

Book: James

James

Chapter 1

¹ James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the dispersion: Greetings! ² Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you experience various troubles. ³ You know that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ Let endurance complete its work so that you may become fully developed and complete, not lacking anything. ⁵ But if any of you needs wisdom, let him ask for it from God, the one who gives generously and without rebuke to all who ask, and he will give it to him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, doubting nothing. For anyone who doubts is like a wave in the sea that is driven by the wind and tossed around. ⁷ For that person must not think that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. ⁹ Let the lowly brother boast of his high position, ¹⁰ but the rich man of his low position, because he will pass away as a wild flower in the grass. ¹¹ For the sun rises with burning heat and dries up the grass. The flower falls off, and its beauty perishes. In the same way, the rich man will fade away in the middle of his journey. ¹² Blessed is the man who endures testing. For after he has passed the test, he will receive the crown of life, which has been promised to those who love God. ¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God," because God is not tempted by evil, nor does he himself tempt anyone. ¹⁴ But each person is tempted by his own desire, which drags him away and entices him. ¹⁵ Then after the desire conceives, it gives birth to sin, and after the sin is full grown, it gives birth to death. ¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. ¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above. It comes down from the Father of lights. With him there is no changing or shadow because of turning. ¹⁸ God chose to give us birth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of firstfruits of all his creatures. ¹⁹ You know this, my beloved brothers: Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger. ²⁰ For the anger of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore take off all sinful filth and abundant amounts of evil. In humility receive the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. ²² Be doers of the word and not only hearers, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word but not a doer, he is like a man who examines his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ He examines himself and then goes away and immediately forgets what he was like. ²⁵ But the person who looks carefully into the perfect law of freedom, and continues to do so, not just being a hearer who forgets, this man will be blessed in his actions. ²⁶ If anyone thinks he is religious and does not control his tongue, he deceives his heart and his religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that is pure and unspoiled before our God and Father is to help the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

James 1 General Notes

Structure and formatting

James formally introduces this letter in verse 1. Writers often began letters in this way in the ancient Near East.

Special concepts in this chapter

Testing and temptation

These two words occur together in ([James 1:12-13](#)). Both words speak of a person who is able to choose between doing something good and doing something evil. The difference between them is important. God is testing the person and wants him to do what is good. Satan is tempting the person and wants him to do what is evil.

Crowns

The crown that a man who passes the test receives is a reward, something that people who do something especially good receive. (See: reward)

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Metaphors

James uses many metaphors in this chapter, and you will need to understand the material on the metaphor page before you can translate them well.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

"To the twelve tribes in the dispersion"

It is not clear to whom James wrote this letter. He calls himself a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, so he was probably writing to Christians. But he calls his readers "the twelve tribes in the dispersion," words which usually refer to Jews. It is possible that he is using the words as a metaphor for "all people whom God has chosen" or that he wrote the letter at a time when most Christians had grown up as Jews.

James 1:1

General Information:

The apostle James writes this letter to all the Christians. Many of them were Jews, and they lived in many different places.

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ

The phrase "this letter is from" is implied. Alternate translation: "This letter is from James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ"

to the twelve tribes

Possible meanings are 1) this is a synecdoche for Jewish Christians, or 2) this is a metaphor for all Christians. Alternate translation: "to God's faithful people"

in the dispersion

The term "dispersion" normally referred to the Jews who were scattered in other countries, away from their homeland, Israel. This abstract noun can be expressed with a phrase with the verb "scattered." Alternate translation: "who are scattered around the world" or "who live in other countries"

Greetings!

This is a basic greeting, such as "Hello!" or "Good day!"

James 1:2

Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you experience various troubles

"My fellow believers, think of all your different kinds of troubles as things to celebrate"

James 1:3

the testing of your faith produces endurance

The expressions "the testing," "your faith," and "endurance" are nouns that stand for actions. God does the testing, that is, he finds out how much the believers trust and obey him. Believers

James 1:4

Let endurance complete its work

Here endurance is spoken of as if it were a person at work. Alternate translation: "Learn to endure any hardship"

fully developed

able to trust in Christ and obey him in all circumstances

not lacking anything

This can be stated in the positive. Alternate translation: "having all that you need" or "being all that you need to be"

James 1:5

ask for it from God, the one who gives

"ask God for it. He is the one who gives"

gives generously and without rebuke to all

"gives generously and does not rebuke any"

he will give it to him

"God will give it to him" or "God will answer his prayer"

James 1:6

in faith, doubting nothing

"with complete certainty that God will answer"

For anyone who doubts is like a wave in the sea that is driven by the wind and tossed around

Anyone who doubts that God will help him is said to be like the water in the ocean or in a large lake, which keeps moving in different directions.

James 1:7

General Information:

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James 1:8

is a double-minded man, unstable

The word "double-minded" refers to a person's thoughts when he is unable to make a decision. Alternate translation: "cannot decide if he will follow Jesus or not and is unstable"

unstable in all his ways

Here this person is spoken of as if he cannot stay on one path but instead goes from one to another.

James 1:9

the lowly brother

"the believer who does not have much money" or "the believer whom other people consider unimportant"

boast of his high position

Someone whom God has honored is spoken of as if he were standing in a high place.

James 1:10

but the rich man of his low position

The words "let" and "boast" are understood from the previous phrase. Alternate translation: "but let the rich man boast of his low position"

but the rich man

"but the man who has a lot of money"

of his low position

A rich believer should be happy if God causes him to suffer. Alternate translation: "should be happy that God has given him difficulties"

he will pass away as a wild flower in the grass

Rich people are spoken of as being similar to wild flowers, which are alive for only a short time.

James 1:11

its beauty perishes

A flower that is becoming less beautiful because it is decaying is spoken of as if its beauty were dying. Alternate translation: "it is no longer beautiful"

the rich man will fade away in the middle of his journey

Here the flower simile is probably continued. As flowers do not die suddenly but instead fade away over a short time, so also the rich people may not die suddenly but instead take a little time to disappear.

in the middle of his journey

A rich man's activities in daily life are spoken of as if they are a journey that he is making. This metaphor implies that he is giving no thought to his coming death, and that it will take him by surprise.

James 1:12

Connecting Statement:

James reminds the believers who have fled that God does not cause temptation; he tells them how to avoid temptation.

Blessed is the man who endures testing

"The man who endures testing is fortunate" or "The man who endures testing is well off"

endures testing

remains faithful to God during hardships

passed the test

he has been approved by God

receive the crown of life

Eternal life is spoken of as if it were a wreath of leaves placed on the head of a victorious athlete. Alternate translation: "receive eternal life as his reward"

has been promised to those who love God

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God has promised to those who love him"

James 1:13

when he is tempted

"when he desires to do something evil"

I am tempted by God

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God is trying to make me do something evil"

God is not tempted by evil

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "No one can make God desire to do evil"

nor does he himself tempt anyone

"and God himself does not try to persuade anyone to do evil"

James 1:14

each person is tempted by his own desire

A person's desire is spoken of as if it were someone else who was tempting him to sin.

which drags him away and entices him

Evil desire continues to be spoken of as if it were a person who could drag away someone else.

entices

attracts, persuades someone to do evil

James 1:15

Then after the desire conceives, it gives birth to sin, and after the sin is full grown, it gives birth to death

Desire continues to be spoken of as a person, this time clearly as a woman who becomes pregnant with a child. The child is identified as sin. Sin is a female baby that grows up, becomes pregnant, and gives birth to death. This chain of metaphors is a picture of someone who ends up dying both spiritually and physically because of his evil desires and his sin.

James 1:16

Do not be deceived

"Do not let anyone deceive you" or "Stop deceiving yourselves"

James 1:17

Every good gift and every perfect gift

These two phrases mean basically the same thing. James uses them to emphasize that anything good that a person has comes from God.

the Father of lights

God, the creator of all the lights in the sky

With him there is no changing or shadow because of turning

This expression pictures God as an unchanging light. This is in contrast to the sun, moon, and stars that appear to move in the sky and sometimes are darkened. Alternate translation: "God always stays the same. He does not change like shifting shadows"

James 1:18

to give us

The word "us" refers to James and his audience.

give us birth

God, who brought us eternal life, is spoken of as if he had given us birth.

the word of truth

Possible meanings are 1) "the message about the truth" or 2) "the true message."

so that we would be a kind of firstfruits

James is using the traditional Hebrew idea of firstfruits as a way to describe the value of the Christian believers to God. He implies that there will be many more believers in the future. Alternate translation: "so that we would be like an offering of firstfruits"

James 1:19

You know this

Possible meanings are 1) "Know this" is a command to pay attention to what I am about to write or 2) "You know this" is a statement saying that I am about to remind you of something that you already know.

Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak

These sayings are idioms that mean people should first listen intently, and then consider carefully what they say. Here "slow to speak" does not mean speaking slowly.

slow to anger

"not get angry quickly"

James 1:20

the anger of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God

When a person is always angry, he cannot do God's work, which is righteous.

James 1:21

take off all sinful filth and abundant amounts of evil

Sin and evil are spoken of here as if they were clothing that could be taken off. Alternate translation: "stop doing all filthy sins and stop doing abundant amounts of evil"

take off all sinful filth and abundant amounts of evil

Here the expressions "sinful filth" and "evil" share similar meanings. James uses them to emphasize how bad sin is. Alternate translation: "stop doing every kind of sinful behavior"

sinful filth

Here "filth," that is, dirt, stands for sin and evil.

In humility

"Without pride" or "Without arrogance"

receive the implanted word

The expression "implant" means to place one thing inside of another. Here God's word is spoken of as if it were a plant made to grow inside believers. Alternate translation: "obey the message God has spoken to you"

save your souls

What a person is saved from can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "save you from God's judgment"

your souls

Here the word "souls" refers to persons. Alternate translation: "yourselves"

James 1:22

Be doers of the word

"Be people who follow God's instructions"

deceiving yourselves

"fooling yourselves"

James 1:23

For if anyone is a hearer of the word but not a doer

In the phrase "but not a doer" the words "is" and "of the word" are understood from the previous phrase. The noun "doer" can also be expressed with the verbs "do" or "obey." Alternate translation: "For if anyone listens to God's word in the scriptures but does not obey the word"

the word

"the message"

he is like a man who examines his natural face in a mirror

A person who hears God's word is like someone who looks in the mirror.

his natural face

The word "natural" clarifies that James is using the ordinary meaning of the word "face." Alternate translation: "his face"

James 1:24

then goes away and immediately forgets what he was like

It is implied that though he may see that he needs to do something, such as wash his face or fix his hair, he walks away and forgets to do it. This what a person who does not obey God's word is like. Alternate translation: "then goes away and immediately forgets to do what he saw he needed to do"

James 1:25

the person who looks carefully into the perfect law

This expression continues the image of the law as a mirror.

the perfect law of freedom

The relationship between the law and freedom can be expressed clearly. Here "freedom" probably

refers to freedom from sin. Alternate translation: "the perfect law that gives freedom" or "the perfect law that makes those who follow it free"

this man will be blessed in his actions

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "God will bless this man as he obeys the law"

James 1:26

thinks he is religious

"thinks he worships God correctly"

his tongue

Controlling one's tongue stands for controlling one's speech. Alternate translation: "what he says"

deceives

gets someone to believe something that is not true

his heart

Here "heart" refers to his belief or thoughts. Alternate translation: "himself"

his religion is worthless

"he worships God uselessly"

James 1:27

pure and unspoiled before our God and Father

James speaks of religion, the way one worships God, as if it could be physically pure and unspoiled. These are traditional ways for Jews to say that something is acceptable to God. Alternate translation: "completely acceptable to our God and Father"

the fatherless

"the orphans"

in their affliction

The fatherless and widows are suffering because their fathers or husbands have died.

to keep oneself unstained by the world

Sin in the world is spoken of as something dirty that can stain a person. Alternate translation: "to not allow the evil in the world to cause oneself to sin"

Chapter 2

¹ My brothers, do not hold to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality toward certain people. ² Suppose that someone enters your meeting wearing gold rings and splendid clothes, and there also enters a poor man in dirty clothes. ³ If you look at the person wearing fine clothes and say, "You sit here in a good place," but you say to the poor man, "You stand over there" or "Sit by my footstool," ⁴ are you not judging among yourselves? Have you not become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵ Listen, my beloved brothers, did not God choose the poor of the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those who love him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor! Is it not the rich who oppress you? Are they not the ones who drag you to court? ⁷ Do they not insult the good name by which you have been called? ⁸ If, however, you fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you do well. ⁹ But if you favor certain people, you are committing sin, and you are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰ For whoever obeys the whole law, except that he stumbles in just a single way, has become guilty of breaking the whole law. ¹¹ For the one who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery, but if you do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. ¹² So speak and act as those who will be judged by means of the law of freedom. ¹³ For judgment comes without mercy to those who have shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

¹⁴ What profit is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ Suppose that a brother or sister is badly clothed and lacks food for the day. ¹⁶ Suppose that one of you says to them, "Go in peace, stay warm and be filled." If you do not give them the things necessary for the body, what profit is that? ¹⁷ In the same way faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ¹⁸ Yet someone may say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that there is one God; you do well. But even the demons believe that, and they tremble. ²⁰ Do you want to know, foolish man, that faith without works is useless? ^{[1]21} Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²² You see that faith worked with his works, and that by works his faith was completed. ²³ The scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness," and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴ You see that it is by works that a man is justified, and not only by faith. ²⁵ In the same way also, was not Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them away by another road? ²⁶ For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead.

Footnotes

2:20 ^[1]Some important and ancient Greek copies read,

James 2 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Favoritism

Some of James's readers treated rich and powerful people well and treated poor people badly. This is called favoritism, and James tells them that this is wrong. God wants his people to treat both rich people and poor people well.

Justification

Justification is what happens when God makes a person righteous. James says here that God makes righteous or justifies people who do good works along with having faith. (See: justice and righteous and faith)

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Quotation marks

The words "Show me your faith without works, and I will show you my faith by my works" are hard to understand. Some people think that they are what "someone may say," like the words in the quotation marks. Most versions translate them as words that James is saying back to that "someone."

"You have ... I have"

Some people think that the words "you" and "I" are metonyms for "some people" and "other people." If they are correct, verse 18 could be translated, "Someone may say, 'Some people have faith and other people have works. Not everyone has both.'" If the next sentence is also what "someone may say," it could be translated "Some people show their faith without works, and other people show their faith by their works. Both have faith." In both cases, the reader will understand only if you add the extra sentence. It is probably best to translate as the ULB does.

James 2:1

Connecting Statement:

James continues to tell the scattered Jewish believers how to live by loving one another and reminds them not to favor rich people over poor people.

My brothers

James considers his audience to be Jewish believers. Alternate translation: "My fellow believers" or "My brothers and sisters in Christ"

do not hold to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ... with partiality toward certain people

James wanted them to hold to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but he did not want them to show partiality to people. Alternate translation: "as you hold to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ... do not show partiality toward certain people"

hold to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ

Believing in Jesus Christ is spoken of as if it were an object that one could hold onto.

our Lord Jesus Christ

The word "our" includes James and his fellow believers.

partiality

the act of treating some people better than others

James 2:2

Suppose that someone enters your meeting

James starts to describe a situation where the believers might give more honor to a rich person than to a poor person.

wearing gold rings and splendid clothes

"dressed like a wealthy person"

James 2:3

sit here in a good place

sit in this place of honor

stand over there

move to a place with less honor

Sit by my footstool

move to a humble place

James 2:4

are you not judging among yourselves? Have you not become judges with evil thoughts?

James is using rhetorical questions to teach and possibly scold his readers. Alternate translation: "you are making judgments among yourselves and becoming judges with evil thoughts."

James 2:5

Listen, my beloved brothers

James is exhorting his readers as if they were his family. Alternate translation: "Pay attention, my dear fellow believers"

did not God choose ... love him?

Here James uses a rhetorical question to teach his readers not to show favoritism. It can be made a statement. Alternate translation: "God has chosen ... love him"

the poor

This refers to poor people in general. Alternate translation: "poor people"

be rich in faith

Having much faith is spoken of as being wealthy or rich. The object of faith may have to be specified. Alternate translation: "have strong faith in Christ"

heirs

The people to whom God has made promises are spoken of as if they were to inherit property and wealth from a family member.

James 2:6

But you have

James is speaking to his whole audience.

have dishonored the poor
"you have shamed poor people"

Is it not the rich who oppress you?
Here James uses a rhetorical question to correct his readers. Alternate translation: "It is rich people who oppress you."

the rich
This refers to rich people in general. Alternate translation: "rich people"

who oppress you
"who treat you badly"

Are they not the ones ... to court?
Here James uses a rhetorical question to correct his readers. It can be made a statement. Alternate translation: "The rich people are the ones ... to court."

drag you to court
"forcibly take you to court to accuse you in front of judges"

James 2:7

Do they not insult ... have been called?
Here James uses a rhetorical question to correct and teach his readers. It can be made a statement. Alternate translation: "The rich people insult ... have been called."

the good name by which you have been called
Here "name" represents "Christ." This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "Christ, who called you" or "Christ, to whom you belong"

James 2:8

you fulfill
The word "you" refers to the Jewish believers.

fulfill the royal law
"obey God's law." The law is "royal" because God, the true king, is the one who gave it to people.

Love your neighbor as yourself
James is quoting from the book of Leviticus.

your neighbor
"all people" or "everyone"

you do well
"you are doing well" or "you are doing what is right"

James 2:9

if you favor
"give special treatment to" or "give honor to"

committing sin
"sinning." That is, breaking the law.

you are convicted by the law as transgressors
Here the law is spoken of as if it were a human judge. This can be translated using an active verb. Alternate translation: "the law itself convicts you of transgressing it" or "you are guilty of breaking God's law"

James 2:10

For whoever obeys
"For anyone who obeys"

except that he stumbles ... the whole law
Stumbling is falling down while one is trying to walk. Disobeying one point of the law is spoken of as if it were stumbling while walking.

in just a single way
because of disobedience to just one requirement of the law

James 2:11

For the one who said
This refers to God, who gave the law to Moses.

Do not commit
To "commit" is to do an action.

If you ... but if you ... you have
Here "you" means "each one of you." Although James was writing to many Jewish believers, in this case, he used the singular form as if he was writing to each person individually.

James 2:12

So speak and act
"So you must speak and obey." James commands the people to do this.

who will be judged by means of the law of freedom
This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "who know that God will judge them by means of the law of freedom"

by means of the law
This passage implies that it is God who will judge according to his law.

the law of freedom
"the law that gives true freedom"

James 2:13

Mercy triumphs over
"Mercy is better than" or "Mercy defeats." Here mercy and justice are spoken of as if they were persons.

James 2:14

Connecting Statement:

James encourages the scattered believers to show their faith before others, just as Abraham showed others his faith by his works.

What profit is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith, but he has no works?

James is using a rhetorical question to teach his audience. Alternate translation: "Fellow believers, if someone says he has faith but he has no works, that does him no good at all." or "Fellow believers, someone who has no works is no better if he says he has faith than someone who does not say he has faith."

he has faith, but he has no works ... that faith

Here, it is implied that "works" refers to things people do because they believe in God, such as obeying God and doing good to others. The abstract nouns "faith" and "works" can be expressed with the verbs "believe" and "do." Alternate translation: "he believes in God but does not do anything ... what he believes" or "he believes in God but does not do anything as a result of his belief ... that belief"

Can that faith save him?

James is using a rhetorical question to teach his audience. This can be restated to remove the abstract noun "faith." Alternate translation: "That faith cannot save him." or "Just saying he believes in God will not save him."

save him

"spare him from God's judgment"

James 2:15

brother or sister

a fellow believer in Christ, whether male or female

James 2:16

stay warm

This means either "have enough clothes to wear" or "have a place to sleep."

be filled

The thing that fills them is food. This can be stated explicitly. Alternate translation: "be filled with food" or "have enough to eat"

for the body

to eat, to wear, and to live comfortably

what profit is that?

James uses a rhetorical question to teach his audience. Alternate translation: "how does that help them?" or "that does nothing good for them." or "your speech by itself does not help them."

James 2:17

faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead

Here, it is implied that "works" refers to things people do because they believe in God, such as obeying God and doing good to others. James speaks of faith as if it were alive if one does good works, and of faith as if it were dead if one does not do good deeds. This can be restated to remove the abstract nouns "faith" and "works." Alternate translation: "a person who says he believes in God but does not do anything, does not really believe in God" or "a person who says he believes in God but does not do anything as a result of his belief, does not really believe in God"

James 2:18

Yet someone may say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

Possible meanings are 1) James describes how someone might argue against his teaching and how he would respond to that person or 2) James describes how someone might support his teaching. If the speaker is supporting James, then the quotation would end at the end of the verse.

"You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without works, and I will show you my faith by my works

The meanings in the abstract nouns "faith" and "works" can be expressed with "believe in God" and "do good things." Alternate translation: "'You believe in God and I do good things.' Prove to me that you can believe in God without doing anything, and I will prove to you that I believe in God by what I do"

James 2:19

General Information:

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James 2:20

Do you want to know, foolish man, that faith without works is useless?

James uses this question to introduce the next part of his teaching. Alternate translation: "Listen to me, foolish man, and I will show that faith without works is useless."

that faith without works is useless

The meanings in the abstract nouns "faith" and "works" can be expressed with "believe in God" and "do good things." Alternate translation: "that saying that you believe in God without doing good things is useless" or "that if you do not do good things, it is useless to say that you believe"

James 2:21

General Information:

Since these are Jewish believers, they know the story of Abraham, about whom God had told them long ago in his word.

Was not Abraham our father justified by works ... on the altar?

This rhetorical question is used to rebut the foolish man's arguments from [James 2:18]

Was not Abraham our father justified by works ... on the altar?

This can be restated to remove the abstract noun "works." This can also be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "Did not God justify Abraham our father because of what he did ... on the altar?" or "God certainly justified Abraham our father because of what he did ... on the altar."

father

Here "father" is used in the sense of "ancestor."

James 2:22

You see

The word "see" is a metonym. Alternate translation: "You understand"

that faith worked with his works, and that by works his faith was completed

James speaks as if "faith" and "works" were things that can work together and help each other. The meanings in the abstract nouns "faith" and "works" can be expressed with "believe God" and "do what God commanded." Alternate translation: "that because Abraham believed God, he did what God commanded him to do. And Abraham doing what God commanded showed that he truly believed"

You see

James again addresses his audience directly by using the plural form of "you."

James 2:23

The scripture was fulfilled

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "This fulfilled the scripture"

it was counted to him as righteousness

"God regarded his faith as righteousness." Abraham's faith and righteousness were treated as if they were able to be counted as having value.

James 2:24

it is by works that a man is justified, and not only by faith

Here, it is implied that "works" refers to things people do because they believe in God, such as

obeying God and doing good to others. This can be restated to remove the abstract nouns "faith" and "works." This can also be stated in active form.

Alternate translation: "God justifies a man because of what he does, and not just because he believes in God" or "God justifies a man because of what he does as a result of his belief, and not just because he believes in God"

James 2:25

In the same way also ... justified by works

James says that what was true of Abraham was also true of Rahab. Both were justified by works.

was not Rahab the prostitute justified by works ... another road?

James is using this rhetorical question to instruct his audience. Alternate translation: "it was what Rahab the prostitute did that justified her ... another road."

was not Rahab the prostitute justified by works ... another road?

This can be restated to remove the abstract noun "works." This can also be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "did God not justify Rahab the prostitute because of what she did ... another road?" or "God justified Rahab the prostitute because of what she did ... another road."

Rahab the prostitute

James expects his audience to know the Old Testament story about the woman Rahab.

messengers

people who bring news from another place

sent them away by another road

"then helped them escape and leave the city"

James 2:26

For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead

James is speaking of faith without works as if it were a dead body without the spirit. Here, it is implied that "works" refers to things people do because they believe in God, such as obeying God and doing good to others. This can be restated to remove the abstract nouns "faith" and "works." Alternate translation: "For just as the body is useless without the spirit, even so it is useless for a person to believe in God if he does not do anything" or "For just as the body is useless without the spirit, even so it is useless for a person to believe in God if he does not do anything as a result of his belief"

Chapter 3

¹ Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. ² For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in words, he is a perfect man, able to control even his whole body. ³ Now if we put bits into horses' mouths for them to obey us, we can also direct their whole bodies. ⁴ Notice also that ships, although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, are steered by a very small rudder to wherever the pilot desires. ⁵ In this way, the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts great things. Notice also how small a fire sets on fire a large forest. ⁶ The tongue is also a fire, a world of evil set among our members. The tongue defiles the whole body, sets on fire the course of life, and is itself set on fire by hell. ⁷ For every kind of wild animal, bird, reptile, and sea creature is being tamed and has been tamed by mankind. ⁸ But no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we praise the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things should not happen. ¹¹ Does a spring pour out from its opening both sweet and bitter water? ¹² Does a fig tree, my brothers, make olives? Or a grapevine, figs? Neither can salty water produce sweet water.

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let that person show a good life by his works in the humility of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter jealousy and ambition in your heart, do not boast and lie against the truth. ¹⁵ This is not the wisdom that comes down from above. Rather, it is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where there are jealousy and ambition, there is confusion and every evil practice. ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace among those who make peace.

James 3 General Notes

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Metaphors

James teaches his readers that they should live to please God by reminding them of things that they know from everyday life.

James 3:1

Not many of you

James is making a generalized statement.

my brothers

"my fellow believers"

we who teach will be judged more strictly

"God will judge us who teach more severely." This probably because those whom they teach trust them to know the truth and teach it correctly.

we who teach

James includes himself and other teachers, but not the readers, so the word "we" is exclusive.

James 3:2

we all stumble

James speaks of himself, other teachers, and the readers, so the word "we" is inclusive.

stumble

Sinning is spoken of as if it were stumbling while walking. Alternate translation: "fail" or "sin"

does not stumble in words

"does not sin by saying wrong things"

he is a perfect man

"he is spiritually mature"

control even his whole body

James is referring to one's heart, emotions, and actions. Alternate translation: "control all his behavior" or "control all his actions"

James 3:3

General Information:

James is developing an argument that small things can control big things.

Now if we put bits into horses' mouths

James speaks about horses' bits. A bit is a small piece of metal that is placed into a horse's mouth to control where it goes.

Now if
"If" or "When"

horses
A horse is a large animal used to carry things or people.

James 3:4

Notice also that ships ... are steered by a very small rudder
A ship is like a truck that floats on water. A rudder is a flat piece of wood or metal at the back of the ship, used to control where it goes. The word "rudder" could also be translated as "tool."

are driven by strong winds,
This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "strong winds push them, they"

are steered by a very small rudder to wherever the pilot desires
"have a small tool that a person can use to control where the ship goes"

James 3:5

the tongue is a small member
It can be stated explicitly what the tongue is a member of. Alternate translation: "the tongue is a small member of the body" or "the tongue is a small part of the body"

boasts great things
Here "things" is a general word for everything about which these people are proud.

Notice also
"Think about"

how small a fire sets on fire a large forest
In order to help people understand the harm that the tongue can cause, James speaks of the harm that a small flame can cause. Alternate translation: "how a small flame can start a fire that burns many trees"

James 3:6

The tongue is also a fire
The tongue is a metonym for what people say. James calls it a fire because of the great damage it can do. Alternate translation: "The tongue is like a fire"

a world of evil set among our members
The enormous effects of sinful speaking are spoken of as if they were a world by themselves.

our members
"the members of our bodies" or "the parts of our bodies"

The tongue defiles the whole body
The tongue here is a metonym for the words of the person whose tongue it is, and the body is a synecdoche for the whole person. The words defiling the person is a metaphor for God rejecting a person who speaks evil words.

sets on fire the course of life
The phrase "course of life" refers to a person's entire life. Alternate translation: "it ruins a person's entire life"

life, and is itself set on fire by hell
The word "itself" refers to the tongue. Also, here "hell" refers to the powers of evil or to the devil. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "life because the devil uses it for evil"

James 3:7

For every kind of ... mankind
The phrase "every kind" is a general statement referring to all or many kinds of wild animals. This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "People have learned to control many kinds of wild animals, birds, reptiles, and sea creatures"

reptile
This is an animal that crawls on the ground.

sea creature
an animal that lives in the sea

James 3:8

But no human being can tame the tongue
James speaks of the tongue as if it were a wild animal. Here "tongue" represents a person's desire to speak evil thoughts.

It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison
James speaks of the harm that people can cause by what they say as if the tongue were an evil and poisonous creature that can kill people. Alternate translation: "It is like a restless and evil creature, full of deadly poison" or "It is like a restless and evil creature that can kill people with its venom"

James 3:9

With it we
"We use the tongue to say words that"

we curse men
"we ask God to harm men"

who have been made in God's likeness
This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "whom God made in his likeness"

James 3:10

Out of the same mouth come blessing and cursing

The nouns "blessing" and "cursing" can be translated with a verbal phrase. Alternate translation: "With the same mouth, a person blesses people and curses people"

My brothers

"Fellow Christians"

these things should not happen

"these things are wrong"

James 3:11

Connecting Statement:

After James stresses that the words of believers should not both bless and curse, he gives examples from nature to teach his readers that people who honor God by worshiping him should also live in right ways.

Does a spring pour out from its opening both sweet and bitter water?

James uses a rhetorical question to remind believers about what happens in nature. This can be expressed as a statement. Alternate translation: "You know that a spring does not pour out both sweet water and bitter water."

James 3:12

Does a fig tree, my brothers, make olives?

James uses another rhetorical question to remind the believers about what happens in nature. Alternate translation: "Brothers, you know that a fig tree cannot grow olives."

my brothers

"my fellow believers"

Or a grapevine, figs?

The word "make" is understood from the previous phrase. James uses another rhetorical question to remind the believers about what happens in nature. Alternate translation: "Or does a grapevine make figs?" or "And a grapevine cannot grow figs."

James 3:13

Who is wise and understanding among you?

James uses this question to teach his audience about proper behavior. The words "wise" and "understanding" are similar. Alternate translation: "I will tell you how a wise and understanding person is to act."

Let that person show a good life by his works in the humility of wisdom

This can be restated to remove the abstract nouns "humility" and "wisdom." Alternate translation: "That person should live a good life by doing the

kind of deeds that come from being humble and wise"

James 3:14

if you have bitter jealousy and ambition in your heart

Here "heart" is a metonym for a person's emotions or thoughts. This can be restated to remove the abstract nouns "jealousy" and "ambition." Alternate translation: "if you are jealous and selfish" or "if you desire what other people have and you want to succeed even if it harms others"

do not boast and lie against the truth

The abstract noun "truth" can be stated as "true." Alternate translation: "do not boast that you are wise, because that is not true"

James 3:15

This is not the wisdom that comes down from above

Here "This" refers to the "bitter jealousy and strife" described in the previous verses. The phrase "from above" is a metonym that represents "heaven" which represents God himself. Alternate translation: "This is not the kind of wisdom that God teaches us from heaven"

This is not the wisdom that comes down from above. Rather, it is earthly, unspiritual, demonic

The abstract noun "wisdom" can be stated as "wise." Alternate translation: "Whoever acts like this is not wise according to what God in heaven teaches us. Rather, this person is earthly, unspiritual, and demonic"

earthly

The word "earthly" refers to the values and behaviors of the people who do not honor God. Alternate translation: "not honoring to God"

unspiritual

"not from the Holy Spirit" or "not spiritual"

demonic

"from demons"

James 3:16

For where there are jealousy and ambition, there is confusion and every evil practice

This can be restated to remove the abstract nouns "jealousy," "ambition," and "confusion." Alternate translation: "For when people are jealous and selfish, this causes them to act in disorderly and evil ways"

there is confusion

"there is disorder" or "there is chaos"

every evil practice

"every kind of sinful behavior" or "every kind of wicked deed"

James 3:17

But the wisdom from above is first pure

Here "from above" is metonym that represents "heaven," which represents God himself. The abstract noun "wisdom" can be stated as "wise." Alternate translation: "But when a person is wise according to what God in heaven teaches, he acts in ways that are first pure"

is first pure

"is first holy"

full of mercy and good fruits

Here "good fruits" refer to kind things that people do for others as a result of having wisdom from God. Alternate translation: "full of mercy and good deeds"

and sincere

"and honest" or "and truthful"

James 3:18

The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace among those who make peace

Making peace is spoken of as if they were sowing seeds, and righteousness is spoken of as if it were the fruit that grows up as a result of making peace. Alternate translation: "The result of making peace is righteousness" or "Those who work peacefully to help people live in peace produce righteousness"

make peace

The abstract noun "peace" can be expressed by using the word "peacefully." Alternate translation: "cause people to live peacefully" or "help people not to be angry with each other"

Chapter 4

¹ Where do quarrels and disputes among you come from? Do they not come from your desires that fight among your members? ² You desire, and you do not have. You murder and covet, and you are not able to obtain. You fight and quarrel. You do not possess because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly, in order that you may use it for your desires. ⁴ You adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility against God? So whoever desires to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think the scripture says in vain, "The Spirit he caused to live in us is deeply envious"? ⁶ But God gives more grace, so the scripture says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

⁷ So submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come close to God, and he will come close to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded people. ⁹ Grieve, mourn, and cry! Let your laughter turn into mourning and your joy into gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

¹¹ Do not speak evil about another, brothers. The person who speaks evil about a brother or judges his brother speaks evil about the law and judges the law. If you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge. ¹² Only one is the lawgiver and judge. He is the one who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you, you who judge your neighbor?

¹³ Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into this city, spend a year there, trade, and make a profit." ¹⁴ Who knows what will happen tomorrow, and what is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then disappears. ¹⁵ Instead, you should say, "If the Lord wishes, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶ But now you are boasting about your arrogant plans. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ So for anyone who knows to do good but does not do it, for him it is sin.

James 4 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Adultery

Writers in the Bible often speak of adultery as a metaphor for people who say they love God but do things that God hates. (See: and godly)

Law

James probably uses this word in [James 4:11](#) to refer to "the royal law" ([James 2:8](#)).

Important figures of speech in this chapter

Rhetorical Questions

James asks many questions because he wants his readers to think about how they are living. He wants to correct and teach them.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Humble

This word probably usually refers to people who are not proud. James uses the word here to refer to people who are not proud and who also trust in Jesus and obey him.

James 4:1

General Information:

In this chapter, the words "yourselves," "your," and "you" are plural and refer to the believers to whom James writes.

Connecting Statement:

James rebukes these believers for their worldliness and their lack of humility. He again urges them to watch how they speak to and about each other.

Where do quarrels and disputes among you come from?
The abstract nouns "quarrels" and "disputes" mean basically the same thing and can be translated with verbs. Alternate translation: "Why do you quarrel and dispute among yourselves?" or "Why do you fight among yourselves?"

Do they not come from your desires that fight among your members?
James uses this question to rebuke his audience. This can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "They come from your evil desires for things, desires that fight among your members." or "You quarrel and have disputes because of your desires that fight among your members."

Do they not come from your desires that fight among your members
James writes of the tension or conflict that people feel because of their different desires as if those desires were fighting. Alternate translation: "Do they not come because of the conflict you feel because of your different desires?" or "You quarrel and argue because of the tension caused by your different desires."

your desires that fight among your members
Possible meanings are 1) "members" refers to the parts of a person: his body, feelings, and thoughts. Each person wants more than one thing, but he cannot have them all. Alternate translation: "your conflicting desires within you" 2) "members" refers to the individual people in the church. Different members want different things. Alternate translation: "the conflicting desires among you all"

James 4:2

You murder and covet, and you are not able to obtain
The phrase "You murder" is probably a hyperbole. The words "murder" and "covet" are used to express how badly the people behave in order to get what they want. Alternate translation: "You do all kinds of evil things to get what you cannot have"

You fight and quarrel
The words "fight" and "quarrel" mean basically the same thing. James uses them to emphasize how much the people argue among themselves. Alternate translation: "You constantly fight"

James 4:3

you ask wrongly
Possible meanings are 1) "you ask with wrong motives" or "you ask with bad attitudes" or 2) "you are asking for wrong things" or "you are asking for bad things"

James 4:4

You adulteresses!
James speaks of believers as being like wives who sleep with men other than their husbands. Alternate translation: "You are not being faithful to God!"

Do you not know ... God?
James uses this question to teach his audience. This can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "You know ... God!"

friendship with the world
This phrase refers to identifying with or participating in the world's value system and behavior.

friendship with the world
Here the world's value system is spoken of as if it were a person that others could be friends with.

friendship with the world is hostility against God
One who is friends with the world is an enemy of God. Here "friendship with the world" stands for being friends with the world, and "hostility against God" stands for being hostile against God. Alternate translation: "friends of the world are enemies of God"

James 4:5

Or do you think the scripture says in vain ... envious?
This is a rhetorical question James uses to exhort his audience. To speak in vain is to speak uselessly. Alternate translation: "There is a reason that scripture says ... envious."

The Spirit he caused to live in us
Some versions, including the ULB and UDB, understand this as a reference to the Holy Spirit. Other versions translate this as "the spirit" and mean by it the human spirit that each person has been created to have. We suggest that you use the meaning that is presented in other translations used by your readers.

James 4:6

But God gives more grace
How this phrase relates to the previous verse can be made explicit. Alternate translation: "But, even though our spirits may desire what we cannot have, God gives us even more grace if we will humble ourselves"

so the scripture
"that is why the scripture"

the proud
This refers to proud people in general. Alternate translation: "proud people"

the humble

This refers to humble people in general. Alternate translation: "humble people"

James 4:7

So submit

"Because God gives grace to the humble, submit"

submit to God

"obey God"

Resist the devil

"Oppose the devil" or "Do not do what the devil wants"

he will flee

"he will run away"

you

Here this pronoun is plural and refers to James's audience.

James 4:8

General Information:

The word "you" here is plural and refers to the scattered believers to whom James writes.

Come close to God

Here the idea of coming close stands for becoming honest and open with God.

Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded

These are two phrases in parallel with each other.

Cleanse your hands

This expression is a command for people to do righteous acts instead of unrighteous acts. Alternate translation: "Behave in a way that honors God"

purify your hearts

Here "hearts" refers to a person's thoughts and emotions. Alternate translation: "make your thoughts and intentions right"

you double-minded people

The word "double-minded" refers to a person who cannot make a firm decision about something. Alternate translation: "you people who cannot decide if you want to obey God or not"

James 4:9

Grieve, mourn, and cry

These three words have similar meanings. James uses them together to emphasize that the people should be truly sorry for not obeying God.

Let your laughter turn into mourning and your joy into gloom

This is saying the same thing in different ways for emphasis. The abstract nouns "laughter," "mourning," "joy," and "gloom" can be translated as verbs or adjectives. Alternate translation: "Stop laughing and mourn. Stop being joyful and be gloomy"

James 4:10

Humble yourselves before the Lord

"Be humble toward God." Actions done with God in mind are often spoken of as being done in his physical presence.

he will exalt you

James indicates that God will honor the humble person by saying God will pick that person up off the ground physically from where that person had prostrated himself in humility. Alternate translation: "he will honor you"

James 4:11

brothers

James speaks of the believers as if they are biological brothers. The term here includes women as well as men. Alternate translation: "fellow believers"

but a judge

"but you are acting like the person who gives the law"

James 4:12

Only one is the lawgiver and judge

This refers to God. "God is the only one who gives laws and judges people"

Who are you, you who judge your neighbor?

This is a rhetorical question James uses to scold his audience. This can be expressed as a statement. Alternate translation: "You are just a human and cannot judge another human."

James 4:13

spend a year there

James speaks of spending time as if it were money. "stay there for a year"

James 4:14

Who knows what will happen tomorrow, and what is your life?

James uses these questions to correct his audience and to teach these believers that physical life is not that important. They can be expressed as statements. Alternate translation: "No one knows what will happen tomorrow, and your life does not last very long!"

For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then disappears

James speaks of people as if they were a mist that appears and then quickly goes away. Alternate translation: "You live for only a short amount of time, and then you die"

James 4:15

Instead, you should say

"Instead, your attitude should be"

we will live and do this or that

"we will live long enough to do what we have planned to do." The word "we" does not directly

refer to James or his audience but is part of the example of how James's audience should consider the future.

James 4:16

General Information:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

James 4:17

for anyone who knows to do good but does not do it, for him it is sin

Anyone who fails to do the good he knows he should do is guilty of sin.

Chapter 5

¹ Come now, you who are rich, weep and wail because of the miseries coming on you. ² Your riches have rotted, and your clothes have become moth-eaten. ³ Your gold and your silver have become tarnished and their rust will be a witness against you. It will consume your flesh like fire. You have stored up your treasure for the last days. ⁴ Look, the wages you kept back from the laborers who mowed your fields is crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. ⁵ You have lived in luxury on the earth and indulged yourselves. You have fattened your hearts for a day of slaughter. ⁶ You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not oppose you.

⁷ Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit from the ground and he is patient about it, until it receives the early and late rains. ⁸ You, too, be patient. Strengthen your hearts because the Lord's coming is near. ⁹ Do not complain, brothers, against one another, so that you will not be condemned. See, the judge is standing at the door. ¹⁰ Take an example, brothers, from the suffering and patience of the prophets, those who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ See, we regard those who endured as blessed. You have heard of the endurance of Job, and you know the purpose of the Lord, how he is very compassionate and merciful.

¹² Above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by the earth, or by any other oath. Rather, let your "Yes" mean "Yes" and your "No" mean "No," so you do not fall under judgment.

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering hardship? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him. Let them anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ The prayer of faith will heal the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has committed sins, God will forgive him. ¹⁶ So confess your sins to one another and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is very strong in its working. ¹⁷ Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain in the land for three years and six months. ¹⁸ Then Elijah prayed again. The heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

¹⁹ My brothers, if anyone among you strays from the truth, and someone brings him back, ²⁰ that person should know that whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and will cover over a great number of sins.

James 5 General Notes

Special concepts in this chapter

Eternity

This chapter contrasts living for things of this world, which will not last, with living for things that will last for eternity. It is also important to live with the expectation that Jesus will return soon. (See: eternity)

Oaths

Scholars are divided over whether this passage teaches all oaths are wrong. Most scholars believe some oaths are permissible and James instead is teaching Christians to have integrity.

Other possible translation difficulties in this chapter

Elijah

This story will be difficult to understand if the books of 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles have not yet been translated.

"Save his soul from death"

This probably teaches that the person who stops their sinful lifestyle will not be punished with physical death as a consequence of their sin. On the other hand, some scholars believe this passage teaches about eternal salvation. (See: sin and death and save)

James 5:1

Connecting Statement:

James warns rich people about their focus on pleasure and riches.

you who are rich

Possible meanings are 1) James is giving a strong warning to wealthy believers or 2) James is talking about wealthy unbelievers. Alternate translation: "you who are rich and say you honor God"

because of the miseries coming on you

James states that these people will suffer terribly in the future and writes as if their sufferings were objects that were coming toward them. The abstract noun "miseries" can be translated as a verb. Alternate translation: "because you will suffer terribly in the future"

James 5:2

Your riches have rotted, and your clothes have become moth-eaten.

Earthly riches do not last nor do they have any eternal value. James speaks of these events as if they had already happened. Alternate translation: "Your riches will rot, and your clothes will be eaten by moths."

riches ... clothes

These things are mentioned as examples of things that are valuable to wealthy people.

James 5:3

Your gold and your silver have become tarnished

Earthly riches do not last nor do they have any eternal value. James speaks of these events as if they had already happened. Alternate translation: "Your gold and silver will become tarnished"

gold ... silver

These things are mentioned as examples of things that are valuable to wealthy people.

have become tarnished ... their rust

Gold does not actually tarnish, and gold and silver do not actually rust. James wants to emphasize that these precious metals will be ruined. Alternate translation: "are ruined ... their ruined condition"

their rust will be a witness against you. It

James wrote of their valuable things being ruined as if they were a person in a courtroom accusing the wicked of their crimes. Alternate translation: "and when God judges you, your ruined treasures will be like someone who accuses you in court. Their corrosion" (See: and)

will consume ... like fire

Here the corrosion is spoken of as if it were a fire that will burn up their owners.

your flesh

Here "flesh" stands for the physical body.

fire

The idea of fire here is meant to lead people to remember that fire often stands for God's punishment that will come on all the wicked.

for the last days

This refers to the time right before God comes to judge all people. The wicked think they are storing up riches for the future, but what they are doing is storing up judgment. Alternate translation: "for when God is about to judge you"

James 5:4

Connecting Statement:

James continues to warn rich people about their focus on pleasure and riches.

the wages you kept back from the laborers who mowed your fields is crying out against you

The money that should have been paid is spoken of as a person who is shouting because of the injustice done to him. Alternate translation: "God can see that you kept back the wages you should have given to those who mowed your fields"

The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts

The shouts of the harvesters are spoken of as if they could be heard in heaven. Alternate translation: "The Lord of hosts has heard the cries of the harvesters"

the ears of the Lord of hosts

God is spoken of as if he had ears as humans have.

James 5:5

You have fattened your hearts for a day of slaughter

Here people are viewed as if they were cattle, luxuriously fed on grain so they would become fattened to be slaughtered for a feast. However, no one will feast at the time of judgment. Alternate translation: "Your greed has only prepared you for harsh eternal judgment"

your hearts

The "heart" was considered to be the center of human desire, and here stands for the entire person.

James 5:6

You have condemned ... the righteous person

This is probably not "condemned" in the legal sense of a judge passing a sentence of death on a criminal. Instead, it probably refers to the wicked and powerful people who decide to mistreat the poor until they die.

the righteous person. He does not

"the people who do what is right. They do not."

Here "the righteous person" refers to righteous people in general and not to a specific person.

Alternate translation: "righteous people. They do not"

James 5:7

General Information:

In closing, James reminds the believers about the Lord's coming and gives several short lessons on how to live for the Lord.

Connecting Statement:

James changes topics from a rebuke of the rich people to an exhortation to the believers.

Be patient, then

"Because of this, wait and be calm"

until the Lord's coming

This phrase refers to the return of Jesus, when he will begin his kingdom on the earth and judge all people. Alternate translation: "until Christ's return"

the farmer

James makes an analogy using farmers and believers to teach what it means to be patient.

James 5:8

Strengthen your hearts

James is equating the believers' hearts to their will to remain committed. Alternate translation: "Stay committed" or "Keep your faith strong"

the Lord's coming is near

"the Lord will return soon"

James 5:9

Do not complain, brothers ... you

James is writing to all the scattered Jewish believers.

against one another

"about each other"

you will not be condemned

This can be stated in the active. Alternate translation: "Christ will not condemn you"

See, the judge

"Pay attention, because what I am about to say is both true and important: the judge"

the judge is standing at the door

James compares Jesus, the judge, to a person about to walk through a door to emphasize how soon Jesus will return to judge the world. Alternate translation: "the judge is coming soon"

James 5:10

the suffering and patience of the prophets, those who spoke in the name of the Lord

"how the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord suffered persecution with patience"

spoke in the name of the Lord

"Name" here is a metonym for the person of the Lord. Alternate translation: "spoke by the authority of the Lord" or "spoke for the Lord to the people"

James 5:11

See, we regard

"Pay attention, because what I am about to say is both true and important: we regard"

those who endured

"those who continued obeying God even through hardship"

James 5:12

Above all, my brothers,

"This is important, my brothers:" or "Especially, my brothers,"

my brothers

This refers to all believers including women.

Alternate translation: "my fellow believers"

do not swear

To "swear" is to say that you will do something, or that something is true, and to be held accountable by a higher authority. Alternate translation: "do not make an oath" or "do not make a vow"

either by heaven or by the earth

The words "heaven" and "earth" refer to the spiritual or human authorities that are in heaven and earth.

let your "Yes" mean "Yes" and your "No" mean "No,"

James is telling people to speak the truth without making an oath. Alternate translation: "If you say 'Yes' or 'No,' say it truthfully"

so you do not fall under judgment

Being condemned is spoken of as if one had fallen, crushed by the weight of something heavy.

Alternate translation: "so God will not punish you"

James 5:13

Is anyone among you suffering hardship? Let him pray

James uses this question to cause the readers to reflect on their need. This can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "If anyone is enduring troubles, he should pray"

Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise

James uses this question to cause the readers to reflect on their blessings. This can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "If anyone is happy, he should sing songs of praise"

James 5:14

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call

James uses this question to cause the readers to reflect on their need. This can be translated as a statement. Alternate translation: "If anyone is sick, he should call"

in the name of the Lord

"Name" is a metonym for the person of Jesus Christ. Alternate translation: "by the authority of the Lord" or "with the authority that the Lord has given them"

James 5:15

The prayer of faith will heal the sick person

The writer speaks of God hearing believers pray for sick people and healing those people as if the prayers themselves healed the people. Alternate translation: "The Lord will hear the prayer of faith and will heal the sick person"

The prayer of faith

"The prayer made by believers" or "The prayer that people pray believing God will do as they ask"

the Lord will raise him up

"the Lord will make him well" or "the Lord will enable him to resume his normal life"

James 5:16

General Information:

As these are Jewish believers, James reminds them to pray by recalling one of the prophets of old and that prophet's practical prayers.

So confess your sins

Admit to other believers things you did wrong so that you can be forgiven.

to one another

"to each other"

so that you may be healed

This can be stated in active form. Alternate translation: "so that God may heal you"

The prayer of a righteous person is very strong in its working

Prayer is presented as if it were an object that was strong or powerful. Alternate translation: "When the person who obeys God prays, God will do great things"

James 5:17

prayed earnestly

"prayed eagerly" or "prayed passionately"

in the land

There may have been rain in lands other than Israel, but it did not rain in Israel.

three ... six

"3 ... 6"

James 5:18

The heavens gave rain

"The heavens" probably refers to the sky, which is presented as the source of the rain. Alternate translation: "Rain fell from the sky"

the earth produced its fruit

Here the earth is presented as the source of the crops.

fruit

Here "fruit" stands for all the crops of the farmers.

James 5:19

brothers

Here this word probably refers to both men and women. Alternate translation: "fellow believers"

if anyone among you strays from the truth, and someone brings him back

A believer who stops trusting in God and obeying him is spoken of as if he were a sheep that wandered away from the flock. The person who persuades him to trust in God again is spoken of as if he were a shepherd who goes to search for the lost sheep. Alternate translation: "whenever anyone stops obeying God, and another person helps him start obeying again"

James 5:20

whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way ... will cover over a great number of sins

James means that God will use the actions of this person to persuade the sinner to repent and be saved. But James speaks as if it were this other person who actually saved the sinner's soul from death.

will save him from death and will cover over a great number of sins

Here "death" refers to spiritual death, eternal separation from God. Alternate translation: "will save him from spiritual death, and God will forgive the sinner for all of his sins"

will cover over a great number of sins

Possible meanings are 1) the person who brings back the disobedient brother will have his sins

forgiven or 2) the disobedient brother, when he returns to the Lord, will have his sins forgiven. Sins are spoken of as if they were objects that God could

cover so that he would not see them, so that he would forgive them.

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:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

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. 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,

Chapter 4

Mengenali Roh yang Berasal dari Allah ¹ Bagu angwugimi hamanawaragu, illa alpuhatena mu di tangadi wadi tabolo nyura toti rada wadi kamu tada takayi bayiddana kawalitai Allah oroge butai Nabi kapaleka kadabena ta panu tana. ² Tauda dage miyo kamu tadai waddi wali Tai Allah: Tangadi waddi kama ngaku nai Yesus Kristus inna maibe lar tahada kadadi ata nyiwo kawa ci tai Allah. ³ Tangadi wadi yika mangakuni Yesus, Walna walikma tai Allah. Nyidda nada waddi aika baini Kristus, Harengembemi ka amna monno bajaage dabeni panutana. ⁴ Anagu, Miyo walim tai Allah monno habakkebiyi nabi-nabi paleka rada oroge nyiyo dani tataumi Rehina madaka wali nyiyo ka dana tapanu tana. ⁵ Nabi-nabi paleka rada walida tapanu tana. Oroke innage, yidda dahanewe wali tapanu tana mono panutana darangeyi yidda. ⁶ Yitta walida tai Allah. Ata katadabeyi Allah karangeda yitta, tabolo ata aila wali tai Allah waleda rangekbana yitta. Waige innage, yitta datadai wadi katena mono wadi kaha jalora. Marilah Kita Saling Mengasihi ⁷ Bagu angwugimi hama nawaragu, maida yitta kada hamanawara wikna oroge manawara kawali tai Allah. mono tangana ata kamangu manawara dadi nage wali tai Allah mono Natadai Allah. ⁸ Ata aika mangu manawarai walena tadakmayi Allah oroge Allah kabanunani manawara. ⁹ Tauda dage inna manawarai Allah baha dedalage ta jonga dalarada yitta. Allah nahalewai ana nahana inne tapanu tana dajalage kada morha ledeni nyiyo. ¹⁰ Tabara hena lah manawara inna; wali yitta dakma kama manawarani Allah, Tabolo Allah kamanawarada yitta monno mana halewa dani anana bamaraka hamoliyi tubadi doku jalada yitta. ¹¹ Anguwu hamanawaragu, nyi Allah bataudahingge manawarada yitta, taudajala nage yitta daha manawara wik hona. ¹² lahing mahona ata ka etai Allah. Nyi yitta bada hamanawara wikna. Allah engana tabanada mono manawarana inna wabange tabarada yitta. ¹³ Waige kataudana inne ge yita batadawe yitta bada

engana tabarawai Allah monno Allah tabarada yitta oroge Allah bana nyik bedani tabarada yitta wali ngahuna. ¹⁴ Monno, Nami ma etabeyi mono hatada daumage nyi Ama bana halewai Ana-Na banyiyi Hada Hoila panu tana ¹⁵ Tangana ata kamaku nai Yesus Anai Allah nyi, Allah engana tabarana nyiyo mono nyiyo engana tabara Allah. ¹⁶ Nyidawe, yitta datada bewe monno dahatenabewe inna manawara badauwage Allah tubada yitta. Allah nyi kamanawara, monno ata kaengana ta manawara, engana tabarai Allah mono Allah tabarana nyiyo. ¹⁷ Ledegeinne, manawara nabange waige yitta dajalage yitta kana dadiwe bada dauge hatewa wali tatauda dikki ge lado nyini rakana ata oroge katauna nyiyo, tauda jalanagi yitta tapanu tana. ¹⁸ Lakmage madauta tillu mana wara, tabola manawara kabanna nawungage madauta oroge madauta naduwu dangage li hokna. Ata kama madauta, wale naban dahok mage manawara tabarana. ¹⁹ Yitta manawara oro nyiyo ulluhakna manawara da yitta. ²⁰ Nyi badaka ata kaha newe, nauwa mawawarani Allah; Tabolo buttun ate olebaina, Ata nada kama tipu. Oroe, Ata aika dadi manawarani angu wuna haetena, walena dadik mawe manawarani Allah aiha etana. ²¹ Monno, Pareha inne yitta dahibawe wali tai Allah: Tangana Ata kama nawarani Allah, enga dahoge bana manawarani angu wuna. Anak-Anak Allah Mengalahkan Dunia ¹ Tangana ata kahatena nadai Yesus Nyi Kristus dadi wali tai Aallah, Nonno tangana ata kamanawarani Ama, tauja lage manawarani ana kadadi wali tai ama. ² Waige inne yitta datada bewe bada manawaradi Ananai Allah, Bakolle Yitta Manawarani Allah Monno dakudi ukparehana. ³ Oroe inne nyiwe manawarai Allah, nyi yitta bada dokukadi uk parehaNa, Monno uk parehaNa wali biktamayi. ⁴ Oroe, agahingakai kadadi wali tai Allah habakkewe panutana, inne nyiwe tailo kaha bakkebewe panu tana; hatenada yitta. ⁵ Iya dudikahabakebe we panu tana ai nyika kaha tenai nai Yesus Nyikna ananai Allah. Hidup Kekal Ada dalam Yesus ⁶ Nyiknala kamai waina weyo mono Rayo: Yesus Kristus wale Duka kelukmage weyo, tabolo waina weyo mono rayo. Wadna Nyiyo kapadeladage oroge waddi nyin katengna. ⁷ Oroe, dadi tauda hada kapadelage ta Surga: ⁸ Waddi, weyo, mono Rayo; Mono kataudana rada weati. ⁹ Nyiwe yitta bada hibawe patallara kadadi ata, patakki Allah rehina kulhawe. Oroe, patakki hanyinai Allah patakki tubana Ana-Na. ¹⁰ Ata kahatena tabara Anai Allah padelaka patau takana lar tatauna. Ata aika hatena tabarai Aallah nyi kapahadayi Nyiyo ata kama tipu oroge ata nada walena hatenakmawe hataki Allah bana yiwe tubana Ana-Na. ¹¹ Mono, inne paha delaka inna: Allah na yibewe tabarada yitta Morha aika dukka, monno Morha inna dage tabara anana. ¹² Tangana ata kadauni anana daunage Morha; Tangana ata aika dauni anai Allahwale nadaumage Morha. Orang yang Lahir dari Allah Tidak Berbuat Dosa ¹³ Nauwa gu tolhamige tangage inna tabarami miyo kahatena tabarana Ana Allah dajalage miyo kamu tadawe monno miyo kamu dauge Morha aika dukka. ¹⁴ Monno, inne nyiwe hatena hadau danga dage ta orona Nyiyo, nyi baaga hingkawe haraida duku ge ha kabu atena, nyiyo narange dage yitta. ¹⁵ Nyiwe titta tadawe nyi narange dage yitta, aga hingkawe yitta haraida, yitta tadawe inna yitta dadaubege maraino habebeda yitta karaiwali tabarana. ¹⁶ Nyi badaka ata kaeta yi angwuna raina Jala aika harodani tamate, dahawege ata nada kana karaiwe, monno Allah enga yidani Morha tabarana ata karayina, jala aika kaarohani jamate Inna. Tabolo, dage wuyo jala kaarodada tamate; Nauwa walegutakki mamigge tabolo ka engage bana kanukawe tubage jala inna. ¹⁷ Tangage aika tena nyiduwe jala. Tabolo dage jala aika paarodana ta mate. ¹⁸ Yitta datadawe tangawa ata kadadi wali tai Allah Walena rayikmana jala, tabolo nyiyo kadadi wali tai Allah naha mawoni mono kajapata walena jojakmai. ¹⁹ Yitta tadawe yita bawalida tai Allah, mono tangane panu yana dage takabu kaha rehana ka japata. ²⁰ Monno yitto datadawe Anai Allah na maibe monno na yibedage paha ngada tabarada yitta dajalage yitta kanadaweta dai nyiyo katena; Monno Yitta dada tabarana nyiyo katena, car ta anana, Yesus Kristus. Nyiknai Allah katena monno Morha aika dukana. ²¹ Anagu, hamaraugae taumu wali hada bara marapu.

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:

This page has intentionally been left blank.

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:

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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"
