

What does Lk.1:17 mean that fathers will turn to children? Where do we see this happening in the scripture?

Turning the hearts of parents and children toward each other is a marker of repentance, forgiveness, harmony, and love. A people prepared for the Lord will not turn away from each other, but live in love **toward** each other as they await the coming of the savior. This preparation and reconciliation extends outside of the household as well, as God calls us to love Him and serve our neighbors. John preached of the kingdom that was at hand and urged the people to repent, to turn from their selfish, hateful, broken ways and to humble themselves before God's mercy. We see in scripture that John had followers and that he baptized many people with a baptism of repentance. To this day, we are also called to repentance and love toward another as we await the second coming of Christ, who has already made reconciliation with God and others possible through his death and resurrection.

Paul adds: vs.16- John will bring back many of Israel to the Lord, which is repentance. Vs.17 "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord," which is a repentant heart (contrition and faith). In between see the parallelism of father/disobedient and children/wisdom of the righteous. On that basis some understand this as John using the good sense of righteous people to turn and convert disobedient people.

Was Zechariah sinless, according to Lk.1:6?

The scriptures speak of multiple people as either righteous, blameless or having followed all of God's commandments. Examples of these are Noah, Abraham, Job, Zechariah, and Simeon. Does this mean that these people are without sin? NO! Romans 3:23 tells us that no person is without sin. Each of these people is also recorded as having sinned. Blameless meant that these people followed God and obeyed the commandments as best they could, and in relationship with God, He forgave and restored them continually.

The better question may be, why would the scripture put this detail in this place? Likely because it directly related to perception about why Zechariah and Elizabeth could not have a child. The Jewish people believed that sickness, harm, and things like infertility were all direct consequences of and punishment for sins. Luke is likely being careful to let the reader know that Zechariah, like Abraham, is not childless because God is punishing them for sin.

Paul adds: "Both of them were righteous in the sight of God" (other translations have upright). It is forensic righteousness, justified, not guilty because of faith in God's promised

forgiveness given through sacrifices that pointed to Jesus' sacrifice. The evidence or fruit of that faith was in their godly life, which was blameless in the eyes of people.

What about gender neutral, inclusive pronouns in Lk.1:17?

Last week, there was a concern from multiple people that the NIV had been edited to make the language more gender neutral in an effort to be more "inclusive". There is some truth to this, but in today's political and cultural climate, the intent and effect of the translation can be easily misunderstood and mislabeled.

In order to understand the translational choices, we must understand the goals of the translators. Some translators want to honor the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts in a way that translates each word most accurately, which can often end up with a "wooden" translation which is very difficult to read in the target language since sentence structure, idioms, and other linguistic aspects simply do not line up. On the other hand, some translators want to make sure that the intended meaning of the Greek and Hebrew texts is conveyed to the reader. This makes for smooth, understandable reading, but errs on the side of not translating each word in its exact definition.

One thing that is very helpful to understanding the bible you own is to go to the opening pages and read the translators' preface, in which they make clear their intent, method, benefits, and shortcomings of their work.

One concern of this NIV translation is the removal of gender specific pronouns. While it is easy to assume that the translators had an agenda toward political correctness due to our current cultural moment, the NIV's preface tells us that the clear goal for these changes was to convey the intended meaning of the original writings to the modern-day audience. This does not change the meaning of the text, but the phrasing in its target language (English).

An important thing to keep in mind is that although the Greek and Hebrew text do not change, target languages, such as English, change constantly and rapidly. 50 years ago, the word man may have been easily read as mankind, but today, people read and speak in ways that explicitly mentions and interprets gender. It simply is part of the natural development of language. In our study last week, “fathers” was changed to “parents” because fathers would have been understood to be the head of the household. If a father was reconciled to their child, so was the mother. This would not be clear to a contemporary reader. Changes like this help the reader understand the intended meaning.

Another very important thing to observe is that the NIV, to my knowledge, does not omit the gender specific pronouns for specific individuals, nor does it make **God** gender neutral. The goal is not to get rid of gender specific pronouns, but to convey that groups of people were addressed through male pronouns in the time of the original events and writings whereas they would today, be gender neutral (all people) or explicitly inclusive (men and women). A quirky example would be of someone in the future reading “hey, guys!” and assuming only the men in a group were being addressed.

One of the most important things to acknowledge is that these translational variances make nearly no difference in how the scripture is understood. These small details can be distracting, but they should not overshadow our focus on the text and its meaning as a whole. No translation is perfect or 100% accurate. Mistakes will be made, corrected, and made again in each one. These translations are not the inspired word of God. The original writings are. All translations are simply the best attempt of broken humans trying to share the gospel with the world. That is not to say that all translations are equally valid. But each translation has a specific purpose and may succeed at that while failing in other ways.

Please see excerpts from the NIV’s preface below:

The first concern of the translators has continued to be the accuracy of the translation and its faithfulness to the intended meaning of the biblical writers. This has moved the translators to go beyond a formal word-for-word rendering of the original texts. Because thought patterns and syntax differ from language to language, accurate communication of the meaning of the biblical authors demands constant regard for varied contextual uses of words and idioms and for frequent modifications in sentence structures.

One of the main reasons the task of Bible translation is never finished is the change in our own language, English. Although a basic core of the language remains relatively stable, many diverse and complex linguistic factors continue to bring about subtle shifts in the meanings and/or connotations of even old, well-established words and phrases. One of the shifts that creates particular challenges to writers and translators alike is the manner in which gender is presented. The original NIV (1978) was published in a time when “a man” would naturally be understood, in many contexts, to be referring to a person, whether male or female. But most English speakers today tend to hear a distinctly male connotation in this word. In recognition of this change in English, this edition of the NIV, along with almost all other recent English translations, substitutes other expressions when the original text intends to refer generically to men and women equally. Thus, for instance, the NIV (1984) rendering of 1 Corinthians 8:3, “But the man who loves God is known by God” becomes in this edition “But whoever loves God is known by God.” On the other hand, “man” and “mankind,” as ways of denoting the human race, are still widely used. This edition of the NIV therefore continues to use these words, along with other expressions, in this way.

A related shift in English creates a greater challenge for modern translations: the move away from using the third-person masculine singular pronouns—“he/him/his”—to refer to men and women equally. This usage does persist at a low level in some forms of English, and this revision therefore occasionally uses these pronouns in a generic sense. But the tendency, recognized in day-to-day usage and confirmed by extensive research, is away from the generic use of “he,” “him,” and “his.” In recognition of this shift in language and in an effort to translate into the “common” English that people are actually using, this revision of the NIV generally uses other constructions when the

biblical text is plainly addressed to men and women equally. The reader will frequently encounter a “they,” “their,” or “them” to express a generic singular idea. Thus, for instance, Mark 8:36 reads: “What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?” This generic use of the “indefinite” or “singular” “they/them/their” has a venerable place in English idiom and has quickly become established as standard English, spoken and written, all over the world. Where an individual emphasis is deemed to be present, “anyone” or “everyone” or some other equivalent is generally used as the antecedent of such pronouns.

The committee has again been reminded that every human effort is flawed—including this revision of the NIV. We trust, however, that many will find in it an improved representation of the Word of God, through which they hear his call to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and to service in his kingdom. We offer this version of the Bible to him in whose name and for whose glory it has been made.