

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2020

Bible References:

Genesis 3:15
Numbers 35:21, 22

Original text:

Gen 3:15 - ואִיבָהוּ אִשִּׁית בִּינֶךָ וּבִין הָאִשָּׁה וּבִין זְרַעָהּ וּבִין זְרַעָהּ -

Num 35:21 - אוֹ בְּאִיבָהּ הִכָּהוּ בְּיָדוֹ וַיָּמָת מוֹת־יוֹמָת הַמִּכָּה -

Num 35:22 - וְאִם־בְּפִתְעַ בְּלֹא־אִיבָהּ הִדְּפוּ אוֹ־הַשְּׁלִיךְ עָלָיו כָּל־כְּלִי בְּלֹא צְדִיקָה -

NIV rendering:

Gen 5:15 - And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers,

Num 35:21 - or if out of enmity one person hits another with their fist so that the other dies, that person is to be put to death;

Num 35:22 - But if without enmity someone suddenly pushes another or throws something at them unintentionally

Suggestion:

Gen 3:15 - And I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers,

Num 35:21 - or if out of hostility one person hits another with their fist so that the other dies, that person is to be put to death;

Num 35:22 - But if without hostility someone suddenly pushes another or throws something at them unintentionally

Rationale:

The noun אִיבָהּ occurs five times in the OT. Twice the NIV translates “hostility” (Ezek 25:15; 35:5) and three times “enmity.” We suggest translating all five as “hostility” for easier comprehension, since “hostility” in our opinion is a more widely understood word. The two English words, “enmity” and “hostility,” are close enough synonyms that we don’t see any reason why “enmity” needs to be preferred as the rendering of אִיבָהּ.

It can be noted that this OT suggestion is accompanied by a NT suggestion for James 4:4 recommending that “enmity” be changed to “hostility” also in that NT passage. These are the only four passages in the NIV where the word “enmity” occurs (three in connection with this recommendation plus James 4:4).

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
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Bible Reference:

Genesis 3:21

Original text:

וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לְאָדָם וּלְאִשְׁתּוֹ כְּתָנִיּוֹת עוֹר וַיַּלְבִּשֵׁם:

NIV rendering:

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

Suggestion:

The LORD God made garments out of animal skins for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

Rationale:

We fear that in common usage the singular English noun “skin”—if it doesn’t have a modifier (e.g., “beaver skin,” “potato skin”) or isn’t used for a leather container for liquid (e.g., Gen 21:14)—refers almost exclusively to human skin. We would never refer to a leather coat as a “coat of skin.”

Another way to make the reference in Genesis 3:21 clearer would be to simply make the noun plural (“skins”).

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
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Bible Reference:

1 Samuel 16:4

Original text:

וַיַּעַשׂ שְׁמוּאֵל אֵת אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה וַיָּבֵא בֵּית לָחֶם וַיִּתְרָדּוּ זִקְנֵי הָעִיר לְקִרְאָתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁלֹם בּוֹאֵד:

NIV rendering:

Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, “Do you come in peace?”

Suggestion:

Samuel did what the LORD said and went to Bethlehem. The elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, “Do you come in peace?”

Rationale:

This is a minor matter of English style. In our opinion, it seems like poor English style to have two “when” temporal clauses in the same sentence.

Also, our suggestion puts the English translation into agreement with the Masoretic accents. The Masoretes clearly think that Samuel's going to Bethlehem belongs together with his obeying the Lord—a logical assumption in this context.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
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Bible Reference:

1 Samuel 17:4

Original text:

וַיֵּצֵא אִישׁ־הַפְּלִשְׁתִּים מִמַּחֲנֵיזָה פְּלִשְׁתִּים גְּלִית נִשְׂמוּ מִגַּת גָּבְהוּ לְשֵׁשׁ אַמּוֹת נֹזֶרֶת:

NIV rendering:

A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. His height was six cubits and a span.

Suggestion:

A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. His height was six* cubits and a span.

* Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scrolls, Septuagint and Josephus have *four*

Rationale:

It has long been known that key Septuagint manuscripts have “*four* cubits” instead of “*six* cubits” for the height of Goliath. Now that 4QSam^a supports this variant reading, perhaps a footnote is warranted in a translation like the NIV.

There also are some logical arguments in favor of “*four* cubits” as the original reading. As the story was passed down, the giant’s height more likely would have been increased in order to magnify the victory of David, rather than decreased. Perhaps the number six was accidentally inserted in verse 4 when a scribe saw the number six a few lines later in verse 7, where the point of Goliath’s spear is said to weigh **לְשֵׁשׁ** מֵאֹזֶת שְׁקָלִים.

As for which height is more likely, six cubits and a span would be about 9 feet 9 inches. Four cubits and a span would be about 6 feet 9 inches. The latter seems more likely from what we know of heights today, and it still would have made Goliath tower over his Israelites opponents. Scholars estimate that most Israelites were probably in the range of 5 feet to 5 feet 3 inches tall.

Commentaries and translations that favor the variant reading include McCarter (Anchor Bible), Steinmann (Concordia Commentary), and the NET. Many translations, including the ESV and CSB, keep “*six*” in the text, but put “*four*” in a footnote.

**Translation Suggestion for the NIV
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Bible References:

1 Samuel 25:26, 28, 31

Original text:

1 Sam 25:26 – ועתה אֲדַלְנִי חַי־יְהוָה וְחַי־נַפְשְׁךָ

1 Sam 25: 28 – שָׂא נָא לִפְשַׁע אֲמַתְךָ כִּי עָשָׂה־יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה לְאֲדֹנָי בְּיַת נְאֻמָּן –

1 Sam 25:31 – וְהִיטֵב יְהוָה לְאֲדֹנָי וְזָכַרְתָּ אֶת־אֲמַתְךָ: –

NIV rendering:

1 Sam 25:26 – And now, my lord, as surely as the LORD your God lives and as you live,

1 Sam 25: 28 – Please forgive your servant’s presumption. The LORD your God will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my lord,

1 Sam 25:31 – And when the LORD your God has brought my lord success, remember your servant.”

Suggestion:

1 Sam 25:26 – And now, my lord, as surely as the LORD lives and as you live,

1 Sam 25: 28 – Please forgive your servant’s presumption. The LORD will certainly make a lasting dynasty for my lord,

1 Sam 25:31 – And when the LORD has brought my lord success, remember your servant.”

Rationale:

We see no reason why NIV inserts the expression “your God” three times in 1 Samuel 25, when the word אֱלֹהֵיךָ does not occur in the MT. Yahweh was *Abigail’s* God just as he was *David’s* God.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
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Bible Reference:

1 Kings 17:18

Original text:

וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל־אֱלֹהֵיהוּ מַה־לִּי וְלָךְ אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים בָּאתָ אֵלַי לְהַזְכִּיר אֶת־עֲוֹנִי וּלְהַמִּית אֶת־בְּנִי:

NIV rendering:

She said to Elijah, “What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?”

Suggestion:

She said to Elijah, “What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to call attention to my sin and kill my son?”

Rationale:

The Hebrew text does not indicate *by whom* the widow’s sin was to be remembered, whether God or the widow herself. The Hebrew simply says: “to bring my sin to remembrance.”

Many commentators (e.g., Keil, ICC, Provan, Ryken, Meier) assume that the prophet Elijah’s coming, in the viewpoint of the widow, brought her sins to the attention of *God*, not to her own attention. Hence God was angry and killed her son. Indeed, this interpretation makes good sense to us.

It is quite easy in English to present the pertinent phrase (לְהַזְכִּיר אֶת־עֲוֹנִי) without indicating the agent of the remembering, just as it is found in Hebrew. We recommend such a translation for the NIV, so that the interpretation of the commentators listed above is not excluded.

Other possible ways to render it would be “to expose/uncover/make known my sin.”

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
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Bible References:

2 Kings 18:33
Isaiah 36:18b

Original text:

2 Kgs 18:33 – הַהֲצִיל הָאֱלֹהִי הַגּוֹיִם אִישׁ אֶת־אֲרָצוֹ מִיַּד מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּרִי:

Isa 36:18b – הַהֲצִילוּ אֱלֹהֵי הַגּוֹיִם אִישׁ אֶת־אֲרָצוֹ מִיַּד מֶלֶךְ אַשּׁוּרִי:

NIV rendering

2 Kgs 18:33 – Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?

Isa 36:18b – Have the gods of any nations ever delivered their lands from the hand of the king of Assyria?

Suggestion:

2 Kgs 18:33 – Has any of the gods of the other nations ever rescued his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?

Isa 36:18b – Has any of the gods of the other nations rescued his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?

Rationale:

This verse pair comes from one of the better-known instances in the OT of the same incident reported twice in words that are nearly, but not entirely, identical. Our concern is that the similarities and differences be made as transparent as possible to English readers who wish to compare the two accounts. In order to accomplish this here:

- 1) Most important, אֱלֹהִי should be translated consistently, with either a singular or a plural. A plural is preferable both because of the plural verbs in both verses and because of the distributive use of אִישׁ, on which see below.
- 2) In both cases, word order and the accentuation (a disjunctive accent on הַגּוֹיִם and a conjunctive accent on אִישׁ) indicate that the syntax is “any of the gods,” not “any of the nations.” “Other” is added in the suggestions above to clarify that non-Israelite nations are meant.
- 3) “Deliver” in the sense of “set free” is rarely used in contemporary English except by speakers who are quoting or imitating the KJV.
- 4) In Hebrew, the only difference between the two verses is the infinitive absolute (with הַ interrogative) הַהֲצִיל in 2 Kgs 18:33. Within a rhetorical question, the construction serves to strongly reject the possibility that something has or could happen (*BHRG* § 20.2.2.2.). It appears as “ever” in our suggested translation above and is purposely omitted from Isa 36:18b.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
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Bible Reference:

Psalm 45:6 (H 7)

Original text

כִּסְאֵךָ אֱלֹהִים עוֹלָם וָעֶד יִשְׁבֵּט מִיְשָׁר יִשְׁבֵּט מִלְּכוּתְךָ:

NIV rendering

Your throne, O God,* will last forever and ever;
a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.

*Here the king is addressed as God's representative.

Suggestion:

Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever;
a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.

[Omit footnote.]

Rationale:

The text of Ps 45:7 (Hebrew) is not in doubt and its meaning is not obscure. The sole purpose of the NIV's footnote appears to be to inscribe the verse with a particular interpretation. The interpretation contradicts Hebrews 1:8, however, where Psalm 45:6-7 is said to have been spoken "to [NIV "about"] the Son."

If the NIV's footnote reflects an assumption that the psalmist would not have been capable of the insight that the addressee can both be (verse 6) and have (verse 7) "God," we find that troubling. We also think that an interpretive comment like this belongs in a study Bible, and not in a translation like the NIV. In any case, our strong preference is that the footnote be removed.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
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May 2020

Bible References:

Psalm 46:10 (H11)
Isaiah 23:8

Original text:

Ps 46:8 (H9) – לְכוּ-חִזּוּ מִפְעֻלֹת יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר-שָׁם שְׁמוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ:

Ps 46:10 (H11) – הֲרַפּוּ וְדַעוּ כִּי-אֲנֹכִי אֱלֹהִים אַרְוֶם בְּגוֹלִם אַרְוֶם בְּאֶרֶץ:

Is 23:8 – מִי יַעֲזֹב זֹאת עַל-צָר הַמְעֻטֶּיִתָּה אֲשֶׁר סַחֲרִיהָ שָׂרִים פְּנֻעָנִיהָ נִכְבְּדֵי-אֶרֶץ:

Is 23:9 – הֲהִנָּה צְבָאוֹת יַעֲצָה לְחַלֵּל גְּאוֹן כָּל-צָבִי לְהַקְל כָּל-נִכְבְּדֵי-אֶרֶץ:

NIV rendering:

Ps 46:8,10 (H9,11) – Come and see what the LORD has done,
the desolations he has brought on the earth....
He says, “Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.”

Is 23:8-9 -- Who planned this against Tyre, the bestower of crowns,
whose merchants are princes,
whose traders are renowned in the earth?
The LORD Almighty planned it,
to bring down her pride in all her splendor
and to humble all who are renowned on the earth.

Suggestion:

Ps 46:8,10 (H9,11) – Come and see what the LORD has done,
the desolations he has brought on the earth....
He says, “Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted on the earth.”

Is 23:8-9 -- Who planned this against Tyre, the bestower of crowns,
whose merchants are princes,
whose traders are renowned on the earth?
The LORD Almighty planned it,
to bring down her pride in all her splendor
and to humble all who are renowned on the earth.

Rationale:

We notice that there are two places where the NIV has “in the earth” when referring to nations on earth (Ps 46:10 and Is 23:8). The preposition “in” strikes us as unnatural in these contexts. Sheol is “in” the earth (see Ezek 26:20; 31:16), but nations are “on” the earth.

We are all the more surprised by the NIV choice in these passages, because in both cases the NIV translates the same word within a verse or two as “on the earth” (see Ps 46:8 and Is 23:9). We think you should make the expressions identical in English as they are in Hebrew.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
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Bible Reference:

1 Corinthians 7:39

Original text:

Γυνή δέδεταί ἐφ' ὅσον χρόνον ζῆ ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς· ἐὰν δὲ κοιμηθῆ ὁ ἀνὴρ, ἐλευθέρα ἐστὶν ᾧ θέλει
γαμηθῆναι, μόνον ἐν κυρίῳ.

NIV rendering:

A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.

Suggestion:

A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but let it be done in the Lord.

Rationale:

It is understandable that translators will come to varying decisions about the advisability of translating more literally or more freely in various passages, but to us it seems important to avoid translating in a way that adds to God's word. We see NIV as crossing that line in its rendering of 1 Corinthians 7:39. Neither here nor anywhere else in the Greek NT do we find a clear passage that explicitly or by necessary implication prohibits a Christian from marrying a non-Christian. Accordingly, in our pastoral practice we *advise* our members about the potential dangers of marrying unbelievers, but we do not elevate that advice to the level of a divine command.

Paul's expression ἐν κυρίῳ, "in the Lord," is clearly adverbial here, as we make explicit in our suggested translation; it is not an adjectival description of the person a widow might marry. Does the adverbial expression *imply* that marrying "in the Lord" necessarily entails marrying a believer? That view turns up already in the ancient church and is regarded as certain or nearly certain by many modern commentators, but it is only an opinion. Schlatter (*Paulus der Bote Jesu*) exegetes the passage without articulating any such thought; he says that a Christian widow's remarriage should be governed by the same basic principle of union with the Lord that governs every Christian action and decision. What J. B. Lightfoot wrote in the nineteenth century remains true:

μόνον ἐν Κυρίῳ] This expression is generally interpreted to imply that she must marry a Christian husband, if she marry at all. But the expression cannot be so pressed. It will only signify that she must remember that she is a member of Christ's body; and not forget her Christian duties and responsibilities, when she takes such a step. Marriage with a Christian only does not seem to be contained in the words, though that might be the consequence of her attempt to fulfill those duties.

There is no reason to assume that "in the Lord" or "only in the Lord" in the context of marriage was a familiar technical expression understood by Paul and the Corinthians as indicating a marriage between

Christians. That being the case, Paul's expression would have required the Corinthian readers to do some thinking: What would it mean for a Christian widow to get married "in the Lord"? That question could lead them to a set of thoughts that clearly are part of God's teaching in the Bible: she should not marry incestuously, she should not seek a married man (whether to get him to divorce his wife or to make him a bigamist), she should not use sinful methods to lure or entrap a man, she should not marry with the thought that she can always get a divorce if she regrets her new marriage, she should pray for God's guidance and help, she should seek to serve God and let her light shine in her new marriage, and she should be a loving, dutiful, obedient wife. It is easier to prove that all those thoughts flow out of *μόνον ἐν κυρίῳ* than to prove it means the new husband must be a Christian, but the NIV rendering focuses all attention on the latter opinion and gives the reader no reason to think any of the former thoughts.

While it is common for modern commentators to interpret *μόνον ἐν κυρίῳ* as requiring the new spouse to be a Christian, they normally *translate* the text literally and offer their interpretation in the form of *comments*. That way a reader at least has the opportunity to distinguish between what Paul wrote and what the commentator says it means. But the reader of the NIV has no opportunity to make such a distinction.

Gordon Fee opines that what Paul says in verse 39 is "not so much a *command* that she may not marry outside the Lord as it is good sense." Whether one agrees or not, Fee's view is not readily available to readers of the NIV. Readers who regard the Bible as the very word of God will see the NIV rendering of verse 39, and their consciences will be bound by this human addition to the word of God.

**Translation Suggestion for the NIV
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Bible Reference:

Ephesians 4:20-21

Original text:

²⁰ ὑμεῖς δὲ οὐχ οὕτως ἐμάθετε τὸν Χριστόν, ²¹ εἶ γε αὐτὸν ἠκούσατε καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ἐδιδάχθητε, καθὼς ἐστιν ἀλήθεια ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ,

NIV rendering:

²⁰ That, however, is not the way of life you learned ²¹ when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.

Suggestion:

²⁰ You, however, did not learn Christ that way ²¹ when you heard about him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.

Rationale:

Throughout Ephesians chapters 4 through 6 Paul is reminding his readers of who they are in Christ. That's certainly the case in Ephesians 4:17-24, where he first describes the Gentiles as “darkened in their understanding” (ἐσκοτωμένοι τῇ διανοίᾳ ὄντες) and as “having lost all sensitivity” (οἴτινες ἀπηληγκότες) and then contrasts his faithful readers with them (ὑμεῖς δὲ).

We suggest that this contrast of persons should boldly be brought forward at the start of Ephesians 4:20, “You, however, ...” That, in turn, positions the rest of the verse for a more straightforward rendering of the expression ἐμάθετε τὸν Χριστόν. But how can you “learn Christ”? The fact that no parallel expression is found in other Greek writings indicates that the writer is expressing something he wants his readers to chew on for a while.

We are pleased with the way the CBT has rendered Colossians 3:11 (“Christ is all, and in all”) and Philippians 1:21 (“to live is Christ”). What we are proposing here is similarly vivid, thought-provoking, and memorable.

Given the prominence of “Christ” in the proposed rendering of verse 20, we do not feel it needs to be repeated in verse 21. Besides, this would more closely approximate the Greek.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
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Bible Reference:

Philippians 2:1

Original text:

Εἴ τις οὖν παράκλησις ἐν Χριστῷ, εἴ τι παραμύθιον ἀγάπης, εἴ τις κοινωνία πνεύματος, εἴ τις σπλάγχνα καὶ οἰκτιρμοί,

NIV rendering:

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,

Suggestion:

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being in Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,

Rationale:

The phrase ἐν Χριστῷ appears 73 times in Paul's epistles. Given the flexibility of the preposition ἐν, we are not surprised to see half a dozen verses that render it "through Christ" (twice), "by Christ" (once), "for Christ" (once), or even "as Christ" (once). By and large, however, we see wisdom in the CBT's decision to render it "in Christ" for most every other occasion ἐν Χριστῷ appears.

True, in English we rarely speak of being "in" a person. Yet the apostle Paul seems inclined to present Christ as a metaphorical container, so to speak. Simply to be "in Christ," then, is of the highest good, as those who are in that place receive God's blessings of love, eternal life, salvation, justification, and sanctification, to name just a few. Even the prized unity of the body is "in Christ" (Romans 12:5).

Here at Philippians 2:1 we see the expression "united with Christ" as an unnecessary departure from the usual sense of ἐν Χριστῷ. The metaphor has been altered, and the reader is deprived of seeing a connection to those many other occasions when the apostle uses the phrase ἐν Χριστῷ. So we propose bringing back the far more common and, yes, much more meaningful rendering "in Christ" here as well.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
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Bible Reference:

Hebrews 2:6-9

Original text:

6 διεμαρτύρατο δέ πού τις λέγων,

**Τί ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος ὃτι μιμήσκη αὐτοῦ,
 ἢ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ὃτι ἐπισκέπη αὐτόν;**

7 ἠλάττωσας αὐτὸν βραχύ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους,
 δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφάνωσας αὐτόν,

8 πάντα ὑπέταξας ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ.

ἐν τῷ γὰρ ὑποτάξει [αὐτῷ] τὰ πάντα οὐδὲν ἀφῆκεν αὐτῷ ἀνυπότακτον. νῦν δὲ οὕτω ὀρῶμεν αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα ὑποτεταγμένα· 9 τὸν δὲ βραχύ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους ἠλαττωμένον βλέπομεν Ἰησοῦν διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφανωμένον, ὅπως χάριτι θεοῦ ὑπὲρ παντὸς γεύσῃται θανάτου.

NIV rendering:

⁶ But there is a place where someone has testified:

 “What is mankind that you are mindful of them,
 a son of man that you care for him?

⁷ You made them a little lower than the angels;
 you crowned them with glory and honor

⁸ and put everything under their feet.”

In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them. ⁹ But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Suggestion:

⁶ But there is a place where someone has testified:

 “What is a human being that you are mindful of him,
 a son of man that you care for him?

⁷ You made him a little lower than the angels;
 you crowned him with glory and honor

⁸ and put everything under his feet.”

In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. ⁹ But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Rationale:

In May 2018, we submitted a translation suggestion in regard to Psalm 8:4-6, asking that it be translated in such a way that the messianic connection with Hebrews 2:6-9 be apparent. Subsequently it dawned on us that if the NIV were to adopt our suggestion for Psalm 8:4-6, then Hebrews 2:6-9 should also be adjusted, to match Psalm 8.

The rationale for these changes is laid out in our May 2018 recommendation, which we are attaching here. In short, Hebrews 2 makes clear that Jesus is the fulfillment of Psalm 8. The NIV could do more to make the messianic intent of Psalm 8 apparent.

In large part our suggestion means putting the NIV footnotes from Hebrews 2:6-9 into the text, as was also the case in Psalm 8.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2018

Bible Reference:

Psalm 8:4-6 (H 5-7)

Original text:

מִה־אֲנוֹשׁ כִּי־תִזְכְּרֵנוּ וּבְן־אָדָם כִּי תִפְקְדֵנוּ

NIV rendering:

⁴ what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?*

* Or *what is a human being that you are mindful of him, / a son of man that you care for him?*

⁵ You have made them* a little lower than the angels
and crowned them* with glory and honor.

* Or *him*

⁶ You made them rulers over the works of your hands;
you put everything under their* feet;

* Or *made him ruler...; / ... his*

Suggestion:

⁴ what is a human being that you are mindful of him,
a son of man* that you care for him?

* The Hebrew phrase *ben adam* means *human being*. The phrase *son of man* is retained here because of its use in the New Testament as a title of Jesus, reflected in Heb 2:5-9.

⁵ You have made him a little lower than the angels
and crowned him with glory and honor.

⁶ You made him ruler over the works of your hands;
you put everything under his feet;

Rationale:

We notice that there are two places in the OT where the NIV11 retains the translation “son of man” for בְּן־אָדָם and includes a footnote to mention the possible connection to “Son of Man” in the New Testament. Here are the two passages:

- Ezekiel 2:1 – He said to me, “Son of man,* stand up on your feet and I will speak to you.”
* The Hebrew phrase *ben adam* means *human being*. The phrase *son of man* is retained as a form of address here and throughout Ezekiel because of its possible association with “Son of Man” in the New Testament.
- Daniel 7:13 – In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man,* coming with the clouds of heaven.

* The Aramaic phrase *bar enash* means *human being*. The phrase *son of man* is retained here because of its use in the New Testament as a title of Jesus, probably based largely on this verse.

Given the NIV11's treatment in these two passages, we wonder why the NIV11 does not do the same in Psalm 8, all the more because Hebrews 2:5-9 quotes Psalm 8 and makes the connection. Granted, Hebrews 2 does not explicitly call Jesus "the Son of Man." But certainly Hebrews 2 makes a connection between Psalm 8's language about the son of man and Jesus. Picking up on the wording of Psalm 8, Hebrews 2:9 says: "We see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death."

Of course, we realize that many interpreters view Psalm 8 as referring to the human race in its privileged creation position—with Christ being the ultimate example of human rulership. But there are also many interpreters who consider Psalm 8 to be prophetic—fully meaningful only in connection with Christ himself. One linguistic argument in favor of this messianic understanding is that the phrase בְּרֵאשִׁית אֲדָמָה does not elsewhere seem to have a collective sense (= "human beings"), but rather it refers to a single, representative human. For messianic interpreters, the NIV11's current rendering of Psalm 8 is disappointing, because it seems to forestall any direct connection to Jesus.

Perhaps in such a rich passage with prophetic implications it is best to keep the English words as close as possible to the Hebrew (i.e. "son of man"). This would keep the English text open to the fulfillment provided later by God.

In addition, the current NIV11 rendering of Psalm 8:4 is out of sync with the quotation in Hebrews 2:6, where there NIV11 has: "What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him?" Since the NIV11 puts "son of man" into the quotation in Hebrews 2, we think that it would make sense to coordinate the OT passage with the NT quotation, and to put "son of man" into Psalm 8 as well.

Perhaps Hebrews 2:6 was not made consistent with Psalm 8:4, because the NT is quoting the LXX and not the MT. The average Bible reader, however, neither knows nor cares that Hebrews 2 is quoting the LXX. The average reader would benefit by being able to see a clear connection between the two passages, especially since this is not a passage where the MT and LXX diverge significantly.

Our suggestion is that the NIV put the alternate translation of its footnotes into the text, and then to include a footnote similar to Ezekiel 2:1 and Daniel 7:13. This would make Psalm 8 consistent with Ezekiel 2:1 and Daniel 7:13, and also consistent with its New Testament quotation.

It can be mentioned that this was a passage as much as any other that set some people in WELS against the NIV11 when it came out. It appeared to some in WELS that the NIV was doing away with the messianic intent of Psalm 8, and was separating Psalm 8 from the quotation in Hebrews 2.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2020

Bible Reference:

James 4:4

Original text:

μοιχαλίδες, οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ἡ φιλία τοῦ κόσμου ἔχθρα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν; ὃς ἐὰν οὖν βουλευθῆ φίλος εἶναι τοῦ κόσμου, ἐχθρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσταται.

NIV rendering:

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

Suggestion:

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means hostility toward God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

Rationale:

The noun ἔχθρα occurs five times in the NT. Three times the NIV translates “hostility” (Ephesians 2:14, 16) or “hostile” (Romans 8:7), once “enemies” (Luke 23:12), and once “hatred” (Galatians 5:20). Only here does it translate “enmity.” We suggest translating this verse also as “hostility” for easier comprehension, since “hostility” in our opinion is a more widely understood word, and this is the only verse in the NT where the NIV uses the word “enmity.” The two English words, “enmity” and “hostility,” are close enough synonyms that we don't see any reason why “enmity” needs to be preferred, even though the related noun ἐχθρὸς occurs in the second half of the verse and is properly translated as “enemy.” We believe the parallel between the two parts of the verse will still be clear.

It can be noted that this NT suggestion is accompanied by an OT suggestion for Genesis 3:15 and Numbers 35: 21–22 recommending that “enmity” be changed to “hostility” also in those three OT passages.

Translation Suggestion for the NIV
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee
May 2020

Bible References:

Revelation 9:21; 21:8; 22:15

Original text:

Rev 9:21 – καὶ οὐ μετενόησαν ἐκ τῶν φόνων αὐτῶν οὔτε ἐκ τῶν φαρμάκων αὐτῶν οὔτε ἐκ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῶν οὔτε ἐκ τῶν κλεμμάτων αὐτῶν.

Rev 21:8 – τοῖς δὲ δειλοῖς καὶ ἀπίστοις καὶ ἐβδελυγμένοις καὶ φονεῦσιν καὶ πόρνοις καὶ φαρμάκοις καὶ εἰδωλολάτραις καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς ψευδέσιν τὸ μέρος αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ λίμνῃ τῇ καιομένη πυρὶ καὶ θείῳ,

Rev 22:15 – ἔξω οἱ κύνες καὶ οἱ φάρμακοι καὶ οἱ πόρνοι καὶ οἱ φονεῖς καὶ οἱ εἰδωλολάτραι καὶ πᾶς φιλῶν καὶ ποιῶν ψεῦδος.

NIV rendering:

Rev 9:21 – Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Rev 21:8 – But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur.”

Rev 22:15 – Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

Suggestion:

Rev 9:21 – Nor did they repent of their murders, their sorceries, their sexual immorality or their thefts.

Rev 21:8 – But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, the sorcerers, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur.”

Rev 22:15 – Outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

Rationale:

When modern Americans hear the word “magic,” we suspect that many of them think first about “the art of producing illusions as entertainment by the use of sleight of hand, deceptive devices, etc.” (so *Dictionary.com*). Children who play around with such harmless “magic” may be troubled to read in the NIV that “those who practice magic arts” will be consigned to hell along with other evildoers.

The traditional rendering in these verses is “sorceries/sorcerers,” which captures the import well enough. We notice that NIV uses the words “sorcery” and “sorcerer” in other places. Equally acceptable would be: “witchcraft/those who practice witchcraft.” In Gal 5:20, NIV translates *φαρμακεία* as “witchcraft.”