

Small changes made to guidelines

THREE CHANGES DETAILED IN A WORD FROM CBMW PRESIDENT WAYNE GRUDEM

AFTER CONSIDERING COMMENTS FROM many people, the signers of the Colorado Springs translation guidelines on gender-related language in Scripture (*CBMW NEWS* 2:3, p. 6) have agreed to the following changes:

Guideline change #1

A.3. "Man" should ordinarily be used to designate the human race [DELETE: **or human beings in general**], for example in Genesis 1:26-27; 5:2; Ezekiel 29:11; and John 2:25.

This is because the phrase was confusing and widely misunderstood. Many people thought we meant that women should always be called "men," which we surely did not intend!

Guideline change #2

B.1. "Brother" (*adelphos*) should not be changed to "brother or sister"; [ADD: **however, the plural *adelphoi* can be translated "brothers and sisters" where the context makes clear that the author is referring to both men and women.**]

This does not say it *has* to be translated that way, but that it can be. (Translators still might want to keep "brothers" for the sake of continuity in Bible translations, for example, and they should keep "brothers" where only men are in view or the context is ambiguous.) This change is a result of much evidence from Greek lexicons and Greek literature that we were unaware of earlier (see further information below).

Guideline change #3

C. We understand these guidelines to be representative and not exhaustive, [ADD: **and that some details may need further refinement.**]

The endorsers of the statement recognize that there may yet be new information or more precise ways of formulating certain things, but they would only be refinements, not fundamental changes.

Evidence regarding *adelphoi* as "brothers and sisters"

Many times the plural word *adelphoi* means "brothers," and refers only to males. But in Greek, the masculine plural form of a word is also used when referring to a mixed group of men and women. In the following actual sentences from Greek literature, the sense "brother and sister" or "brothers and sisters" seems to be required:

1. That man is a cousin of mine: his mother and my father were *adelphoi*.
2. My father died leaving me and my *adelphoi* Ted and Thelma as his heirs, and his property devolved upon us.
3. The footprints of *adelphoi* should never match (of a man and of a woman): the man's is greater.
4. An impatient and critical man finds fault even with his own parents and children and *adelphoi* and neighbors.¹

In standard English, we just don't say, "My brothers Ted and Thelma." So the Greek plural *adelphoi* sometimes has a different sense from English "brothers." In fact, the major Greek lexicons for over 100 years have said that *adelphoi*, which is the plural of the word *adelphos*, "brother," sometimes means "brothers and sisters" (so BAGD, 1957 and 1979; Liddell-Scott-Jones, 1940 and even 1869).

This material was new evidence for those of us who wrote the May 27 guidelines — we weren't previously aware of this pattern of Greek usage outside the Bible. Once we saw these examples and others like them, we felt we had to make some change in the guidelines.

One other factor influencing our decision was that the masculine *adelphos* and the feminine *adelphē* are just different forms (masculine and feminine) of the same word *adelph-*, which is again different from English where bro- and sis- are completely different roots. (The root *adelph-* is from *a-*, which means "from," and *delphus*, "womb," [LSJ, p. 20] and probably had an early sense of "from the same womb.")

Therefore in the New Testament, when Paul wrote, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers (*adelphoi*), in view of God's mercy..." (Rom. 12:1), it seems that the original hearers would have heard him to say something very much like "brothers and sisters" in English today. (Or technically "siblings," but that is not the way anyone speaks to anyone else today: would we say, "Therefore, I urge you, siblings...?")

Why then does the New Testament sometimes specify "brothers and sisters," putting both masculine (*adelphoi*) and feminine (*adelphai*) forms (as in Matt. 19:29 or Mark 10:30)? Sometimes the authors may have specifically included feminine forms to make it very clear that women as well as men were included in a certain statement (since *adelphoi* could at times mean only "brothers").

These changes will now be included in all future printings of the guidelines. I think they make the guidelines stronger, more accurate, and more likely to gain general acceptance from the broader Christian world.

The full text of the guidelines is available at www.cbmw.org

1. The quotations are found in the following sources: (1) Andocides, *On the Mysteries* 47 (approx. 400 B.C.); (2) *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 713, 20-23 (97 A.D.; with Greek names Diodorus and Theis, not Ted and Thelma); (3) Euripides, *Electra* 536 (5th cent. B.C.); (4) Epictetus, *Discourses* 1.12.20-21 (approx 130 A.D.).

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COUNCIL MEMBERS

- Gleason Archer, Ph.D.
Professor of Old Testament,
Trinity International University
Deerfield, IL
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American Association of Medical
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- James Borland, Th.D.
Professor of New Testament and Theology,
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Theological Seminary, Charlotte Extension
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Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary,
Wake Forest, NC
- Beverly LaHaye
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Women for America, Washington, D.C.
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Christendom College,
Front Royal, VA
- Dorothy Patterson, D.Min.
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Interest magazine, Wheaton, IL
- Larry Walker, Dr. Theol.
Memphis, TN
- Bruce A. Ware, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Biblical and
Systematic Theology, Trinity International
University, Deerfield, IL
- William Weinrich, Ph.D.
Vice President of Academic Affairs
Concordia Theological Seminary,
Ft. Wayne, IN