



NG Study Guide: 1Jn. 5:14-17 “Confidence in Prayer” [6.10.18]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: Does prayer really matter? If you were confident that prayer would change you, your circumstances and/or your world would you pray differently? This week we learn how to pray with confidence and compassion. Let’s discover together how to be a house of prayer.

“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. ¹⁶ If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. ¹⁷ All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death” [1Jn. 5:14-17].

In the preceding chapters, John has helped us to understand how we can be confident that we have eternal life [5:6-13]. Confidence in your relationship with God produces confidence in prayer.

A. Pray with confidence [14-15]. How you can be confident when you pray:

1. Be right with God by faith in Jesus, and seeking to obey and to please Him [1Jn. 3:22-23]

“And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ” [1Jn. 3:22-23]. If you are living in rebellion against God, you should not expect Him to grant any request until you repent. The psalmist observes, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord

will not hear” [Ps. 66:18]. Similarly, Peter notes that a husband who mistreats his spouse will have his prayers hindered [1Pet. 3:7].

2. Pray according to God’s will [14]

We are to ask *according to His will*. In the Model Prayer, Jesus instructed us to pray, “Your kingdom come, your will be done ...” [Mt. 6:10]. In the Garden of Gethsemane, hours before the cross, Jesus agonized in prayer as He contemplated taking on the sin of the world, but He prayed, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will” [Mt. 26:39]. The key is to seek His will not ours. Are you seeking to know what God wants or do you generally tell Him what you want? George Mueller observed, “Prayer is not overcoming God’s reluctance but laying hold of His willingness.” Mueller was a man of great dependence upon prayer, who ministered to thousands of orphans in Bristol, England in the mid-1800s.

Familiarity with the Bible helps you know God’s will.

A great way to know God’s will is to know the Bible. Throughout the Scriptures we discover promises and principles revealing God’s will. Moses, Daniel, and Nehemiah, to name a few would remind God of His promises to His people. In essence, they would pray knowing it was God’s will, because God had declared it was His will.

There are countless times when we pray and we just aren’t sure what is God’s will. For example, you have a very elderly loved one who loves the Lord, and who is struggling with illness. You’re not sure whether to pray for healing, knowing they will struggle, or whether it is God’s will to bring them home. Perhaps you are contemplating a career change, a relationship, or a relocation, and none of the choices are contrary to God’s word, and you want to pray for (and know) God’s will.

Familiarity with Jesus helps you know God’s will.

The closer you are with Jesus the more likely you are to know God’s will. Jesus declared, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you” [Jn. 15:7]. Abiding speaks of dwelling with or being connected to. As with any relationship, the better you know and the closer you are, the greater the sense that you know their desires. If you are close with Jesus, it likely impacts what you ask for. Jesus told His disciples, “Ask anything in My name, I will do it” [Jn. 14:14]. The concept of “name” refers to authority or nature. In other words, the better we understand Jesus, the more likely we are to know whether a request is consistent with His nature.

Familiarity with the Holy Spirit helps you know God’s will.

We pray to the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit. Ideally, our prayers are not simply our best ideas, but are inspired by the Holy Spirit. Part of the work of the Holy Spirit is to guide and direct our prayers per God’s will, “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us ... according to *the will of God*” [Rom. 8:26-27].

Note, if God does not grant the request we know that it is not His will or perhaps not His time, and we can be comforted that His will is best.

B. Pray with compassion [16-17]

Pray for others to be restored with God

¹⁶ *If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.* ¹⁷ *All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.*

Generally, we are to pray for people to be restored with God, *“If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death”* [16]. Westcott observed, “The end of prayer is the perfection of the whole body.”

Our intercession for others through prayer reflects Jesus’ present ministry of intercession,

“Therefore, He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him since He always lives to make intercession for them” [Heb.7:25]. We are generally to be moved with compassion for the lost who have not come to Christ [Lu. 15, Mk. 6:34], and pray for them to know Christ. Yet, four times we see the phrase, *sin leading to death*. This is likely referring to spiritual death, or ultimate separation from God, in contrast with physical death [1Cor. 11:30]. There are some hearts that are so hard to God that they will never repent, and respond to the work of the Holy Spirit drawing them to receive Christ. Jesus referred to this as the only unpardonable sin, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit [Mk. 3:28-30]. John may have been thinking of the false teachers of Gnostic philosophy who refused to repent. In essence, the principle is that at a certain point don’t bother praying because God’s Spirit will not strive with man forever [Gen. 6:3]. How do you know when to stop praying? As a rule of thumb, pray as long as you sense God leading you to pray for someone.

George Mueller tells a story of persistent prayer in his diary: In November 1844, I began to pray for the conversion of five individuals. I prayed every day without a single intermission, whether sick or in health, on the land, on the sea, and whatever the pressure of my engagements might be. Eighteen months elapsed before the first of the five was converted. I thanked God and prayed on for the others. Five years elapsed, and then the second was converted. I thanked God for the second, and prayed on for the other three. Day by day, I continued to pray for them, and six years passed before the third was converted. I thanked God for the three, and went on praying for the other two. These two remained unconverted.

Thirty-six years later he wrote that the other two, sons of one of Mueller’s friends, were still not converted. He wrote, “But I hope in God, I pray on, and look for the answer. They are not converted yet, but they will be.” In 1897, fifty-two years after he began to pray daily, without interruption, for these two men, they were finally converted—but after he died! Mueller understood what Luke meant when he introduced a parable Jesus told about prayer, saying, “Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up” [Lu. 18:1].

Study Guide Qs

1. How has growing in Christ given you greater confidence in prayer?

2. Describe a time when God granted your prayer request. How did the experience encourage you to pray?

3. How has growing in God helped you to know His will?

4. Who are some of the people that you are interceding for to receive Christ?

“Digging Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

1. Search George Mueller of Bristol, England, and read about the influence of prayer in his life. What did you discover and how will you apply it in your life?

2. Spend significant time praying this week. How did this lesson impact your prayer life?

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?

2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?

3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

Plan a Summer BBQ and invite neighbors to come and get to know other neighbors. Also, be receptive to invitations from neighbors to BBQs and other events.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?

2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

1. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
2. **Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
3. **The “Digging Deeper” section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the “Digging Deeper” section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
4. **Every time you meet consider asking:**
 - a. **What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.