

The CEB and the disciple who barely escaped

By [John Dart](#)

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As a disciple left the Jerusalem Temple complex, he urged Jesus to look. "What large stones and what large buildings!" the disciple says in the NRSV (Mark 13:1). But "large" seems too weak a word. The new *Common English Bible* translates the line, "What awesome stones and buildings!" That adjective is a better choice (though it's been watered down in recent years).

Whenever a new Bible translation [comes out](#), questions arise about changes to familiar passages. I was pleased to see the CEB use the word "disciple" to refer to the mysterious young man who appears in Mark 14:51-52, after the 12 disciples desert Jesus and run away:

One young man, a disciple, was wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They grabbed him, but he left the linen cloth behind and ran away naked.

The Greek word for "disciple" is not in the text--but there is a verb indicating he was a follower who was risking arrest himself.

Mark later describes a "young man" wearing a white robe and sitting on the right side inside the empty tomb when the three women enter--the only witness to the resurrection recorded in Mark's gospel (with its original ending at 16:8). He tells the women to inform Peter and the disciples to go to Galilee, where they will see the risen Jesus--but the women are so "overcome with terror and dread" (CEB) that they flee from the tomb and tell no one.

Mark doesn't say that these two passages feature the *same* young man. But it's interesting that Mark's Gospel, unlike the others in the canon, does not have the risen Jesus appear to the 12 disciples--and that it does feature numerous unnamed witnesses, separate from the 12 and Jesus's family, to his healings and teachings and death.

Emerson B. Powery, the Greek associate editor for the CEB, said in an e-mail interview that the young man who barely escaped arrest "is exactly the kind of representative who is part of this larger group of disciples 'around Jesus' who were following along closely." People around Jesus, along with the 12, were even given the secret to God's kingdom (4:10-11).

Powery, who has a doctorate from Duke, teaches at Messiah College in Pennsylvania. Asked about CEB passages likely to draw interest, Powery noted that Mary's surprised reaction to the angel ("I haven't had sexual relations") is accurate and less theological than the NRSV's use of "virgin" (Luke 1:34). "Throughout the Gospel of John," he said, "the NRSV's general use of 'the Jews' is usually, in the CEB, translated as the more specific 'Jewish leaders,' or 'Jewish opposition' or 'Jewish authorities.'" And the "Son of man" becomes "the Human One"--a translation decision far too complex to deal with here.