

Payton, Bible Translation, Session 19, Verbal Ideas, Part 2 Resources from Notebooklm

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

1. Abstract of Payton, Bible Translation, Session 19, Translating Verbal Ideas, Part 1, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. George Payton focuses on the challenges of translating verbal ideas in the Bible, particularly from languages lacking direct equivalents for abstract nouns. He explains that many words seemingly functioning as nouns actually derive from verbs, obscuring the implied action and participants. The lecture uses examples from Greek and Hebrew, illustrating how to identify the underlying verbs and actors to achieve accurate translation. Dr. Payton highlights the difficulties this poses, especially for languages like those spoken in Papua New Guinea, which lack abstract nouns entirely. He emphasizes the importance of rephrasing verses to make implicit actions and participants explicit, leading to a more thorough understanding of the biblical text.

**2. 14 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Payton, Session 19, Translating Verbal Ideas, Part 1 –
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
9.mp3**

3. Bible Translation: Session 19, Translating Verbal Ideas, Part 1

Bible Translation: Translating Verbal Ideas - Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each, based on the source material.

1. What are verbal ideas in the context of Bible translation, according to Dr. Payton?
2. List three forms that verbal ideas can take in biblical texts, aside from verbs.
3. According to the lecture, what are two gaps in communication created by verbal ideas that make translation difficult?
4. Why is translating "the fruit of the Spirit" challenging for some languages, such as those in Papua New Guinea?
5. When translating a participle, what are two key aspects you must consider?
6. How did Dr. Payton describe the function of the participle in the phrase "arriving in Jerusalem?"
7. In the example of "They were amazed at his understanding," what does Dr. Payton emphasize about "understanding" conceptually, despite its grammatical form?
8. How does Dr. Payton suggest translators deal with idiomatic expressions in the text?
9. How does Dr. Payton describe the genitive phrase "fruit of the Spirit?"
10. According to Dr. Payton, what is significant about participles in the Greek New Testament?

Answer Key

1. Verbal ideas are words that, despite not being expressed as verbs, have an underlying verbal meaning. They often carry the semantic essence of a verb and can be expressed as nouns, adjectives, or participles.

2. Verbal ideas can take the form of abstract nouns (like punishment, knowledge), participles (like arriving, understanding), and adjectives (like coming, president-elect).
3. The lecture points out that verbal ideas lack explicit information such as who is performing the action, who or what is receiving the action, and the nature of the action itself may be obscured.
4. Languages like those in Papua New Guinea lack abstract nouns, which is often how verbal ideas are expressed. This makes it difficult to directly translate phrases like “the fruit of the spirit,” as such nouns represent abstract concepts.
5. When translating a participle, it is crucial to identify the underlying verb it stems from and determine who the participants are in the action being described.
6. In the phrase, “arriving in Jerusalem,” Dr. Payton notes that the participle functions as a time reference, setting the stage for when Jesus and the disciples arrived, not describing a process of walking.
7. Dr. Payton notes that “understanding” is grammatically a noun because it can be possessed, but conceptually it represents a verbal idea; it is an action.
8. Dr. Payton suggests breaking down idiomatic expressions into their core components by identifying the verb, participants, and rephrasing it in a clearer, more straightforward manner.
9. Dr. Payton states that the genitive phrase “fruit of the Spirit” is an objective genitive, describing the fruit that the Holy Spirit produces in people’s lives.
10. Dr. Payton notes that participles are the most common verbal form in the Greek New Testament, making it a challenging but critically important feature of Greek to understand for accurate translation.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Develop a coherent essay response to each of the following questions based on the provided source material.

1. Discuss the challenges of translating verbal ideas and provide an example of how this principle applies to the translation of a specific phrase.
2. Analyze Dr. Payton's methodology for translating verbal ideas, particularly how he breaks down a given phrase, including a discussion of the importance of identifying the verb and the participants in the action.

3. Explain the significance of the Tanzanian translator's observation that Dr. Payton's teaching on translating verbal ideas was among the most critical principles. Why would this be such an important insight for translators?
4. Reflect on the specific difficulties that arise when translating abstract nouns and the examples Dr. Payton offers, and explore why understanding the underlying verb is so crucial to accurate translation.
5. Assess the implications of translating verbal ideas for theological understanding, focusing on how the process of breaking down these ideas clarifies the meaning and the agency in biblical text.

Glossary

- **Abstract Noun:** A noun that refers to an idea, quality, or state rather than a concrete object (e.g., punishment, knowledge, joy).
- **Concrete Noun:** A noun that refers to a physical object or substance (e.g., book, tree, person).
- **Genitive Phrase:** In Greek, a phrase using the genitive case, which can express a variety of relationships, such as possession, origin, or description.
- **Idiom:** A phrase or expression whose meaning cannot be understood from the literal meanings of the individual words (e.g., "when your greeting reached my ears").
- **Objective Genitive:** A genitive phrase where the noun in the genitive case functions as the object of the action implied by the head noun.
- **Participant:** The entities involved in the action expressed by a verb, including the agent performing the action, the receiver of the action, and any objects involved in the action.
- **Participle:** A verb form that functions as an adjective or noun and can denote action or state (e.g., arriving, coming, understanding).
- **Pedagogical:** Related to the theory or practice of teaching.
- **Semantic:** Relating to meaning in language.
- **Verbal Idea:** A word or phrase that has an underlying verbal meaning or semantic base, often expressed through nouns, adjectives, or participles.

4. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from Dr. George Payton's Session 19 on "Translating Verbal Ideas, Part 1":

Briefing Document: Translating Verbal Ideas in Bible Translation

Source: Excerpts from "Payton_BT__EN_Session19.pdf"

Author: Dr. George Payton

Date: © 2025

Subject: Bible Translation Principles and Techniques, specifically focusing on verbal ideas

1. Introduction: The Challenge of Verbal Ideas

- Dr. Payton introduces the challenge of translating "verbal ideas" – words that, while expressed as nouns or adjectives, have an underlying verb as their core meaning.
- He emphasizes that languages, especially those like in Papua New Guinea, may lack abstract nouns and verbal nouns, creating significant translation difficulties.
- The central problem is that these words, in their surface form, often do not explicitly indicate the *doer*, the *receiver*, or the precise nature of the action being described.
- **Quote:** "The next challenge in translation that we're going to address is how to translate verbal ideas. What do we mean by verbal ideas? These are words that have some kind of verbal notion attached to them, or the basic semantic underlying meaning is actually a verb, even though it might be expressed in a different way."

2. Identifying Verbal Ideas: Examples

- Payton provides examples of how abstract nouns, participles, and adjectives often mask underlying verbs.
- **Nouns:** "Punishment" (to punish), "knowledge" (to know), "deliverance" (to deliver), "suggestion" (to suggest).
- **Adjectives:** "The coming king" (the king who is coming), "president-elect" (the president who was elected).

- **Participles:** "Arriving in Jerusalem" (to arrive), "his understanding" (to understand), "your greeting" (to greet).
- The issue with these verbal ideas, particularly in translation is that they create "gaps in communication" because they don't specify the doer, the receiver, or the action.
- **Quote:** "So, punishment, and the verb is to punish. Knowledge and the verb is to know. Suggest comes from suggestion. Deliverance is to deliver... First of all, it doesn't tell us who's doing the action, and it doesn't tell us who is receiving the action or other parts that are related to it."

3. The Translation Process: Breaking Down Verbal Ideas

- Payton outlines a three-step process for translating verbal ideas:
 1. **Identify the verb:** Find the underlying verb associated with the noun, adjective, or participle (e.g., "arriving" - "to arrive").
 2. **Identify the participants:** Determine who is doing the action (the actor) and who or what is receiving the action (the receiver), as well as any other participants involved in the action.
 3. **Rewrite the verse:** Rephrase the text to explicitly express the verb, the participants, and other relevant parts of the action in a clear, straightforward manner.
- He stresses the importance of including time or manner references (e.g., the "when" in "when arriving" or the "how" in "his understanding").
- He also points out how idioms also need to be rephrased to their explicit and clear meaning.
- **Quote:** "First of all, we have to identify the verb... Second of all, who are the participants?...Then we rewrite the verse, making all of these parts of the action and the participants...explicit."

4. Case Study: The Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)

- Payton uses the example of the "fruit of the Spirit" to demonstrate the application of these principles.

- He explains that the phrase "fruit of the Spirit" is not a description of the Holy Spirit but an objective genitive, meaning "the fruit that the Holy Spirit produces in people".
- For each element of the fruit (love, joy, peace, etc.) he identifies the underlying verb and relevant participants, illustrating how to express these abstract nouns with explicit actions.
- Example Breakdown:
 - **Love:** The Holy Spirit makes the person love other people.
 - **Joy:** The Holy Spirit makes the person rejoice.
 - **Peace:** The Holy Spirit makes the person be at peace.
 - **Patience:** The Holy Spirit makes the person be patient.
 - **Kindness:** The Holy Spirit makes a person be kind to people.
 - **Gentleness:** The Holy Spirit makes a person treat others gently.
 - **Faithfulness:** The Holy Spirit makes the person be faithful to other people.
 - **Self Control:** The Holy Spirit makes a person control their actions.
- **Quote:** "We broke that down by saying the Holy Spirit produces these qualities in people, so we could say the Holy Spirit makes the person love other people."

5. The Challenge of Participles and Generative Constructions

- Participles are identified as a frequent and difficult feature of Greek, even the "hardest feature of Greek in the New Testament to figure out, the hardest thing to interpret."
- Payton highlights the challenges posed by "generative constructions," where two or more abstract nouns are joined together (e.g., "baptism of repentance").
- These constructions require breaking down the relationships between the nouns and expressing them in an accessible manner. He gives the example of the word "koinonia" and how it can have different meanings, making it hard to translate.
- **Quote:** "Participles are very, very challenging. In fact, Darrell Bock, a professor from Dallas Seminary, says participles are probably the hardest feature of Greek in the New Testament to figure out, the hardest thing to interpret. And so we can

say by association, if it's the hardest thing to interpret, it's the hardest thing to translate."

6. Importance and Impact of This Approach

- He states that using this approach greatly enhances the understanding of the Biblical text. Rather than treating ideas as simply abstract thoughts, they are actions that we are called to take.
- Payton stresses that rephrasing verses with verbal ideas in this manner, while sometimes resulting in longer translations (even "a whole paragraph"), is often necessary to accurately convey the intended meaning. This is because languages that don't have abstract nouns, as many do, have no way of understanding the text otherwise.
- He shares a story of a Tanzanian colleague who said this approach to verbal ideas was the most important thing he had learned in translation workshops.
- **Quote:** "As we do this research, as we try to break them down, as we try to understand the relationships between these words, our understanding of the biblical text is greatly enhanced...But there's no way around it because these languages do not have another option for communicating these truths."

7. Preview of Next Session

- The session concludes with a preview of the next session, which will further explore abstract nouns and generative constructions.

Conclusion:

Dr. Payton's Session 19 emphasizes the critical role of identifying and properly translating "verbal ideas" in Bible translation. By focusing on the underlying verbs, participants, and relationships within these constructions, translators can more accurately convey the meaning of the original text, particularly in languages that lack abstract nouns or have different grammatical structures. This approach is not simply a technical exercise but is crucial for enabling people from different language backgrounds to grasp the full impact of biblical teachings.

5. FAQs on Payton, Bible Translation, Session 19, Translating Verbal Ideas, Part 1, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Translating Verbal Ideas in the Bible

- **What are "verbal ideas" in the context of Bible translation, and why are they important?**
- Verbal ideas refer to words—including nouns, adjectives, and participles—that have an underlying verb as part of their semantic meaning. For example, a word like "punishment" implies the action "to punish". Recognizing these underlying verbs is crucial because many languages, unlike English, may not express abstract concepts in the same way and may require the verbal action to be made explicit.
- **Why do verbal ideas pose a challenge in Bible translation?**
- Verbal ideas create gaps in communication because they often don't specify who is doing the action or who is receiving it. The action itself might be obscured, especially when dealing with abstract nouns, which many languages lack. This makes accurately conveying the original intent difficult without breaking down the core verb and participants.
- **How should translators approach verbal ideas such as abstract nouns (like "punishment") and participles (like "arriving")?**

Translators should first identify the underlying verb of the verbal idea. Then, they must identify all participants involved in that action—who is performing the action and who or what is receiving it. Finally, they should rewrite the verse in a way that makes these actions and participants explicit, using a verbal form of the idea, even if it means restructuring the sentence or creating a longer phrase.

- **How do participles function, and what challenges do they present?**
- Participles, which act as verbal adjectives, are extremely common in the Greek New Testament and often function as time references (e.g., "when arriving in Jerusalem"). However, many languages may not have the same grammatical structures for conveying this, making their translation particularly challenging. They can also convey manner of an action rather than time. Because they often hide the participants of the action, the translator needs to identify the action and the participants and make them explicit.

- **What is the "fruit of the Spirit" referring to, and how does understanding the underlying verbal ideas help with translation?**
- The "fruit of the Spirit" in Galatians 5 refers to qualities produced by the Holy Spirit in believers. Abstract nouns like love, joy, and peace are actually verbs describing actions: to love, to rejoice, and to be at peace. Translating them requires unpacking these actions: stating who is performing them (the Holy Spirit) and who is participating in the action. This might involve creating longer descriptive phrases to convey their full meaning.
- **Why are genitive phrases, such as "fruit of the Spirit," significant in translation?**
- Genitive phrases like "fruit of the Spirit" can be tricky because they may not imply the kind of relationship that a direct translation conveys. Instead of the fruit *of* the Holy Spirit as descriptive of God's character, it refers to the fruit that the Holy Spirit *produces* in people. Translators must understand the genitive relationship in its context (objective genitive in this case) to accurately translate the phrase, making explicit the connection between the Holy Spirit and the resulting characteristics.
- **How might translating verbal ideas change the approach to a passage such as 1 Corinthians 13?**
- Instead of thinking of the qualities in 1 Corinthians 13 (love is patient, love is kind) as an abstract concept, understanding the verbal nature requires translators to see them as active behaviors that are done to other people. This means focusing on the actions of love—being patient *with others*, being kind *to others*, etc. This results in translation that communicates the active responsibility placed on believers rather than as qualities that exist without agency.
- **What are some other translation challenges beyond the translation of single verbal ideas, and how are these similar?**
- Besides translating single abstract nouns and participles, complex constructions like genitive phrases (and two or more nouns joined together) present challenges, which is similar to the problem with translating single verbal ideas. They often involve layers of abstract concepts, obscuring the underlying actions. Translators must break down these complex relationships, similar to how they would unpack a single abstract noun, to identify the actions, participants, and specific meanings being conveyed.