
Question Time — Why Should We Pray in the Name of Jesus?

--- By Elder Charlie Booth

One of the distinctive practices of disciples of Jesus Christ is that of praying to the Heavenly Father in the name of his Only Begotten Son. This is much more than a good idea or long-standing tradition. The scriptures are clear: We must **always** pray in the name of Jesus.

There are many admonitions to do so, but the truth of this practice can be verified in a single scripture. In John 14: 13-14, Jesus himself is quoted as saying, *“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.”*

In his visit to the Americas, Christ strongly expanded on this theme. In 3rd Nephi 8, 50-51, we read, *“. . . Ye must watch and pray always, lest ye enter into temptation; for Satan desireth to have you . . . therefore you must always pray unto the Father in my name . . .”*

Here is a partial list of other pertinent scriptures:

John 16: 23-27	3 rd Nephi 8: 50-51	Ether 1: 112
Colossians 3: 17	3 rd Nephi 13: 6	Moroni 2: 2
Moroni 7: 26	D & C 16: 4c	

Invoking the name of Jesus is a way of identifying ourselves to our Heavenly Father, an affirmation that we are claiming to be disciples of his Son. This puts a great responsibility upon us. If our prayer is selfish or out of touch with the teachings of Christ, our words may be “as clanging symbols” or otherwise lacking merit for the Lord’s consideration. We need to take great care in asking anything of God, for asking amiss is clearly sinful. (D & C 85: 16f)

Using the name of Christ is much more than symbol or rite. It is humbly admitting that we, on our own, lack adequate righteousness to approach God in prayer. It is confessing that we need the personal reality of Christ’s sacrifice on the Cross to be worthy enough to ask God anything at all, even to utter words of praise, thanks or contrition.

Many times we hear prayers from professing Christians on television, radio or in church services that end with a simple “Amen” or “in your name, Amen.” Sadly, these prayers leave out the connection to Christ that Jesus himself clearly commanded us to draw upon.

Finally, we must remember that saying some form of the words “in Jesus’ name” in a prayer is not a magic formula for prayer to be answered as we wish. It is rather an attitude of the heart. If what we asked for or said in prayer was not for God’s glory and according to his will, then saying “in the name of Jesus Christ” can be an affront to his name. Genuinely praying in Jesus’ name and doing so for his glory are most important, not attaching certain words to a prayer. While the words in a prayer do matter, it is the attitude -- the heart -- behind the prayer that communicates to the Heavenly Father whose we really are.