

# 1 John 5:14 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

[INDEX FOR ALL VERSES ON 1 JOHN](#)

[1 John 5:1](#)  
[1 John 5:2](#)  
[1 John 5:3](#)  
[1 John 5:4](#)  
[1 John 5:5](#)  
[1 John 5:6](#)  
[1 John 5:7](#)  
[1 John 5:8](#)  
[1 John 5:9](#)  
[1 John 5:10](#)  
[1 John 5:11](#)  
[1 John 5:12](#)  
[1 John 5:13](#)  
[1 John 5:14](#)  
[1 John 5:15](#)  
[1 John 5:16](#)  
[1 John 5:17](#)  
[1 John 5:18](#)  
[1 John 5:19](#)  
[1 John 5:20](#)  
[1 John 5:21](#)

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN  
Click chart to enlarge  
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - Charles Swindoll

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			
From Talk Thru the Bible			

STUDY GUIDE

1 JOHN 5

What is this? On the photograph of the Observation Worksheet for this chapter you will find handwritten 5W/H questions (Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?) on each verse to help you either personally study or lead a discussion on this chapter. The questions are generally very simple and are stated in such a way as to stimulate you to observe the text to discern the answer. As a reminder, given the truth that your ultimate Teacher is the Holy Spirit, begin your time with God with prayer such as Psalm 119:12<sup>[+](#)</sup>

"Blessed are You, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes." (you can vary it with similar prayers - Ps 119:18, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135, 171, etc) The questions are generally highlighted in yellow and the answers in green. Some questions have no answers and are left to your observations and the illuminating/teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Some qualifying thoughts - (1) Use "As is" - these are handwritten and will include mistakes I made, etc. (2) They may not be the best question for a given verse and my guess is that on some verses you will think of a far superior 5W/H question and/or many other questions.

Dr Howard Hendricks once gave an assignment to his seminary students to list as many observations as they could from Acts 1:8. He said "So far they've come up with more than 600 different ones! Imagine what fun you could have with 600 observations on this passage. Would you like to see Scripture with eyes like that?" (P. 63 [Living by the Book](#) - borrow) With practice you can! And needless to say, you will likely make many more observations and related questions than I recorded on the pages below and in fact I pray that the Spirit would indeed lead you to discover a veritable treasure chest of observations and questions! In Jesus' Name. Amen

Why am I doing this? **Mortimer Adler** among others helped me develop a questioning mindset as I read, seeking to read actively rather than passively. Over the years I have discovered that as I have practiced reading with a 5W/H questioning mindset, it has yielded more accurate interpretation and the good fruit of meditation. In other words, consciously interacting with the inspired Holy Word of God and the illuminating Holy Spirit has honed my ability to meditate on the Scripture, and my prayer is that this tool will have the same impact in your spiritual life. The benefits of meditation are literally priceless in regard to their value in this life and in the life to come (cf discipline yourself for godliness in 1Ti 4:8+.) For some of the benefits - see Joshua 1:8+ and Psalm 1:2-3+. It will take diligence and mental effort to develop an "inductive" ([especially an "observational"](#)), interrogative mindset as you read God's Word, but it bears repeating that the benefits in this life and the rewards in the next will make it more than worth the effort you invest! Dear Christian reader let me encourage you to strongly consider learning the skills of [inductive Bible study](#) and spending the rest of your life practicing them on the Scriptures and living them out in your daily walk with Christ.

Although Mortimer Adler's advice is from a secular perspective, his words are worth pondering...

*Strictly, all reading is active. What we call passive is simply less active. Reading is better or worse according as it is more or less active. And one reader is better than another in proportion as he is capable of a greater range of activity in reading.* (Adler's classic book [How to Read a Book is free online](#))

[John Piper](#) adds that "Insight or understanding is the product of intensive, headache-producing meditation on two or three verses and how they fit together. This kind of reflection and rumination is provoked by asking questions of the text. And you cannot do it if you hurry. Therefore, we must resist the deceptive urge to carve notches in our bibliographic gun. Take two hours to ask ten questions of Galatians 2:20+ and you will gain one hundred times the insight you would have attained by reading thirty pages of the New Testament or any other book. Slow down. Query. Ponder. Chew.... (John Dewey rightly said) "People only truly think when they are confronted with a problem. Without some kind of dilemma to stimulate thought, behavior becomes habitual rather than thoughtful."

*"Asking questions is the key to understanding."*

--Jonathan Edwards

That said, below are the [5W/H questions](#) for each verse in this chapter (click page to enlarge). This is not neatly typed but is handwritten and was used for leading a class discussion on this chapter, so you are welcome to use it in this "as is" condition...

--	--

**1 John 5:14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us:**

**Greek** - kai aute estin (3SPA1) he parrhesia he echomen (1PPAI) pros auton hoti ean ti aitometha (1PPMS) kata to thelema autou akouei (3SPA1) hemon:

**Amplified** - And this is the confidence (the assurance, the privilege of boldness) which we have in Him: [we are sure] that if we ask anything (make any request) according to His will (in agreement with His own plan), He listens to and hears us.

**NET** And this is the confidence that we have before him: that whenever we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

**Wuest** - And this is the assurance which we are having toward Him, that whatever we keep on asking for ourselves according to His will, He hears us.

KJV 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:

BGT 1 John 5:14 Κα α τη σ τ ν πα ρ ρ η σ α ν χ ο μ ε ν π ρ ς α τ ν τ ι ν τ ι α τ με θα κα τ τ θ λ η μ α το κο ει μ ν.

NET 1 John 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have before him: that whenever we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

CSB 1 John 5:14 Now this is the confidence we have before Him: Whenever we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

ESV 1 John 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.

NIV 1 John 5:14 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

NLT 1 John 5:14 And we are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him.

NRS 1 John 5:14 And this is the boldness we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

NJB 1 John 5:14 Our fearlessness towards him consists in this, that if we ask anything in accordance with his will he hears us.

NAB 1 John 5:14 And we have this confidence in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

YLT 1 John 5:14 And this is the boldness that we have toward Him, that if anything we may ask according to his will, He doth hear us,

MIT 1 John 5:14 This is the kind of confidence we have in his presence: If we ask anything in keeping with his will, he listens to us.

GWN 1 John 5:14 We are confident that God listens to us if we ask for anything that has his approval.

BBE 1 John 5:14 And we are certain that if we make any request to him which is right in his eyes, he will give ear to us:

RSV 1 John 5:14 And this is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.

NKJ 1 John 5:14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

ASV 1 John 5:14 And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us:

- **this:** 1Jn 3:21 Eph 3:12 Heb 3:6,14 10:35
- **if:** 1Jn 3:22 Jer 29:12,13 33:3 Mt 7:7-11 21:22 John 14:13 15:7 16:24 Jas 1:5,6 4:3 5:16
- **He:** Job 34:28 Ps 31:22 34:17 69:33 Pr 15:29 John 9:31 11:42
- [1 John 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

1 John 3:21-22 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; 22 and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

## CONFIDENCE IN PRAYER

The **NAS** does not translate the **and (kai)** which is the first word in the Greek and which connects the truth of this passage with 1Jn

5:13. Here's the connection - "Confidence in prayer is founded on the assurance that you have eternal life. If you do not have eternal life, there is no way that you can pray according to the will of God, except to pray that God would save you from your sins. The promise of our text is only for God's children." ([Cole](#))

The believer's first confidence was eternal life (1Jn 5:13) and here it is confidence in answered prayer.

**This is the confidence ([parrhesia](#)) which we have** (present tense - continually) **before** (pros - near, facing) **Him - Confidence** speaks of "free and fearless confidence, cheerful courage, boldness, assurance." (Wuest). Believers can have boldness and assurance before the Holy God, a simple but profound truth that is easy to skim over. Stop for a moment and meditate on this truth. **Have** in present tense speaks of confidence is something we can continually possess before Him. Before (pros) pictures saints in an intimate face-to-face relationship with God their Father. Who is **Him**? While the nearest antecedent is the Son, this more likely refers to the Father as prayer is generally addressed to Him. Jesus instructed His disciples (and all listening to His Sermon on the Mount) to "**Pray** (present imperative = command to make this your lifestyle) then, in this way: 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name.'" (Mt 6:9+) It is interesting to note a recent popular trend to direct prayers primarily to Jesus ("Dear Jesus," "Lord Jesus"). While I think that one can certainly pray to Jesus, it is notable that the pattern Jesus Himself gave is to direct our prayers to the Father. Jesus is the Mediator through Whom our prayers reach the heart of Father (1Ti 2:5-6+).

[D Edmond Hiebert](#) says **confidence** "relates to the believer's present confidence as he stands before God in prayer. In each instance it is confidence Godward, grounded in our relationship with Him. As a compound noun, the word "confidence" (*parrhēsia*, *par* = "all" and *rhēsis* = "speech") basically denotes that freedom of speech which enables us to express our thoughts and desires before God without hesitancy or fear of embarrassment.

[Brooke](#) on **this** - The object of the preceding section was to produce assurance in the readers that they were in possession of the new life. This assurance is now described as [parrhesia](#), boldness or confidence, with perhaps special reference to the original meaning of the word, absolute freedom of speech. [Brooke](#) adds that **pros** "generally denotes that which "goes out towards," a relation realized in active intercourse and fellowship. Cf. Jn. 1:1 = "the Word was with [**pros**] God." Jn 1:2+ "He was in the beginning with [**pros**] God.") What a privilege, to have continual entree into His very presence in the Throne Room! (cp Ro 5:1-2+) As the writer of Hebrews says "Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need." (Heb 4:16+, cp Heb 10:21-22+)

**Steven Cole** - God is a prayer-hearing God (Ps. 65:2). But at the same time, I can't gloss over the tremendous difficulty that our text creates for my prayer life. It is simply not true to my experience. John, who is echoing here the repeated promises of Jesus (Mk 11:22-24; Jn 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:24), says that if we ask anything according to God's will, He will answer favorably. "No" is not an acceptable answer. It must be "yes" every time! Over the years, my "prayer batting average" is pretty low. I have prayed for the salvation of people who have not gotten saved. I have prayed for the restoration of sinning Christians, who have not repented and been restored. I have prayed for the reconciliation of many Christian marriages that have broken up. Some try to get God off the hook by saying, "He gives people free will." But if God cannot subdue a sinful person's will, then He can't do any-thing! That means that sinful man, not God, is sovereign! And it means that prayer is useless and impotent. If God promises to answer our prayers, then He has the power to answer them! I'm sure that the fault is with me, not with God's promise! I am probably lacking in understanding God's perfect will and lacking in faith. But I could not find any preachers on this text who admit to having the difficulties that I have. So this has not been an easy message to prepare, because if I'm honest, I have to expose my own failures in prayer to you! My prayer has been that perhaps by sharing my struggles, you will be motivated to keep "swinging" in your prayer life. Maybe we'll all improve our batting averages!" ([1 John 5:14-17 Confidence and Carefulness in Prayer](#))

Earlier John had spoken of **confidence in prayer** writing "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight." (1Jn 3:21+, 1Jn 3:22+)

**Cole** makes four observations from 1Jn 5:13

- (1) **We should have confidence when we approach God in prayer.** Our confidence is never in ourselves, but rather in Christ. After reminding us of our sympathetic high priest, the author of Hebrews states (Heb 4:16), "Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (see also, Eph. 3:12). Our confidence is never in anything in ourselves, but only in Jesus Christ, whose blood gives us access to the very throne of God.
- (2) **We must come into His presence when we pray.** We have confidence before Him (1Jn 5:14). Prayer is not just mumbling through a list or repeating some rote formula. Prayer is coming before the living God, humbling ourselves in His presence. If we have not come before God, we haven't prayed.
- (3) **We must come confidently into His presence and ask.** As James (James 4:2) pointedly reminds us,

"You do not have be-cause you do not ask." He adds (James 4:3), "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures." We need to be sure to ask (not assume), but we need to ask with the proper motives, that our requests would further God's purpose and glory.

(4.) **If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us..** Since God hears everything and even knows the unspoken secrets of our hearts, John means that He hears us favorably by coming to our aid. I've been at church gatherings where many children were playing as the adults sat eating or talking. Suddenly one mother jumped up and ran for her child. Why? Because she heard his cry. None of the other parents heard the cry, or if they did, they knew that it was not their child. But the mother knows the cry of her own child, and she responds to his need. Our heavenly Father knows the cry of His children. He hears our prayers. ([1 John 5:14-17 Confidence and Carefulness in Prayer](#))

*Prayer becomes not only a time for petitioning  
but of yielding one's life to the will and work of God.*

-- Glenn Barker

**John Stott** - Christian confidence belongs not just to the future, to the parousia (1Jn 2:28) and the judgment day (1Jn 4:17), but to the here and now. It describes both the manner of our approach to God, free and bold (1Jn 3:21), and our expectation of its outcome namely that ... he hears us. In 3:22 the condition of answered prayer is whether our behaviour accords with God's commands; here whether our requests accord with His will. (BORROW [The Letters of John page 188](#))

### THE QUALIFICATION: ACCORDING TO HIS WILL

**That** ([hoti](#)) is a term of explanation, explaining how we can draw near to God in confident prayer. John says we can do so when we ask according to His will.

*"Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance.  
It is laying hold of God's willingness."*

**If we ask** ([aiteo](#)) **anything according to His will** ([thelema](#)), **He hears** ([akouo](#) present tense) **us** - **If we ask** is a third-class condition which means potential action. While the promise that God hears is a precious promise, the phrase **according to His will** is the critical caveat! Is what we are asking in His will? (See [Topic Will of God](#)) **Hears** in the present tense means He continually hears our voice and listens with divine attention. This is an amazing thought that God listens to us! Why are we so reticent to talk to Him (speaking from personal experience)? **Robertson** adds that **He hears us** "Even when God does not give us what we ask."

*God wants to give you what you would want God to give you  
if you were wise enough to want it.*

-- Daniel Akin

**Kenneth Wuest** adds that **aiteo** means "to ask for something to be given. It is in the middle voice in which the person acting in the verb does so in his own interest (Ed: middle voice signifies that we pray earnestly as with a personal interest). It is in the present tense, subjunctive mood, which speaks of continuous action. Thus, the total idea is, "if we keep on asking for something for ourselves."

*God's will is "is the secret in all prayer,  
even in the case of Jesus Himself."*

-- A T Robertson

**David Jackman** - Our praying is never on a surer foundation than when it is grounded in Scripture, for here God's will is revealed. As we pray Bible prayers, we know that God will hear and answer. Of course, we still have to make sure that, at our human end, we are not vitiating our prayers by unbelief or disobedience. 'If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened' (Ps. 66:18). It is hypocritical nonsense to hold on to some cherished sin in our lives and at the same time come to God in prayer, to ask him for some gracious good gift. But if we have first found his cleansing and forgiveness (1Jn 1:9), we can ask with boldness. God's will is 'good, pleasing and perfect' (Rom. 12:2), so when a request is refused it is not due to any reluctance or unwillingness in God, unless it be the unwillingness to give to a dearly loved child something that the heavenly Father, in his perfect wisdom, knows would not be in that child's best interests. For prayer is not an attempt to get God to see things my way and to extract from him what I have decided I need or want. Prayer is submitting my will to his. To paraphrase the Lord's Prayer, it is saying, 'Your will be done in me, your bit of earth, as it is in Christ, who is my heaven!' It is opening the door of my need to the Lord Jesus. And this means that prayer is God's means by which my submission to Christ's lordship can be developed. The less I pray, the more self-willed I become.

But the corollary is wonderfully true. 'Not my will, but yours'—that is the essence of assured prayer, the secret of prevailing prayer. What confidence we can have! This should be a great stimulus in our personal lives to find out God's will, to build on the commands and promises of his Word in our prayers, to talk every situation through with him, and to submit all our thinking, planning and deciding to God. Answers to prayer do not depend on a right diagnosis or analysis of the problem by us as we pray, but on a childlike submission to the Father, knowing that he will give what is best according to his will. If he were to answer on any other basis, which of us would ever dare to pray again? We do not have that sort of wisdom. (Borrow [The message of John's letters : living in the love of God page 160](#))

**Daniel Akin** - John states that "if we ask anything ... he [God] hears us." Whereas the condition of answered prayer in 3:22 is that "we obey his commands and do what pleases him," here it is that our petitions should be "according to his will." In his Gospel, John records Jesus making similar statements. In 15:7 Jesus encourages us to "ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you." Again there is a condition: "If you remain in me and my words remain in you." Also on several occasions Jesus indicates that he or the Father will do whatever we ask if we ask it in his "name" (14:13–14; 15:16; 16:24, 26).<sup>229</sup> Smalley writes, "The fundamental characteristic of all truly Christian intercession is that the will of the person who offers prayer should coincide with God's will."<sup>230</sup> This does not mean that if a believer is sincere God will answer his prayer. Sometimes our desires are not God's desires for us. Sometimes what we want is not what our heavenly Father wills. Faith will accept that God's will is best, and it will trust his plan and purpose, even if it does not understand at the time. ([1, 2, 3 John - Page 205](#))

*Spread out your petition before God, and then say, "Thy will, not mine, be done."*

*The sweetest lesson I have learned in God's school is to let the Lord choose for me.*

--Dwight L. Moody

**John Stott** - Prayer is not a convenient device for imposing our will upon God, or for bending his will to ours, but the prescribed way of subordinating our will to his. It is by prayer that we seek God's will, embrace it and align ourselves with it. Every true prayer is a variation on the theme 'your will be done'. Our Master taught us to say this in the pattern prayer he gave us, and added the supreme example of it in Gethsemane. In such prayers, and only in such, he hears us. That is, he takes note of our petitions and, in addition, he listens favorably to us (as in John 9:31; 11:41–42). (BORROW [The Letters of John page 188](#))

**Max Anders** - Prayer must be viewed not as our attempt to get God to see things from our point of view but as our attempt to see things from God's point of view. When we grow, mature, study, and meditate on Scripture and seek the will of God, we try to ask ourselves not what we want, but what God wants. Then we make progress in prayer. (See [I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude - Page 225](#))

*Prayer is really the thermometer  
of the spiritual life.*

**D Edmond Hiebert** - In 1Jn 3:21–22 John speaks of confidence that our request would be answered "because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." Here the condition is that our prayers are "according to his will." The two conditions set forth the human and the divine aspects for effective prayer... Yet whenever we have a request concerning which we are not assured that it is in accord with His will, we can follow the example of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane when He prayed for the removal of "the cup" but added "nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mark 14:36; cf. also John 12:27–28). Prayer is not a device for imposing our will upon God, but rather the bending of our will to His in the desire that His good will may be done. "Prayer, according to God's will," G. Williams notes, "is an activity growing out of the consciousness of the sweet relationship of a child and a father. Such an intimacy involves harmoniousness of will and only asks for what accords with that will."

**Steven Cole** discusses the qualification of asking according to God's will - Many who do not know God pray, but they are not seeking God's will in prayer. Rather, they are trying to use Him (whoever they conceive Him to be) to get what they want. But biblical prayer is not trying to talk God into giving us what we want. Rather, it is submitting our will to His will. It is praying, as Jesus instructed (Mt. 6:10+), "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." It would be the height of stupidity to pray for your will to be done as opposed to God's will. For one thing, it would mean that you know better than God what is best for your life. But He knows everything and He has assured us that He loves us far more than the best earthly father loves his children. **So it only makes sense to submit to and pray for His will for your life and for others.** Also, to pray for your will against God's will would be asking God to abdicate His sovereignty over the universe and submit to you as the sovereign! Again, this would be the epitome of stupidity! But, the difficulty is, how do we determine what God's will is so that we pray in line with it? Are we talking about His will of decree or His will of desire? God's will of decree is what He has determined to do. In this sense, God "works all things after the counsel of His will" (Ep 1:11+). Everything that happens takes place because God decreed it. If anything could happen outside of His will, then He would not be in control of the universe. He would not be the sovereign who plans it and does it (Isa. 46:9-11). **God's will of desire**, however, is different than **His will of decree**. God does not in any sense desire that men sin, and yet in His **will of decree**, He permitted the fall of man and He ordained the Cross as the means of rescuing us from sin. But although God ordained these events, He did not cause



Adam and Eve to sin. He was not responsible for the evil men that crucified Jesus (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28). They sinned because of their own evil desires. God took no delight in their sin. He hates sin. Yet, He ordained that Jesus had to die at the hands of sinners. **Here's the difficulty when it comes to praying for God's will** It is God's will of desire that all men be saved (1Ti 2:4). Yet, we know that in His decree, God has willed to save only His elect (Ro 9:9-24). So it would be going against God's will of decree to pray, "God, save everyone in the world." (In fact, Jesus excluded the world in His prayer; Jn 17:9). But, we should pray, "God, save my loved one," and, "Save my neighbor." The problem is, I cannot know in advance whether or not He will do it, because I do not know His will of decree. So I ask, but I have to say, "Not my will, but Yours, be done." Also, it is difficult to pray according to God's will because His ways are not our ways (Isa 55:8-9), and we often think that He has to work in the way that makes sense to us. If I had been a disciple of John the Baptist, I would have been praying that he be released from prison and have many more years of effective ministry. God's way was to have a drunken, lustful king make a stupid promise that resulted in John getting his head lopped off! If I had been the apostle John, I would have prayed for God to spare my brother, James. After all, he was one of the inner circle of three disciples who were especially close to Jesus. His gifts were needed in the early church. But God permitted Herod to put James to death, but He sent His angel to deliver Peter from the same fate (Acts 12:1-17). Although Scripture does not say that John was praying for his brother's release, I could not imagine anything else. Yet, his request was not granted, because it was not God's will! One more example, which I used when we studied 1Jn 3:22: If I had heard that Satan was asking permission to sift Peter like wheat, I would have prayed that Peter be able to resist the devil's attack. But, Jesus didn't pray for that. Rather, He prayed that Peter's faith would not ultimately fail, and that after he was restored, he might strengthen his brothers (Lk 22:31-32). I hope that I'm not discouraging you from praying, but I want you to understand that while God promises to grant our requests when we ask according to His will, it's not a simple, "name it and claim it," process. God's will is that His kingdom will come, and yet the outworking of His will involves thousands of years and many setbacks. We must persevere in prayer even when we do not understand God's will or His ways. That's the general principle, that if we ask anything according to God's will, He hears and grants our requests. ([1John 5:14-17 Confidence and Carefulness in Prayer](#))

**David Smith on we ask... He hears** - A large assurance: our prayers are always heard, never unanswered. Observe two limitations, (1) according to His will which does not mean that we should first ascertain His will and then pray, but that we should pray with the proviso, express or implicit, 'If it be thy will.' Mt 26:39 is the model prayer. (2) The promise is not 'He granteth it' but 'He hearkeneth to us.' He answers in His own way 1Jn 5:15. An amplification of the second limitation. 'We have our requests' not always as we pray but as we would pray were we wiser. God gives us not what we ask but what we really need." Said Shakespeare, "We, ignorant of ourselves, beg often our own harms, which the wise powers deny us for our good; so find we profit by losing of our prayers." ([Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

#### Related Resources on Prayer:

- [Pithy Prayer Phrases](#)
- [Prayer - Greek Words for Prayer](#)
- [Prayer Devotionals and Illustrations](#)
- [Prayer Hymns and Poems](#)
- [Prayer Quotes](#)
- [Praying in the Spirit](#)
- [Spurgeon's Gems on Prayer](#)
- [certainty; prayer, and God's will; asking](#)
- [Devotional on Prayer](#)
- [Guide to Praying for Missionaries](#)

---

**Confidence** (boldness) ([3954](#))(**parrhesia** from **pás** = all + **rhesis** = speech, act of speaking) is literally all speech or speaking all things and thereby conveys the idea of freedom to say all. The basic idea is freedom of speech or an attitude of openness that stems from freedom and lack of fear to speak all. Greeks used **parrhesia** of those with the right to speak openly in the assembly. Ultimately this quality of **confidence** is that which is energized by the indwelling Spirit, emboldening (Spirit filled) believers to openly declare (with great conviction) all that He births within (cp Acts 4:31).

This is John's fourth use of **parrhesia** in this letter...

1 John 2:28+ Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have **confidence** and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

1 John 3:21+ Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have **confidence** before God;

1 John 4:17+ By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have **confidence** in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.

1 John 5:14+ This is the **confidence** which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

**Ask** (154) (**aiteo**) means to ask for something with a sense of urgency and even to the point of demanding. **Aiteo** means to ask for, with a claim on receipt of an answer. In contrast to *erotao* (2065), *aiteo* more frequently suggests attitude of a suppliant = petition of one who is lesser in position than he to whom the petition is made, as of men in asking something from God (Mt 7:7 Jas 1:5 1Jn 3:22, as of a child from a parent (Mt 7:9-10), as of a subject from a king (Acts 12:20), as of priests and people from Pilate (Lu 23:23) or finally as of a beggar from a passer by (Acts 3:2).

**Will** (2307) (**thelema**) from *thelo* = to will with the "-ma" suffix indicating the result of the will = "a thing willed") generally speaks of the result of what one has decided. One sees this root word in the feminine name "Thelma." In its most basic form, *thelema* refers to a wish, a strong desire, and the willing of some event. Most of the NT uses of **thelema** (over 3/4's) refer to God's will and signify His gracious disposition toward something.

**Wuest** distinguishes *boule* from **thelema** noting that "**boule** is a desire based upon the reason, but *thelema* is a desire based upon the emotions. God's will or desire here (Ep 1:9, 11), comes from His heart of love." (Word Studies from the Greek New Testament)

**Zodhiates** says that *thelema* is the "Will, not to be conceived as a demand, but as an expression or inclination of pleasure towards that which is liked, that which pleases and creates joy. When it denotes God's will, it signifies His gracious disposition toward something. Used to designate what God Himself does of His own good pleasure." ([Zodhiates, S. The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament](#))

**Vine** - Since the will of God for His children has as its design their greatest possible benefit, it is only divine grace that puts the stated limitation upon the fulfillment of our request. If our prayer has as its object, not our self-interest, but our brother's real good, the condition is fulfilled and prayer will be answered in God's time and way.

**Hears** (191) **akouo** means to attend to or consider what is or has been said (not just to hear but to listen, give thoughtful attention to). *Akouo* primarily means physical hearing of sounds and the apprehension of the sounds with one's mind. **Akouo** gives us our English **acoustics** which is the science of designs that helps one hear (We need "*spiritual acoustics*" to help us hear spiritual truth!).

**Louw-Nida summary of akouo** - borrow [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament : based on semantic domains](#)

- (1). hear (Rev 18:22; Mk 16:11 v.r.; Jn 8:9 v.r.);
- (2). be able to hear, as opposed to being deaf (Mt 11:5);
- (3). receive news, normally by word of mouth (Mk 6:29);
- (4). pay attention to, to believe and respond (Mt 18:15);
- (5). obey, listen and conform to what was heard (Mt 17:5);
- (6). understand, comprehend (Mk 4:33);
- (7). hear legal case (Jn 7:51);
- (8). *akoē akouō*, listen carefully (Mt 13:14; Ac 28:26);
- (9). *akouō eis to ous*, hear in secret, formally, hear into the ear (Mt 10:27; Ac 11:22)
- (10). *tois ōsin bareōs akouō*, be slow to comprehend and respond to a spiritual truth (Mt 13:15; Ac 28:27)

---

**Robert Morgan** - from [100 Bible Verses Everyone Should Know by Heart](#) - recommended

1 John 5:14 Now this is the confidence we have before Him: whenever we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. —1 John 5:14

This verse and the next offer one of the Bible's best definitions of prayer. It's easy to memorize when you notice how the verses unfold and expand. The meaning and marvel of prayer grows deeper and more practical as phrase builds upon phrase. Prayer is...

- Coming before Him.
- Coming before Him with confidence.
- Coming before Him with confidence and asking.
- Coming before Him with confidence and asking according to His will.
- Coming before Him with confidence and asking according to His will, knowing that He hears us.

Writing near the end of the Bible and at the end of the apostolic age, the apostle John wanted us to know something about the biblical promises related to prayer. They are all conditioned by God's will. In his Gospel, for example, John quoted Jesus as saying,



"You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it" (John 14:14 NIV). Anything is a huge word, and perhaps some of John's readers had taken it a bit too literally. So in 1 John 5:14, he reminds us that the promise of answered prayer is dependent on the phrase "according to His will."

From the perspective of infinity, our God knows what's best from beginning to end. He sees the outcomes of every chain reaction in life. He knows how the dominoes fall and how the cookies crumble. His perfect, providential oversight makes no mistakes and always results in the best for His children.

Our vantage point is as limited as a person who's fallen into a hole and can only see a circle of sky above him. We don't always know the landscape, and we can't see distant vistas. So we pray earnestly and ask God for our needs, our wants, our wishes, and our desires. But we always pray with the attitude, "if it be Your will." In that we can have total confidence.

Sometimes when I purchase roses or plants from a nursery catalog, there's a little box on the order form saying, "If we are out of the item you want, may we substitute one of equal or greater value?" I always say no, because I don't think the workers in the warehouse know what's best for my garden. But with the Lord we should always say, "Yes, Lord! You may substitute. You may grant an alternative answer of equal or greater value. I trust You with substitutions."

The purpose of prayer is to get God's will done.... The greatest prayer any one can offer is "Thy will be done." It will be offered in a thousand different forms, with a thousand details, as needs arise daily. But every true prayer comes under those four words. —S. D. Gordon

---

**John MacArthur - A PRAYER PREREQUISITE** (see [Truth for Today: A Daily Touch of God's Grace - Page 67](#))

If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 1 JOHN 5:14

Praying in Jesus' name is more than a formula. Some people think that they have to close every prayer with the phrase "In Jesus' name, amen." But the proper kind of prayer involves much more than a formula.

What does it mean to pray in Jesus' name? In Scripture, the name of God embodies all that He is. When God told Moses His name, He said, "I am who I am" (Ex. 3:14). Likewise, Jesus' name embodies all that He is. When you pray in His name, what you ask should be consistent with who He is. Praying in Jesus' name is praying in accord with God's will.

When our requests are in line with God's sovereign plan, He will answer them and our faith will increase. Instead of invoking a formula at the end of your prayers, perhaps you could say, "I pray this because I believe it to be the will of Christ."

---

**R A Torrey** - Prayer is the key that unlocks all the storehouses of God's infinite grace and power. All that God is and all that God has is at the disposal of prayer. But we must use the key. Prayer can do anything that God can do and since God can do anything, prayer is omnipotent. ([The power of prayer and the prayer of power page 16](#))

---

**Pray! By Drew Wilkerson**

SCRIPTURE: 1 John 5:14–15

INTRODUCTION: Abraham Lincoln wrote, "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My wisdom, and all that about me, seemed insufficient for the day." Do you feel your prayers are connecting with God? If not, put John's counsel to work.

1. Be confident when you approach God (v. 14)
2. Ask anything you want of God (v. 14)
3. Seek to know if what you're asking for is the will of God (v. 14)
4. Believe that you are heard by God (v. 14)
5. Expect that your answer will come from God (v. 15)

CONCLUSION: Prayer is a relationship God wants to develop with His children. It needn't become stale or boring. All we need to do is be intentional and full of assurance. As much as we need to pray, God wants to answer our prayers.

---

**Spurgeon - Praying and waiting** (See full sermon [Praying and Waiting](#))

'And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us:

and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.' 1 John 5:14–15

*the true child of God hunts by faith, and when he cannot see the mercy,  
he scents it and still pursues it, till at last he lays hold upon it*

I saw the other day a greyhound coursing a hare. The moment the hare ran through the hedge out of the greyhound's sight, the race was over, for he could not follow where he could not see. The true hound hunts by scent, but the greyhound only by sight. Now there are some Christians too much like the greyhound; they only follow the Lord as far as they can see his manifest mercy; but the true child of God hunts by faith, and when he cannot see the mercy, he scents it and still pursues it, till at last he lays hold upon it. Why, man, you say you have had no answers! How know you? God may have answered you, though you have not seen the answer. This is a riddle, but it is a fact. God has not promised to give you the particular mercy in kind, but he will give it you somehow or other. If I pay my debts in gold, no man can blame me because I do not pay them in silver; and if God gives you spiritual mercies in abundance, instead of temporal ones, he has heard your prayer. You may pray, like Paul, thrice, that the thorn in the flesh may be taken away from you: God's answer is given, and it is, 'My grace is sufficient for thee.' Christ prayed that God might hear him; he was heard in that he feared, but he had not the cup taken from him. No, but he had an angel to comfort and strengthen him; and this was in truth an answer, though not such as the prayer seemed to require. You have had an answer, and if God has heard you but once, pluck up courage and go again.

---

### Walter Kaiser - 5:14 Praying According to His Will? ([Hard Sayings](#))

All Christians believe in prayer, for the New Testament teaches us to pray; but some of the verses make us struggle with prayer. This is one of those verses. It forms part of the conclusion of 1 John and leads into a "health wish" (a standard part of the ending of Greek letters). It is not the place where we would expect radically new teaching on prayer, but a repetition of truths that the readers already know. Yet even what was a repetition for them may raise questions for us. What does it mean to ask "according to his will"? Does "he hears us" mean that he grants our request? If so, doesn't this fly in the face of the Christian experience of prayer? In other words, what is this "confidence" that John believes we should have? Is it something that makes sense in the light of the prayer experience of the church?

John has spoken of "confidence" three times before this in this letter. Twice it has to do with the return of Christ and the final judgment (1 Jn 2:28; 4:17). Once it has to do with prayer (1 Jn 3:21–22). In all three it is a confidence that we have before God; it is this relationship with God, not our relationship with the world, that is the issue.

The confidence here is that "if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." John makes it plain in the next verse what "hears us" means: "We know that we have what we asked of him" (1 Jn 5:15). Therefore the hearing is not simply that God registers our request, that there is a heavenly "Ah, hum, I see; I heard that." Instead it is that God hears and answers the request, the same thing that the expression means in John's Gospel (Jn 9:31; 11:41–42).

This answered prayer is conditioned by "ask ... according to his will." In the Johannine writings there are a series of conditions for prayer:

Passage	Condition:
John 14:13–14	Ask "in my [Jesus'] name"
John 15:7	Remain in Jesus/His words remain in you
John 15:16	Ask "in my [Jesus'] name"
John 16:23–27	Ask "in my [Jesus'] name"
1 John 3:21–22	We obey his [God's] commands
1 John 5:14	Ask according to his [God's] will

All of these conditions boil down to being in an intimate relationship with God/Jesus. To "remain in [Jesus]" or "ask in [his] name" is to be in such a relationship with him. To "obey his commands" or for "his words to remain in [us]" are expressions of this relationship as one lives in obedience to the declared will of God/Jesus. This, then, is what asking according to God's will means; it is to ask in submission to that will.

Such a condition does not surprise us, for in Matthew 6:10 we are taught to pray, "Your will be done." Yet what John is talking about is not a general prayer, for such general prayers get general answers. In fact, if the Lord's Prayer is an outline for prayer and not a prayer itself, it too is not expressing a general wish. Instead, John is talking about knowing and praying the specific will of God in a given instance. This is not always pleasant; nor does one come to know and submit to this will easily. Jesus in Gethsemane also prays, "Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mk 14:36). He did not come to this submission without a struggle. He appears to have begun his prayer dreading what was coming and hoping that there might be a way in the will of God for it not to happen. In his struggle in those hours he apparently saw clearly that the Father had only one way, the cross. Therefore Jesus comes to the place of

submission to that will. But it was not easy; it was not without groans and cries and sweat.

John, then, is suggesting to his readers a relationship with God in which they too will pray God's will back to him. It may be no easier for them than for Jesus, who, although he wrestled with bigger issues, did not have a background of sin and disobedience to fight against and had a more intimate relationship with the Father than believers experience. But the process is analogous. Believers live in obedience to God (having repented of sin); now they come in prayer, perhaps already knowing the divine will, but otherwise listening and praying until they know that they are in line with God. It is then that the confidence comes that this prayer will indeed be heard.

But why pray if one is only praying God's will back to him? Such a question, of course, tries to unravel the mystery of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Yet without being able to solve that mystery, we can answer the real issue it poses. That answer is relatively straightforward. God in his sovereignty has chosen to work his will through human prayer. It appears to be his will not to do what he might like to do if human beings will not pray for it. On the one hand, this makes prayer a privilege. Christians are invited to work together with the Creator of the universe. He has chosen to make their freely willed prayers part of his plan. On the other hand, this gives prayer a security. If a believer does not correctly perceive the will of God, God is not bound to answer that prayer. We do not have to walk in fear that we will mess up the universe through ill-advised prayers.

This passage is often read as if it meant, "If we ask anything, according to his will he hears us." We do the asking, and then God decides if it is his will to hear us. This is not the relationship with God that John is presenting, for it is no confidence at all. Instead, he is presenting a relationship in which meditation on the words of Jesus (and obeying them as they are understood) and listening prayer are central.<sup>1</sup> Out of this struggle to hear and then, perhaps, to will that will oneself, the Christian prays. That prayer, says John, rising like incense to the Father (Rev 5:8), will certainly be heard, receiving whatever it is that is requested. This is not only the theory of John, but it is also the experience of the numerous people of prayer down the centuries who have taken the time to learn to pray in this manner.

---

**[Why Do You Ask - Our Daily Bread](#)** - If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. —1 John 5:14

You may have heard the saying, "Our small things are great to God's love; our great things are small to His power." How true! There's nothing in our lives so small that God isn't concerned about it—no need, no desire, no burden, no emotion. Likewise, no problem or crisis is so big that it baffles God's wisdom and power. And because He cares for us, we are invited to tell Him about any and all of our concerns (1 Peter 5:7).

Does that mean we can ask God for anything and expect to receive it? For example, does a Christian on a sports team have the right to ask God for victory in a particular game, and then expect God to intervene directly to help his team win? And what if players on the other team are also praying for victory?

Faith in our Savior and praying in His name are surely praiseworthy. But let's be sure that what we're asking for is something in line with what we know God would want. It is possible to cross the line from trustful dependence to superstitious selfishness.

Biblical faith is controlled by submission to God's will (1 John 5:14). So every petition must be offered in a way that reflects the attitude of Jesus, who said to His Father, "Not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39). ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

God's will, not mine, I make my goal  
When I bow to Him in prayer;  
I know He'll do what He deems best,  
When I cast on Him my care. —Fitzhugh

The keynote of every prayer should be: "Your will be done."

---

**[Frustrating Promises - Our Daily Bread](#)**

Do any Bible promises frustrate you? Some people say that Psalm 37:4 is a guarantee that you'll get whatever you want—a spouse, a job, money. This has made me wonder at times, Why don't I have what I want?

When a promise frustrates us because it seems that God is not fulfilling it, maybe it's because we don't understand what the verse really means. Here are three suggestions to help, using Psalm 37 as an example:

Consider the context. Psalm 37 is telling us not to worry or be envious of the wicked. Our focus is not to be on what they have, nor on what they seem to be getting away with (vv.12-13). Instead, we are commanded to trust and delight in the Lord (vv.3-4).

Consider other verses. We're taught in 1 John 5:14 that our requests need to be according to God's will for us. Other Scriptures on the same topic can give us a balance.

Consult a Bible commentary. In *The Treasury of David*, C. H. Spurgeon says this about verse 4: "[Those] who delight in God desire or ask for nothing but what will please God." Doing a little deeper study can help us understand frustrating Bible verses like this one.

As we learn to delight in the Lord, His desires will become our own and He will grant them. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Standing on the promises that cannot fail,  
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,  
By the living Word of God I shall prevail,  
Standing on the promises of God. —Carter

You can't break God's promises by leaning on them.

---

### **[Mountains Can Move! - Our Daily Bread](#)**

A familiar slogan about prayer is, "Prayer changes things." But prayer doesn't do this—God does. Some people think that prayer itself is the source of power, so they "try prayer," hoping "it will work" for them. In Mark 11, Jesus disclosed one of the secrets behind all true prayer: "Have faith in God." Not faith in faith, not faith in prayer, but "faith in God" (v.22).

Jesus told His disciples they could command a mountain to be cast into the sea, and if they believed it would happen, it would. Jesus then gave them His meaning behind that astonishing promise. He said, "Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will" (v.24). Jesus was speaking about answered prayer. We can ask and receive answers only if our asking is directed to God in faith and according to His will (1 John 5:14).

I've often wished that I could move mountains by faith. Having once lived in Switzerland, I'd like God to move the Alps into my backyard in England. But He has done something much more important: He has removed mountains of worry, fear, and resentment from my heart and cast them into oblivion through my faith in Him. He is still in the mountain-moving business! Have faith in God and pray! ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When the Spirit prompts the asking,  
When the waiting heart believes,  
Then we know of each petition—  
Everyone who asks receives.  
—Anon.

Faith is the key to answered prayer.

---

### **[Why Do You Ask- - Our Daily Bread](#)**

You may have heard the saying, "Our small things are great to God's love; our great things are small to His power." How true! There's nothing in our lives so small that God isn't concerned about it—no need, no desire, no burden, no emotion. Likewise, no problem or crisis is so big that it baffles God's wisdom and power. And because He cares for us, we are invited to tell Him about any and all of our concerns (1 Peter 5:7).

Does that mean we can ask God for anything and expect to receive it? For example, does a Christian on a sports team have the right to ask God for victory in a particular game, and then expect God to intervene directly to help his team win? And what if players on the other team are also praying for victory?

Faith in our Savior and praying in His name are surely praiseworthy. But let's be sure that what we're asking for is something in line with what we know God would want. It is possible to cross the line from trustful dependence to superstitious selfishness.

Biblical faith is controlled by submission to God's will (1 John 5:14). So every petition must be offered in a way that reflects the attitude of Jesus, who said to His Father, "Not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39). ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

God's will, not mine, I make my goal

When I bow to Him in prayer;  
I know He'll do what He deems best,  
When I cast on Him my care. —Fitzhugh

The keynote of every prayer should be: "Your will be done."

---

**1 John 5:13 Commentary <> 1 John 5:15 Commentary**