

A Practical Guide to Bible Translation Projects



Book 2
Bible Translating Series

By
Dr. Steve Combs

A Practical
Guide
to
Bible Translation Projects

Book II:
Bible Translating Series

SAMPLE PAGES

**A Practical Guide to Bible
Translation Projects**

**Book II:
Bible Translating Series**

**By
Dr. Steve Combs**

ISBN 979-8-9866583-8-4

**Published in the USA by
The Old Paths Publications
www.theoldpathspublications.com**

Copyright © 2022 by *Steve Combs*

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission from the copyright owner in writing.

The Author may be contacted by writing:
bpsg.scombs@gmail.com

The Bible Translation used in this book is the King James Bible. Illustrations of translation methods and techniques are taken from the King James Bible and the Greek Textus Receptus, Global Edition, 2019. Other versions occasionally for illustration purposes only.

ISBN 979-8-9866583-8-4

Published in the USA
by The Old Paths Publications
www.theoldpathspublications.com

Dedication

**This book is dedicated to my wife, Suzanne,
who has loved me and put up with me and
helped me for over forty years.**

Other Books by the Author

Election and Predestination?
The Fellowship of the Mystery – The Book of Ephesians
The Power of the Gospel – The Book of Romans
Every Word for Every People
The Translator's Grammar of the Textus Receptus
The LSB and Other Unusual Bible Questions
A Practical Theology of Bible Translating

Books Edited by the Author

The Greek New Testament
Parallel Greek TR – English KJV New Testament

SAMPLE PAGES

Contents

Introduction	13
1 Who's Carrying the Ark?.....	16
Who is Carrying the Ark?	18
Who <i>Should</i> be Carrying the Ark?.....	20
Regaining the Truth	23
2 Basic Beliefs Every Christian Needs	27
The Inspiration of the Bible	28
The Divine Preservation of the Scriptures	32
The Fact of Providential Preservation.....	32
The Definition of Providential Preservation	35
The All Sufficiency of the Word of God	36
The Attack on Authority and Sufficiency	38
The Fact of Scripture's Sufficiency.....	39
The Absolute Infallible Guide to Life.....	41
The Greatest Source of Life's Benefits.....	41
3 The Source Texts with Recommended Resources	43
The Greek and Hebrew Source Texts.....	44
The Textus Receptus	51
The King James Bible.....	53
The Scrivener Text	54
The Hebrew Text.....	57
Use of the King James Bible in Translating	61
Recommended Resources	62
4 The Formal Equivalent Method	65
Word to the nearest Equivalent Word	67
Grammar to the Nearest Equivalent Grammar	68

A Practical Guide to Bible Translation Projects

Idiom to the Nearest Equivalent Idiom	69
5 Does Your Language Need a Translation?	73
Step One: Assess the Need	74
Step Two: Prayer and Commitment	76
Step Three: Survey the Situation	77
Step Four: Build a foundation.....	78
Step Five: Begin to Identify a Potential Team.....	79
6 General Rules of Translating.....	81
7 The Discipline of a Translator	84
No One is Exempt from Struggle	84
Personal Discipline.....	85
Overtaken in a Fault.....	85
Public or Private?.....	86
8 The Organization of the Translation Team	88
Single Translator Approach.....	88
A Single Team Approach.....	88
Multiple Teams Approach.....	89
Personnel Needed for the Project	91
The Translators	91
The Churches	92
The Director	92
Chief Records Keeper.....	93
Typist (s).....	93
An Expert in the Grammar of the Target Language.....	94
The Checkers.....	94
The Testers.....	95
The Translation Advisor	95

Table of Contents

9 The Operation of the Translation Team	97
Before You Translate a Single Word	97
First Steps to Get Started.....	97
A Suggested Step-by-Step Plan.....	101
10 Financing and Promoting the Translation	104
Financing the Translation.....	104
Promoting the Translation Among the Churches	108
11 Greek Word Study and Worksheets	110
Step 1. Choose the word you want to study.....	110
Step 2. Find How the Word was Translated	111
Step 3. Use Greek Lexicons.....	113
Step 4. Use Webster's 1828 Dictionary	113
Step 5. Use Commentaries	114
Step 6. Record your findings.....	115
Step 7. Write a Definition of Your Word.....	115
A Worksheet to Track Words.....	115
A Worksheet to Aid in Translating.....	116
12 A Summary of KJB Grammar	118
Identifying the English of the KJB	119
Grammar Notes for the KJB.....	121
Understanding KJB Words	130
13 Finding Meaning and Choosing the Right Words.....	133
Common Characteristics of Languages.....	134
The Meaning of Words	135
Methods to Find Words.....	137
Listen to How People Talk.....	138
Reading and Writing	138
New Combinations and Expanded Meanings.....	140

A Practical Guide to Bible Translation Projects

Coin New Words	141
Borrow Words from Other Languages.....	142
Generic Words Verses Specific Words.....	142
Ask Hypothetical Questions.....	143
Contextual Conditioning.....	143
14 Figures of Speech and Literary Techniques.....	145
Anthropomorphism	145
Personifications	146
Anachronism.....	147
Similes.....	148
Metaphor.....	149
Euphemism	150
Hyperbole	151
Litotes	152
Metonymy.....	153
Synecdoche.....	154
Irony.....	154
Apostrophe	155
Chiasmus.....	156
Collocational Clash.....	156
Hendiadys	157
Rhetorical Questions.....	158
How to Translate Figures of Speech	164
15 Translation Challenges	167
Implied Information.....	167
Ambiguities	168
Use of Italics.....	170
Polysemy and the Meaning of Words	171

Table of Contents

Consistency in Translation – or Not.....	172
Flexibility in Greek Prepositions	173
Cultural Substitutes	174
The Historical Present.....	179
Genitive Structures	180
Subscriptions to the Epistles.....	182
Beware of Presuppositions and Bias.....	183
16 Other Issues in Translating	184
Issues from John 1 in the Greek NT	184
The Only Begotten Son (John 1:18; 3:16)	190
Questions and Answers	193
Further Challenges.....	199
17 Choosing a Name for God	201
How God Translated His Name	201
How Should We Translate His Name?	203
Principle 1: Choose a Name from the Native Culture.....	204
Principle 2: Contextual Conditioning	210
18 Adding to and Taking Away from the Scriptures.....	214
Satan’s Original Strategy: Genesis 2, 3	216
Who Can Add or Subtract?	217
When One is <i>NOT</i> Adding or Taking Away.....	218
Taking Away From the Words of God.....	220
Adding to the Words of God.....	222
What a Translator Needs	224
19 Checking and Testing the Translation	225
Begin with a Translator Self-Check	226
Checking in a Team or Single Translator Setting	226
Categories to Check in the Translation.....	228

A Practical Guide to Bible Translation Projects

Ways to Check a Translation.....	229
Back-Translations.....	232
Guidelines for Doing a Back-Translation.....	233
Testing the Translation	234
Final Pointers	235
20 Printing and Distributing the Translation.....	237
Deciding When to Print.....	237
Finding a Printer.....	238
Editing and Formatting the Document	240
Raising Funds	243
E-Book and Audio	244
Conclusion.....	244
21 Steps Toward a Mature Translation	245
What is a “Perfect” or Mature Translation?.....	246
How the English Bible became Mature	247
Mature Bibles in Many Languages.....	249
22 Be of Good Courage.....	252
About the Author.....	256
Acknowledgments and Bibliography.....	257
Index	260
NOTES	264

Introduction

Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls ... (Jeremiah 6:16)

Several years ago, I was struggling to put together what I envisioned as a large anthology on the subject of Bible translating. It was simply not coming together. There were several major difficulties. It was then I realized that I needed to go back to the old paths. So, I laid aside the anthology and embarked on a study of the theology of Bible translating. I had never seen anything published on this subject, and it is not taught as a doctrine in college theology classes nor in theology books. At one time, Dr. H.D. Williams wanted to publish a book on that subject, but he had never done so because other projects interfered and took his time. Nevertheless, it was through him that I got the idea. Surely, I thought, God has something to say about Bible translating in His Word. The result was *A Practical Theology of Bible Translating*, published in 2019. I was never to return to the anthology (at least, not to date).

Then, in 2020, as I was reviewing and updating our web site (www.bpsglobal.org), I noticed the numerous articles we had scattered around the site explaining various aspects of Bible translation projects. I further called to mind how we write a short guide to starting translation projects for each new translation project. We call it “an assessment.” I realized that we already had nearly all the material we needed for a practical project guide. We just needed to bring it all together and flesh it out. The result is the book you hold in your hands.

Therefore, this is the second book written in a series on Bible translating. The first was *A Practical Theology of Bible Translating*, which should be *studied first*. This second book adds to the theology, but focuses more on the practical aspects of starting, conducting, and finishing a translation project. Some material in the first book is summarized in this book so that the reader will have full continuity in the thoughts presented.

A book like this is extremely important. We live in an age when the old paths have been all but forgotten when it comes to Bible

A Practical Guide to Bible Translation Projects

translating. Many have forgotten the importance of the actual words God inspired. They think the only thing that matters is to carry the meaning or message into the translation. The words are flexible. I agree that meaning is important, but I argue that the meaning is imbedded in the inspired words, and that it is those words with the proper meaning that are to be translated. I believe the Bible makes that case. That is why we subscribe to a formal equivalent translation method. In the following pages we make the meaning of that method crystal clear.

Translation projects and local situations differ greatly. So, there is no one standard plan or pattern that fits all projects. A lot will depend on the local situation and current schedules of the people included on the translation team. The translators will need to make decisions about how they will apply these guidelines.

There are six categories in this plan for translation. *You must read these categories in the order they are presented to get the most from the guide.* For example, you should not begin the process of organizing the team until you have read the foundational convictions and principles. We suggest that the entire team read the guide at the same time and periodically gather to discuss it. Also, if you are reading this book with a goal to translate the Bible into a specific language, please contact us using the email address on the copyright page, through our website, or on the Facebook page for Global Bible Translators. We would be glad to answer questions and walk through this process with you. There are also other translation ministries, committed to the Received Text, that can help, also.

The first category of the book is about **convictions** that are absolutely necessary to be a good translator. These include believing in your heart that each and every word of the Bible was inspired by God when it was given. You must be convicted deep in your heart that God has preserved every one of these words. You need to know that they are available now and that you can have them in your possession. You need to know where to find them. Without these convictions, how can you be sure that you are truly translating the Word of God? How can you be certain that you are using the correct source texts?

The second includes **information on several practical subjects** that are not absolutes but are still foundational. They are time tested and practical. The translators must agree on the principles they will follow. If all the translators follow the same rules, it will result in a more accurate and consistent translation.

Introduction

Category three is about **organizing and operating** the translation team. These are a list of ideas that work well in various translation projects. It includes types of team organizations and a list of the different jobs that need to be accomplished by the translation team. Some of these ideas may work well for you, while others may not.

The fourth category is about the **theology and practice** of the actual work of translation. These include issues you will see in the Biblical text that can present difficulties for translators. It includes issues that can be challenging, to say the least, such as, figures of speech, whether to use italics, choosing a name for God, and being careful to avoid adding to or taking from the Word of God.

The fifth category helps you implement **some techniques to check and test** the translation for accuracy and clarity. There are several techniques accepted and practiced by various translation ministries and professional translation services. We include some of them. The general rule is simple: the more checking and testing there is, the greater will be the accuracy of the translation.

In the last category, we give guidance on **printing and distributing** your translation.

It is our prayer that this guide will result in many new translation projects and further spread the preaching of the precious Word of God.

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. (2 Corinthians 4:5)

1 Who's Carrying the Ark?

This chapter was based on an outline and ideas from Dr. Steve Zeinner, Director of Global Bible Translators/Bearing Precious Seed Global

2 Samuel 6:1-4, 6-7 Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand.

2 And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts that dwelleth between the cherubims.

3 And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drave the new cart.

4 And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God: and Ahio went before the ark.

6 And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it.

7 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God.

Exodus 25:10-14 And they shall make an ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof.

14 And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them.

Numbers 4:15 And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation.

During the last days of the judges, the Ark of God was taken by the Philistines. After God punished the Philistines severely, they sent it away back to Israel in a cart (1 Sam. 5, 6). The Ark ended up in the town of Kirjathjearim for twenty years. 2 Samuel 6 tells the story of