

# Confidence



---

## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *John 3:36, Acts 4:29, 1 Cor. 9:27, Heb. 4:16, 1 John 5:13–21, Rev. 12:9.*

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

**B**en Franklin once said that only two things are certain in this life: death and taxes. There's a third certain thing, as well: life is full of uncertainty!

We do not know how secure our jobs are. Nothing guarantees our protection from sickness, terrorism, war, and natural disaster. We have no guarantee that when we go to bed we will wake up the next day.

Facing this, we do our best, trying to protect ourselves from these troubles the best we can, and yet, in the end our best efforts can guarantee us nothing.

But what about God? And God's promises to us? Are they not certain? How can we live without confidence and assurance when it comes to God? Our relationship with God and living with Him forever are more important than anything else. What does John have to say to us about this, the most important thing in our lives?

**The Week at a Glance:** What can we have confidence in? How do we not turn our confidence into presumption? What confidence can we have that our prayers will be answered? What protection are we offered against Satan? How can we come to a knowledge of God?

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, September 5.*

## Having Confidence *(1 John 5:13–21)*

First John 5:14 contains the word *confidence*, which also has the meaning of “assurance,” “boldness,” or in other contexts “frankness” (*Acts 4:29, 31*) and “openness” (*John 16:25, 29*).

According to Hebrews 4:16 and 10:19, Christians can draw near to the throne of God with confidence. Why? First, because Jesus shed His blood for them on the cross. And second, because Jesus has ascended to heaven to serve there as High Priest on their behalf.

The same term is used by John in 1 John 4:17 talking about “confidence” or “boldness” in the day of judgment. Christians are not afraid of judgment. They rely on what Jesus has done for them. Their confidence is not in themselves, or what they have done or could ever do. This confidence rests, instead, entirely on Jesus.

Another way that John expresses this idea of confidence is by the repeated use of the phrase “we know” at the end of 1 John. While this phrase is found throughout the letter only twice (*1 John 3:2, 14*), it occurs five times in the conclusion of the epistle and additionally stresses the topic of “confidence.”

**According** to the following texts, what can we be confident about?

*1 John 5:13* \_\_\_\_\_

*1 John 5:15* \_\_\_\_\_

*1 John 5:18* \_\_\_\_\_

*1 John 5:19* \_\_\_\_\_

*1 John 5:20* \_\_\_\_\_

In 1 John 5:13 the apostle says “you may know” and talks about assurance of salvation. From 1 John 5:15 onward he uses “we know.” In 1 John 5:15 he emphasizes that our prayers are heard. We can be confident. In 1 John 5:18 “we know” is followed by the promise of divine protection. In 1 John 5:19 the same phrase “we know” introduces the wonderful concept of belonging to God, and 1 John 5:20 stresses that we know Jesus and thereby, through Jesus, we know God and are in Him. Therefore, Christians have confidence with regard to their relationship to God, their prayer life, and their present state and future destiny.

**How many times have you disappointed yourself in the last month, week, or even *day*? We would say, “Keep a record of those disappointments,” but that might be too discouraging. How does the reality of your own foibles bring home the need to make sure that your confidence rests in Jesus and not in yourself?**

## *The Lesson in Brief*

---

▶ **Key Text:** *1 John 5:13–21*

▶ **The Student Will:**

**Know:** Realize that we can be sure of salvation, answered prayer, protection, belonging to God, and knowing Jesus.

**Feel:** Nurture a sense of trust and belonging.

**Do:** Live a positive Christian life without being presumptuous.

▶ **Lesson Outline:**

**I. Know: Unchangeable Certainties**

**A** John lists five claims that begin with “we know”: we know that salvation is ours, that our prayers are heard, that we have protection, that we belong to God, and that we know Jesus. Divide into groups and brainstorm how we can strengthen our confidence in each of these areas. Share your findings with the group.

**B** John expresses eternal life as a present reality (*1 John 5:13*). What is the difference between this reality and “once saved always saved”?

**II. Feel: Nurturing Our Relationship With God**

**A** Sometimes God doesn’t answer our prayers for earthly blessings. How do these occasions help us to nurture our faith?

**B** John constantly focuses on the positive. How can we foster a similar attitude?

**III. Do: Positive but Not Presumptuous**

**A** Our choices are the only way that we can lose our assurance of salvation. List ways of being sure you are making the right choices.

**B** Ask the class to share their personal experiences for each of John’s “we know” areas.

▶ **Summary:** John lists five areas in which we can have confidence in God. The only thing that can take away our salvation is our own negative choices.

## Having Eternal Life (1 John 5:13)

**Read** 1 John 5:13. What can we be sure of, according to this text?

Verse 13 provides an important reason John wrote his letter. He wanted his audience to have assurance of salvation. His hearers and readers should know that they already have eternal life. Everlasting life is a present reality. John made a similar statement at the end of his Gospel (*John 20:30, 31*).

First John 5:13 surpasses the other texts in the New Testament that deal with everlasting life. They mention a condition and contain a promise (e.g., *John 3:36*), but 1 John 5:13 states that children of God should know that they have eternal life. It is not an option, something that can be added to a Christian life or can be left out. God wants us to have assurance of salvation. Moses (*Exod. 32:32*), Peter (*1 Pet. 5:1*), Paul (*2 Tim. 4:7, 8*), the Christians in Ephesus (*Eph. 2:8*), and the believers in Colossae (*Col. 1:12–14*) had this certainty.

**How, though, can we be protected from taking assurance and turning it into presumption?** See *Matt. 10:22, 1 Cor. 9:27, Rev. 3:11*.

---

Some folk have taken this “confidence” of salvation and turned it into an “unconditional guarantee,” the idea of “once saved, always saved.” If this were true, what would stop us from forgetting all about God and living an immoral and unethical life—one that would, according to the Bible, bar us from heaven (*Gal. 5:21, Rev. 21:8*)? After all, it’s hard enough, even knowing that we can fall away from God, to keep ourselves pure. Imagine if we thought it didn’t matter at all how we lived!

The Bible teaches that there is assurance of salvation, but this certainty can be lost through our own choices. We need to hold on to the crown of life by keeping ourselves daily surrendered to the Lord in obedience and in repentance and faith. We must, always, watch and pray, for Satan is seeking whom he may devour (*1 Pet. 5:8*). And if that’s not us, then who?

**Look at yourself closely (we know, it’s painful!). Are you struggling with assurance of salvation? If so, isn’t it because of the things that you are doing? If so, then you must first claim the forgiveness that is yours and then claim the power to overcome that is promised you. What’s holding you back but your own choices?**

## Learning Cycle

### ► **STEP 1—Motivate**

**Key Concept for Spiritual Growth:** It is our privilege to believe that God will keep His promises, according to His Word.


**Just for Teachers:** This lesson focuses on critical aspects of our understanding of Christ that give us the heartfelt security we need in order to live in a hostile world and the confidence to trust our future to an unseen God. Use this introduction to illustrate how untrustworthy the best of human knowledge can be and raise the issue of how we know what is dependable information. If possible, provide recent pictures of the moon, planets, and/or the Milky Way.

For two thousand years or more, based greatly on the influence of Aristotle, people believed that the sun moved in orbit around the earth. In the early 1600s, Galileo was the first to make practical use of the telescope by studying the moon, the Milky Way, Jupiter, and Saturn. On a trip to Rome, he used a telescope to show Pope Paul V and other high church officials some of his discoveries that supported Copernicus's theory that the earth moves around the sun. Though the pope claimed friendship with Galileo, he brought his "friend" before the Inquisition and forced him to recant his belief in Copernicus's theories. Galileo was put under house arrest for the rest of his life, and Copernicus's writings were placed on a list of prohibited books for another two hundred years.

**Consider This:** What is the likelihood that things we believe to be true today will be demonstrated to be false in the future, and why is this so often the case? What knowledge circulated today as scientific fact is false according to the Bible? How do scientists determine what is dependable knowledge? How do we as Christians determine what is dependable knowledge?

### ► **STEP 2—Explore**

**Just for Teachers:** The Scriptures give us ample evidence of God's character on which to base our confidence and faith. This section of the lesson focuses on these assurances and promises.

CONTINUED 

**According to His Will** (*1 John 5:14–17*)

**Read** 1 John 5:14, 15. What promise do we have there? Most important, what should it mean to us?

---



---

We can come to God with all our joys, burdens, and requests. We can tell Him that we need money. We can tell Him that we have problems with our kids and need His intervention. We can tell Him that we are seriously ill and need healing. Do we know that He will send us a check, straighten out our kids, or heal us from a vicious disease? Not necessarily. When Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, He added to His prayer “Your will be done” (*Matt. 26:42, NKJV*); and God did not deliver Him from the cross.

However, if we confess our sins and ask for forgiveness, God does not put us on a waiting list; rather, we can have confidence that, as we end our prayer, forgiveness has become a reality. If I ask Him to make me His child because I accept Jesus as Savior and Lord, God will answer such a prayer right away. Whenever the will of God is revealed in Scripture—whether in a commandment or a promise—and we claim that expression of His will, we know that the prayer is answered. In cases in which we are not sure how God will lead us, we should add “Your will be done” to our prayers and in confidence trust that the Lord will do what is best.

First John 5:16, 17 is not easy to understand. Scholars are divided on what it means (some say it’s the sin against the Holy Spirit). We do know, however, that all sin is unrighteousness and cannot be justified or tolerated. But what is the distinction of sins that John has made in these verses? This is not easy to answer. Whatever John is saying, we can be sure that he’s not downplaying the seriousness of sin.

**We’ve all had prayers that have not come to pass in any way, shape, or form. A loved one dies despite prayer. A job is lost despite prayer. And so forth. In some cases, later on we can see how things really did turn out better when the prayer wasn’t answered as we had wanted. In others, all we see is disappointment, heartache, and sorrow. How are we to deal with the latter? How are we to continue to live by faith and trust God when seemingly unanswered prayers leave us filled with sorrow, disappointment, and, yes, even doubt?**

*Learning Cycle* CONTINUED**Bible Commentary****I. Being Confident in Our Knowledge of God and His Promises** (*Review 1 John 5:13 with the class.*)

“We should cherish love and gratitude, we should look unto Jesus and become transformed into His image. The result of this will be increased confidence, hope, patience, and courage. We shall be drinking of the water of life of which Christ spoke to the woman of Samaria. . . . This water represents the life of Christ, and every soul must have it by coming into living connection with God. Then blessed, humble, grateful confidence will be an abiding principle in the soul. Unbelieving fear will be swept away before living faith.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 226.

**Consider This:** Scientists use observations and reasoning to propose explanations for things that happen in the natural world, which they test by experiments. As Christians come into contact with Christ, what kinds of observations and knowledge do they develop? How do they test their knowledge of Christ and become confident that what they believe is true? Review the experience of Abraham (*Genesis 12–23*).

**II. Praying According to His Will** (*Read 1 John 5:14, 15, 18, 19 with the class.*)

“We do not desire to be saved any more ardently than Christ desires to save us. His will is bent on our redemption much more firmly than is our own (Gal. 1:4, Eph. 1:5). Therefore we may be sure that if we offer any petition regarding our salvation, the Saviour will be more than ready to hear us—He will be waiting to fulfill that request. This assurance holds true for the smaller as well as the greater matters of daily life.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 677, 678.

**Consider This:** Compare the experiences of Peter walking on water (*Matt. 14:27–29*), John the Baptist (*Matt. 14:1–12*), Jesus (*Matt. 26:36–46*), and Stephen (*Acts 6, 7*). In each of these cases, these men were facing death. How were their prayers answered? How might you explain these answers to prayer?

**III. Intercessory Prayer** (*Review 1 John 5:16, 17 with the class.*)

There were some situations in which Ellen G. White could not pray for

CONTINUED 

## **Confident of Being Protected** (*1 John 5:18, 19*)

In 1 John 5:18, 19, John twice states that “we know.” Both verses begin with this statement. However, John is not concerned with knowledge only.

### **What** indirect challenges do verses 18 and 19 contain?

In verse 18 (*NKJV*), the phrase “born of God” is used twice. However, the first phrase refers to every true believer, while the second phrase refers to Jesus. In Greek there is a difference of tenses that may be quite important. “Anyone born of God” (the first phrase) occurs in the perfect tense and may describe the lasting effect of regeneration. The second phrase occurs in a tense that refers to one specific event in the past only. The second phrase describes Jesus’ incarnation. Jesus was born of Mary in Bethlehem. The first phrase refers to the experience of humans who are born again (*John 3:3, 5; 1 John 3:9*). The usage of the same term for Jesus may point to the fact that Jesus has come close to us, even became one of us. On the other hand, Jesus is different from us. He is the Son of God in a sense that we never will be.

### **What** comfort do these verses contain? *1 John 5:18, 19.*

Both verses mention “the evil one.” The term also is used in 1 John 2:13, 14; 3:12. It describes Satan. Additionally John calls him “devil” (*1 John 3:8, 10*). According to Revelation 12:9 he is the old serpent, the devil. First John 5:18, 19 provides a short glimpse of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. This controversy is revealed in the book of Revelation, especially chapter 12. However, the different parties are already pointed to in 1 John.

In verses 18 and 19 John refers to the world as the arena of the evil one. On the other side of the conflict, the disciples of Jesus are found together with God the Father and Jesus. These believers are protected by Him. Jesus keeps them and does not allow Satan to touch them. Therefore, they are able to say No to sin and to withstand temptations.

Verse 19 states that we *are* of God. We can be confident because we have a direct and intimate relationship with God and are separate from the world. As children of God we can claim His promises.

**How are you experiencing the reality of the great controversy in your own life? How can you make these promises of victory and protection your own? That is, what are you doing that might make it impossible for those promises to be realized for you now? At the same time, what hope can you draw from the fact that Jesus has already won the war against Satan for us and offers us His victory?**



Learning Cycle CONTINUED

healing for others. In one of her testimonies, she wrote of the case of a man who was earnestly seeking prayers for himself and his family. She didn't know him, but others in the church were trying to help him and pray for him. Mrs. White noted that because there was so much iniquity in the lives of even professed Sabbath keepers, she "had resolved not to engage in prayer for anyone unless the Spirit of the Lord should dictate in the matter." She presented this man's case before God and asked if she should pray for his healing. In the night God revealed to her that this particular man had a cherished sin in his life since childhood, and God did not give her freedom to pray for his healing while he chose to live a life of self-abuse.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 349, 350.


**Consider This:** First John 5:16, 17 recognizes that there are some things we should not pray for, though it is not clear just what are the sins that lead to death. This story about Mrs. White's situation should not discourage us from intercessory prayer, but it does present the need for caution. What should be the guiding principle in regard to prayer for others when we are not sure of their life history? What prayer can be prayed under all circumstances, with the assurance that God will hear?

### ► STEP 3—Apply

**Just for Teachers:** Give some time for your class members to practice the principles of prayer and the development of a trusting confidence in God.

#### Life-Applications:

- 1 Consider the life of Elijah, especially his prayer on Mount Carmel, his prayers for rain, how the Holy Spirit gave him power to run before Ahab's chariot in the rain down the mountain, and Elijah's response to Jezebel's threat on his life (*see 1 Kings 18, 19*). Have you had similar ups and downs in your confidence in God? Why?
- 2 Compare Esther's prayer before she went before King Xerxes (*Esther 4*) and the response of the three Hebrews when King Nebuchadnezzar

CONTINUED 

## Having True Knowledge of the Godhead

(1 John 5:20, 21)

Again John states that “we know.” We know Him who is true. The Son of God, Jesus, has come into this world and has revealed to us God the Father. This knowledge is not merely head knowledge but knowledge that leads us to a close connection with God.

### **According** to 1 John 5:20, who is the One who is true?

Throughout his first letter we have seen that John switches easily from the Father to Jesus. In some cases the personal pronouns *He* and *Him* may even refer to both Father and Son. This is no surprise, because he “who confesses the Son has the Father also” (1 John 2:23, *RSV*). First John 5:20 includes the word *true* three times. The first reference clearly points to God the Father: Jesus has come and has given us insight so that we understand the Father, at least to some extent.

The second reference refers to Jesus: “We are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ” (*NKJV*). The last part of this clause seems to explain the first: The Son of God is the one who is true. The word *true* is found in 1 John 2:8, describing Jesus (*see also Rev. 3:7, 14*), but it also is an attribute of the Father (*John 7:28*).

The last reference in 1 John mentioning the word *true* occurs in the sentence, “This is the true God, and eternal life” (*NKJV*). This sentence may refer to God the Father, to Jesus, or to both. Expositors are divided on this issue. In any case, it makes perfect sense if it relates to Jesus.

### **What** does 1 John 5:21 say, and how could we apply the principle to ourselves?

So far in the entire epistle, John has not mentioned idolatry. Instead, he has wrestled with false conceptions of Jesus and their influence on those church members who had not left the church. Why would he at the end of his letter, as a final admonition, introduce a topic not found before? Perhaps John considers the false views of Christ as idolatry, and so idolatry is associated with the teachings of the antichrists about God and Jesus. Their understanding of the Godhead could be seen as worshiping false gods instead of the Father, who in Jesus gives eternal life and confidence to all true believers.

**Write a paragraph expressing what you “know” about the nature and character of God and bring it to class on Sabbath. What are some things about God that you do not know? What are the things that you don’t know but would like to know?**

*Learning Cycle* CONTINUED

confronted them about bowing down to the image (*Daniel 3*). Was there a crisis of confidence in these situations? Why, or why not? Has there been a time you had to face a person in authority in your life under difficult circumstances? How has your relationship with God informed your dealings with others in authority?

3 When tempting Jesus, Satan quoted from Psalm 91, a favorite psalm of protection. Compare Psalm 91:11, 12 with what Satan quoted in Matthew 4:6. What is missing? What are your favorite promises of protection? What important principles of prayer for protection does 1 John 5 teach us?

#### ► STEP 4—Create

**Just for Teachers:** The activities below are suggestions of how to apply the lessons on confidence and prayer in this lesson to our daily lives. They can be done together as a class to summarize and close the lesson, or you may create memory aids for your class members to take home as reminders and encouragement to do the activities later.

1 Make a list of the five most important aspects of your life that you keep before the Lord. Which of these items do you know are the will of the Lord? Of which of these items is it important to ask “that God’s will be done”? Are any of these items things that you should ask whether it is God’s will that you pray for them?

2 Create an acrostic using the word CONFIDENCE. Write the word vertically, and ask your class to write sentences or phrases about confidence in God that begin with each letter of the word.

3 Write out and illustrate a promise of protection and care from the Bible. To do this, use your favorite craft technique or practice a new skill, such as calligraphy, photography, fabric appliqué, or collage.

4 Write out seven cards using your favorite texts that remind you of what makes you confident in God’s gift of eternal life. Place them beside your bed and read a different card each morning. Then some time during the day, find a way to share the card with a family member or friend.

**Further Study:** Read Ellen G. White, “Asking to Give,” pp. 147, 148, in *Christ’s Object Lessons*; “From Jezreel to Horeb,” p. 157, in *Prophets and Kings*.

“When we pray for earthly blessings, the answer to our prayer may be delayed, or God may give us something other than we ask, but not so when we ask for deliverance from sin. It is His will to cleanse us from sin, to make us His children, and to enable us to live a holy life. Christ ‘gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.’ Gal. 1:4. 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. ‘If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’ 1 John 1:9.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 266.

“If the life of the sick can glorify Him, we pray that they may live; nevertheless, not as we will but as He will. Our faith can be just as firm, and more reliable, by committing the desire to the all-wise God, and, without feverish anxiety, in perfect confidence, trusting all to Him. We have the promise. We know that He hears us if we ask according to His will. Our petitions must not take the form of a command, but of intercession for Him to do the things we desire of Him.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 149.

### Discussion Questions:

- ❶ As a class, discuss what you wrote at the end of Thursday’s lesson. What can you learn from each other?
- ❷ Many have struggled with the question of “assurance of salvation.” What usually is the reason for this problem? How can you help those who are struggling here?
- ❸ Considering all the wonderful promises in the Bible for victory over sin, why do so many of us still fall into the same sins again and again?
- ❹ How are we seeing the reality of the great controversy being manifested in our world today? How is it being played out in our own communities, or even our own homes? What are we doing, in the controversy, for the cause of Christ? What can we as individuals, or together with our church, do for the cause of Christ in His battle with Satan?