

## **Payton, Bible Translation, Session 17, Review of Translation Issues and Best Practices Resources from Notebooklm**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

### **1. Abstract of Payton, Bible Translation, Session 17, Review of Translation Steps, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

Dr. George Payton's lecture on Bible translation techniques focuses on **identifying and addressing "gaps" in communication** within the original texts. He emphasizes the importance of **thorough interpretation**, going beyond the literal meaning to understand the author's intent and cultural context. This involves **asking key questions** about the text, **researching** relevant historical and cultural information, and carefully considering **grammatical structures and literary devices**. The lecture uses examples from Genesis and Mark to illustrate how these steps lead to more accurate and faithful translations. Ultimately, the goal is to **convey the complete meaning**, including implied information, to the target audience.

**2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Payton, Session 17, Review of Translation Steps – Double click the icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Introductory Series → Bible Translation).**



**Payton\_BT\_Session 1  
7.mp3**

### 3. Bible Translation: Session 17, Review of Translation Steps

#### Bible Translation: A Review of Translation Steps

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. Why is a thorough understanding of the source text essential for Bible translation?
2. According to Payton, what is the biggest challenge in understanding the Bible?
3. What are the five "W's" and one "H" that translators should use when approaching a text?
4. Why is it important for a translator to consider how participants are mentioned in the biblical text?
5. What are the different types of gaps in communication that translators must identify?
6. How does the context of a word impact its meaning and how does that relate to translating the Bible?
7. What is the significance of understanding the literary structure of Hebrew when interpreting a text like Genesis 14?
8. What does it mean for a king to "rebel" in the context of the ancient Near East, as described in Genesis 14?
9. How does a translator handle pronouns that lack clear referents when translating the Bible, and why is this important?
10. How does the example from Mark 9:23 illustrate the importance of considering rhetorical devices in the source text?

#### Answer Key

1. A thorough understanding of the source text is essential because you cannot translate what you do not understand. Without it, the translation will be inaccurate and unfaithful to the original text's cultural nuances, semantic meaning, and pragmatic implications. A poor interpretation will necessarily result in a poor translation.

2. The biggest challenge in understanding the Bible is understanding what was meant but not said. This includes deciphering the author's implicit assumptions and the gaps in communication between the writer and the original audience. It involves looking beyond what is explicitly stated in the text.
3. The five "W's" and one "H" are: Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How. These questions help translators understand the text by establishing the action, the participants, the setting, and the intent behind the author's message, which is necessary for effective translation.
4. It is important because different languages and cultures may portray characters and their importance differently. If translators simply translated names, they could, for example, demote a major character in the story or highlight the wrong character in a given story.
5. Translators must identify several types of gaps in communication, including figures of speech, idioms, metaphors, and comparisons, linguistic difficulties, and cultural assumptions. These gaps often stem from differences in the way languages are used or understood between the original culture and the target culture.
6. The meaning of a word is context-specific, not inherent to the word itself, so what it evokes in the mind of the reader will vary according to context. Because of that fact, translators must be careful to note the particular social context of a word when translating the Bible, to understand what that context would evoke for the original readers.
7. Understanding Hebrew literary structure is critical because it can help explain apparent contradictions or repetitions. For example, Genesis 14 uses a general statement followed by specific details, which is common in Hebrew narrative. Understanding this structure helps readers and translators know they are not reading a chronological account.
8. In the ancient Near East, kings often had vassal kings who paid them tribute. A vassal king "rebelled" by refusing to pay that tribute. That was the action that provoked a response by the ruling king and his army.
9. Translators must carefully analyze pronouns that lack clear referents by using context, literary devices, and external resources. This is important because using vague pronouns can confuse or misguide readers, thereby hindering effective communication.

10. The example from Mark 9:23 illustrates that the statement "if you can" may be a rhetorical question, which communicates meaning beyond the literal words and is intended to highlight the importance of faith. Translators must discern how this rhetorical effect could be communicated in the receptor language.

## Essay Questions

**Instructions:** Answer each question in a well-organized essay.

1. Discuss the importance of considering cultural context in Bible translation. Provide examples from the source material to support your claims.
2. Explain the process of identifying and addressing gaps in communication during the translation process. How does this process enhance the accuracy and clarity of a translation?
3. Describe how asking the five "W's" and one "H" questions of the text can help a translator better understand the source material and produce a more effective translation.
4. How does the translator navigate the tension between literal accuracy and effective communication when translating biblical passages? Use examples from the source material to illustrate your answer.
5. Analyze the challenges of translating the New Testament passage from Mark 9, focusing on the ambiguities related to participants and rhetorical devices. Explain how these challenges affect the process of translation.

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Source Text:** The original biblical text in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek, which a translator works from.
- **Receptor Language:** The target language into which the biblical text is being translated.
- **Cultural Nuances:** The subtle aspects of meaning shaped by a particular culture, including customs, beliefs, and practices, that may not be immediately apparent to those from another culture.
- **Semantic Meaning:** The meaning of a word, phrase, or sentence that stems from the definition of the words used and how they are arranged.

- **Pragmatic Implications:** The meaning of a word, phrase, or sentence as it is understood and used in context, often adding meaning beyond semantic value alone.
- **Gaps in Communication:** The implicit information or assumptions that are not explicitly stated in the text, yet were understood by the original audience.
- **Deictic Center:** The focal point of a text or communication from which everything else is viewed, like the character most focused on by the author.
- **Literary Structure:** The way a text is organized and constructed, which influences how it is interpreted (e.g., Hebrew literary structure often involves a general statement followed by details).
- **Vassal King:** A king who is subordinate to another, more powerful king, and who pays tribute to the ruling monarch.
- **Collocation:** Words that co-occur or are used in the same context, the study of such co-occurrence in language and how such associations reveal meaning.
- **Rhetorical Question:** A question not asked for information but to emphasize a point or create a specific effect.
- **Figurative Language:** Language that uses figures of speech, like idioms or metaphors, to make a comparison, add meaning, or create an effect.
- **Context-Specific:** The meaning of something that is determined by its surrounding circumstances, including cultural, historical, and literary contexts.
- **Implied Information:** Information that is not explicitly stated but is understood by implication, often tied to cultural context or shared knowledge.
- **Participant Tracking:** Observing how the author moves focus between different people and how they are referred to throughout the text.

## 4. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Payton\_BT\_\_EN\_Session17.pdf":

### **Briefing Document: Bible Translation Process Review**

**Source:** Excerpts from "Payton\_BT\_\_EN\_Session17.pdf" by Dr. George Payton

**Date:** October 25, 2024

### **Overview:**

This document summarizes Dr. George Payton's lecture on reviewing the steps involved in Bible translation. The core theme revolves around the idea that accurate and faithful Bible translation requires a deep understanding of the source text that goes far beyond a simple word-for-word conversion. It emphasizes the need to interpret not only what is explicitly stated but also the implicit meanings, cultural nuances, and communication gaps present within the biblical text. The lecture stresses the importance of questioning the text, identifying potential communication gaps, and using various resources for a quality translation.

### **Key Themes and Ideas:**

#### **1. Understanding the Source Text is Paramount:**

- The translation process begins with a thorough understanding of the source text, including its cultural nuances, semantic meaning, language, and pragmatic implications.
- "We have to properly interpret biblical texts in order to produce quality translations. If you do not have a quality interpretation, you will not end up with a quality translation. It will not be accurate, it will not be faithful to the original text."
- Simply looking at the Greek or Hebrew or relying solely on commentaries is not sufficient. Commentaries may not address specific grammatical or contextual issues encountered during translation.
- Bible translation organizations provide study guides and materials to help translators identify and address communication gaps and difficulties.

### 1. Deciphering Implied Meanings and Communication Gaps:

- A major challenge is understanding what was *meant* but not explicitly *said* by the author. This involves recognizing and interpreting the "cryptic communication principle."
- "The biggest challenge in understanding the Bible is understanding what was meant but not said."
- The goal is to understand the gaps in communication and that it is critical to see the gaps to not overlook them.
- Examples are given, such as requests implied in casual conversations (e.g., "There's no salt on the table," meaning, "Please get the salt").

### 1. The Importance of the "Five W's and an H":

- Translators need to ask fundamental questions about the text using the "five W's and an H" framework: Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How?
- These questions help to establish the context, setting, and motivations within the text and help uncover gaps in communication.
- Questions help translators determine the focus of the passage, which may not be readily apparent by a literal reading.

### 1. Identifying and Analyzing Types of Gaps:

- Translators must identify the type of communication gap: Is it a figure of speech (idiom, metaphor), a linguistic difficulty (differences in language structure), or a cultural assumption (shared knowledge, beliefs, or worldview)?
- Cultural assumptions include historical, religious, and situational expectations.
- It's important to be aware of how participants are mentioned in the biblical text and how this impacts meaning in the target language and how it affects the deictic center or main character. For instance, the consistent use of a pronoun could demote the subject in some languages.

### 1. Research and Resource Utilization:

- Once a communication gap is identified, translators must research the passage using all available resources.

- These resources include commentaries, Bible dictionaries, translation helps, different Bible versions, historical background studies, and cultural information.
- The meaning of words is context-specific and must be interpreted within their sentence and social context. The analysis of sentence structure and collocations is crucial.
- Understanding historical context and what the original audience would have known is essential.
- Translators must analyze the overall scenario or setting, and step back to get a helicopter view of the action and scene to get a full understanding.

#### 1. **Translating the Scenario, Not Just Words:**

- The goal is not just to translate individual words or sentences but to translate the entire scenario or scene to create a vivid picture for the reader in the target language.
- Translators need to help the reader understand the situation of what is occurring in the biblical text.

#### 1. **Examples from Genesis 14:**

- Genesis 14 illustrates the importance of understanding Hebrew literary structure, where a general statement is followed by details.
- The passage is used to explore issues related to chronology, the meaning of "rebellion" in ancient cultures (refusal to pay tribute by vassal kings), and participant tracking in the passage.
- It is essential to look at what is highlighted or focused on, and not assume the literal is most important. In Genesis 14, the focus is on Lot, Sodom, and Gomorrah, rather than every single participant in the battle.

#### 1. **Examples from Mark 9:**

- Mark 9 highlights the challenge of understanding figurative language, allusions to the Old Testament, and implied meanings within the text.
- The references to Elijah and John the Baptist highlight the importance of knowing Old Testament context.



- The passage explores issues related to participant tracking, identifying the speaker and listener, and recognizing the literary structure of a passage and literary focus.
- The exchange between Jesus and the father of the possessed boy illuminates the importance of understanding rhetorical questions and the theme of belief within a passage, as well as cultural implications, such as how open criticism or reprimands are received.

**Key Quotes:**

- "We can't translate what we don't understand."
- "The biggest challenge in understanding the Bible is understanding what was meant but not said."
- "Translation is communication, and communication is cryptic."
- "The meaning of words is always context-specific."
- "We're translating the scenario. We're not translating words, we're not translating sentences, we're not translating just paragraphs, we're translating the whole scene."

**Conclusion:**

Dr. Payton's lecture reinforces that effective Bible translation is a complex process that demands critical thinking, cultural awareness, thorough research, and a deep understanding of communication principles. It is not sufficient to approach translation as a mere word-for-word transfer; instead, translators must be active interpreters, seeking to bridge the gaps in communication and ensure that the translated text accurately and faithfully conveys the original message.

## 5. FAQs on Payton, Bible Translation, Session 17, Review of Translation Steps, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ on Bible Translation Based on Dr. George Payton's Session 17

1. **Why is understanding the source text so critical for Bible translation, and what does this entail?**
2. Understanding the source text is foundational because you cannot translate what you don't understand. This involves grasping not just the words, but also the cultural nuances, semantic meaning, original language usage, and pragmatic implications of the biblical text. A quality translation requires a quality interpretation. This means digging into what the author meant, even if it was not explicitly stated, considering what the original audience would have understood. Failing to do so will lead to inaccurate and unfaithful translations.
3. **What is meant by "gaps in communication," and why are they so challenging for translators?**
4. "Gaps in communication" refer to the implied information, unstated assumptions, and cultural background knowledge that the original authors assumed their audiences would understand but didn't explicitly articulate. These gaps are challenging because they often require translators to discern what was *meant* beyond what was *said*. If these gaps aren't identified, the message's true meaning can be lost or distorted. The cryptic nature of communication makes it difficult for those outside the original cultural context to recognize and address these gaps.
5. **What is the "Five W's and an H" approach in Bible translation, and why is it important?**
6. The "Five W's and an H" approach involves asking: Who (was involved)? What (happened)? Where (did it happen)? When (did it happen)? Why (did it happen)? and How (did it happen)? These questions are critical for understanding the context and background of a passage. By methodically investigating these aspects, translators can begin to form a mental picture of the scene and identify implicit meanings. If these questions cannot be answered clearly, it often indicates a gap in communication or a need to research the historical and cultural context more deeply.

7. **How do cultural assumptions and literary styles impact Bible translation, and can you provide an example?**
8. Cultural assumptions and literary styles significantly impact translation because they shape how information is communicated and understood. For example, the parable of the vineyard and the tenants shows how the audience could immediately grasp that Jesus was pointing to the Pharisees through cultural norms and expectations. Similarly, the literary structure of Hebrew often presents a general statement before providing more specific details, a pattern crucial to recognize to avoid misinterpreting texts as having multiple occurrences when there was only one (like the Genesis and Ruth examples). Furthermore, the way a particular culture handles emphasis on a character (as with the mouse example in folktales) impacts how key figures in the Bible should be handled in the translation.
9. **Why is understanding the historical context important in Bible translation, and how does the Genesis 14 passage illustrate this?**

Understanding the historical context is critical because it sheds light on elements like customs and political practices that may be unfamiliar to modern readers. In Genesis 14, understanding the ancient Near East practice of vassal kings paying tribute is crucial for understanding the idea of "rebellion" in verse 4. This was not a rebellion like modern warfare, but rather a refusal to pay tribute, which triggered the ensuing conflict. Knowing that these kings came from across the Jordan River and attacked smaller Canaanite tribes also helps one to form a mental image of the conflict's scope and geography. This context informs how the story needs to be communicated.

1. **How should translators deal with pronouns and ambiguous references in the biblical text, and what examples highlight the importance of this?**
2. Pronouns and ambiguous references ("he," "she," "they," "them") require careful attention because they can lead to confusion if not clearly identified. For instance, in Genesis 14, the reference to "they" in different verses had to be carefully clarified by looking at literary focus (who the main characters were), and also paying attention to what information came before and after that reference in the verses. In Mark 9, the constant use of "he" also required the translator to pay attention to the context and understand what information was being conveyed and through who. This includes identifying the primary character in focus (Jesus). Additionally, paying attention to details like when the evil spirit saw him also is important for clarity. A good translation requires tracking participants throughout the passage and considering who the author likely meant each reference to refer to.
3. **How do different Bible translations and commentaries aid in the interpretation process?**

Different Bible translations and commentaries provide various perspectives and interpretations that can help uncover a passage's deeper meanings. Comparing renderings from the NIV, NLT, ESV, and others can highlight nuances and reveal more explicit details that might not be obvious in a single translation. Commentaries and other resources provide historical, linguistic, and cultural context, offering valuable support for understanding a text, and how to better communicate the message of the Bible. However, these resources are not all inclusive so translators still need to dig deeper than just what the commentaries and versions say by asking all their questions.

1. **Why is the interpretation of rhetorical devices, such as questions, essential for effective Bible translation, and how does the Mark 9 passage illustrate this?**

Understanding rhetorical devices is vital because they can significantly affect the tone and intended meaning of a text. In Mark 9:23-24, the phrase "if you can" appears as a question in some translations, while others portray it as a statement. By examining the surrounding context (the theme of unbelief in verse 19) and analyzing how the father responds, it's evident that this statement is likely a rhetorical question meant to challenge the father's faith. Translators must identify these devices and ensure they are effectively conveyed in the target language to preserve the text's intended impact.