

Language: English

Book: 1 John

1 John

Chapter 1

¹ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched, concerning the Word of life— ² the life was made known, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and which has been made known to us. ³ That which we have seen and heard we declare also to you, so you also will have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴ Also, we are writing these things to you so that our joy will be complete. ^[1]

⁵ This is the message that we have heard from him and are proclaiming to you: God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from every sin. ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar, and his word is not in us.

Footnotes

1:4 ^[1]Some important ancient Greek copies read,

1 John 1 General Notes

Structure and formatting

This is a letter that John wrote to Christians.

Special concepts in this chapter

Christians and sin

In this chapter John teaches that all Christians are still sinners. But God continues to forgive a Christian's sins. (See: sin and faith and forgive)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Metaphors

In this chapter John writes that God is light. Light is a metaphor for understanding and righteousness. (See: and righteous)

John also writes about people walking in the light or in the darkness. Walking is a metaphor for behaving or living. People who walk in the light understand what is righteous and do it. People who walk in the darkness may not understand what is righteous, and they do what is sinful.

1 John 1:1

General Information:

The apostle John wrote this letter to believers. All instances of "you," "your," and "yours" include all believers and are plural. Here the words "we" and "us" refer to John and those who had been with Jesus. In verses 1-2 many pronouns like "that," "which," and "it" are used. They refer to "the Word of life" and "the eternal life." But, since these are names for Jesus, you can use pronouns that refer to a person like "who," "whom" or "he."

which we have heard

"which we have heard him teach"

which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at

This is repeated for emphasis. Alternate translation: "which we ourselves have seen"

the Word of life

This refers to Jesus Christ. Alternate translation: "the one who gives life" or "the one who causes people to live forever"

life

The word "life" throughout this letter refers to more than physical life. Here "life" refers to being alive spiritually.

1 John 1:2

the life was made known

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God made the eternal life known to us" or "God made us able to know him, who is eternal life"

we have seen and testify

"we have seen it and testify about it" or "we have seen him and testify about him"

the eternal life, which was with the Father, and which has been made known to us

Here, "the eternal life" refers to the one who gives that life, Jesus. Alternate translation: "the one who enables us to live forever, who was with God the Father, and who has been made known to us"

and which has been made known to us

This was when he lived on earth. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "and which the Father has made known to us" or "and who came to live among us"

1 John 1:3

General Information:

Here the words "we," "us," and "our" refer to John and those who had been with Jesus.

That which we have seen and heard we declare also to you

"We say to you also what we have seen and heard"

have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is with the Father

"be our close friends. We are friends with God the Father"

Our fellowship

It is not clear if John is including or excluding his readers. You may translate this either way.

Father ... Son

These are important titles that describe the relationship between God and Jesus.

1 John 1:4

so that our joy will be complete

"to make our joy complete" or "to make ourselves completely happy"

1 John 1:5

General Information:

Here the words "we" and "us" refer to all believers, including the people to whom John was writing. Unless otherwise stated, that is the meaning for the remainder of this book.

Connecting Statement:

From here into the next chapter, John writes about fellowship—close relationships with God and other believers.

God is light

This is a metaphor that means that God is perfectly pure and holy. Cultures that associate goodness with light may be able to keep the idea of light without explaining the metaphor. Alternate translation: "God is purely righteous like pure light"

in him there is no darkness at all

This is a metaphor that means that God never sins and is not evil in any way. Cultures that associate evil with darkness may be able to keep the idea of darkness without explaining the metaphor. Alternate translation: "in him there is nothing that is evil"

1 John 1:6

walk in darkness

Here "walk" is a metaphor for how a person lives or behaves. Here "darkness" is a metaphor for "evil." Alternate translation: "do what is evil"

1 John 1:7

walk in the light as he is in the light

Here "walk" is a metaphor for how a person lives or behaves. Here "light" is a metaphor for "good" or

"right." Alternate translation: "do what is good as God is perfectly good" or "do what is right as God is perfectly right"

the blood of Jesus

This refers to the death of Jesus.

Son

This is an important title for Jesus, the Son of God.

1 John 1:8

have no sin

"never sin"

are deceiving

"are tricking" or "lying to"

the truth is not in us

The truth is spoken of as if it were an object that could be inside believers. Alternate translation: "we do not believe what God says is true"

1 John 1:9

he is faithful

"God is faithful"

to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. John uses them to emphasize that God will surely forgive our sins. Alternate translation: "and will completely forgive us for what we have done wrong"

1 John 1:10

we make him out to be a liar

It is implied that a person who claims to be without sin would be calling God a liar since he said that everyone is a sinner. Alternate translation: "it is the same as calling God a liar, because he said we have all sinned"

his word is not in us

"Word" here is a metonym for "message." Obeying and honoring God's word is spoken of as if his word were inside the believers. Alternate translation: "we do not understand God's word and do not obey what he says"

Chapter 2

¹ Children, I am writing these things to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the one who is righteous. ² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world. ³ We know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴ The one who says "I know God" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God has been perfected. By this we know that we are in him: ⁶ whoever says that he remains in God should himself also walk just as he walked.

⁷ Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment that you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you heard. ⁸ Yet I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Christ and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. ⁹ The one who says that he is in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness until now. ¹⁰ The one who loves his brother remains in the light and there is no occasion for stumbling in him. ¹¹ But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness; he does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

¹² I am writing to you, children, because your sins are forgiven because of his name. ¹³ I am writing to you, fathers, because you know the one who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.

¹⁴ I have written to you, fathers, because you know the one who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God remains in you, and you have overcome the evil one. ¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For everything that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the arrogance of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷ The world and its desire are passing away. But whoever does the will of God will remain forever.

¹⁸ Children, it is the last hour. Just as you heard that the antichrist is coming, now many antichrists have come. By this we know that it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not from us. For if they had been from us they would have remained with us. But when they went out, that showed they were not from us. ²⁰ But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. ²¹ I did not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it and because no lie is from the truth. ²² Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? That person is the antichrist, since he denies the Father and the Son. ²³ No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son also has the Father. ²⁴ As for you, let what you have heard from the beginning remain in you. If what you heard from the beginning remains in you, you will also remain in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵ This is the promise he gave to us—eternal life. ²⁶ I have written these things to you about those who would lead you astray. ²⁷ As for you, the anointing that you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you everything and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, remain in him.

²⁸ Now, children, remain in him so that when he appears we will have boldness and not be ashamed before him at his coming. ²⁹ If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born from him.

1 John 2 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Antichrist

In this chapter John writes about both a specific antichrist and many antichrists. The word "antichrist" means "opposed to Christ." The antichrist is a person who will come in the last days and imitate Jesus's work, but he will do it for evil. Before this person comes, there will be many people who work against Christ; they too are called "antichrists." (See: antichrist and lastday and evil)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Metaphor

There are several groups of similar metaphors that are used throughout this chapter.

Being in God is a metaphor for having fellowship with God, and God's word and truth being in people is a metaphor for people knowing and obeying God's word.

Walking is a metaphor for behaving, not knowing where one is going is a metaphor for not knowing how to behave, and stumbling is a metaphor for sinning.

The light is a metaphor for knowing and doing what is right, and darkness and blindness are metaphors for not knowing what is right and doing what is wrong.

Leading people astray is a metaphor for teaching people things that are not true.

1 John 2:1

General Information:

Here the word "we" refers to John and all believers.

Connecting Statement:

John continues to write about fellowship and shows that it is possible because Jesus goes between believers and the Father.

Children

John was an elderly man and their leader. He used this expression to show his love for them. Alternate translation: "You who are as dear to me as my own children"

I am writing these things

"I am writing this letter"

But if anyone sins

"But when anyone sins." This is something that is likely to happen.

we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the one who is righteous

The word "advocate" here refers to Jesus. Alternate translation: "we have Jesus Christ, the one who is righteous, who speaks to the Father and asks him to forgive us"

1 John 2:2

He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins

"God is no longer angry with us because Jesus sacrificed his own life for our sins"

1 John 2:3

We know that we have come to know him

"We know that we know him" or "We know that we have a good relationship with him"

if we keep his commandments

"if we obey what he commands"

1 John 2:4

The one who says

"Anyone who says" or "The person who says"

I know God

"I have a good relationship with God"

does not keep

"does not obey" or "disobeys"

his commandments

"what God tells him to do"

the truth is not in him

The truth is spoken of as if it were an object that could be inside the believers. Alternate translation: "he does not believe what God says is true"

1 John 2:5

keeps his word

To keep someone's word here is an idiom for to obey. Alternate translation: "does what God tells him to do"

in him truly the love of God has been perfected

This can be stated in active form. Possible meanings are 1) "the love of God" refers to a person loving God, and "perfected" represents completely or fully. Alternate translation: "it is that person who loves God completely" or 2) "the love of God" refers to God loving people, and "perfected" represents completing its purpose. Alternate translation: "God's love has achieved its purpose in that person's life"

By this we know that we are in him

The phrase "we are in him" means that the believer has fellowship with God. Alternate translation: "When we obey what God says, we can be certain that we have fellowship with him" or "By this we know that are joined to God"

1 John 2:6

remains in God

To remain in God means to continue to have fellowship with God. Alternate translation: "continues to have fellowship with God" or "stays joined to God"

should himself also walk just as he walked

Conducting one's life is spoken of as if it were walking on a path. Alternate translation: "must live as he lived" or "should also obey God just as Jesus Christ did"

1 John 2:7

Connecting Statement:

John gives believers basic principles of fellowship—obedience and love.

Beloved, I am

"You people whom I love, I am" or "Dear friends, I am"

I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment that you have had

"I write to you to love one other, which is not a new thing to do but an old commandment that you have heard." John refers to Jesus's command to love one another.

from the beginning

Here, "beginning" refers to when they decided to follow Christ. Alternate translation: "from when you first believed in Christ"

The old commandment is the word that you heard

"The old commandment is the message that you heard"

1 John 2:8

Yet I am writing a new commandment to you

"But in one way the commandment I write to you is a new commandment"

which is true in Christ and in you

"which is true, as shown in Christ's deeds and your deeds"

the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining

Here "darkness" is a metaphor for "evil," and "light" is a metaphor for "good." Alternate translation: "you are ceasing to do evil and you are doing more and more good"

1 John 2:9

General Information:

Here the word "brother" refers to a fellow Christian.

The one who says

"Anyone who says" or "Someone who claims." This does not refer to a specific person.

he is in the light

Here to be "in the light" is a metaphor for doing what is right. Alternate translation: "he does what is right"

is in the darkness

Here to be "in the darkness" is a metaphor for doing what is evil. Alternate translation: "does what is evil"

1 John 2:10

there is no occasion for stumbling in him

"nothing will cause him to stumble." The word "stumbling" is a metaphor that means to fail spiritually or morally. Alternate translation: "nothing will cause him to sin" or "he will not fail to do what is pleasing to God"

1 John 2:11

is in the darkness and walks in the darkness

Here "walk" is a metaphor for how a person lives or behaves. Here to be "in the darkness" and "walks in the darkness" mean the same thing. This brings attention to how evil it is to hate a fellow believer. Alternate translation: "does what is evil"

he does not know where he is going

This is a metaphor for the believer who is not living as a Christian should be living. Alternate translation: "he does not know what he should do"

the darkness has blinded his eyes

"the darkness has made him unable to see." Darkness is a metaphor for sin or evil. Alternate translation: "sin has made it impossible for him to understand the truth"

1 John 2:12

General Information:

John explains why he is writing his letter either to different age groups or to believers with differences in maturity. Try to use similar wording for these sentences, as they are written poetically.

you, children

John was an elderly man and their leader. He used this expression to show his love for them. See how you translated this in [1 John 2:1]

your sins are forgiven

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God forgives your sins"

because of his name

"his name" refers to Christ and who he is. Alternate translation: "because of what Christ has done for you"

1 John 2:13

I am writing to you, fathers

The word "fathers" here is possibly a metaphor referring to mature believers. Alternate translation: "I am writing to you, mature believers"

you know

"you have a relationship with"

the one who is from the beginning

"the one who has always lived" or "the one who has always existed." It refers either to "Jesus" or to "God the Father."

young men

This possibly refers to those who are no longer new believers but are growing in spiritual maturity. Alternate translation: "young believers"

overcome

The writer is speaking of the believers' refusal to follow Satan and of their frustrating his plans as if it were a matter of conquering him.

1 John 2:14

you are strong

Here "strong" refers not to believers' physical strength, but to their faithfulness to Christ.

the word of God remains in you

"Word of God" here is a metonym for the message from God. The writer refers to the believers' increased faithfulness to Christ and knowledge of him as if he were speaking of God's word existing in them. Alternate translation: "God's message continues to teach you" or "you know the word of God"

1 John 2:15

Do not love the world or

In 2:15-17 the word "world" refers to all the things people want to do that do not honor God. Alternate translation: "Do not behave like the people in the world who do not honor God, and do not love"

the things that are in the world

"the things that those who dishonor God want"

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him

A person cannot love this world and all that dishonors God and love the Father at the same time.

the love of the Father is not in him

"he does not love the Father"

1 John 2:16

the lust of the flesh

"the strong desire to have sinful physical pleasure"

the lust of the eyes

"the strong desire to have things that we see"

is not from the Father

"does not come from the Father" or "is not how the Father teaches us to live"

1 John 2:17

are passing away

"pass away" or "will one day not be here"

1 John 2:18

Connecting Statement:

John warns about those who are against Christ.

Children

John was an elderly man and their leader. He used this expression to show his love for them. See how you translated this in [1 John 2:1]

it is the last hour

The phrase "the last hour" refers to the time just before Jesus returns. Alternate translation: "Jesus will return soon"

many antichrists have come

"there are many people who are against Christ"

have come. By this we know

"have come, and because of this we know" or "have come, and because many antichrists have come, we know"

1 John 2:19

They went out from us

"They left us"

but they were not from us

"but they did not really belong to us anyway" or "but they were not really part of our group in the first place." The reason they were not really part of the group is that they were not believers in Jesus.

For if they had been from us they would have remained with us

"We know this because they would not have left us if they really had been believers"

1 John 2:20

General Information:

In the Old Testament the word "anointing" referred to pouring oil on a person to set him apart to serve God.

But you have an anointing from the Holy One

John speaks of the Holy Spirit as if he were "an anointing" that the people have received from Jesus. The abstract noun "anointing" can be translated with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: "But the Holy One has anointed you" or "But Jesus Christ, the Holy One, has given you his Spirit"

the Holy One

This refers to Jesus. Alternate translation: "Jesus, the Holy One"

you all know

Your language might allow you to use the abstract noun "knowledge" here. If your language requires you to state what it is that the readers know, be as general as possible. Alternate translation: "you all have knowledge" or "you all know what is true"

1 John 2:21

the truth ... no lie is from the truth

The abstract noun "truth" can be translated as an adjective. Alternate translation: "what is true ... no lie comes from what is true"

1 John 2:22

Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ?

"Who is the liar? Anyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ." John used a question to emphasize who liars are. Alternate translation: "The one who denies that Jesus is the Christ is the liar"

denies that Jesus is the Christ

"refuses to say that Jesus is the Christ" or "says that Jesus is not the Messiah"

denies the Father and the Son

"refuses to say the truth about the Father and the Son" or "rejects the Father and the Son."

Father ... Son

These are important titles that describe the relationship between God and Jesus.

1 John 2:23

has the Father

"belongs to the Father"

confesses the Son

"speaks the truth about the Son"

has the Father

"belongs to the Father"

1 John 2:24

General Information:

Here the word "you" is plural and refers to the people to whom John wrote, as well as all believers. The word "he" is emphatic and refers to Christ.

Connecting Statement:

John reminds believers to continue in what they have first heard.

As for you

This marks John's telling them how they should live as followers of Jesus instead of how those against Christ live.

let what you have heard from the beginning remain in you

"remember and believe what you have heard from the beginning." How they heard it, what they heard, and what "the beginning" means can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "continue to trust what we have taught you about Jesus just as you have trusted since you first became believers"

what you have heard from the beginning

"what we taught you about Jesus when you first became believers"

If what you heard from the beginning remains in you

The word "remains" is talking about relationship, not salvation. Alternate translation: "If you continue to trust what we first taught you"

also remain in the Son and in the Father

To "remain in" means to continue to have fellowship with. See how you translated a similar phrase to "remain in" in [1 John 2:6]

1 John 2:25

This is the promise he gave to us—eternal life.

"This is what he promised to give us—eternal life" or "He has promised to cause us to live forever"

life

The word "life" throughout this letter refers to more than physical life. Here "life" refers to being alive spiritually. See how you translated this in [1 John 1:1]

1 John 2:26

those who would lead you astray

Here "lead you astray" is a metaphor for persuading someone to believe something that is not true. Alternate translation: "those who want to deceive you" or "those who want to make you believe lies about Jesus Christ"

1 John 2:27

Connecting Statement:

Starting in verse 29, John introduces the idea of being born into God's family. The previous verses show that believers continue to sin; this part shows that believers also have the new nature, which cannot sin. It continues to show how believers can recognize each other.

As for you

This marks John's telling them something else about how they should live as followers of Jesus instead of following those who are against Christ.

the anointing that you received from him remains in you
John speaks of the Holy Spirit as if he were "the anointing" that the people have received from Jesus and remains in them. The abstract noun "anointing" can be translated with a verbal phrase. See how you translated "anointing" in [1 John 2:20]

as his anointing teaches you everything

Here the word "everything" is a generalization. Alternate translation: "because his anointing teaches you everything that you need to know" or "because his Spirit teaches you everything that you need to know"

1 John 2:28

Now

This word is used here to mark a new part of the letter.

Now, children

John was an elderly man and their leader. He used this expression to show his love for them. See how you translated this in [1 John 2:1]

he appears

"we see him"

boldness

having no fear

not be ashamed before him

"not be ashamed in his presence"

at his coming

"when he comes again"

1 John 2:29

has been born from him

"has been born of God" or "is God's child"

Chapter 3

¹ See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God, and this is what we are. For this reason, the world does not know us, because it did not know him. ^[1]² Beloved, we are now children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we will be. We know that when Christ appears, we will be like him, for we will see him just as he is. ³ Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as he is pure. ⁴ Everyone who sins is committing acts of lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness. ⁵ You know that Christ was revealed in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. ⁶ No one who remains in him will keep on sinning. No one who continues to sin has seen him or known him. ⁷ Children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does righteousness is righteous, just as Christ is righteous. ⁸ The one who commits sin is from the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this reason the Son of God was revealed, so that he would destroy the devil's works. ⁹ Whoever has been born from God does not continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him. He cannot continue to sin because he has been born of God. ¹⁰ In this the children of God and children of the devil are revealed: Whoever does not do what is righteous is not from God, neither is the one who does not love his brother. ¹¹ For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another. ¹² We should not be like Cain, who was from the evil one and murdered his brother. Why did he kill him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.

¹³ Do not be amazed, my brothers, if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵ Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer. You know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him. ¹⁶ By this we know love, because Christ laid down his life for us. We also ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. ¹⁷ But whoever has the world's goods, sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart of compassion from him, how does the love of God remain in him? ¹⁸ My children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in actions and truth. ¹⁹ It is by this we know that we are from the truth, and we assure our hearts before him. ²⁰ For if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and he knows all things. ²¹ Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. ²² Whatever we ask we will receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing before him. ²³ This is his commandment: that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he gave us this commandment. ²⁴ The one who keeps God's commandments remains in him, and God remains in him. By this we know that he remains in us, by the Spirit whom he gave to us.

Footnotes

3:1 ^[1]Some important and ancient Greek copies leave out,

1 John 3 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Children of God

God created all people, but people can only become children of God by believing in Jesus. (See: believe)

Cain

Cain was a son of the first man, Adam, and the first woman, Eve. He was jealous of his brother and murdered him. Readers may not know who Cain was if they have not read Genesis. It may help them if you explain this to them.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

"To know"

The verb "to know" is used in two different ways in this chapter. Sometimes it is used about knowing a fact, as in 3:2, 3:5, and 3:19. Sometimes it means to experience and understand someone or something, as in 3:1, 3:6, 3:16, and 3:20. Some languages have different words for these different meanings.

"He who keeps God's commandments remains in him, and God remains in him"

Many scholars believe this is about remaining in God's will and is not about being saved. (See: eternity and save)

1 John 3:1

Connecting Statement:

In this part John tells the believers about their new nature, which cannot sin.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us

"Think about how our Father loves us so much"

we should be called children of God

"the Father called us his children"

children of God

Here this means people who belong to God through faith in Jesus.

For this reason, the world does not know us, because it did not know him

Possible meanings are 1) "Because we are the children of God and because the world did not know God, it does not know us" or 2) "Because the world did not know God, it does not know us."

the world does not know us, because it did not know him

Here "the world" refers to people who do not honor God. What the world did not know can be made explicit: Alternate translation: "those who do not honor God do not know that we belong to God, because they did not know God"

1 John 3:2

Beloved, we are

"You people whom I love, we are" or "Dear friends, we are." See how you translated this in 1 John 2:7.

it has not yet been revealed

This can be stated in active form: Alternate translation: "God has not yet revealed"

revealed

This can mean here either "told," "demonstrated," or "shown."

1 John 3:3

Everyone who has this hope in him

The word "him" refers to Christ. Having hope in Christ means expecting that because of Christ, what is hoped for will happen. Alternate translation: "Everyone who has this hope because of Christ" or "Everyone who trusts Christ to fulfill this hope"

who has this hope in him

The phrase "this hope" refers to the hope of being like Christ, as mentioned in the previous verse. Here to have hope is to confidently expect

something good. Alternate translation: "who confidently expects in Christ to become like Christ" or "who confidently waits for Christ to cause him to become like Christ"

purifies himself just as he is pure

"keeps himself pure because Christ is pure"

1 John 3:4

General Information:

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1 John 3:5

Christ was revealed

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "Christ appeared" or "the Father revealed Christ"

1 John 3:6

remains in him

To remain in someone means to continue to have fellowship with him. See how you translated "remains in God" in [1 John 2:6]

No one ... has seen him or known him

John uses the words "seen" and "known" to say that the person who sins has never met Christ in a spiritual sense. A person behaving according to his sinful nature cannot know Christ. Alternate translation: "No one ... has ever truly believed in him"

1 John 3:7

Children, do not let

John was an elderly man and their leader. He used this expression to show his love for them. See how you translated this in [1 John 2:1]

do not let anyone lead you astray

Here "lead you astray" is a metaphor for persuading someone to believe something that is not true. Alternate translation: "do not let anyone fool you" or "do not let anyone deceive you"

The one who does righteousness is righteous, just as Christ is righteous

"He who does what is right is pleasing to God just as Christ is pleasing to God."

1 John 3:8

is from the devil

"belongs to the devil" or "is like the devil"

from the beginning

This refers to the very earliest time of creation before humans first sinned. Alternate translation: "since the earliest time of creation"

the Son of God was revealed

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God revealed his Son"

Son of God

This is an important title for Jesus that describes his relationship to God.

1 John 3:9

Connecting Statement:

For now John ends this section on the new birth and the new nature which cannot sin.

Whoever has been born from God

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "Whoever God has made his child"

God's seed

This speaks of the Holy Spirit, whom God gives to believers and who makes them able to resist sin and do what pleases God as if he were a physical seed that is planted in the earth and grows. Alternate translation: "the Holy Spirit"

he has been born of God

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God has given him new spiritual life" or "he is a child of God"

1 John 3:10

In this the children of God and children of the devil are revealed

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are"

Whoever does not do what is righteous is not from God, neither is the one who does not love his brother

"whoever does not do what is righteous is not from God; whoever does not love his brother is also not from God" or "those who are from God do what is right, and those who are from God love their brothers"

his brother

Here "brother" means fellow Christians.

1 John 3:11

General Information:

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1 John 3:12

General Information:

Cain and Abel were the first sons of Adam and Eve, the first man and woman.

We should not be like Cain

"We should not do as Cain did"

brother

This refers to Cain's younger brother Abel.

Why did he kill him? Because

John uses a question to teach his audience. This can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "He killed him because"

his works were evil and his brother's righteous

The words "works were" are also understood in the second phrase. Alternate translation: "Cain's works were evil and his brother's works were righteous" or "Cain did evil things and his brother did what was right"

1 John 3:13

my brothers

"my fellow believers." John's readers were both male and female.

if the world hates you

Here the word "world" refers to the people who do not honor God. Alternate translation: "if those who do not honor God hate you who do honor God"

1 John 3:14

we have passed out of death into life

The conditions of living and of being dead are spoken of as if they were physical locations that a person could leave from and go to. The abstract nouns "life" and "death" can be translated with verbal phrases. Alternate translation: "we are no longer spiritually dead but are spiritually alive"

life

The word "life" throughout this letter refers to more than physical life. Here "life" refers to being alive spiritually. See how you translated this in [1 John 1:1]

remains in death

"is still spiritually dead"

1 John 3:15

Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer

John speaks of a person who hates another believer as if he were a murderer. Since people commit murder because they hate other people, God considers anyone who hates to be as guilty as someone who kills a person. Alternate translation:

"Whoever hates another believer is as guilty as someone who kills a person"

no murderer has eternal life residing in him

"Eternal life" does refer to believers living forever after they have died, but it is also the power that God gives believers in this life to help them to stop sinning and to do what please him. Here eternal life is spoken of as if it were a person that could live in someone. Alternate translation: "a murderer does not have the power of spiritual life"

1 John 3:16

Christ laid down his life for us

This expression means "Christ willingly gave his life for us" or "Christ willingly died for us"

1 John 3:17

the world's goods

material possessions like money, food, or clothing

sees his brother in need

"realizes a fellow believer needs help"

shuts up his heart of compassion from him

Here "heart" is a metonym for "thoughts" or "emotions." Here "shuts up his heart of compassion" is a metaphor for no longer showing someone compassion. Alternate translation: "does not show him compassion" or "does not willingly help him"

how does the love of God remain in him?

John uses a question to teach his audience. Alternate translation: "God's love is not in him"

1 John 3:18

My children

John was an elderly man and their leader. He used this expression to show his love for them. See how you translated this in [1 John 2:1]

let us not love in word or in tongue, but in actions and truth

The phrases "in word" and "in tongue" both refer to what a person says. Alternate translation: "do not just say that you love people, but show that you truly love people by helping them"

in actions and truth

The words "let us love" are understood here. Alternate translation: "let us love in actions and truth"

1 John 3:19

Connecting Statement:

Here John probably means that believers' ability to love God and each other sincerely (1 John 3:18) is a sign that their new life has indeed originated from the truth about Christ.

we are from the truth

People living according to the truth is spoken of as they were "from the truth." Alternate translation: "we are living according the way Jesus taught us" or "we belong to him who is true"

we assure our hearts

The word "heart" here refers to feelings. Alternate translation: "we do not feel guilty"

1 John 3:20

if our hearts condemn us

Here "hearts" is a metonym for people's thoughts or consciences. Here "hearts condemn us" is a metaphor for feeling guilty. Alternate translation: "if we know that we have sinned and as a result feel guilty"

God is greater than our hearts

Here "hearts" is metonym for people's thoughts or consciences. For God to be "greater than our hearts" means that God knows more than a person. Therefore he can judge things better than a person can. The effect of this truth is probably that God is more merciful than our consciences would suppose. Alternate translation: "God knows more than we do"

1 John 3:21

Beloved, if

"You people whom I love, if" or "Dear friends, if." See how you translated this in 1 John 2:7.

1 John 3:22

do the things that are pleasing before him

Here "before him" represents God's opinion or what he thinks about something. Alternate translation: "do the things that are pleasing to him" or "do what pleases him"

1 John 3:23

This is his commandment: that we should believe ... just as he gave us this commandment

The abstract noun "commandment" can be stated as "command." Alternate translation: "This is what God commands us to do: Believe ... just as he commanded us to do"

Son

This is an important title for Jesus, the Son of God.

1 John 3:24

remains in him, and God remains in him

To remain in someone means to continue to have fellowship with him. See how you translated "remains in God" in [1 John 2:6]

he remains in us

To remain in someone means to continue to have fellowship with him. Alternate translation: "God continues to have fellowship with us"

Chapter 4

¹ Beloved, do not believe every spirit. Instead, test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² By this you will know the Spirit of God—every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming, and now is already in the world. ^[1]⁴ You are from God, children, and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. ⁵ They are from the world; therefore what they say is from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶ We are from God. Anyone who knows God listens to us. He who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and everyone who loves is born from God and knows God. ⁸ The person who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ Because of this the love of God was revealed among us, that God has sent his only Son into the world so that we would live because of him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and that he sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also should love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is perfected in us. ¹³ By this we know that we remain in him and he in us, because he has given us some of his Spirit. ¹⁴ Also, we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he in God. ¹⁶ Also, we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and the one who remains in this love remains in God, and God remains in him. ¹⁷ Because of this, this love has been made perfect among us, so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because as he is, just so are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love. Instead, perfect love throws out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. But the one who fears has not been made perfect in love. ¹⁹ We love because God first loved us. ²⁰ If anyone says, "I love God" but hates his brother, he is a liar. For the one who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. ²¹ Also, this is the commandment we have from him: Whoever loves God must also love his own brother.

Footnotes

4:3 ^[1]Some important and ancient Greek copies read,

1 John 4 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Spirit

This word "spirit" is used in different ways in this chapter. Sometimes the word "spirit" refers to spiritual beings. Sometimes it refers to the character of something. For example "the spirit of the antichrist," "the spirit of truth," and "the spirit of error" refer to what is typical of the antichrist, truth, and error. "The Spirit" (written with a capital "S") and "the Spirit of God" refer to God. (See: antichrist)

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Loving God

If people love God, they should show it in the way they live and the way they treat other people. Doing this may assure us that God has saved us and that we belong to him, but loving others does not save us. (See: save)

1 John 4:1

General Information:

John gives a warning against false teachers who teach against Christ's having had a human body and teachers who talk the way those who love the world talk.

Beloved, do not believe

"You people whom I love, do not believe" or "Dear friends, do not believe." See how you translated this in 1 John 2:7.

do not believe every spirit

Here, the word "spirit" refers to a spiritual power or being that gives a person a message or prophecy. Alternate translation: "do not trust every prophet who claims to have a message from a spirit"

test the spirits

Here, the word "spirits" refers to a spiritual power or being that gives a person a message or prophecy. Alternate translation: "think carefully about what the prophet says"

1 John 4:2

has come in the flesh

Here "flesh" represents the human body. Alternate translation: "has come as a human being" or "has come in a physical body"

1 John 4:3

This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming, and now is already in the world

"These are prophets opposed to Christ, whom you have heard are coming, and now are already in the world"

1 John 4:4

God, children

John was an elderly man and their leader. He used this expression to show his love for them. See how you translated this in [1 John 2:1]

have overcome them

"have not believed the false teachers"

the one who is in you is

"God, who is in you, is"

the one who is in the world

Here "the one" refers to the devil. Here "the world" represents the people of the world. Alternate translation: "the devil who is in the people of the world"

1 John 4:5

They are from the world

"They" refers to the false teachers. "From the world" is in contrast to being from God. "The world" represents all things that oppose God. Alternate translation: "They are of the world"

therefore what they say is from the world

Here "from the world" is in contrast to being from God. Here "the world" represents all things that oppose God. Alternate translation: "therefore what the false teachers say is of the world"

and the world listens to them

The words "the world" are a metonym for people who do not obey God. Alternate translation: "so the people who do not obey God listen to them"

1 John 4:6

General Information:

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1 John 4:7

General Information:

John continues to teach about the new nature. He teaches his readers about God's love and loving one another.

Beloved, let us love

"You people whom I love, let us love" or "Dear friends, let us love." See how you translated "Beloved" in 1 John 2:7.

let us love one another

"believers are to love other believers"

and everyone who loves is born from God and knows God

"and because those who love their fellow believers have become God's children and know him"

for love is from God

"because God causes us to love each other"

born from God

This is a metaphor which means someone has a relationship to God like a child to his father.

1 John 4:8

The person who does not love does not know God, for God is love

The phrase "God is love" a metaphor which means "the character of God is love." Alternate translation: "Those who do not love their fellow believers do not know God, because the character of God is to love people"

1 John 4:9

Because of this ... among us, that God has sent his only Son

"Because of this ... among us: God has sent his only Son." The phrase "Because of this" refers to the phrase "that God has sent his only Son."

the love of God was revealed among us

The noun "love" can be translated as a verb. This phrase can be made active. Alternate translation: "God showed that he loves us"

so that we would live because of him

"to enable us to live eternally because of what Jesus did"

1 John 4:10

In this is love, not that

"The true demonstration of love was not that" or "This is true love: not that"

he sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins

By dying on the cross as a sacrifice, Christ satisfied God's wrath against our sin. The phrase "atoning sacrifice" can be translated with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: "he sent his Son to be the sacrifice that satisfied his wrath against our sins"

1 John 4:11

Beloved, if

"You people whom I love, if" or "Dear friends, if." See how you translated this in 1 John 2:7.

if God so loved us

"since God loved us in this way"

we also should love one another

"believers are to love other believers"

1 John 4:12

God remains in us

To remain in someone means to continue to have fellowship with him. See how you translated "remains in God" in [1 John 2:6]

his love is perfected in us

"God's love is complete in us"

1 John 4:13

we remain in him and he in us

To remain in someone means to continue to have fellowship with him. See how you translated "remains in God" in [1 John 2:6]

and he in us

The word "remains" is understood from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: "and he remains in us"

By this we know ... us, because he has given

Your translation may be clearer if you omit either "by this" or "because." Alternate translation: "We know ... us because he gave" or "By this we know ... us: he gave"

because he has given us some of his Spirit

"because he gave us his Spirit" or "because he has put his Holy Spirit in us." This phrase, however, does not imply that God has less of his Spirit after he has given us some.

1 John 4:14

Also, we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world

"And we apostles have seen the Son of God and tell everyone that God the Father has sent his Son to save people on this earth"

Father ... Son

These are important titles that describe the relationship between God and Jesus.

1 John 4:15

Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God

"Anyone who says the truth about Jesus, that he is the Son of God"

Son of God

This is an important title for Jesus that describes his relationship to God.

God remains in him and he in God

To remain in someone means to continue to have fellowship with him. See how you translated "remains in God" in [1 John 2:6]

and he in God

The word "remains" is understood from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: "and he remains in God" (See: Ellipsis)

1 John 4:16

God is love

This is a metaphor which means "the character of God is love." See how you translated this in [1 John 4:8]

the one who remains in this love

"those who continue to love others"

remains in God, and God remains in him

To remain in someone means to continue to have fellowship with him. See how you translated "remains in God" in [1 John 2:6]

1 John 4:17

Because of this, this love has been made perfect among us, so that we will have confidence

This can be stated in active form. Possible meanings are 1) "Because of this" refers back to [1 John 4:16]

this love has been made perfect among us

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God has made his love for us complete"

because as he is, just so are we in this world

"because the relationship that Jesus has with God is the same relationship we have with God in this world"

1 John 4:18

Instead, perfect love throws out fear

Here "love" is described as a person with the power to remove fear. God's love is perfect. Alternate translation: "Instead, when our love is complete, we are no longer afraid"

because fear has to do with punishment

"because we would be afraid only if we thought that he would punish us"

But the one who fears has not been made perfect in love

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "But when a person is afraid that God will punish him, his love is not complete"

1 John 4:19

General Information:

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1 John 4:20

hates his brother

"hates a fellow believer"

the one who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen

If two negative statements in a row are confusing, this can be translated differently. Alternate translation: "the one who hates his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen"

1 John 4:21

General Information:

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Chapter 5

¹ Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born from God, and whoever loves a father also loves the child born from him. ² This is how we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and obey his commandments. ³ For this is love for God: that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. ⁴ For everyone who is born from God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. ⁵ Who is the one who overcomes the world? The one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. ⁶ This is the one who came by water and blood: Jesus Christ. He came not only by water, but also by water and blood. The Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷ For there are three that testify: ⁸ the Spirit, the water, and the blood. These three are in agreement. ^[1]⁹ If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater. For this is the testimony of God that he has testified concerning his Son. ¹⁰ Anyone who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. ¹¹ And the testimony is this: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² The one who has the Son has life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

¹³ I have written to you these things so that you will know that you have eternal life—to you who believe in the name of the Son of God. ¹⁴ Also, this is the confidence we have before him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. ¹⁵ Also, if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask of him—we know that we have whatever we have asked of him. ¹⁶ If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not result in death, he must pray, and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not result in death. There is a sin that results in death; I am not saying that he should pray about that. ¹⁷ All unrighteousness is sin, but there is sin that does not result in death.

¹⁸ We know that whoever has been born from God does not sin. But the one who was born from God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. ¹⁹ We know that we are from God, and we know that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. ²⁰ But we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true. Also, we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This one is the true God and eternal life. ²¹ Children, keep yourselves from idols.

Footnotes

5:8 ^[1]Some important and ancient Greek copies read,

1 John 5 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Children born from God

When people believe in Jesus, God makes them his children and gives them eternal life. (See: believe)

Christian living

People who believe in Jesus should obey God's commands and love his children.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

A sin that results in death

This seems to refer to behaviors that will result in a person experiencing spiritual death, that is, to be separated from God forever. (See: death)

"the whole world lies in the power of the evil one"

The phrase "the evil one" refers to Satan. God has allowed him to rule the world, but ultimately God is in control over everything. God keeps his children safe from the evil one. (See: satan)

1 John 5:1

General Information:

John continues to teach his readers about God's love and the love believers are to have because they have this new nature from God.

is born from God
"is a child of God"

1 John 5:2

This is how we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and obey his commandments.

"When we love God and do what he commands, then we know that we love his children"

1 John 5:3

For this is love for God: that we keep his commandments

"Because when we do what he commands, that is true love for God"

his commandments are not burdensome
"what he commands is not difficult"

burdensome
"heavy" or "crushing" or "difficult"

1 John 5:4

everyone who is born from God overcomes

"all children of God overcome"

overcomes the world
"has victory over the world," "succeeds against the world," or "refuses to do the evil things unbelievers do"

the world
This passage uses "the world" to refer to all the sinful people and the evil systems in the world. Alternate translation: "everything in the world that is against God"

And this is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith

"And this is what gives us the power to resist whatever would lead us to sin against God: our faith" or "And it is our faith that gives us the power to resist whatever would lead us to sin against God"

1 John 5:5

Who is the one who overcomes the world?

John used this question to introduce something he wanted to teach. Alternate translation: "I will tell you who overcomes the world:"

The one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God
This does not refer to a specific person but to anyone who believes this. Alternate translation: "Anyone who believes that Jesus is the Son of God"

Son of God

This is an important title for Jesus that describes his relationship to God.

1 John 5:6

Connecting Statement:

John teaches about Jesus Christ and what God said about him.

This is the one who came by water and blood: Jesus Christ

"Jesus Christ is the one who came by water and blood." Here "water" is probably a metonym for the baptism of Jesus, and "blood" stands for Jesus's death on the cross. Alternate translation: "God showed that Jesus Christ is his son at Jesus's baptism and his death on the cross"

He came not only by water, but also by water and blood

Here "water" is probably a metonym for the baptism of Jesus, and "blood" stands for Jesus's death on the cross. Alternate translation: "God did not show us Jesus was his son just through his baptism, but through his baptism and his death on the cross"

1 John 5:7

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

1 John 5:8

General Information:

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1 John 5:9

If we receive the testimony of men

The idiom to "receive the testimony" means to believe what another person testifies concerning something that he has seen. The abstract noun "testimony" can be translated with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: "If we believe what men testify" or "If we believe what men say about what they have seen"

the testimony of God is greater

the testimony of God is more important and more reliable

Son

This is an important title for Jesus, the Son of God.

1 John 5:10

Anyone who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself

"Whoever believes in Jesus knows for sure Jesus is the Son of God"

has made him out to be a liar
"has called God a liar"

because he has not believed the testimony that God has given concerning his Son
"because he has not believed that God has told the truth about his Son"

1 John 5:11

And the testimony is this
"This is what God says"

life

The word "life" throughout this letter refers to more than physical life. Here "life" refers to being alive spiritually. See how you translated this in [1 John 1:1]

this life is in his Son

"this life is through his Son" or "we will live forever if we are joined with his Son" or "we will live forever if we are united with his Son"

Son

This is an important title for Jesus, the Son of God.

1 John 5:12

The one who has the Son has life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have life

Being in a close relationship to the Son is spoken of as having the Son. Alternate translation: "He who believes in the Son of God has eternal life. He who does not believe in the Son of God does not have eternal life"

1 John 5:13

General Information:

This begins the end of John's letter. He tells his readers the last purpose for his letter and gives them some final teachings.

these things

"this letter"

to you who believe in the name of the Son of God

Here "name" is a metonym for the Son of God. Alternate translation: "to you who trust in the Son of God"

Son of God

This is an important title for Jesus that describes his relationship to God.

1 John 5:14

this is the confidence we have before him, that

The abstract noun "confidence" can be stated as "confident." Alternate translation: "we are confident in God's presence because we know that"

if we ask anything according to his will
"if we ask for the things that God desires"

1 John 5:15

we know that we have whatever we have asked of him
"we know that we will receive that for which we have asked God"

1 John 5:16

his brother

"a fellow believer"

life

The word "life" throughout this letter refers to more than physical life. Here "life" refers to being alive spiritually. See how you translated this in [1 John 1:1]

death

This refers to eternal death, that is, eternity spent away from God's presence.

1 John 5:17

General Information:

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1 John 5:18

Connecting Statement:

John closes his letter, reviewing what he has said about the new nature of believers, which cannot sin, and he reminds them to keep themselves from idols (5:21).

the evil one cannot harm him

The phrase "the evil one" refers to Satan, the devil.

1 John 5:19

the whole world lies in the power of the evil one

Lying in someone's power represents being controlled or ruled by him. Alternate translation: "the whole world is controlled by the evil one"

the whole world lies in the power

Here "world" represents all the people who rebel against God. Alternate translation: "all the people of the world are under the power"

1 John 5:20

Son of God

This is an important title for Jesus that describes his relationship to God.

has given us understanding

"has enabled us to understand the truth"

we are in him who is true

Being "in" someone represents having a close relationship with him, that is being united to him or belonging to him. The phrase "him who is true" refers to the true God, and the phrase "in his Son Jesus Christ" explains how we are in him who is true. Alternate translation: "we are united to him who is true by being united to his Son Jesus Christ"

him who is true

"the true one" or "the real God"

This one is the true God

Possible meanings are 1) "This one" refers to Jesus Christ, or 2) "This one" refers to the one true God.

and eternal life

He is called "eternal life" because he gives us eternal life. Alternate translation: "and the one who gives eternal life"

1 John 5:21

Children

John was an elderly man and their leader. He used this expression to show his love for them. See how you translated this in [1 John 2:1]

keep yourselves from idols

"stay away from idols" or "do not worship idols"
