

Dr. George Payton, Bible Translation, Session 7, Language, Part 2, Speech Acts

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This is Dr. George Payton in his teaching on Bible Translation. This is session 7, Language, Part 2, Speech Acts.

We're continuing our series on language.

What is language all about? How we communicate, how people talk to each other. In this part, we're going to be talking about speech acts, how to analyze the way that people talk, and how to break down conversations. Before we get started with that, I'd just like to read to you a little bit about a little bit from the pirate Bible.

Do you remember a couple of days ago, I talked about how some professors who teach Greek think that Yoda speaks okay? Well, this is pirate speak. And if you can imagine Yoda saying these things, then you kind of get an idea of what Yoda-speak would sound like to the average person who's receiving the translation.

So here we go. Galatians 5, 18 to 21 in pirate Bible, but if you be led by the wind, you ain't be subject to the code. I the scurvy deeds of the scallywag be plain to see adultery, fornicating, uncleanness, literalness, mutiny, voodoo, a vast hatred, arguing, looking for a fight, bombs burst in with rage, scallywags at each other's throats, blasphemous thinking, and mutinous notions.

Arr, envying, and slander, and murdering, and guzzling, and grog, and revelry, etc, etc, etc. Okay, we can't imagine a whole Bible like that. This obviously sounds very strange.

We don't want our translation sounding very strange. And the more strange it sounds, guess what? The less it is acceptable. The less it speaks to the people.

And so, how do we strike that balance? And oftentimes, if we go more towards the literal side, it ends up sounding strange, and it ends up sounding unclear. So, we need to strike that balance. We want to preserve the sacredness of the text, but at the same time, we are in the process of conveying a communication action.

Okay, so let's continue on. We talked about different languages and functions. Here's a little diagram that helps to visualize what we talked about.

So, we have the source language text, and there are rhetorical functions in the source language text in the Bible, and it comes in a particular form. That's the Greek

form or the Hebrew form. So, then we want to transfer, remember that translation is a transfer process of transferring the meaning.

And so, we want to transfer what? We transfer the meaning together with the source text's rhetorical function. It stays the same, but we do it using the forms in the target language so that we have a target text that communicates well. And the way that you communicate, whether it's imperatives, polite requests, rebukes, or instructions, they all use or might use different forms from the original language to communicate well with the same intended effect.

So, we always have to keep that in mind. What are the forms? What's it going to look like in the target language in order to communicate the same thing from the source text? We talked about authorial intention and readers, and so the way that Brown puts it, I really like the way she says that the author, the text, and today's reader are in this relationship, and in that relationship, communication happens and communication takes place. And so we're trying to facilitate really good communication.

The text stands in the middle between the author and the reader, whether it was in ancient times or whether it's today. So communication always has a purpose. We never randomly communicate.

We never randomly say, like my son, he came up and said, well, he had a reason for that. So, every communication act has a purpose, and usually, it's to influence people in some way. And so as we said, our goal is to figure out what the author intended, to seek to understand, and if we don't realize that there's an intended message for us, sometimes we might miss that message.

If we don't see the signals in the source text, then we might miss the intended thing that the author wanted us to get out of it. So, continuing on, just imagine. I want you to think about this. How might we interpret the Bible differently if we viewed it as an email from God via the author to the people? How would we view the Bible differently if we viewed it as God's email to us sent by his prophet or his author who wrote the Bible, which adds a spin on it that we don't normally think about? And that's why we ask, what was Paul talking about? What was he saying, and why did he say it to those people? What was his point? Why was he saying those things? And we are always, in the back of our minds, thinking, why was this a part of Scripture? Why was, for example, Philemon a part of Scripture? Very small book, about 20-something verses, and that's the whole book, so you think, why were those included? There's a reason and a purpose for why they were included because they had value in communicating God's message to people.

And we always ask ourselves, what are we to learn from this text? And pastors do this every week. They speak to us, and then they draw out application points of what

we're supposed to do with the message that they give us, and that message is from the Scriptures. Okay, so we're going to look at how to break down conversations, how to break down interaction between people that we find in the Scriptures, and then what to do with it.

And so, we're going to talk generally what we look at, and then we'll apply it to Scripture passages. So first of all, what was said? What was the utterance? What were the words that were spoken? And what kind of utterance was it? Was it a statement? Was it a question? Was it a command? Was it a request? Was it something else? And then we think, what is the underlying sense behind this thing, this utterance, this statement or question? And why did the speaker say it to the receiver or to the receivers, and what did the person want them to do? And how did the receiver or receivers respond? And so we're going to look at this. This is a framework that helps us to break down Scripture, and this framework can be used to break down any interaction between people.

Okay, it's based on some assumptions. One assumption is that there's shared knowledge between the speaker and the listener, between the reader and the writer. We assume that they speak the same language.

So, we assume that when Paul was speaking in Greek, that his people spoke Greek. We're assuming that when David communicated in Hebrew, or when the Old Testament writers communicated in Hebrew, that the people receiving that spoke Hebrew. Another thing is that they share the same cultural background.

They share the same history, and that shared knowledge is kind of in the background when they're communicating. They know the same language, and they know how to communicate specific things with the language. All these things might seem to be obvious, but we need to air them out so that we have this common ground and common framework from which to build.

They know the cultural norms in the language. They know what is appropriate in one context and what is not appropriate in another context. In one of the other talks, I was talking about register, and how I went to the library at the college where I was, and the guy behind the desk said to me, hey dude, and the other workers at the desk said, sorry, that's inappropriate.

You don't say hey dude to your professor. Well, they were talking about cultural norms. If you're speaking to a person who's of a certain level that's above you, then you speak to them with an appropriate form of greeting.

So, there you go. The speaker assumes that the hearer shares the same knowledge that he or she has. So, if I say to you the yellow buses are going around the neighborhood again.

If it's summertime, what month is it? It's September, August. If it's wintertime, what month is it? Probably January, after the Christmas holiday. And what are the yellow buses? And how did you know what month it is? School buses pick up children and take them to school.

I didn't need to say anything. All I said to you was yellow buses. And you all knew exactly what I was talking about.

That's what I mean when I say shared knowledge between me and you. Shared knowledge between the speaker and the listener. And we do this all the time.

Everything that we say is built upon some kind of shared something with the people that you're talking to. Unless you meet somebody new, but even then you still might have shared information. If you're both Americans, then you have a certain amount of shared knowledge.

If you're of the same age group, then you have even higher level of shared knowledge. Okay, so as we said, they assume that the receiver has this shared knowledge. And the speakers use language that they think is going to have a high probability of succeeding in that particular situation.

And they're speaking to that situation and something to do with that situation. So, for example, I don't walk up to a stranger and say something random that has nothing to do with the situation that we're in. We always speak to that situation and to that context.

The listener must infer or guess what the speaker is saying, why the speaker is saying it, and what the person's speaking means in that particular contextual situation. Okay, so what is said? Man says to his wife, Honey, we're out of milk. So, we break that down.

And that is a statement. It's a straight-up statement of fact. Okay, he's giving his wife a statement of fact.

Right? But what is it really? Really, it's a polite request. He wants her to buy milk. Does he say milk? No.

Does he think it's going to work if he says that? Yes. Honey, we're out of milk. And the wife says, hmm, so we need to then figure out what does the wife do with this statement of fact? I'll stop by the store after work.

So, what did the wife respond? What's she going to do? She's going to stop by the store and she's going to buy milk. Do you see how cryptic that is? But it connects

because between husband and wife, they know those social cues, and they know those verbal cues, and they know what it means when he says we're out of milk. And he knows what she means by saying, I'll stop by the store.

She never said milk, and he never said store. Right? That is a breaking down of a speech conversation, a speech act. So, the thing is that people in the Bible talk like this all the time.

And our goal is to figure out what's going on. Why did they say that, and what do they mean by that? Okay. So, this actually happened to me some years ago.

We were living in California. My wife and I were there in Southern California, and my wife took our daughter to a museum. And they spent the afternoon at the museum.

My wife calls me at four in the afternoon. How did it go, dear? Oh, it was fine. We had great fun.

And we'll be coming home after a bit. And she said I'm ready for tea. I said, okay, great.

All right. Well, we'll see when you get home. So, she said, I'm ready for tea.

So, I'm thinking, okay, when my wife says I'll be home in a little bit, that can mean anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour and a half. So, she says a little bit. Sometimes, she comes home an hour and a half later.

Well, we had to stop by Costco and pick up some stuff. Then our daughter needed some things at Walmart, and so, we came home.

So, a little bit can have a broad range of meanings. Okay. And she did mention tea.

And I thought, okay, well, they probably have a little cafe there at the restaurant. She's going to have that at the restaurant. And so she probably is not going to be home for probably a good 45 minutes.

20 minutes later, she shows up and she says, where's the tea? And I said, sorry, what tea? And I'm like, but I said, I'm ready for tea. I said, yes, you gave me a statement of fact. You did not give me a request.

She goes, yeah, I did. I said I was ready for tea. How was I supposed to infer? That's what she meant.

And this happens all the time. I don't know about you, but husbands and wives in my area of the world, my neck of the woods, that happens more times than I would like. But it's just natural.

It's just one of those human things. And that's why we said that the person who hears it has to try to make sense of it. What does it mean in this context? Why is this person saying this to me? I completely missed it.

She wasn't upset. We laughed. It was fun.

But I had no idea that it was a polite request. And I had no idea that she was saying, I want you to make tea for me and have it ready roughly about the time that I come home. I had no idea.

So, if we think about the response to her communication, there wasn't a response. So that means, did her communication succeed in that regard? No. And the breakdown? Where was the breakdown? The breakdown was that I did not pick up the cues and the subtle cues that she was actually asking me to do something.

I just completely missed it. And I can't say it's one person's fault or the other, but this happens all the time in communication. And this happens in communication, in the scriptures, where we just shake our heads and go, what in the world is going on here? Okay.

All this is to say we talk in cryptic ways. And the speaker says some things that are explicit. They come out, and they say certain things, certain pieces of information.

But then also, the speaker intentionally leaves out some things and they expect the listener to infer or to figure out based on the context and based on what was explicitly said and based on some other factors. Yeah. So this whole thing of being cryptic, a lot of it is based on what's not said.

So we can deal with the explicit stuff, but even the explicit, as I said, a statement is a statement, but it's not giving information. That's why we talked about those different functions of communication. What's going on here? So John says to Jane they had a nice meal together afterward.

He says to Jane, would you like a piece of cake? And Jane says I'm on a diet. That is Jane's answer. And that's an explicit piece of factual information that she gives John.

What does that have to do with what he said? Did she say yes? Or did she say no? It could go either way, right? Okay. So, if it's no, it's an implicit no. I'm on a diet; therefore, I'm watching my sugar and starches and sweet intake, so I don't want any cake.

Thank you very much. Or it could be that I'm on a diet, I'm so sick of eating salad all the time, and I would love a piece of chocolate cake. So, if you ask me again, I'll probably say yes.

But as it is, I'm on a diet that is not clear enough. And so John would say, so, and she says, well, okay. All right, whatever.

Would you like coffee with that? All right. So that's why we have to look at these speech acts. All right.

So, here's another situation where I'm at my friend's house, we're hanging out in the evening, and then I'm getting ready to go home. And I remember, dang, I'm on empty. What am I going to do? So, I said to my friend, hey, I'm low on gas.

What do I not tell him? What's the implied information or information that I have not made explicit? I don't think I have enough gas to get me home. My friend, being the perceptive guy that he is, says, well, there's a station down the street. That's what he says.

Did he pick up on what I needed? Yeah. And then I go, well, um, I'm low on cash too. And he says, all I have is five bucks.

And you say, okay, thanks. That'll do. Cryptic language.

We use it every day. We use it constantly all the time. So, we have to keep in mind when we analyze that.

And remember, we said this about breaking down those medical sentences for children. What is the scenario? What is the situation that they're in? Where are they at? What's going on? And what could be the connection between what's happening and what's being spoken by both parties? So, what is that scenario? And again, the hearer has to guess what could possibly make the most sense in this particular situation. So, when I said, I'm low on gas, the guy doesn't say, it's 945.

That would be a weird thing to throw in there. It doesn't make any sense in that context. He's trying to answer related to what I said.

And so, they're staying in the situation. What is going on? Okay. Here's another one.

The door is open. If one person says that to another one, they're communicating some information. The question is, what is that situation? Now, can you think of a situation or a scenario where this kind of statement might be used? And what is the speaker telling the other person? You can think of probably several.

Here's one. So, someone knocks at my door, and I want to invite them in. And I say to them, the door's open.

And they come in. Great. All right.

Here's another one. The door's standing open, and we're at my son's house, and we're watching our grandson. And my wife says to me, the door's open.

She probably means the baby shouldn't go outside. Please shut the door. Okay.

What about if I'm talking to a friend and he's saying, you know, if you need a job, you might be able to get one from my company. Come down and talk to me. And I go, well, I don't know.

And we talked back and forth. And then he says, well, the door's open. And I say, okay, thanks.

I'll let you know. So there's another usage of the door is open. So it's contextually determined, and it's situationally determined, and it's fixed with the people that are involved.

So, here's another one. The man is working at his home office. Again, it's a husband and wife thing.

Okay, fine. Honey, the doorbell rang. He's right in the middle of writing this report.

Probably he doesn't want to get up, and he wants to know, can she come from where she is and open the door? And she says from the upstairs, I'm in the shower. What is she saying? I can't get down there right now. You'll have to answer the door yourself.

You see how cryptic language is, but it's all over the place. Let's look at some in the Bible. There are some examples, and these are real verses in the Bible.

Okay, so at the wedding at Cana in the New Testament, Jesus and some of his disciples were invited to go to this wedding and Jesus' mother is there. And so, they're at this wedding feast. We don't know how long the feast has been going on, but in those days the feast could last a week.

And so, in John chapter 2, Jesus' mother speaks to him and she says, they have no wine. And Jesus responds with, my time has not yet come. Sorry.

So, let's look at what Mary said. All right, so what did Mary say? They have no wine. That is a statement of fact.

How many times have we been misled by a statement of fact? Okay. What does she want Jesus to do? She didn't say, can you and your buddies take a collection and run down to BevMo and pick up a couple of jugs of wine so that we can push it to the end of the feast. She wasn't asking him to go and get more alcohol.

But there's something going on between Mary and Jesus that no one else knows what's going on in that, as far as we can tell, in that room, there's no one else that's going on, knows what's going on. Based upon what he responded with, and he says, my time has not yet come. My time for what? The time for my public ministry, when I do miracles, is one possibility.

Was she asking him to perform a miracle? Some say yes, some say no, but there's strong evidence in favor of that interpretation based on what Jesus said and based upon what happened afterward. And how did Mary take his refusal? You there, whatever he says for you to do, do it. And they go, yes, ma'am.

Mom, but he's a good son. He doesn't embarrass mom. He goes, and he does what? He performs a miracle.

There's a strong possibility that she was asking him to perform a miracle. And here's where the shared context and shared information is between Mary and Jesus. If indeed she was asking that, how did she know he could do that? I'll leave that for you to figure out.

But we want to say that Mary's statement wasn't a statement. It was a polite request. And what did she want from him? She eventually got what she wanted.

She wanted more wine at the wedding, and she wanted Jesus to do something for that. Initially he responded by saying no, but later he said yes. And again, what did they both know? When we get to heaven, we'll ask Jesus, say, Jesus, I want to ask you a question about that wedding thing.

How did your mom know that you were able to do that? All right, I'll leave that to you. But here's what we're trying to do: would I change anything in the translation, and would I adjust anything here? No, I wouldn't. Let the text speak for itself.

But sometimes, certain things that we see do need to be changed in order to fit a target culture. But if it were any other language that I was working in, I would not change anything in this conversation. So, I'm not saying we always need to change something, but we at least need to understand what's going on so that we have a good interpretation.

Okay, so we talked about explicit information, and we talked about implied or implicit information. Here you go. So, Pilate is interviewing Jesus, interrogating him.

Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus, and said to him, are you the king of the Jews? Is that a real question, or is he asking for information there? Seems like it, doesn't it? Yeah, so it's not a rebuke. It's not something else. And then Jesus answers him with this: do you say this out of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me? Did others tell you I'm the king of the Jews, or are you saying that yourself? And Pilate asks, am I a Jew? Strange interaction here between Pilate and Jesus. So, did Jesus say he was the king of the Jews? He hasn't said yet, and Pilate answers, am I a Jew? The obvious answer is a rhetorical question, meaning no, I'm not a Jew, which means probably people told me.

I'm not a Jew. How would I have known that unless the Jewish people told me? Okay, do you see the interplay here? It's fascinating. Then he goes on to say, your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me; what have you done? And Jesus answers, my kingdom is not of this world. Holy moly, what's going on? Jesus never answers a question in a way that we can understand why he said it, what he said.

Okay, so we look at that, and we say, there's more going on here that would need more investigation, but apparently Jesus was avoiding telling Pilate about his identity, but he wanted to communicate to Pilate, you really don't have any power over me, but he's doing it in a very roundabout way. Okay, so if we look at these speech acts, there's miscommunication or missed communication, things get by the other person, and we talked about how language is cryptic. Generally speaking, I don't want to get too caught up in this, but generally speaking, there are two kinds of cultures, or there are two ways that cultures communicate, and it's more or less a continuum rather than a dichotomy.

There is low-context communication, and there's high-context communication. In low-context communication, remember what I said about the shared knowledge between the speaker and the hearer? In low-context communication, the speaker assumes that there's only a little shared information between the speaker and the hearer, so they have to supply a lot of information. So low-context, a lot of words, a lot of explaining.

High-context communication, so as I've said, is low-context, a lack of shared knowledge. What about high-context communication? It's assumed that there's a lot of shared knowledge, and so what do they do? They say just a little, like Jesus and Pilate, like Jesus and his mother. They didn't need to say very much because they knew what was going on, and so if there's a high context that's shared between the people, there are few words that are spoken.

In the West, and I can't speak of every Western country, but here in America, we tend to have a low-context communication culture. We explain everything, or we explain things in more detail. In Kenya, they're a high-context culture, where I worked in Kenya and Tanzania, and one time, we were finishing up our term in Tanzania, we were selling all of our possessions, and we were going back to America, and we were renting a house from a local man, and we told him, yeah, we'll be selling some of our stuff.

So, he came in, and it was like Monday or Tuesday, and he said, and I said, so we're selling stuff. He goes, I'm going on a trip. I'll be back this weekend.

We'll talk. Guess what? High-context communication. I had no clue what he meant.

I said Okay. So, he leaves. Comes back on Saturday, and we had been selling things all week, you know.

Great. We see that some people bought our furniture, some people bought our refrigerator, some people bought the dishes, some people bought this and that, and he walks in, and he goes, where's all your stuff? Didn't I tell you we would talk? And I said, oh my goodness, I am so, so sorry. He walked around, and he goes, okay, I'll take everything.

I'll sit in your house, and he had the means to do it. He had a couple of different business and lucrative businesses as well. I missed it.

Later, I recounted this story to some Tanzanian friends, and I said he came, and he told me we'll talk. I said, what do you think that he meant? And they said, we think that he meant, I really am interested in your stuff. I really don't want you to sell anything till we get here.

Please wait until you get back. How in the world did they know that that let's talk? But they did, and I missed it. We're from a different culture than the Bible, and we miss stuff that's in the Bible because we don't come from that same kind of context.

And guess what? The cultures where we translate the Bible, many of them are high-context cultures. How do you communicate with a high-context culture? It's a challenge. So, the problem, one of the problems is that what we hear on the surface, or read on the surface, doesn't match what's really meant.

So, one thing is said, but what's meant is hidden, and we don't get it, and we miss the cues. Because sometimes we take it literally. Sometimes it's a generational difference.

Sometimes, it's a cultural difference. Sometimes it's a gender difference, just the way that people talk. So, because of these things, what's said in the open, the explicit, is in some ways misleading, and the biggest problem is what is not said.

Okay, so from interpretation to translation, what do we do? So we try to interpret the source text, and so we try to understand what's going on in the communication, what is said, how did the person respond to what was said, is there anything that we can discern about this conversation, any hidden meanings that we can decipher, and what are the features of this act? So, what was said? Was it a question that was said, or was it a statement that was said? And then, what are the natural ways of saying those things? Whatever it was, we tried to figure out what that was, and then we tried to express that in the target language. When you're going from Greek to English, we have so many resources. That's really a blessing to us that we have the benefit of so many resources at our disposal.

We have so many different Bible versions we can look at. When you're translating it into another language that's from a different part of the world, a completely different structure of language, it's a completely different social, historical, cultural context, it takes more work. You can do it.

We can do it because we've been doing Bible translation since before Jesus, when they did the Septuagint, up to now. People have been doing translation this whole time, so it's a doable thing.

We just have to put in a lot more forethought and be aware because sometimes you don't know. Oh no, Houston, we do have a problem here. Okay, so I read this one article, and it talked about ways that you influence people through, maybe you're writing a description or an ad in a piece of writing, so like an advertisement.

German people, if they want to influence you, they have special words that they use, like very or really or astonishing. So, they have these adjectives that they use, and those special words cue the emphasis to the reader. In English, what did I do when I just said it? I used intonation, didn't I? And how do we write intonation? Underlining, italics, bolding, all caps, and too many all caps, and then you say, stop shouting at me.

Yeah? Okay. We use intonation. Hungarian, it's the order of the words.

It's the order of the clauses, so if you want to communicate a certain sense to the Hungarian people, you take into account what they typically do, and then you go, you therefore, and do likewise, and you do that when you translate. So, translating into German, looking for those words, translating into English, you have intonations, and somehow indicate that graphically in the text. Hungarian, you'll change the words around.

So, we're thinking, remember what I said, translation is a bi-directional activity where you are looking back at the source text, forward to the target text, back and forth, and we keep that motion back and forth continuous until we finish the particular translation that we're working on. Okay. So here are some examples of indirect speech, such as speech axioms that you might hear commonly in English.

Can you pass the salt, or can you please pass the salt? And my dad always used to say, yeah, I can. Dad, come on. Dad jokes, you know, you just kind of grown a little bit.

But that's what we say; you ask a question, and that's a what? Polite request. Okay. In Kenya, they have the word, give me, it's nípe.

Nípe chumvi, give me the salt. Sometimes, they'll add a polite word like please, they'll say, please give me the salt. Hebu nípe chumvi.

In Tanzania, they say, naomba chumvi. That means, I request salt. So sometimes Kenyans will go down to Tanzania, and they're sitting around the table with some Tanzanians, and the Kenyan is used to saying, what? Nípe chumvi.

And to a Tanzanian, that is so rude. And so they say, okay, there it is, go ahead. What's all the way across the table? Well, you said, give me.

That's rude. That's a command. Naomba means, I request.

So, you really actually have not said the verb to give, or pass, or something. Naomba chumvi means, please pass me the salt. So, you see how the same expression in different languages looks different ways, and even in the same language in different parts of the world, different countries.

Okay, here's a passage from Mark 14. So, Jesus is sending his two disciples in to look for a place to have the Passover meal. And they go in, and he says, follow this guy carrying the water pot, wherever he goes, follow where he goes, go into the house, and the owner of the house is there.

Tell the owner of the house this, quote, the teacher says, where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples? It almost, in my ears, sounds like an accusation. If it was in Swahili, especially for the Tanzanian speakers, we would say, naomba, the room where my teacher can put in, can have the meal. You see how that, the content is the same, everything is the same.

We're sure that the disciples, well, we're not sure, but there's a high probability that they were not rude. They were not trying to be demanding. Although in English, it

sounds pretty demanding, okay? Does it change it to say, naomba, or teacher, ombas, where is the room? Or the teacher, ombas, can we please have a room? Again, we have to imagine the situation, we don't want to read too much into the text, but what is the tone, what is the register, all those things that we've talked about before, and what is the most polite way that people would typically say that if they were, in fact, trying to be polite? Now, when Jesus is talking to Peter, and Jesus is talking about going to the cross, and Peter rebukes him. Peter rebukes him.

It's a straight-up rebuke, and we can't soften that, and Jesus says to him, get behind me, Satan. Okay, that's a really harsh thing. We don't see harshness here.

Here's another one. John, excuse me, Mark 14:41. They're in the Garden of Gethsemane. He goes away to pray, he comes back, and he says, are you guys sleeping? Can't you stay awake for an hour? He's not being harsh, but that rhetorical question, or those two rhetorical questions together, it's kind of a rebuke.

He goes away, he comes back, and we're not told what happens or what is said, but they just cannot stay awake. He goes away, comes back a third time, and then he says this. Go ahead and sleep, it is enough, the hour has come.

Now, look in your Bibles for Mark 14:41. How many of your Bibles have a rhetorical question there? Are you guys still sleeping? The Greek is not a rhetorical question. The Greek is a command form, actually, if you look at the form of the words.

What is he saying? Fine, go ahead and do that then. We call that a rhetorical statement. Okay, so how do we use that in our language? You have a friend who's about to go and do something stupid, and you tell him, please, dude, I am begging you, please don't do this.

And he goes, I think I'm just going to go through with it. And you go, please don't do that. And then he says, nope, my mind's made up.

And what do you say? Fine, go ahead and do that then. Rhetorical statement. This is a rhetorical statement here that most English versions turn into a rhetorical question.

Why? Because they want you to understand that Jesus is rebuking them, and this is more clear if it's said in a question form. Now, I was in Tanzania listening to a pastor speak on this very passage. He said that Jesus had compassion for them.

And the Swahili Bible says, Jesus said, go ahead and sleep then, take a rest. And Jesus was really concerned about them because they've been trying to pray and they're not able to stay awake. So, he was saying, it's okay, take a rest.

And so, Jesus is saying to you, do you need rest? Are you worn out? And he had this application. The problem is, in the very next statement, he says, get up and go; the guys are here. How much time can you sleep in a second and a half? Not very much.

So, we know that it wasn't really a statement telling them to rest. And this is what I said: if we take these things literally, it can mislead us. If it's a question, it may not be a question.

If it's a statement, it may not be a statement. And here we have it right there in scripture. So, are those translations, and some of them literal translations, are they wrong by putting in a question there, if the Greek was a statement? No, because the intent was clear that he was rebuking them.

Are you guys really still asleep? The time has come. These guys are coming to get us. So, in the reading of the whole context, a rhetorical question does fit there.

Do you know which translation doesn't use a rhetorical question? Do you know which translation actually retains the rhetorical statement? The New Living Translation. Supposedly a "free translation," and the literal ones change it to a question. Interesting.

Okay? Literal is not always the best, but sometimes literal communicates really well. So, we have to keep that balance. All right.

So, different functions, different languages, different usages, and exhortations. If you're trying to give advice to someone, what does that sound like? So, in the Orma culture where we lived, when a couple is getting married, the dad sits the young man down and gives him advice. And he might say something like this.

This is what he's giving the advice. A good husband should take care of his wife. This is English.

This is what it sounds like in Orma. Sorry, a good husband should provide for his family, and a good husband should be an example to his kids. This is what it sounds like in Orma.

As a good husband, you will do this. And it's said basically in the future tense. It's not a harsh tone or whatever.

You will provide for your family. You will be a good example to your kids. I talked to a friend who spoke modern Hebrew.

He and his family had lived in Israel for many years, and they were fluent in modern Hebrew. And somehow, we got on this topic of how do you give advice to people. And he said, well, in Hebrew, he said it to himself, something like this context here.

He goes, well, we do the same thing in Hebrew. We use future tense. You will do this.

You will do that. What do we use in English? What is the word that's consistently there? Should. And that's what we call mood.

This is the subjunctive mood, the softening mood. It's not a command. It's an imperative mood.

It's not an indicative, which is a statement. It's a subjunctive mood. Should.

There's a subjunctive in Swahili, and I would use a subjunctive here. And so, you're not thinking what word was said. You're thinking what is the way it was said, and if it's a subjunctive, then you use a subjunctive in that language.

Remember what we use? The form of the target language conveys the meaning of the source language. This isn't homework, but how would this sound in Orma? How might this sound if it was being communicated as a polite request or a polite advice or instruction to someone? I'm not saying we should change the text but just think about that. Would they use this, you will, you will, you will? Maybe.

What about the negative side? But this is not just information. Okay, so communication is purposeful. It's based on shared understanding.

The speaker's goal, they have one, and they hope to accomplish it by doing the communication. And they use language that they think is going to work. Sometimes you're right, and sometimes you're not.

Okay, so again, with communication and translation, trying to figure out what the author meant. And so, we analyze text. We're looking for the authorial intent.

We assume purposeful communication, and we use different hermeneutical methods to figure it out. And as Nida says, we look for the desired effect because we can't always know the actual effect. So, we don't know how the Galatians responded to Paul.

If you read Philippians, the tone is very gentle, kind, and loving, and it comes across as we read it. Even in English, it's obvious. And so, he was encouraging them, and he was also instructing them.

Furthermore, we operate on the understanding that the biblical authors put these clues in the text. What evidence can we notice to figure out what the author is trying to say? And we can't always be right. I can't say everything that I've interpreted is absolutely correct, but we try to look for these clues, and they are generally discernible.

And what do we use in order to figure that out? What words are used? What is the tone? What is the mood? What are common phrases that people normally use? Like we said, we use the word *should* in English to communicate the mood. We use intonation to include and to indicate emphasis. What grammatical constructions were used? When you put words together, what are the meanings of those words in that context, and pragmatically, how is this being used? Does that mean that we're going to always figure it out? Well, what does Peter say when he's referring to Paul? He says that Paul's writings can be hard to understand.

Now, Peter spoke Greek, and Paul spoke Greek. They had a lot of shared context and shared knowledge, right? And sometimes, Peter was confused by Paul. So, it's not always a given that even if they speak the same language and from the same culture, they're going to get what you mean.

What about us today? We're 2,000 plus years removed from the first century. What does that mean for us? We have a lot of work to do to figure it out. But God is there, and God will illuminate our minds to understand.

And God gives us insights on how to communicate this in another language. Thanks.

This is Dr. George Payton in his teaching on Bible Translation. This is session 7, Language, Part 2, Speech Acts.