

Expanded Report: Confidence in Prayer (1 John 5:13-17)

Prologue: The Power and Assurance of Prayer

As the family gathered for their Bible study, Ryan opened the book of 1 John to chapter 5, verses 13-17. The aroma of Yaya's freshly brewed tea filled the room, and the warmth of the family being together created a peaceful atmosphere. Ariel's curious eyes sparkled as she leaned in, and Alice snuggled up with Mr. Fluffernutter, her stuffed bunny, giving the scene a sense of comfort and closeness. In this passage, John assures believers that they can have confidence in their prayers when they align with God's will. He emphasizes that prayer is a powerful means of communication with God, and that when believers ask according to God's will, they can trust that He hears them and answers their prayers. John also addresses the importance of praying for others, especially when they struggle with sin, and how God desires to restore and guide His people.

"Tonight, we're going to learn about the confidence we can have in prayer," Ryan said. "John teaches us that when we pray according to God's will, He hears us and answers our requests. It's a powerful reminder that our prayers matter and that God is always listening."

Ariel, always eager to understand more about prayer, asked, "What does it mean to pray 'according to God's will'?"

Ryan smiled at Ariel's curiosity. "That's a great question, Ariel. Praying according to God's will means asking for things that honor Him and reflect what He wants for us and for the world. Think of it like this: when we pray, we're not just giving God a list of what we want; we're trying to understand what God wants for us too."

Ariel tilted her head slightly, thinking. "But how do we know what God wants?"

Ryan nodded, understanding her confusion. "Sometimes it can be hard to know for sure. That's why it's so important to read the Bible and understand God's character. For example, we know God wants us to love others, to be kind, and to help those in need. So, if you pray for God to help you be kind to someone at school, you're definitely praying according to His will because it aligns with His teachings."

He paused, then continued, "Another way to think about it is this: Imagine you're working on a school project and you're feeling really frustrated. If you pray for God to help you do your best and to give you patience, that's a prayer that aligns with God's will because He wants us to rely on Him and grow through our challenges."

Ariel's eyes brightened as she began to understand. "So, it's more about asking for things that help us grow closer to God and do what's right?"

"Exactly," Ryan said, smiling. "When we align our prayers with what God wants—like asking for wisdom, patience, or help to love others—we can be confident that He hears us. And remember, even when we're not sure, we can still pray and trust that God knows what's best. He'll guide us."

Ariel nodded thoughtfully. "Okay, I think I get it now. It's not just about what we want, but about what God wants for us."

Ryan patted her shoulder gently. “That’s right. And the amazing thing is, when we pray this way, it helps our hearts to be more like His. It helps us want the things that God wants, and that’s where real joy and peace come from.” She wondered if her own prayers, like asking for help with schoolwork or her friends, were what God wanted. This question was important to her because she wanted to be sure she was praying the right way.

“That’s a great question,” Ryan replied. “It means praying for things that honor God and align with His purposes. When we pray for things that match God’s heart and His plans for us, we can be confident that He will answer in His perfect timing.”

Alice, cuddling up with Mr. Fluffernutter, added, “So, God answers our prayers when we ask for good things, right?” She paused, then added with a giggle, “Like asking for more crayons to share with my friends, or for Mr. Fluffernutter to be extra fluffy?”

“Yes,” Yaya said, “God always hears our prayers and answers in ways that are best for us. Sometimes, the answer is ‘yes,’ sometimes it’s ‘wait,’ and sometimes it’s ‘no’—but it’s always perfect because it’s God’s will.”

Key Teachings: Confidence and Effectiveness in Prayer

1. Confidence in Asking According to God’s Will

1 John 5:14

“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.”

• The Assurance of God’s Harkening to Our Prayers:

Ryan explained, “John assures us that we can have confidence when we pray. If we ask anything according to God’s will, He hears us. This is not just a casual promise—it’s a firm, unshakeable assurance that God is listening, and He will respond to our prayers. Let me share a personal story: There was a time when I prayed for a promotion at work. I really thought it was what I needed, but it didn’t happen. Instead, God opened another door that was even better for me and our family. It taught me that God always knows what’s best, even if it’s not what I initially wanted.”

• Aligning Our Hearts with God’s Will:

Ryan continued, “God desires for us to pray with hearts that are tuned to His will. It’s like asking for something that will bring Him glory, or asking for the wisdom to grow in our relationship with Him. We can be sure that God will always respond in ways that are for our good and His glory.”

Yaya added, “When we pray according to God’s will, we are inviting Him to work in us and through us, shaping our hearts to be more like His.”

2. God’s Will and the Power of Prayer

1 John 5:15

“And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”

- The Assurance of Answered Prayers:

Ryan explained, “When we ask according to God’s will, we can be sure that He will answer our prayers. This verse assures us that God not only hears us, but He also grants us our petitions when we ask in faith.”

Ariel asked, “Does this mean God gives us everything we ask for?”

“Not exactly,” Ryan said. “God doesn’t always give us what we want, but He gives us what is good and necessary for us. He answers our prayers in the way that best aligns with His perfect plan for our lives.”

- Praying with Confidence and Faith:

Ryan continued, “Having confidence in our prayers doesn’t mean getting everything we want, but it does mean trusting that God’s answers are always the right ones. We can have faith that God will give us what we need, when we need it.”

Yaya added, “It’s about trusting in God’s wisdom. When we pray, we are surrendering our will to His, and that’s where true peace comes from.”

3. Praying for Others: The Power of Intercession

1 John 5:16-17

“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.”

- Praying for the Restoration of Others:

Ryan explained, “John also talks about praying for others, especially when they’re struggling with sin. If we see a fellow believer caught in sin, we can pray for them, asking God to restore them. Our prayers can be a powerful tool in helping others find healing and reconciliation with God.”

Ariel asked, “What if someone is really stuck in their sin?”

“Even in those cases, we pray with hope and trust that God can restore them. We’re also reminded here that some situations are beyond our understanding, and there are things God alone knows. Still, we pray for those who need help, trusting God’s will in their lives.”

- The Importance of Praying for Others’ Spiritual Needs:

Ryan continued, “Intercessory prayer is important because it shows our love for others. When we see someone struggling, our first response should be to pray for them, asking God to work in their hearts and lives.”

Yaya added, “When we pray for others, we are partnering with God in His work, and we can be confident that He hears and acts according to His will.”

4. The Key Teaching: Prayer Rooted in God’s Will Is Powerful and Effective

Key Teaching:

The key teaching of this passage is that prayer rooted in God's will is not only powerful but effective. Believers can approach God with confidence, knowing that when their requests align with His will, He hears them and answers according to His perfect plan. Additionally, the act of praying for others—especially for their spiritual well-being—reflects a heart that desires God's best for others, and it plays a significant role in the lives of fellow believers.

Ryan summarized, "John encourages us to pray with confidence, knowing that when we pray according to God's will, we are aligning our hearts with His. Our prayers are powerful, and God answers them in the way that is best for us and for others."

Practical Applications: Living with Confidence in Prayer

The family discussed how they could apply these teachings in their daily lives:

1. Praying with Confidence:

Ariel suggested, "I can pray more confidently, knowing that when I ask for things that are in God's will, He will hear and answer me."

Alice added, "And when I pray for others, I know that God will help them because He hears my prayers."

2. Praying for Others:

Ryan encouraged them, "We can make it a point to pray for others, especially when they are going through tough times or struggling with sin. For example, we can set aside a few minutes each night to pray specifically for our friends or family members who need help. God can bring restoration and healing through our prayers, and it helps us stay connected to the needs of others."

3. Aligning Our Prayers with God's Will:

Yaya reminded them, "It's also important to remember that when we pray, we should ask for things that align with God's will. Even when we don't get exactly what we expect, we can trust that God's answers are always for our good. Let's think about times when God's answer was different from what we wanted—how did that make us feel, and how did it end up being for the best?"

Takeaway: Confidence in Prayer

As the family reflected, Yaya shared a time when her prayer for a friend's healing was answered in a way she didn't expect but knew was right. "I prayed for my friend to be healed from an illness, but God's answer was different. While she wasn't healed in the way I imagined, God worked in her heart and gave her peace. I realized that God's answer was perfect for her."

Ariel smiled, "So, we can trust that God will answer our prayers in the best way, even if it's not exactly what we want?" She thought about the time she prayed for her friend to come over, but instead, they had a family day together that turned out to be really fun. It helped her see that God's plans could be even better than her own.

Later that evening, Ariel had another question. She approached her dad, her eyes thoughtful. "Daddy, how do we know if what we're asking for is selfish or if it's something that honors God?"

Ryan paused, then smiled gently. “That’s a really good question, Ariel. Let’s think about it this way—when we ask for something, we should consider why we want it. Are we asking because it will help us love others better, grow closer to God, or do something that’s good for others? Those are the kinds of things that align with God’s purposes. But if we’re asking for something just for ourselves, without thinking of others or without considering what God wants for us, it might be more selfish.”

Ariel nodded slowly. “So, if I ask for something like... a new game, it could be selfish, right?”

Ryan nodded. “It depends on why you’re asking. Wanting a new game isn’t necessarily bad, but if it’s just because you want more and more things, it could be selfish. But if you’re asking for something that helps you connect with others, like playing with your sister or friends, it can be different. It’s all about the heart behind the request.”

Ariel thought for a moment. “I think I understand. So, I should ask myself if what I’m praying for is just for me, or if it’s something that could help others or help me grow?”

“Exactly,” Ryan said, his eyes filled with pride. “Prayer is about aligning our hearts with God’s. When we do that, we start wanting the things that He wants for us—things that bring joy, peace, and love to others as well as ourselves.”

Ariel’s face brightened. “I want to pray like that. I want my prayers to be about more than just me.”

Ryan gave her a gentle hug. “I’m so proud of you, Ariel. That’s exactly the kind of heart God loves—one that’s willing to grow and learn. And remember, God loves when we talk to Him, no matter what. It’s okay to ask for things you want, but it’s even more special when we ask in a way that honors Him.”

One evening, as the family gathered for their Bible study, Yaya decided to share a story. She looked at the girls and began, “I want to tell you about a time when I prayed for someone who was really struggling.”

Ariel and Alice leaned in, their eyes wide with interest.

Yaya continued, “There was a friend of mine who was struggling with addiction. It was a really difficult time for him, and I didn’t know how to help. I remember feeling so helpless, but I knew that God could do what I couldn’t. So, I prayed for him every day. I asked God to give him strength to overcome his struggles, and to help him see that he was loved and not alone.”

She paused, her voice softening. “It took time—months, actually. But slowly, I saw changes in him. He started to make better choices, and he told me that he felt like something was different, like he had hope again. I believe that was God answering those prayers. It wasn’t easy, and it didn’t happen overnight, but God worked in his heart.”

Ariel’s eyes were filled with awe. “So, your prayers really helped him?”

Yaya nodded. “Yes, but it wasn’t just my prayers—it was God’s power at work. When we pray for others, we’re partnering with God. We’re asking Him to step in and do what we can’t. And sometimes, the most loving thing we can do for someone is to lift them up in prayer.”

Alice hugged Mr. Fluffernutter tightly. “That sounds like real magic, but better—like God’s magic.”

Yaya smiled. “It’s God’s love and grace. When we pray for others, we’re showing them that we care, and we’re trusting God to do what’s best. It helps us grow in love too, because we’re focusing on someone else’s needs.”

Ariel nodded thoughtfully. “I want to pray like that more. I want to help people by praying for them.”

Ryan added, “That’s the beauty of intercessory prayer. It’s not about us; it’s about trusting God to work in the lives of others. And when we do that, we get to see just how amazing God’s love really is.”

One day after school, Ariel noticed that her friend, Emma, seemed unusually quiet and sad. Ariel’s heart felt heavy for her friend. That evening, as Ariel and Alice were getting ready for bed, Ariel decided to do something about it.

“Alice,” Ariel said, “I think we should pray for Emma. She seemed really sad today, and I don’t know what’s wrong, but I want to ask God to help her.”

Alice nodded, holding Mr. Fluffernutter tightly. “Okay! Let’s pray for Emma. I want her to be happy too.”

Ariel began, her voice soft but sincere, “Dear God, please help Emma. I don’t know what she’s going through, but You do. Please comfort her and give her whatever she needs. Let her feel Your love and know that she’s not alone.”

Alice chimed in after, her eyes closed tight, “And God, please make Emma smile again. And if she needs a friend, help her know that Ariel and I are here. Thank You for always listening.”

As they finished their prayer, Ariel felt a warmth fill her heart. She realized that praying for Emma wasn’t just about asking God to fix things—it was about trusting God to work in Emma’s life in the best way possible. It gave her a sense of peace, knowing that she had brought her friend’s needs before God.

Later, Ariel shared her thoughts with Ryan. “Daddy, I prayed for Emma tonight. She seemed so sad, and I wanted God to help her. It felt... different, like I was really helping her by talking to God.”

Ryan smiled, his eyes filled with pride. “That’s the power of intercessory prayer, Ariel. When we pray for others, we’re showing love and trusting God to do what’s best for them. It’s one of the most selfless things we can do—lifting someone else up to God.”

Ariel nodded, understanding a little more deeply now. “It felt good, even though I don’t know what will happen. I just know that God’s got it.”

Ryan hugged her. “Exactly. When we pray for others, we’re trusting God’s love and grace to work in their lives. And that’s a beautiful thing, Ariel. It helps us understand just how big and caring God’s heart really is.”

Later that evening, as the family sat together, Ryan decided to talk more about the significance of God answering prayers in His timing and ways. “You know,” he began, looking around the room, “sometimes God answers our prayers in ways we don’t expect, and sometimes His answer takes longer than we want. But we can always trust that His timing is perfect and His answers are always for our good.”

Ariel looked up, her brow furrowed slightly. “But Daddy, what if I really, really want something, and God doesn’t give it to me? How do I trust that His way is better?”

Ryan smiled gently. “I know that can be hard, Ariel. It’s natural to want things to happen right away, especially when it’s something important to us. But God sees the bigger picture—He knows what we need, even when we don’t. Let me give you an example. Remember when I prayed for that promotion at work?”

Ariel nodded. “Yeah, you said you wanted it really badly.”

“That’s right,” Ryan said. “I thought it was the best thing for me and for our family. But God didn’t give it to me. Instead, He led me to something else—something I hadn’t even thought about, but it ended up being so much better for all of us. At the time, I didn’t understand why God said no, but looking back, I can see that His plan was perfect.”

Ariel was quiet for a moment, then asked, “So, it’s about trusting that God knows what’s best, even if it doesn’t make sense to us right away?”

“Exactly,” Ryan said, his eyes filled with warmth. “God’s wisdom is greater than ours. Sometimes, what we want isn’t what’s best for us, and God knows that. He loves us so much that He only gives us what is truly good for us. It’s like when I tell you no to something because I know it might hurt you or it’s not the right time.”

Ariel sighed, a small smile forming. “I guess it’s like when you tell me I can’t stay up late, even though I want to.”

Ryan chuckled. “Exactly like that. It’s not because I want to keep something good from you—it’s because I love you and want what’s best for you. God is the same way. His answers may not always be what we expect, but they’re always what we need.”

Ariel nodded slowly, the tension easing from her face. “Okay, I think I get it. I need to trust that God knows better than I do, even when it’s hard.”

Ryan reached over and squeezed her hand. “That’s right. And the more we trust Him, the more we’ll see how perfect His plans are. It’s all about trusting His wisdom over our own desires.”

“Yes,” Ryan said, “because our prayers are always answered according to God’s will, and we can trust that His will is always good.”

Key Points Summary

1. Praying with Confidence:

- Believers can approach God with boldness, knowing that when they pray in alignment with His will, He hears them and answers their prayers.

2. Effective Prayer for Others:

- Praying for others, especially for their spiritual well-being, is a powerful way to show love and encourage them in their faith.

3. God's Will in Prayer:

◦ Aligning our prayers with God's will is essential for them to be effective. We trust that God's answers are always for our good.

Key Verse:

"This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." (1 John 5:14)

This passage encourages believers to approach prayer with confidence, knowing that God hears our requests when they align with His will. By praying according to God's will, we tap into the power of prayer

to bring about His purposes in our lives and in the lives of others.

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Time-Audit Machine Adventure:

As the family gathered around for their evening Bible study, Ryan could sense the spark of curiosity in Ariel and Alice. The discussion had been enlightening, but there was still a hunger for more—a deeper connection to the truth they were uncovering. Ryan, always one to encourage their imagination, decided it was time to take things a step further.

"You know," Ryan began, his eyes twinkling with excitement, "we've been reading John's letters, right? But what if we could actually *experience* them? What if we could travel back in time and witness those moments as they happened?"

Ariel's face lit up with curiosity. "Wait... back in time? Really? How are we going to do that?"

Ryan smiled, a secret gleam in his eye. "I think it's time to take a little trip with my Time-Audit Machine."

Alice, clutching Mr. Fluffernutter in her arms, blinked. "Time travel? Can Mr. Fluffernutter come, too?"

"Of course!" Ryan said with a chuckle. "Everyone is welcome. Even stuffed animals."

Ariel, always the more skeptical one, eyed the device Ryan pulled from his pocket. It looked like a strange hybrid of a wristwatch and a compass, with a glowing button in the center. "That's your time machine?" she asked, raising an eyebrow.

Ryan nodded confidently. "It's not just any time machine—it's an **audit of time**. We don't just visit the past; we experience it. Let's see what it was like when John wrote those letters we've been reading, and witness how the early Christians lived out those words."

Ariel and Alice exchanged glances, both eager to embark on this adventure. Ryan pressed the glowing button, and in an instant, the room seemed to stretch and warp. The familiar sounds of their living

room faded away, replaced by the rush of wind and the shifting hum of time. A warm, glowing light enveloped them, and before they knew it, they had landed.

First Stop: Witnessing John's Letter in Ephesus

When the swirling light finally dissipated, the family found themselves standing in an open, sunlit square. The scent of baking bread and fresh herbs filled the air, and the bustling sounds of a busy marketplace echoed all around them. Ryan smiled. "Welcome to Ephesus, where early Christians gathered to hear the very words of John."

Ariel looked around in wonder. "This is amazing! It's like we're in the past!"

Alice tugged on Ryan's sleeve. "Where's Mr. Fluffernutter? Is he okay?"

Ryan looked down, and with a smile, Mr. Fluffernutter appeared beside them, as if by magic. "He's right here," Ryan reassured. "Let's see what's happening."

A group of people stood in a semi-circle, gathered around a man who held a scroll in his hands. The scroll looked ancient and worn, just like the one Ryan had seen in pictures. The man's voice rang out, warm and strong, as he read aloud to the people.

"Children of God," the man began, his words carrying over the crowd, "you have overcome the evil one through the victory of Jesus Christ. Do not let anything take God's place in your hearts, for we know that we are born of God."

Ariel's eyes widened. "This is exactly like what we read in our Bible study! It's real!"

Ryan nodded, his voice soft with awe. "This is where John's letter came to life. These believers are hearing John's words firsthand, and they're trying to live them out, just like we are."

Alice, hugging Mr. Fluffernutter tightly, whispered, "They look so serious. I think they really believe it."

A few believers in the crowd nodded solemnly. A woman, with dark eyes full of wisdom, looked around at the group and said, "We must guard our hearts, not let anything become an idol. Not even the things we love most."

Ryan leaned down to Ariel and Alice. "Idols aren't just statues. They can be anything—desires, distractions, or even things like money or fame. John warned them to keep their hearts pure, so nothing would steal their devotion to God."

Ariel thought about this, her brow furrowing in concentration. "So, just like John said, we can't let our toys, or even things like school, be more important than God?"

Ryan smiled proudly. "Exactly. Keeping God first is key."

Second Stop: The Early Christians Guarding Their Hearts

With a quick twist of the Time-Audit Machine, Ryan activated the device again. The world shifted around them, and suddenly, they found themselves standing on a rocky hill at sunset. A fire crackled nearby, casting a warm glow over a small group of believers. They were seated in a circle, listening to a man reading from a scroll.

Ariel's heart raced with excitement. "Is this another moment from John's letters?"

Ryan nodded. "Yes, this is where John's warning about idols came alive. Let's listen."

The man reading the scroll looked up from the parchment. "We must keep our hearts focused on God. Idols, whether they are desires for things or power, will only lead us away from Him. We must stay vigilant."

Alice, watching the group intently, whispered to Ryan, "Are their idols like toys? Or, like the things we love?"

Ryan's voice was soft, but full of meaning. "For them, idols were more like status, power, or even a desire for wealth. They were living in a world where these things were everywhere, trying to pull them away from God."

A young man in the circle spoke up. "I've been tempted to chase after riches. But I know now that all that will fade away. What matters is what we store up in heaven."

Ariel nodded, understanding. "So even if something doesn't seem bad, like school or hobbies, it can become an idol if we focus on it too much and forget about God?"

Ryan placed a hand on her shoulder. "That's right. Idols can be tricky. They don't always look like bad things. But if they start taking God's place, we need to guard against them."

As the firelight flickered, the family felt the weight of the early Christians' struggles, their determination to keep God at the center of their lives, no matter the distractions around them.

Third Stop: Witnessing Victory Over Sin

Ryan pressed the button once more, and the scenery shifted again. This time, they found themselves inside a humble, candlelit room. Believers knelt in prayer, their faces solemn yet filled with hope. At the front of the room, an elderly man—perhaps an elder or pastor—was speaking to the group.

"We are no longer slaves to sin," he said, his voice strong yet filled with compassion. "Through the victory of Jesus Christ, we are free. Even when we stumble, His strength will help us rise."

Ariel's eyes glistened with understanding. "This is the victory over sin that John was talking about."

Ryan nodded. "Yes, these believers had learned that, through Christ, they didn't have to let sin control them anymore. They could choose a different path."

Alice, holding Mr. Fluffernutter, looked at Ryan. “So, even if we mess up, we don’t have to let it keep us stuck?”

Ryan smiled. “Exactly. We’re not perfect, but we don’t have to live under sin’s control. God’s power is greater than any mistake we make.”

Ariel glanced around at the people praying together. There was a sense of peace in the room, a peace that came from knowing they were free in Christ. “I see. It’s not about being perfect, it’s about choosing to follow God every day.”

Returning Home:

Ryan pressed the button again, and in the blink of an eye, the family was back in their cozy living room. The scent of cookies filled the air, and the room was calm once more.

Ariel looked at her dad, her heart full of awe. “That was amazing. I understand what it means to be born of God so much better now. It’s not just about being saved; it’s about living in that victory every day.”

Alice, still holding Mr. Fluffernutter, smiled. "We saw how they fought to keep God first. I can do that, too."

Ryan hugged both his girls. "You’ve got it. Just like those early believers, we have to guard our hearts and focus on God every day."

As they bowed their heads to pray, the family felt a deep sense of connection—not only to the people they had witnessed in the past, but also to the timeless message of John’s letters. In their hearts, they knew that by keeping God at the center, they could live out the victory over sin and the protection He promised.