

Prayer in the New Testament:

Terminology:

Aiteo –

Traditionally, this word was understood as a request or demand, usually for one's share. It is used in the LXX as a translation most often of *say-al*, to ask or require. In the New Testament it is used mostly as a request for oneself, but not always addressed to God. Matthew 21:22 is a great example of it being used in the context of prayer.

Gonupeteo –

Traditionally, this word meant to kneel, typically as an act of submission before the king, a slave-master, or a god. In the O.T. this word is used in the LXX as adopted from surrounding cultures to show submission. In the N.T. it has common usage other than prayer, but clearly appears in a prayerful context in Acts 7:59-60.

Deomai –

In Classical Greek culture this word meant to ask, or even beg. It is used in the LXX as a translation of the Hebrew *haynan*, to beg for favor, best exemplified by Esther before the king. In the N. T. this term is used in generality, but fits within the context of requesting in prayer in Acts 8:22 where one must ask God for forgiveness of sins committed within the heart.

Proseuchomai –

In ancient Greek tradition, this word was used as a technical term whereby one invoked a deity, and thereby covers a small field of meaning as to request, to entreat, vow, or to consecrate. This word is used most in the LXX to translate the Hebrew *Paylal* as the standard term meaning, to pray. In the N.T. it is the word used most to communicate the concept of prayer. There are very many texts to demonstrate this, but the iconic passage is of course Matthew 6:9ff.

Proschuneo –

This word was used in Classical Greek for kissing the ground, or perhaps the feet of a deity, thus a form of worship. In the LXX this word is commonly used for the Hebrew *sayhah* which has the technical definition of bowing, but is commonly employed to depict worship. So in the N.T. it is most often translated as worship, but does communicate an element of prayer in a very few texts. John 12:20 translates the word as worship, but traditionally there are understood prayers that accompanied the feast of Unleavened Bread.

Erotao –

According to tradition, this word was used to express the asking of a question. It is used as the Greek translation of the Hebrew *sayal* in the LXX. The context dictates whether *erotao* or *aiteo* was to be used for *sayal*. In the N.T. this term

is used 62 times but is only translated as prayer a few times, again depending upon the context. I John 5:16 is the clearest use of the term in this context.

Krouo –

Traditionally, this term was used to strike something, especially the rapping on a door. It is never used in the LXX, and is only found 9 times in the N.T. It is synonymous with prayer in the context of Luke 11:5-10.

Entugchano –

This term is used the same in both classical Greek and in the LXX and means to approach or appeal to someone. In one ancient manuscript it is used of an appeal to an individual about or concerning a third party. In the New Testament this thought is developed to mean intercession and though used in contexts outside of prayer we mostly find it referring to prayer, as in Romans 8:34.

Remarkable examples:

Acts 12:5-17 – An example of praying without faith.

* Note * There is a direct link between verses 5 and 12b. The church was praying for Peter, though we know not the specific requests.

Luke 22:41-44 – An example of a request outside of God's will, but submission to it.

* Note * God is able to encourage you as you pray.

I Corinthians 1:4ff; Philippians 1:3ff; Colossians 1:3ff; I Thessalonians 1:2ff; II Timothy 1:3ff; Philemon 1:4ff – An example of prayer being made for and because of others.

Acts 10:1-2 – An example of a godly man whose life was marked by a few godly traits, including prayer.

Matthew 7:7-11 – Instruction to pray for good things that you may receive by the hand of our gracious God.

I Timothy 2:8 – An example of prayer being made by people committed to holy godliness.

James 5:15-16 – Prayer for the sick is a noble activity, and may be the very means by which God will heal.