



river west church

Praying in the Name of Jesus

John 14:13-14

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“Whatever you ask in my name...”

In the book of John, Jesus instructed His disciples to pray to the Father in His name. It's one of the more remarkable promises in scripture. Jesus said, “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it” (John 14:13-14). Wow! Did you get that? Jesus even repeats Himself as if to say, “I want to make sure you get what I'm saying here. If you ask in my name, I will do it”. And in case His disciples still don't hear Him, He declares the same thing several other times in the Gospel of John (see 15:16, 16:23-24). So, how are Christians to understand such a teaching? Is it merely a matter of ending our prayers with the phrase “In Jesus' name”, as if this is some magical formula that will ensure that our prayers are effective? Does tacking on “In Jesus' name” obligate God to act on our behalf? Surely not. So what does it mean to pray in the name of Jesus?

Jesus is the Way to the Father

To answer this question we must first understand the role of Jesus in prayer. In our series on prayer, we have been reminded how important it is to know the one to whom we are praying. Jesus taught us to pray to our “Father in Heaven” because prayer begins with our view of God. Of similar importance for the believer is to understand the means by which we can come before the Father in the first place. To pray in the name of Jesus is to understand that the very reality of my relationship with the Father has been made possible through the work of the Son. Earlier in John 14, Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (vs. 6). Jesus is the way to the Father because He opened up access to God through His death, resurrection and ascension to the Father's right hand. This means that all Christian prayer is offered through Jesus. He is the way. He is the mediator. To pray in Jesus' name is to come before God's throne of grace, not in our own merit, but by the merit of Jesus. Apart from Christ, we have no right to approach God because of our sin, but Jesus has made a way for the believer to come boldly before God in prayer (Heb 4:14-16). When you pray, talk to God about these things. Acknowledge your own unrighteousness. Thank God for the righteousness of Jesus (2 Cor. 5:21) in which you stand. This is an important aspect of praying in Jesus' name. But, there's more.

Representing the Name of Jesus in Prayer

Praying in Jesus' name also means that we pray in a way that is consistent with His character and will. It is to come to the Father and offer up requests that are in thorough accord with all that the name of Jesus represents. In order to do this, we need to be deeply connected to Jesus, so that we can know His character, His will and His heart. Jesus said, “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (15:7). Similarly, John reminds us in his first letter that, “If we ask anything according to his will he hears us” (1 Jn. 5:14). The point of all of this is plain. The key to answered prayer is not simply tacking on the phrase “In Jesus' name”. The key to answered prayer is in actually seeking to represent the heart of Jesus in all that we ask of the Father. You will never represent Jesus perfectly in prayer, but the more you practice, the more you seek to know Jesus through His word and through the Holy Spirit, the more that you look to Jesus in humble submission and

faith, the more you will effectively pray in Jesus' name. Here are some scriptures to meditate on and pray through this week:

John 15:1-17; Ephesians 5:18-20; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Colossians 3:17