

A CALL FOR GREATER ACCURACY FOR TRANSLATING ἀδελφοί
IN THE ESV INTRODUCTION

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The ESV (English Standard Version Bible), as well as some other Bible versions, translate the Greek word ἀδελφοί as “brothers” in the main text where it is used in the Epistles of Paul. Alternately, the NRSV chooses to translate ἀδελφοί as “brothers and sisters.” Which one is a more accurate translation? I will propose that the ESV should update their translation from “brothers” to “brothers and sisters.” I will argue that the ESV should update “brothers” to “brothers and sisters,” holding them accountable to their stated aim of a “word-for-word” translation, as outlined in the preface and on the Crossway website. I will demonstrate that “brothers” no longer accurately reflects the meaning of ἀδελφοί. I will begin by exploring how the ESV operates as a translation, what their purpose is, and who their translation is aimed at. I will move forward to analyse what grammatical gender is, and what generic masculine nouns are, exploring the two Greek words ἄνθρωπος and ἀδελφοί. I will then focus on the grammatical gender in the English language stating that gendered language is strongly associated with social gender and not a grammatical category, and therefore masculine generics are being used less as they are strongly associated with males. I will assess how “brothers” has been subject to change in the face of diminishing use of masculine generics, drawing together the previous argumentation with an analysis of a set of results from a questionnaire I put together to interpret participants’ understanding of the English word “brothers.” I will conclude demonstrating that “brothers” is no longer a viable translation of ἀδελφοί when it is used generically, while “brothers and sisters” is a suitable alternative for the ESV. This conclusion will be based on an analysis of three instances of the word ἀδελφοί used in Romans 1:13 and 16:14, 17.

Principles of Translation

Translation can be defined as “the action of converting from one language to another.”¹ When translating, various approaches influence how the original text is presented in the target language. Some prioritise preserving grammatical structures, while others focus on conveying meaning more naturally in the target language. The purpose of the translation usually determines which approach is more suitable because translations are made for a specific audience’s needs (e.g., an academic audience may wish to have a greater focus on retention of grammatical features of a source language; whereas, an audience of everyday readers may call for the prioritisation of meaning).

Bock identifies the two foundational ways to approach translation, “dynamic/functional equivalence” and “formal equivalence.”² Dynamic equivalence has the intention of “[being] clear about the fuller meaning of the passage with concern for it making good sense in the ‘target’ language.”³ Whereas, formal equivalence is concerned with “[keeping] the gender, number, lexical and grammatical force of the originating language as much as is possible and still be

¹ Oxford English Dictionary, “Translation,” *OED*, March 2019, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/translation_n?tab=meaning_and_use#17956691

² Darrell L. Bock, “Do gender-sensitive translations distort Scripture? Not Necessarily.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45 no. 4 (2002), 652.

³ Bock, “Gender-sensitive translations,” 652.

understandable in the target language.”⁴ The distinction between these two translation approaches is a common understanding seen across scholarship.⁵

Formal Equivalence and the ESV

The ESV aims to use formal equivalence as their methodology, made clear from their preface, which states they use “word-for-word” as opposed to the alternative, “thought-for-thought” translation.⁶ They define this method as “[seeking] as far as possible to reproduce the precise wording of the original text.”⁷ Further they take care “to be transparent to the original text, letting the reader see as directly as possible the structure and exact force of the original.”⁸ The ESV intends to maintain the gendered language from the original text, as attested by their preface and the Crossway website, aiming is to include masculine aspects of words from Greek and Hebrew.⁹ Therefore, the ESV honours the original text through maintaining the grammatical features while translating the meaning into English. The purpose of the ESV is to be widely used, namely to be “equally well suited for public reading and preaching, for private reading and reflection, for both academic and devotional study, and for Scripture memorisation.”¹⁰

Why is the use of formal equivalence in translation, as seen in the ESV, preferable?

Retaining grammatical features has positive impacts in expressing the source text in the target language. Grudem, for example, is strongly opposed to gender neutral language and argues that the masculine features of the original texts should be kept. Grudem gives a number of examples of how the NRSV moves away from masculine language in favour of neutrality, including a comparison of John 14:23 in the RSV and the NRSV.

“Jesus answered him, ‘If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him’” (RSV).

“Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them” (NRSV).

The NRSV changes the singular to the plural using “those” and “them” to avoid the masculine gender. Grudem holds issue with this change in number arguing “Jesus did not speak” this way.¹¹ He contends that the NRSV alters the original meaning, as it loses the emphasis that “[Jesus] and

⁴ Bock, “Gender-sensitive translations,” 652.

⁵ Cf. Joseph F. Wimmer, “New Mass translation: formal vs dynamic equivalence,” *New Theology Review* 23 no 4 (2010), 81. Samuel L. Perry and Joshua B. Grubbs, “Formal or Functional? Traditional or Inclusive? Bible Translations as Markers of Religious Subcultures,” *Sociology of Religion* 81 Iss 3 (2020), 319-320.

⁶ The Translation Oversight Committee, “Preface,” in *ESV® Bible, The Single Column Journaling Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), vii.

⁷ Translation Committee, “Preface,” vii.

⁸ Translation Committee, “Preface,” vii.

⁹ Crossway, “10 Things”; Translation Committee, “Preface,” viii.

¹⁰ Translation Committee, “Preface,” viii.

¹¹ Wayne A. Grudem, “Do Inclusive-Language Bibles Distort Scripture,” *Christianity Today* 41 No. 12 (1997), 28.

the Father would come and dwell *with an individual believer*” (italics in original), as the plural points to a “a group of people.”¹²

Grudem presents a strong argument highlighting the benefits of maintaining grammatical features of the original text. However, in the aim to maintain the singular aspect of Jesus’ speech, there is no need to also retain the masculinity of the speech. The masculine is being used in a generic sense, and is not pertaining to an individual male. Therefore, alternately it could be translated as “the person who loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them” (personal alteration to the NRSV). There is good reason for carrying forward some grammatical features such as number and person, though carrying forward grammatical gender can be misleading, an argument I will explore further in this paper.

Dynamic Equivalence

Dynamic equivalence, the other approach mentioned by Bock, is introduced in the preface of the ESV, labelled as “thought-for-thought” translation.¹³ This “thought-for-thought” process is fitting with Bock’s definition of dynamic equivalence, and is less concerned with retaining all the grammatical features of the original text. Sometimes in this kind of translation, words deemed unnecessary can be removed from use in the target language and often the sentence order of the original text is altered.¹⁴ Due to the nature of these changes, there is potential for thinking the translation is inadequate as the word of God. Though, this is not the case.

Cherney shows how the Lutheran Church supports the use of dynamic equivalence with structured theology. Lutherans distinguish that “the Word of God . . . (*quoad formam*) is ‘the very meaning God expresses,’ while nonessentially (*quoad materiam*) it is ‘the very letters, syllables, and words that are written.’”¹⁵ This leads them to believe that a translation is the Word of God based upon whether “the translation expresses in the target language the thoughts that are expressed in the source text.”¹⁶ Therefore, grammatical features are only required to be kept where the meaning is expressed in the target language as it is in the host.¹⁷ It must be clarified that Cherney does not believe grammar is redundant, they state “we have access to God’s meaning only through the languages that exhibit them.”¹⁸ Grammar is fundamental to understanding what is being said in the original texts – meaning in the Greek language is only expressed with the use of their grammatical system. Cherney makes it clear that it is not necessary to carry these features over where they do not convey the same meaning in the target language, which is where grammatical gender, as I will show, will become a matter of contention with its severely limited use in English compared to Greek.¹⁹

¹² Grudem, “Inclusive-Language,” 28.

¹³ Translation Committee, “Preface,” vii.

¹⁴ Translation Committee, “Preface,” ix.

¹⁵ Kenneth A. Jr. Cherney, “Gender-neutral Language, with special reference to the New International Version” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 113 no. 4 (2016), 264.

¹⁶ Cherney, “Gender-neutral language,” 265.

¹⁷ Cherney, “Gender-neutral language,” 265.

¹⁸ Cherney, “Gender-neutral language,” 265.

¹⁹ Cherney, “Gender-neutral language,” 265.

Grammatical Gender Theory

I will now introduce and explore the necessary parts of grammatical gender relevant to determining an appropriate modern English translation of ἀδελφοί, considering the ESV's translation approach. The focal point of this exploration will centre on generic masculine nouns, examining their role and how their use has diminished in modern English. This analysis will demonstrate that gendered language functions differently in English than in Greek. I will finish this section with an analysis of how the meaning of "brothers" has evolved in English in light of wider language reform towards gender-neutral language.

What is Grammatical Gender

For native English speakers, grammatical gender is probably a largely unknown system of grammar. This system is used within a language for the agreement of nouns with other words in a sentence "such as articles and attributive adjectives."²⁰ Ibrahim calls agreement "the essence of gender."²¹ It should be noted that this linguistic feature is not "a universal grammatical category," some languages have never used grammatical gender.²²

Grammatical gender uses a classification system within which every noun is attributed to a class. These classes determine how the parts of a sentence, such as the adjectives and articles, are to agree with the noun.²³ Some languages use a two-gender system, distinguishing between masculine and feminine, while the Indo-European group, alternately, employs "a triple-gender-system", consisting of masculine, feminine and neuter.²⁴ In modern times this three-class gender system has developed in various forms in modern Indo-European languages.²⁵ In English, the use of this system is largely diminished, however, some aspects remain such as pronouns.²⁶

Huddleston states that "the masculine and feminine gender classes are so called because these are the classes to which nouns denoting respectively males and females characteristically belong."²⁷ Therefore in Koine Greek, ἡ μητηρ (mother) is a feminine word and ὁ πατηρ (father) is masculine. Likewise, in modern German, der Vater (father) is masculine and die Mutter (mother) is feminine. Despite the names of these classes, grammatical gender is not always indicative of sex, which can be seen to be applicable to inanimate objects.²⁸ Cherney asks the question, "is there really something feminine about Brazilian pants (*al calças*) but manly about Brazilian shoes (*os sapatos*)? Probably not."²⁹ This can likewise be seen in Koine Greek such as ἡ τραπεζα (the table) is feminine and ὁ ἄσκος (the wineskin) is masculine. However, when it

²⁰John Payne and Rodney Huddleston, "Nouns and noun phrases," in *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (ed. Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey K. Pullum; Cambridge: CUP, 2002), 484.

²¹ Muhammad Hassan Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender: Its Origin and Development* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), 26.

²² Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 17, 70.

²³ Payne, "Nouns," 484.

²⁴ Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 70.

²⁵ Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 70.

²⁶ Ibrahim, *Grammatical Gender*, 70.

²⁷ Payne, "Nouns," 484.

²⁸ Payne, "Nouns," 484.

²⁹ Cherney, "Gender-neutral language," 266.

comes to talking about humans or animals the designation of the grammatical gender will indicate the sex within Indo-European languages.³⁰

In grammatical gender, generic masculine nouns can specifically refer to a male or function “generically to refer to creatures of unspecified sex.”³¹ This feature is seen in many modern Indo-European languages and is sometimes used in English. Silveira gives the example, “*Man is mortal*,” contrasted against, “*The man stubbed his toe*” (italics in original).³² The first phrase is not indicating a specific sex, whereas the second phrase denotes an individual male based on the construction of the sentence with a pronoun and definite article.³³ This feature is also present in modern German and is used in the languages of the Bible.³⁴ To illustrate how this feature appears in Greek Biblical texts, I will analyse two example words: ἄνθρωπος and ἀδελφός,

ἄνθρωπος

Ἄνθρωπος is a Greek word that, in some cases, is used generically in its masculine form. *The Brill Dictionary of Greek* recognises this by listing the possible translations of the word, “ἄνθρωπος -ου, ὁ, ἡ *usu.* [usually] *masc.* **human, human being, person, man** (*in generic or individual sense*).”³⁵ The priority is given to “human,” a gender-neutral term, despite the word’s grammatical masculinity. *The LSJ* also accounts for generic use alongside specific use for males.³⁶ *The LSJ* and *The Brill Dictionary of Greek* differ in their translation choices when it comes to gendered language, *The LSJ* chooses to use “man” and *The Brill Dictionary of Greek* chooses to use “humanity.”³⁷ The difference in word choice highlights the shift towards more gender-neutral language in English over recent time, which will be explored below.

According to Cherney, ἄνθρωπος “was an epicene noun—i.e., one that could belong to either gender, so that ‘the man’ was ὁ ἄνθρωπος and ‘woman’ could be ἡ ἄνθρωπος.”³⁸ He refers to Herodotus’ *The Histories*, where the phrase, “τὴν ἄνθρωπον” is designated as feminine through the definite article, τὴν.³⁹ The feminine form of ἄνθρωπος appears in other sources, and is a standard use of the word.⁴⁰ This feminine form of ἄνθρωπος does not appear in the New

³⁰ Cherney, “Gender-neutral language,” 266.

³¹ Jeanette Silveira, “Generic Masculine Words and Thinking,” *Women’s Studies International Quarterly* 3 Iss. 2-3 (1980), 165.

³² Silveira, “Generic Masculine,” 165.

³³ Silveira, “Generic Masculine,” 165.

³⁴ For an example in German, cf. Claire Michard and Catherine Viollet, “Sex and Gender in Linguistics,” *Feminist Issues* 11 Iss 1 (1991), 70.

³⁵ Franco Montanari, “ἄνθρωπος,” in *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 179-180.

³⁶ Henry George Liddle and Robert Scott, “ἄνθρωπος,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon* (9th ed.; London: OUP, 1940. Repr. 1976), 141-142.

³⁷ Liddel and Scott, “ἄνθρωπος,” 141-142; Montanari, “ἄνθρωπος,” 179-180.

³⁸ Cherney, “Gender-neutral language,” 275.

³⁹ Herodotus, *The Persian Wars, Volume I: Books 1-2* (trans. A. D. Godley; Loeb Classical Library 117; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 70. Cherney, “Gender-neutral language,” 275.

⁴⁰ Cf. Philo, *On Abraham* 94. Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.3.5, 15.7.2, 15.7.4.

Testament, though this does not detract from the word's inclusion of women through generic usage.⁴¹

In the plural form, ἄνθρωπος may refer to “humanity.” For example, in Homer’s *Iliad* we see the phrase, “ἀνθρώπων πέλει ἀνδρῶν ἠδὲ γυναικῶν,” that is “of mankind [humanity], even of men and women.”⁴² The singular masculine can likewise be seen to be generic of humanity in Plato’s *Protagoras*. The properties of humanity, such as their “share in the portion of the gods” and “articulate speech,” are ascribed to the noun “ὁ ἄνθρωπος,” which is being used in a generic sense to be representative of a human.⁴³

Strauss shows how the NT uses ἄνθρωπος as a generic masculine noun. Matthew 12:12 reads, “How much more valuable is a person (ἄνθρωπος) than a sheep!” According to Strauss, “the contrast here is between animals and people,” this is not something that is applicable to men only.⁴⁴ 1 Timothy 2:4 also reads that, God “desires all people (ἀνθρώπους, masculine accusative plural form) to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4, ESV).⁴⁵

ἀδελφός

The word behind the translation “brothers” in Romans 1:13, 16:14 and 16:17 and elsewhere is ἀδελφός, a word which can be used generically in the plural form. *The Brill Dictionary of Greek* translates ἀδελφός as “brother,” and ἀδελφοί (masculine, plural, nominative form) as “brothers and sisters” in certain contexts, noting other meanings like “relative, compatriot, comrade” in different instances. However, in Romans ἀδελφοί is used in a familial sense.⁴⁶ There is also a feminine form of this word, ἀδελφή, which does not have a generic usage and is understood to refer to women explicitly.⁴⁷ The *LSJ* likewise offers “brothers” as a translation and “brothers and sisters” as a possibility in the plural case.⁴⁸ For Strauss, “the Greek masculine noun ἀδελφός can carry the sense of a physical brother, but is more often used in the NT figuratively of the kinship between believers,” and “in many contexts . . . the author is clearly addressing both men and women.”⁴⁹

⁴¹ Cherney, “Gender-neutral language,” 275.

⁴² Homer, *The Iliad* (Trans. A. T. Murray; London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1928), 392-393.

⁴³ Plato, *Protagoras* (ed. John Williams White and Thomas D. Seymour; College Series of Greek Authors; London: Ginn and Company, 1889), 67-68. Plato, *Protagoras and Meno* (trans. W. K. C. Guthrie; The Penguin Classics; Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1956. Repr. 1961), 53.

⁴⁴ Strauss, “Linguistic fallacies,” 241. Other Scholarship further supports this understanding of the text Cf. R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (The New International Commentary of the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 464-465. Joachim Jeremias, “ἄνθρωπος, ἀνθρώπινος,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Vol. 1; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 364.

⁴⁵ Other scholars agree with this generic use of ἄνθρωπος here, cf. William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (Word Biblical Commentary; Vol. 46; Dallas: Word Books, 2000), 75, 88-89; Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Trans. Philip Buttolph and Adela Yarbro; Ed. Helmut Koester; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 35, 41.

⁴⁶ Franco Montanari, “ἀδελφός,” in *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 28.

⁴⁷ Franco Montanari, “ἀδελφή,” in *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 28

⁴⁸ Henry George Liddle and Robert Scott, “ἀδελφός,” in *A Greek-English Lexicon* (9th ed.; London: OUP, 1940. Repr. 1976), 20.

⁴⁹ Strauss, “Linguistic fallacies,” 253.

Context helps determine whether women are being addressed in the New Testament text. For example, Phil 4:1 reads “Therefore my *ἀδελφοί*, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved” (ESV with use of Greek word). The following sentence is addressed to Euodia and Syntyche, (cf. Phil 4:2-3), showing women are included in Paul’s use of *ἀδελφοί*. Romans 16 offers another example, where women are mentioned in Paul’s greetings, including Prisca (v. 3), Mary (v. 6), Rufus’ mother, Junia (v. 7), Tryphena (v. 12), Tryphosa (v. 12), Persis (v.12) Nereus’ sister (v.15), Julia (v. 15). Following his greetings, Paul says, “I appeal to you, *ἀδελφοί*, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them” (ESV with use of Greek). Given that the greetings are addressed to women and men, the likelihood of addressing this statement to the men only is negligible. The statement is meant for all to be wary of the threats facing their community. Jewett, Fitzmyer and Greathouse all account for the inclusion of women within the usage of *ἀδελφοί* when it is being used this way in Paul’s Epistles.⁵⁰

There are also examples of *ἀδελφοί* including women outside of biblical literature. The Oxyrhynchus Papyri include a text where the word *ἀδελφοί* refers to both a male and female. The Greek word *ἀδελφοίς* (the masculine, plural, dative form of *ἀδελφός*) is used to refer to Diodorus and Theis, the brother and sister of the author of the text, Leonides.⁵¹ Another example from classical Greek comes from Euripides’ *Electra*. The Greek reads “*δυσὶν ἀδελφοῖν ποῦς*,”⁵² translated as, “the foot of brother and sister”⁵³ in English. The context compares the foot size of the speaker Electra (a women), and her brother, showing the capability of the word *ἀδελφός* to include women when used in the plural. The ESV acknowledges that *ἀδελφοί* can be indicative of women as well as men, yet retains the translations as “brothers” in the main text, a point I will return to later after discussing grammatical gender in English.⁵⁴

Grammatical Gender in English

Late Old English had a grammatical gender system that went under a significant transition into early Middle English, a period spanning “the tenth to the thirteenth centuries.”⁵⁵ This period is understood to be an important time in the move towards how grammatical gender functions in the English Language today.⁵⁶ The grammatical gender system of Old English functioned as other modern languages, with “definite articles, possessive pronouns, ‘strong’ adjectives and the like” holding agreement with head nouns, all within a three-class gender

⁵⁰ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans* (The Anchor Bible; Vol. 33; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 249; William M. Greathouse, *Romans 1-8* (NBBC; Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2008), 53; Robert Jewett, *Romans* (ed. Eldon Jay Epp; *Hermeneia*; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 128.

⁵¹ Cf. Strauss, “Linguistic fallacies,” 254. Bernard P. Grendell and Arthur S. Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri: Part IV* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1904), 180-182.

⁵² Euripides, “Electra,” line 535 in *Euripidis Fabulae Vol. 2* (Ed. Gilbert Murray; Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis; Oxford University Press, 1950).

⁵³ Euripides, “Electra,” in *The complete Greek Drama* (Ed. Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O’Neill, Jr.; Trans. E. P. Coleridge; New York: Random House, 1938), 81.

⁵⁴ Translation Committee, “Preface,” viii.

⁵⁵ Charles Jones, *Grammatical Gender in English: 950 to 1250* (Kent: Croom Helm, 1988), 1.

⁵⁶ Anne Curzan, *Gender Shifts in the History of English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 31.

system.⁵⁷ Curzan summarises the transition of the Old English to modern English as being a “[shift] from a morphological gender assignment system to a semantic one, so that when Modern English speakers think of ‘gender’ in their language, they think of the pronouns and nouns that refer to gendered entities.”⁵⁸ That is, gender in English became more associated with social roles, such as Queen referring to a female role, rather being a categorical system that dictates the form and agreement of words in a language.

Payne analyses the usage of grammatical gender in modern English by comparing it to the function of this feature in French and German.⁵⁹ Within French and German, nouns are associated with a gender class that determines how “various dependents in the NP [noun phrase], such as articles and attributive adjectives” agree with the head noun in form.⁶⁰ However, English is different, “gender classes can be differentiated only on the basis of relations with pronouns . . . where the identical indices mark the anaphoric relation between the pronoun and the (head of the) antecedent.”⁶¹ English also differs from Greek in its use of grammatical gender, as Koine Greek functions similarly to the French and German system. Payne offers the example of English, “the Queen declared herself satisfied,” within which the pronoun “herself” is used to avoid repetition of the head noun, and is in agreement in gender.⁶²

Classes of grammatical gender in English have a much stronger link with the gender identity of the noun in the current system (that being the social understanding of its gender, not a grammatical class). Nouns are no longer attributed to a grammatical gender class and therefore inanimate objects take on the neuter pronoun associated with a lack of animacy, “it.” Living beings take on pronouns that relate to social gender identity.⁶³ Therefore, someone who identifies as male will take “he/him” pronouns, someone who identifies as female will take “she/her” pronouns, and someone who identifies as non-binary use “they/them” pronouns.⁶⁴

Within the remnants of grammatical gender in English, there is some usage of the masculine generic noun and pronoun, though it is largely diminished. Payne analyses the generic use of the masculine pronoun “he,” arguing “*he* has traditionally been regarded as the grammatically ‘correct’ choice in opposition to the singular *they*.”⁶⁵ Debates between use of “he” and “they” have been ongoing “for some 200 years,” however, Payne argues “the matter has received much more widespread attention since the early 1980s in the context of social changes in the status of women.”⁶⁶ Both “he” and “they” have been used as generic singular pronouns since Old English, with “he” also being used specifically for males.⁶⁷ Payne argues “the fact that the primary meaning of ‘he’ contains the component ‘male’ makes it an unsatisfactory pronoun

⁵⁷ Jones, *Gender*, 1-3.

⁵⁸ Curzan, *Gender Shifts*, 31.

⁵⁹ Payne, “Nouns,” 484-486

⁶⁰ Payne, “Nouns,” 484.

⁶¹ Payne, “Nouns,” 485.

⁶² Payne, “Nouns,” 486.

⁶³ Cambridge Dictionary, “Gender,” *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/gender>.

⁶⁴ This does not account for all the potential pronouns a person might use.

⁶⁵ Payne, “Nouns,” 492.

⁶⁶ Payne, “Nouns,” 492.

⁶⁷ Curzan, *Gender*, 70-71.

for use in a secondary sense that covers females as well as males.”⁶⁸ Masculine words have become strongly associated with the male gender and viewed as not possible to include women. This is different from the Greek words that I explored, which more easily express the inclusion of women when used generically.

Beyond pronouns, there has also been the prevalent use of generic masculine nouns in English, such as the word “man.” The *Oxford English Dictionary* states, “*man* was considered until the 20th century to include women by implication, though referring primarily to males,” adding, “it is now frequently understood to exclude women, and is therefore avoided by many people.”⁶⁹ Alongside pronouns, masculine nouns are also diminishing in their use as masculine generics due to the strong association with maleness. This explains the difference between the *LSJ* in using “man” and the *Brill Dictionary of Greek* using “humanity” from the same meaning of the Greek word ἄνθρωπος, as I pointed out earlier.⁷⁰

The social change in use of gender-neutral language is observable in government writing in both the European Union and the British government. “In 2008, the European Parliament was one of the first international organisations to adopt multilingual guidelines on gender-neutral language.”⁷¹ In an update that follows 10 years after the first set of guidelines for making this happen, they say, “the European Parliament remains as committed as ever to the use of gender-neutral language in its written and spoken communications and I now invite the relevant services to raise awareness on the updated guidelines and the importance of their use in parliamentary publications and communications.”⁷² The reason for their change is to promote “gender equality” by reducing the use of language that perpetuates the idea that “one sex or social gender is the norm.”⁷³

The move to gender-neutral language has also been present in the legal system in the UK. Until 2007, legal writing in the UK was done using masculine language, which was intended to be indicative of all people. However, since 2007 “it has been government policy to write legislation in gender-neutral language.”⁷⁴ The UK have similar motivations to the EU, arguing that using masculine words generically is “inaccurate and tends to reinforce gender stereotypes.”⁷⁵ Whereas, gender-neutral language reinforces “inclusion and equality.”⁷⁶

⁶⁸ Payne, “Nouns,” 492.

⁶⁹ Oxford English Dictionary, “man,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, December 2023, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/man_n1?tab=meaning_and_use#38341619.

⁷⁰ Cf. page 14.

⁷¹ European Parliament, “Gender-Neutral Language in the European Parliament,” European Parliament document, 2018, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/151780/GNL_Guidelines_EN.pdf.
[GNL_Guidelines_EN.pdf \(europa.eu\)](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/151780/GNL_Guidelines_EN.pdf)

⁷² European Parliament, “Gender-Neutral Language.”

⁷³ European Parliament, “Gender-Neutral Language.”

⁷⁴ Diggory Bailey, “Breaking down gender stereotypes in legal writing,” *GOV.UK*, 10 January 2020, <https://civilservice.blog.gov.uk/2020/01/10/breaking-down-gender-stereotypes-in-legal-writing/>.

⁷⁵ Diggory Bailey, “Breaking down gender stereotypes.”

⁷⁶ Diggory Bailey, “Breaking down gender stereotypes.”

The transition to gender-neutral language is widespread, observed in government policy, dictionaries, and grammatical books. As masculine generics diminish, I will argue how this has affected the meaning of “brothers.”

The meaning of “brothers” in English

By examining various dictionaries, the usage of “brothers” can be observed both in its past and present forms. Samuel Johnson’s *English Dictionary*, the 6th edition published in 1785, provides the following definition of “brother:” “*Brother* is used in theological language, for man in general,” revealing its use as a masculine generic in history.⁷⁷ In the full *Oxford English Dictionary* some continued generic use of “brothers” is maintained today. Definition II states, “A person bound to another by shared experiences or by membership of a particular group. Typically, with reference to a man, although collective plural uses may refer to a group consisting of men and women.”⁷⁸ The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* also offers a generic use in stating “one related to another by common ties or interests.”⁷⁹

In the Collins, *Cambridge and Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries*, the masculine generic aspect of the definition of the word cannot be found.⁸⁰ The *Collins English Dictionary* focuses heavily on the male social gendered meaning. Further, the lack of mention of generic usage in the *Oxford Learner’s Dictionary* indicates that this use of the word is not of high importance to inform those learning the English language. The *Oxford English Dictionary* also clarifies that “typical” use of the word is for males, and the inclusion of women is therefore a lesser observed usage.⁸¹ According to these dictionaries, there is some generic usage of the word, however, this usage of the word is not represented across all dictionaries.

In light of ongoing social changes, especially with regards to diminishing use of masculine generic words, it is appropriate to ask whether “brothers” has undergone transition in meaning. A change in the meaning of “brothers” would be significant, having an effect on how readers would interpret the English of the ESV translation. The ESV uses “brothers” as a generic word in English to express the inclusion of women in the Greek word ἀδελφοί.⁸² However, if “brothers” has come to be more closely associated with males than its generic usage, the ESV may be misunderstood by readers. Therefore, we must assess how people today engage with and interpret the word “brothers” to determine if the ESV is misrepresenting the source text.

⁷⁷ Samuel Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language* (Vol. 1; 6th ed; London: 1785), 306.

⁷⁸ Oxford English Dictionary, “brother,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/brother_n?tab=meaning_and_use#13043599.

⁷⁹ Merriam-Webster, “brother,” *Merriam-Webster*, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/brothers#dictionary-entry-1>.

⁸⁰ Cf. Collins, “brother,” *Collins dictionary*, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/brother>; Cambridge Dictionary, “brother,” *Cambridge Dictionary*, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/brother>. Merriam-Webster, “brother.”; Oxford University Press, “brother,” *Oxford Learners Dictionary*, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/brother_1?q=brother.

⁸¹ Oxford English Dictionary, “brother,” *Oxford English Dictionary*, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/brother_n?tab=meaning_and_use#13043599.

⁸² Translation Committee, “Preface,” viii.

In researching for this dissertation, I prepared a questionnaire that I made available via a link on my personal Instagram. The aim of the questionnaire was to gain insight into how people are reading and understanding the word “brothers” currently, through asking readers to engage with Romans 1:13 and Romans 16:14 and 16:17. There were 34 participants, of which almost half were male, and the other half female.⁸³ The majority of participants were Christian, with 2 agnostics and 1 atheist.⁸⁴ 32% of people had engaged with the Bible at an academic level, with 85% of people stating they had engaged with the Bible in a church setting. One participant had no prior experience with the Bible.⁸⁵

I first asked the participants to read Romans 1:1-15 from the ESV, followed by the question, “when you read the term ‘brothers’ in verse 13, what did you envisage the sex of the referents to be?” The question was followed by four choices, “male,” “female,” “male and female,” and an option for “other,” where they were allowed to write in a potential alternate answer for themselves. When the word “brothers” is used in the ESV in Romans 1:13, 56% of participants viewed this word as referring specifically to males, with 32% understanding brothers to refer to both males and females.⁸⁶ In addition, there were four responses where participants chose to write in their own understandings.⁸⁷ These personalised responses offer insight into how some people recognise a masculine generic element in the word “brothers.”⁸⁸

In the next question I asked readers to engage with Romans 16:1-20 in the ESV, asking the exact same question about “brothers” in Romans 16:14. In this instance 85% of readers thought that the referents were male, with one person inserting their own clarification as to why they believed this is in the “other” box.⁸⁹

In response to Romans 16:14, the other 15% thought the referents were “male and female.”⁹⁰ When asking this question of verse, 17, 56% of participants thought the word referred to males, with 38% thinking the word referred to males and females.⁹¹ There were also two participants that filled out the “other” box, one writing, “written to the men meant to be shared with the women,” and the other writing, “Brothers and Sisters in Christ / Believers.”⁹²

Following this set of questions, I introduced information from the ESV footnotes, including details that some of the names in Romans 16 are female and some male. Following this extra information, I asked the same questions about the ESV texts and what sex the readers envisaged the referents to be. This time 41% of people thought “brothers” in Romans 16:14 referred to male, and 56% thought it referred to males and females, with one answer being a participant’s own addition, which is unclear in the wording of the answer.⁹³ This makes a 27%

⁸³ One participant preferred not to say, Appendix A

⁸⁴ Appendix B.

⁸⁵ Appendix C.

⁸⁶ Appendix D.

⁸⁷ Appendix D.

⁸⁸ Appendix D.

⁸⁹ Appendix E.

⁹⁰ Appendix E.

⁹¹ Appendix F.

⁹² Appendix F.

⁹³ Appendix G.

increase in those who view the word as inclusive of male and female when extra contextual information is added. For Romans 16:17, 68% of participants thought that “brothers” referred to male and female with this added information, which is a 29% increase.⁹⁴

Following this, I asked the same question about “brothers” but in reference to the word “brothers and sisters” in the NRSV translation. In Romans 1:13, 94% answered “brothers and sisters” referred to male and female, with one participant answering “male” and one participant answering “female.”⁹⁵ From Romans 16:14 and 16:17, 100% of participants understood “brothers and sisters” to refer to both male and female recipients.⁹⁶ Then I asked participants whether “brothers” could be used in a generic sense to refer to both sexes.” Half of the participants agreed it could while the other half thought it could not.⁹⁷

Before drawing conclusions from the data, the limitations of this questionnaire must be stated. This was a small sample size made up mostly of Christians. In producing the questionnaire, I did not ask about the age of participants. Further, due to its submission on my personal Instagram account, there is a limitation to the circles of people this questionnaire could reach. There is warrant for a greater study in this area that includes a much wider and diverse group of people. It would be desirable to have more in-depth questions that allows for better visualising of trends in understanding how “brothers” is read, such as by age.

Despite its limitations, this questionnaire is not without value. It reveals that some people in society do not understand the word “brothers” as being used in a masculine generic sense. Even with the addition of contextual information, while there is an increase in the numbers of people reading “brothers” as generic, a proportion still interpret the word to refer to males. The NRSV’s translation choice, “brothers and sisters,” is almost flawlessly communicates that ἀδελφοί refers to both the sexes. The word “brothers” carries the potential for misunderstanding of the source text, whereas “brothers and sisters” offers a clearer translation. The questionnaire shows the ESV does not fully meet the needs of people of nowadays, requiring the need for the update its wording to avoid misunderstanding the primary source. The male association of “brothers” reflects broader societal shift in the use of gendered language which increasingly links social gender with gendered language.

Strauss agrees with this assessment of the modern understanding of the English word “brothers.” He gives the example that “if a pastor stood up in my church and said to the congregation, ‘Brothers, please attend a meeting with the elders immediately following the service,’ I suspect that only the males present would feel welcome. When Paul addressed his congregations as ἀδελφοί, however, the women surely felt included.”⁹⁸ Given this, Strauss argues that “brothers” is no longer a viable translation as it is no longer functioning as a masculine generic in the same way that ἀδελφοί does in the Greek.⁹⁹ So, the use of gendered language in Koine Greek and English is vastly different. In English, male terms are more strongly associated with only men, whereas grammatically masculine words in Greek can be

⁹⁴ Appendix H.

⁹⁵ Appendix I.

⁹⁶ Appendix J, Appendix K.

⁹⁷ Appendix L.

⁹⁸ Strauss, “Linguistic Fallacies,” 253.

⁹⁹ Strauss, “Linguistic Fallacies,” 253-254.

used generically with greater ease. Now that we have analysed how the word “brothers” is used in English and how people tend to interpret it, we can turn to examining the best translation of the ἀδελφοί.

Application of Theory: Translation of ἀδελφοί in the ESV

I will now analyse the translation of ἀδελφοί in Romans 1 and Romans 16 in the ESV. It is clear that Romans 16 addresses both male and female recipients, and therefore, it is best to interpret ἀδελφοί as being used in the generic sense in both Romans 1:13 and Romans 16:17. In these two instances, ἀδελφοί is used to speak collectively of the addressees of the letter, serving as a fictive kinship term. Romans 16:14 is less clear about the sex of the referents included in ἀδελφοί there. This instance of the word does not address the general recipients of the letter, but refers to a specific group connected with “Asyncretus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, [and] Hermas.” Given the ambiguity of this instance, the ESV should note in the footnotes that the sex of the referents is unknown due to lack of contextual information.

The ESV agree that women are included in the use of ἀδελφοί, seen in their footnotes which state “Or *brothers and sisters*” at each instance of ἀδελφοί in Romans 1 and 16. In spite of the inclusion in the footnotes, they have chosen to retain “brothers” in the main text. This choice of translation for the main text significantly influences how the text is understood. For example, the ESV Reader’s Edition includes no footnotes leaving the main text as the only apparatus to interpret the biblical text. Further, in church settings, biblical texts are often read aloud in various contexts. From personal experience with Scripture readings, when read aloud, footnotes are not typically read, meaning that only the word “brothers” is likely to be spoken.

The ESV carries the grammatical masculinity of the word ἀδελφοί over into the English, in their aim to provide a “word for word” translation. The inclusion of footnotes to indicate the capability of “brothers” to refer also to women reveals that the word “brothers” is already a misleading or insufficient translation. I have shown the English language has a diminished use of grammatical gender compared to the Greek language. The desire to retain grammatical gender assumes it functions in English in the same way it does in the Greek. While some dictionaries acknowledge a generic use of “brothers,” this is limited and largely overlooked in other dictionaries. Furthermore, given the questionnaire that was conducted, a significant proportion of people are reading “brothers” as indicative of males. The footnotes do not fully clarify that “brothers” in the ESV is intended to include both men and women. The association of “brothers” in favour of the male meaning of the word over the generic use of the word aligns with the broader shift in the English language. Language is evolving gender-neutral terms, with gender shifting from a grammatical category to being more heavily associated with social gender.

The remnant of grammatical masculinity in English nouns and pronouns is strongly associated with social gender, and therefore masculine generics are no longer an appropriate way to express groups that include women. In light of this shift towards gender neutrality and the diminishing of masculine generics, it is important for the ESV to adapt in order to align with how words are currently understood. If the ESV wished to accurately translate the Bible into modern English, retention of male associated words in English alongside grammatically masculine words in Greek could lead to a misunderstanding of the source text.

Currently, the main text of the ESV no longer provides a “word-for-word” translation into English. Due to the changes in the English language, there is no word that functions as a

direct equivalence to ἀδελφοί. Given there is no direct equivalent from Greek to English, dynamic equivalence is the only viable method for translation. As the Lutherans engage in a theology of translation, the meaning of the word of God must take precedence over the form in which it was originally presented within Greek grammar. Crossway confesses “every translation is at many points a trade-off between literal precision and readability, between ‘formal equivalence’ in expression and ‘functional equivalence’” and add the ESV is also subject to this.¹⁰⁰ For the sake of readability, functional equivalence (dynamic equivalence) must be undertaken in the case of ἀδελφοί in order to carry forwards this word’s meaning into the English for the audience of the ESV translation.

An aspect of ἀδελφοί that must be carried forward into the English is sibling relation. This portion of the word’s meaning is strongly agreed upon and is understood as part of the kinship language that Paul uses across his letters.¹⁰¹ Another important aspect to carry forward into English is the inclusivity of both male and female in the word. Given the inclusiveness of women of the term ἀδελφοί is clear in the cases of Romans 1:13 and 16:17, this aspect of the word is integral to express in the English.

In light of “brothers” no longer being an appropriate translation, there are two alternatives that are close to communicating what ἀδελφοί would have been indicative of in the Greek. The first is “brothers and sisters.” This is the phrasing other Bible translations offer in the main text, e.g., the NRSV which was used in the questionnaire. This translation carries forward the meaning that both male and female are included in the audience of Paul. In the questionnaire, this translation was almost without fail in communicating who Paul was addressing to. However, there would still be a requirement for a footnote with further explanation of the nuances of this word. In the context of society in the first century and society in the English-speaking West today, there is a vast difference in the understanding of social gender. Sex and gender were understood differently in Graeco-Roman culture, within which there was a strong binary distinction between men and women.¹⁰² Therefore, the meaning of “brothers and sisters” should not be understood through the lens of the current understanding of social gender. Instead, the primary source addresses both males and females as this was the gender distinction understood at that time. Thus, such a translation is needed to express that gender was perceived differently in the society surrounding the New Testament than it is today. “Brothers and sisters” functions as a strong replacement to the currently used “brothers” as it is using the same type of familial language with the addition of a female associated word.

The second potential option is “siblings.” The English word “Siblings” is used to speak generically of people who are related as “brothers and sisters,” without holding any gendered connotations. Therefore, it can be inclusive of those who identify as non-binary. With regard to the primary source, this word carries forward the inclusion of both sexes being addressed in one generic word. However, the ESV aims to function as an “essentially literal” translation, looking “to carry over every possible nuance of the meaning in the original words of Scripture into our

¹⁰⁰ Crossway, 10 things

¹⁰¹ Cf. T. J. Burke, “Kinship Language in Paul,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Scot McKnight, ed.; 2nd Ed.; London: InterVarsity Press, 2023), 593-600.

¹⁰² Marilyn B. Skinner, *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture* (2nd ed.; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 8-9.

own language.”¹⁰³ In this instance also, there would need to be a clarification on the difference between gender identity today and in the first century. The ESV seeks to express what the primary source was conveying, and ἀδελφοί was addressed to a society that understood men and women in a binary manner.¹⁰⁴ In order to provide an accurate reading of the text in the ESV’s methodology, an understanding of the social context is required.

“Siblings” in my experience has not been commonly used to address a group. At the end of the questionnaire, I asked participants whether they viewed “siblings” as an appropriate translation of ἀδελφοί when referring to both the male and female. 59% considered it a viable translation, while 41% did not.¹⁰⁵ I also allowed people to express why they believed this was a viable translation or not. There was a variety of reasons given. One person argued, “[siblings] does not feel a comfortable or natural word to use.”¹⁰⁶ This view was recounted by others alongside some who felt siblings was “depersonalising” and “less . . . affectionate than [sic] brothers and sisters.”¹⁰⁷ Another person wrote that they viewed “siblings” as being referent to biological relationships only, and they did not view “siblings” as having the capacity to represent a non-biological role.¹⁰⁸ Others agreed that “siblings” has the connotations of blood relatives only.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, a number of people supported the use of the word due to its gender neutrality, and breadth of inclusivity for the those who do not identify as male or female.¹¹⁰

Given the purpose of the ESV to provide access to the meaning of the original text, though the inclusivity of those who do not identify as male or female is an important discussion, the aim of the ESV is to provide a translation that captures the nuances of the original text. The ESV is not attempting to address the non-binary, as they are attempting to translate what was communicated in the first century. Although the gender implications of the “siblings” could be clarified in footnotes that provide information on the context surrounding sex and gender in the first century, the term may imply blood relations and is seen as an uncomfortable word choice. As a result, replacing “brothers” with “brothers and sisters” appears to be the most appropriate choice since the primary source originates from a cultural and linguistic context vastly different from modern English, it is necessary to clarify that the gender in the first century and modern society was understood differently. Unfortunately, no single word can accurately express this distinction, as it extends beyond language into broader social frameworks of understanding. Though I argue “brothers and sisters” is currently the most appropriate translation, it should be noted that this could be subject to change with time. “Siblings” may become a more appropriate translation in the future depending on how the English language continues to develop, as language is dynamic.

¹⁰³ The Translation Oversight Committee, “Preface,” in *ESV®: Outreach Edition* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2009), xvi.

¹⁰⁴ Skinner, *Sexuality*, 8-9.

¹⁰⁵ Appendix M.

¹⁰⁶ Appendix N.

¹⁰⁷ Appendix N.

¹⁰⁸ Appendix N.

¹⁰⁹ Appendix N.

¹¹⁰ Appendix N.

Conclusion

The Greek word ἀδελφοί is a grammatically masculine word that can be used in a generic sense to refer to both males and females. The English word “brothers” formerly had a semantic overlap with ἀδελφοί in that it represented a familial sibling relation while also having the capacity to function generically. However, due to developments in the English language, “brothers” no longer functions strongly as a masculine generic, causing people to misunderstand the translation of the Greek text provided by the ESV. As the questionnaire aimed to explore, a significant proportion of the readers of the sample passages (Romans 1:1-15, 16:1-20) understood the word “brothers” to refer solely to males, despite the ESV agreeing the Greek word is inclusive of females also. The transformation in the understanding of the word “brothers” comes from a wider linguistic reformation across the English language that is also present in other language used in the European Union. In English, there is a stronger association with masculine generic words to be representative of males, which is linked to the diminishing of the grammatical gender system. Pronouns and nouns are no longer part of a grammatical gender classification that triggers alteration in dependent words in the sentence to form agreement. Instead, gendered words are more strongly associated with social gender. Within this transformation, “brothers” has become more strongly associated with males, and therefore “brothers and sisters” is a more suitable translation to accurately represent the inclusion of females in the presentation of the word ἀδελφοί.

Due to the difference in the understanding of social gender today and at the time of the source text, footnotes are necessary to convey this difference in social context. Modern readers should know how the original audience would have understood maleness and femaleness implied in the phrase “brothers and sisters.” The ESV should analyse its entire translation in light of this study on the Greek word ἀδελφοί in Romans 1 and Romans 16 to ensure it effectively serves its intended audience. Devotional readers do not need the text to maintain a masculine generic phrasing at the risk of miscommunicating, as they are not expected to understand grammatical gender and its use in these ancient languages. Therefore, the ESV must adapt to changes in the English language and update the translation “brothers” to “brothers and sisters” where ἀδελφοί is used generically, with added contextual footnotes in order to provide a more accurate and accessible rendering of the text for modern readers.

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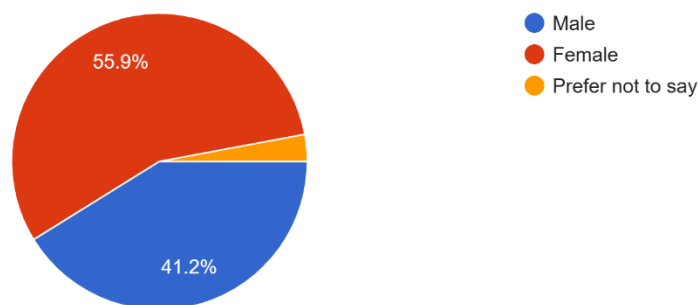
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Appendix A

Sex

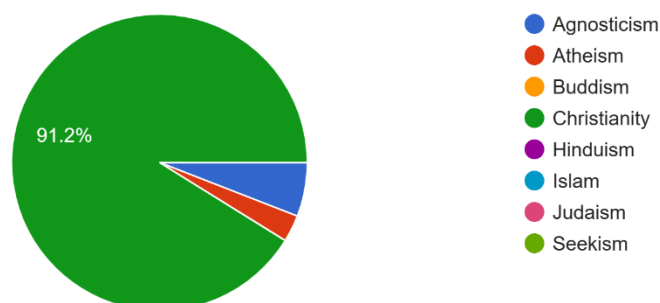
34 responses



Appendix B

Religion

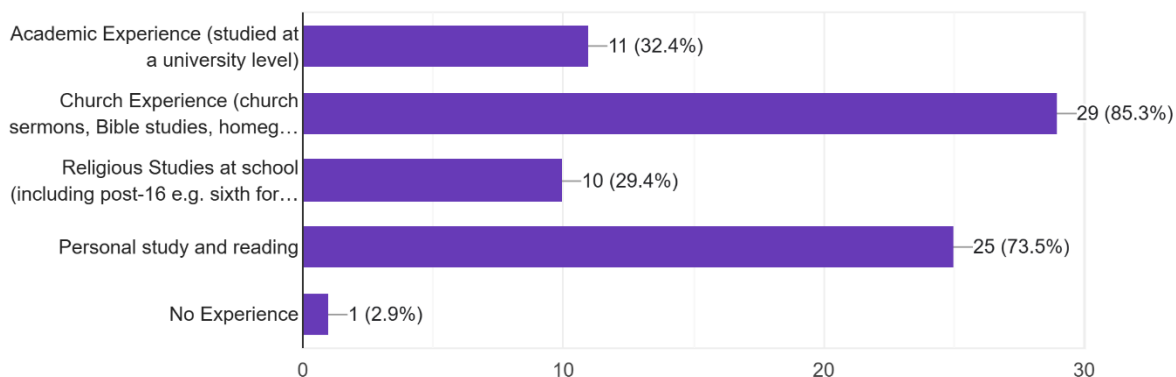
34 responses



Appendix C

Please select the boxes that fit your experience with the Bible:

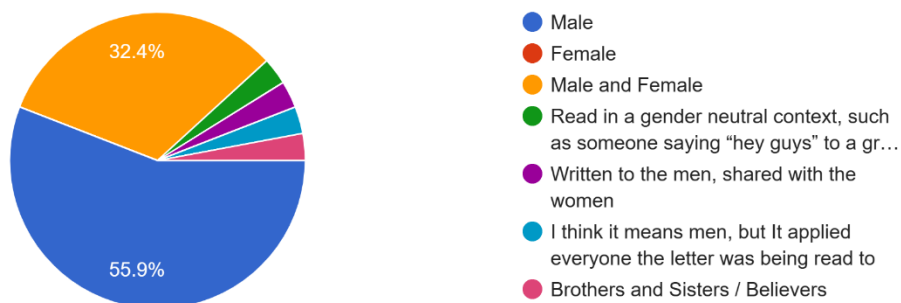
34 responses



Appendix D

When you read the term brothers in verse 13, what did you envisage the sex of the referents to be?

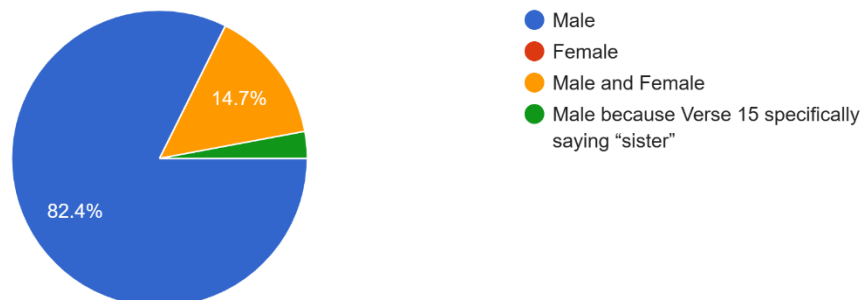
34 responses



Appendix E

When you read the term brothers in verse 14, what did you envisage the sex of the referents to be?

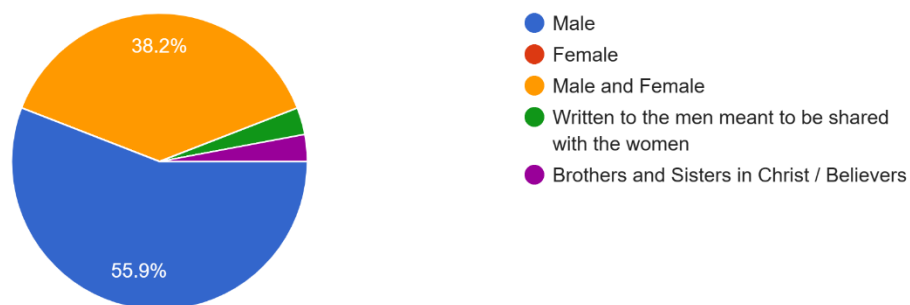
34 responses



Appendix F

When you read the term brothers in verse 17, what did you envisage the sex of the referents to be?

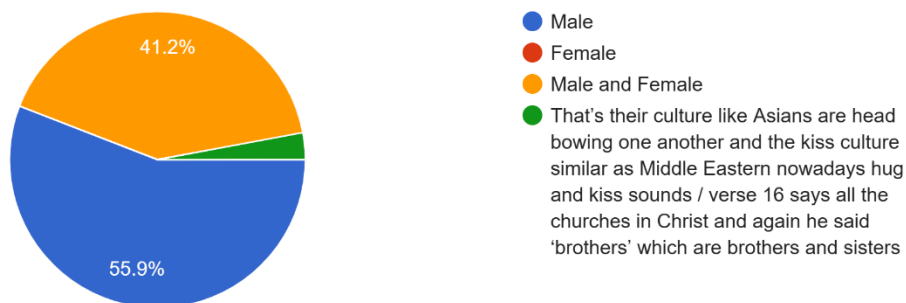
34 responses



Appendix G

When you read the term brothers in chapter 16 verse 14, what did you envisage the sex of the referents to be?

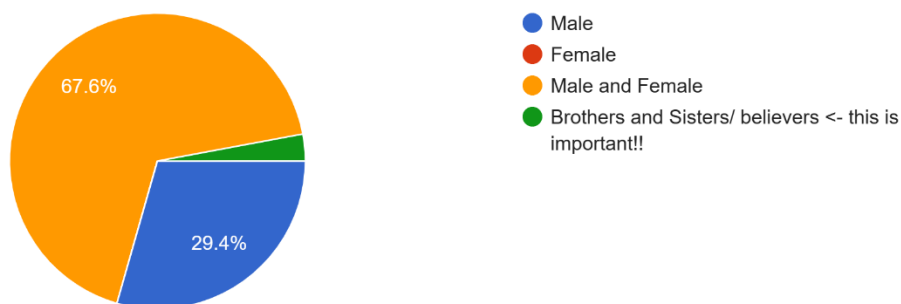
34 responses



Appendix H

When you read the term brothers in chapter 16 verse 17, what did you envisage the sex of the referents to be?

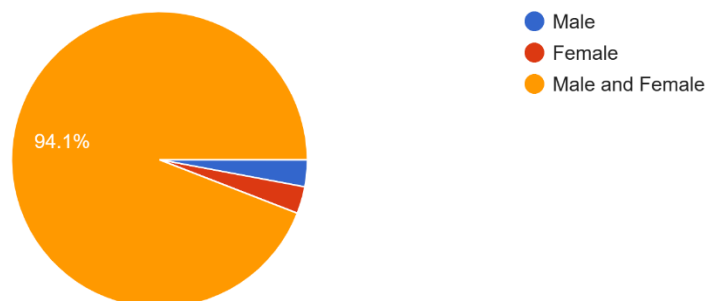
34 responses



Appendix I

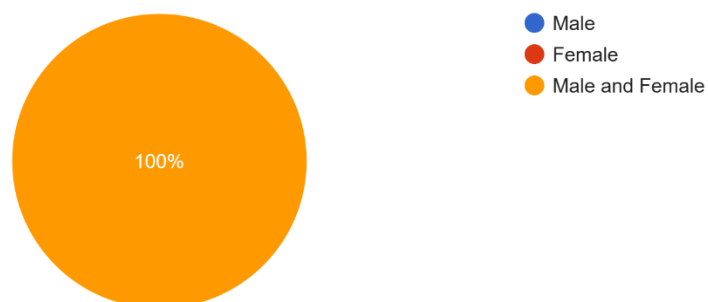
When you read the phrase brothers and sisters in chapter 1 verse 13, what did you envisage the sex of the referents to be?

34 responses

*Appendix J*

When you read the term brothers and sisters in chapter 16 verse 14, what did you envisage the sex of the referents to be?

33 responses



Appendix K

When you read the term brothers and sisters in chapter 16 verse 17, what did you envisage the sex of the referents to be?

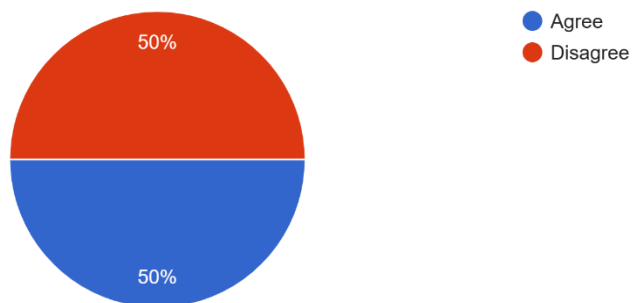
34 responses



Appendix L

Brothers can be used in a generic sense to refer to both male and female sexes.

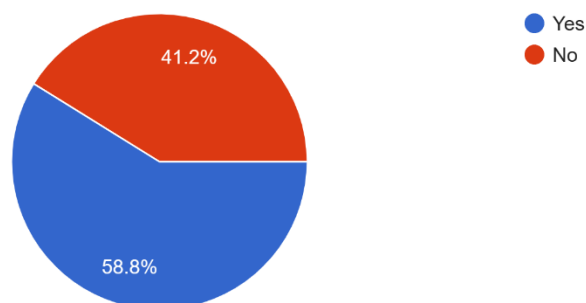
34 responses



Appendix M

If ἀδελφοί (adelphoi) were being used to refer to both the male and female sex, do you believe the translation siblings is appropriate in English in the texts of Romans 1 and Romans 16.

34 responses



Appendix N

Why do you agree/disagree with the use of <i>siblings</i> ?
It does not feel a comfortable or natural word to use. It does not make sense to me or help the text speak to me.
I agree that siblings is appropriate to refer to both male and female sex, but I should say for some reason I'm still slightly uncomfortable with it - but have no reason why.
It's inclusive, simple, and leave no room for misinterpretation.
It's a term to bring people together, to group them into a similar group, and it makes me see the relationship described as a way to say we're all children of God and belong together as siblings under God
It is gender neutral, so therefore includes male and female, but also those who are non-binary or don't identify as a specific gender :)
Appropriate to explain it's either sex, tho I think the connotation of siblings we wouldn't use in this way making it an odd feeling translation & I would guess they weren't that close to suggest they could be siblings. I think brothers and sisters has a wider reaching connotation allowing it to be put in the place of someone who you are linked with but not immediately related to
It would provide a better understanding on who's being addressed
It seems less personal and affectionate then brothers and sisters, it also may be more difficult for some to understand
Siblings suggest familial/blood related relationship which I don't believe is the case here
I would argue that the changing of the term "brothers" into "siblings" could potentially mislead and stumble some people.
Translations of the Bible are very influential. Personally, I think this translation could imply the support of gender neutrality/fluidity or non-binary ideologies (ie. It could be compared to the use of "they/them" when referring to a

<p>non-binary person), which (I believe) are ideas that are contrary to the Bible.</p> <p>I think “brothers and sisters” is a more appropriate term - it’s an inclusive term which still carries the meaning of addressing both male and female readers, whilst not stumbling people.</p> <p>However, I do recognise that there are intersex people who may be excluded from using “brothers and sisters” instead.</p>
<p>It’s gender neutral and removes the gendered language and potential confusion brothers has.</p> <p>However it’s a familial term. I think I view brother, sister, mother, father as titles given to people. Not just as their biological relationship or relationship otherwise to specific people. They are representations of roles or ways of being. I don’t view sibling like this. I don’t know if that is because I have not seen it used like that, especially in the Bible. Maybe I would view it like that if I had grown up reading that word in the Bible.</p>
<p>The text seems to lend itself with a male & female narrative.</p>
<p>Brothers and sisters feels more appropriate. Brothers in our language still feels close to brethen, and there is an awareness that this does not have to be a brother by blood (outside of Christ). Sister therefore feels the same. But sibling feels more 'bloodline' like.</p>
<p>Siblings, whilst technically correct, feels a bit depersonalising. When I refer to my direct family, I can them my 'brother and sister', not 'siblings'.</p>
<p>Because sibling feels informal and not descriptive of the deeper family connection</p>
<p>I think the term siblings implies a human link between all people, I agree with the term</p>
<p>I think because brother and sister are also commonly used as titles when speaking fondly about a Christian friend (eg. ‘my brother in Christ Tom’), it attaches a sense of endearment and warmth to the phrase ‘brothers and sisters’ - which I would imagine is Paul’s intention, to emphasise our familial relationship in Christ.</p> <p>I have not heard the term sibling be used in this way as an endearing title and therefore it feels slightly colder and more of a biological description rather than way to convey familial love and respect.</p> <p>I feel like people in general conversational language use the word sibling far less than brother or sister so we have less of an emotional attachment to the term, whereas in this passage I believe emotional attachment is meant to be conveyed.</p>
<p>Think it works, but isn’t commonly used because brothers and sisters sounds more natural.</p>
<p>Agree</p>
<p>The word siblings refers to both sexes, and it retains the-church-is-a-family connotation too!</p>
<p>Sibling would mean that the male or/and female are blood related. This could be misleading.</p>
<p>It would help make it clear that it's referring to men and women, however, I would normally only use the word siblings to mean a group of siblings that I am not part of rather than siblings that are mine. So it sounds like he means 'siblings of each other' rather than calling them his own family (particularly in 16:17 for some reason).</p>
<p>While it could be argued that it is more inclusive, i dont feel its necessary, as the term "brothers and sisters" fits well.</p>
<p>The use of the word removes gender out of the equation. Siblings can be of any gender (including non binary and trans identities) and therefore removes the ambiguity of who is being spoken to because of gendered nuances in language that do not necessarily translate well to modern day english.</p>

Siblings is gender neutral and includes both male and female.
Paul seems to basically be saying, "my fellow-christians" but is using the language of family as he would argue we're adopted by God, like family. Out of the two terms, "siblings" and "brothers and sisters," both seem accurate to what he's trying to communicate, but "siblings" seems a little more accurate as it maintains just being one word. Also, it has the benefit now of including people of different gender identities.
Agree
Siblings is specifically talking about blood relatives and in the text I don't think it is referring just to immediate family members, but church members, the word siblings assumes actual family relatives not fellow Christians
Covers all sexes and genders
It not only includes both male and female, but is not limited by any gender at all, therefore making it inclusive of non-binary genders or A-gender people.
It somehow feels less personal
Every time I heard this debate I think it's really interesting and makes me laugh 😊
All the other countries except western cultures has same word we call "that guy" can pointing at female or can be male
Same to other asian languages and Africans But English nowadays people going crazy they should know Bible is not for English people only This holy scripture written for everyone who believes Christ