

# Passages Explained

## *Gender Accuracy*

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### **Genesis 1:27 (TNIV)**

So God created **human beings** in his own image,  
in the image of God he created **them**;  
male and female he created them.

### **Genesis 1:27 (KJV)**

So God created **man** in his own image,  
in the image of God he created **him**;  
male and female created he them.

The TNIV's commitment to gender accuracy makes Genesis 1:27 easier to understand (and more important, less easy to *misunderstand*) in today's English.

What's going on here?

- Genesis 1 tells the story of creation: Out of nothing, God brings the world into existence. All of it—day, night, land, sea, plants, animals...and last (but definitely not least), people.
  - Hundreds of years ago (like when the King James Version was translated), “man” sometimes meant men *and* women—i.e., humanity. In fact, that’s *all* the word originally meant in Old English. In the 1300s, for example, they had a completely separate word for *male* human beings. (In case you’re interested, it was *wer*.)
  - Thing is, word meanings have this habit of changing with time. Over the years, people began to use “man” more and more in reference to *male* human beings...and “wer” completely disappeared from the English language. So for years “man” had to serve dual purposes—sometimes as a reference to males and sometimes a generic reference to humanity. But it didn’t start out that way.
  - Today you stand a good chance of being misunderstood if you use “man” in the generic sense. But there’s no question Genesis 1:27 is referring to humanity in general. The Hebrew word is *adam* (also the name of the planet’s very first human), a word the Old Testament writers used often to refer to human beings. And if there’s any doubt, notice the very next line about God creating them “male and female.” In poetry this is a device known as a “parallelism”—restating the same thing in a slightly different way.
  - Bottom line? The TNIV leaves no room for confusion about who is responsible for bringing both men *and* women into existence.
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### **Proverbs 3:1 (TNIV)**

My **son**, do not forget my teaching,  
but keep my commands in your heart...

### **Proverbs 3:1 (NLT)**

My **child**, never forget the things I have taught you.  
Store my commands in your heart.

Because the TNIV is built on the foundation of the NIV—the world’s most read, most trusted translation—sometimes it’s nice to see what they *didn’t* change.

What’s going on here?

- The TNIV’s commitment to gender accuracy means just that. People are referred to as people. Men are referred to as men. You get the picture.

- The TNIV translates the beginning of Proverbs 3:1 as “my son,” just like the NIV. Why? Because in all likelihood, what follows is a collection of wisdom that an actual father (probably Solomon) passed along to an actual son, once upon a time.
  - If there’s any doubt that we’re eavesdropping on one father’s heart-to-heart with his son (albeit in written, poetic form), just look at Proverbs 5, where the writer warns his son to stay away from the “lips of the adulterous woman.”
  - The TNIV—gender neutral? Not on your life. Gender accurate? You bet.
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**Matthew 5:9 (TNIV)**

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called **children** of God.

**Matthew 5:9 (NKJV)**

Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they shall be called **sons** of God.

Gender accuracy means not having to wonder if the kingdom of God is like a tree house with a “no girls allowed” sign on the door.

What’s going on here?

- Think about it. In one study, readers misinterpreted generic masculine references (masculine words used to refer to men and women) almost **90%** of the time.
  - It’s not as if there’s any question whether Jesus is referring to men *and* women in Matthew 5:9. The Greek *huioi* is a word that New Testament writers used figuratively to describe the relationship between God and his people. In such contexts, it refers to both men and women who are God’s children.
  - If there’s still any doubt, consider this. The TNIV isn’t exactly breaking new ground with its translation of Matthew 5:9. There was a time when every English Bible—including William Tyndale’s New Testament (1536) as well as the revered King James Version of 1611—translated *huioi* as “children” in this verse.
  - The TNIV returns to a more precise translation of Matthew 5:9, meaning that no one will ever have to wonder if becoming a child of God means undergoing a certain medical procedure first.
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**Mark 1:17 (TNIV)**

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will **send you out to fish for people.**”

**Mark 1:17 (NIV)**

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you **fishers of men.**”

When Jesus said this to his disciples, they didn’t have to wonder if he was referring to men and women. With the TNIV, you don’t have to either.

What’s going on here?

- One of our authors told us that one night he was reading this passage to his daughter. When he got to verse 17, she interrupted him and said, “When I grow up, I’m going to be a fisher of *women.*” Clearly she missed the point...because the language wasn’t clear for her.
- It doesn’t have to be that way. The word some times translated “men” is the Greek *anthrōpos*. Here’s a clue about its meaning: We get our English word “anthropology” (the study of humans) from it. Look it up in *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (the premier lexicon for New Testament Greek), and the first entry

you'll see is this: "a person of either sex, [with] focus on participation in the human race."  
That's a fancy way of saying "a human being—man or woman."

- In fact, in the New Testament, the plural form of *anthrōpos* refers to men *and* women almost 95% of the time. Thankfully, most contemporary translations, including the NLT, NCV, HCSB and, of course, the TNIV, get it right, using gender accurate language to capture the meaning of this passage with clarity that no one can miss.

### Luke 17:3 (TNIV)

"If a **brother or sister** sins against you, rebuke **them**; and if **they** repent, forgive **them**."

### Luke 17:3 (NIV)

"If your **brother** sins, rebuke **him**, and if he repents, forgive **him**."

The TNIV uses gender accurate language to ensure that no one misses the full meaning of Jesus' command.

What's going on here?

- Luke 17:3 uses the Greek word *adelphos*. Like most words, *adelphos* can mean a number of things, depending on the context. For example, it's the word you would use for your biological brother. But get this—the ancient Greeks also it used to refer to their male *and* female siblings. The leading lexicon for New Testament Greek even suggests that *adelphos* can be translated "neighbor" in some cases.
- Dozens of New Testament passages use *adelphos* figuratively, referring to believers. The idea is this: As followers of Jesus, we're connected to each other in a profound way—we're family. And women are just as much a part of that family as men are.
- The context leaves no room for doubt—Jesus wasn't just thinking of men when he said, "If an *adelphos* sins against you..." He's referring to anyone who is part of God's family. The TNIV captures this crucial aspect of meaning—without sacrificing the important family overtones of *adelphos*.
- Yeah, but what about that singular "they"? That's how the TNIV translates the Greek pronoun *autos* in Luke 17:3. Funny thing about pronouns...they always get their meaning from their antecedent (the word or words they refer back to). So if *adelphos* doesn't just mean "brother" in Luke 17:3, then *autos* doesn't just mean "him." Grammar 101.
- Problem is, English doesn't have singular pronoun that refers to both men and women. And more than one study has proven that a majority of readers miss the point when you use "he" or "him" generically. The good news is the English language has a solution that goes back hundreds of years—the singular "they." Shakespeare used it. C.S. Lewis used it. The King James Version uses it. Dictionaries and style guides (which are usually a bit slow to catch up to actual English usage) are even beginning to recommend it.
- But here's the most important thing to remember: The meaning of Luke 17:3 didn't mysteriously change overnight. It's not like the translators woke up one day and realized, "Hey! This passage refers to men *and* women!" That's exactly what it meant thirty years ago when they translated the NIV. But a new generation needs a new translation to accurately communicate the timeless truth of God's Word in *their* language.