

## ARE CHRISTIANS TO PRAY "IN JESUS' NAME" IN PUBLIC?

### QUESTION:

Should Christians pray "in Jesus' name"? Many Christians end their prayers "in Jesus' name, Amen." But, many, no doubt, do so out of rote repetition without much thought. On the other hand, some Christians purposefully avoid praying "in Jesus' name," particularly in public, for fear of offending someone. One question is whether Christians should pray "in Jesus' name," and if so, how this should be done. A related question is what if the use of the name "Jesus" might "offend" someone in the audience.

### INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING PUBLIC USE OF THE NAME "JESUS":

Colossians 3:17: "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus giving thanks through Him to God the Father." Giving a public prayer would certainly fit into the category of "whatever you do in word," and would fit into the category of being a "deed", and would also fit into the category of "all." But, could this verse simply mean that we should act in the spirit of Jesus or for Jesus or as Jesus would act (without actually using the name "Jesus")? If this is what the verse means, then we can simply remain silent as to the "name of the Lord Jesus." But, the verse is direct and seems to call for a vocal recognition. But, don't forget the overriding principle of I Corinthians 13 where we are given instructions about words that do not have love behind them ("If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong...."). The name of "Jesus" should not be used unless it can be, and is, used in love in the particular situation.

- **Public use of the name "Jesus" by the early Christians:**

1 Corinthians 1:2: "[W]ho in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ..."

Acts 9:21: "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name [Jesus]."

Acts 4:17-18: "[L]et us warn them to speak no more to any man in this name. And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus."

Acts 5:28: "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name... But Peter and the apostles answered and said, 'We must obey God rather than men.'"

Acts 5:40: "[T]hey flogged them and ordered them to speak no more in the name of Jesus."

Acts 21:13: "I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

## **DID JESUS DIRECT CHRISTIANS TO ASK/PRAY IN HIS NAME?**

John 14:12-14: [Jesus said,] "[B]ecause I go to the Father. And whatever you ask in My name that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it." Jesus is saying that after He returns to the Father (dies, is resurrected, and ascends) His followers are to ask the Father in Jesus' name.

John 15:16: [Jesus said,] "[S]o that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you." Using this template, we are to direct our prayers to "the Father" (as Jesus did in The Lord's Prayer, Mathew 6:8-13—"Our Father who art in heaven"), but whatever we ask of the Father, we are to ask in the name of Jesus, and then "He" (the Father) will give it to us.

John 16:24,26: [Jesus said,] "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name. Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be made full....In that day you will ask in My name...." After Jesus' death, Christians were to ask/pray in Jesus' name.

## **EXAMPLES OF CHRISTIANS PUBLICLY AND VOCALLY USING, ASKING, OR PRAYING IN JESUS' NAME:**

- **In healing and performing miracles:**

Acts 3:6: "But Peter said, 'I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!'" This is a direct quote of what Peter said to bring about the healing of the man. Healing was literally, publicly, and vocally done "in the name of Jesus Christ."

Acts 3:16: "And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man."

Acts 4:10: "[B]y the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene...by this name this man stands before you in good health."

Acts 4:30: "[W]hile Thou dost extend Thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy Servant Jesus."

- **In casting out demons:**

Acts 16:18: "But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her?' And it came out at that very moment." This is a direct quote of what Paul said in casting out the demon. This was literally, publicly, and vocally done "in the name of Jesus Christ."

- **In baptizing:**

Acts 2:38: "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ...."

Acts 8:16: "[B]aptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Acts 10:48: "And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ."

Acts 19:5: "And when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

Acts 22:16: "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away yours sins, calling on His [Jesus'] name."

- **In praying:**

Ephesians 5:20: "[A]lways giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father."

Acts 4:29-30: "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence, while Thou dost extend Thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy Servant Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered was shaken...."

**Did any of the authors of the New Testament end any books of the Bible with a prayer in, through, or with reference to Jesus' name? Yes.**

Jude 1:25: "[T]o the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen."

1 Corinthians 16:24: "[I]n Christ Jesus. Amen."

Romans 16:27: "[T]o the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever. Amen."

Galatians 6:18: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brethren. Amen."

Revelation 22:21: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen."

The use of the name Jesus, when used appropriately, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, can effectuate and/or usher in the tremendous power that is ours as believing Christians. Clearly, there is a release of power with the speaking of Jesus' name.

### **PRAYING A PUBLIC PRAYER "IN JESUS' NAME":**

2 Corinthians 4:13: "I believed, therefore I spoke," we also believe, therefore also we speak." Romans 10:14-17: "And how shall they believe in Him [Jesus] whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." Words are an important part of our witness to accompany our actions. Using the powerful name of Jesus is a way of acknowledging, honoring, witnessing for, and connecting yourself to the Messiah. It is a testimony to others to hear a prayer that lifts up the name of Jesus. But, do not be surprised to find it very difficult to use the name of "Jesus." Satan hates that name and knows its power in the spiritual realm. [Ephesians 6:12: "We fight not against flesh and blood but against the...forces of darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places"]. Evil will use its best efforts to discourage you from using the name "Jesus" in any way. Why? Prayers in the name and power of Jesus open the floodgates for God to supernaturally work.

John 14:6: "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.'" Praying in Jesus name or through Jesus is a verbal acknowledgement that you are coming to the Father "through" Jesus and confirming your belief in the truth of John 14:6. The listener who hears your prayer is made aware of this through your words. If a Christian says a prayer, and it is not given in Jesus' name or through Jesus, what is the difference between the Christian's prayer and a Jewish or Muslim prayer?

Mathew 10:32-33: "Every one therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven."

Ester 4:14: "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place... And who knows, whether you have attained royalty for such a time as this?" If you have risen to a position that you are asked to offer a public prayer, it is an opportunity "for such a time as this."

Revelation 3:15-16: "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot... Because you are lukewarm, I will vomit you out of my mouth." When you pray in Jesus' name, you are taking a definite stand for Christ (not lukewarm).

When done in the right spirit of love and through the Holy Spirit, publicly proclaiming the name of the Lord over a group of people does something in the supernatural realm to bring about blessing for the entire group. Numbers 6:22-27: "So they shall invoke My name on the sons of Israel [publicly and vocally], and I then will bless them." The use of the word "then" is a term of condition (when His "name" is "invoked" over the people, He "then" will bless them). Extrapolating from this verse, when one prays in the name of Jesus, and invoke His name over the people, God "then" will bless them (the entire group).

### **THE POWER OF THE NAME "JESUS":**

Philippians 2:9-10: "Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Acts 4:12: "[F]or there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."

Matthew 18:19: "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst."

John 12:32: [Jesus said,] "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men to myself."

Acts 4:12: "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

Acts 10:43: "[T]hrough His name everyone who believes in Him has received forgiveness of sins."

Mathew 18:20: "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I will be in their midst."

Romans 10:13: "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

Romans 10:9: "[T]hat if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation." Words are important. Spoken words are important.

A daily-devotional book popular since the 1940s, *God Calling*, includes a devotional for September 13<sup>th</sup> entitled "No Other Name," a devotional for June 17<sup>th</sup> entitled "Dear Name," and a devotional for November 4 entitled "I Am Beside You." While these three devotionals are not express quotes from Scripture, they are informed by and based upon Scripture and provide practical scriptural application of what Jesus might say to us in the first person:

No Other Name: "My Name is the Power that turns evil aside, that summons all good to your aid. Spirits of evil flee at the sound of 'Jesus.' Spoken in fear, in weakness, in sorrow, in pain, it is an appeal I never fail to answer. 'Jesus.' Use My Name often. Think of the unending call of 'Mother' made by her children. To help, to care, to decide, to appeal, 'Mother.' Use My name in that same way—simply, naturally, forcefully. 'Jesus.' Use it not only when you need help but to express Love. Uttered aloud, or in the silence of your hearts, it will alter an atmosphere from one of discord to one of Love. It will raise the standard of talk and thought. 'Jesus.' 'There is none other Name under Heaven whereby you can be saved.'"

Dear Name: "It was in My Name Peter bade the lame man walk. 'In the Name of Jesus Chris of Nazareth arise and walk.' 'Jesus.' The very sounding of My Name, in Love and tenderness, drives away all evil. It is the word before which all the hosts of evil flee. 'Jesus.' My Name is the call for a life line to rescue you from temptation. 'Jesus.' The name banishes loneliness—dispels gloom. 'Jesus.' Summons help to conquer your faults. I will set you on high because you have known My name. Yes! My Name—'Jesus.' Use it more. Use in tenderly. Use it prayerfully. Use it powerfully."

I Am Beside You: "Call often My Name, 'Jesus.' The calling of My Name does not really summons Me. I am beside you. But it removes, as it were, the scales from your eyes, and you see Me. It is, as it were, the

pressure of a loved one's hand, that brings an answering pressure, and a thrill of Joy follows, a real, and a joyful sense of nearness."

### **WHAT ABOUT "MEANINGLESS REPETITION"?**

Matthew 6:7: "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words." While this verse is not directly applicable to praying in Jesus' name (since the phrase "many words" appears to be referring to long and verbose prayers), it should nevertheless be noted that no one should ever use the phrase "in Jesus' name" out of rote or meaningless repetition. Anyone who uses the name of "Jesus" in any context should do so with reverence and with a full understanding of why they are using the name.

### **WHAT ABOUT OFFENDING OTHERS BY PRAYING "IN JESUS' NAME"?**

The phrase, "in Jesus' name," is not a tag line intended to proselytize or to offend Jews, Muslims, atheists, or others but is said to comply with a basic tenet of the Christian faith. Ending a prayer in the name of "Jesus" sometimes upsets non-Christians. But, should it? If someone prays in the name of "Jesus" and the listener is a non-Christian, the listener may believe that the person has prayed to nothing. How can one logically be offended if they believe someone has prayed to nothing? An analogy might be the following: There are many children who believe in Santa Claus and tell others of their belief and of their petitions to Santa Claus. Does this offend anyone? A reasoned reaction might be amusement, but not insult. The same should be true concerning religious expressions. A sincere prayer by a Christian "in Jesus' name" is not intended to offend anyone but rather to honor God and seek protection and blessing for believers and non-believers alike. The idea of a person being "offended" by the expression of another's sincere prayer "in Jesus' name" may simply be a euphemism for bigotry or intolerance by the person claiming to be "offended." For someone to attempt to prohibit or discourage a Christian from ending a prayer "in Jesus' name" would not only cause the person to violate his or her conscience but to violate a basic precept of his/her faith.

### **IF YOU PRAY "IN JESUS' NAME" WILL YOU ALWAYS GET WHAT YOU REQUEST?**

Jesus said, "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:13-14). Yet, we do not always get what we ask when praying "In Jesus' name." Does this mean the verse is not true, or that we need not pray in Jesus' name, or that prayer is not effective? When Jesus announced, "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it," he was announcing a new spiritual law that was true

then and is true now. But there are also other spiritual laws that are, at the same time, just as true and just as effective. And there are a number of these other spiritual laws that are also at work every time we pray. An analogy is found in an analysis of the Law of Gravity: In the World there are numerous physical laws at work at the same time. The Law of Gravity is one example. The Law of Gravity is always effective even when it appears otherwise. For instance, when one sees a multi-ton airplane floating through the sky, one might think the Law of Gravity has been suspended and is not working in that instance. Not true. The Law of Gravity is working perfectly, but another physical law is also at work: the Law of Lift, which, in this instance, is the predominate "law" that has affected the plane to allow the plane to be suspended in mid-air. The Law of Lift has impacted the Law of Gravity. Another example would be a helium balloon rising. The rising balloon is the result of yet another physical law that is simultaneously working along with the Law of Gravity. The Bible gives guidance on the issue of answered/unanswered prayer providing a number of other spiritual laws equally impacting our prayers:

Your own sin has caused God not to hear: Psalm 66:18: "If I regard wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not hear." Isaiah 59:2: "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, so that He does not hear." Micah 3:4: "Then they will cry out to the Lord, but he will not answer them. Instead, He will hide His face from them at that time, because they have practiced evil deeds." See also 1 John 3:22 ("[W]hatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.").

Your prayer is not in accord with God's will:

1 John 5:14-15: "And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him." Mathew 6:10: "Thy will be done on earth...." Luke 22:42: "[N]ot My will, but Thine be done."

God has answered your prayer and has said "No" or "Not Yet":

2 Corinthians 12:7-9: "[T]here was given me a thorn in the flesh... Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.'" See *also* Exodus 33:20; Deuteronomy. 3:26; 2 Samuel 12:16; Ezekiel 20:3.

You are asking with wrong motives:

James 4:3: "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures."

You are not asking in faith:

James 1:6: "But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." Mark 11:24:

You are not abiding in Jesus and His words are not abiding in you:

John 15:7: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

The one for whom you are praying has a sickness unto death:

John 11:4: "But when Jesus heard it, He said 'This sickness is not unto death...' If there are sicknesses "not unto death," then there must be sicknesses unto death (i.e., the person is going to die from this sickness). We all have a physical death at some point in time. "And in Thy book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them." Psalm 139:16. Since we don't know the appointment of that day for anyone, we should pray in faith presuming that this is not the day (whether praying for ourselves or for another).

The one for whom you are praying has sinned unto death:

1 John 5:16-17: "If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death."

Practical application: When we pray, we need to be sure that our own sins and wrong motives are not standing in the way of our prayers being answered. Beyond that, since we will usually not know (or will not realize or recognize) which of the other above (or other) spiritual laws are impacting our prayers, we should all pray with one spiritual law in mind (which we can always know is true and applicable to every prayer): "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:13-14).

## **CONCLUSION:**

Jesus said, "[T]he words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." John 6:63. The words of Jesus and the name of "Jesus" are not merely words but are "spirit" and "life" and have a supernatural aspect. When led by the Spirit and when in conjunction with God's will and timing, the spoken name of Jesus is incredibly powerful. The Bible talks about healing in the name of Jesus, casting out demons in the name of Jesus, working miracles in the name

of Jesus, baptizing in the name of Jesus, and praying in the name of Jesus. There is supernatural power in the name of "Jesus." The powers of darkness do not want the name said and will do everything possible to discourage you from using the name "Jesus." And yet we are told to use His name. Until 1963, there were government prayers said in our public schools, but they were normally prayers to no particular God and not in Jesus' name. They were "civic prayers." But now, with students having the freedom to pray their own prayer, the name of "Jesus" can be lifted above our schools.

In Roman times, a soldier would say, "I come in the name of Caesar." As Christians, we come in the name of "Jesus."

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