

What it means to do something in Someone's Name

Olumuyiwa *Asaolu* (asaolu@yahoo.com)

Lagos, Nigeria (March 25, 2022)

This article outlines what it means to do something in someone's name. Phrases abound in the scriptures that allude to this concept such as: "in the name of", "in my name", "in his name", "in thy name", etc. At any given instance, the concept of doing something in someone's name refers to AT LEAST ONE of the following, and may even connote some or all in certain situations:

- A. Formally reserved for someone [designated possession]
- B. Reference to a specific name to be uttered [while initiating or performing an action]
- C. For the sake of another [acknowledgment, volunteered service for another]
- D. On behalf of another [By authorization as his representative].

Let us take a closer look at these with examples from the scriptures, [KJV unless otherwise stated].

A. **Formally reserved for someone** [designated possession]

1 Kings 18:32 *And with the stones he built an altar **in the name of the LORD**: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed.*

Above means that Elijah built an altar reserved or dedicated to the LORD. The true prophet mentioned or invoked the LORD's name so others around knew for whom the place was built. It was to offer a sacrifice unto the God of Israel unlike the altar of the prophets of Baal. This is akin to something Jacob did during his travel (Genesis 28:16-19). The patriarch on waking from his unusual dream of angels ascending and descending upon a ladder in Luz, built an altar there and called or named the place **Bethel - the house of God**.

Deuteronomy 25:6 *And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth **shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead**, that his name be not put out of Israel.*

Under the Old Testament (OT), when a man died childless, his brother/next of kin should marry the widow. The first child of such marriage is reserved for and surnamed after the deceased (Mt 22:24).

B. **Reference to a specific name to be uttered** [while initiating or performing an action]

Deuteronomy 18:22 *When a prophet speaketh **in the name of the LORD**, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.*

Prophets were expected to say the truth (2 Chro 18:14-15). In above scenario, someone purports to be a prophet and utters: 'Thus says the LORD...' - mentioning God's name, whereas the LORD has not mandated him to say anything. The Lord said that such false prophets are not authorized by Him!

Jeremiah 14:14 *Then the LORD said unto me, the prophets prophesy lies **in my name**: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.*

Matthew 24:5 *For many shall come **in my name**, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.*

Jesus herein references false messiahs who would claim to be Him. Such would adopt his name/title and purport to function in his stead or role.

Acts 5:40,42 *And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak **in the name of Jesus**, and let them go... And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.*

How would anyone know ‘the name’ in which the disciples preached if they did not mention an actual name? The Jewish Council forbade the apostles from uttering the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth and preaching on His behalf. The apostles would rather obey God than men since “*there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*” (Acts 4:10-12). It is a highly exalted name. Isaiah foretold that “*in his name shall the Gentiles trust*” (Mt 12:21). Thus, people from all nations have faith in the literal name of Jesus because it is backed by His power to save (Mt 1:21, Prov 18:10). After His resurrection, Christ instructed “*that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name*” (Lk 24:47). That is, His actual name should be uttered to declare His person and His kingdom.

Barnabas informed the apostles how converted Saul “*had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus*” (Acts 9:27). Recall Christ’s words about Saul unto Ananias and how it was later fulfilled.

Acts 9:15 *But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel*

Acts 26:19-20, 22-23, *Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance... Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.*

Acts 28:3 *Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.*

Note that on the following occasion, no one would have known in which name the man cast out a devil if they did not hear him audibly pronounce same. [He probably invoked as Paul later did in Acts 16:18b]

Mark 9:38-39 *And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbid him, because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me.*

The unknown disciple on behalf of the Lord cast out devils by uttering the name ‘Jesus’ in faith to heal the afflicted. **John did not consider the fellow authorized since that strange healer was not amongst the mainstream followers of Jesus.** Yet Christ endorsed the ‘unknown disciple’ after getting John’s report.

Hebrews 13:15 *By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.*

The Hebrews writer enjoins saints to praise the very name of Jesus Christ even as Paul teaches also.

Colossians 3:16-17 [YLT] *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing each other, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, in grace singing in your hearts to the Lord; 17 and all, whatever ye may do in word or in work, all things in the name of the Lord Jesus - giving thanks to the God and Father, through him.*

Verse 17 of Col 3 is widely misunderstood due to an insertion of [do] by most Translators just before ‘all things.’ That insertion is NOT really necessary! The verse simply states that we are to give thanks for everything by verbally mentioning the name of Jesus as we express appreciation to God. **The real focus of the verse is ‘giving thanks’ NOT ‘doing things’ as many presume!**

Consider the **parallel passage** where Paul also highlighted praises via vocal music.

Ephesians 5:19-20 [YLT] *speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the God and Father.*

C. **For the sake of another** [acknowledgment, volunteered service for another]

Mark 9:36-37, 41 *And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children **in my name**, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me... For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink **in my name**, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.*

Whosoever receives a child or a preacher for Christ's sake shall be rewarded by the Lord. Such could but may not necessarily say: "Welcome in Jesus' name." He simply has to treat others fine because they or him, belong unto Christ. It is recognizing someone's position. Christ reiterated (Mt 10:41):

*"He that **receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet** shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward."*

It means to recognize the status of a prophet or a righteous man.

Mt18:20 *For where two or three are gathered together **in my name**, there am I in the midst of them.* Wherever saints assemble for His sake; there Jesus would be as the omnipresent Lord. Paul indeed uttered a charge in Christ's name unto the Corinthian church that the power of the Lord would be present when they assemble for His cause (1 Cor 5:4)

D. **On behalf of another** [By authorization as his representative]

Exodus 5:22-23 *And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak **in thy name**, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.*

Moses spoke as God's representative or prophet unto Pharaoh. Yet, in doing so, he first had to make God's name known unto the Egyptian ruler in order that the king might know who sent Moses.

Exodus 5:1-3 *And afterward Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, Thus saith **the LORD God of Israel**, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness. And Pharaoh said, **Who is the LORD**, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go. And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the LORD our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.*

It is evident that as an envoy, Moses first 'presented his credentials' to the king. A representative MUST first of all declare who he represents before delivering his message or discharging a duty. Likewise,

1 Samuel 25:5-10 *And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him **in my name**: And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David. And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words **in the name of David**, and ceased. And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master.*

Verse 10 implies that 'in greeting Nabal in the name of David,' the emissaries mentioned their principal to be 'David – Son of Jesse.' In other words, they went to Carmel for David's sake, uttered David's name before Nabal, and functioned as David's authorized representatives.

More examples

God-willing, someday I will endow a Prize in the university “*in the name of*” my late father; institute an award “*in his name.*” This means I will voluntarily establish the Prize: designate and name it after him to honour his memory. I do it for his sake because I recognize his past role and efforts upon me e.g. *E. O. Ashaolu Prize for the Best 100 Level Student in Engineering.*

Matthew 7:21-23 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Christ herein spoke of those who would **claim** that as His ministers [possession], they did miracles and prophesied for His sake, by His authority and did proclaim His name. Yet he would deny and reject their claim because He neither knew them nor did they ever do His Father’s will.

Matthew 28:18-19 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

This command is to immerse those that believe by calling upon them the name of the Godhead so that they would become God’s possession. Consider the following:

Acts 19:3-5 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

While on earth, Jesus did NOT personally immerse anyone, rather His disciples baptized on His behalf - Jn 4:1-2. This practice continued after His resurrection based on His commandment. When a disciple of Christ is about to immerse a penitent, such baptizer ought to let it be evident that he is immersing by the authority of Christ since he is baptizing as a representative of the Lord Jesus. Moreover, the baptizer is not promoting his or anyone’s teaching but the teaching of Christ. The declaration would make the baptizee a new disciple of Christ rather than a follower of the baptizer. For instance, Paul did not baptize to reserve disciples for himself; rather he uttered the name - Jesus Christ, while immersing penitents since he was baptizing them for Christ’s sake, and was functioning as Christ’s authorized representative (1 Cor 1:12-15). For their salvation, believers get baptized for Christ’s sake - to partake of his death and resurrection (Col 2:9-12, **1 Cor 15:29**) as well as to become His possession (1 Cor 7:23, 1 Pet 1:18-19) and God’s children (Gal 3:27, Acts 20:28b, 1 Jn 3:16).

Conclusion

The phrase ‘*in the name of*’ or ‘*in my name*’ or ‘*in his name*’ typically refers to the name uttered to identify the entity being represented when something is done by another based on authorization. But, when something is voluntarily done for the sake of another, it may not be necessary to pronounce a name. How could we know which of cases A, B, C & D applies to any given passage of scripture? By examining the immediate context, the Bible theme and possibly apostolic example about an issue.

For instance, on baptism: the Lord is that Spirit (2 Cor 3:17) and the Everlasting Father (Isa 9:6) who came in the flesh. He used the name “Jesus Christ” amongst men (Jn 1:14, Mt 1:18, 1 Tim 3:16) as the Son who died for us. In Mt 28:18-19, the Lord had just stated that He has all authority. New disciples are not to be immersed in a shared authority but in a common literal name of the personalities of the Godhead. It would be muddled to say: ‘Be baptized in the authority of the Father’ or ‘Be baptized by the authority of the Spirit.’ It is scriptural to state: “***Be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ***” (Acts 2:38) since that is the name of the true deity. We are called out and reserved for the Lord’s name (Acts 15:14), and upon being immersed into His name (Rm 6:3-4) became ***Christians*** (1 Pet 4:14-16).