

Communication versus “prayer”

Every believers knows what we mean when we say “pray.” “I’m praying for you.” means that I’m asking God for something for you. If you’re sick, I’m probably asking Him to make you better. If you’re having problems on the job, I’m asking for God’s intervention. If you have a family difficulty, then I’m asking God to help you resolve the difficulty. I’m asking, asking, asking. God to most prayer meetings and 90 percent of the prayers are asking God for something. Recently a friend pointed out that much of our asking is health related. Indeed, when I look over my prayer list, health needs dominate. So prayer is asking God?

This chapter tries to understand how the Bible uses the terms behind our English word “pray” and “prayer.” One problem is that our Bibles use this word to translate several different Hebrew and Greek words. This does not reflect the diversity God intended with these terms. In modern English Bibles, these two words predominantly translate the Greek verb *proseuchomai* [προσευχομαι] and the noun *proseuche* [προσευχη]. Translators use them for other New Testament terms but these two Greek words are the most common. In the Old Testament, this words commonly translates the Hebrew *palal* [פלל]. This may be due to the use in the Greek Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) to translate the Hebrew *palal* by *proseuchomai* and *proseuchē*.

This word is from *niphal* meaning to fall or kneel, and then with the idea of communicating to God will on the ground.

Hanah’s communication (1 Samuel 1:10, 12; 2:1).

It could be distinguished from a request for favor [*chanan*] (1 Kings 8:28, 33).

While it is distinguished from a request for favor, it also appears to be the general term for “communication” in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament continues to the day of Pentecost, therefore, the gospels are Old Testament. In keeping with this, the Greek word *proseuchomai* is used in a general sense of communication with God.

Jesus taught that worship would change (John 4:24).

Worship is in spirit. It is not in a location such as Jerusalem or the mountain, but in our spirit.

But the word Jesus used *proskuneo* meant to fall before or kiss before, therefore, this word would give the wrong implication.

Who is “worshipping” [*proskuneo*] in the following passages. In Acts through Revelation, *proskuneō* only occurs the following texts.

Acts 7:43 - Israel worshipped false gods.

Acts 8:27 - The Ethiopian had worshipped in Jerusalem.

Acts 10:25 - Cornelius worshipped before Peter.

Acts 24:11 - Paul worshipped in Jerusalem. He was going through the motions of Old Testament worship.

1 Corinthians 14:25 - A new convert or an unsaved man who enters an assembly of believers.

Hebrews 1:6 - Angels worshipped the first born (God the Son).

Hebrews 11:21 - Jacob worshipped on his staff.

Revelation 3:9 - People from Satan’s synagogue worship Christ and are before us because we are with Christ.

God has taken *proseuchomai* which meant general communication along with the idea of falling down and made it the term for worship in the present. (We’ll look at this later).

The word *proseuchomai* is used in such a manner that it can not be interpreted as the general term for communication. How do the following passage demonstrate this?

1 Timothy 2:1- It does not come first in the list but second in a list with three other words for communication.

Philippians 4:6 - It is combined with supplication and thanksgiving. See also Eph. 6:18; Col. 1:9; 1 Tim. 5:5.

The term for general communication today is *epikaleo* [επικαλεω].

The idea is that of naming the name for the sake of appealing to an individual. It is illustrated in Acts 25:11, 12, 21, 25.

In the following passages, upon whose name do they call and for what do they call?

Acts 2:21 - They call on the Lord for future salvation.

Acts 7:59 - Stephen called on the Lord to receive His spirit at death.

Acts 9:14, 21 - Paul called on the name of the Lord. He did what the Christians had been doing.

Acts 22:16 - Paul is calling on the Lord as his first public act as a new believer.

1 Corinthians 1:2 - The Corinthians believers appealing to God.

2 Corinthians 1:23 - Paul called on God as His witness.

2 Timothy 2:22 - Believers who are calling on God from a pure heart are worth investing teaching time.

1 Peter 1:17 - Believers were struggling with persecution and were calling on God for help.

The terms for communication

The New Testament uses several terms for communication to God?

Epikaleo επικαλεω - Call on

Means to call upon or appeal to

Number of occurrences - 9 times.

Proseuchomai/proseuche [προσευχομαι/προσευχη] Pray, worship

Means to pray or worship as an address toward God. It fills a void for *pruskuneō*.

Number of occurrences - the verb 25 times and the noun 17 times, for a total of 41 times.

Eucharisteo/eucharistia [ευχαριστεω/ευχαριστια] Thank, thanksgiving

Means to thank or recognize God's grace as good.

Number of occurrences - the verb 24 times and the noun 12 times.

Aineo/ainesis/epaineo/epainos [αινεω/αινεσις/επαινεω/επαινος] Praise
Means to praise, to tell the tale of another.

Number of occurrences - all four words occur 18 times.

Deomai/deesis [δεομαι/δεησις] Supplicate or petition
Means to plead, beg, or ask with urgency due to an intense need.

Number of occurrences - the verb 6 times and the noun 15 times for a total of 21.

Entugchano/enteuxis [εντευψις εντυγγανω] Intercede
Means to speak to someone on behalf of another.

Number of occurrences - the verb 4 times and the noun 2 times.

Aiteo/aitema [αιτεω αιτημα] Ask
Means to ask or make a simple request.

Number of occurrences - the verb 15 times and noun 2 times.

Homologeō/homologia [ομολεγω ομολογια] Confess or agree
Means to agree, to say the same thing, hence to confess.

Number of occurrences - the verb 12 times and the noun 6 times.

Euchomai/euche [ευχομαι ευχη] Pray or vow
Means to pray or make a vow to God. This is a milder form of *proseuchomai*.

Number of occurrences - the verb 5 times and the noun 1 time.

Three of these terms refer to asking.
deomai - supplicate, *entunchanō* - intercede, *aitēō* - ask

Three terms focus primarily on God.
proseuchomai - pray, worship, *aineō* - praise, *eucharisteō* - thanks

The following is a concordance listing for each term to allow the English reader to locate the word in an English Bible,

The words are listed in groups corresponding to the order of the forms in each heading.

Occurrences of *proseuche* then *proseuchomai* in the epistles.

These two words are uniformly translated “prayer” and “pray” in the NASB

Rom. 1:10; 12:12; 15:30; 1Cor. 7:5; Eph. 1:16; 6:18; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2, 12; 1Th. 1:2; 1Tim. 2:1; 5:5; Philem. 4, 22; James 5:17; 1Pet. 3:7; 4:7

Rom. 8:26; 1Cor. 11:4, 5, 13; 14:13, 14, 15; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:3, 9; 4:3; 1Th. 5:17, 25; 2Th. 1:11; 3:1; 1Tim. 2:8; Heb. 13:18; James 5:13, 14, 17, 18; Jude 20

Occurrences of *eucharistia* then *eucharisteo* in the epistles. These two words are used only of thanks to God and translated by some form of thanks in the NASB except Col. 2:7.

1Cor. 14:16; 2Cor. 4:15; 9:11, 12; Eph. 5:4; Phil. 4:6; Col. 2:7 [gratitude]; 4:2; 1Th. 3:9; 1Tim. 2:1; 4:3, 4

Rom. 1:8, 21; 14:6; 16:4; 1Cor. 1:4, 14; 10:30; 11:24; 14:17, 18; 2Cor. 1:11; Eph. 1:16; 5:20; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3, 12; 3:17; 1Th. 1:2; 2:13; 5:18; 2Th. 1:3; 2:13 Philem. 4

Occurrences of *Aineo* then *ainesis/epaineo/epainos* in the epistles.

All followed by an * are not praise to God.

Heb. 13:15

Rom. 15:11

Rom. 2:29; 13:3*; 1Cor. 4:5; 2Cor. 8:18* [fame]; Eph. 1:6, 12, 14; Phil. 1:11; 4:8*; 1Pet. 1:7; 2:14*

Rom. 15:11; 1Cor. 11:2*, 17*, 22*

Occurrences of *deasis* then *deomai* in the epistles.

“Prayer” - Rom. 10:1; 2Cor. 1:11; 9:14; Phil. 1:4, 19; 2Tim. 1:3; Heb. 5:7; James 5:16 (second occurrence); 1Pet. 3:12

“Petition” - Eph. 6:18;

“Supplication” - Phil. 4:6;

“Entreaties” - 1Tim. 2:1; 5:5;

“Request” - Rom. 1:10;

“Beg/ging” - 2Cor. 5:20; 8:4; Gal. 4:12 - to men

“Ask” - 2 Cor. 10:2 - to men

“Praying” - 1Th. 3:10

Occurrences of *enteuxis* then *entugchano* in the epistles.

“Intercedes/ makes intercession” - Rom. 8:27, 34; Heb. 7:25

“Pleads” - Rom. 11:2

“Petition” - 1Tim. 2:1

“Prayer” - 1 Tim. 4:5

Occurrences of *aiteo* then *aitema* in the epistles.

“Requests” - Phil. 4:6; 1John 5:15

“Ask” - 1Cor. 1:22, Eph. 3:13 (to men), 20; Col. 1:9; James 1:5, 6; 4:2, 3; 1Pet. 3:15 (men to believer); 1John 3:22; 5:14, 15, 16

Occurrences of *homologeō* then *homologia* in the epistles. Note how many translations are used.

“Confess” (to/for men) - Rom. 10:9, 10; 1Tim. 6:12; Heb. 11:13; 1 John 2:23; 4:2, 3, 15

“Profess” (to/for men) - Titus 1:16;

“Giving thanks” (to God as praise) - Heb. 13:15

“Confess” (to God) - 1John 1:9

“Acknowledge” (to men) - 2John 7

“Confession” (not to God) - 2Cor. 9:13; 1Tim. 6:12, 13; Heb. 3:1; 4:14; 10:23

Occurrences of *euche* and *euchomai* in the epistles.

“Prayer” - James 5:15

“Wish” - Rom. 9:3

“Pray” - 2Cor. 13:7, 9; James 5:16; 3John 2

***Proseuchomai* and *proseuche* [proseucomai/proseuch] are the New Testament words for worship.** They do not mean prayer/communication in general. This is true in Acts and the Epistles, though this word was still in transition during the gospels and has a broader use in the gospels.

Acts 16:25 προσευχόμενοι ὕμνουσαν τὸν θεόν
 worshipping they hymnized the God

“Hymnize” is the main verb and “worship” is a participle describing how they did this. The word “sing a hymn” or “hymnize” means to speak or announce the character of a deity (god), to praise, affirm or recite something about the deity.

Richard Chenevix Trench (*Synonyms of the New Testament*) distinguished this word from psalm and ode, “A ‘hymn’ must always be more or less of a *Magnificat*, a direct address of praise and glory to God.” Hebrews 2:12 “I will hymnize you...”

Paul and Silas’ actions explain *proseuchomai*, as they were singing something about God and did so as those who were worshipping. The verb *hymneō* is not common, so *proseuchomai* gives character to their actions.

The problem in Romans 8:26 helps explain *proseuchomai*. The individual does not know what to “pray.” If “pray” means “ask” believers who are suffering nearly always know what to ask. However, suffering can make it difficult to focus on God’s character. For this reason, the Holy Spirit intercedes for the individual to

The relationship between *proseuchomai* and “interpret” in 1 Corinthians 14:13 does not mean he is asking that it be interpreted. He prays/worships with the intent that someone will interpret it.

In verse 16. *proseuchomai* the one speaking in a tongue says something good about God but it is only of value if one’s mind understands so he can appreciate what he said.

In Philippians 1:9, Paul said, “And this I worship...” “This” refers to Paul’s confidence (v. 6) in God being faithful to finish what He began. Faithfulness is an aspect of God’s attribute of truth.

In Acts 4:31, the word “prayed” [NASB] is the verb *deomai*, to supplicate. The context of verses 24-31 illustrate the relationship of worship to other forms of communication with God. Worship is demonstrated by action though not by the specific word. They acknowledge God as Creator, as the One who decreed what would happen, and the Sovereign over all. After worshipping, they ask.

***Proseuchomai* and *proseuche* occur with other communication words.**

It occurs with *aiteo* (αἰτέω) in Colossians 1:9, both are participles describing Paul and his companions. They perform both. “Pray” is not the general term, but one of two acts.

In Philippians 4:6, one asks after praying and supplicating. Rather than worry they are to ask in the framework of worship and supplication.

It occurs with *deasis* (δεησις) in Ephesians 6:18. Both are joined by an “and” [*kai*] and tied as accompanying activities.

In Romans 1:10 it is while [*epi*] he worships that Paul supplicates. The Greek preposition *epi* has a temporal force in this context. He supplicates and remembers them while worshipping.

In Philippians 4:6 worship is one of two distinct responses to the cause of worry. Grammatically, both have a definite article in Greek connected by “and” [*kai*] to indicate they are distinct.

In 1 Timothy 2:1 worship is combined second in a list with three forms of communication. Supplication occurs first.

In 1 Timothy 5:5 both nouns have definite articles in the Greek and supplication occurs first.

With *enteuxis* (εντευξις) in 1 Timothy 2:1 -

With *eucharistia* (ευχαριστια) in Philippians 4:6 - (“with”/meta)

Colossians 4:2 -

1 Timothy 2:1 -

Ephesians 1:16 -

1 Thessalonians 1:2

Philemon 4 -

Colossians 1:3 -

The Greek prepositions help explain occurrences of *proseuchomai* which appear to be “asking” communication.

The preposition *peri* (*peri*) is used with two Cases: the Genitive and Accusative. With the Genitive it means “about” in a general sense, and the Accusative is “about” in a localized or specific sense. No one “said anything generally about Him (*peri autou*)” (John 7:13). In Acts 10:19 Peter was thinking generally about the vision. In Mark 3:34 people were gathered “around Him (*peri auton*).” As an idiom with the Accusative it referred to Paul’s companions, “the ones with Paul specifically” (Acts 13:13). Law teachers generally affirm teachings they haven’t wrapped their minds around and as a result generally concerning the faith (Christian Life) have made shipwreck (1 Timothy 1:7, 19).

When *peri* is used with *proseuchomai* it indicates the person/s or matter generally or around which worship is made, not the specific. Other communication words “intercede” [*entugchano*] and “ask” [*aito*] are used with an Accusative object or the preposition *huper* which indicated “over” with the idea of specificity.

Examples of *proseuchomai* / *proseuche* with the preposition “*peri*.”

Acts 12:5 -

Colossians 4:3 -

1 Thessalonians 5:25 -

2 Thessalonians 1:11 -

2 Thessalonians 3:1 -

Hebrews 13:18 -

The preposition *huper* (*uper*), used with the Genitive case, has the idea of acting on behalf of someone, or in their place, as a substitute. “The good shepherd lays down His life in place of the sheep” (John 10:11).

Romans 15:30 (n)-

Colossians 4:12 (n)-

1 Timothy 2:1 (n)-

Colossians 1:9 (v)-

The preposition *epi* (*epi*) refers to the basis of, the time of (i.e. on the occasion of), or the direction to rest upon. “They went up to the temple for (direction) the hour of prayer” (Acts 3:1).

James 5:14 -

Several of these involve the act of thanking or remembering upon the occasion or time of worship, i.e. while worshipping, Paul also asked.

Romans 1:10 -

Ephesians 1:16 -

*1 Thessalonians 1:2 -

*Philemon 4 -

The preposition *dia* (*dia*) when used with the Genitive case means “through means of” or “through the agency of.”

Ephesians 6:18 -

Philemon 22 -

Proseuchomai occurring in various cases. In addition to use with prepositions in various cases, the word *proseuchomai* also occurs with out prepositions in various cases indicating differing ideas. The four forms in which *proseuchomai* occurs are: the Nominative (Subject of a sentence) - (s)hJ proseuch\ (pl)ai° proseukai; the Genitive (Descriptive) (not Ablative)-(s)thvß proseuchvß; the Locative/Instrumental/Dative (Indirect Object) (s)thØv proseuchØv (pl)tai√ß proseucaivß; the Accusative (object) (s)th\n proseuch\n (pl)ta»ß proseuca»ß.

Proseuchomai in the Nominative
Acts 10:4, 31

12:5

Proseuchomai in the Genitive
Acts 3:1 - “prayer” describes -

Proseuchomai in the Locative/Instrumental/Dative cases
Acts 1:14; 2:42

Acts 6:4

Romans 12:12

*Romans 15:30

1 Corinthians 7:5

Philippians 4:6

Colossians 4:2

Colossians 4:12 Does occur with the preposition *en*.

1 Timothy 5:5

James 5:17

Proseuchomai in the Accusative

Acts 16:13

Acts 16:16

1 Timothy 2:1

1 Peter 3:7

1 Peter 4:7

Why communicate with God? If God knows what you need before you ask, why ask? Why supplicate? Why intercede? Why worship?

Jesus told His disciples not to pray with much words and repetition [babbling] (Matthew 6:7-8). What do the Gentiles think this will accomplish for them?

What did Jesus say should be the knowledge/attitude of the one asking?

Jesus was speaking to Jews, so does this have any significance for us?

Communication is a God given means of connecting with God for the purpose of easing our concerns or worries.

1 Peter 5:5-9 - Who does this text primarily address?

What are these individuals to do (vv. 5-6)?

What might be the cares, concerns or anxieties in verse seven?

Philippians 4:2-7 - Who does this text primarily address?

What was the concern (v. 2)?

How did Paul instruct them to respond to the concern?

John 16:23-24 - Who does this text primarily address?

What is significant about Jesus' statement in verse 23?

How would this change affect the disciples (v. 24)?

How does John 14:12 frame 14:13-14?

How did Jesus tell His disciples to ask (John 14:13)?

What does that mean?

What purpose does it serve?

How does John 15:7 further frame this kind of asking?

Does this have any tie to the “fruit” in verse eight? (cf. v. 16).

What does John 16:23-24 reveal about this asking type of communication?

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Why had they not previously asked in His name?

What other communication can/should be done in Christ’s character (Ephesians 5:20).

What degree of privilege does the believer have for asking according to John 16:26? How do we know this?

What three activities/qualities are the background for asking communication in 1 John 3:21-22?

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What qualification is placed on asking in 1 John 5:14?

How does 5:15 fit with this statement?

In light of previous statements in John and 1 John what would be included in the idea “according to His will?” (cf. 1 John 3:23)

What are some things for which a believer might ask?

- 1 John 5:16 -

- James 1:5 -

What restriction is placed on this asking (vv. 6-7)?

- Colossians 1:9 -

What does James 4:1-2 indicate about our asking, and how does it agree with the issue of God’s desirous will?

What did these people want, and what was the problem with it?

1:6-8 -

1:26-27 -

2:1-7 -

4:13-17 -

4:3 -

How did this situation fit the “whatever you wish” statement in John 15:7 or the “whatever you ask” statements in John 14:13, 14; 15:16; 16:23?

In James 5:13-16 James lists several forms of communication. Identify the form, the type of person using it, and the reason.

v. 13 - 1 -

v. 13 - 2 -

v. 14 - 3 -

v. 15 - 4 -

v. 16 - 5 -

v. 16 - 6 -

Our worship communication was changed.
John 4:24 - List two contrasts to worship in spirit? cf vv. 20-21.

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Why are these two significant for the believer today?

How does “in truth” affect our worship?

How does 1 Corinthians 1:31 shape any activity of the believer including his communication?

What were some areas which distinguished some believers from others in this context?

v. 20 -

v. 26 -

How does verse 31 affect this?

Issues of praise as a communication to God.

How does Hebrews 13:15-16 define praise [*aineo*]? The A.V. “thanksgiving” is confess.

What makes praise a sacrifice?

What does “fruit of the lips” say about this praise?

So, what is one reason for praise?

In Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14, what is the object of praise? Specify what is confessed in each section.

v. 6

v. 12

v. 14