

THE IMPROVED GENDER ACCURACY OF THE TNIV OVER THE NIV

Dr. David W. Miller, Senior Pastor
The Church at Rocky Peak
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INTRODUCTION: SENSATIONALISM SELLS

A recent newspaper story about the TNIV ran with the heading, “Politically correct gender-neutral Bible open to interpretation.” Ed Vitaliano, news editor for the American Family Association Journal titled his article, “New TNIV translation plays fast and loose with God’s Word.” World Magazine’s headline announced the TNIV as “The NIV’s Twisted Sister.” Such headings make conservative evangelicals cringe, thinking someone has altered the original text to fit cultural trends. Because of such negative press, I expected to find liberal mistranslation when I compared it with the original Greek. To my surprise, I instead discovered an amazing improvement in gender accuracy! While no translation is perfect, the TNIV is a marked improvement on the highly respected NIV.

A word of caution: Beware of the sensational negative publicity. Some usually reputable conservative publications lowered themselves to tabloid-like headlines in response to the TNIV.

GENDER NEUTRAL OR GENDER ACCURATE?

The term “gender neutral” has been used erroneously to describe inclusive language Bibles. The TNIV is in fact “gender accurate.” Gender neutrality suggests the removal of specific male or female attributes. The TNIV does not remove these attributes or “neuter” any passages of Scripture. The TNIV uses generic language only where the meaning of the text was intended to include both men and women. These changes reflect a better understanding of the meaning of the original Greek and Hebrew.

Anthropos Usually Includes Both Genders

Two Greek words, *anthropos* and *aner*, are at the center of the controversy. The NIV usually translates with generic masculines. While *aner* usually refers to males (men or husbands), *anthropos* is a more general term that most often refers to mankind in general—human beings of either gender. We get the term anthropology from a combination of the two Greek words: *anthropos* (mankind/human beings) and *logos* (word/study). Anthropology is the study of both male and female human beings, not just males.

Since *anthropos* is usually inclusive, the TNIV has improved upon the NIV far too many times to list all the examples here. The following passages are but a small sampling:

1. Matthew 4:4

NIV Jesus answered, “It is written: Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

TNIV Jesus answered, “It is written: People do not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

2. Matthew 4:19

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

TNIV “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to catch people.”

3. Matthew 5:16

NIV In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

TNIV In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Anthropos in James 5:17

James 5:17 is of interest because *anthropos* is used in reference to Elijah; yet the TNIV translates it “human,” not “man.” Is this an attempt to androgonize Elijah? Of

course not! The point of the passage is Elijah's humanity, not his maleness. James is saying that Elijah was a mere human being like we are human beings, and God answered his prayers.

Anthropos Sometimes Means "Males"

There are times when anthropos refers to a male person or persons. In such cases the TNIV retains a masculine rendering. For example:

1. Matthew 8:9a

For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me.

2. Matthew 9:9a

As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth.

3. Matthew 19:5

"...and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?'"

4. Matthew 25:14

Again, it will be like a man going on a journey who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them.

5. Matthew 27:57

As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus.

Anthropos in the Messianic Title "Son of Man"

The TNIV retains the masculine translation of anthropos in the Messianic title "Son of Man," as in Matthew 8:20 ("Jesus replied, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.' ") Based upon Daniel 7:13,

the Jewish people of Jesus' day understood that when Jesus constantly referred to himself as the "Son of Man," he was claiming a Messianic title.

This phrase could legitimately be translated "Son of Mankind" or "Son of Humanity" for two reasons—one linguistic and the other theological. Linguistically, the Aramaic term, enash (Hebrew, enosh), is a generic term referring to both males and females. The Aramaic root of enash is from nisu ("people") and tenisetu ("humanity, human race") (Brown-Driver-Briggs, p. 60). Theologically, Jesus was not technically "the son of the man" (a literal translation of the Greek huioi tou anthropou). No man was Jesus' father. Jesus was born of a woman (Galatians 4:4). There were more precise terms for males that could have been used, but the Holy Spirit chose terms that emphasized Jesus' humanness, not his maleness!

Anthropos in 1 Timothy 2:5

"For there is one God and one mediator between God and human beings, Christ Jesus, himself human." The Spirit chose anthropos to stress our Lord's humanity, not his masculinity. The point of the passage is not that Jesus was a male, who mediates between God and males. Fuzzy translations make for fuzzy doctrine. The clear truth is that Jesus was truly human, and is the one mediator between the one deity and all humanity, both men and women. That's what the Greek says, and that's how the TNIV translates it. Correct translations make for correct doctrine.

Aner Usually Means a Male Person

If the TNIV translators had an agenda to alter Scripture, then they would have played loosely with the Greek word aner. But they didn't. Anthropos is often generic, but aner usually has a masculine meaning, referring to an adult male or to a husband. The TNIV is careful to retain the masculine gender meaning of aner in almost every passage (88% of the time), except for a few valid, rare exceptions (12% of the time). For such exceptions the TNIV has felt the fiery attacks of critics. These attacks are based upon the mistaken idea that aner absolutely must refer to males only. For example, respected scholar Wayne Grudem of Phoenix Seminary has said that aner "occurs 216 times in the

New Testament, and there is no case where it clearly includes women.” However, many conservative scholars disagree with Grudem.

Aner in James 1:12

Almost all the respected commentaries agree that *aner* has no exclusively male gender specificity in James 1:12. The conservative Greek scholar, D. Edmond Hiebert makes this comment on *aner* in James 1:12: “The predicate noun ‘man’ (*aner*) is again used in the same general sense as in verse 8... with no thought of restricting the beatitude to the male sex. The noun is without an article, thus making it of general application, ‘anyone who’ has the indicated character.” (The Epistle of James, p. 9)

Other Passages Where Aner Includes Both Genders

A comparison of the NIV and TNIV’s handling of *aner* confirms the TNIV’s accuracy. Once the gender inclusiveness of the noun is established, the pronouns naturally follow for consistency. Note the following examples:

1. Romans 4:8

NIV Blessed is the man [*aner*] whose sin the Lord will never count against him.”

TNIV Blessed are those [*aner*] whose sin the Lord will never count against them.”

2. James 1:7-8*

NIV That man [*anthropos*] should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a doubleminded man [*aner*], unstable in all he does.

TNIV Those [*anthropos*] who doubt should not think they will receive anything from the Lord; they [*aner*] are double-minded and unstable in all they do.

*Note how *anthropos* and *aner* are used interchangeably.

3. James 1:12

NIV Blessed is the man [*aner*] who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

TNIV Blessed are those [aner] who persevere under trial, because when they have stood the test, they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

4. James 1:19-20

NIV for man's [aner] anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

TNIV because our [aner] anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

5. James 1:23-24

NIV Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man [aner] who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

TNIV Those who listen to the word but do not do what it says are like people [aner] who look at their faces in a mirror and, after looking at themselves, go away and immediately forget what they look like.

6. James 3:2

NIV We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man [aner], able to keep his whole body in check.

TNIV We all stumble in many ways. Those [aner] who are never at fault in what they say are perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

Grudem's strict definition of aner violates the obvious meaning of all the above passages. In these contexts, a male-only definition of aner logically leads to a male-only interpretation and application of these passages. But in each case cited, the meaning of aner clearly includes women. To follow Grudem's unyielding definition of aner is to make the Bible say something it does not say. To be more gender exclusive than the text allows is just as erroneous as to be more gender inclusive than the text permits.

Lexical Support for Aner Including Both Genders

Nearly all the lexical authorities support the idea that *aner* is at times gender inclusive. According to these authorities, *aner* is most often a reference to a male person, but *aner* infrequently includes both genders.

Aner in Acts 17:22

Acts 17:22 has drawn criticism because *aner* is translated “people of Athens” rather than “men of Athens.” The Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) criticized the TNIV, saying it “suggests that there were women debating on the Areopagus... [and] mistranslates Greek *aner*.” While I believe the TNIV should have retained the NIV’s translation in this case, one should be careful not to exclude all women from Paul’s audience. The fruit of Paul’s preaching in Acts 17 included at least one prominent woman named Damaris (Acts 17:34). Commentators have offered various explanations: Perhaps Damaris was a member of the educated class (Bruce), or perhaps others besides council members were present to hear Paul (Harrison). Can anyone say for certain that Damaris was not present when Paul addressed the crowd in Acts 17:22? The TNIV has contextual support for its translation.

Aner in Acts 20:30

While I usually agree with the TNIV’s handling of *aner*, I do not agree in Acts 20:30. I believe this passage suggests that false teachers will come from within the select group of elders, not the church at large. F.F. Bruce writes that these teachers will come “from the ranks of the leaders of the church” (The Book of Acts, p. 417). However, there is room for disagreement here. John Stott’s commentary agrees with the TNIV: “[Wolves] will arise even from within the church” (The Spirit, The Church and The Word: The Message of Acts, p. 327).

All translation entails some subjectivity, making it difficult for any serious student of the Word to agree with every decision made by a translation. While I do not agree with the TNIV’s rendering of Acts 20:30, I would not use this passage to defend my belief in male eldership. That those elders happened to be men is not a prescriptive standard for eldership. However, Acts 20:30 is another example of the reality that all those who

served as elders in the New Testament were men. Likewise, no one could use the Acts 20:30 in the TNIV as evidence for female elders!

THE TNIV DOES NOT DO AWAY WITH “ANYTHING MASCULINE”

World Magazine writer Joel Belz said of the TNIV, “The editors of this Bible have a preoccupation of doing away with anything masculine.” Such a comment is not only a sensational exaggeration; it is a serious distortion of the truth. The TNIV preserves everything masculine where doing so is true to the meaning of the text:

- The TNIV makes no attempt to feminize or neutralize God. God’s gender is always male, as the original Greek requires.
- The TNIV makes no attempt to feminize or neutralize Jesus Christ. In the TNIV Jesus’ gender is always male, as the original Greek requires.
- The TNIV makes no attempt to feminize or neutralize the Holy Spirit. In the TNIV the Holy Spirit’s gender is always male.
- The TNIV makes no attempt to do away with male headship in the home or church.

The Husband’s Role in the TNIV

The TNIV carefully retains the proper male meaning of *aner* in passages addressing the husband’s role in the home:

1. 1 Corinthians 7:2

But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband.

2. Ephesians 5:22

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.

3. Ephesians 5:23

For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.

4. Ephesians 5:24

Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

5. Ephesians 5:33

However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

6. Colossians 3:18

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

7. Titus 2:4-5

Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will align the word of God.

8. 1 Peter 3:1

Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives,

9. 1 Peter 3:5

For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They submitted themselves to their own husbands.

Gender and the Church in the TNIV

The TNIV also retains the masculine gender meaning of *aner* in the passages relating to the role of men in the church:

1. Acts 1:21

Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us.

2. Acts 6:3

“... choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them.”

3. 1 Timothy 2:8

I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.

4. 1 Timothy 3:2

Now the overseer must be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

5. 1 Timothy 3:12

A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well.

6. Titus 1:6

An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.

In Titus 1:6 the TNIV Adds “Man”

Titus 1:6 deserves mention because the TNIV adds “a man,” making the masculine identity of the elder even stronger. This is clear evidence that the TNIV has no agenda to force an egalitarian understanding of church leadership.

In *Distorting Scripture*, Mark Strauss wonders why there has been no uproar over the many additions of the words “man” or “men” where there is no equivalent term in the Greek text: “In the NIV there are 1,357 verses where the English words ‘man’ or ‘men’

appear with no corresponding term in the Greek or Hebrew. Those who are so concerned about retaining the form of the original Greek or Hebrew should be outraged at such ‘additions’ to God’s word.”

Gender and Deacons in 1 Timothy 3:11

One of the most controversial offices in the church is the female deacon. The NIV translates 1 Timothy 3:11a: “In the same way, their wives must be respected, and must not speak evil of others.” The TNIV translates: “In the same way, women who are deacons are to be worthy of respect, not malicious talkers.” The TNIV opens the door for women to serve as deacons. Clearly, the TNIV is the preferred translation. Otherwise Scripture would hold a deacon’s wife to a higher standard than an elder’s wife, since elders’ wives are given no standards. How odd it would be for God to require deacons’ wives to meet certain standards, but have no such standards for the wives of the elder, which the elder holds a higher office than the deacon!

There is another reason to support the TNIV’s rendering. Following his discussion of the qualifications for elders, Paul uses the phrase “In the same way” to introduce the office of deacon in 1 Timothy 3:9. The same phrase is used again in 3:11, so it makes sense that it again points to a new office or a new category within that office. Since the office of deacon is clearly in the immediate context of 1 Timothy 3:11, then the plural, *gynaikas*, which means “women” must relate to the office of deacon.

Gender and Deacons in Romans 16:1 in the TNIV

In a similar vein, I also concur with the TNIV’s translation of Romans 16:1. The NIV calls Phoebe “a servant of the church,” and the TNIV calls her, “a deacon of the church.” The NIV and NASB offer a footnote option of “deaconess,” while the TNIV puts “servant” in the footnote. This passage will always be debated, because the Greek word can mean either “servant” or “deacon,” depending on the context. Our word “deacon” is a transliteration of its sound-alike Greek counterpart, *diakonos*.

Gender Accuracy in 1 Corinthians 11 in the TNIV

Liberals often cite 1 Corinthians 11 as an example of the political incorrectness of the Bible. A simple reading of selections from the TNIV's translation 1 Corinthians 11 show there is no diluting of politically incorrect gender roles:

“But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God... For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have authority over her own head.”

The above passage is a challenge for anyone to interpret, but no one can say the TNIV made this passage gender neutral!

CHANGING “BROTHERS” TO “BROTHERS AND SISTERS” IN THE TNIV

The TNIV has done us all a favor with its translation of adelphoi (traditionally, “brothers”). The term is found nearly 350 times in the New Testament. Sometimes it means literal biological brother(s) as in Matthew 4:18a, in which case the TNIV translates accordingly. However, adelphoi was often used as an expression for spiritual brothers and sisters in the family of God. In this case, adelphoi does not exclude women. For this reason the TNIV correctly translates with the phrase, “brothers and sisters.” Almost every teacher of the Word has had to stop after reading a verse that begins with “brothers” to quickly say, “This includes both brothers and sisters in Christ.”

Note the following examples in which women are clearly included in the original context:

1. Romans 12:1

NIV Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God this is your spiritual act of worship.

TNIV Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God this is your proper worship as rational beings.

2. 1 Corinthians 15:58

NIV Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

TNIV Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

3. Philippians 4:8

NIV Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable if anything is excellent or praiseworthy think about such things.

TNIV Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable if anything is excellent or praiseworthy think about such things.

Brothers and Sisters in Hebrews 2:17

The TNIV has taken some heat due to its translation of Hebrews 2:17: “For this reason he [Jesus] had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest.” Wayne Grudem made this outlandish comment regarding the TNIV’s rendering: “Did Jesus have to become like a sister in every way? This text does not quite proclaim an androgynous Jesus, but it comes close.” Focus on the Family Vice President Tom Minnery went even further, with the following prediction: “I can see, down the road, proponents of gay activism suggesting that Jesus is not fully man if he ‘became like his sisters in every way,’ and that would seem to even give biblical license to transsexuals to change their sexuality.”

First, the TNIV never says Jesus was to be made like his sisters in every way, but that he was made like his brothers and sisters. Second, Jesus is called a “he,” not a “she” or a “he-she.” The TNIV makes clear that Jesus was a male, not a female or a hermaphrodite. No sane person could read the TNIV New Testament and think Jesus was anything other than a Jewish boy who grew up to be Jewish man. Third, the point of this

passage is not that Jesus was made a male human with male genitals and male hormones who only can relate to males! The point of the incarnation is that Jesus became human, and can therefore relate to all humanity, even women! Jesus became like his sisters in their humanity, but obviously not in their sexuality.

What if someone interpreted 1 John 4:17 (“in this world we are like him”) to mean female believers become like Jesus in his gender? Would that be a reason to reject the translation? To do so would be as ridiculous as it is to claim that the TNIV’s translation of Hebrews 2:17 suggests an androgynous Jesus.

CHILDREN OF GOD IN THE TNIV

The TNIV has also clarified the meaning of the term *huios* (traditionally, “son”). As with the term “brothers,” the term “sons” is not meant to exclude women who are daughters of God. It is rare for the Greek New Testament to use both “sons” and “daughters” in the New Testament (see Acts 12:17 & 2 Corinthians 6:18). Instead, authors used the shorthand “sons” to include males and females who are the spiritual offspring of God. Note the following example:

Galatians 3:26:

NIV You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,

TNIV So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.

Sonship in Romans 8:14-16 in the TNIV

There are times when sonship has a theological significance. The TNIV does a masterful job in Romans 8:14-16, first translating *huios* as “children” while keeping the masculine concept of sonship in its translation of *hiothesia* (TNIV, “adoption to sonship”):

The TNIV’s translation is not an inconsistency, but a needed change that brings an important point to light. The Greek term *hiothesia* is derived from the combination of two words: *huios* (“son”) and *thesis* (“a placing”). The term is not found in the Septuagint or any of the Hellenistic (culturally Greek) Jewish writing of Paul’s day. Nor was the practice of legal adoption officially recognized among Jewish people (see Douglas Moo,

Romans, p. 501). This means Paul must have been referring specifically to a Greco-Roman custom.

To understand Paul's analogy one must understand that Greco-Roman adoption custom gave higher priority to sons. Adoption was more frequent in Greco-Roman society than it is in the United States today. Adoption meant that a new son was chosen by his father, had any past debts cancelled, received the family name and became entitled to the inheritance of his new father. At the same time, the new father owned all his adopted son's property, held the right to discipline his son, assumed responsibility for support and reserved final say in his son's relationships (see Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, p. 62). Daughters could be adopted; but in general, sons were much preferred to daughters—to such a degree that many unwanted infant girls were left to die.

So the TNIV's translation is necessary to accurately capture Paul's point that both males and females are adopted into God's new family. Both males and females get the same status of legal sonship. Bravo TNIV!

In his commentary on Romans 8:14-15, John MacArthur repeatedly interprets "son of God" and "adoption as sons" as gender neutral phrases (*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on Romans 1-8*, pp. 430-437). Here is a partial list of phrases found in his commentary on this passage:

- "God's children are secure in Him." (p. 430)
- "God leads His children by illumination." (p. 431)
- "...even God's own children." (p. 433)
- "The Spirit leads God's children." (p. 433)
- "...our adoption as God's children." (p. 434)
- "...permanently adopted as children of God." (p. 435)
- "The adopted child attains all the rights." (p. 435)
- "God...seeks out unworthy men and women ...and makes them His children." (p. 436)
- "Believers...are indeed God's adopted children. (p. 437)

“FATHERS” CHANGED TO “PARENTS” IN HEBREWS 12

The TNIV changes “fathers” to “parents” in several passages, including Hebrews 12. The Greek word *pater(es)* is a word with more than one meaning—one of which is primary and another that is less common. The primary meaning of *pater(es)* is “father(s),” but “parent(s)” is a legitimate secondary meaning, especially when *pater(es)* is plural. Rather than quote the lexical authorities, I will again quote John MacArthur, this time from his commentary on Ephesians 6:4 (NIV, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”).

The TNIV retains the primary translation of “fathers,” in Ephesians 6:4, but MacArthur argues for a more inclusive meaning (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians, p. 316):

Though *pateres* (fathers) usually referred to male parents, it was sometimes used of parents in general. Paul has been speaking about both parents in the preceding three verses, and it seems likely that he still has both in mind in this term in verse 4. The same word is used in Hebrews 11:23 to refer to Moses’ parents.

Is John MacArthur to be castigated as a liberal for promoting a gender-inclusive definition of *pateres* in Ephesians 6:4? Of course not! Is MacArthur in error for thinking that *pateres* means “parents” in Ephesians 6:4? I think so, and so do the TNIV translators. (Though I highly recommend MacArthur’s commentaries for the students lacking a background in Greek or Hebrew.)

Paul just used the more specific Greek word for parents (*goneus*) in 6:1 (“Children, obey your parents.”) and switched to *pateres* in verse four. It seems Paul wanted to focus upon the father’s role as the leader-parent in raising children. But there is room for disagreement here. However, one has no more right to accuse the TNIV editors of having a liberal, feminist agenda than one has the right to accuse MacArthur of having such an agenda in his commentary on Ephesians.

MacArthur also interprets *pateres* inclusively in Hebrews 12, a passage for which the TNIV has been severely criticized by some. Note the following passage from MacArthur’s commentary on Hebrews 12:9 (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Hebrews, p 337):

It is the disciplined child who respects his parents. The surest way for a parent to lose, or never gain his child's respect is never to correct or punish him, no matter how terrible the child's behavior. Even when they are growing up, children instinctively know that a parent who disciplines fairly is a parent who loves and cares. They also realize that a parent who always lets them have their own way is a parent who does not care.

If such a highly respected conservative pastor repeatedly uses the word "parent(s)" in his commentary on Hebrews 12:9, then why should there such a concern if the TNIV translates accordingly? The hue and cry against the TNIV is especially strange since it is almost universally agreed that pateres can mean parents! Almost every Bible translates pateres as "parents" in Hebrews 11:23 ("By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months."). Why? The context demands it. For the same reason the TNIV translated pater(es) as "parents" in Hebrews 12: 7,9-10:

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their parents? ...Moreover, we have all had human parents who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our parents disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.

I highlighted "the Father of our Spirits" to emphasize that the TNIV has no politically correct, gender-tampering agenda. If it did, it surely would have changed this to "the Parent of our spirits."

ENDORISING THE TNIV DOES NOT MEAN A DENIAL OF CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICAL VALUES

The TNIV has several strengths, but one of the greatest is its gender accuracy. In my opinion, the TNIV also has a few weaknesses (as all translations do). However, unjustifiably neutering Scripture is not one of them. Thus, after doing some research of the TNIV, I offered my endorsement. It was direct and to the point:

The TNIV is not gender-sensitive, it is gender accurate.
It simply says it like God said it. I'm ready to switch over!

From this endorsement of the TNIV I received some interesting attacks. The following diatribe was sent by e-mail to most of our staff at the Church at Rocky Peak:

[This] sounds like what the Jehovah's Witnesses do... Maybe you think someone should write a new book to explain it better than the Bible does... That's what the Holy Spirit does; He makes sense of what can't be made sense of. What's next, Dr. David W. Miller? Is homosexuality okay, or maybe premarital sex, or pornography? Are you opening the door for the Devil, or is He or is She already a part of your church? Yes, the devil can raise a big church, just look at the Mormons... So don't pat yourself on the back because of your big church, maybe the devil has his hand in it... Please don't be offended, I had to write this and I didn't do it out of hate, but from my heart.

It is difficult to know how to answer such illogical, emotional outbursts. I teach what the Bible teaches about homosexuality, premarital sex and pornography—they are all sins. I have never sought to raise a big church, only a biblical church that stands on the Word of God as its final authority.

The sad reality is that there will be many such irrational reactions to the TNIV like the e-mail I received. In the long run, I am confident that cooler heads will prevail, not the reactionary hotheads. My best guess is that TNIV will become a best-selling, respected and trusted translation for English speaking believers for many years to come. Certainly there is room for debate about which version should be preferred, but many keen minds that have been illuminated by the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures will embrace the TNIV.

RESPECTED EVANGELICAL LEADERS APPLAUD AND DENOUNCE THE TNIV

Baptist preacher Jerry Falwell wrote in his *National Liberty Journal* that the TNIV “is nothing more than acquiescence to feminists.” John R. Stott, Rector Emeritus of All Souls Church in London writes that the TNIV “is highly successful in combining both scholarly accuracy and linguistic relevance.”

I respect and love many critics of the TNIV. Some who have rejected the TNIV are reputable theologians like R. C. Sproul. Others are outstanding Christian leaders like Dr. James Dobson. I am pained most by those committed, conservative Christians who lack the linguistic schooling to evaluate the TNIV for themselves and must make a decision based upon the studies of others. Dr. Dobson humbly admitted such dependence in his disapproval of the TNIV: “Being neither a theologian nor a linguist, I am not qualified to make an assessment of the translation accuracy of the recently released

TNIV. However, I have now received sufficient feedback from a large number of evangelical scholars to convince me that this new work is a step backward in the field of biblical translation.”

I stand shoulder to shoulder with Dr. Dobson against the evils that threaten the family today, including a politically correct feminism that alters the gender of God or dilutes the headship of the husband or denies the male spiritual leadership in the church. God has used Dr. Dobson and Focus on the Family as a voice for truth in our land. But I believe Dr. Dobson’s suggestion that the TNIV “alters God’s Word or toys with translation methodology for the sake of political correctness” was baseless. As I have attempted to show, the TNIV does not impose a politically correct translation methodology, but strives to provide an accurate translation that does not inaccurately exclude women.

The following is just a few of the respected evangelical leaders who endorse the TNIV: Philip Yancey, John R. Stott, Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., Michael Green, Jim Cymbala, Jay Kesler, Stuart Brisco and Myron Augsburger. Of course, who and how many back the TNIV are not as important as why and what grounds they have for their support.

Craig Blomberg, Ph.D., Professor of New Testament at the Conservative Baptist Denver Seminary summarizes the rationale for welcoming the TNIV: “The TNIV avoids the overly free translation of certain texts that previous gender-inclusive translations have included, while rendering gender-inclusive uses of ‘man,’ ‘he,’ ‘brothers,’ and the like with appropriate, contemporary English exactly corresponding to the meaning of the original Greek or Hebrew. Not to do this leaves a Bible that increasingly misleads the modern reader; as the father of two daughters I know first hand how this works! And I remain a complementarian with respect to gender roles; the two issues are quite separate.”

THE GOOD AND BAD OF THE TNIV CONTROVERSY

The TNIV debate is causing many to dig deeper into many issues, especially the meaning of certain Greek terms and the question of valid translation methodology. When respected evangelical scholars are divided on a new translation, it spurs many to do more

research into the Word of God. Many in my church family have told me that they have learned much due to the dispute over the accuracy of the TNIV. My own study over these issues has sharpened my understanding as well.

Another positive aspect of the TNIV debate is the potential it has for improving the TNIV. I find several weaknesses in the TNIV, but I still find it superior to the NIV I now use. As with all new versions, there are sure to be many revisions along the way.

There is also a dark side to this debate. While evangelicals should “agree to disagree” over the TNIV, the debate has already become more divisive than necessary. Lively debate is healthy, but demagoguery and mean-spirited name-calling is harmful to the body of Christ. We must take care not to judge the motives of those who take either side of the TNIV controversy. Translating the Word of God is serious business. Both sides should acknowledge that the other has no hidden agenda, but are people of integrity who desire the truth of God’s inerrant Word to be correctly translated from ancient foreign languages into present day English.

THE TNIV AND 2 TIMOTHY 3:16

I am unashamed of my enthusiastic support for the TNIV New Testament. I thank the Lord for another accurate version of His Holy Scriptures. I recall the day I first read the NIV in the early 1970’s and came across 2 Timothy 3:16: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” My initial reaction was exhilaration: Finally a version said what God said about his word—that it is “God-breathed!” There was no way the older term, “inspired,” with all its many confusing meanings, could come close to the clear meaning of “God-breathed.” Now the TNIV has made that passage even clearer. No longer must my wife or two daughters read a mistranslation of 2 Timothy 3:17: “that the man (anthropos = a human person of either gender) of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Thanks to the TNIV, everyone in my family and everyone in my church, both male and female, can read what God breathed for that passage: “that the people of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” The finest translation of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 in the NIV just got better with TNIV!

I will continue to devote my life and ministry to doing my “best to present myself to God “as one approved, being “a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15, TNIV).