

## PRAYER POINTERS

Dub McClish  
Denton, Texas

We all are subject to drifting into behavior and speech habits that convey unscriptural concepts. Sometimes such speech habits are manifested in the prayer in our assemblies. Such mistakes are doubtless made innocently, but they mistakes, nonetheless. Every earnest saint is interested in praying according to that which the New Testament authorizes.

1. When we pray we are to address **God**, our Heavenly **Father** (not us Son), **in the name of His Son** (**Matthew 6:9; John 14:13-14; 15:16b; 16:23-24 Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:17**; et al). There is no Scriptural authority for addressing Jesus in prayer.

2. Brethren sometimes close their prayers with the words, "In **Thy** name we pray." To do so is to address the prayer to the Father and then offer it **in the name** of the Father, instead of **in the name** of Christ. It is both contrary to Scripture (**Colossians 3:17**) and nonsensical to pray **to** God in the **name** of God.

3. We have heard many prayers at the Lord's table on the following order: "**Father** we thank **Thee** for **Thy** table...", or "We thank **Thee** for this bread which represents **Thy** body...; We thank **Thee** for this fruit of the vine which symbolizes **Thy** blood." By such terminology the prayer leader (likely unwittingly) is either addressing Christ in his prayer, or He is implying that the table is the **Father's** instead of the **Son's** (i.e., the Lord's [**Luke 22:30; I Corinthians 10:21**]) and that the Father rather than the Son sacrificed His body and blood.

In either case, the terminology (and the concept behind it) is unscriptural. Likely, leaders of such prayers have copied them from others without considering their implications. As noted above, we are not authorized to address the **Son**, but **the Father**, in prayer. Further **the Son, not the Father**, sacrificed His body and blood (the Father never had flesh and blood). The supper/table belongs peculiarly to the **Son** as a memorial to His death (**I Corinthians 11:23-26** – not His "death, burial, and resurrection" incidentally). The wording of our prayers should keep these distinctions clear. The following (or similar) prayers at the table correctly convey these concepts: "**Father** we thank Thee for this bread, which represents the body of **Thy Son**, sacrificed for our salvation." "**Father**, we thank Thee for this fruit of the vine, which symbolizes the blood of **Thy Son** poured out for our sins, In the name of Christ we pray. Amen"

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4. Prayer leaders occasionally address fellow-humans in prayer. Brethren leading a prayer before a “fellowship” dinner sometimes say, “We thank these ladies who have prepared this food.” Or, I’ve heard brethren say in a closing prayer, “We thank brother \_\_\_\_\_ for his good sermon today.” We should certainly be grateful for those who thus serve, but if we mention them in prayer, let us remember we are addressing **God**, not others we appreciate. Therefore, let us thank God **for** the ladies or the preacher (or for whomever we are grateful), rather than **thanking those people** directly in a prayer addressed to God. Then thank the ladies or the preacher in person, rather than addressing them in prayer.

5. It is not uncommon to hear a brother lapse into a personal prayer when leading public prayer in a worship assembly. When one leads others in prayer (whether in an assembly, before a meal, or on other occasions), first-person pronouns (*I, me, my*) are inappropriate. Each supplication, thanksgiving, and intercession is on behalf of all whom he is leading and should therefore always employ second-person pronouns (*we, us, our*), Jesus’ “teaching prayer” perfectly illustrates this principle. It is not “My Father...” “Give **me...my** daily bread...,” or “Forgive **me my** debts...and so forth, but “**OUR FATHER...**,” “**GIVE US...OUR DAILY BREAD...**,” and “**FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS...**” (**Matthew 6:9-13**). The Lord prefaced this prayer model with the clear instruction: “**AFTER THIS MANNER THEREFORE PRAY YE**” (**v.9**), obviously having in mind a setting in which more than one person would be present. First-person pronouns should be reserved for our personal and private prayers.

As in all things, including our prayers, we should seek to please God and our Mediator, His Son, including the wording of our prayers: “**AND WHATSOEVER YE DO, IN WORD OR IN DEED, DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, GIVING THANKS TO GOD THE FATHER THROUGH HIM**” (**Colossians 3:17**).