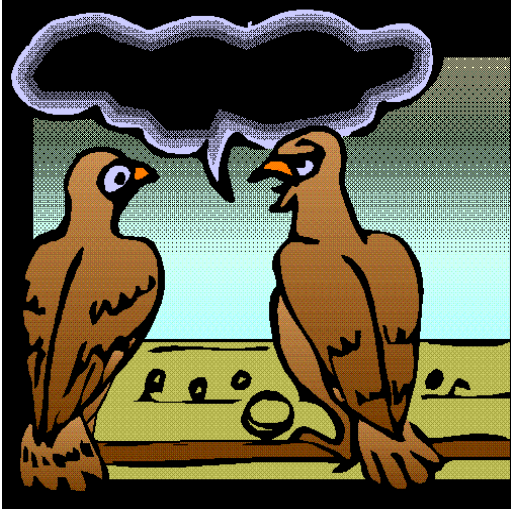**Lesson #3**

THE PROBLEM WITH LANGUAGE

1   **Did you tweet anyone today?**

Match the following with the correct definition by placing the corresponding letter in the blank.

____gay

____mouse

____tweet

____web

____dumb

____surf

____text

____spam

____server

____alien

a)   Someone who waits on your table
b)   Junk e-mails
c)   The writing part of a book or newspaper
d)   A person who is a stranger in a country
e)   Happy
f)   A canned food product consisting of pork
g)   A short message that is posted on Twitter
h)   Not able to speak
i)   Waves breaking onto a beach
j)   What a spider makes
k)   To be homosexual
l)   A small rodent
m)   A person from outer space
n)   A pointing device for computers
o)   To send a message with a cell phone
p)   A network of computers and information
q)   A main computer to which others connect
r)   A soft sound that a young bird makes
s)   Stupid, not very smart
t)   Looking for information on the internet

What did you notice about the words and definitions above?

What does this tell you about the English language?

What does that mean for a Bible translation that wants to continue to communicate with people in the language which they speak every day?

What would happen, for example, if the translators were to use the word "gay" for happy people in the Bible?

One of the reasons the NIV was updated was because of the change in word meanings in our English language.

Put an X before the phrase that you feel is correct.

_____It's me.   OR   _____It's I.

_____It's they. OR   _____It's them.

_____He's taller than I.   OR   _____He's taller than me.

_____Betty and me went to the store. OR   _____Betty and I went to the store.

_____He gave it to Ben and myself.   OR   _____He gave it to Ben and me.

_____Just between you and me.   OR   _____Just between you and I.

_____Tell me whom you are talking about. OR _____Tell me about whom you are talking.

Some of these are bad grammar and some are good grammar according to traditional rules of grammar. Yet some of the bad grammar examples have become so common they sound *right* to us. For example, even though it isn't correct, most people today say "It's me!" If you say, "It is I!" many people look at you like you are some kind of weird person. Likewise most of us think nothing of ending our sentences with prepositions. Yet this is against generally accepted rules of grammar. It has become so common, however, that it is the way most of us communicate.

Another feature of our language that has changed is that "they, them, their" are filling in for singular, gender-neutral antecedents (words to which they refer). This has happened for a number of reasons. One is that the English language has no gender-neutral 3rd person singular pronouns. [In older English there actually was such a pronoun: "hit."]   So "they" sometimes is

used as a substitute. Additionally, the English language used to use the pronouns "he, him, his" as gender-neutral pronouns. But somewhat due to the influence of the feminist movement of years ago, this pronoun has lost its gender-neutral connotation for many (if not most) people. Many today hear a masculine when they hear "he" or "him." So more and more "they" has found its way into our communication as a replacement.

Consider the following examples:

Everyone should do his best in whatever situations he finds himself in. (This agrees in number but does not agree in the indefinite gender.)

Suggested revision: **Everyone should do his or her best in whatever situations he or she finds himself or herself in.** (This maintains number agreement as both are singulars, but burdens the sentence with awkwardness in trying to cover the indefinite gender of the antecedent.)

Revision: **Everyone should do their best in whatever situations they find themselves in.** (This agrees in logical number since everyone implies a plural even though it is singular and also agrees in gender since "their, they and themselves" are indefinite in gender, able to refer to either a male or female.)

Consider some examples from the KJV showing that this was occasionally done years ago in the English language:

Matthew 18:35 (AV)
So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Numbers 2:34 (AV)
And the children of Israel did according to all that the LORD commanded Moses: so they pitched by their standards, and so they set forward, every one after their families, according to the house of their fathers.

Joshua 21:42 (AV)
These cities were every one with their suburbs round about them: thus were all these cities.

READ each of the following sentences aloud:

Anyone who thinks they left their hat in the theater, should leave their cell number with the clerk.

Each child who left their toy in the playroom, should check with their parents before leaving.

Each person who came to the play should hold on to their ticket for the drawing following.

Anyone who is wearing smooth-soled shoes, should watch their step on the newly waxed tiles.

Anyone who wants to commune today, should announce their intention to the pastor.

Now go back and substitute "he" or "him" or "his" for the "they" or "them" or "their" in each of those sentences. Do you find that it sounds a bit strange? That's because more and more this is the way we speak. Not all grammars are in favor of this. But a huge database called the Collins Bank of English Usage was consulted by the NIV Committee on Bible Translation (CBT). This database showed that in written and spoken English this kind of substitution was very common and growing. So the CBT made the decision to use this way of speaking when there were impersonal/gender neutral or collective words followed by pronouns.

Discuss.
Is it good for a Bible Translation to keep up with the way people speak the language?

Have you ever noticed that young people often use words differently than older people are used to? Why is that?

Why will translations need to steer away from "slang" expressions while at the same time being aware of changes in the structure of the English language and changes in word meanings?

As language changes, why is it difficult for one generation to "give up" the way they are used to speaking for the sake of another generation? Why will it be necessary for someone to make a sacrifice? Who will make that sacrifice?

Another change that many have noticed in some of the new translations, including the NIV11, is that in some places instead of saying "all men" they now say "all people" or "everyone." This again has to do with the way people hear language today. Years ago people heard the word "man" or "men" in some contexts and understood this to mean "all people." Many believe that today more and more people hear "males" exclusively when they hear those expressions. Since the word "men" or "man" was often used for a Greek word which meant "human beings" or "people," many translations have chosen to translate it with "people" or "human beings" in many places rather than "men."

Let's take a look a just a few examples:

EXAMPLE 1

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (NA26)
³ τοῦτο καλὸν καὶ ἀπόδεκτον ἐνώπιον τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν θεοῦ,⁴ ὃς πάντας ἀνθρώπους θέλει σωθῆναι καὶ εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας ἐλθεῖν.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (NIV84)
This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants <u>all men</u> to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (NIV11)
This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants <u>all people</u> to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (ESV)
This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires <u>all people</u> to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (NASB95)
This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires <u>all men</u> to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (HCSB)
This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants <u>everyone</u> to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (AV)
For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; 4 Who will have <u>all men</u> to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (GW)
This is good and pleases God our Savior. 4 He wants <u>all people</u> to be saved and to learn the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (NLT)
This is good and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants <u>everyone</u> to be saved and to understand the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3-4 (AAT)
This is good and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants <u>all people</u> to be saved and to come to know the truth.

<u>Take a closer look:</u>
Look at the context of 1 Timothy 2:3-4 (vv. 1-9). In verse 5 *anthrwpos* (person, human being) is used two more times. First it is plural (people) and then singular (person or human being). [Note

that "all people" in v. 6 is a translation of the Greek word "all" without another word with it. The "people" is understood by the Greek and added in the English translation for clarity based on the context.] In v. 8 Paul uses a different Greek word when he says, "I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer..." This Greek word is not *anthrwpos*, but *avnp*. That latter word means "man" as opposed to "woman." Note that in v. 9 Paul contrasts what he says in verse 8 with "women." The problem is that when NIV84 and some of the other translations translate all these words using "men" in our English translation, the shift and the point of what Paul is saying is lost.

EXAMPLE 2

Matthew 4:19 (NA26)
¹⁹ καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου, καὶ ποιήσω ὑμᾶς ἁλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων.

Matthew 4:19 (NIV84)
"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

Matthew 4:19 (NIV11)
"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."

Matthew 4:19 (ESV)
And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Matthew 4:19 (NASB95)
And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Matthew 4:19 (HCSB)
"Follow Me," He told them, "and I will make you fish for people!"

Matthew 4:19 (AV)
And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Matthew 4:19 (GW)
Jesus said to them, "Come, follow me! I will teach you how to catch people instead of fish."

Matthew 4:19 (NLT)
Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!"

Matthew 4:19 (AAT)
"Come follow Me," Jesus told them, "and I will make you fishers of men."

Once again, the word used here which follows "fishers of " is the plural of the Greek word which commonly means "human beings" or "people."   Notice how it is variously translated.

Discuss:

Why would Jesus use the Greek word for "human beings" here instead of the word for "man" as opposed to woman?

Is Jesus saying that he only wants his disciples to be fishers of men and not women?

In the context, which translation(s) more adequately expresses what Jesus is saying?

EXAMPLE 3

Matthew 8:9 (NA26)
⁹ καὶ γὰρ ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος εἰμι ὑπὸ ἐξουσίαν, ἔχων ὑπ᾽ ἐμαυτὸν στρατιώτας, καὶ λέγω τούτῳ· πορεύθητι, καὶ πορεύεται, καὶ ἄλλῳ· ἔρχου, καὶ ἔρχεται, καὶ τῷ δούλῳ μου· ποίησον τοῦτο, καὶ ποιεῖ.

Matthew 8:9 (NIV84)
For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

Matthew 8:9 (NIV11)
For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

Matthew 8:9 (ESV)
For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

Matthew 8:9 (NASB95)
"For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it."

Matthew 8:9 (HCSB)
For I too am a man under authority, having soldiers under my command. I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes; and to another, 'Come!' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it."

Matthew 8:9 (AV)
For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

Matthew 8:9 (GW)
As you know, I'm in a chain of command and have soldiers at my command. I tell one of them, 'Go!' and he goes, and another, 'Come!' and he comes. I tell my servant, 'Do this!' and he does it."

Matthew 8:9 (NLT)
I know this because I am under the authority of my superior officers, and I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, 'Go,' and they go, or 'Come,' and they come. And if I say to my slaves, 'Do this,' they do it."

Matthew 8:9 (AAT)
"I'm only a man who has to obey others, but I have soldiers under me. I tell one of them, Go, and he goes. And another, Come, and he comes. And my slave, Do this, and he does it."

Discuss:
In this passage again the Greek word *anthrwpos* is used. However, most of the translations, including NIV11, translate it with "man" here instead of using "people" or "human being" as we've seen in other places. Why would the context of this verse lead them to translate it this way here–and properly so?

What do you notice about translating and the use of language from these three examples?

For further study: You may want to do further study on your own regarding the topics that are taken up in these four lessons. We suggest that you look up the Web site of the Translation Evaluation Committee (TEC) at the following address: www.wels.net/translation. There are links to articles and comparisons that can give you much more information located on this page.