

**Translation Suggestion for the NIV  
From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee  
May 2019**

**Hebrew words:**

כַּנּוֹר and נָבֵל

Genesis 31:27 and other passages

**Suggestion and rationale:**

Most lexical resources assume that the word כַּנּוֹר refers to a stringed instrument that was smaller than the נָבֵל (so *NIDOTTE*), or more “cheap, simple, and common” (so BDB). *HALOT* and *DCH* give “harp” as the best English gloss for נָבֵל, and BDB has “harp (or lute).” For כַּנּוֹר, BDB and *DCH* have “lyre,” and *HALOT* has “zither.”

Though we know that there is a degree of uncertainty about the ancient instruments and that it is impossible to find perfect English equivalents for them (our normal “harp” is certainly different from anything in antiquity), we are surprised by the inconsistent handling of these two terms in the NIV. Here is a chart showing how the NIV translates the two Hebrew words.

	“lyre/lyres”	“harp/harps”	other
כַּנּוֹר 42 total	13 times	28 times	1 time
נָבֵל 27 total	16 times	11 times	

Since there are two Hebrew words and two English words that are commonly used to represent the Hebrew words (“harp” and “lyre”), we think that a translation might as well be consistent, matching the terms as much as possible. We notice that the CSB consistently renders כַּנּוֹר as “lyre” and נָבֵל as “harp” in all of their occurrences. The ESV does likewise in almost all the references.

Following is a list of passages that would need to be changed in order to make the NIV consistent with these words.

**NIV passages with both words where “harp” and “lyre” need to be switched:**

1 Sam 10:5 -- you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, timbrels, pipes and harps being played before them,

2 Sam 6:5 -- David and all Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with castanets, harps, lyres, timbrels, sistrums and cymbals.

1 Ki 10:12 -- The king used the almugwood to make supports for the temple of the LORD and for the royal palace, and to make harps and lyres for the musicians.

Is 5:12 -- They have harps and lyres at their banquets,

Ps 33:2 -- Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.

Psa 81:2 (H 3) -- Begin the music, strike the timbrel, play the melodious harp and lyre.

Psa 92:3 (H 4) -- to the music of the ten-stringed lyre and the melody of the harp.

1 Chr 13:8 -- David and all the Israelites were celebrating with all their might before God, with songs and with harps, lyres, timbrels, cymbals and trumpets.

1 Chr 15:16 -- David told the leaders of the Levites to appoint their fellow Levites as musicians to make a joyful sound with musical instruments: lyres, harps and cymbals.

1 Chr 15:28 -- So all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouts, with the sounding of rams' horns and trumpets, and of cymbals, and the playing of lyres and harps.

1 Chr 16:5 -- They were to play the lyres and harps, Asaph was to sound the cymbals,

1 Chr 25:1 -- David, together with the commanders of the army, set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman and Jeduthun for the ministry of prophesying, accompanied by harps, lyres and cymbals.

1 Chr 25:6 -- All these men were under the supervision of their father for the music of the temple of the LORD, with cymbals, lyres and harps,

2 Chr 9:11 -- The king used the algumwood to make steps for the temple of the LORD and for the royal palace, and to make harps and lyres for the musicians.

***NIV passages with כַּנֹּתֶן where “harp” needs to be switched to “lyre”:***

Gen 31:27 -- Why didn't you tell me, so I could send you away with joy and singing to the music of timbrels and harps?

Isa 16:11 -- My heart laments for Moab like a harp,

Isa 23:16 -- “Take up a harp, walk through the city, you forgotten prostitute;

Isa 24:8 -- the noise of the revelers has stopped, the joyful harp is silent.

Isa 30:32 -- Every stroke the LORD lays on them with his punishing club will be to the music of timbrels and harps,

Ezek 26:13 -- the music of your harps will be heard no more.

Psa 49:4 (H 5) -- I will turn my ear to a proverb; with the harp I will expound my riddle:

Psa 98:5 -- make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing,

Psa 137:2 -- There on the poplars we hung our harps,

Psa 147:7 -- Sing to the LORD with grateful praise; make music to our God on the harp.

Psa 149:3 -- Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with timbrel and harp.

1 Chr 15:21 -- and Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-Edom, Jeiel and Azaziah were to play the harps,

1 Chr 25:3 -- Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiiah, Shimei, Hashabiah and Mattithiah, six in all, under the supervision of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied, using the harp in thanking and praising the LORD.

***NIV passages with לַחֲבִילָה where “lyre” needs to be switched to “harp”:***

Ps 144:9 -- I will sing a new song to you, my God; on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you,

1 Chr 15:20 -- Zechariah, Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah and Benaiah were to play the lyres according to *alamoth*,

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**Bible References:**

Exodus 20:3  
Deuteronomy 5:7

**Original text (the same in both passages):**

לֹא יִהְיֶה-לְךָ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים עַל-פְּנֵי:

**NIV rendering (the same in both passages):**

You shall have no other gods before \* me.  
\*Or *besides*

**Suggestion:**

You shall have no other gods in my presence. \*  
\*Or *besides me*

**Rationale:**

The exact force of על-פְּנֵי here has been much debated (see the entry in *HALOT*), but we feel it is time for the venerable translation “before me” to be retired. The main problem is on the target-language side. While the etymological sense of “before” is spatial, in contemporary English usage its most common sense by far is temporal, which by extension can imply preference. “You shall have no other gods *before*” the Lord, we believe, is too easily misunderstood as “When you rank the gods in order of importance, be sure to put me first.”

עַל-פְּנֵי has a variety of uses, but in determining its meaning here the contexts (Exod 20:4-6 and Deut 5:8-10) are especially decisive. We believe the Lord’s intention in Exod 20:3 is to completely eliminate all other gods from Israel’s consideration (לְךָ). His meaning could be paraphrased, “Get all your other gods out of my sight. I don’t want to see them!” The presence of the Lord with his people is a dominant theme in Exod 19-40, and the suggested translation “in my presence” implies that no other gods should be found anywhere that God’s people find themselves.

We have no objection to including the translation “besides me” in the footnote, although it sacrifices some of the flavor of פְּנֵים. “Besides me” reflects an ancient (LXX, both Targums, and Syriac) and defensible interpretation.

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**Bible References:**

Deuteronomy 15:14  
Esther 1:7; 2:18  
2 Corinthians 8:20

**Original text:**

Deut 15:14 – הַעֲנִיִּים תַעֲנִיֵן לָוֶה מִצֹּאֲנָהּ וּמִגִּרְנָהּ וּמִקִּבְּהָ אֲשֶׁר בֵּרַכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ תִתֶּן-לוֹ:

Esth 1:7 – וְהַשְׂקוֹת בְּכֶלִי זָהָב וְכֵלִים מְכֻלִּים שׁוֹנִים וַיְיָן מַלְכוּת רַב כְּיַד הַמֶּלֶךְ:

Esth 2:18 – וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁתֵּה גָדוֹל לְכָל-שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו אֵת מִשְׁתֵּה אֶסְתֵּר וְהַנְּחָה לְמַדִּינֹת עֲשֵׂה וַיִּתֶּן מִשְׂאֵת כְּיַד הַמֶּלֶךְ:

2 Cor 8:20 – στελλόμενοι τοῦτο, μή τις ἡμᾶς μωμήσῃται ἐν τῇ ἀδρότητι ταύτῃ τῇ διακονουμένῃ ὑφ' ἡμῶν.

**NIV rendering:**

Deut 15:14 – Supply them liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give to them as the Lord your God has blessed you.

Esth 1:7 – Wine was served in goblets of gold, each one different from the other, and the royal wine was abundant, in keeping with the king's liberality.

Esth 2:18 – And the king gave a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his nobles and officials. He proclaimed a holiday throughout the provinces and distributed gifts with royal liberality.

2 Cor 8:20 – We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift.

**Suggestions:**

Deut 15:14 – Supply them generously from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give to them as the Lord your God has blessed you.

Esth 1:7 – Wine was served in goblets of gold, each one different from the other, and the royal wine was abundant, in keeping with the king's generosity.

Esth 2:18 – And the king gave a great banquet, Esther's banquet, for all his nobles and officials. He proclaimed a holiday throughout the provinces and distributed gifts with royal generosity.

2 Cor 8:20 – We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this generous gift.

**Rationale:**

The adverb “liberally” and the noun “liberality” are seen so infrequently nowadays, many of the NIV’s readers may not easily grasp their meaning. It would not surprise us if a number of them take these words as if they were referring to the giver’s political principles. We suggest “generously,” “generosity,” and “generous” as renderings much less likely to be misunderstood.

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**Bible Reference:**

1 Samuel 14:33

**Original text:**

וַיִּגִּידוּ לְשָׂאוֹל לֵאמֹר הִנֵּה הָעַם חָטְאוּ לַיהוָה לֵאכֹל עַל־הַדָּם וַיֹּאמֶר בְּגַדְתֶּם

**NIV rendering:**

Then someone said to Saul, “Look, the men are sinning against the LORD by eating meat that has blood in it.” “You have broken faith,” he said.

**Suggestion:**

Then someone said to Saul, “Look, the men are sinning against the LORD by eating meat that has blood in it.” “You have been unfaithful,” he said.

**Rationale:**

We fear that some modern English readers may not be familiar with the expression “to break faith,” especially if it is not followed by the preposition “with.”

In a number of other places, the NIV translates the verb כָּגַג as “be unfaithful” (see Jer 3:20; 5:11; Hos 5:7; 6:7; Mal 2:11). That rendering would work well here, since the soldiers were “unfaithful” to the dietary regulations of the Mosaic Law by eating meat with blood in it. We think this rendering may allow for easier comprehension for all readers.

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**Bible Reference:**

Psalm 51:6 (H 8)

**Original text:**

הַדְּאָמָה הַפְּצֵת בְּטְהוֹת אִבְסָתָם הַכְּמָה תוֹדִיעֵנִי:

**NIV rendering:**

Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;  
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

**Suggestion:**

Indeed, you desire faithfulness deep within my heart;  
you teach me wisdom in that secret place.

**Rationale:**

- 1) הָיָה normally affirms the truthfulness of the statement that follows it (*BHRG* § 40.21). We see no reason to posit a different function for it here.
- 2) It is true that הַפְּצֵת is a perfect, but יָפַת is a stative verb, and the perfect of a stative often describes a condition at the moment a statement is made (*BHRG* § 19.2.2). There is no grammatical or contextual reason to relegate God's desire for faithfulness to the past (see #4 below).
- 3) Our biggest objection to the NIV's translation is its handling of טְהוֹת. While the word is difficult, neither BDB, *DCH*, Gesenius, or *HALOT* recommends "womb" as a gloss. Granted: טְהוֹת is parallel to מְסֻדָּה ("sealed up," "secret"), and a womb could be considered a "secret" place. But the real justification for NIV's translation seems to be an assumption that because in verse seven the psalmist refers to his situation *in utero*, the action of verse eight must take place there as well. That is unwarranted, especially when the resulting interpretation has the psalmist claiming in verse eight that while *in utero* he was taught wisdom—not likely. In our opinion, the view of most English versions that take a position (CSB, ESV, GNT, NET, NRSV, TLB) is correct: the "secret places" referred to are the recesses of the psalmist's heart.
- 4) It is not impossible that תוֹדִיעֵנִי is a prefixed preterite form, which would justify the NIV's translation "you taught me." But once the translation of the parallel verb הַפְּצֵת is corrected to an English present tense, there is no reason not to take תוֹדִיעֵנִי as an imperfect, with an imperfect's normal semantics. The reverse is also true: the fact that תוֹדִיעֵנִי is parallel to הַפְּצֵת makes it less likely that the latter refers to past time (see #2 above).



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**Bible Reference:**

Isaiah 52:7 (comparing Nahum 1:15)

**Original text:**

Isa 52:7 – מֵהַנְּאֻוֹ עַל־הַהָרִים רַגְלֵי מְבַשֵּׂר מִשְׁמִיעַ שְׁלוֹם מְבַשֵּׂר טוֹב מִשְׁמִיעַ יְשׁוּעָה אִמָּר לְצִיּוֹן מִלֵּךְ  
אֱלֹהֶיךָ:

Nah 1:15 (H 2:1) – הִנֵּה עַל־הַהָרִים רַגְלֵי מְבַשֵּׂר מִשְׁמִיעַ שְׁלוֹם

**NIV rendering:**

Isa 52:7 – How beautiful on the mountains  
are the feet of those who bring good news,  
who proclaim peace,  
who bring good tidings,  
who proclaim salvation,  
who say to Zion,  
“Your God reigns!”

Nah 1:15 (H 2:1) – Look, there on the mountains,  
the feet of one who brings good news,  
who proclaims peace!

**Suggestion:**

Isa 52:7 – How beautiful on the mountains  
are the feet of one who brings good news,  
who proclaims peace,  
who brings good tidings,  
who proclaims salvation,  
who says to Zion,  
“Your God reigns!”

(Nah 1:15 remains unchanged)

**Rationale:**

The NIV frequently renders singular forms in the source text as plurals in order to avoid the gender-specific pronouns “he” and “his.” We cannot see, however, that this is a valid consideration in Isa 52:7. The source text forms here are singular and should be translated that way. In addition, the wording of Isa 52:7 and Nah 1:15 is identical (apart from מֵהַנְּאֻוֹ vs. הִנֵּה) and an inter-textual connection in the original is obvious. NIV has made it less so.

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**Bible References:**

Ezekiel 34:4, 16

**Original text:**

Ezek 34:4 – אַתְּ-הַחַלַּוְתָּ לֹא חֲזָקָתָם וְאֶת-הַחֹלְהָ לֹא-רַפֵּאתָם וְלִנְשָׁבְרֵת לֹא חִבַּשְׂתָּם וְאֶת-הַנִּדְחֹת לֹא  
הִשְׁבַּתָּם וְאֶת-הָאֲבֵדֹת לֹא בִקְשָׁתָם

Ezek 34:16 – אֶת-הָאֲבֵדֹת אֲבַקֵּשׁ וְאֶת-הַנִּדְחֹת אֲשִׁיב וְלִנְשָׁבְרֵת אֶחְבֹּשׁ וְאֶת-הַחֹלְהָ אֲחַנֵּק

**NIV rendering:**

Ezek 34:4 – You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost.

Ezek 34:16 – I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak.

**Suggestion:**

Ezek 34:4 – You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bandaged the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost.

Ezek 34:16 – I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bandage the injured and strengthen the weak.

**Rationale:**

It strikes us as odd in English to use the verb “bind up” with “the injured” as the direct object. Could you ever imagine someone saying: “The medic came to bind up the people who were injured”? When the verb “bind up” is used with people as the direct object, the ordinary meaning is “to tie someone’s hands and feet together so that they cannot move.” Negative images of capturing and controlling a person come to mind.

We notice that the NIV translates the Pual of שָׁבַע as “bandaged” in Isa 1:6, and we notice that many modern translations use “bandage” in these Ezekiel passages.

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**Bible Reference:**

Habakkuk 2:4

**Original text:**

הַגָּזָה עֲפֻלָּה לֹא־יִשְׁרָה נַפְשׁוֹ בּוֹ וְצַדִּיק בְּאַמוּנָתוֹ יִחְיֶה:

**NIV rendering:**

“See, the enemy is puffed up;  
his desires are not upright—  
but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness\*—”

\* Or faith

**Suggestion:**

“See, the enemy is puffed up;  
his desires are not upright—  
but the righteous person will live by his faith\*—”

\* Or faithfulness

**Rationale:**

It was a Bible translation principle of Martin Luther to translate the Hebrew OT in harmony with the Greek NT, if possible. He wrote: “Wherever the Hebrew text readily yields to and harmonizes with the New Testament, this is and must be the only right interpretation of Scripture” (*Luther’s Works*, 15:299). Also, “Whenever equivocal words or constructions occur, that one would have to be taken which (without, however, doing injustice to the grammar) agrees with the New Testament” (*LW*, 54:446).

To be sure, Luther did not do violence to the Hebrew text by imposing NT concepts contrary to the context and Hebrew philology. For example, he translated “bed” in Gen 47:31 and “dark land” in Is 9:1, contrary to the LXX and NT. But if possible, he sought to harmonize the two. In doing so, one could say he was practicing what is called canonical criticism today.

With this principle in mind—a principle that we assume is still widely shared by evangelical Christians—we are surprised that the NIV11 replaced “faith” with “faithfulness” in Hab 2:4. It is well known that this passage is quoted three times in the NT with an emphasis on “faith” as the way that people are justified (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11) and as the way believers persevere in time of hardship (Heb 10:38). It seems strange that the NIV11 would blur the connection between Heb 2:4 and these three passages.

Some have argued, we know, that אֱמוּנָה must always be translated with “faithfulness” or something similar, and not “faith.” But we fail to be convinced by these arguments. Certainly, when אֱמוּנָה is used to express a quality of God, it must mean something like “faithfulness.” In contexts dealing with humans, it can refer to a virtue like “faithfulness,” “reliability,” or “integrity.” But we think that אֱמוּנָה could focus on “steadfast trust” (Robertson) or “firm reliance upon God” (Keil) in a context like Hab 2:4.

First, the concept of “believing” certainly is associated with the Hebrew root אָמַן, especially in the Hiphil stem. The “firmness” that אָמַן denotes can include firmness in trust or faith. The only other occurrence of the root אָמַן in Habakkuk appears in God’s declaration in Hab 1:5, and there the NIV translates: “I am going to do something in your days that you would not *believe* (אָמַן), even if you were told.” In 2 Chr 20:20, the NIV translates אָמַן אֱלֹהֵינוּ with “*Have faith* in the LORD.” Most notably, in Gen 15:6 the NIV translates אָמַן אַבְרָם with “Abram *believed* the LORD.”

In regard to Gen 15:6, many commentators actually think that Hab 2:4 may be alluding to that verse, since the two passages have such noteworthy similarities. About Abraham, God said that he “believed [אָמַן]” the Lord, and the Lord credited it as “righteousness [צְדָקָה].” Now in Hab 2:4, God says that the “righteous person [צַדִּיק]” will live by his אֱמוּנָה. Maybe the nuance of “believing” seen in Gen 15:6 also belongs in Hab 2:4—two key passages that speak about how human beings are in a right relationship with God.

Second, the notion of “faith” fits well in the context of Hab 2:4. In the opening chapters of Habakkuk, the prophet is struggling with the problem of Israel’s wickedness and suffering, along with Babylon’s success and dominion. In this situation, God speaks a “revelation that awaits an appointed time” (Hab 2:3). What is needed, then, is “an undisturbed confidence in the divine promises of grace” (Keil, 73). The righteous person will live, not by his own virtuous life of integrity, but by clinging in faith to God’s revelation, which promises that God will bring relief and justice in his right time.

In short, the meaning “faith” does not seem to be a linguistic or contextual impossibility for אֱמוּנָה in Hab 2:4. Since the NT quotes Hab 2:4 three times with the meaning “faith,” we think that the NIV should put “faith” into the text in Hab 2:4 to make the connection more evident. Needless to say, this translation decision is of greater than average significance, because of the monumental importance of Hab 2:4 and its NT quotations in Protestant theology.

For two quotations supporting our suggestion, see the following.

Robertson (*NICOT*, 179-180):

As strange as it may seem, the Hebrew language does not abound in nouns that might be regarded as equivalents to the English term *faith*. As a matter of fact, <sup>ע</sup>*mînâ* would have been the most natural candidate if “faith” were the idea that Habakkuk was intending to convey. Too quickly, it seems, have exegetes been ready to identify the meaning of this term (<sup>ע</sup>*mînâ*) exclusively with “faithfulness.” But a careful consideration of the OT contexts in which the term occurs indicates that “trust” or “faith” may well explain its usage at several points.

Archer/Chirichigno (*OT Quotations in the NT*, 105):

It is true that אֱמוּנָה in the OT usually connotes “faithfulness,” but it also serves as the OT word for faith in the sense of a true adherence to God and to His Word (*G-B Lex.* 47B), or of faithfulness in belief and trust (cf. *Zorrell Lex.* 63A).

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**Bible Reference:**

Luke 10:6

**Original text:**

καὶ ἐὰν ἐκεῖ ᾗ υἱὸς εἰρήνης, ἐπαναπαύσεται ἐπ’ αὐτὸν ἡ εἰρήνη ὑμῶν· εἰ δὲ μὴ γε, ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς ἀνακάμψει.

**NIV rendering:**

If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you.

**Suggestion:**

If someone who values peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you.

**Rationale:**

Rendering descriptive genitives in English can be a thorny problem. A quick survey of English Bible translations indicates that several different solutions have been proposed for this verse, although by far, the most common is simply to render the expression “a son of peace.” Earlier editions of the NIV chose to render it “a man of peace.” Presumably the change in this verse was intended 1) to get away from gender specific language and 2) to “unpack” the meaning somewhat. Whether one agrees or not with the NIV’s philosophy of rendering gender specific language, the choice is in keeping with your published philosophy, so our suggestion is also gender neutral.

The bigger problem is the choice to unpack the meaning. Several other translations attempt to do that, but we haven’t found one outside the NIV family of translations that takes Jesus’ words to mean “someone who promotes peace.” We found variations of “sharing peace” (CEB, NRSV—the closest to the NIV we found, but more ambiguous), “peace-loving” (CEV, EXB, GNT, NCV), and “peaceful” (GW, ICB, NABRE).

We are of the opinion that “promotes peace” is more specific than the context indicates. In this context, “a son of peace” refers to a person who *eagerly receives the gospel of peace* when it is presented. The expression does not so much suggest someone who *promotes* peace, but someone who *values* or *treasures* peace.

In short, our suggestion is intended to leave the expression more undefined in order to allow the reader and expositor to wrestle with it. Other possibilities that would keep the expression more general would be “a peaceable person” or “a peace-loving person.”

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**Bible Reference:**

Romans 12:16

**Original text:**

τὸ αὐτὸ εἰς ἀλλήλους φρονοῦντες, μὴ τὰ ὑψηλὰ φρονοῦντες ἀλλὰ τοῖς ταπεινοῖς συναπαγόμενοι. μὴ γίνεσθε φρόνιμοι παρ' ἑαυτοῖς.

**NIV rendering:**

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. \* Do not be conceited.

\*Or *willing to do menial work*

**Suggestion:**

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. \* Do not be conceited.

\*Or *but be willing to do menial work*

**Rationale:**

We are under the impression that this footnote is supposed to render τοῖς ταπεινοῖς as a neuter substantive that's parallel to τὰ ὑψηλὰ. Due to the brevity of the footnote, however, it doesn't easily read that way. Instead we wonder whether readers will frequently take the footnote as if it were modifying the word "people," as in, "be willing to associate with *people* willing to do menial work."

For the sake of clarity, we suggest adding two words to the footnote.

**Translation Suggestion for the NIV**  
**From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee**  
**May 2019**

**Bible Reference:**

Galatians 2:15-17

**Original text:**

<sup>15</sup> Ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοὶ <sup>16</sup> εἰδότες [δὲ] ὅτι οὐ δικαιοῦται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ἐὰν μὴ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν, ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου, ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ. <sup>17</sup> εἰ δὲ ζητοῦντες δικαιωθῆναι ἐν Χριστῷ εὐρέθημεν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ, ἄρα Χριστὸς ἁμαρτίας διάκονος; μὴ γένοιτο.

**NIV rendering:**

<sup>15</sup> “We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles <sup>16</sup> know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

<sup>17</sup> “But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn’t that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not!

**Suggestion:**

<sup>15</sup> “We who are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners <sup>16</sup> know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

<sup>17</sup> “But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also to be sinners, doesn’t that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not!

**Rationale:**

By its handling of ἁμαρτωλοὶ in Galatians 2:15 and 2:17, we fear that the CBT has softened what ought to be heard as an utterly shocking remark on the part of the apostle Paul.

At 2:15 Paul is not merely announcing that those who descended from non-Jews are “sinful.” They rather are “sinners” intrinsically, essentially, to the core of their natural being. As such they are eternally condemned were it not for the gracious verdict granted through faith in Christ.

By acknowledging at 2:17 that “we who are Jews by birth” also are justified only through faith in Christ, Paul is not saying we are merely “among” those Gentile sinners. Such a translation would to some degree, at least, perpetuate the very distinction Peter erroneously made when certain Jewish men from James arrived in Antioch (Galatians 2:12). Rather, Paul is saying that “we ... Jews by birth” who are seeking to be justified in Christ are thus found to be “sinners” ourselves intrinsically, essentially, to the core of our natural being. Jewish sinners like Peter and Paul, no less than Gentile sinners, are condemned by the law.

**Translation Suggestion for the NIV**  
**From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee**  
**May 2019**

**Bible Reference:**

Galatians 4:4-7

**Original text:**

4 ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ χρόνου, ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, γενόμενον ἐκ γυναικός, γενόμενον ὑπὸ νόμον, 5 ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον ἐξαγοράσῃ, ἵνα τὴν υἰοθεσίαν ἀπολάβωμεν. 6 Ὅτι δὲ ἐστε υἱοί, ἐξαπέστειλεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν κραῶν, Ἀββα ὁ πατήρ. 7 ὥστε οὐκέτι εἶ δοῦλος ἀλλ' υἱός· εἰ δὲ υἱός, καὶ κληρονόμος διὰ θεοῦ.

**NIV rendering:**

4 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.\* 6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” 7 So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

\* The Greek word for *adoption to sonship* is a legal term referring to the full legal standing of an adopted male heir in Roman culture.

**Suggestion:**

4 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.\* 6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” 7 So you are no longer a slave, but God’s son; and since you are his son, God has made you also an heir.

\* The Greek word for *adoption to sonship* is a legal term referring to the full legal standing of an adopted male heir in Roman culture.

**Rationale:**

We are pleased that the CBT did not take a “gender-neutral” approach to υἰοθεσία and υἱός where those expressions appear in Galatians 4:5-6. In fact, the footnote shows why rendering these nouns as “sonship” and “sons” is highly significant here. We suggest that the apostle’s point is more complete if υἱός is rendered as “son” twice more in verse 7.

Interestingly enough, at Romans 8:17 it is quite apparent that τέκνα (“children”) can be κληρονόμοι (“heirs”). Should he have been so inclined, Paul could have used τέκνον here at Galatians 4:7 as well. He seems to have chosen υἱός, however, to carry forward the imagery of 4:4-6 and perhaps even to anticipate the allegory he will present at the end of this chapter.



**Translation Suggestion for the NIV**  
**From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee**  
**May 2019**

**Bible Reference:**

Ephesians 5:15-16

**Original text:**

Βλέπετε οὖν ἀκριβῶς πῶς περιπατεῖτε μὴ ὡς ἄσοφοι ἀλλ' ὡς σοφοί, <sup>16</sup> ἐξαγοραζόμενοι τὸν καιρὸν, ὅτι αἱ ἡμέραι πονηραὶ εἰσιν.

**NIV rendering:**

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

**Suggestion:**

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the best use of your time, because the days are evil.

**Rationale:**

According to a survey of the translations listed at Bible Gateway, the rendering of ἐξαγοραζόμενοι τὸν καιρὸν among English translations falls into three general choices. The “great tradition” chose to preserve the idea of a *buying* in the verb and rendered it “redeeming the time.” The most common choice is the one we are recommending, “making the best use of your time.” The NIV’s choice comes in third among the options listed there and is shared with several other translations, several of which (CEB, NET, GW) make readability their priority.

Our concern with this translation is that it seems to limit the expression more than the context does. We feel that in the minds of most Christians, “making the most of every opportunity” will invoke an outreach context. While we certainly applaud encouraging Christians to share their faith at every opportunity, we don’t believe that is what Paul was talking about in the immediate context here. BDAG agrees (although it also prefers the NIV’s choice) when it writes, “The context of **Col. 4:5** relates to opportunity for evangelism; **Eph 5:16** to avoidance of anything that interferes with understanding of the Lord’s will.”

The verb ἐξαγοράζω only occurs four times in the New Testament. In Galatians 3:15 and 4:5, in a context about Christ’s work, it has a very different sense. BDAG defines it as to “deliver” or “liberate.” The NIV chose to render it “redeem” in both of those verses, a good choice in our view. We agree that the average reader would not be helped by a mechanical resort to lexical concordance in these four verses, so we do not recommend “redeeming the time.” We agree with BDAG that in Colossians 4:5, outreach is in the context, so we don’t object to the NIV’s choice of “make the most of every opportunity” in that verse, although we would find “make the best use of your time” quite acceptable there as well.

We recognize that the CBT’s motive in “making the most of every opportunity” may, in part, be an attempt to distinguish καιρὸς from χρόνος. But we are not convinced that the NT usage of these two Greek words precludes them occupying some of the same semantic domain.

We note that modern translations such as the CSB and the ISB, at least one fairly “free” translation, the NLT, as well as some more literal translations such as the ESV and the NASB, and even the RSV family of translations prefer some version of “making the most of your time” here. That would seem to indicate that this translation choice would be acceptable across a wide spectrum of modern Bible students.

**Translation Suggestion for the NIV**  
**From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee**  
**May 2019**

**Bible Reference:**

1 Peter 1:10-11

**Original text:**

<sup>10</sup> Περὶ ἧς σωτηρίας ἐξεζήτησαν καὶ ἐξηραύνησαν προφῆται οἱ περὶ τῆς εἰς ὑμᾶς χάριτος προφητεύσαντες  
<sup>11</sup> ἐραυνῶντες εἰς τίνα ἢ ποῖον καιρὸν ἐδήλου τὸ ἐν αὐτοῖς πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ προμαρτυρούμενον τὰ εἰς Χριστὸν παθήματα καὶ τὰς μετὰ ταῦτα δόξας.

**NIV rendering:**

<sup>10</sup> Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, <sup>11</sup> trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.

**Suggestion:**

<sup>10</sup> Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care. <sup>11</sup> They were trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow.

**Rationale:**

Our suggestion is entirely stylistic. We feel that 1 Peter 1:10-11 is too much material for one English sentence.

**Translation Suggestion for the NIV**  
**From the WELS Translation Liaison Committee**  
**May 2019**

**Bible References:**

Hebrews 2:10; 12:2

**Original text:**

Heb 2:10 – Ἐπρεπεν γὰρ αὐτῷ, δι’ ὃν τὰ πάντα καὶ δι’ οὗ τὰ πάντα, πολλοὺς υἱοὺς εἰς δόξαν ἀγαγόντα τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτῶν διὰ παθημάτων τελειῶσαι.

Heb 12:2 – ἀφορῶντες εἰς τὸν τῆς πίστεως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν Ἰησοῦν, ὃς ἀντὶ τῆς προκειμένης αὐτῷ χαρᾶς ὑπέμεινεν σταυρὸν αἰσχύνης καταφρονήσας ἐν δεξιᾷ τε τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ κεκάθικεν.

**NIV rendering:**

Heb 2:10 – In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.

Heb 12:2 – fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

**Suggestion:**

Heb 2:10 – In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.

Heb 12:2 – fixing our eyes on Jesus, the founder and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

**Rationale:**

We do not believe that “pioneer” is a good gloss for ἀρχηγός. We understand the CBT wanted to move away from “author” because in the modern mind, the first meaning of an author is someone who writes something and it may take a moment to get to the idea of originator, the idea the Greek word conveys. But we don’t think “pioneer” will serve even as well as “author.” In the modern mind, we imagine pictures of Daniel Boone arising. But even leaving that aside, an online dictionary defines pioneer as “a person who is among the first to explore or settle a new country or area” and then “to develop or be the first to use or apply (a new method, area of knowledge, or activity).” Neither of these really seems to convey the idea in Hebrews that Jesus is the source and origin of our salvation. BDAG suggests both “originator” and “founder” as a gloss. Either would seem to do a better job conveying the sense of the Greek.