

Have you ever heard someone pray and then end the prayer by saying, “In Jesus’ name. Amen”? If you pray, do you end your prayers that way? Why do some people pray that way? Should all of our prayers end that way?

These questions are related to a prayer promise Jesus gave. Jesus once 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! Isn’t that exciting! Ask the Lord for *anything...anything...* in his name, and it will happen! (I can imagine some of you are already thinking, “Well, I’ve asked for things in prayer and my prayers weren’t answered.”)

Notice, Jesus says we are to ask “in his name.” What does it mean to ask for something “in Jesus’ name”?

For ancient Hebrews, a person’s “name” meant that person’s character. In other words, to pray for something in Jesus’ name means that we are to pray for things that are consistent with his character. Is what I’m asking for something Jesus would do or want to have done?

For instance, if somebody cheats me out of something and I pray that this person would have something bad happen to him or her, is that something Jesus would sanction? I doubt it, since Jesus told us to love our enemies and do good to those who harm us. If I pray that my team wins a game or the championship, how consistent is that with the personhood of our Lord? I doubt that Jesus cares that much who wins the NBA championship or the World Series or the Super Bowl any given year. (Sorry, I doubt Jesus is a Phillies or Steelers fan). If I ask for something selfish – like “Lord, help me to win the lottery”, or “Lord, help me to be the one chosen for the promotion rather than the other two candidates,” do we really feel comfortable running that one by the Jesus-character test?

So, asking ourselves whether what we are praying for is something Jesus’ would approve of is a good filter to sort out prayers that are frivolous, foolish, or selfish.

Aw, gee, you say. That isn’t such a great prayer promise after all.

But it is! There are tons of things Jesus wants for us that are good, and life enhancing. He wants us to overcome the bad habit that binds us. He wants us to be able to forgive the neighbor or family member who hurt us. He wants us to resist temptations. He wants us to have the capacity to be more unselfish. He wants us to be more kind and thoughtful to people. He wants us to learn and grow. He wants us to succeed in wholesome endeavors. He wants us not to worry so much. He wants us to know deep in our heart that if we believe in him and follow we will have eternal life with him. And so much more goof stuff!

Just ask. And keep on asking. In his name.

And ending your prayers with something like, “I pray this in Jesus’ name”, is a good reminder to pray boldly for things that can bring a smile to Jesus’ face.

