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Translation Notes (unfoldingWord)

2 John - Introduction

"# Introduction to 2 John

Part 1: General Introduction

Outline of the book of 2 John

1. Opening of letter (1:1–3)
2. Encouragement and the commandment to love one another (1:4–6)
3. Warning about false teachers (1:7–11)
4. Closing of letter (1:12–13)

Who wrote the book of 2 John?

The author of this letter identifies himself only as "the elder." However, the content of 2 John is similar to the content in John's gospel and also to the content in 1 John and 3 John. This suggests that the apostle John wrote this letter, and he would have done so near the end of his life.

To whom was the book of 2 John written?

The author addresses this letter to someone he calls "the chosen lady" and to "her children" (1:1). Although this could refer to a specific woman and her children, that interpretation is very unlikely. More probably, this is a figurative way to refer to a specific congregation and its members. See the discussion in Part 3, below. John knew some members of this congregation or at least was told about them (1:4) and he wanted to give them instruction and encouragement.

What is the book of 2 John about?

It appears that John addressed this letter to a specific congregation of believers. John's purposes in writing this letter to them was to encourage them in their faith and to warn them about false teachers. John did not want believers helping or giving money to false teachers. He probably intended this message to be passed on to all believers in general.

How should the title of this book be translated?

Translators may choose to call this book by its traditional title, "2 John" or "Second John." Or they may choose a different title, such as "The Second Letter from John" or "The Second Letter John Wrote." (See: How to Translate Names)

Part 2: Important Religious and Cultural Concepts

What is hospitality?

Hospitality was an important concept in the ancient Near East. It was important to be friendly toward foreigners or outsiders and provide help to them if they needed it. John wanted believers to offer hospitality to guests. However, he did not want believers to offer hospitality to false teachers.

Who were the people John spoke against?

The people John spoke against may have been those who later became known as Gnostics. These people believed that the physical world was evil. Since the physical body was seen as evil, they did not think that God could become human. Therefore, they believed that Jesus was divine but denied that he was human. (See: Evil)

Part 3: Important Translation Issues

Who is the "chosen lady" of 2 John 1:1?

John addresses this letter to "the chosen lady and her children," and a few scholars have suggested that this refers to an actual woman with children. However, the great majority of scholars understand "the chosen lady and her children" to be a figurative way to refer to a congregation and its members. A closer examination of the letter reveals that this is the case. First of all, much of the content would not make sense if addressed to an individual. Also, John addresses this "lady" using plural forms of "you" in verses 6, 8, 10, and 12. An individual would not be addressed in that way. At the end of the letter, he sends greetings from "the children of your chosen sister," using the same figurative language to refer to his own congregation. Since the word "church" was feminine in Greek, referring to a church as a "lady"

and to another church as a "sister" would be quite normal. For these reasons, these notes will present the meaning of these words as figurative, not literal.

What are the major textual issues in the text of the book of 2 John?

In 1:8, some manuscripts read "what you have worked for" instead of "what we have worked for." If a version of the Bible already exists in your region, you should consider using the reading of that version in your translation. If not, you may wish to follow the reading that most Bible scholars consider to be authentic and say "what we have worked for." Scholars are divided over whether "we" includes both John and the letter recipients or includes only John and those with him, and thus excludes the letter recipients. If your language makes the distinction, you might want to use the inclusive form, since the letter recipients certainly worked to support each other's faith.

In 1:12, some manuscripts read "your joy" instead of "our joy." If a version of the Bible already exists in your region, you should consider using the reading of that version in your translation. If not, you may wish to follow the reading that most Bible scholars consider to be authentic and say "our joy." In this case, "our" would include both John and the letter recipients. (See: Textual Variants)"

2 John 1:1 (#1)

"The elder"

In this culture, letter writers would identify themselves first, referring to themselves in the third person. If that is confusing in your language, you could use the first person here. Or if your language has a particular way of introducing the author of a letter, and if it would be helpful to your readers, you could use it here. Alternate translation: "I, the elder, am writing this letter to you"

See: First, Second or Third Person

2 John 1:1 (#2)

"The elder"

The elder refers to John, the apostle and disciple of Jesus. He refers to himself as **elder** either because of his old age or because he is a leader in the church

or both. If you have a term for an older, respected leader, you can use it here. Alternate translation: "I, John, am writing this letter to you" or "I, John the elder, am writing this letter to you"

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

2 John 1:1 (#3)

"to the chosen lady and her children"

In this culture, letter writers would name the addressees next, referring to them in the third person. If that is confusing in your language, you could use the second person here. Or if your language has a particular way of introducing the person who receives a letter, and if it would be helpful to your readers, you could use it here. Alternate translation: "to you, chosen lady, and to your children"

See: First, Second or Third Person

2 John 1:1 (#4)

"to the chosen lady and her children"

Here John is speaking of a church and its people as if they were a **lady and her children**. See the discussion in Part 3 of the Introduction to this book. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly in the text or in a footnote. Alternate translation: "to the people of the chosen church"

See: Metaphor

2 John 1:1 (#5)

"to the chosen lady and her children"

In this context, the term **chosen** indicates a person or group of people whom God has chosen to receive salvation. Alternate translation: "to the congregation that God has saved"

See: Idiom

2 John 1:1 (#6)

"love in truth"

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract noun **truth**

with an equivalent expression. The phrase **the truth** could: (1) refer to how John loves. Alternate translation: "truly love" (2) provide the reason for John's love. Alternate translation: "love because we both follow the one who is true"

See: Abstract Nouns

2 John 1:1 (#7)

"all the ones having known the truth"

John uses the phrase **all the ones having known the truth** to refer to believers who know and accept the true message about Jesus Christ. John is most likely using the term **all** as a generalization to mean all the believers who are with him and who know the people of this church. Alternate translation: "all who are with me and who know and accept the truth"

See: Hyperbole

2 John 1:2 (#1)

"the truth"

John uses the abstract noun **truth** to refer to the true message that Christians believe. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the same idea with a different form of the word. Alternate translation: "the true message"

See: Abstract Nouns

2 John 1:2 (#2)

"us" - "us"

If your language marks this distinction, the pronoun **us** would be inclusive here and throughout the epistle, because John always uses it to refer to both himself and to the recipients of the letter. The pronoun "we" would also be inclusive for that same reason, as would the pronoun "our," if you choose to use it in your translation.

See: Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'

2 John 1:2 (#3)

"to eternity"

This is an idiom that means "forever." If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, you could use an idiom from your language that does have that meaning or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "for all time"

See: Idiom

2 John 1:3 (#1)

"Grace, mercy, {and} peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ"

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract nouns **grace**, **mercy**, and **peace** with verbal phrases, and use **God the Father** and **Jesus Christ** as the subject. Alternate translation: "God the Father and Jesus Christ will be kind to us, be merciful to us, and enable us to be peaceful"

See: Abstract Nouns

2 John 1:3 (#2)

"Grace, mercy, {and} peace will be with us"

In this culture, letter writers would normally offer a good wish or blessing for the recipients before introducing the main business of the letter. But instead of a blessing here, John makes a declarative statement. This probably expresses his confidence that God will do as he promised. Be sure that your translation also expresses this confidence.

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

2 John 1:3 (#3)

"the Father" - "Son"

Father and **Son** are important titles that describe the relationship between God and Jesus Christ. Be sure to translate them accurately and consistently.

See: Translating Son and Father

2 John 1:3 (#4)

"in truth and love"

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the abstract nouns **truth** and **love** by stating the ideas behind them with adjectives or

verbs. Here, these abstract nouns could refer to: (1) the qualities of God the Father and Jesus Christ. Alternate translation: "who are truthful and loving" (2) how believers should live, and thus are the conditions under which believers will receive the "grace, mercy, and peace" from God. Alternate translation: "as we continue to believe what is true and to love each other"

See: Abstract Nouns

2 John 1:4 (#1)

"I rejoiced greatly that I found some of your children walking in truth"

If it is more natural in your language to state the reason first and then the result, you can put the statement **I rejoiced greatly** at the end of the verse. Alternate translation: "I found some of your children walking in the truth, just as we have received a commandment from the Father. Therefore, I rejoiced greatly."

See: Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship

2 John 1:4 (#2)

"your children"

See how you translated the term **children** in 1:1. John is continuing his figure of speech in which he addresses the church collectively as a "lady" and its members as her "children." Alternate translation: "the believers from your group"

See: Metaphor

2 John 1:4 (#3)

"your children"

The word **your** is singular here, since John is continuing his figure of speech in which he addresses the church collectively as a "lady" and its members as her **children**. If you are translating this in a non-figurative way, you may want to make this plural, according to what is natural in your language. Alternate translation: "the believers from your group"

See: Forms of You

2 John 1:4 (#4)

"walking in truth"

Here John is speaking figuratively of a person's life as if it were a journey, and the way that the person behaves is the way that he walks on that journey. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "living according to the truth"

See: Metaphor

2 John 1:4 (#5)

"in truth"

If your language does not use an abstract noun for **truth**, you could use a phrase with an adjective. Alternate translation: "in a way that agrees with the true message from God"

See: Abstract Nouns

2 John 1:4 (#6)

"just as we have received a commandment from the Father"

The expression **received a commandment** expresses the idea that God commanded the believers to do something. If it would be helpful in your language, you could make **the Father** the subject of a sentence with the verb "command." Alternate translation: "just as the Father has commanded us"

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

2 John 1:4 (#7)

"the Father"

Father is an important title for God. Be careful to translate it accurately and consistently.

See: Translating Son and Father

2 John 1:5 (#1)

"And now"

The words **and now** signal that what follows is the main point of the letter, or at least the first main

point. Use a natural way for introducing the main point in your language.

See: Connecting Words and Phrases

2 John 1:5 (#2)

"you," - "to you"

These instances of **you** are singular since John is once again addressing the church in a figurative way as a **lady**. If you are translating John's form of address in a non-figurative way, you may want to make these plural, according to what is natural in your language.

See: Forms of You

2 John 1:5 (#3)

"lady"

John is continuing his figure of speech in which he addresses the church collectively as a **lady**. See how you translated **lady** in 1:1. Alternate translation: "my dear believers"

See: Metaphor

2 John 1:5 (#4)

"not as writing a new commandment to you"

If your language requires you to state who is **writing**, you could add a pronoun here. Alternate translation: "not as though I were writing a new commandment to you"

See: Ellipsis

2 John 1:5 (#5)

"from the beginning"

The phrase **from the beginning** refers to the time when John and his audience first believed in Jesus Christ. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "since the time that we first believed"

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

2 John 1:6 (#1)

"we should walk according to" - "you should walk in it"

Here as in 1:4, John is speaking figuratively of living one's life as "walking." Specifically, to **walk according to** a commandment or to **walk in** a commandment means to "obey" it. If it would be helpful in your language, you could state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "we should obey ... you should obey it"

See: Metaphor

2 John 1:6 (#2)

"you heard" - "you should walk"

The term **you** is plural in this verse, because John is addressing a congregation of believers without any figure of speech. This is the case throughout the rest of the letter, as well, except at the end 1:13, where John returns to using his figure of speech in which he refers to a church as a woman and its members as her children.

See: Forms of You

2 John 1:7 (#1)

"For"

Here, **For** introduces the reason why John wrote about the commandment to love and obey God in the previous verses—it is because there are many who pretend to be believers but they do not love or obey God. Use a natural way to introduce this reason in your language. See the UST.

See: Connect — Reason-and-Result Relationship

2 John 1:7 (#2)

"For many deceivers have gone out into the world"

The phrase **gone out into the world** describes the way that the false teachers traveled around, as John discusses in 1:10–11. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "For many deceivers are going around from place to place"

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

2 John 1:7 (#3)

"Jesus Christ coming in flesh"

The expression **coming in flesh** is a metonym for being a real, physical person and not a spiritual being only. Alternate translation: "that Jesus Christ came as a real human"

See: Metonymy

2 John 1:7 (#4)

"This is the deceiver and the antichrist"

This refers back to the situation of people teaching falsely that Jesus did not have a body of flesh. John is saying that people deceive others in this way because the original deceiver (the devil) directs them to do so. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "This is the work of the deceiver, the antichrist" or "This kind of teaching comes from the one who is the deceiver and the antichrist"

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

2 John 1:7 (#5)

"the deceiver and the antichrist"

The terms **deceiver** and **antichrist** refer to the same person (the devil). It may be helpful to clarify that in your translation. Alternate translation: "the deceiver, that is, the antichrist"

See: Doublet

2 John 1:8 (#1)

"Watch yourselves"

Here, **Watch yourselves** is an idiom that means "be careful." If this phrase does not have that meaning in your language, you could use an idiom from your language that does have that meaning or state the meaning plainly. Alternate translation: "Mind yourselves" or "Guard yourselves"

See: Idiom

2 John 1:8 (#2)

"Watch yourselves"

The implication is that the believers are to be careful so that they are not deceived by the deceiving false teachers. You could include this information if that would be helpful to your readers. Alternate translation: "Be careful not to let the deceivers influence you"

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

2 John 1:8 (#3)

"what"

The word **what** refers generally to all of the work that John and his fellow believers have done to build up the faith of the believers in the church to which he is writing. You could use a general term here, or if it would be helpful in your language, you could state this more explicitly. Alternate translation: "everything" or "the faith in Jesus"

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

2 John 1:8 (#4)

"we have worked for"

Some manuscripts have "you" here instead of **we**. Most scholars, however, consider the reading with **we** to be the correct one. See the discussion in Part 3 of the Introduction.

See: Textual Variants

2 John 1:8 (#5)

"we have worked for"

The word **we** here is probably inclusive. John, his audience, and others have all worked to build up the faith of the believers to whom John is writing.

See: Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'

2 John 1:8 (#6)

"a full reward"

The word translated as **reward** also refers to the wages that a worker gets for his work. John is using

this idea to say that God rewards his people for the work that they have done for him, and that this reward would be lost if the work came to nothing. In this context, the reward may include the idea of the person's relationship with God, since that is what would be lost if John's readers leave behind the teachings of Christ, as he goes on to say in the next verse. Use a general phrase that could include all of those things. Alternate translation: "complete recompense" or "the whole prize"

See: Metaphor

2 John 1:9 (#1)

"Everyone going beyond and not remaining in the teaching of Christ"

John figuratively refers to **the teaching of Christ** as a place where faithful believers **remain** and also as a place that false teachers leave as they go **beyond**. The expression **going beyond** refers to teaching new and false things that Jesus did not teach. Alternate translation: "Everyone who teaches things that Jesus did not teach"

See: Metaphor

2 John 1:9 (#2)

"Everyone going beyond and not remaining in the teaching of Christ"

These two phrases mean the same thing, one stated positively (**going beyond**) and the other stated negatively (**not remaining**). If it is more natural in your language, you can reverse the order of these, as in the UST.

See: Information Structure

2 John 1:9 (#3)

"does not have God"

To **have God** means to have a relationship with God as Savior through faith in Jesus Christ. If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this explicitly. Alternate translation: "does not have a right relationship with God" or "does not truly know God"

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

2 John 1:9 (#4)

"The one remaining in the teaching, this one has both the Father and the Son"

By **one**, John does not mean a particular person. He means anyone **remaining in the teaching** of Jesus. Alternate translation: "Anyone who follows Christ's teaching belongs to both the Father and the Son"

See: Generic Noun Phrases

2 John 1:9 (#5)

"The one remaining in the teaching"

This phrase is in contrast to the previous sentence. If it would be helpful in your language, you could use a word or phrase to mark this contrast, as in the UST.

See: Connect — Contrast Relationship

2 John 1:9 (#6)

"this one"

John is using the demonstrative adjective **this** as a noun, to refer to a kind of person. ULT indicates this by adding the word **one**. If your language does not use adjectives in this way, you can translate this with an equivalent phrase. Alternate translation: "such a person" or "that kind of person"

See: Nominal Adjectives

2 John 1:9 (#7)

"the Father and the Son"

Father and **Son** are important titles that describe the relationship between God and Jesus Christ. Be sure to express these titles consistently and accurately.

See: Translating Son and Father

2 John 1:10 (#1)

"If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching"

The word **anyone** here implies "any teacher or preacher." John does not want the believers to welcome any teacher who does not teach what Jesus taught, and specifically that Jesus came as a human being (See: 1:7). Alternate translation: "If anyone comes to you claiming to be a teacher, but he teaches differently than this"

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

2 John 1:10 (#2)

"does not bring this teaching"

John is speaking of a **teaching** or a message as if it were an object that someone could **bring**. If you would not use this kind of metaphor in your language, you could use one that has the same meaning or use plain language. Alternate translation: "does not teach this same message"

See: Metaphor

2 John 1:10 (#3)

"this teaching"

The phrase **this teaching** refers to the teaching mentioned in 1:7 that Jesus Christ came as a real human being. If this is not clear for your readers, you could mention that teaching again here. Alternate translation: "this teaching that Jesus came in the flesh"

See: Pronouns — When to Use Them

2 John 1:10 (#4)

"do not receive him into your house"

John does not want the believers to accept a false teacher into their homes and, as a result, support his false teaching by showing him respect and providing for his needs. Alternate translation: "do not support him or encourage him by welcoming him into your home"

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

2 John 1:10 (#5)

"do not say to him, "Greetings"

John warns the believers not to greet a false teacher respectfully in public. The implication is that he does not want them to do anything that might look like they are endorsing a false teacher or that would give a false teacher good standing in the eyes of others. Alternate translation: "do not give him a respectful public greeting"

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

2 John 1:11 (#1)

"the one saying to him, "Greetings"

By **one**, John does not mean a particular person. He means anyone who greets a false teacher. Alternate translation: "any person who gives him a respectful public greeting"

See: Generic Noun Phrases

2 John 1:11 (#2)

"shares in his evil deeds"

John is using the verb **shares** in a particular sense here to mean assisting and helping to advance the activity of the false teacher. Alternate translation: "takes part in his evil deeds" or "helps him in his evil deeds"

See: Idiom

2 John 1:12 (#1)

"I did not want with paper and ink"

Here John leaves out some of the words that a sentence would need in many languages in order to be complete. If it would be helpful to your readers, you could supply these words from earlier in the sentence. Alternate translation: "I did not want to write these things with paper and ink" (See: Ellipsis)

See: Ellipsis

2 John 1:12 (#2)

"with paper and ink"

John is not saying that he would rather write these things with something other than **paper and ink**. Rather, he is speaking of those writing materials to

represent writing in general. He means that he wants to visit the believers personally and to continue his communication with them directly. Alternate translation: "to communicate these things in writing"

See: Metonymy

2 John 1:12 (#3)

"to come"

In a context such as this, your language might say "go" instead of **come**. Alternate translation: "to go"

See: Go and Come

2 John 1:12 (#4)

"to speak mouth to mouth"

The expression **mouth to mouth** describes people speaking to one another in person. You can use an expression in your own language with this same meaning or use plain language. Alternate translation: "to speak face to face" or "to speak to you in person"

See: Idiom

2 John 1:12 (#5)

"so that your joy might be made complete"

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express this with an active verb form. Alternate translation: "so that this will make your joy complete"

See: Active or Passive

2 John 1:12 (#6)

"so that your joy might be made complete"

If it would be helpful in your language, you could express the idea behind the abstract noun **joy** with an adjective such as "joyful." Alternate translation: "so that this will make you completely joyful"

See: Abstract Nouns

2 John 1:12 (#7)

"your joy might be made complete"

See the note in Part 3 of the General Introduction to 2 John about the textual issue here. Alternate translation: "our joy might be made complete"

See: Textual Variants

2 John 1:12 (#8)

"your"

If you use "our" here instead of **your**, it would include both John and the letter recipients.

See: Exclusive and Inclusive 'We'

2 John 1:13 (#1)

"The children of your chosen sister"

See the discussion of this metaphor in Part 3 of the Introduction. Just as John uses the term "chosen lady" as a figurative expression for the group of believers to whom he is writing in 1:1 and the term "her children" for the members of that group, also here John is describing his own group of believers as the **chosen sister** of that group and the members of his group as the **children** of this sister. If you choose to keep the metaphor in the text, you may want to include an explanation of the meaning in a footnote. Alternate translation: "The members of the chosen group of believers here"

See: Metaphor

2 John 1:13 (#2)

"The children of your chosen sister"

In this context, the term **chosen** indicates someone whom God has chosen to receive salvation. In the context of John's metaphor, this indicates a church or group of people whom God has chosen to receive salvation. Alternate translation: "The members of this group of believers in Jesus"

See: Idiom

2 John 1:13 (#3)

"greet you"

As was customary in this culture, John concludes the letter by extending greetings from people who are with him and who may know the people to whom he is writing. Your language may have a particular way of sharing greetings in a letter. If so, you can use that form here. Alternate translation: "send you their greetings" or "ask to be remembered to you"

See: Assumed Knowledge and Implicit Information

2 John 1:13 (#4)

"your" - **"you"**

The pronouns **you** and **your** are singular here, in keeping with John's metaphor of writing to a congregation as though it were a lady. If it would be clearer in your language, you could use plural forms here.

See: Forms of You