


Prayer and *koinonia* in the Fourth Gospel

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Prayer, the central spirituality in the theological and ethical life of Christ's disciples, has not yet received significant attention from Johannine scholars. Although some scholars emphasised and discussed prayer in the New Testament, Johannine scholars have failed to recognise the significance of prayer in the Fourth Gospel. Using narrative criticism the article aims to uncover the relationship between prayer and *koinonia* in the Fourth Gospel. The research on the theme of prayer and *koinonia* conducted in the Fourth Gospel has yielded the finding that prayer was a manifestation of abiding in Jesus. *Koinonia* was a form of prayer.

Contribution: The article fills the lacuna in Johannine studies, more specifically, in the field of prayer and *koinonia*. The article, which is in line with the scope of *HTS Theological Studies*, and offers a new interpretation of prayer and *koinonia* in the Fourth Gospel.

Keywords: narrative criticism; close reading; the Fourth Gospel; prayer; abiding; *koinonia*.

Introduction

The centrality of prayer in the spirituality of the theological-ethical life of the disciples of Jesus was emphasised by Markus Bockmuehl (1994:126; cf. Hvalvik & Sandnes 2014) with the statement, 'the single most important expression of both participation in Christ and imitation of Christ was prayer'. However, the close examination of the theme of prayer in the New Testament doctrine seems to have received less attention (Cullmann 1995; Jeremias 1967). Mathias Nygaard (2012:1; cf. O'Brien 1973:111), for example, in 2012 lamented that 'compared to other subjects, "prayer" as such seldom acts as a main locus of investigation'. Although scholars (Black 2018; Clark 2017; Gibson 2015; Sandnes 2016) have attempted to respond to Nygaard, there has been no mention of prayer in the Fourth Gospel. The theme of prayer in the Fourth Gospel has gained sparse thought. D. Moody Smith's (1995:151–152) study of the theology of John's Gospel, for instance, only includes two pages of discussion on prayer.

Is it likely that this deficiency was caused by the statements of two prominent New Testament theologians, Rudolf Bultmann and Ernst Käsemann. About the prayer of Jesus, Bultmann and Käsemann made the following comments. Rudolf Bultmann (1958) stated:

[It is] a great mistake to discuss the prayer life of Jesus, to speak of him as a praying man, to call him the greatest man of prayer in history; even historically one has no right to do this. (pp. 188–189)

Ernst Käsemann (2017) wrote:

Jesus has no need to ask the Father because his request is always heeded at once. Thus, actually he can only give thanks. His prayer, therefore, differs from ours in that, like his discourses, it, too, is witness to his unity with the Father. (p. 5)

Despite their opposing Christologies, Bultmann and Käsemann concurred in claiming that Jesus did not pray. Does this claim explain the Johannine scholars' disregard for prayer? We cannot be certain. Prayer terminology, such as the verb 'pray' (προσεύχομαι) and the noun 'prayer' (προσευχή) which appear in the Synoptic Gospels but not in the Gospel of John, is a second plausible reason for Johannine scholars' disregard for prayer.

This article examines the theme of prayer and *koinonia* in the Gospel of John using the narrative criticism method (Barus 1999:48–60, 2006:123–140, 2016:2–41, 2019:69–102), which bases the text for study on the final edited form and analyses the final text through close reading (Resseguie 2005:22, 24).

The theme of prayer and *koinonia* in the Fourth Gospel was examined using the method of close reading, focusing on John 15:7 and 16:26 (Barus 2022:99–121). Why? Because, these two texts discuss the theme of prayer and *koinonia* with different focus. The two verbs request (ἐρωτάω) and

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ask (αἰτέω) are prayer terms (Käsemann 2017:5). John 15:7 discusses ask (αἰτέω) from the perspective of abide (μένω), while John 16:26 talks about request (ἐρωτάω) from the viewpoints of the Father (τὸν πατέρα) and in my name (ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου). This article argues that *koinonia* and prayer are closely related.

Aspects of prayer and *koinonia* in the Fourth Gospel

John 15:7

The text of John 15:7 is part of the passage of John 15:1–17 (Barrett 1978:470; Beasley-Murray 1999:271; Bultmann, 1971:529; Dodd 1953:410; Köstenberger 2004:448), where the central motif is revealed using the verb ‘abide’ (μένω). The motif of ‘indwelling’ appears 11 times in verse 4 (3 times), verse 5, verse 6, verse 7 (twice), verse 9, verse 10 (twice), and verse 16. Meanwhile, in John 13:1–16:33, the motif of ‘abiding’ is used 14 times. In conclusion, the motif of ‘indwelling’ becomes densely concentrated in the text of John 15:1–17.

The affirmation of the importance of abiding is illustrated by the metaphor (Moloney 1998:417) of the true vine in John 15:1–5a. In addition, the motif of ‘abiding’ is intertwined with the motif of ‘love’, which is used six times. Both the motifs of ‘abide’ and ‘love’ bind John 15:1–17 into a cohesive unit before the text moves on to the motif of ‘hate’ (μισέω) which dominates the portion of John 15:18–16:4a.

In general, the motif of abiding in John 15:1–17 is explained in a series of literary designs with other themes as follows:

- Abide in Jesus (vv. 1–5a): parts of verses 1–5a are bound by the ‘I am the vine’ clause in verses 1 and 5a. The relationship between the vine and the branch is an organic *koinonia*, or organic participatory communion (cf. Baumert 2003:40; Ogereau 2014:218), just as the branch innately lives in the vine (cf. Keener 2010:993).
- The fruit of abiding or remaining in Jesus (vv. 5b–8): parts of verses 5b–8 are bound by the ‘bearing fruit’ clause in verses 5b and 8. The mutual abiding between Jesus and the disciples produces much fruit.
- Remain in Jesus and his love: verses 9–11 become one entity, with the pronouns ‘I’ and ‘you’ as references to the mutual abiding of Jesus and the disciples.
- The commandment of love (vv. 12–17): parts of verses 12–17 are tied together by the ‘My command is this’ in verses 12 and 17.

The discussion text of John 15:7 is in the second part of the passage, which explains the fruit of abiding and not abiding in Jesus (vv. 5b–8). However, John 15:7 is still to be read in the light of John 15:1–17 (cf. Brodie 1993:476–477; contra Brown 1970:680). Therefore, the literary context of John 15:1–17 is used in reading the text of John 15:7. In this reading, the literary design of John 15:5b–8 becomes the focal point in the process of reading the discussion text (v. 7) because of the affinity of the motif of abiding (μένω) with other themes,

particularly its connection with the theme of ‘asking’ (αἰτέω).

The Lord Jesus gives commands to the disciples to ask anything they want. Therefore, (conditional) requests will be granted to those who ask for them. However, the contingent particle if (ἐάν-v. 7) at the beginning of the sentence states a specific circumstance that must be fulfilled before a request is granted. The dual condition that must be met is reciprocal, encompassing the disciples’ actively dwelling in Jesus and the words of Jesus remaining in the disciples’ hearts.

The disciples abide in Jesus

The plural form of the verb ‘you remain’ or ‘you dwell’ (μείνητε) refers to the *koinonia* or participatory communion which occurs between one disciple and another. The disciples who are in the *koinonia* remain in Jesus communally. The *koinonia* of the disciples is organically described by the phrase ‘you are the branches’ (v. 5). The branches attach to and become an integral part of the vine. The disciples are the branches who remain in Jesus, who is the true vine.

What does it mean to dwell in Jesus? Some interpretations with different approaches to abiding in Jesus are as follows:

- Remain loyal to Jesus (Bultmann 1971:538).
- Complete and continued dependence for the Christian life on the indwelling Christ (Keener 2010:999).
- An adherence to him as the vital source of help and strength in order to bear much fruit (Ridderbos 1997:517).

Nevertheless, the views of scholars are yet to reach a consensus on this. What then? When the reading of John 15:7, as previously suggested, is done in light of the literary context of John 15:1–17, it conveys a different nuance. According to John 15:9–11, abiding in Jesus means abiding in his love. Furthermore, remaining in the love of Jesus means keeping the commandments of love (vv. 12–17). Keeping the commandments of love means doing something (v. 5). Without abiding in the love of Jesus, the disciples can do nothing.

Is it possible for the disciples not to abide in Jesus? John 15:1–5a emphasises the absolute necessity for the disciples to abide in him. Abiding in Jesus is not an option but a command, a must, as affirmed by the imperative verb ‘remain’ (v. 4). The vine must have branches and be attached to the vine. A vine without branches is not a vine. A vine and its branches form a single organic *koinonia* entity. Disciples who do not remain in Jesus are fruitless. A branch that does not bear fruit will be removed by the Father, the vineyard farmer (γεωργός) (Bauer Danker Arndt Gingrich [BDAG]:196). Branches that are cut off dry up and are thrown into the fire and then burned (v. 6). Conversely, disciples who abide in Jesus will bear fruit (v. 5). The Father’s ultimate goal in cultivating the vineyard is to reap much fruit (Köstenberger 2004:452; Schnackenburg 1987:95, 97). This orientation and purpose of the Father are revealed using the adjective ‘true’ (ἀληθινή) in the phrase ‘I

am the true vine' (v. 1). The explanation? The nation of Israel, often symbolised by the vine (Ps 80:8–16; Is 5:1–7; 27:2–5; Jr 2:21; 12:10–11; Ezk 15:1–8; 17:1–21; 19:10–14; Hs 10:1–2), produced sour fruit and even failed to produce fruit.

On the other hand, Jesus, unlike Israel, is the true vine because his branches produce fruit, or even, after being pruned, they produce much fruit. It is clear that Jesus is not (shown to be) the true vine because he 'gathers a community' (Ridderbos 1997:516) or is the 'source of the real life' (Brown 1970:674; cf. Bultmann 1971:530). Jesus is the true vine because the branches bear much fruit.

As previously stated, abiding in Christ entails remaining in his love (contra Caragounis 2012:261, 262). Therefore, it is vital to further elaborate on abiding in the love of Jesus, from the aspects of its foundation, source, model, result, and purpose:

- **Foundation:** Remaining in the love of Jesus means obeying his commands. Jesus commanded the disciples to love one another. Jesus lives in the love of the Father by doing the Father's commands. What is love? Love means giving what is desired (v. 7; cf. Jn 3:16) and sacrificing one's life for friends (v. 13). Giving what the disciples desire and dying for the disciples is a form of love. God's love in relation to prayer is proven by answering the disciples' prayers by giving them what they long for.
- **Source:** The source of Jesus' love is the Father's love (v. 9). That is the origin of the disciples' love because of themselves they have no love.
- **Model:** The love of Jesus. Jesus loves the disciples as the Father loves Jesus. The disciples love one another as Jesus loves the disciples by giving his life (vv. 12–14).
- **Result:** Friends of Jesus (see Keener 2010:1004–1015). Love transforms servant status into that of a friend (vv. 15–16). Jesus calls humans who receive his love and the object of his death friends. However, humans cannot call Jesus their friend. The relationship between the disciples and Jesus as friends is not reciprocal (Carson 1991:522). The disciples whom Jesus addresses as friends have three characteristics that apply to all of them. Firstly, Jesus reveals all his and the Father's secrets (v. 15; cf. Gn 18:17); secondly, the disciples carry out Jesus' commands with love (v. 14); thirdly, there is a correspondence between Jesus and the disciples (v. 20).
- **Purpose:** The Father as the vineyard farmer is glorified. How? The disciples bear much fruit. What does it mean for them to bear fruit? The disciples produce fruit not because the fruit comes from themselves. Bearing fruit is the result or effect of the disciples abiding in Jesus. Thus, fruit signifies love, not new converts (Carson 1991:523; Köstenberger 2004:469). Fruitfulness means consistently living out the love commands, not 'symbolic of possessing divine life and...communicating that life to others' (contra Brown 1970:680) or 'effective mission in bringing to Christ men and women in repentance and faith', (Beasley-Murray 1999:273; Köstenberger 2004:455) or 'every demonstration of vitality of faith, to which according to vv. 9–17, reciprocal love above all

belongs'. (Bultmann 1971:532–533). The various scholarly interpretations mentioned are not inconsistent with the purpose of the Father in cultivating the vineyard. Thus, fruitfulness is inherently related to love (vv. 9–17). Fruitfulness is the work of the Father, who prunes the branches. Pruning the branches aims to make them produce much fruit (v. 2). Fruitful disciples are disciples who glorify the Father. That is the purpose of abiding in the love of Jesus.

Glorifying the Father is the ultimate goal of the disciple abiding in Jesus, while in other parts, it is said that the Father is glorified in and through the Son (Jn 13:31; 14:13; 17:4). In this process, we see the crucial role of the Father in multiplying fruit in the disciples' lives. Three actions reveal the Father's role in John 15:1–17:

- Pruning fruitful branches (Lv 25:3–4; Can 2:12; Is 2:4; 5:6; 18:5; Jl 3:10; Mi 4:3) so that they bear more fruit (v. 2).
- Cutting off branches that do not produce fruit (vv. 2, 6).
- Answering disciples' prayers (vv. 7, 16).

Although the Father's role in the process of the disciples producing fruit is crucial, it needs to be understood that the relationship between the Father as the vineyard farmer and Jesus as the vine is not one of subordination.

Therefore, abiding in Jesus means remaining in the love of Jesus. Remaining in the love of Jesus implies bearing much fruit. Abiding in Jesus is essentially not a reciprocal relationship (contra Ridderbos 1997:517; Bultmann 1971:536; Köstenberger 2004:455; Lindars 1972:489) because it is not Jesus who lives in the disciples' hearts, but the words of Jesus. Therefore, it is false to view the two as identical, as Brown (1970:662) does, 'Jesus and his revelations are virtually interchangeable, for he is the incarnate revelation (Word)'.

The words of Jesus remain in the disciples

The words or sayings (ρήματα) of Jesus remain in the disciples, whereas Jesus obeys (τετήρηκα) the commands (ἐντολάς) of the Father (v. 10). Are the terms 'sayings' and 'commands' different? Are the sayings of Jesus that the disciples submit to separate from the Father's commandments that the Lord Jesus carries out? Unfortunately, this essential question has not received the attention of scholars.

What is meant by the words (ρήματα) of Jesus? Scholars are yet to reach a consensus. Some of their suggestions on the 'words' of Jesus are listed below:

- The teaching of Jesus (Morris 1995:596).
- The revelation that he brought (Beasley-Murray 1999:273).
- All the individual utterances that together constitute Jesus' word (logos) (Carson 1991:517; Köstenberger 2004:455).
- The specific sayings and precepts of Jesus (Barrett 1978:475).

A reading of John 15:7 in its literary context reveals that sayings and commands have fundamental differences (contra Ridderbos 1997:518 n 124; Brown 1970:662). What is the explanation? The term 'saying' in the plural form is

used 12 times in the Gospel of John (3:34; 5:47; 6:63, 68; 8:20, 47; 10:21; 12:47, 48; 14:10; 15:7; 17:8) to describe the functional *koinonia* of Jesus with the Father (the Father living in Me doing His works). The word 'command' is used 10 times (10:18; 11:57; 12:49, 50; 13:34; 14:15, 21; 15:10 [2x], 12). The term 'commands' refers to a form of *koinonia*, such as death on the cross (10:18), a response to Jesus' words resulting in eternal life (12:49–50), and love for one another (13:34; 14:15).

The usage of the terms 'saying' and 'command' is not synonymous. The use of sayings, as explained above, refers to functional *koinonia*. The words or sayings of Jesus abiding in the disciples point to the functional *koinonia* of Jesus and the disciples. The *koinonia* of Jesus and the disciples is manifested by the disciples doing the command (v. 10). The functional *koinonia* of Jesus and the disciples is demonstrated by the disciples carrying out the commands of love (v. 12). Carrying out the commands of love will cause them to abide in the love of Jesus (v. 10).

Consequently, we observe a spiral explanation that goes deeper and deeper (growth spiral). The disciples abiding in Jesus means remaining in love. Remaining in love means following the commands of love. Therefore, obeying the commands of love causes the disciples to abide in the love of Jesus (Figure 1).

However, it is necessary to distinguish between the existing positions of Jesus and the disciples. The perfect verb 'kept' *τηρήκα* in the clause 'I have kept my Father's commands' (v. 10) might seem to imply that Jesus remains in his Father's love in the present as the result and continuation of past circumstances. Perfect verbs refer to actions that were done in the past with ongoing consequences. The present verb 'remain' in the clause 'I remain in His love' refers to the present situation. However, it does not mean that Jesus remaining in the Father's love is a current condition as a consequence of obeying the Father's commands. Jesus declares that the Father has always loved him and continues to love him (v. 9). The circumstance is different from that of the disciples in their obedience to Jesus' commands of love, as indicated by the use of the verb *aorist* 'obey' (*τηρήσητε*). For the disciples, to remain in the love of Jesus is the outcome of adhering to Jesus' commands. Observing the commandments of love results in the disciples remaining in the love of Jesus.

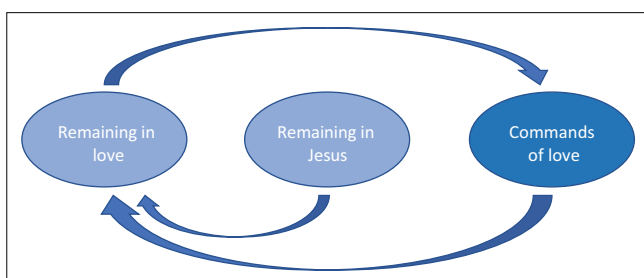


FIGURE 1: Remaining in Jesus.

But what of the use of the term 'word' (*λόγος*) in verse 3? Jesus there adds the explanation that this word is what 'I have spoken to you' (v. 3). The words of Jesus remaining in the disciples are the beginning of the purifying process. Jesus' words lead the disciples to bear fruit. However, that is not sufficient. The disciples must be continually cleansed. The cleansing is what the Father does. This continuous refining aims to make the disciples produce much fruit.

How do the words of Jesus remain in the disciples (v. 7)?:

- Accept the revelation of God in Jesus (Moloney 1998:423).
- Lodge in the disciple's mind and heart (Carson 1991:517).
- Faith in Jesus (Bruce 1983:310).
- Through quiet meditation or through experience, ordinary or unusual, or through a religious service (Brodie 1993:481).

Once again scholars are yet to reach agreement, and a new explanation is needed. The fulfilment of the two conditions, as mentioned above, namely the disciples abiding in Jesus and the words of Jesus remaining in the disciples, becomes the foundation for the disciples to ask the Father in the name of Jesus (v. 16). The disciples pray because of the *koinonia* of Jesus and the disciples. Prayer is a logical consequence of *koinonia*. The disciples' prayer to the Father is the fruit of the *koinonia* between the disciples and Jesus. With such an understanding, it is not an exaggeration to state that John 15:7 is the core of John 15:1–17, which speaks of the Father, Jesus, and the disciples.

That Jesus remains in the Father's love and obeys the Father's commands is the supreme pattern of the two reciprocal conditions which are to exist between the disciples and Jesus. The *koinonia* of Jesus and the Father becomes an example for the *koinonia* of Jesus and the disciples. The *koinonia* of Jesus and the Father, and also the *koinonia* of Jesus and the disciples, cause the Father to be glorified.

The *koinonia* between the disciples, and the *koinonia* of the disciples and Jesus and his words, are the foundation for praying to God the Father in the name of Jesus. Prayer to the Father in the *koinonia* with Jesus is a greatly fruitful prayer. Disciples who bring forth much fruit are disciples who glorify the Father. The fruit signifies love as a result of the *koinonia*, which is revealed in and through the accomplishment of the commandment of love. Prayer is the fruit of the *koinonia*, and bountiful fruit is the result of prayer in the *koinonia* with Jesus. Prayer is meaningless without *koinonia*, and there is no prayer without *koinonia*.

Furthermore, the result of the reading mentioned above needs to be juxtaposed with the purpose of writing the Gospel of John as stated in John 20:30. Juxtaposing is indispensable to test the validity of close reading.

The disciples abiding in Jesus is not interchangeable with the words of Jesus remaining in the disciples. The disciples abiding in Jesus refers to believing in Jesus (*πιστεύσητε*), while

the words of Jesus remaining in the disciples and the disciples obeying Jesus' commands refer to a condition in which the disciples continually believe (πιστεύετε - Jn 20:30). Remaining in Jesus refers to the use of the verb to believe in the aorist form (πιστεύσητε), whereas the words of Jesus remaining in the disciples and the disciples' obedience to Jesus' commands refer to the present tense of the verb to believe (πιστεύετε). In summary, abiding in Jesus is the evangelisation aspect of believing in Jesus and the words of Jesus abiding in the disciples and the disciples carrying out Jesus' commands point to the edification aspect of believing in Jesus. The pairing exhibits the validity of the application of close reading.

John 16:26

John 16:26 is read in light of its literary context. Reading John 16:26 in a literary context requires the definition of the upper and lower limits of the literary text. Scholars of the Gospel of John do not appear to be in agreement regarding the limits of the literary context, as evidenced by the various suggestions presented: John 15:1–16:33 (B. Lindars), John 16:25–33 (R. Schnackenburg), John 15:18–16:33 (A.J. Köstenberger), John 16:12–33 (R. Bultmann), John 16:16–33 (C.H. Dodd, R.E. Brown, D.A. Carson, H.N. Ridderbos, L. Morris), John 16:4–33 (F.J. Moloney), John 16:4b–33 (G.R. Beasley-Murray, T.L. Brodie), John 16:5–33 (C.S. Keener), John 16:1–33 (E. Haenchen).

John 16:25–33 is used as the literary context for John 16:26 based on a number of considerations, which are explained below:

- The use of 'these things I have told you' (ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν) as inclusio at the beginning (v. 25) and end (v. 33) of John 16:25–33 unifies the narrative.
- The term for figures of speech (παροιμία) is repeated three times (vv. 25, 29) out of the four times (John 10:6; 16:25 [2x], 29) in the Gospel of John. Therefore, these occurrences are concentrated in John 16:25–33.
- The concentration of the motif of 'believe' (πιστεύω) in John 16:25–33 (vv. 27, 30, 31), whereas the previous occurrence is in John 16:9.
- The motif 'come', and 'leave' further emphasises the unity of John 16:25–33. John 16:27, 28, and 30 contain three occurrences of the 'come' motif, which last appears in John 13:31. The motif 'leave' appears four times (vv. 25, 28, 32 [2x]).

The above explanation leads to the conclusion that John 16:25–33 forms a unified unit. The 'come-leave' motif and the 'believe' motif can be identified as the two dominant motifs. If John 15:1–17 is a monologue, John 16:25–33 is a dialogue between Jesus and his disciples. The following literary design illustrates the intertwining of these two themes in the dialogue between Jesus and his disciples (contra Brodie 1993:501):

- Going to the Father (vv. 25–28): Jesus directly told the disciples that the time had come for him to return to the Father.

- The disciples believed Jesus (vv. 29–30): The disciples believed Jesus came from God, but they did not grasp the significance of Jesus' return to the Father. Jesus' response in the form of the question, 'Do you now believe?' (v. 31) reveals that the disciples recognised the incarnate Jesus but did not yet recognise the resurrected Jesus.
- A time (ᾠρα) is coming and has come (vv. 31–33): When the departure of Jesus brings both sorrow and peace.

Although the discussion text of John 16:26 is organically connected to first section (Jn 16:25–28), it is read in light of its literary context (Jn 16:25–33).

Ask in my name (Jn 16:26)

What does it mean to ask in the name of Jesus? Following are several interpretations of 'ask in the name of Jesus':

- Prayer is made by the invocation of Jesus (Bultmann 1971: 585, 588).
- Praying on the basis of all that he is and has done for our salvation (Köstenberger 2004:478; Morris 1995:629).
- As his representatives carrying out his work (Keener 2010:1016, 1046; Lindars 1972:492).
- The disciples have a true communion with Jesus because they give their consent to his mission, as sent by God, and love him (Schnackenburg 1987:163).

Scholars appear to disagree on the meaning of 'to ask in my name'. Therefore, it is necessary to re-read John 16:26 to discover the meaning of the clause 'ask in the name of Jesus'.

As the Lord instructed his disciples, 'In that day' (ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ), they would ask in the name of Jesus. The expression 'in that day' (v. 26) includes the expression the hour is coming (ἔρχεται ᾠρα -v. 25) and the expression the hour is coming and has come (ἔρχεται ᾠρα καὶ ἐλήλυθεν -v. 32). That was the day when the disciples would ask in the name of Jesus. Therefore, the phrase 'in that day' is distinguished from the term 'time' (ᾠρα), which appears in John 16:25 and 32.

What does 'in that day' mean? According to Bultmann (1971:583, 588), who interpreted the New Testament from an existentialist perspective, the phrase 'in that day' refers to an eschatological situation in which the disciples no longer had questions. However, most interpreters believe that the expression refers to the period after Jesus' resurrection (Carson 1991:545; Morris 1995:627, 629). In contrast, the term 'time' (ᾠρα) in verse 32 refers to the time of Jesus' death on the cross. Nevertheless, as stated previously, the expression 'in that day' is expanded to include the crucifixion and the period following it. Still, it lacks sufficient breadth. The use of the perfect verb ἐλήλυθεν (v. 32) most likely refers to the period of the incarnation and the period following the crucifixion (see Wallace 1996:572–573). The expression refers to the interval between the incarnation and the parousia.

The expression 'in that day' explicitly refers to the event described in verse 25 and includes the event described in

verses 32–33, in which both internal *koinonia* of the disciples and the external *koinonia* between the disciples and Jesus were severed. The phrase ‘in that day’ also refers to the day of Jesus’ crucifixion when the *koinonia* of Jesus and the Father was not broken, as well as the day when the internal *koinonia* among the disciples and the *koinonia* between Jesus and the disciples were severed.

The disciples’ internal and external *koinonia* was harmed because they did not yet comprehend the significance of Jesus’ departure, despite having previously understood the significance of Jesus’ coming (vv. 29–30). Although the *koinonia* of the disciples was internally and externally broken, Jesus’ *koinonia* with the disciples was not affected. ‘Ask in the name of Jesus’ then refers to the *koinonia* of Jesus and his disciples (Brown 1970:636; Nygaard 2012:184, 189, 190). ‘In that day’ was a condition or time which the disciples would ask in the name of Jesus as a manifestation of *koinonia*. Because the disciples could now enter God’s presence directly, they would no longer require the Lord Jesus to relay their prayers to the Father. Jesus did not require the Father’s permission to grant the disciples’ request. *Koinonia* of the disciples and Jesus became the foundation and assurance that the Father heard and granted their request.

Jesus’ departure is described by the phrase ‘a time is coming’ (ἔρχεται ὥρα -v. 25). ‘Time’ (ὥρα) was a condition in which the disciples would weep, wail, and mourn (v. 20). But the situation was brief, much like a woman who endures excruciating pain during childbirth, only to experience immense joy upon witnessing the birth of her child. Similarly, the disciples’ sorrow was transformed into joy at the time of God’s revelation in and through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. It was a great joy for the disciples because, at that time, the Lord Jesus revealed the Father to them in a very clear manner (v. 25). How? Jesus proclaimed God the Father by openly pointing to the revelation of the Father in and through his crucifixion and resurrection. These events revealed explicitly who God the Father is. According to Moloney (1998:453), this direct revelation points to the glory of God. The term ‘glory’ does not appear in John 16:25–33, so Moloney’s interpretation is incorrect. In light of John 16:25–33, especially verses 25–28, it is clear that this direct revelation is about love. The crucifixion of Jesus clearly demonstrates and reveals God’s love. The Father loves the disciples. This was depicted prominently on the cross. The disciples’ petitions in the name of Jesus, the risen Saviour, were then motivated and supported by the Father’s love.

Jesus also explained his departure with the phrase ‘a time is coming and has come’ (ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ ἐλήλυθεν) in verse 32, in addition to the phrase ‘a time is coming’ in verse 25. ‘A time is coming’ is also, as noted above, the condition under which the internal and external *koinonia* of the disciples with Jesus were interrupted (vv. 32–33). ‘A time is coming and has come’ brings both sorrow and peace. Grief was a faith experience for the disciples when they scattered, endured persecution, and even abandoned Jesus. The disciples’ internal *koinonia*

was damaged because of their separation from Jesus. Nonetheless, for the disciples, this devastating faith experience ultimately revealed God’s love to them. When the disciples abandoned Jesus, they shattered the *koinonia* among themselves and severed the *koinonia* between themselves and Jesus (vv. 32–33). The *koinonia* was shattered when the disciples abandoned Jesus and dispersed. It is interesting to note that the persecution did not destroy the *koinonia*.

The phrase ‘A time is coming and has come’ induces both grief and peace. What does peace mean? The peace that Jesus promises his disciples has several characteristics:

- It originates from the *koinonia* with Jesus (v. 33). Peace originates not from within the disciples, but from the *koinonia* of the disciples and Jesus. Peace is achieved through *koinonia* with Jesus not ‘the possibility of existing as a believer’ (Bultmann 1971:594).
- Courage during persecution (v. 33). The persecution in this context is the hatred of the world against the disciples, as explained in John 15:18–16:4a.
- It also relates to the defeat of the world (seen here as an enemy) (v. 33). The theme of the world (κόσμος), which appears 78 times in the Gospel of John, is ambiguous. On the one hand, the world hates Christ and his disciples (Jn 15:8), and the world is under the control of the devil (Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). On the other hand, the world was created by Christ (Jn 1:3), the world is the object of the Father’s love (Jn 3:16), and Christ is the world’s Saviour (Jn 4:42). Therefore, John Ashton’s (1991:206–208) definition of a purely pessimistic view of the world is flawed.

In a state of sorrow and peace, the disciples pray to the Father in the name of Jesus. The *koinonia* between Jesus and the disciples prepares the disciples to pray to the Father.

Asking in the name of Jesus highlights the *koinonia* between Jesus and his disciples. It also refers to the internal *koinonia* of the disciples. The internal *koinonia* of the disciples is indicated by the plural of the verb ‘you will ask’ (v. 26), their unanimous response to Jesus’ explanation (v. 29–30), and the use of the terms ‘them’ and ‘you’ (vv. 31–32).

Therefore, the disciples’ requests to the Father are founded on the *koinonia* between Jesus and the disciples and the love of the Father.

Ask on the disciples’ behalf (v. 26)

The Lord Jesus said to his disciples, ‘I am not saying that I will ask (ἐρωτάω) the Father on your behalf’ (v. 26). John 16:26 uses two verbs which are translated as the verb ‘ask’, namely the verb αἰτέω and the verb ἐρωτάω. We, along with the majority, translated both verbs as synonymous (L. Morris, D.A. Carson, R.E. Brown, F.J. Moloney, C.S. Keener, and C.C. Black). This definition is consistent with the formulation of the Greek dictionary. According to the Greek dictionary, the verb ἐρωτάω has two meanings: ‘to ask a question’ and ‘to request’ (BDAG 395). The verb ἐρωτάω is translated as ‘ask’ and ‘request’. The

verb ἐρωτάω in John 1:19, 21, 25; 9:2, 19, 21; 16:5, 19, 30 is translated as 'ask,' but in John 14:16; 16:26 as 'request.' The verb αἰτέω is defined as 'to ask for' (BDAG 20) and is translated as 'to request.' The verb αἰτέω in John 14:13, 14; 15:7, 16; 16:23, 24 (2x), 26 is consistently translated as 'to request'.

The Gospel of John uses the prayer term ἐρωτάω exclusively in reference to Jesus (which includes its use in Jn 17:9, 15, 20). His disciples, in contrast, use the terminology of αἰτέω for prayer. In other words, the prayer term ἐρωτάω is exclusive to Jesus' prayers in the Gospel of John, whereas for the disciples uses the prayer term αἰτέω. The distinction in usage indicates that the disciples' requests are on a lower level than Jesus' requests. Why does this distinction exist? Are the prayers of Jesus and the disciples of a different order? Can't the prayer of the Lord Jesus be used as a model for the disciples' prayers? The answer to this question merits investigation.

According to the translation of John 16:26, the verbs αἰτέω and ἐρωτάω are both translated as 'to request'. Although the two verbs are synonymous, their usage reveals distinction regarding the request's subject and object. The disciples use the verb αἰτέω [request] with Jesus as the subject (14:13–14; 15:7, 16; 16:23–24, 26), the object being 'something' (14:13–14; 15:16; 16:23–24), and the will of the disciples being the object (15:7). The use of the verb ἐρωτάω [request] used in John 14:16 and 16:26 indicates that the focus is on the Father (14:16; 16:26), and the object is the gift of the Holy Spirit (14:16) and love (16:27). The focus of and the giving in Jesus' subsequent prayers appear to be consistent with the usage in John 17:9, 15, 20. The Lord Jesus asks the Father (17:9, 15, 20) to act for his disciples. Without a doubt, this concise description requires in-depth research. However, at least in this case, we can affirm that the verb ἐρωτάω and the verb αἰτέω are synonymous but have a distinct focus and object of the request.

Can the disciples use Jesus' prayer as an example? John 16:26 provides the answer, stating that the Lord Jesus did not need to ask the Father because the disciples were directly able to ask the Father. At this moment, it became most apparent that the disciples' requests (αἰτέω) were directly communicated to the Father, just as Jesus had asked (ἐρωτάω) to the Father. In other words, Jesus' request was identical to that of disciples' requests. In this regard, the Lord Jesus' prayer can serve as a model for the prayers of his disciples.

Bringing together the preceding descriptions into a single principle, *koinonia* is a form of prayer. This definition contrasts markedly with the one proposed by Hvalvik and Sandness (2014:4): 'Prayer is a verbal and nonverbal communication with God, proceeding from a relationship of trust'. The definition echoes John Chrysostom's conception of prayer, which describes prayer as a conversation with God (*Hom. Gn* 30.16). Essentially, prayer is a form of communication. Even though the definition already implies a relationship, this understanding must be refined. Relationship, not communication, is at the heart of prayer. *Koinonia* is a form of prayer, I would argue.

Conclusion

The discussion above is presented in the form of points listed below for clarity:

- The disciples' request to the Father in the name of Jesus is based on the disciples' *koinonia* and the disciples' *koinonia* with the Lord Jesus and his words.
- *Koinonia* refers to organic participatory communion, such as between the vine and branches.
- The disciples' request to bear much fruit resulted from praying in the *koinonia* with Jesus. Hence, the disciples glorify the Father.
- Fruit as the answer to prayer is the result of the *koinonia*, and the answer to prayer is in and through the implementation of the commands of love.
- *Koinonia* with Jesus and the Father's love is the foundation for the disciples' requests which are directly conveyed to the Father.

Finally, all the above descriptions crystallise into one principle: *koinonia* is closely related to prayer. Suppose the conclusion that *koinonia* is a form of prayer is accepted. In that case, the existence of John 17 in its final editorial form is not an accident (contra Bultmann 1971:459), but a logical necessity as the embodiment of the *koinonia* of Jesus and the Father. The Lord Jesus' prayer, as detailed in John 17, is the *koinonia* of Jesus and his Father. In that line of interpretation, John 17 is viewed as the Lord Jesus' prayer (C.H. Dodd, C.K. Barrett, D.A. Carson, C.S. Keener, B. Lindars), not a farewell prayer (R. Bultmann, H. Ridderbos, A.J. Köstenberger, M. Nygaard), or the High Priest's Prayer (A. Feuillet, L. Morris) or the prayer of consecration (E.C. Hoskyns, F.F. Bruce, G.R. Beasley-Murray, T.L. Brodie) or the final mandate (Kasemann, R.E. Brown). Thus, the theological unity of John 17 and John 13:1–16:33 is acknowledged.

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