

So That You May Know To Pray Confidently I John 5:14-17

Our confidence in praying is grounded in our "face-to-face" relationship with God in Christ. In I John 5:14, the word translated "before... toward... with" is the same word Jesus used in John 14:3 when He says, "I will receive you 'to' Myself" - "face to face with Me, with nothing between us... no law, no charge, not even space." We have boldness to speak directly to God because we've been brought into an unbreakable union with Him through the Saving Life of Christ. Fully forgiven, fully atoned for, fully brought into the Family... we have no need to "face away" from Him. No need to argue or bargain our way into His listening ear. "He hears us" (I Jo 5:14)! Isn't that the basis of all prayer, all communion - that Someone is listening? (Even if our "story", our request is in error, He listens - in order to refine, correct, or re-direct it.)

He listens to our "requests" (I Jo 5:15) -(literally, "the desires we desire") and we can confidently trust Him with them. We may "think" out loud in the presence of God, bring our full humanity face-to-face with His Divinity without any fear of rejection, condemnation, or shame. Like any child, we may bring Him our "desires", ask Him for things that could bring harm to ourselves or others. Even so, we may have confidence that we are heard in "whatever we ask" (I Jo 5:15), and, confidence that we can trust Him with the results yet to come.

How do we get this confidence and come to know it? By putting our faith in God, not in our "prayers"! There is no power in prayer. Prayer changes nothing. The power is in God. He changes things. John also indicates our confidence increases as we learn to "ask... according to His will." (I Jo 5:14) That's not as complicated or mysterious as it may sound. Essentially, we pray with a willingness for God to be the Willer! (Jo 7:17) It is hard to pray confidently when we are disobeying what we already know to be Christ-like, when we are "asking" for the sake of self interest alone, when the outcome would not be best for others and glorifying to God. No loving parent would ever give a child everything they request. It would not be good for the child, for others, or for the parent! "According to His will" reminds us we would never go before God - face-to-face with God - and ask for what is unChristlike. We confidently let our desires be made known... and fully trust Him with the outcome.

P.S. What do we do with verses 16-17 and "the sin unto death?" Is John speaking of counterfeit believers, "professers" but not "possesers" of the Life? Genuine children of God living in deliberate, defiant, unrepentant sin? I'm not sure it matters. If confession of Christ and His Truth is the act of belief that puts you face-to-face with God, then rejection of Christ and His Truth is an act of unbelief that puts you face-to-face with death (Ro 6:23) - something is going to die! John is not saying you "can't" pray for either the lost or those believers who've gone to the "far country". But, he seems to be inferring that where there is deliberate, defiant, unrepentant sinning - an open eyed rejection of Christ and His Truth in any man who resists all correction and will no longer listen to anyone - God is saying, "No need to make any request for this one... get out of the way and let Me have him!" (See I Cor 5:5; I Tim 1:20)

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Greetings

We are planning to make a "Go" of our annual February Florida Retreat in 2022, with a few minor changes. To begin with we will meet later than usual - February 25-27 - and we will return to Alachua. Our meetings will be held at First Baptist Alachua and our lodging will be at a fairly new Holiday Inn Express in Alachua (breakfast provided at the hotel).

With increased costs in the hotel and catering industries, we've made adjustments there as well. There will be no Friday night meal provided (eat before you come, but save room for a dessert fellowship!), and everyone will be free to secure their own lunch on Saturday (many options in Alachua). A fully catered meal will be provided Saturday evening.

Two less catered meals will make for much less kitchen work and an overall lower cost than previous years. We do our best to keep this weekend affordable, meaningful, and sociable. There will still be plenty of opportunities for fellowship and personal interaction. Deadlines and deposits matter more than ever. All reservations need to be made by January 25, lest we have to pay for rooms and meals on hold. Minimum numbers are also required for our secured rates. If we do not reach them by January 25th, we will need to cancel the entire event.

Hope to see many of you in February!

CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

5-7 Binghamton, NY (607-239-5006)
9 Alachua Bible Study
14,21,28 First Baptist Alachua

DECEMBER

7 Ocala Bible Study

JANUARY

28-30 Heritage Community Church,
Fruitland Pak, FL (352-431-3925)

↩ 2022 Florida Retreat ↩

February 25-27 Alachua, Florida
\$50 deposit (per person) due by January 25, 2022



\$320 - couple



\$270 - single (1 per room)

\$165 - single (2 per room)

\$50 - conference fee and Saturday dinner

\$30 - conference fee only



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2022 Florida Retreat



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