Chapter 11: Divine Familial Terms

Objective: _Participants will understand what Divine Familial Terms are and will commit to assuring that Divine Familial Terms will be translated accurately. They will understand WA's policy on how the DFTs must be translated, and will know how to use the guides for reviewing translations of "Father" and "Son"._

Core Concepts:
- God intentionally referred to Himself as "Father" and Jesus as His Son when He inspired Scripture.
- These familial terms of the Godhead (Divine Familial Terms) must be translated accurately, or important theological truths will be lost.

For [our Lord Jesus Christ] received from God the Father honor and glory from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (2 Pet. 1:17).

When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:16-17).

Intro:
We are going to talk about a doctrinal belief called Divine Familial Terms.

This is a hard phrase. This doctrinal belief is about the **terms _Father_ and _Son_ when used for God and Jesus**. It is related to the doctrine of the Trinity—God is one and exists in three roles. This is important to talk about because the Bible uses different titles and names for each of the three persons of God.

Discuss:
What are some names or titles that the Bible uses for Jesus?
o Christ (John 1:17)
o Messiah (John 1:41; John 4:25)
o Son of Man (Matthew 9:6)
o Son of God (Matthew 14:33)

Time: 90-120 min.
Workbook p. 46
Materials:
✓ White board
✓ Slide Deck: T3.Slides_11 _Divine.Familial.Terms
✓ Bible with place markers
✓ _God the Father Terms Guide (from bibleinevery language.org)_– have open online, or copy pp. 142-47 of this Trainer Guide.)
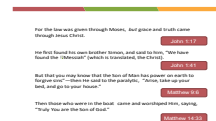
Teacher's Notes:

"_Divine_" refers to God; "_Familial_" refers to family relationships.

Invite a participant to write responses on the board.

Divine Familial Terms

What are some names or titles that the Bible uses for God?
o Father (Matthew 5:16)
o Almighty (Genesis 17:1)
o Lord (Genesis 2:4)

What are some names or titles that the Bible uses for the Holy Spirit?
o Comforter/Helper/Advocate (John 14:16; John 16:7—differs by English version)
o Spirit of God (Matthew 3:16)
o Spirit of truth (John 16:13)

Do you think God intended to communicate specific truths about who He is through the names He uses in the Scriptures?

We believe that since the Bible is God's Word, we should use the exact names He uses when talking about Himself. God defines Himself as Father and Jesus as His Son. And we do not have the right to change that.

Translating these terms clearly and faithfully will preserve the meaning of Scripture.

Some people have translated these terms differently to avoid offending non-believers in their region. Instead of calling Jesus God's Son, they may call Him God's chosen one, or sent one, or beloved one. Instead of calling God Father, they may use Most High or Holy One.

Discuss:
What might be lost if the terms *Son* and *Father* are changed in these ways?
• The nature of the relationship between God and Jesus
• The significance of God's Son being sacrificed in our place by His Father
• The eternal nature of Jesus
• The relationship of the Trinity

Notes:

Divine Familial Terms

Example:

1 John 4:14 – "The Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world."

If "Son" is replaced with "beloved one" or some other term, it does not make it clear that the Savior is God, and it does not show how great God's sacrifice was.

Ask:

What difference would changing *Father* make in John 5:17-18?

John 5:17–18 (Jesus is speaking) – "'My Father is working even now and I, too, am working.' Because of this, the Jews sought even more to kill him because he not only broke the Sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God."

- If the term "Father" is replaced with "My Lord" or "My Master," then the idea that Jesus made Himself equal with God makes no sense. The rest of this verse is very confusing if He does not in fact call God "My Father."

The terms used in the Bible to describe the relationship between God the Father and Jesus are important to the meaning of Scripture. These terms must be the same in the translation, or accuracy and integrity will be lost.

Wycliffe Associates (WA) commits to support only Bible translations that use accurate and literal common language terms for "Father" and "Son" when referring to God and Jesus Christ. This is a conviction we have committed to. The issue of Divine Familial Terms came up in translation work done in a primarily Muslim area. Our conviction on this challenging issue is a response to this situation.

Discuss:
- o **Have you heard of the idea of using different terms to refer to God and Jesus instead of using "Father" and "Son"?**
- o **What reasons or ideas were given for changing these terms?**

Notes:

Other examples to discuss, if time allows: John 10:30–31, 33, 36, Hebrews 1:8, John 3:16.

These questions will help you know how much of the session your audience needs to hear. If they do not have struggles with this issue in their area, you can shorten this session.

Divine Familial Terms

Explain:

In some Muslim environments, translators have changed these names (as well as making other changes to the text) to make the text more culturally acceptable to Muslims. Their desire is to be **invitational to Muslims** in the hopes that many would turn to the Lord for salvation.

Unfortunately, these changes **significantly changed the meaning of the text**. We feel this is an example of Paul's contrast between human wisdom and wisdom of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:13).

Teach Back:

o **How would you explain the Divine Familial Terms?**
o **Why is translating "Father" and "Son" literally is so important?**
- The Bible is God's Word and we should translate it the way He communicated it.
- The doctrine of the Trinity is affirmed.
- The gospel message is preserved.

WA has created a resource to help translators confirm their correct use of "Father" and "Son." This resource is designed as a useful aid; translators are not required to complete it and submit it to WA. But we do strongly recommend they use it if any question about the accuracy of these terms arises.

This resource is in the form of four Reviewer's Guides. They are accessible on bibleineverylanguage.org.
- o God the Father (NT)
- o Jesus the Son (NT)
- o God the Father (OT)
- o Jesus the Son (OT)

Go to the "Translations" tab and select your preferred language. Under the "Reviewers' Guide" heading, click "Topics".
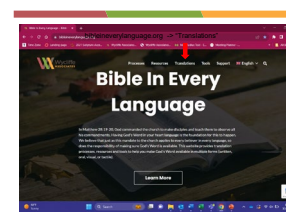

Notes:

1 Corinthians 2:13

These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

If possible, show on bibleineverylanguage.org where people can download the four DFT Reviewer's Guides.

If internet is not available, use slides.

Divine Familial Terms

Select "God the Father Terms" or "Son of God Terms". Documents without "(Old Testament)" in the title are for the New Testament.

If using the internet, show *"God the Father Terms Guide"* pp. 3-4 on screen.

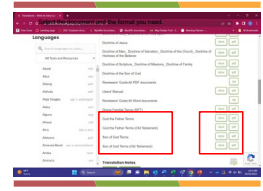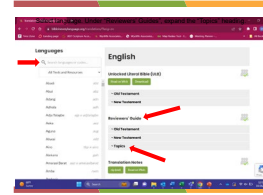Let's look at one of the guides together as an example.

Notice the different meanings of the word "father" in the Bible.
- Biological, male parent
- Ancestor
- Someone older
- God the Father of the Israelites
- God the Father of a person

o **Do you have these ways of using *father* in your language?**

Discuss different meanings for the word "Father" on pages 3-4 (143-45 if using copies from the Trainer Guide). You don't have to cover every way it is used; just show the list and then ask about words they use.

This paragraph is from God the Father Terms Guide, p. 4.

When referring to God as "God the Father," it is important that translators use the same word for "father" as they do when referring to a biological, male parent… The word "father" means something different in each case; that is, God did not father Jesus or his people in the way that a human male fathers a child. However, God has chosen to use the word "father" to reveal himself and his character. It is the responsibility of Christian preachers and teachers to explain to their churches the meaning of "God the Father." Remember, the term "father" may be translated differently in other contexts, but when this term is used for God, it must be the common term for a biological father.

Exercise—Guided Practice:
(Workbook pp. 48-51)
The God the Father Terms document has a table for checking terms.

This table has every instance in the New Testament that refers to God as "Father." (Uses of the word "father" in the Bible for anyone other than God are not included in the chart.)

- The first column has the verse reference, (and a note on the translation if there was difficulty).
- The second column shows the verse in Greek, with the word for "Father" or "God the Father" in bold.
- The third column shows the phrase in the Unlocked Literal Bible (ULB).
- In the fourth column, you will write the word for "Father" used in that verse in the translation you are reviewing.
- The fifth column is for comments and questions.

Page 5 of "God the Father Terms" Reviewers' Guide lists questions you should ask yourself about each verse when reviewing a translation. If you have any doubts or concerns at all, make notes in the fifth column. Always label your notes with the reference of the verse being discussed.

On page 51 of your Workbook, look up the first verse in any translation you choose.
- **What word is used for "Father" in that translation?**
- **Is it a common word?**

Translation teams should have these Guides available for reference throughout their entire translation process.

Notes:

God the Father Terms p. 6 (show online); also on p. 50 in the Workbook, and p. 146 of this Guide, if extra copies are needed.

The ULB is available on bibleineverylanguage.org under the "Translations" tab.

Point out that column 5 is all one column. If using an online form of this Guide, reviewers will need to press "Enter" on the keyboard to make comments line up with the correct verse.

This list is reproduced on p. 49 in the Participant Workbook.

Repeat with as many verses as needed to confirm that they get the idea, or have each participant look up a different verse and take turns sharing their answer. If you have a large group, you can break them into small teams.

Teach Back:
o **Explain why the issue of translating DFTs correctly is so important.**

o **What essential doctrines of Christianity are affected by how these terms are translated?**

o **In what areas of the world would these resources be important to share with national translators?**

o **Is there an issue with understanding DFTs in your culture?**

Notes:

Some doctrines that are affected are:
- The Deity of Jesus
- God's love for humanity
- The Trinity

Confirm:
Participants understand what Divine Familial Terms are and the importance of translating them accurately. The team wants to ensure that these terms are translated accurately in their project. All participants have reviewed and understand the DFT Reviewers' Guides and how to use them. They also understand that all 4 guides are available on bibleineverylanguage.org and should be used for reference with translators (especially in regions where this is an issue).