the assembly of mockers. But his delight is in the law of Yahweh, and on his law he meditates day and night. (Psalm 1:1-2 ULT)

The following are examples of how people might translate Psalm 1:1-2.

- (1) Translate the poetry using one of your styles of poetry. (The style in this example has words that sound similar at the end of each line.)

“Happy is the person not encouraged **to sin**, Disrespect for God he will not **begin**, To those who laugh at God he is **no kin**. God is his constant **delight**, He does what God says **is right**, He thinks of it all day **and night**.”

- (2) Translate the poetry using your style of elegant speech.

This is the kind of person who is truly blessed: the one who does not follow the advice of wicked people nor stop along the road to speak with sinners nor join the gathering of those who mock God. Rather, he takes great joy in Yahweh’s law, and he meditates on it day and night.

- (3) Translate the poetry using your style of ordinary speech.

The people who do not listen to the advice of bad people are really happy. They do not spend time with people who continually do evil things or join with those who do not respect God. Instead, they love to obey Yahweh’s law, and they think about it all the time.

Next we recommend you learn about:

[Symbolic Language \(UTA PDF\)](#)

Possession

Description

In English, the grammatical form that commonly indicates possession is also used to indicate a variety of relationships between people and objects or people and other people. In English, that grammatical relationship is shown by using the word “**of**,” by using **an apostrophe and the letter “s”**, or by using a **possessive pronoun**. The following examples are different ways to indicate that my grandfather owns a house.

- the house **of** my grandfather
- my grandfather **'s** house
- **his** house

This page answers the question: *What is possession and how can I translate phrases that show it?*

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

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

Sentence Structure ([UTA PDF](#))

Possession is used in Hebrew, Greek, and English for a variety of situations. Here are a few common situations that it is used for.

- Ownership — Someone owns something.
- The clothes of me - my clothes — The clothes that I own
- Social Relationship — Someone has some kind of social relationship with another.
- The mother of John — John's mother - the woman who gave birth to John, or the woman who cared for John
- A teacher of Israel - Israel's teacher — a person who teaches Israel
- Association — A particular thing is associated with a particular person, place, or thing.
- The sickness of David - David's sickness — the sickness that David is experiencing
- the fear of the Lord — the fear that is appropriate for a human being to have when relating to the Lord
- Contents — Something has something in it.
- a bag of clothes — a bag that has clothes in it, or a bag that is full of clothes
- Part and whole: One thing is part of another.
- my head — the head that is part of my body
- the roof of a house — the roof that is part of a house

In some languages there is a special form of possession, termed **inalienable possession**. This form of possession is used for things that cannot be removed from you, as opposed to things you could lose. In the examples above, *my head* and *my mother* are examples of inalienable possession (at least in some languages), while *my clothes* or *my teacher* would be alienably possessed. What may be considered alienable vs. inalienable may differ by language. In languages that mark the difference, the expression of inalienable possession and alienable possession will be different.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- You (the translator) need to understand the relationship between two ideas represented by the two nouns when one is in the grammatical relationship of possessing the other.
- Some languages do not use grammatical possession for all of the situations that your source text Bible might use it for.

Examples From the Bible

Ownership — In the example below, the son owned the money.

▮ The younger son ... wasted his wealth by living recklessly. (Luke 15:13b)

Social Relationship — In the example below, the disciples were people who learned from John.

Then **the disciples of John** came to him. (Matthew 9:14a ULT)

Association — In the example below, the gospel is the message associated with Paul because he preaches it.

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, from the seed of David, according to **my gospel**, (2 Timothy 2:8 ULT)

Material — In the example below, the material used for making the crowns was gold.

On their heads were something like **crowns of gold**. (Revelation 9:7b)

Contents — In the example below, the cup has water in it.

For whoever gives you **a cup of water** to drink ... will not lose his reward. (Mark 9:41 ULT)

Part of a whole — In the example below, the door was a part of the palace.

But Uriah slept at **the door of the king's palace**. (2 Samuel 11:9a ULT)

Part of a group — In the example below, “us” refers to the whole group and “each one” refers to the individual members.

Now to **each one of us** grace has been given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. (Ephesians 4:7 ULT)

Events and Possession

Sometimes one or both of the nouns is an abstract noun that refers to an event or action. In the examples below, the abstract nouns are in **bold** print. These are just some of the relationships that are possible between two nouns when one of them refers to an event.

Subject — Sometimes the word after “of” tells who would do the action named by the first noun. In the example below, **John baptized people**.

The **baptism of John**, was it from heaven or from men? Answer me. (Mark 11:30)

In the example below, **Christ loves us**.

Who will separate us from the **love of Christ**? (Romans 8:35)

Object — Sometimes the word after “of” tells who or what something would happen to. In the example below, **people love money**.

For the **love of money** is a root of all kinds of evil. (1 Timothy 6:10a ULT)

Instrument — Sometimes the word after “of” tells how something would happen. In the example below, God would **punish people by sending enemies to attack them with swords**.

Then be afraid of the sword, because wrath brings **the punishment of the sword**. (Job 19:29a ULT)

Representation — In the example below, John was baptizing people who were repenting of their sins. They were being baptized to show that they were repenting. Their **baptism represented their repentance**.

John came, baptizing in the wilderness and preaching **a baptism of repentance** for the forgiveness of sins. (Mark 1:4 ULT)

Strategies for learning what the relationship is between the two nouns

- (1) Read the surrounding verses to see if they help you to understand the relationship between the two nouns.
- (2) Read the verse in the UST. Sometimes it shows the relationship clearly.
- (3) See what the notes say about it.

Translation Strategies

If possession would be a natural way to show a particular relationship between two nouns, consider using it. If it would be strange or hard to understand, consider these.

- (1) Use an adjective to show that one noun describes the other.
- (2) Use a verb to show how the two are related.
- (3) If one of the nouns refers to an event, translate it as a verb.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) Use an adjective to show that one noun describes the other.

On their heads were something like **crowns of gold**. (Revelation 9:7b)

"On their heads were **gold crowns**"

- (2) Use a verb to show how the two are related.

Whoever gives you **a cup of water** to drink ... will not lose his reward. (Mark 9:41 ULT)

Whoever gives you a **cup that has water in it** to drink ... will not lose his reward.

Wealth is worthless on **the day of wrath**. (Proverbs 11:4a ULT)

Wealth is worthless on **the day when God shows his wrath**.

or:

Wealth is worthless on the **day when God punishes people because of his wrath**.

- (3) If one of the nouns refers to an event, translate it as a verb. (In the example below, there are two possession relationships, "punishment of Yahweh" and "your God.")

Notice that I am not speaking to your children, who have not known or seen **the punishment of Yahweh your God**. (Deuteronomy 11:2a ULT)

Notice that I am not speaking to your children who have not known or seen **how Yahweh, the God whom you worship, punished the people of Egypt**.

You will only observe and see the **punishment of the wicked**. (Psalms 91:8 ULT)

You will only observe and see **how Yahweh punishes the wicked**.

You will receive **the gift of the Holy Spirit**. (Acts 2:38b ULT)

You will receive the **Holy Spirit, whom God will give to you**.

"

Referenced in: [Philippians 1:3](#); [Philippians 2:30](#); [Philippians 4:7](#); [Philippians 4:9](#)

Pronouns

Description

Pronouns are words that people might use instead of using a noun when referring to someone or something. Some examples are "I," "you," "he," "it," "this," "that," "himself," "someone," and others. The personal pronoun is the most common type of pronoun.

This page answers the question: *What are pronouns, and what kinds of pronouns are in some languages?*

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

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

Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns refer to people or things and show whether the speaker is referring to himself, the person he is speaking to, or someone or something else. The following are kinds of information that personal pronouns may provide. Other types of pronouns may give some of this information, as well.

Person

- First Person — The speaker and possibly others (I, me, we, us)
 - [Exclusive and Inclusive "We"](#)
- Second Person — The person or people that the speaker is talking to and possibly others (you)
 - [Forms of You](#)
- Third Person — Someone or something other than the speaker and those he is talking to (he, she, it, they)

Number

- Singular — one (I, you, he, she, it)
- Plural — more than one (we, you, they)
 - [Singular Pronouns that Refer to Groups](#)
- Dual — two (Some languages have pronouns specifically for two people or two things.)

Gender

- Masculine — he
- Feminine — she
- Neuter — it

Relationship to other words in the sentence

- Subject of the verb: I, you, he, she, it, we, they
- Object of the verb or preposition: me, you, him, her, it, us, them
- Possessor with a noun: my, your, his, her, its, our, their
- Possessor without a noun: mine, yours, his, hers, its, ours, theirs

Other Types of pronouns

Reflexive Pronouns refer to another noun or pronoun in the same sentence: myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves, themselves.

- John saw **himself** in the mirror. The word "himself" refers to John.

Interrogative Pronouns are used to make a question that needs more than just a yes or no for an answer: what, which, who, whom, whose.

- **Who** built the house?

Relative Pronouns mark a relative clause. The relative pronouns, who, whom, whose, which and that give more information about a noun in the main part of the sentence. Sometimes, the relative adverbs when and where can also be used as relative pronouns.

- I saw the house **that John built**. The clause “that John built” tells which house I saw.
- I saw the man **who built the house**. The clause “who built the house” tells which man I saw.

Demonstrative Pronouns are used to draw attention to someone or something and to show distance from the speaker or something else. The demonstrative pronouns are: this, these, that, and those.

- Have you seen **this** here?
- Who is **that** over there?

Indefinite pronouns are used when no particular noun is being referred to. The indefinite pronouns are: any, anyone, someone, anything, something, and some. Sometimes a personal pronoun is used in a generic way to do this: you, they, he or it.

- He does not want to talk to **anyone**.
- **Someone** fixed it, but I do not know who.
- **They** say that **you** should not wake a sleeping dog.

In the last example, “they” and “you” just refer to people in general.

”

Referenced in: [Philippians 2:4](#)

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: [Philippians 1:28](#); [Philippians 2:7](#); [Philippians 2:26](#); [Philippians 2:27](#); [Philippians 2:28](#); [Philippians 2:30](#); [Philippians 3:10](#); [Philippians 3:12](#); [Philippians 3:21](#); [Philippians 4:13](#)

Reduplication

Description

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

Writers and speakers in the Bible sometimes repeat the same word or forms of the same word. This is to increase the intensity, completeness, or certainty of the action that the word describes, or to otherwise increase the emotional impact of the word.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

Some languages may not repeat words to increase the intensity, completeness, or certainty of an action, or they may not repeat words to increase the level of emotion that they communicate. In these cases, repeated words may appear to be a mistake or may indicate that the speaker is unable to speak correctly.

Examples From the Bible

To the woman he said, "To multiply I will multiply your pain and your childbearing..." (Genesis 3:16 ULT)

The speaker is repeating forms of the verb "multiply" in order to intensify the idea of multiplying.

To be circumcised he must be circumcised (Genesis 17:13)

The speaker is repeating forms of the verb "circumcise" in order to increase the certainty that this must happen.

Begin, possess, to possess his land (Deuteronomy 2:31 ULT)

Moses repeats the word "possess" to emphasize the completeness of the action of possessing the land.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Psalm 22:1 ULT)

The writer repeats "my God" to increase the level of emotion that he wants to communicate; he is crying out desperately to God.

"Fallen, fallen has Babylon the Great..." (Revelation 14:8 ULT)

The angel repeats the word "fallen" in order to show deep emotion in this lament for the ruined city of Babylon.

Translation Strategies

If repeating words would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, then do the same in your translation. If not, here are some other options:

- (1) If your language would not repeat words to increase the intensity, completeness, or certainty of an action, then use a different word or phrase to add that meaning.
- (2) If your language would not repeat words to increase emotional intensity, then use an emotional word to do that.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) If your language would not repeat words to increase the intensity, completeness, or certainty of an action, then use a different word or phrase to add that meaning.

To the woman he said, "To multiply I will multiply your pain and your childbearing..." (Genesis 3:16 ULT)

To the woman he said, "I will greatly multiply your pain and your childbearing..."

To be circumcised he must be circumcised (Genesis 17:13 ULT)

He certainly must be circumcised
Or
By all means, he must be circumcised

Begin, possess, to possess his land (Deuteronomy 2:31 ULT)

Begin to completely possess his land
Or
Enter his land until you completely possess it

(2) If your language would not repeat words to increase emotional intensity, then use an emotional word to do that.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Psalm 22:1 ULT)

You are my God! Why, then, have you forsaken me?
Or
My God, oh, why have you forsaken me?

"Fallen, fallen has Babylon the Great..." (Revelation 14:8 ULT)

"Alas, Babylon the Great has fallen!

"

Referenced in: [Philippians 2:8](#)

Reflexive Pronouns

Description

All languages have ways of showing that the same person fills two different roles in a sentence. English does this by using reflexive pronouns. These are pronouns that refer to someone or something that has already been mentioned in a sentence. In English the reflexive pronouns are: “myself,” “yourself,” “himself,” “herself,” “itself,” “ourselves,” “yourselves,” and “themselves.” In English, these pronouns can also be used to emphasize the person to whom they refer. Other languages may have other ways to do both of these things.

This page answers the question: *What are reflexive pronouns?*

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

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

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

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

- Languages have different ways of showing that the same person fills two different roles in a sentence. For those languages, translators will need to know how to translate the English reflexive pronouns.
- The reflexive pronouns in English also have other functions.

Uses of Reflexive Pronouns

- To show that the same person or things fills two different roles in a sentence
- To emphasize a person or thing in the sentence
- To show that someone or something did something alone or was alone

Examples From the Bible

To show that the same person or thing fills two different roles in a sentence

If **I** testify about **myself**, my testimony is not true. (John 5:31 ULT)

Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and **many** went up to Jerusalem from the country before the Passover in order to purify **themselves**. (John 11:55 ULT)

To emphasize a person or thing in the sentence

Jesus himself was not baptizing, but his disciples were. (John 4:2 ULT)

So they left the crowd, taking Jesus with them, just as he was, in the boat. There also were other boats with him. Then a violent windstorm arose and the waves were breaking into the boat so that the boat was already full of water. But **Jesus himself** was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. (Mark 4:36-38a ULT)

Then Festus answered that Paul was being held at Caesarea but that **he himself** was about to depart soon. (Acts 25:4 ULT)

To show that someone did something alone, or that something was alone

When Jesus realized that they were about to come and seize him by force to make him king, he withdrew again up the mountain **by himself**. (John 6:15 ULT)

He saw the linen cloths lying there and the cloth that had been on his head. **It** was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a place **by itself**. (John 20:6b-7 ULT)

Translation Strategies

If a reflexive pronoun would have the same function in your language, consider using it. If not, here are some other strategies.

- (1) In some languages people put something on the verb to show that the object of the verb is the same as the subject.
- (2) In some languages people emphasize a certain person or thing by referring to it in a special place in the sentence.
- (3) In some languages people emphasize a certain person or thing by adding something to that word or putting another word with it.
- (4) In some languages people show that someone did something alone by using a word like “alone.”
- (5) In some languages people show that something was alone by using a phrase that tells about where it was.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

- (1) In some languages people modify the verb to show that the object of the verb is the same as the subject.

If I testify about **myself**, my testimony is not true. (John 5:31)

“If I **self-testify**, my testimony is not true.”

Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem from the country before the Passover in order to **purify themselves**. (John 11:55)

“Now the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went up to Jerusalem out from country before the Passover in order to **self-purify**.”

- (2) In some languages people emphasize a certain person or thing by referring to it in a special place in the sentence.

He himself took our sickness and bore our diseases. (Matthew 8:17 ULT)

“**The one who** took our sickness and bore our diseases **was Jesus**.”

Jesus himself was not baptizing, but his disciples were. (John 4:2)

“**It was not Jesus who** was baptizing, but his disciples.”

- (3) In some languages people emphasize a certain person or thing by adding something to that word or putting another word with it.

But Jesus said this to test Philip, for he **himself** knew what he was going to do. (John 6:6)

But Jesus said this to test Philip, for, **as for him, he** knew what he was going to do.

Then Festus answered that Paul was being held at Caesarea but that **he himself** was about to depart soon. (Acts 25:4 ULT)

Then Festus answered that Paul was being held at Caesarea but that, **for his part, he** was about to depart soon.

- (4) In some languages people show that someone did something alone by using a word like “alone.”

When Jesus realized that they were about to come and seize him by force to make him king, he withdrew again up the mountain **by himself**. (John 6:15)

“When Jesus realized that they were about to come and seize him by force to make him king, he withdrew again **alone** up the mountain.”

(5) In some languages people show that something was alone by using a phrase that tells about where it was.

He saw the linen cloths lying there and the cloth that had been on his head. It was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up in a place **by itself**. (John 20:6b-7 ULT)

“He saw the linen cloths lying there and the cloth that had been on his head. It was not lying with the linen cloths but was folded up and lying **in it’s own place**.”

”

Referenced in: [Philippians 2:4](#); [Philippians 2:7](#); [Philippians 2:8](#)

Rhetorical Question

A rhetorical question is a question that a speaker asks when he is more interested in expressing his attitude about something than in getting information about it. Speakers use rhetorical questions to express deep emotion or to encourage hearers to think deeply about something. The Bible contains many rhetorical questions, often to express surprise, to rebuke or scold the hearer, or to teach. Speakers of some languages use rhetorical questions for other purposes as well.

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

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

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

Sentence Types ([UTA PDF](#))

Description

A rhetorical question is a question that strongly expresses the speaker's attitude toward something. Often the speaker is not looking for information at all. Or, if he is asking for information, it is not usually the information that the question appears to ask for. The speaker is more interested in expressing his attitude than in getting information.

But those who stood by said, “**Are you insulting the high priest of God?**”(Acts 23:4 ULT)

The people who asked Paul this question were not asking if he was insulting God's high priest. Rather, they used this question to accuse Paul of insulting the high priest.

The Bible contains many rhetorical questions. These rhetorical questions might be used for the purposes: of expressing attitudes or feelings, rebuking people, teaching something by reminding people of something they know and encouraging them to apply it to something new, or introducing something they want to talk about.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Some languages do not use rhetorical questions; for them a question is always a request for information.
- Some languages use rhetorical questions, but for purposes that are different or more limited than in the Bible.
- Because of these differences between languages, some readers might misunderstand the purpose of a rhetorical question in the Bible.

Examples From the Bible

Do you not still rule the kingdom of Israel? (1 Kings 21:7b ULT)

Jezebel used the question above **to remind** King Ahab of something he already knew: he still ruled the kingdom of Israel. The rhetorical question made her point more strongly than if she had merely stated it, because it forced Ahab to admit the point himself. She did this in order **to rebuke** him for being unwilling to take over a poor man's property. She was implying that, since he was the king of Israel, he had the power to take the man's property.

Will a virgin forget her jewelry, a bride her veils? Yet my people have forgotten me for days without number! (Jeremiah 2:32 ULT)

God used the question above **to remind** his people of something they already knew: a young woman would never forget her jewelry or a bride forget her veils. He then **rebuked** his people for forgetting him who is so much greater than those things.

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: [Philippians 1:18](#)

Simile

Description

A simile is a comparison of two things that are not normally thought to be similar. The simile focuses on a particular trait the two items have in common, and it includes the words “like,” “as,” or “than.”

This page answers the question: *What is a simile?*

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

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

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were troubled and discouraged, **like sheep not having a shepherd**. (Matthew 9:36)

Jesus compared the crowds of people to sheep without a shepherd. Sheep grow frightened when they do not have a good shepherd to lead them in safe places. The crowds were like that because they did not have good religious leaders.

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**, so be as wise **as the serpents** and harmless **as the doves**. (Matthew 10:16 ULT)

Jesus compared his disciples to sheep and their enemies to wolves. Wolves attack sheep; Jesus' enemies would attack his disciples.

For the word of God is living and active and sharper **than any two-edged sword**. (Hebrews 4:12a ULT)

God's word is compared to a two-edged sword. A two-edged sword is a weapon that can easily cut through a person's flesh. God's word is very effective in showing what is in a person's heart and thoughts.

Purposes of Simile

- A simile can teach about something that is unknown by showing how it is similar to something that is known.
- A simile can emphasize a particular trait, sometimes in a way that gets people's attention.
- Similes help form a picture in the mind or help the reader experience what he is reading about more fully.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- People may not know how the two items are similar.
- People may not be familiar with both of the items being compared.

Examples From the Bible

Suffer hardship with me, **as a good soldier** of Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 2:3 ULT)

In this simile, Paul compares suffering with what soldiers endure, and he encourages Timothy to follow their example.

Just as the lightning flashing from a place under the sky shines to another place under the sky, so will the Son of Man be. (Luke 17:24b ULT)

This verse does not tell how the Son of Man will be like the lightning. But in context we can understand from the verses before it that just as lighting flashes suddenly and everyone can see it, the Son of Man will come suddenly and everyone will be able to see him. No one will have to be told about it.

Translation Strategies

If people would understand the correct meaning of a simile, consider using it. If they would not, here are some strategies you can use:

(1) If people do not know how the two items are alike, tell how they are alike. However, do not do this if the meaning was not clear to the original audience. (2) If people are not familiar with the item that something is compared to, use an item from your own culture. Be sure that it is one that could have been used in the cultures of the Bible. If you use this strategy, you may want to put the original item in a footnote. (3) Simply describe the item without comparing it to another.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) If people do not know how the two items are alike, tell how they are alike. However, do not do this if the meaning was not clear to the original audience.

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**. (Matthew 10:16a ULT) — This compares the danger that Jesus' disciples would be in with the danger that sheep are in when they are surrounded by wolves.

See, I send **you out among wicked people** and you will be in danger from them **as sheep are in danger when they are among wolves**.

For the word of God is living and active and sharper **than any two-edged sword**. (Hebrews 4:12a ULT)

For the word of God is living and active and **more powerful than a very sharp two-edged sword**.

(2) If people are not familiar with the item that something is compared to, use an item from your own culture. Be sure that it is one that could have been used in the cultures of the Bible. If you use this strategy, you may want to put the original item in a footnote.

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**, (Matthew 10:16a ULT) — If people do not know what sheep and wolves are, or that wolves kill and eat sheep, you could use some other animal that kills another.

See, I send you out **as chickens in the midst of wild dogs**.

How often did I long to gather your children together, just **as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings**, but you were not willing! (Matthew 23:37b ULT)

How often I wanted to gather your children together, **as a mother closely watches over her infants**, but you refused!

If you have faith **as a grain of mustard** ... (Matthew 17:20)

If you have faith even as small **as a tiny seed**,

(3) Simply describe the item without comparing it to another.

See, I send you out **as sheep in the midst of wolves**. (Matthew 10:16a ULT)

See, I send you out among **people who will want to harm you**.

How often did I long to gather your children together, just **as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings**, but you were not willing! (Matthew 23:37b ULT)

How often I wanted to **protect you**, but you refused!

Next we recommend you learn about:

Metaphor ([UTA PDF](#))

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

Referenced in: [Philippians 2:22](#)

Symbolic Action

Description

A symbolic action is something that someone does in order to express a certain idea. For example, in some cultures people nod their heads up and down to mean “yes” or turn their heads from side to side to mean “no.” Symbolic actions do not mean the same things in all cultures. In the Bible, sometimes people perform symbolic actions and sometimes they only refer to the symbolic action.

This page answers the question: *What is a symbolic action and how do I translate it?*

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

Translate Unknowns ([UTA PDF](#))

Examples of symbolic actions

- In some cultures people shake hands when they meet to show that they are willing to be friendly.
- In some cultures people bow when they meet to show respect to each other.

Reason This Is a Translation Issue

An action may have a meaning in one culture and a different meaning or no meaning at all in another culture. For example, in some cultures raising the eyebrows means “I am surprised” or “What did you say?” In other cultures it means “yes.”

In the Bible, people did things that had certain meanings in their culture. When we read the Bible, we might not understand what someone meant if we interpret the action based on what it means in our own culture today.

You (the translator) need to understand what people in the Bible meant when they used symbolic actions. If an action does not mean the same thing in your own culture, then you need to figure out how to translate what the action meant.

Examples From the Bible

And behold, a man came whose name was Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue. And **falling at the feet of Jesus**, he begged him to come to his house. (Luke 8:41 ULT)

Meaning of symbolic action: He did this to show great respect to Jesus.

Look, I am standing at the door and am knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and will eat with him, and he with me. (Revelation 3:20 ULT)

Meaning of symbolic action: When people wanted someone to welcome them into their home, they stood at the door and knocked on it.

Translation Strategies

If people would correctly understand what a symbolic action meant to the people in the Bible, consider using it. If not, here are some strategies for translating it.

- (1) Tell what the person did and why he did it.
- (2) Do not tell what the person did, but tell what he meant.
- (3) Use an action from your own culture that has the same meaning. Do this only in poetry, parables, and sermons. Do not do this when there actually was a person who did a specific action.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) Tell what the person did and why he did it.

And **falling at the feet of Jesus** (Luke 8:41 ULT)

Jairus fell down at Jesus' feet in order to show that he greatly respected him.

Look, I am **standing at the door and am knocking**. (Revelation 3:20 ULT)

Look, I stand at the door and knock on it, asking you to let me in.

(2) Do not tell what the person did, but tell what he meant.

And **falling at the feet of Jesus** (Luke 8:41 ULT)

Jairus showed Jesus great respect.

Look, I am **standing at the door and am knocking**. (Revelation 3:20 ULT)

Look, I stand at the door and ask you to let me in.

(3) Use an action from your own culture that has the same meaning.

And **falling at the feet of Jesus** (Luke 8:41 ULT) — Since Jairus actually did this, you should not substitute an action from your own culture.

Look, I am **standing at the door and am knocking**. (Revelation 3:20 ULT) — Jesus was not standing at a real door. Rather he was speaking about wanting to have a relationship with people. So in cultures where it is polite to clear one's throat when wanting to be let into a house, you could use that.

Look, I stand at the door and clear my throat.

"

Referenced in: [Philippians 2:17](#)

Synecdoche

Description

Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which a speaker uses a part of something to refer to the whole thing, or uses the whole to refer to a part.

■ **My soul** magnifies the Lord. (Luke 1:46b ULT)

Mary was very happy about what the Lord was doing, so she said “my soul,” which means the inner, emotional part of herself, to refer to her whole self.

■ So **the Pharisees** said to him, “Look, why are they doing that which is not lawful?” (Mark 2:24a ULT)

The Pharisees who were standing there did not all say the same words at the same time. Instead, it is more likely that one man representing the group said those words.

Reasons This Is a Translation Issue

- Some readers may not recognize the synecdoche and thus misunderstand the words as a literal statement.
- Some readers may realize that they are not to understand the words literally, but they may not know what the meaning is.

Example From the Bible

■ Then I looked on all the deeds that **my hands** had accomplished. (Ecclesiastes 2:11a ULT)

“My hands” is a synecdoche for the whole person because clearly the arms and the rest of the body and the mind were also involved in the person’s accomplishments. The hands are chosen to represent the person because they are the parts of the body most directly involved in the work.

Translation Strategies

If the synecdoche would be natural and give the right meaning in your language, consider using it. If not, here is another option:

(1) State specifically what the synecdoche refers to.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

(1) State specifically what the synecdoche refers to.

■ “**My soul** magnifies the Lord.” (Luke 1:46b ULT)

■ “**I** magnify the Lord.”

So **the Pharisees** said to him ... (Mark 2:24a ULT)

■ **A representative of the Pharisees** said to him ...

Then I looked on all the deeds that **my hands** had accomplished. (Ecclesiastes 2:11a ULT)

■ I looked on all the deeds that **I** had accomplished

This page answers the question: *What is a synecdoche, and how can I translate such a thing into my language?*

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

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

Metonymy ([UTA PDF](#))

Biblical Imagery — Common Metonymies ([UTA PDF](#))

Next we recommend you learn about:

Metonymy ([UTA PDF](#))

Biblical Imagery — Common Metonymies ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Philippians 1:22](#); [Philippians 1:24](#); [Philippians 3:19](#); [Philippians 4:23](#)

Textual Variants

Description

Thousands of years ago, people wrote the books of the Bible. Other people then copied them by hand and translated them. They did this work very carefully, and over the years many people made thousands of copies. However, people who looked at them later saw that there were small differences between them. Some copiers accidentally left out some words, or some mistook one word for another that looked like it. Occasionally, they added words or even whole sentences, either by accident or because they wanted to explain something. Modern Bibles are translations of the old copies. Some modern Bibles include some of these sentences that were added. In the ULT, these added sentences are usually written in footnotes.

This page answers the question: *Why does the ULT have missing or added verses, and should I translate them?*

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

Choosing a Source Text ([UTA PDF](#))

Original Manuscripts ([UTA PDF](#))

Bible scholars have read many old copies and compared them with each other. For each place in the Bible where there was a difference, they have figured out which wordings are most likely correct. The translators of the ULT based the ULT on wordings that scholars say are most likely correct. Because people who use the ULT may have access to Bibles that are based on other copies, the ULT translators have sometimes included information about some of the differences between them, either in the ULT footnotes or in the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes.

Translators are encouraged to translate the text in the ULT and to write about added sentences in footnotes, as is done in the ULT. However, if the local church really wants those sentences to be included in the main text, translators may put them in the text and include a footnote about them.

Examples From the Bible

Matthew 18:10-11 ULT has a footnote about verse 11.

¹⁰ See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I say to you that in heaven their angels always look on the face of my Father who is in heaven. ¹¹ ^[1]

^[1] Many authorities, some ancient, insert v. 11: **For the Son of Man came to save that which was lost.**

John 7:53-8:11 is not in the best earliest manuscripts. It has been included in the ULT, but it is marked off with square brackets ([]) at the beginning and end, and there is a footnote after verse 11.

53 [Then everyone went to his own house ... 11 She said, "No one, Lord." Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."] ^[2]

^[2] Some ancient manuscripts include John 7:53-8:11

Translation Strategies

When there is a textual variant, you may choose to follow the ULT or another version that you have access to.

- (1) Translate the verses as they are in the ULT and include the footnote that the ULT provides.
- (2) Translate the verses as another version has them, and change the footnote so that it fits this situation.

Examples of Translation Strategies Applied

The translation strategies are applied to Mark 7:14-16 ULT, which has a footnote about verse 16.

¹⁴ He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man." ¹⁶ [1]

[1] Some ancient manuscripts include verse 16: **If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.**

(1) Translate the verses as they are in the ULT and include the footnote that the ULT provides.

¹⁴ He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man." ¹⁶ [1]

[1] Some ancient manuscripts include verse 16: **If any man has ears to hear, let him hear.**

(2) Translate the verses as another version has them, and change the footnote so that it fits this situation.

¹⁴ He called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand. ¹⁵ There is nothing from outside the man that can defile him when it enters into him. But the things that come out of the man are the things that defile the man. ¹⁶ If any man has ears to hear, let him hear." [1]

[1] Some ancient manuscripts do not include verse 16.

Next we recommend you learn about:

Chapter and Verse Numbers ([UTA PDF](#))

Original Manuscripts ([UTA PDF](#))

Terms to Know ([UTA PDF](#))

The Original and Source Languages ([UTA PDF](#))

Referenced in: [Introduction to Philippians](#)

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: [Philippians 3:2](#); [Philippians 3:8](#); [Philippians 4:22](#)

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: [Philippians 1:12](#); [Philippians 1:14](#); [Philippians 2:7](#); [Philippians 3:1](#); [Philippians 3:13](#); [Philippians 3:17](#); [Philippians 4:1](#); [Philippians 4:5](#); [Philippians 4:8](#); [Philippians 4:21](#)

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.

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Referenced in: [Philippians 2:13](#); [Philippians 3:13](#); [Philippians 3:14](#)



unfoldingWord® Translation Words

Version 86

godly, godliness, ungodly, godless, ungodliness, godlessness

Definition:

The term “godly” is used to describe a person who acts in a way that honors God and shows what God is like. “Godliness” is the character quality of honoring God by doing his will.

- A person who has godly character will show the fruits of the Holy Spirit, such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and self control.
- The quality of godliness shows that a person has the Holy Spirit and is obeying him.

The terms “ungodly” and “godless” describe people who are in rebellion against God. Living in an evil way, without thought of God, is called “ungodliness” or “godlessness.”

- The meanings of these words are very similar. However, “godless” and “godlessness” may describe a more extreme condition in which people or nations do not even acknowledge God or his right to rule them.
- God pronounces judgment and wrath on ungodly people, on everyone who rejects him and his ways.

Translation Suggestions:

- The phrase “the godly” could be translated as “godly people” or “people who obey God.” (See: [nominaladj](#))
- The adjective “godly” could be translated as “obedient to God” or “righteous” or “pleasing to God.”
- The phrase “in a godly manner” could be translated as “in a way that obeys God” or “with actions and words that please God.”
- Ways to translate “godliness” could include “acting in a way that pleases God” or “obeying God” or “living in a righteous manner.”
- Depending on the context, the term “ungodly” could be translated as “displeasing to God” or “immoral” or “disobeying God.”
- The terms “godless” and “godlessness” literally mean that the people are “without God” or “having no thought of God” or “acting in a way that does not acknowledge God.”
- Other ways to translate “ungodliness” or “godlessness” could be “wickedness” or “evil” or “rebellion against God”.

(See also [evil](#), [honor](#), obey, [righteous](#))

Bible References:

- Job 27:10
- Proverbs 11:9
- Acts 3:12
- 1 Timothy 1:9-11
- 1 Timothy 4:7
- 2 Timothy 3:12
- Hebrews 12:14-17
- Hebrews 11:7
- 1 Peter 4:18
- Jude 1:16

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0430, H1100, H2623, H5760, H7563, G05160, G07630, G07640, G07650, G21240, G21500, G21520, G21530, G23160, G23170

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Referenced in: [Philippians 1 Chapter Introduction](#)

righteous, righteousness, unrighteous, unrighteousness, upright, uprightness

Definition:

The term “righteousness” refers to God’s absolute goodness, justice, faithfulness, and love. Having these qualities makes God “righteous.” Because God is righteous, he must condemn sin.

- These terms are also often used to describe a person who obeys God and is morally good. However, because all people have sinned, no one except God is completely righteous.
- Examples of people the Bible who were called “righteous” include Noah, Job, Abraham, Zachariah, and Elisabeth.
- When people trust in Jesus to save them, God cleanses them from their sins and declares them to be righteous because of Jesus’ righteousness.

The term “unrighteous” means to be sinful and morally corrupt. “Unrighteousness” refers to sin or the condition of being sinful.

- These terms especially refer to living in a way that disobeys God’s teachings and commands.
- Unrighteous people are immoral in their thoughts and actions.
- Sometimes “the unrighteous” refers specifically to people who do not believe in Jesus.

The terms “upright” and “uprightness” refer to acting in a way that follows God’s laws.

- The meaning of these words includes the idea of standing up straight and looking directly ahead.
- A person who is “upright” is someone who obeys God’s rules and does not do things that are against his will.
- Terms such as “integrity” and “righteous” have similar meanings and are sometimes used in parallelism constructions, such as “integrity and uprightness.” (See: [parallelism](#))

Translation Suggestions:

- When it describes God, the term “righteous” could be translated as “perfectly good and just” or “always acting rightly.”
- God’s “righteousness” could also be translated as “perfect faithfulness and goodness.”
- When it describes people who are obedient to God, the term “righteous” could also be translated as “morally good” or “just” or “living a God-pleasing life.”
- The phrase “the righteous” could also be translated as “righteous people” or “God-fearing people.”
- Depending on the context, “righteousness” could also be translated with a word or phrase that means “goodness” or “being perfect before God” or “acting in a right way by obeying God” or “doing perfectly good.”
- The term “unrighteous” could simply be translated as “not righteous.”
- Depending on the context, other ways to translate this could include “wicked” or “immoral” or “people who rebel against God” or “sinful.”
- The phrase “the unrighteous” could be translated as “unrighteous people.”
- The term “unrighteousness” could be translated as “sin” or “evil thoughts and actions” or “wickedness.”
- If possible, it is best to translate this in a way that shows its relationship to “righteous, righteousness.”
- Ways to translate “upright” could include “acting rightly” or “one who acts rightly” or “following God’s laws” or “obedient to God” or “behaving in a way that is right.”
- The term “uprightness” could be translated as “moral purity” or “good moral conduct” or “rightness.”
- The phrase “the upright” could be translated as “people who are upright” or “upright people.”

(See also: [evil](#), [faithful](#), [good](#), [holy](#), [integrity](#), [just](#), [law](#), [law](#), [obey](#), [pure](#), [righteous](#), [sin](#), [unlawful](#))

Bible References:

- Deuteronomy 19:16
- Job 1:8
- Psalms 37:30
- Psalms 49:14
- Psalms 107:42
- Ecclesiastes 12:10-11
- Isaiah 48:1-2
- Ezekiel 33:13
- Malachi 2:6
- Matthew 6:1
- Acts 3:13-14
- Romans 1:29-31
- 1 Corinthians 6:9
- Galatians 3:7
- Colossians 3:25
- 2 Thessalonians 2:10
- 2 Timothy 3:16
- 1 Peter 3:18-20
- 1 John 1:9
- 1 John 5:16-17

Examples from the Bible stories:

- **3:2** But Noah found favor with God. He was a **righteous** man, living among wicked people.
- **4:8** God declared that Abram was **righteous** because he believed in God's promise.
- **17:2** David was a humble and **righteous** man who trusted and obeyed God.
- **23:1** Joseph, the man Mary was engaged to, was a **righteous** man.
- **50:10** Then the **righteous** ones will shine like the sun in the kingdom of God their Father.

Word Data:

- Strong's: H0205, H1368, H2555, H3072, H3474, H3476, H3477, H3483, H4334, H4339, H4749, H5228, H5229, H5324, H5765, H5766, H5767, H5977, H6662, H6663, H6664, H6665, H6666, H6968, H8535, H8537, H8549, H8552, G00930, G00940, G04580, G13410, G13420, G13430, G13440, G13450, G13460, G21180, G37160, G37170

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Referenced in: [Philippians 3 Chapter Introduction](#)

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