

About the Plain English Version

Many Indigenous Australians do not have access to God's Word in any form that they can understand. These are mainly people who know English only as a learned language and the English they use is very much shaped by the linguistic and semantic features of their mother tongue. There is currently no published Bible or even a New Testament that modifies its English to accommodate the linguistic or semantic features of Australian Indigenous languages. So this is why we are translating resources into this simplified form of English.

What Exactly Is the PEV?

The PEV is a translation of the Scriptures into the kind of English that is most easily understood by Indigenous Australian people whose mother tongue is an Aboriginal language. We aim for it to accurately convey the meaning of the original Scripture, with no obscurity, in the words and grammar used by the Indigenous people we want it to reach. We do not, however, violate the grammar or spelling rules of standard English, hence the PEV. It is not a Pidgin English or Kriol.

We aim to produce a version that will better communicate than currently available versions the meaning and message of the Scriptures to Indigenous Australians whose mother tongue is an Aboriginal language. To do this we need to have a much freer translation than is normal for an audience whose mother tongue is standard English. Feedback so far on the Plain English Version has all been positive. We urge all who are ministering to Indigenous Australians to promote the use of this

version and we request feedback on the target audience's comprehension of it, particularly if there is any place that is misunderstood or is obscure to them.

Our translation team applies specific procedures to modify the English as much as possible toward what has been shown by linguistic research to be most universal across the spectrum of Australian Indigenous languages. We also apply the principles of dynamic, or 'thought for thought' equivalence rather than formal or 'word for word' equivalence. Hence, we can give scientific justification, in terms of 'thought for thought', for every departure from a formal translation. All PEV translations get the approval of a qualified translation consultant before they are published. The major modifications are:

Vocabulary

The vocabulary used is restricted to what we have found to be more widely employed by our target audience. We are careful also with some of the words this audience uses to convey a meaning different from that of standard English. We frequently need to substitute an explanatory phrase for a single word in the original e.g. for the Greek word *doulos* which is usually translated as 'slave' or 'servant' in standard English we usually use '(one who) works for'.

I Peter 2:16

CEV: 'you are God's servants'

PEV: 'you belong to God and work for him'

Abstract Nouns

'Noun' is the grammatical term for a word that is a thing, except that Greek, Hebrew and English can take concepts that are not things and turn them into nouns. Grammatically these are called 'abstract nouns'. They cannot be detected by any of one's five senses—touch,

taste, smell, sight or hearing. And they occur all through the Bible. Some examples are: faith, grace, righteousness, justice, peace, salvation, wrath, mercy and wisdom, to name but a few.

Conceptually these are either actions or qualities. For example:

faith is conceptually the act of believing

wisdom is conceptually the quality of being wise

There are very few abstract nouns in Indigenous Australian languages because Indigenous people express these action or quality concepts as verbs or adjectives. Usually, when a speaker of an indigenous language hears an abstract noun in English he can find no noun in his own language to equate it with so he or she will struggle with its meaning. So in translating an abstract noun we go back to its basic concept and find the appropriate words to convey that concept, e.g.

1 Pet 1:3

NIV: 'a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead'

PEV: 'Jesus died, but God brought him back to life. From that we know God will save us too.'

Rom 5:4

CEV: 'endurance builds character'

PEV: 'after we learn to keep on believing, then we will become better people'

Passive Voice

This is a grammatical term used for verbs (action words) that do not indicate who does the action. e.g. Ephesians 2:8 NIV '... you have been saved...' does not indicate who does the saving.

In Greek or English, verbs can be stated either in the passive voice or in its counterpart, the active voice, which does state the doer of the action. However, no Aboriginal

language has the passive voice. Along with many African and Asian languages, their grammars just do not allow for this way of stating an action. Every action has to have something — a noun, pronoun or the like — to show who or what performs that action. So in the PEV we change the passive verbs into active verbs and supply the doers of the actions. e.g.

2 Thes.2:12

NIV: 'we had ... been insulted in Philippi'

PEV: 'Philippi people got really cheeky to us'

Note: The original text often has more than one issue in a sentence that we need to address, e.g. Eph. 2:8a has three abstract nouns and the passive voice:

NIV: 'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God'

PEV: 'God is really good to you. You believed in Jesus and God saved you. You did not do anything good but God saved you anyway. It did not cost you anything'

Figurative Speech

While we recognise that figurative speech adds 'punch' to an expression we also recognise that it is often obscure, and sometimes seriously misunderstood by people whose mother tongue does not have the same figures of speech. We aim, firstly, to convey the meaning of a figure, and secondly we include the picture words themselves if that helps. There are many different types of figurative speech in the Scriptures so I will give examples of only two of the more common types:

Metaphor, e.g.

2 Tim 4:7

NIV: 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith'

PEV: 'I did my job properly and finished all the work God gave me to do. I always told the true message about Jesus, even when it was hard to do so. I am like a man who runs a long race and keeps going hard right up to the finish line, and wins the race.'

The apostle Paul often uses the Greek *sarx*, (literally meaning 'meat/ flesh/ body'), as a metaphor meaning 'human (sinful) nature'. We usually render this as 'that old part of us that makes us do wrong', or something similar.

Personification e.g. of an abstract noun at:

Rom 7:11

NIV: 'For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.'

PEV: 'That bad part of me used the law to trick me so that I did bad things, and now I know that I will die.'

Order of Components of a Discourse

Study of discourse in Australian Indigenous languages shows that there is a preferred way that units of information are presented. Where possible we re-order the units to conform to this preference. Some cases involve:

Chronological order, e.g.

Mark 9:5-6

NIV: 'Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)'

PEV: 'Peter, James and John were very frightened and they didn't know what to say, but Peter talked anyway. He said to Jesus, "Teacher, this is great! We must put

up special bush shades; one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah!““

Reason-result—the order preferred over result-reason, e.g.

Luke 2:7

NIV: ‘placed him in a manger (result), because there was no room for them in the inn (reason).’

PEV: ‘they couldn’t find any room to stay in (reason), so they had to sleep out where the animals ate their food ... put him down to sleep in an animal’s feed box (result).’

In making these adjustments we sometimes have to rearrange the components of two or more verses. Since the arrangement of the Scriptures into chapters and verses was not part of the inspired text the authors originally wrote but was introduced hundreds of years later, we don't let verse boundaries interfere with our getting the meaning across clearly. For example in Mark 6, at verse 14 King Herod hears about Jesus sometime after he had killed John the Baptist. Then in the following verses Mark back tracks as far as Herod taking his brother's wife, and tells the story about John's execution. We found we had to put all of this in chronological order so at the start of this passage we have the verse enumeration as 14-29.

Implied or Background Information

We recognise that everyone, when saying something to another person, subconsciously takes into consideration what that other person already knows, and frames his statement accordingly. We also note that the speakers and writers of the Scriptures lived two thousand years or more ago and were in a different part of the world and were of a different culture to our target audience. Hence, our audience does not always know the things the

biblical writers expected their readers to know. So if that information is necessary for our audience to understand the text, we supply it. e.g.

Mark 14:27 NIV: 'for it is written'

The disciples did not need to be told who wrote it nor what authority it had. But we have found that most of our audience do not understand the significance of this statement unless they are given this information. So we render it:

PEV: 'A long time ago God got one of his men to write about this in his book. He wrote'

Indirect Speech

In Aboriginal languages the quotation of speech is almost always direct rather than indirect, so in the PEV we often change indirect speech into direct, e.g.

Rom 1:32

CEV: 'They know God has said that anyone who acts this way deserves to die.'

PEV: 'Long ago God said, "Anyone that does these kinds of things has got to die." These people know what God said'

Naturalness

We aim to accurately convey the author's message in a way that flows naturally, without the reader having to stop and figure anything out. To do this we sometimes include transitional or explanatory wording, e.g.

1 Pet 1:18-19 CEV: 'But you know that you were not rescued by such things as silver or gold that don't last forever. You were rescued by the precious blood of Christ, that spotless and innocent lamb.'

Given the target audience's minimal knowledge of gold, and less of the sacrificing of lambs, we render this passage:

PEV: 'So God didn't pay money to set you free. He did more than that. I'll tell you the price he paid for you. Do you remember the old Jewish ceremonies? Do you remember that they used to pick a young sheep that had nothing wrong with it, and they would bring that sheep to God? Well, that is a picture of Jesus. There was nothing wrong with him and he never did anything wrong. He was perfect. But they killed Jesus. He bled and died for you. This is the price God paid to set you free, and it is better than money, it lasts forever. Now you belong to God.'

Plain English Version
Portions of the Holy Bible in the Plain English Version translation
for Australian Aboriginal people who speak English as a second
language

Copyright © 2019 The Plain English Project

Language: Aboriginal English (English)

Dialect: Australian Aboriginal

This translation is made available to you under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivatives license 4.0.

You may share and redistribute this Bible translation or extracts from it in any format, provided that:

You include the above copyright and source information.

You do not sell this work for a profit.

You do not change any of the words or punctuation of the Scriptures.

Pictures included with Scriptures and other documents on this site are licensed just for use with those Scriptures and documents. For other uses, please contact the respective copyright owners.

2019-08-07

PDF generated using Haiola and XeLaTeX on 27 Sep 2019 from source files dated 8 Aug 2019

838c6f50-4b58-56fb-846b-7becf8890f94