

Ask for Anything in My Name

(SUMMARY: Eric J. Bargerhuff (2012) “The Most Misused Verses in the Bible” chapter 5)

Jesus told the disciples that when they ask Father for things they should ask for it “*in my name*”.¹ But what does this really mean? Does it mean that petitioning for things in his name gives the prayer a boost, or increases the chances of the prayer will be heard and answered? Is it a 'magical formula' that guarantees that we'll get what we've asked for, no matter what Father thinks, so long as we've said “in Jesus' name” at the conclusion?

Being raised in the religious system of the Methodist church I mistakenly thought – until a few years ago – that if this phrase wasn't included at the end of *every* prayer, then my prayer was illegitimate, and that God wouldn't listen to it. How naïve was that!

So what did Jesus mean when he told his disciples to pray in his name? For all exegeses, we must look at the context and in this case we find that the use of the phrase varies widely.

- The disciples were told to welcome little children “in my name”²;
- Demons were to be exorcised “in my name”³;
- False messiahs would come “in my name”⁴;
- Miracles would be done “in my name”⁵;
- Charity was to be done “in my name”⁶;
- The Holy Spirit would be sent to the disciples “in my name”⁷; and
- Ekklesial judiciaries were to meet and deliberate “in my name”⁸.

It's quite plain from these that it's not just prayer that's concerned with his injunction to do things “in my name”.

Here are some more occasions in scripture where a similar expression is used:

- Peter and John were commanded not to speak or teach “In the Name of Jesus”. (*Acts 4:17-19*)
- Peter baptised “In the Name of Jesus”. (*Acts 2:38*)
- Peter healed “In the Name of Jesus”. (*Acts 3:6*)
- Paul preached boldly “In the Name of Jesus”. (*Acts 9:27*)
- Paul taught that we were justified “In the Name of Jesus”. (*1 Corinthians 6:11*)
- Paul taught to give thanks to Father “In the Name of Jesus”. (*Ephesians 5:20*)
- Paul taught to do everything “In the Name of Jesus”. (*Colossians 3:17*)
- Paul commanded the Thessalonians to withdraw from a rebellious brother “In the Name of Jesus”. (*2 Thessalonians 3:6*)
- Paul taught to deliver a sinning person over to Satan “In the Name of Jesus”. (*1 Corinthians 5:4*)
- A person is to be anointed for healing “In the Name of Jesus”. (*James 5:14*)
- We believe “In the Name of Jesus”. (*1 John 5:13*)
- The OT prophets spoke “In the Name of the Lord”. (*James 5:10*)

1 - John 14:13, 14; 15:16; 16:23, 24, 26

2 - Matthew 18:5; Luke 9:48

3 - Mark 16:17

4 - Matthew 24:5; Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8

5 - Mark 9:39

6 - Mark 9:41

7 - John 14:26

8 - Matthew 18:20

So again here, in these examples, “In the Name of Jesus” is used in many different ways and places. It’s obvious in this second list that ‘in the name’ is about being in the authority of a person, not just speaking the phrase or even invoking the authorising person’s name.

“To be sure, to do any of these aforementioned things “in his name” means that we do them in a manner that is consistent with who Christ is, what he taught, and all that he stands for (his kingdom purposes). It is to do them in accordance with God’s will, and ultimately for his glory...[And] in essence, it is to pray in accordance with God’s will—ultimately for God’s glory—“that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” Then as the disciples pray “in Jesus’ name,” with those motives in mind, they can rest assured that their prayers will be answered and that Jesus himself (“I will do it”) will be assisting them from heaven in their ministry efforts.”⁹

Christians usually pray what they think God would approve of, as well as their own needs and desires because God will grant them the desires of their heart¹⁰. This habit comes from the teaching they receive from home and from the pulpit. So, they’ll pray for the salvation of others because God wants all to be saved¹¹; The peace of Jerusalem because King David said to do it¹²; They’ll pray for healing because Jesus purchased our health¹³. But will they pray for Father’s will to be done?

Praying for Father’s will to be done on Earth and in our circumstances is our Kingdom duty, so it should be foremost in our thoughts. Praying this way displays humility, as well as trust and reliance on God. It also aligns us with his sovereign plans, whatever they happen to be. We should also ask him for the desires of our heart, knowing that if his answer is “No”, or “Wait”, we will receive enough grace to handle everything.

Actually, as our Kingdom lives are to bring glory to him, our prayers must also be in line with this principle. Once our prayers are straightened up in this way we should expect to see things happen when we pray.

So cease using “In the Name of Jesus” as a trump card to force God’s hand. Any form of manipulation won’t work with him and is contrary to his mode of operation.

While you’re refraining from using this ending to your prayers, why not stop religiously adding “Amen” to the end of every prayer. It doesn’t make the prayer more correct when you say it.

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9 - Eric J. Bargerhuff (2012) “The Most Misused Verses in the Bible”, p:28 (e-book version)

10 - Psalm 10:17; 37:4

11 - 1 Timothy 2:4

12 - Psalm 122:6

13 - 1 Peter 2:24