

CONFIDENT

HOW CAN I CONFIDENTLY EMBRACE THIS LIFE?

STUDY THEME

Tagged

FOCAL PASSAGES

1 John 5:12-21

BACKGROUND PASSAGES

1 John 5:6-21

SESSION OVERVIEW

For several years I was in awe of Chuck “The Iceman” Liddell. The man was fearless and won every time he entered the octagon, or so it seemed. He faced bigger men with better training, yet he won. In watching interviews with him after fights, he just knew the other guy couldn’t handle him. He knew he could trade punches because he was the stronger man. He knew one of his punches could end the fight at any moment. This confidence lasted quite a while. What if we lived daily with that type of confidence? That no matter what the opponent threw at us, we had something better to respond with. Do you attack each day like that, or do you live in fear and doubt of what may happen? This study will help your group face their doubts so that they can have confidence in their spiritual life—confidence that will change the way a man or a woman relates to life. Instead of living a life of doubt regarding their relationship with God, they can find a full, growing relationship with Him that endures over time. They will know that they can pray boldly in line with God’s will and can also face sin issues head on because they know that victory is theirs.

- 1 Assured of Eternal Life (1 John 5:12-13)
- 2 Confident in Prayer (1 John 5:14-17)
- 3 Certain of Victory (1 John 5:18-21)

PREPARATION

- Use PACK ITEM 3, “Weekly Preparation Reminder,” as a preparation tool this week. Adjust the schedule to meet the needs of your class.
- Check out the *LifeMatters Blog* at www.threadsmedia.com/lifematters for additional thoughts on the lesson.
- Make copies of PACK ITEM 4, “Weekly Prayer Journal,” to distribute to the class.
- Make copies of PACK ITEM 7, “Tagged Wrap-Up,” to distribute to the class.

SESSION OPENER

Have learners turn to the “Community Bible Study” on page 34 in the Learner Guide.

The Internet is crowded with sites offering solutions for those who lack confidence. Among the solutions found was this one: “Fake it.” Some say that simply acting confident will make you confident. This doesn’t work, but we try it anyway. We fake confidence in our abilities at work. We fake confidence in our relational skills. We fake confidence in our athletic ability. Face it. We fake it all of the time. We find ourselves faking confidence in God sometimes, too. You would never know it when you see us at church, but inside we are filled with doubts. These doubts lead us to wonder if we really know God, if God hears our prayers, and if it’s possible to break free from sin’s grasp. This is not the life that God designed for us. He wants for us to live a life of confidence based on our knowledge of Him.

ASSURED OF ETERNAL LIFE { 1 JOHN 5:12-13 }

¹²The one who has the Son has life. The one who doesn’t have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

One of the reoccurring themes from the Book of 1 John is that we can know we have eternal life. In a world of uncertainty and change, knowing that we know Jesus is absolutely essential. Sometimes due to life’s circumstances or conditions in our world, we begin to doubt our salvation. It’s almost as though we feel that God has forgotten us. This verse makes it clear that if we have Jesus, we have assurance of our salvation. Nothing can take that away.

- Why was doubting their salvation an issue in John’s day? Why is it an issue for you and me?

Get the group to talk about where doubts enter in: school, challenges from professors, life circumstances, etc.

- If you have a relationship with Jesus, do you ever struggle with the assurance that you have eternal life? If so, when does this happen to you?

See if you can move your group from talking about the theoretical to the personal.

- When you read these verses, what do you think about the black and white nature of how John defines those who do and do not have eternal life?

See also John 14:6.

- Think about when you came to know Christ. What was happening in your life then? What did you do after you came to know Christ that will give you assurance that you know Him?



During the Session

Reference PACK ITEM 6, “Tagged Unit Poster.” Ask for any questions that have come up during the previous weeks’ studies. Any thoughts stand out? Any ideas that changed the way you see life?

Distribute copies of PACK ITEM 4, “Weekly Prayer Journal,” so the learners can write down prayer needs of the class and remember them in prayer during the week.

Display Pack Item 8, “Threads Foundation #4–Depth.” This is the last of the four foundations for young adult ministry. Discuss how Depth is an important part of young adult life and ministry. How does depth fit in with living confidently?

*Additional discussion question that does not appear in the learner guide.

NOTES ↴

Have the group talk about the life change that they experienced in Christ. Have them tell the story of when their faith became theirs.

- *How does knowing who holds the keys to life and death impact how you live on a daily basis?*

CONFIDENT IN PRAYER { 1 JOHN 5:14-17 }

¹⁴Now this is the confidence we have before Him: whenever we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that He hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked Him for. ¹⁶If anyone sees his brother committing a sin that does not bring death, he should ask, and God will give life to him—to those who commit sin that doesn't bring death. There is sin that brings death. I am not saying he should pray about that. ¹⁷All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin that does not bring death.

Not only can we be confident that we know God, but we can be confident that God hears us. Not only does He hear us; He takes action on our prayers according to His will for our lives.

- *When are you most confident in prayer? What makes these situations unique from your "not so bold" prayer times?*

Get the group to talk about when they pray their boldest prayers. Have them think through what makes these prayers different from their "not so bold" prayers.

- *Verse 14 says that God hears anything we ask when we ask it according to His will. How do you know when you are praying according to His will?*

This verse is key. When we pray, we don't just pray for God's will, we pray according to God's will. When we do this, God hears us and takes action. He moves according to His plan based on our request.

- *According to verse 15, how quickly does God work based on our prayers?*
- *If God moves instantly, then why don't we always see results instantly?*

God's will is not just about the action that He wants to do. It is also about the timing in which God works.

In verses 16-17, we are encouraged to pray for other Christ followers who we see sinning. While it seems simple on the surface, this passage is challenging because of the reference to the sin that leads to death. Some say that this is a specific sin, such as suicide or murder. Others say that it is blasphemy against the Spirit or total rejection of the gospel. Rather than splitting theological hairs, do what the verse says. Pray for our brothers and sisters who are struggling with sin.

- *What is your usual response to seeing other followers of Christ sinning? What should be?*
- *What things should we be praying for when we see a brother or a sister in Christ who is sinning?*

We should pray that they are convicted of their sin, that God brings them to an end of themselves, and we should pray for our role in helping them deal with their sin. We should also be in prayer that we would guard ourselves against those sins we see.

- *Read Galatians 6:1. What role does prayer play in the restoration process?*

Prayer is the starting point for this restoration process. We pray for them. We pray for ourselves as we consider how we can best help them.

- *How can we truly love the sinner and hate the sin?*

CERTAIN OF VICTORY { 1 JOHN 5:18-21 }

¹⁸We know that everyone who has been born of God does not sin, but the One who is born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. ¹⁹We know that we are of God, and the whole world is under the sway of the evil one. ²⁰And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know the true One. We are in the true One—that is, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. ²¹Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

In this passage, we find three things that we know about our victory in Christ. 1) We know that we are kept from the evil one by the power of God. 2) We know that even though the whole world is under the control of the evil one, we are not because we belong to God. 3) We know that, in Jesus, we have the one true way to eternal life. With these three things, we have everything we need to overcome the power of sin in our lives. We can know that we will experience victory!

- *What encouragements and warnings do we find in these verses regarding sin in our lives?*

Because we know Jesus, we can have victory over sin. At the same time, we need to be careful to watch our lives closely.

- *Does verse 18 mean that we will never sin again if we know Jesus?*

No. Take a look at other passages (1 John 1:8-10; 5:16; Romans 6:15-22; 7:17-25), and you'll see that even believers in Jesus will continue to struggle with sin, but they are no longer slaves to sin. Just because the struggle remains, we can still be confident in the work Jesus has completed in our lives.



Conclude the Lesson

Wrap up the class discussion by addressing the personal application questions listed in the AND FINALLY . . . section. If your class is too large to actively interact with these questions, split them into smaller groups. Make sure to allow enough time to process the lesson and application.

You can decide to include discussion of the CONNECT section during the session or direct the class to read and discuss it in their small groups.

Distribute PACK ITEM 7, “Tagged Wrap-Up” and encourage the class to work through it during the week.



Spend a few minutes in prayer with your group:

Pray that as a class you would begin to live lives marked by confidence in Christ. This is going to impact every aspect of who you are, the relationships you have, and the impact you have on the world around you. As a class be determined to seek Him and His will and pray prayers that are too big to be done without Him.

- *What does this passage teach us about Satan's influence over our lives once we know Jesus?*

Those who know Jesus aren't under the same influence of Satan as the rest of the world. We are protected from the full brunt of the enemy's tactics.

- *How should these certainties inspire us to live confidently?*

AND FINALLY . . .

Being confident changes everything. Confidence in Jesus results in bold faith, bold prayers, and bold obedience. This confidence comes by knowing that you know Jesus.

- *Right now, where do you need to experience more confidence in your faith?*
- *What would you be praying for right now if you had ultimate confidence that you were praying in line with God's will?*
- *How does confidence through Jesus help you face temptation and experience victory over sin?*
- *If you knew the outcome of a situation you are currently worried about, how would you act differently?*
- *Knowing that Christ has secured the victory, how should that change you today? tomorrow?*

LEAD YOUR CLASS TO CONNECT . . .

Direct learners to page 37 of the Learner Guide. Go over “Connect with Your Group” with the class as a whole and discuss ways to connect to the world at large.

CONNECT WITH YOUR GROUP

This week, talk about how your group is experiencing the confidence of knowing God together. Look at the prayers of your group and see if they are both bold and in line with God's will. Look at your fellowship together and see if it tolerates sin or if you are prayerfully restoring each other. Lastly, talk about how your relationship with Christ is helping you confidently face the sin in your own life.

CONNECT AS A COUPLE

Direct couples to read through their section together this week and remain on the lookout for ways they can strengthen their relationship with each other and with God.

CONFIDENT

ASSURED OF ETERNAL LIFE

1 John 5:12-13

Several months ago, I listened as a pastor passionately told of one of his church member's spiritual struggle. She was hungry to grow in her faith through any means available. Unfortunately, she ventured upon a TV program featuring a well-known "Christian" teacher. His presentation sounded great to her, prompting the purchase of one of his books. After reading just a few chapters, however, she was thrown into confusion and doubt about her own eternal security due to this author's "insights." She could not sleep, lived in a state of spiritual uncertainty, and questioned her very relationship with God.

This deceived Christ-follower stands in stark contrast with the believer John wrote to promote. He desired his readers to be fully-convinced of their relationship with Jesus and eternal life through Him. He contrasted two types of people. On the one hand, "The one who has the Son has life." Conversely, "The one who doesn't have the Son of God does not have life." Concerning assurance of salvation, two important points are made. First, eternal life is found only in Jesus, confirming Jesus' own statement in John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Second, this "life" is a *present* possession. Believers do not have to wait to experience

eternal life at some point in the future. Once one repents of sin and receives Jesus, he or she possesses certainty of eternal life *right then!* John said such a person "has" (present tense, not future) life. Jesus made this point clear when speaking to a grieving Martha after the death of her brother, Lazarus: "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in Me, even if he dies, will live. Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die—ever. Do you believe this?'" (John 11:25-26).

To grasp fully John's comment on assurance of salvation in his first letter, you need to compare it with his gospel, where His purpose was evangelistic: "But these are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). In short, the Gospel of John was to *bring* people to faith in Jesus. The purpose of John's letter, however, was to *encourage* his readers of the certainty of their salvation. He wrote these things, referring most-likely to the entire letter, "so that you may know that you have eternal life." Those among John's readers who might be on the verge of giving in to false teachers could instead be confident in the present and permanent possession of eternal security.

In previous lessons in this unit, a topic addressed was assurance of a relationship with God. Three tests were presented: the test of right belief in the person of Jesus,



Two previous Biblical Illustrator articles "John's Use of 'Witness'" (Winter 1999-2000) and "Faith Affirmed" (Winter 1997-1998) relate to this lesson and can be found on the Summer 2009 Biblical Illustrator Plus (CD-ROM).



- *When did you come to know Christ?*
- *What were the evidences of that faith in your life then? What are they now?*
- *When you think of your relationship with God, what are some of the things that you know to be true?*
- *What are you most thankful for when you think of the relationship that you have with God?*
- *List names of class members who you believe need assurance of their salvation. How can this lesson help them have that assurance?*

the test of right living in obedience to God's commands, and the test of right relationships with other believers. At times, believers today face an overwhelming struggle, feeling that a genuine conversion experience should bring an unshakable certainty of a relationship with God and the eternal life He gives, but they don't always have that certainty. John's letter, and these verses in particular, provide us encouragement during those times of doubt. As a teacher, take this opportunity to acknowledge that uncertainty may come due to various reasons, but God's Word can be trusted in those occasions. All genuine believers victoriously passing John's three tests have an undeniable assurance of eternal life!

have before Him" is "whenever we ask anything according to His will, He hears us." One of the greatest blessings of being a Christ-follower is the assurance God answers our prayers. John highlighted this certainty in his gospel, citing Jesus' words to His disciples: "I assure you: Anything you ask the Father in My name, He will give you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name. Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be complete" (John 16:23-24). John added in this letter, though, that true confidence in prayer only belongs to those who pray within the will of God. When believers come before the Father with requests in line with His sovereign will, we have the assurance that He hears those prayers.

ONE OF THE GREATEST BLESSINGS OF BEING A CHRIST FOLLOWER IS THE ASSURANCE GOD ANSWERS OUR PRAYERS.

CONFIDENT IN PRAYER

1 John 5:14-17

Believers have certainty of eternal life through receiving Jesus, a point John made the purpose for his letter. But assurance of salvation is not the only certainty John wanted to highlight. As a further encouragement to his readers, John moved next to convincing them of possessing confidence in their prayers. Similarly, Christ-followers not only have assurance of their salvation, but also confidence in approaching the Father in prayer.

The theme of confident prayer flows from the certainty of eternal life through faith in God's Son. The "confidence we

The certainty "that He hears whatever we ask" leads to confidence—"we know that we have what we have asked Him for."

Still, all believers know the experience of petitioning God for concerns near to their hearts, yet not receiving the answers they desire. What do you do when a genuine Christ-follower becomes distraught over an "unanswered prayer"? In a real way, there is no such thing as a prayer request without an answer from the Father. God answers our prayers in three possible ways.

First, God may say no. Because God is sovereign, because He loves us and knows what is best for us, sometimes we might come before Him in prayer, but not have that request met. John claimed

only those prayers asked “according to His will” brought certainty of being granted. Elsewhere, he noted living in obedience brought confidence in prayer (1 John 3:22). James highlighted wrong motives as a stumbling block to effective praying (James 4:3). The point is when we pray, we know God hears our prayers. Yet, we must be willing to acknowledge that His will is always best for us.

A second answer from God may be *slow*. What we might consider a request unanswered sometimes may actually be God calling upon us to wait for His timing and our spiritual growth. Jesus taught the value of persistence in prayer through parables about a midnight visitor and a widow pleading for justice (Luke 11:5-8; 18:1-5). How much more do we need to learn the lessons of persistent praying and not presuming upon God’s willingness to answer our prayers when we want them? Instead, His desire is to deepen our commitment, dependence, and belief in Him—even if it takes us waiting to receive a desired outcome for our prayers.

Finally, God may immediately grant a request with the answer *go*. Again, in His wisdom and sovereignty, only He knows which of our prayer requests are to be granted soon after our asking. Those occasions should be times of rejoicing, worship, thanksgiving, and an increased determination to bring any request no matter how big or small before a loving Father in whom we have confidence.

John provided an example of a prayer guaranteed to be answered by God. It involved a “brother committing a sin that does not bring death.” If anyone observed a fellow believer in such a situation, “he should ask, and God will give life to him.” Note there is no question concerning the spiritual state of the person—John called him “brother.” In short, what the apostle portrayed was a Christ-follower committing a particular sin noticed by

another believer.

Today when such a situation arises, Christians have four options. Some *ignore* it. Of course, this response must not be our reaction, but it might be the most frequent. Second, some *gossip about* it. Of all the options, telling others about a fellow believer’s misdeeds, even if couched in terms of a “prayer request” is the worst path we can take. Third, we can *confront* the person in question. This response is biblical, but with the condition that we do so lovingly and avoid any temptation associated with such a confrontation (Galatians 6:1). Finally, we can *pray*. This option is the most-effective way to deal with a sinning brother or sister in Christ. God guarantees when we pray, He “will give life” to him or her, providing the promised eternal life on the last day when all believers experience the final end of our salvation.

John’s main emphasis in this text was for Christians to pray confidently for a fellow Christ-follower when they see one committing a sin “that does not bring death.” But the majority of Bible students focus on the exact nature of John’s statement, “There is sin that brings death.” While the emphasis may be misplaced, the phrase needs addressing. Essentially, three opinions are offered by Bible students. Initially, some refer to the Old Testament practice of defining sins into sins of ignorance and premeditated, deliberate sins, the latter being specific infractions for which there was no forgiveness. Others think John was referring to what is often called “blasphemy of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 12:32), where a person attributed deeds performed by God’s Spirit to demonic forces. Finally, some prefer the option of a constant, total rejection of the gospel for salvation. Certainty is not possible, but of these three possibilities, the third option provides the best explanation.



- *Would you characterize your prayers as bold and confident?*
- *What about a relationship with Jesus makes it possible to pray with confidence? (See also Hebrews 4:15-16.)*
- *What is the best thing for you to do while you wait for the reality of your prayers to be known?*
- *What would you say to a genuine Christ follower who becomes distraught over an “unanswered prayer”?*



- *Right now, is there an area in your life where you need the confidence of God to face sin patterns?*
- *How does knowing that you are “untouchable” by the enemy help you face sin struggles in your life?*
- *How can you help your group look for victory and not be defeated as they work through their own issues?*

Regardless, John’s point was not to define the “sin that brings death.” The apostle’s concern was for readers to pray confidently for straying believers. Even though he wrote “I am not saying he should pray about that” regarding anyone committing the sin leading to death, he still left open the possibility that Christians *could* pray for those persons. Christians today need to heed John’s invaluable advice to pray in confidence, knowing that as we pray according to the Father’s will, He hears us and guarantees our petitions will be answered. The first place we as teachers must begin is asking how fervent our prayer lives are. Then, relate to our classes that if indeed we as believers have complete confidence in prayer, we should make prayer a priority in our individual lives and life together as a body of Christ-followers.

CERTAIN OF VICTORY

1 John 5:18-21

Through repentance of sin and receiving Christ as our Savior and Lord, believers can live with bold confidence daily. We have assurance of our salvation and the eternal life God promises. In addition, “Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God’s presence” (Ephesians 3:12, NLT). One final aspect of our victorious lives in Jesus is our confidence in gaining victory over sin.

As John wrapped up his first letter, he made a shift to expressing the Christ-follower’s confidence in attitude towards sin. He did so through the use of three “we know” statements (see this lesson’s word study on “Know” in 1 John). First, “We know that everyone who has been born of God does not sin.” John expressed the fact that genuine believers do not habitually commit sin. The new birth in Christ results in new behavior. The reason for such a

victory over sin is because “the One who is born of God keeps him.” The Greek most-likely points to Jesus as the source of victory. God’s unique Son “keeps” His followers from a sinful lifestyle. No wonder Jude proclaimed, “Now to Him who is able to protect you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless and with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority before all time, now, and forever. Amen” (Jude 24-25).

The result of Jesus’ protecting believers is “the evil one does not touch him.” The Greek word translated “touch” may be more strongly rendered to assert the devil cannot “fasten to” any believer to harm him or her. Instead, one is given supernatural ability to overcome sin and obey God’s commands.

The second “we know” statement concerns the difference in relationships between believers and non-Christians. Christ-followers live victoriously, because “We know that we are of God.” We have the absolute certainty that God is our Father and will protect us as we live in obedience to Him. John wrote, “the whole world is under the sway of the evil one.” Unlike Christians, the “world,” that cultural system actively opposed to God, is helplessly under the control of the devil. Apart from turning to Christ, no victory over sin is possible for these persons, while the relationship between Father and child guarantees us victorious life! There are only two possibilities: one can be “of God” or under the control, power, and sway of Satan.

Finally, John claimed, “we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding.” The apostle used the Greek present tense verb that has the affect of a perfect tense—a completed action with an enduring result—in alluding to the incarnation of Jesus and

His distilling to us of understanding. John highlighted the past nature of both events that provide *present* benefits. His opponents as false teachers claimed a special knowledge that set them in a position above others. Here, the apostle with one statement, undercut their rejection of Jesus' incarnation as a full

and John elsewhere called Jesus God (John 1:1,18; 20:28), John is asserting the complete divinity of Christ.

On the surface, John ended his letter quite oddly. Why conclude, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols?" In reality, it is a great way to summarize this last section and the entire letter as a whole.

OUR FAITH IS A CONFIDENT FAITH BECAUSE IT RESTS ON AN ASSURED, INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

human being and their assertion that special knowledge was necessary for salvation. Instead, Jesus provided all believers needed "so that we may know the true One," God Himself.

The relationship between believers and God is intensified as John continued, "We are in the true One." No doubt, he intentionally used the word "true" to refer to God as a comparison between the Father and any false gods or idols the false teachers were promoting. Our communion with God is made possible because we are also in His Son Jesus Christ. In other words, our repentance of sin and receiving Jesus initiates us not only into a relationship with Christ, but also with His Father, who is now also our Father. Differences of opinion exist regarding the object of John's claim, "He is the true God and eternal life." Is he referring to God or Jesus? Although certainty is not possible, a good case can be made that because the nearest antecedent of "He" is Jesus, Jesus elsewhere is cited as the Source of eternal life (1 John 5:12; John 11:25; 14:6),

Yes, Christians are confident in their victory over sin because Jesus protects us from the devil, because of our relationship with God as opposed to the world, and because of the knowledge we have of the true God, reflected in the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. But we still have an obligation to "guard ourselves" from anything that would distract us from victorious life, whether false teachers, material possessions, the desire to be entertained, the quest for "the good life," or other so-called "religious truth."

Believers live in an uncertain world that can shake our confidence in truths we hold near and dear to our hearts. Acknowledge to your class that events may indeed occur that cause real doubts in our lives. But at the same time, stress that despite these sometimes terrible circumstances, our faith is a confident faith, in this life and the one to come, because it rests on an assured, intimate relationship with God, His desire to hear and answer our prayers, and our victory over the devil and the world as we are protected by His Son.



- Which of John's three "we know" statements in these verses is most significant to you at this point in your life? Why?



Know in 1 John

Perhaps John's favorite word in his first letter is know. His word choice was clearly intentional. He wrote to combat an early form of gnosticism. The gnostics stressed a special gnosis or knowledge not possessed by all, but available only through their teaching and necessary for salvation. John indirectly attacked their claims throughout his letter by focusing on the present knowledge shared by believers in an intimate relationship with God. The student of 1 John should keep this truth in mind whenever he or she encounters the word know. These statements have a two-fold purpose: to reject the false teaching of John's opponents and encourage his readers in their walks with Christ.