

Audio Topic 5 - Divine Familial terms (1 session)

J – Welcome back to Wycliffe Associates’ Bible Translation Educator series! This is Topic number 5: Divine familial terms

T – So what are Divine Familial Terms? If you’re not familiar with this phrase, it may sound very complicated or intimidating. The meaning, however, is quite simple to understand.

J - Divine Familial Terms refers to the use of **Father** in reference to God and **Son** in reference to Jesus. While this sounds rather straight forward, some translators have decided not to use these terms in their Scripture translation.

T – This decision was made by professional translators because they determined using Father and Son, as it was written in the Bible, could be misleading and offensive to non-believers in certain cultures and language groups.

J – These translators claimed that, among Muslim background communities specifically, to call Jesus “**God’s Son**” indicates that God had a physical relationship with Jesus’ mother. Additionally, the concept of a triune God—that is a God who exists in three persons in relationship with himself—sounds entirely illogical to the monotheistic mindset of a Muslim.

T – To address this issue among Muslim background believers, some translators have used words like, “beloved of God” to refer to Jesus, or “one sent from God.” But, does adjusting these terms seem like a justifiable change to Scripture?

J – To answer this question, let’s look at the two specific problems we face in making this kind of change during translation. The first and probably most obvious is that a translator who chooses to do this is changing what the Bible says. God chose to call himself a Father and to call Jesus His Son. He used that language throughout the Bible—even occasionally in the Old Testament.

T - God also expresses himself to us as existing in three persons, The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To change this wording in Scripture, in order not to offend unbelievers, is to assume a position of knowing better than God what that culture needs to hear.

J – This type of decision puts a meaning based translation of the Bible on a very uncertain path. If a translator is willing to adjust the wording of Scripture in this way so as not to offend others, what other adjustments might they begin to justify in the same way?

T - The second problem is that this change can lead to a misunderstanding of what God intended to say. God's Word teaches us that He Himself was the sacrifice for our sins in the person of His Son. If our Savior is only ever referred to as the "beloved of God," this reality will be missed.

J - Consider the following verses: "The Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." This verse tells us that God sent his own Son to die for us. If it were translated "God has sent his beloved to be the Savior of the world," what would be missing?

T - And what about John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he sent his one and only beloved one that whoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life"? If this verse does not express the clear relationship of Jesus being God's Son, it could seem like believing in someone other than God will provide salvation.

J - You might want to look at other verse like 1 John 4:10 and Matthew 3:17 or Matthew 17:5 and consider how the meaning might be obscured by a change in these Divine Familial Terms.

T - To help translators maintain accuracy and consistency in this area, a Divine Familial Terms chart has been developed. It includes the verse reference and phrase for every time "**Father**" is used in reference to God and "**Son**" is used in reference to Jesus. Translators can use this as a checklist and go through their Scripture to confirm that every instance has been translated correctly. This chart can be found at bibleineverylanguage.org.

J – It is Wycliffe Associates conviction that **every** translator should commit to an accurate and **direct** translation of these Divine Familial Terms. Please consult your mentor with any questions you may have about this important issue, or email us at TS@WycliffeAssociates.org.

T – We pray that God will give you the wisdom needed to translate his word accurately, and the confidence to teach others as well.

J – Join us again for our next session in Wycliffe Associates' Bible Translation Educator series, as we explore Topic Number Six, Technical Tools.